

Violence and Crime in England

Georgia Macleod
08/06/2018

A podcast called 'At a knife's edge' has been uploaded to Moodle, it is intended that this would be heard first, before progressing with the following three articles. 'At a knife's edge' introduces the topic of violence and crime by taking a close look at the issue of street violence in London. The podcast delves into the topic of youth, masculinity, gangs and the reasons why violence and crime occurs across these three subsections of society.

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At a knife's edge. (~~See Moodle~~). 10 minutes 45 seconds.

The podcast can also be found at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=nHqrBAGyaGA

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Steering youth down a different path

Using the past to make a better future for the kids, ex-gangster Darryl Laycock believes that “prevention is better than a cure” and is committed to helping youngsters avoid a life of crime that saw him in and out of correctional facilities and left him mourning the loss of over 30 of his family and friends.



The smile that says it all, an ex-gang member who is giving back to the community. Photo: Georgia Macleod

Darryl Laycock has a broad toothy grin and a disarming nature that makes it hard to believe he used to be a roadman, for what he says was one of the most dangerous drug gangs in England. Now he’s fully rehabilitated and determined to make a difference helping young people get on the straight and narrow. “I just believe that every kid deserves a chance”, he says, “I tell everybody, it’s never too late. Kids are always told “You’ll amount to nothing”... You know, I’ve been charged with murder, I’ve been charged with attempted murder, I’ve been charged with loads of shooting offences... I’m not guilty on all of those by the way. I’ve been convicted of possession of fire arms, possession of ammunition and supplying drugs. So, if I can turn my life around, anybody can do it.”

Laycock is doing his part to educate youth amid a national outcry over the rising levels of violent crime sweeping across England and Wales. Statistics have shown an overall increase in homicide, knife and gun crime since 2014, as well as a rise in the number of robberies since 2016. As the UK Government launches its new '[Serious Violence Strategy](#)' to combat the issue, many believe that there needs to be a greater focus and funding provided for local support services and education facilities.

In response to the governments new strategy the [Association of Directors of Children's Services stated](#), "Prevention and early action is key, this must involve co-ordination of a wide range of services, including those to support families and young people, but also stimulating housing, employment opportunities and community facilities. The strategy emphasises the importance of local communities and partnerships yet provides little for local authorities to develop local responses."

Darryl Laycock echoes this statement, insisting that "prevention is better than a cure". He is currently mentoring in youth clubs and schools with teenagers and kids as young as 8 years old. "I try to empower kids and point them down different pathways, boxing college or training. I just try and help them to be what I wish someone would have helped me to be when I was younger." Laycock was 14 years old when he got involved with a gang, the need to escape a house rife with domestic violence and poverty, forced him to seek a new family on the streets. "It wasn't really a gang to begin with, just a group of guys coming from a poverty background, then we started antisocial behaviour, selling drugs and that's where it all starts doesn't it."

Laycock was released from jail in 2011 and has since been working with a community interest company called [C.E.L.L.S.](#) "When I came out of jail in 2011, they invested in me they took time to get to know me, took time to help me transition from jail to freedom. It was the only place I could volunteer when I came out of prison," says Laycock, "We go around to school with an actual mobile prison cell and tell kids what it's like in jail. So, it's pretty powerful, we do all kinds of programs, workshops on guns and gangs, knife crime, joint enterprise, antisocial behaviour, controlling relationships, child sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol abuse – I could go on, we do everything."

The ‘Serious Violence Strategy’ promises to allocate £1 million for the Community Fund in both 2018/19 and 2019/20, which would support programs with a similar early intervention approach to that of C.E.L.L.S. It also has committed £11 million over the next two years through a new Early Intervention Youth Fund which is aimed at providing support to communities in preventing violent crimes amongst young people. Whilst this funding is not to be sniffed at, it doesn’t quite compare to the [£1.3 billion that the Justice Secretary announced](#) last year would fund the creation of 5,000 new modern prisons places across England and Wales.

The UK is also facing the effect of a series of cuts to funding in education and youth services. Secondary schools in England for example, have [lost 15,000 teachers and assistants](#) over a two year period as a result of a £2.8 billion funding cut in schools. Government funding for [children and youth services](#) between 2010 and 2016 fell by £2.4 billion.

