

YOUTH AND THE POLICE

SILVIA RAMOS*

**Young people,
violence
and the police**

In Brazil, young people are at the core of the problem of violence: they form the majority of the victims of the 50,000 murders registered each year, and are often the agents of such acts. With one of the highest homicide rates in the world,¹ the country has regions with over 100 homicides per 100,000 young people between 15 and 24 years of age, the case of the states of Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco and Espírito Santo. When we take into account only young black males aged between 20 and 22, this homicide rate rises to more than 140 per 100,000.²

Relations between the young and the police forces are conflictive worldwide. In countries as different as Chile or Nigeria, research data show that young people are the segment with least trust in the police and are the most frequent victims of violent police action.³ In Brazil, research carried out in Rio de Janeiro has indicated that most of the fatal victims resulting from confrontations with the police were aged between 15 and 24 years old, and that the majority were black.⁴ The 2001 survey on *Young People in Rio*, with eight hundred individuals between 15 and 24 years of age interviewed, showed that the violent actions most feared by young men are stray bullets (31.1%), assaults (31.6%) and police violence (16.8%).⁵ Another piece of research carried out in Rio de Janeiro in 1999 interviewed 1,220 young people aged 14 to 20 and reached the conclusion that there exists a high degree of fear and mistrust towards the police, regardless of social class and place of residence, as well as a great number of experiences involving disrespect, humiliation, threats and extortion on the part of policemen. On a scale of zero to ten, the police received a grade of 3 from young people from the upper middle class and 3.5 from lower-class young people, ranking as the second worst evaluated institution (political parties came first).⁶

A quantitative survey of the *Carioca* population, carried out in 2003 on 2,250 individuals interviewed between 15 and 65 years of age, showed that of all the groups under consideration, the young segment expressed the worst judgment of the police: more than half of those interviewed under 30 years old claimed to have little or no trust in the police; among the adolescents (15 to 19 years old), the average grade given to the Military Police (MP) was the lowest and the number of zero grades was far higher than in other age brackets. In this and in other young segments were registered the highest frequencies of negative evaluation of the police as far as respect for the



* Coordinator of the Area of Minorities, Social Movements and Citizenship of the CESeC; coordinator of the Youth and the Police project.

citizen, violence, corruption and racism are concerned, as well as the lowest percentages of positive evaluations as regards the utility and efficacy of police checks. The same research pointed out that young people are disproportionately more accosted at police checks walking in the street, and that when they are stopped, they are more frisked than people of any other age bracket. In focal groups and interviews, young people from different social classes identified being frisked by the police as a humiliating procedure often associated with experiences of violence or threat. In general, young slum-dwellers saw themselves as potential victims of police violence, while young people from the middle class felt they were the preferred victims of police extortion. All the data of the quantitative and qualitative research indicated that the combination of age, color and area of residence made young black men who live in slums or poor neighborhoods not only frequent victims of bad treatment from policemen but also those who harbor feelings of fear and rancor towards the police. Among other indications, the study recommended “opening channels of direct dialogue between the police and youth, especially, but not only, those of poor communities, with a broad base of themes addressed not only to reducing the mutual ‘Satanization’ and discriminatory practices on the part of the police but also to increasing young people’s knowledge of the work of the police and the difficulties it entails.”⁷

Youth and the Police project – background and stages

The AfroReggae Cultural Group was founded in the Vigário Geral slum in 1993, the same year as the slaughter that ended the lives of 21 innocent residents in an illegal police operation. In 2002 the AfroReggae Band sought out the CEsSeC to help it produce a video-clip for the song “Tô Bolado” (*Dead scared*, which tells the story of the Vigário Geral massacre), in which successive images of police violence appeared. The clip was a strong denunciation of police violence. In the same year, one of the founders of the group, percussionist Paulo Nogueira, was shot in the foot by a rifle in a police operation commanded by the BOPE (Special Operations Battalion of the Rio de Janeiro MP) in Vigário Geral. Almost all the young people associated with the AfroReggae had experienced situations of violence, corruption and humiliation on the part of policemen, compounding a vast repertoire of hate and resentment that constituted a powerful “anti-police” culture within the group. In this specific matter, the AfroReggae was no different from thousands of groups of young people from the slums and city peripheries spread throughout Brazil, based on the hip-hop culture or involved in cultural and art projects. The main characteristics common to these groups are denunciation of violence, exclusion and racism, on one hand, and the positive affirmation of the young black resident of the slums and urban periphery on the other.⁸