Darryl Laycock thinks the governments focus needs to shift. “It’s alright to cut funding for schools and things like that but it costs more to put people in prison. They [the government] never run out of funding to put people in prison, they never run out of funding for war but they run out of funding for schools. Come on, education is key,” he says, “You want the kids to get educated in school and not the road mentality that they’ll get in prison. If you’re putting kids in jail, it’s just going to make them worse. Jail is a breeding ground for violence, they’re going to go in there, learn how to handle themselves and they’re going to be tougher when they come out.”

The need for keeping people out of jail seems particularly paramount, since it was [announced earlier this year](#) that UK’s prison system was in a state of “crisis” with two thirds of prisons inspected providing inadequate conditions or unacceptable treatment. Prior to this in 2016, suicide rates among inmates in the UK rose to the [highest number ever recorded](#), alongside a 75% increase in self-harm incidents.

Steering young people down different life paths, away from behaviour that could land them in jail would be a prevention that could in the long term cure the UK’s prison crisis. Darryl Laycock is working on doing just that, by looking for the alternative ways young people can utilize their skills. “If a kid can answer a phone they’ve got skills that can be transferable to an office. If a kid can fight they’ve got skills that can be transferred to boxing or MMA. If

they're selling drugs and can weigh stuff, add up the money, make the count right at the end of the day and even make a ten-pound profit on that day, they're an entrepreneur! If you can sell drugs and make money you can sell other things and make money and you're not going to go to jail."

While young people might think life as a drug selling gangster would turn a better profit than a run of the mill job at McDonalds, Laycock vehemently disagrees. "If you go down the straight path, and get a job at McDonalds, you're going to rise to the top at some point and don't forget this man isn't ever going to get no mortgage, the man at McDonalds could get holidays. The only holidays the road man will ever go on – is to jail!"

"I've lost over 30 friends and family... But the way I see it, those people haven't died in vain, I'm here to give them a lasting legacy. Even people who I had trouble with, my enemies that have died, I still mention their names because at some point they were my friends. We had arguments and we fell out. The way I see it nobody died in vain, if we can use the past to make a better future for the kids, well it's done."

When obeying the honour code harms human rights

A Birmingham mother is sentenced to prison in a landmark case against forced marriage, which many see as a positive move toward the further protection of human rights. Neelam Sarkaria believes there are still ways to go, with more professionals needing to get on board with addressing the issue.



The role of law in society, setting out what's acceptable. Photo: Flickr

“I think that’s wrong, it’s absolutely wrong! What is the role of law in society? The role of law in society is at any one time to set out what’s unacceptable.” Neelam Sarkaria is hard-line when it comes to justice. She’s responding fervently to being asked her opinion on the idea that criminalisation of forced marriage harms victims rather than helps them. “If you’re trying to change behaviour, the law is a really important way of doing it. Forced marriage has been going on for centuries, but we need to do something about it.”

Last week a Birmingham mother was sentenced to four and a half years prison, for forcing her 17-year-old daughter to travel to Pakistan and marry a man 16 years older than her. In the days that followed, [The Guardian published their investigation](#) that revealed more than 3,500