Surprisingly, in late 2002 the coordinators of AfroReggae visited the Center of Studies on Security and Citizenship of the Candido Mendes University to announce that they would like to prepare a project with the Police, rather than *against* the Police, as might be expected. A project involving cultural invasions of the Battalions was presented to the Ford Foundation, which gave its immediate approval.⁹ The negotiations with the Rio de Janeiro Military Police met with frustration following

months of attempts and it was impossible to develop the proposal in the state where the AfroReggae and the CESeC were founded. In 2004, the Secretariat for Social Defense and the Military Police of Minas Gerais invited AfroReggae and the CESeC to develop the project in the Battalions of Belo Horizonte.¹⁰

The project was first developed as a four-stage pilot aimed at establishing a dialogue between the culture of the young and police culture, bridging the gap between these two groups through music and art. Workshops were held on percussion, theater, graffiti art, dancing and shows inside the two Battalions in Belo Horizonte. About 70 policemen from each unit took part (each Battalion has a force of approximately 800 police agents). The instructors in the *workshops* were young people from the AfroReggae, including the musician shot by the police in 2002 and the percussionist of the band who had an ear-drum perforated in a police check. The surprising results of the first four weeks (one week in each month) proved the importance and the potential of an original instrument for integrating the police with society. At this first stage, the great impact of the actions inside the barracks and the media proved that it was possible to valorize human, play-oriented and artistic aspects of policemen – with the same methodology used by AfroReggae on the young people in the slums – at the same time that the policemen's prejudices towards the slum-dwellers, especially the young, waned.¹¹

In 2005, the MP of Minas Gerais assessed the results of the actions held in the first year as being so positive that they decided to lend continuity to the partnership and invited AfroReggae and the CESeC to train policemen, who began to work on a permanent basis as instructors in percussion, graffiti art, street basketball, street dancing and theater. Training was given to 40 police agents from the five battalions in the city of Belo Horizonte, who then began to offer workshops to young slum-dwellers, participants in the Fica Vivo (*Stay Alive*) program and public schools located in slum areas. The program was developed along these lines throughout 2005.

In April of 2006, a new agreement was signed with the government of Minas to continue the Youth and the Police project. The objective of the Secretariat for Social Defense and the Command of Policing the Capital (CPC) of the PMMG was now to create mechanisms to institutionalize the program, as had been done with PROERD (the Educational Program to Resist Drugs and Violence developed by several MPs in Brazil, based on the presence of policemen in primary schools). Since early 2006, for two weeks each month a permanent group of 20 policemen dedicate themselves to working with young people from the slums in public schools and make joint presentations (young people and policemen) of percussion, theater, dancing, graffiti art and basketball at public events and inside police premises. Furthermore, a band of another 20 policemen trained by AfroReggae gives periodical presentations at public events with the participation of young people trained by policemen.

Part of the 2004 pilot project consisted of producing the documentary “Minas Police”, which was directed by an experienced professional, Estevão Ciavatta. In January 2006, following the exhibition of the film in the general barracks of the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro, the State Secretary for Security and the commander of the Military Police, recognizing the positive effects of the proposal

held in Belo Horizonte, asked AfroReggae and the CESeC to introduce it to the battalions in Rio.

An initial dialogue was struck up in 2006 to verify the feasibility and format that would best fit the local reality. After a meeting in the General Barracks in Rio, the AfroReggae band presented themselves together with the “190” band of the Military Police at public events, including television programs.¹² The documentary has been exhibited in several places throughout the country, including a session convoked by the General Commander of Military Police of Santa Catarina for 500 cadets and officers of that state.

Constructive elements of the project

Among the significant aspects of the experience, if compared with the traditional forms of sensitizing police forces (courses and talks on human rights), the following key elements are worth emphasizing:

1. The experience does not only mobilize reason. It mobilizes the emotions and uses body language by means of workshops in music, theater, graffiti art and so on. One has to realize that the traditionally defensive position of police-corporation culture complicates most attempts to teach human rights to police agents based on critical and often accusatory arguments.
2. The essence of the intervention is not only “to change the policeman” by teaching him intellectually something that he is reluctant to assimilate, but rather to propose experiences that are new and uncommon both to policemen and the young people who for the very first time are experiencing closeness with police agents, whether inside a police battalion, a slum or a school. In this sense, the experience stands in strong contrast with international models, some of which have been applied in Brazil, such as Youth Crime Watch (Miami, USA) and Drug Abuse Resistance Education (Los Angeles, USA), or Cops & Kids (Canada) and PAL (Police Athletic Leagues, New York, USA), where the main objective of the initiative is to change the young person in order to steer him away from crime. The Youth and the Police project sets out from the notion that the problem is relational, not just on the part of the young person, nor just on the part of the police.
3. The experience is a first-person thing, without any intermediaries: the young slum-dwellers themselves in direct contact with police agents, teaching (in the first phase in 2004) and learning (as of 2005 and 2006) percussion, dancing, graffiti art and so on, elements that are part of the culture of the young slum-dweller. The policemen have contact with young people who dress, talk and above all have the “attitude” of the young men and women from the slums. The latter, on the other hand, live a new experience that mobilizes and questions their own stereotypes in respect to the police. The essential thing lies in the exchange, and this takes place directly between policemen and young people (without any human-rights teachers or commanders) and in the sphere of aesthetics, the body and the experience of creating a new “image and attitude” of the Police.