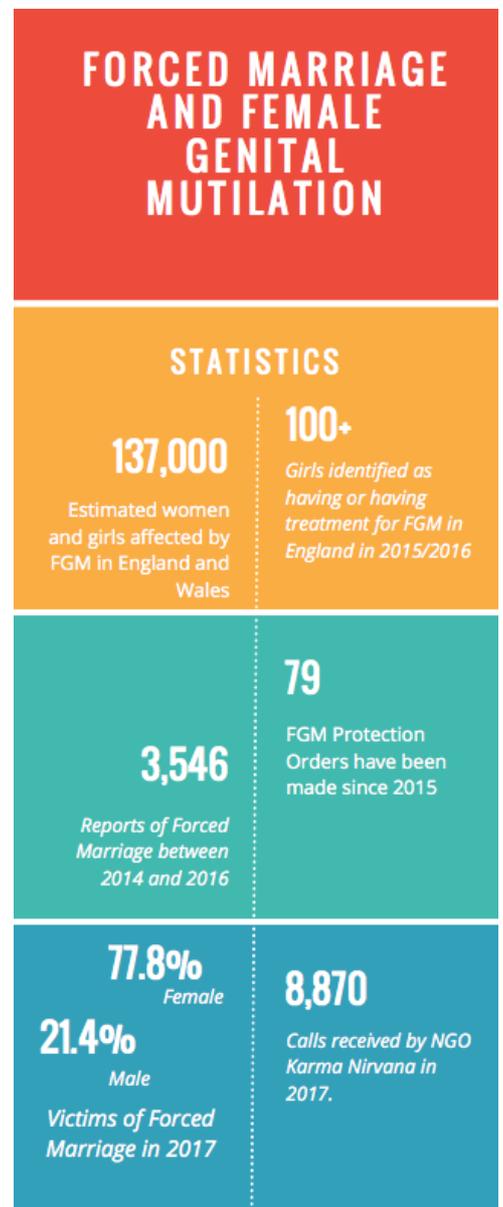
reports of forced marriage were made to police between 2014 and 2016. Tackling honour based practices such as forced marriage is no easy task, when victims can be unaware of the crime being committed against or risk prosecuting their family or community. It's for this reason that much still needs to be done in terms of raising awareness and training professionals across the United Kingdom.

Having previously worked as a barrister and leading the Crown Prosecution on strategy and policy development for VAWG¹, she now specialises in training and consultancy for forced marriage, honour based violence, and FGM². "I'm either developing training for professionals, guiding non-government organisations on how they can work in the field and how they can develop their sustainability, strategy, governance and that sort of stuff," she says, "I've just finished with a colleague delivering training for national health services England, so for their 1.2 million employees I've developed their training on FGM. Similarly, I've just delivered training on forced marriage for the Royal College of Midwives, it's about guiding people through the law and legislation and how it applies to them."

When forced marriage legislation was introduced in the UK in 2015, there was much debate over whether or not criminalising this act would help or hinder victims. Dr. Aisha Gill, an expert in criminology and commentator on forced marriage, violence against women and 'honour killings', has in the past spoken out [against criminalisation](#). Victims would potentially be deterred from seeking help because "they would not want to see their parents being prosecuted in a criminal court or imprisoned." Gill declined to comment on the recent case against forced marriage, due to her role as an expert witness for the prosecution.

Education and awareness

Sarkaria is adamant that criminalisation is the key to combatting the issue "The importance of cases like the prosecution last week, is to send out a message to society that this is wrong," she says, "I think there is a real shift here, towards greater awareness of the issues around violence against women and girls, but what has been one of the catalysts is that with the work on female genital mutilation in the UK." In 2015 the government introduced a mandated reporting duty on teachers, social workers and healthcare professionals, which meant if a case of FGM came to their attention through examination or a woman reporting it, they are required to report the matter to the police.



“This is all about making professionals take responsibility,” says Sarkaria, “There seems to be a little bit of a shift, I don’t think we’re quite there yet, not everybody is doing it. But I think that’s where we need to be moving because the issue has become around detection of certain forms of offending, when they’ve got something like forced marriage or FGM it’s a little bit more difficult for them to get their head around I think.”

‘Othering’, Sarkaria describes, is part of the reason professionals fail to detect and understand the issue “They think that it’s happening over there, it’s for ‘other’ people but actually yes, it is happening to other people but you can understand what’s happening to them. Every society has an honour code, it’s just that when they become harmful they become a problem.”

Detection is made difficult when people are unaware of what the offense is and therefore don’t regard themselves as victims. “The unique nature of honour based abuse whether it’s FGM, forced marriage or otherwise, if you’re lead to believe that this is what is right for you and that you don’t have a choice then you almost learn and comply with what is required of you,” explains Sarkaria, “Whereas if people are taught at a younger age that this is unacceptable in our society that this is not what we accept in British society then that would really encourage young people to understand that they are the subject of an offense. For example the first FGM prosecution in the UK, the failed one, the victim gave evidence for the defence and not the prosecution.”

Currently in the UK there are no formal requirements for educational programs in schools to include information on practices such as forced marriage or FGM. Some schools however, adopt programs when approached by non-government organisations, for organisations to come in and discuss the topic. “I think what the government has done is brought in the law and the legislation. It’s now the difficult bit which is embedding and educating communities. Because what’s happened in the UK, we’ve gone through a period of time where post [Macpherson and the death of Steven Lawrence](#), communities were just becoming quite insular,” she says, “People were really worried about going in and saying, you shouldn’t be doing this and this is unacceptable behaviour. Authorities, police and otherwise – there’s a fear factor that emerged, that they would be seen as targeting and being racist. But I do think that where a criminal offense is being committed, and I train police on this, you have to go in and act. You know cultural sensitivity is a factor but you’ve got to go in and do your job.”

1. Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
2. Female genital mutilation (FGM)

London's Domestic Violence Warrior

In light of recent campaigns and UK's upcoming new Domestic Violence bill, Margaret Aberdeen shares her story of survival and her passionate crusade to empower others and spread awareness of the issue.



Looking hopefully toward a future where domestic violence is eradicated for good. Photo: Georgia Macleod.

I meet Margaret Aberdeen on a stormy spring afternoon at Canary Wharf in London. Rain is bucketing down from the sky as we wade through puddles to her favourite meeting spot, a Turkish restaurant called Hazev. Once inside the manager is greeting her warmly, asking after her day and complaining about the weather outside. “Don’t worry!” she says laughing, “The sun will come out soon, it’s always behind the clouds.” “No!” the manager insists, taking out his phone and showing her the forecast. Clouds all week.

Just one week prior to our meeting, over one hundred Parliamentarian’s in the United Kingdom pledged their commitment to the charity Hestia’s [UK SAYS NO MORE](#) campaign, a nationwide awareness campaign committed to ending domestic violence and sexual assault. A new Domestic Violence bill is set to be introduced in UK parliament, promising new protection orders and tougher sentencing laws.

Margaret Aberdeen has been active in voicing her support during Aberdeen commands quite the presence through her activism on Twitter and in person she's no different. She's vibrant, larger than life and on a mission to help people break free from domestic violence. Aberdeen sees her own personal story of surviving domestic abuse as a "blueprint", from which others can learn. Besides activism and coaching, Aberdeen has published work such as, 'Priceless Roles of Mothers' and is currently in the process of writing a new book, 'Why I'll Never Be Hit Again'.

Aberdeen is originally from Aruba in the Caribbean, where she lived with her parents and five other siblings. Her journey to becoming an activist began during her childhood, her home environment plagued with an abusive father who would beat her mother regularly. "Seeing how many times my father used to beat my mother and how she was treated like a second-class citizen, I think that I felt at an early age that it was not right to be treated that way," she says, "for me as a child, it was really painful going through... the six of us growing up, we were all in such great fear."

One of the things that helped her during this time as a child, was the connection she felt with nature and the peace she derived from it. "I used to climb up a mango tree in the backyard as a child and perch like a bird, I wanted to fly away high in the sky," she tells me, "Just having my imagination and saying I'm going to create a happy life for myself when I grow up. I had this thing churning inside me and this is how I kept on going."

Later when Aberdeen was a teenager, the family moved to New York City, and it was here she disinherited herself from her family environment and moved out alone. "I was getting taller, my mind was getting bolder and my hands were getting stronger. I felt if I had stayed there and had seen my father hit my mum again, I would have switched his life off. Because so many times as a child, I tried to protect and defend my mum."

Entering into adulthood in New York City, Aberdeen felt the desire to make something of her life push her in the right direction. "I had so many choices as a young beautiful, black skinned woman. A lot of men would approach me, for modelling and I did a bit of it but I saw again what could have happened, I could have gone in the direction of drugs, gangs, prostitution." It was her stubborn attitude, she explains, that made her strive to prove to her family that she would end up on a different path.

It was during this time in New York, that she met her first husband and moved with him to London. "It was a whirlwind romance," she says cracking a smile, "within two weeks he'd asked me to marry him." The pair were married for ten years and it was during this time that Aberdeen's first son was born. After ten years the marriage ended and she took on the role as a working single mother, describing the father of her child as more of a "weekend visitor".