4. The policemen and the young people, set up as antagonistic groups, soon discover that they share more identities than they supposed. It is not just the frequently common origin that comes to the fore when cultural closeness is established (the slum, black roots, pride, the beat of reggae music), but also the experience of discrimination as groups stigmatized by society (as “young slum-dwellers” on one hand and “police” on the other). Once ties have been established, the two groups surprise one another mutually and realize that society sees them as protagonists in a new moment.

5. Sound and image are essential. The objective of the project is to question the image that society and youth have of the police and the image that the police and society have of the young blacks who live in the slums. The process is made easier by the imagetic force of the two groups: the police “is image”: the uniform, the arm, the military aesthetic, the identified vehicle. AfroReggae is in turn “the image of the young people from the slum”, their aesthetic, their language, their perceptions and anguishes. One of the most impacting effects of the project is to watch policemen and young people seeing themselves being seen in strange “new scenery”, playing together in final workshops at the end of each stage of the project.¹³

6. Coverage by the media is equally essential. Reporting in newspapers, radio stations and television channels invariably leads to debates, laughter and emotions. All of this helps to create a new division between “us” and “them”: we the participants in the Youth and the Police project, and they – society and the media, seeing a police agent in a setting to which we are not accustomed. This quickly replaced the first we/they (we, the policemen; they, the young people from the slums).

7. The rounds of conversation or games of truth are also essential. Once the first contacts have been mediated by the instruments of percussion, the tin of spray, the ball or music, policemen and young people sit down in a circle on the floor for a first candid chat about “all you ever wanted to know about the Police”. These are generally quite tense conversations about the experiences of the young people with the police and the experiences of the policemen during their rounds inside the slums. The questions and complaints invariably start with the theme of police checks. These “hassle-checks” constitute a repeated experience that is often seen as humiliating by young people of different ages. Once again, direct and non-mediated relations seem to spell a formula that allows a “truth and reconciliation” type of therapeutic logic to emerge. Recognizing the existence of bias based on race, class and geography in police practices is the first step towards de-obstructing communication. Once the “truth” has been recognized, the possibility of “reconciliation” is invariably opened.

Among the problems and limitations of the project are its difficult replicability by other cultural groups in other states. The emotional and symbolic charge incorporated in AfroReggae (born in the context of a police slaughter) is responsible for an important part of the impact produced in the first approaches to the police. The capacity to permanently mobilize the media and create the speculative logic essential to the project is also difficult for local cultural groups to reproduce in other states. A similar observation could be made with regard to the Military Police of Minas Gerais

and the security policies in that state, these being more advanced than the majority of Brazilian policies in terms of adopting mechanisms to modernize and set up social partnerships.

Another difficult problem to be solved concerns police work schedules. For a policeman to participate in a workshop inside a battalion, for one week he practically has to ignore his work timetable. When this policeman is trained and begins to work as an instructor in workshops for young people in slums and schools, he also begins to be exempt from the normal work shifts for long periods. The solution of removing this policeman definitively from his street activities, thereby creating a sort of policeman “specialized” in young people,³⁴ does not seem to be the best, considering the importance of the role of this policeman vis-à-vis his colleagues as a multiplier of the ideas of the project, inside the barracks and on his rounds. Besides this, the project calls for the firm and determined support of the superior officers. The beginning is always difficult and implanting unorthodox methods to bring police and society close together – admitting young people from the poor communities inside the battalions or introducing policemen as instructors in percussion, dancing, basketball and graffiti art in slums and schools – always arouses initial resistance. Experience is showing that the resistance is soon overcome by those who participate directly in the actions, with the help of the magic of music and art, in a process that I call “drum pedagogy”.

Another problem created with the success of the project and especially because of its visibility in the mass communication media, is the resistance of important sectors of the police. This is particularly more accentuated among policemen who do not participate in the project directly and who learn of its existence through the television, radio or newspapers. As we shall see below, if the actions of the project and the impact it provokes meet the approval of the wide majority of young people in the regions where it has been tested and of a significant portion of the police, the initial evaluations indicate that a non-negligible contingent of officers and policemen consider that “it is not the role of the Police to appear on the television playing drums”. In other words, this is a daring project that is designed precisely to change traditional images of the Police. To the extent that the objectives are satisfied, part of the opposition to such changes also tends to become more explicit.