Despite not knowing many people, she stayed living in London after the breakup, I "For my son to have a father, to have some sort of stability with family because here he has a father, grandmother, uncle. These things I did not have when I was growing up... I was doing okay

in those first few years [after the breakup] I was working doing freelance at an in-house publishing company, I bought my own property.”

Enter: Prince Charming

Feelings of stress and depression began to plague Aberdeen, alongside coping with health issues such as seizures, which had begun two years after giving birth to her son. “I was so stranded, so isolated, I had no one to turn to. I didn’t know what to do, financially I was struggling. I became in such a dilemma that I thought, murder suicide. When you are in a situation where there is no one, the dark is so dark, there is no light, no one to lean on,” she says, “And when you have a child who you are trying to give the best head start in life, you feel pain for that child and you feel that failure and the guilt. You want to switch that off, the guilt, you don’t want to continue living that... that pain is like a dagger.

While she was struggling to cope with this stress and depression, a man entered her life. “I called him my angel, he was a Prince Charming. The words that were coming out of his mouth were what I wanted to hear.”

Soon Prince Charming had moved into Aberdeen’s flat and was controlling her finances and property. “I can see it now, but when you are in a situation where you are being manipulated... people who end up in a situation of domestic violence, we don’t really see. They’re so charming and so loving, all the things we were always been hoping for and looking for, that we might not have had as a child. Sometimes we mistake that for love.”

The two became engaged, Aberdeen fell pregnant with his child and together they travelled to his home country in Africa, leaving her first son to live with his father. “I think subconsciously I went to his country with the hopes of being a part of a big family,” she admits, “when I look at myself there is a pattern, the way I came over here [to London] looking for something, wanting a sense of belonging.”

After arriving in his home country, her fiancé’s true colours emerged and his abuse became physical. “I remember saying, ‘I can see why you came into my life. You came into my life for my dual nationality because I’m British, I’m American and my money.’ And when I said that he smacked me in my face so hard. I stood up, I looked him straight in the eyes. I turned my face and I said, ‘Smack the other cheek.’” Aberdeen’s eyes blaze at this point and she has me fixed me with a fierce stare, “I said ‘What are you waiting for smack the other cheek, the other one is green with envy.’ He’s looking at me with wide eyes, he was absolutely shocked. And what did I do? I smacked him back! The reason? After seeing my father, smacking my mum so many times and after how many times I tried to protect her, that was like a retribution, it was like I was smacking my father. He walked out of the room and as he was walking out he said, ‘If you weren’t pregnant, I’d kill you.’”

In the days that followed the violence toward Aberdeen only got worse, shortly after this period she was admitted to hospital with malaria and was forced to have an emergency

caesarean, almost losing her life in the process. “My child died 7 days later. I remember it was a Wednesday morning. The child was in the incubator and the nurse picked him up and she screamed... I did pray for that child’s life to be gone,” her voice cracks with emotion, “how could you bring a child into this world where it’s going to suffer with a father like that, I have been through it! I said Lord supreme being remove this child from this earth, because I do not want it to suffer. I suffered as a child, one of my sisters killed herself! So, I know, I cannot bring that child into this world. People say ‘Oh, don’t say that’ and I say don’t you dare tell me, what shouldn’t be, I was there, no-body was there but me.”

At this point in the interview Aberdeen pauses. “One second,” she takes a steadying breath, “You know I’m strong enough to say all this but sometimes you just go back [in your memory] and you can feel... you know I’m not going to say I’m super woman, that I don’t feel it, I do.” She takes another deep breath.

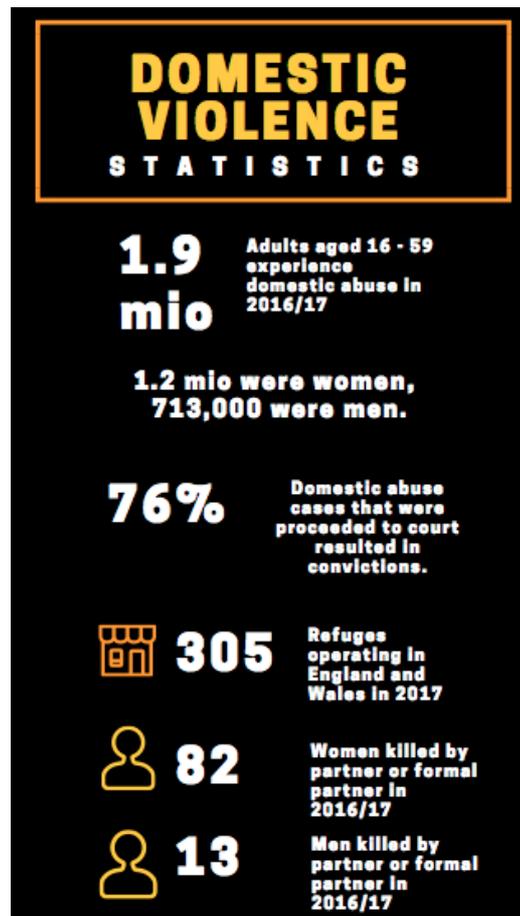
What kept you going, I ask Aberdeen? “I just have this strong purpose so passionate, so burning. That’s what kept me going. It’s like a flame that I can’t put out. That seed was planted in me from my childhood to be who I am today. So, there I was alone, don’t know where the heck I’m going. But that thought stayed in my mind.”

Breaking patterns to break free

With help from the doctor who performed her caesarean, Aberdeen’s family in America were contacted and she was flown back to Europe and away from her abusive fiancé. Still plagued by illness and fighting for her life, she returned to London where she was eventually able to start healing and building her life up again.

“I started doing meditation and going to all these sorts of things, really going deep into myself and, flipping the mirror. I started writing a lot of poems because I found that so therapeutic. And then I was invited to speak at an event and that’s how I started coming out talking about my story.”

What is your most important message to women now going through a similar situation, I ask? “Self-love! We’ve got to value ourselves Georgia,” Aberdeen says, “we really do.” She takes out an informational flyer she’s made, one of her poems printed onto the back, “I’m



Georgia Macleod: Office for National Statistics UK

so passionate to help others break free of domestic violence. I've created a training program which I'm trying to get funding for, which I've called 'Breakfree of Domestic Violence Forever' using the four C's process. The four C's stand for, courage, choices, commitment, change. That's how I am now, I have changed my pattern and my habits, to be who I am. I call myself a domestic survivor warrior."

Her opinion on the government's new Domestic violence bill and MPs support for the campaign is that so far, it's just words. "Action is what we need! Let's see if it's going to make a difference." Aberdeen would rather see the MPs tackle the issue from a different angle, "They think they can just start with the icing on the cake and not go to the ingredients of how this problem is born." She pulls out her book from her bag and quotes me a line from Fredrick Douglas, an African American civil rights activist, "It's easier to build stronger children than to repair broken adults."

Aberdeen isn't the only one who thinks the government are coming at the Domestic Violence bill from the wrong angle. Sisters Uncut, a feminist direct action group, criticised the government's focus on tougher sentencing, [reporting in The Guardian](#) "Instead of giving more power to the criminal justice system, the government should properly fund specialist services and refuges."

In order for the spotlight to properly be shone on the issue, Aberdeen thinks domestic violence needs to be tackled more like a health issue. "I want to see domestic violence posted on buses, on the underground, don't just have cancer and how to keep slim. The more we bring the issue out, the more people you will see come out."

Aberdeen looks out the window next to where we are sitting and exclaims, "Look! That sun is shining after all! What did I say, it's always just behind the clouds."

Title of audio/podcast/video: At the knife's edge.

Name of student: Georgia Macleod

Date: 8th June 2018

Podcast – Transcript

0:00 Voice over: A warning the audio you're about to hear contains violence and might be disturbing to some listeners

0:05 Audio of street violence.

0:24 Voice over: It's midnight on a Sunday and the commotion you can hear has just broken out in the middle of the street in Shoreditch, East London. I'm staying in a backpacker's that's right next to a busy intersection and is surrounded by pubs and clubs. My dorm room where I'm sleeping has this large window facing the street and it's jammed wide open, the light and sounds from outside pouring in and making it impossible not to notice the violence that is taking place just below. You can hear a woman is hysterically screaming at the men that are fighting, one of whom is her boyfriend, to stop. Two young men, who look to be in their early 20s are outside fighting each other, there are people littered all over the street, some who have come to watch and others who are trying to break up the violence.

1:10 Audio of street violence.

1:13 Voice over: The whistle is being blown by a bouncer, he is the only person in uniform who is trying stop the chaos. One of the guys has been bottled over the head is being carried away by his friends, his body completely limp and bloody. At this point the other fighter has made himself scarce. The fight has splintered off. The police never show up.

1:32 Music/voice over: My name is Georgia Macleod and you're listening to At the knife's edge, my podcast exploring the issue of violent crime in the United Kingdom, with an inside look into London's street violence.

1:53 Voice over: Violent crime in London has been a major topic of debate in the media since the beginning of the year, when London's homicide rate rose higher than that of New York City's for the first time in modern history. So far, this year there have been 55 suspected murders in London and 54 in New York. Between 2016 and 2017 there was a 22% rise in knife crime and an 11% rise in gun crime across England and Wales. After witnessing first-hand the kind of violence that can break out in the streets of London and noticing a lack of police response, I spoke to Nigel Hun, who works as a security guard in London and is on the frontline to the kind of street violence that I witnessed, the kind that breaks out around late-night venues.

2:35 Hun: Hi my name is Nigel and I'm a doorman mainly in central London and around London for clubs and festivals.

2:46 voice over: Do you ever feel vulnerable being on the front line to violence in the streets or in your venue?

2:52 Hun: I would say that I would feel extremely vulnerable in certain circumstance where you have some individuals which is over aggressive or being very aggressive towards us you feel a little bit vulnerable in terms of like the door staff we have so little door staff to deal with such a big crop where you never know if anyone will join a fight if anyone is going to help them out but I did encounter one time while finishing work while walking back from work I got attacked by a group of guys that got removed from the venue, not by myself but by my college and they just so happened to recognise me as one of the security from the venue and they attacked me but I would say that this is the job that you sign up for that you work for and you should be prepared. Not to say that oh you will definitely be attacked. But if you are to work in the security field or law enforcement you should be prepared for all these people that will try to take revenge on you or do something to you during work. But at the end of the day this is part of the job.

3:50 Voice over: Did you feel like the training you had to be a bouncer was sufficient?

3:54 Hun: For me I would say that the training is not sufficient for the things that we have to deal with, the training we have here in the UK to obtain the SIU badge I would say it's very basic and it's not suitable for more critical jobs such as club nights or festivals. I would say that the training courses need to be improved and more intense in terms of fitting up to the reality of what we might be dealing with.

4:18 Voice over: Do you feel confident in the police that they would respond if you need help?

4:22 Hun: I would say that they need to improve in terms of their backup and response because we do have numerous accounts when we call for police backup and maybe to them that's not that serious enough or not that urgent enough where they don't respond immediately where we sort of need to deal with the situation by ourselves until they arrive which is a few hours later, so I wouldn't say they provide enough backup.

4:43 Voice over: Many people are blaming austerity on the rising violent crime rates, in particular targeting the cuts to youth and police services. Police funding has fallen one fifth since 2010 and it is predicted that they will lose a further 700 million pounds and 3000 officers by 2020. Alongside cuts to services, the numbers of children in care, excluded children and homeless adults have all risen since 2014. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, one in eight UK workers live in poverty, which equates to 3.7 million people. Of those, rates are highest among children and their parents, with child poverty having risen to 30% in 2017. Of the people killed in London this year a majority of them were young and male with many of the victims and perpetrators being under the age of 21. I spoke with Dr. Adam Baird, a trained ethnographer and masculinities expert, about the impact social exclusion and inequality has on how masculinity is expressed in the young men who make up the majority of those involved in gangs and violent crimes.

5:39 Voice over: I read an analysis saying that it's only men from lower socioeconomic backgrounds that learn the cultural importance of violence and therefore display their masculinity this way, do you think this is a correct assumption?

5:53 Baird: It's a really interesting question, fundamentally for me the way that it pans out in terms of violence in terms of performance comes from Judith Butler's interpretation of gender as performance, it really depends on the tools you have at hand. the concept of the main pillars of masculinity quite often they don't really change fundamentally depending on which class bracket you find yourself in. But what you do find is that wealthy men, they might buy a rolex watch, a big house, a fast sports car, they have ways of showing their masculinity which is in their class bracket all the tools that they have to perform that masculinity. so fundamentally masculinity do turn violent but when you have men living in excluded neighbourhoods who have few legal or legitimate ways to become men which are essentially non-violent. So when you look at drug trafficking neighbourhoods, when young kids are growing up in really poor, really marginalised neighbourhoods which are full of gangs and drug traffickers then you know the local male icons are going to gang members and they use violence. we just need to give people tools to find non-violent pathways to manhood.

6:58 voice over: That kind of places a lot of importance on the role of parenting and role models, it doesn't paint a good picture for single mothers not having male role models...

7:06 Baird: Here we have to be really, really careful. It's more about context of inequality exclusion and socioeconomic vulnerability, because all of these elements and you can link this into a neo-Marxist discourse, all of these elements push people to the margins of society and poverty and exclusion penetrates the home and breaks it up and it forces people into crime and violence through necessity because they don't have any other option. So we have to be little bit careful on poor families saying "You need to be a better parent, you need to be a better father" the father's aren't in the home, it's this kind of right-wing morality discourse which actually puts the onus of responsibility of local violence on the most vulnerable people themselves instead of actually having a reflection, of stepping back and saying what we need to do is address inequality, marginalisation. You know, you're in London, why is there so much brutal inequality in London and why are so many people falling of the end of the socioeconomic spectrum. We really need to root the conversation, take it away from the family and away from putting pressure on vulnerable poor young mothers, vulnerable men and we need to root it in the political economy of the city and of the country. If you go anywhere, I've worked across the Caribbean, I've worked in Latin America and everywhere I go, it's the most vulnerable people who are most likely to engage in these types of violence. And it's not because they're genetically worse people, not because they're black or they're brown, of course not, it's because of their contextual oppression, the constraints under which they live. So, what do you do? You have to address hegemonic masculinity, you have to address machismo, you have to address all of these elements but fundamentally within that cocktail you have to really get to social economic exclusion and inequality. And if you don't do that, you're always going to have violence. In every single setting that I've worked, the state and international actors and the political and economic system has completely failed to reduce the socio-economic vulnerability of the most violent populations.

8:56 voice over: So is it only people who have abusive or poverty stricken home lives that will seek to join a gang?

9:03 Baird: that is one element but it's also a little bit more complicated than just saying the most desperate kids join. What you also find is that it's more about a lack of attractive opportunities for these young people. So when I've been working in very violent neighbourhoods, I've found some of the most intelligent, ambitious young men who show

lots of agency, they end up in gangs. And you're thinking, you're so smart, you're so clever, you've got so much capacity what the hell are doing in a gang? And they basically say, "this is the best opportunity in my neighbourhood So sometimes the gang is not just for desperate children but it's also a destination for the most ambitious children. we need to target young men in particular and try and get a handle on what attractive masculinization opportunities would be for these people because if we don't do that, they're always going to end up in the gang.

9:50 voice over: Could you explain a little bit about your opinion on toxic masculinity?

9:55 Baird: I don't mean to diminish it its useful maybe in terms of policy, lobbying, campaigning, but intellectually it's not very new and I don't think it's very rigorous. And also we have to be careful with this discourse that we don't just say, if we go into the most dangerous neighbourhoods in Manchester or London, we just need to deal with masculinity when in fact the violence is produced out of a whole cocktail of issues and I think the most pressing issue is exclusion and inequality and a lack of opportunities.

10:26 Voice over: Dr. Adam Baird. Dr. Baird is currently trying to launch another big project which is going to compare the Caribbean and London in terms of masculinity and crime. A big thanks to Dr. Adam Baird and Nigel Hun. You've been listening to At the knives edge.