First quantitative evaluations Since 2004, the actions of the Youth and the Police project in Minas Gerais have been widely documented in photography (1,500 photos can be found on file);¹⁵ on film (80 hours of records of the 2004 pilot and a 50-minute film, the documentary *Police Mineira [Minas Police]*)¹⁶ and approximately 30 hours of interviews and focal groups with young people of AfroReggae, policemen of two battalions in the capital city and young people from slums in Belo Horizonte.

In 2005 and 2006, two different quantitative instruments were applied and focal groups organized, as follows: a) in 2005, four focal groups with policemen who participated directly in the project and with policemen who did not participate in the project were organized in two battalions in Minas; b) a *survey* was answered by policemen from both MP battalions; c) in 2006, a *survey* was answered by adolescents from two schools on the outskirts of Belo Horizonte where the Youth and the Police project was developed. The process of monitoring and evaluating the experience is still underway and its most significant part is to develop its long-term effects, which is still being done. Presented below are the preliminary results of the impact of the project on the two sectors of the public involved, policemen and young people.

a) Impact of the actions on the Police

In addition to focal groups and interviews, a quantitative instrument was used to evaluate how well the policemen from two Battalions knew the project, to identify their perception of the stereotypes in relation to young slum-dwellers and the actual police, and to assess the degree of support for the Youth and the Police project. The *survey* was conducted in August 2005, that is to say before the new stage of the project started (when policemen were trained to work with young people in slum areas and schools). So the result measures only the impact of the pilot stage developed in 2004, when young people of AfroReggae held workshops inside the battalions and when a group of policemen appeared in a very popular nationwide television program together with the AfroReggae band. The questionnaires were answered by 192 policemen (99 from one battalion and 93 from another).¹⁷ The respondents included both policemen who had participated directly in the project (13.5% had taken part in the workshops) and some who had no contact with the project but who had heard of its existence (76.1%). Only 10.4% did not know the project existed. As regards the media, 51.6% of the policemen had seen references to the project on the television, 16.1% on the radio, and 30.2% in the newspapers. The main source of reference to the project were comments by other policemen (67.7%), indicating that even policemen who took no part in the workshops spoke at some moment with their colleagues about the activities going on inside the battalion.¹⁸ Only 28.6% of the policemen affirmed having received official information about the project in instructions, courses or through communication from their hierarchical superiors. This result indicated the need to intensify such communications.

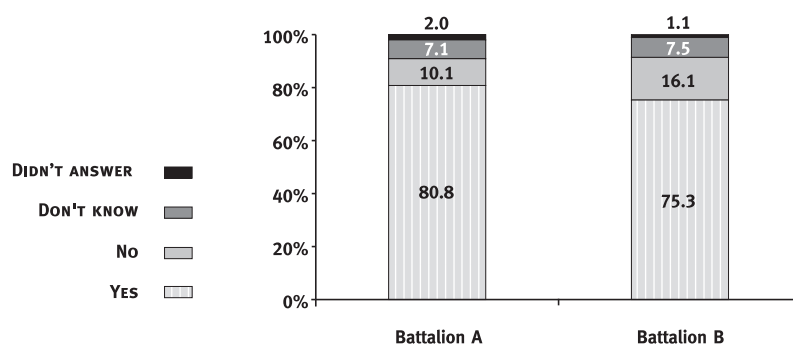
When asked whether the MP should develop initiatives to bring the police closer to society, the result was surprisingly high: 89.6% answered yes. This result is probably due to the fact that the PMMG has for many years engaged in partnerships with research centers and other civil-society

organizations (including security councils), which resulted in a very frequent discourse in the statements of policemen of all ranks: “the police is changing, it has to be brought closer to society”. The same can be said in relation to 86.5% of the policemen finding that “the young people who live in slum communities have a prejudiced image of the police”. In a smaller but still very expressive proportion, 65.6% (this percentage reached 74.2% in one of the battalions) find that “policemen have a prejudiced image of young slum-dwellers”. Another surprise is that 78.1% of the policemen (80.8% in one of the battalions) believe that “cultural workshops for music, sport and art favor integration between the police and the community” (**graph 1**). The objectives of the project are clear for most of the policemen. In answer to an open question, 72.3% stated that the objectives are to approximate police and community, change the image of the police, or change the citizens’ view of the police.

Only 6.3% answered that the objectives are to keep young people away from crime or to obtain information on criminals, and 21.4% failed to answer the question or else stated that they did not know. When asked whether the Youth and the Police project helps to integrate police and community, 71.7% in one of the battalions and 58.1% in another responded yes, as shown in **graph 2**. It is interesting to note that the proportion of indecisive policemen who answered “don’t know” whether the project helps integration or not is quite high (17.2% in one battalion and 16.2% in another), indicating that it is still too early to form definitive opinions. Obviously, among the policemen who participated directly in the activities of the Youth and Police project, the percentage of approval as an instrument of integration with the community is substantially high (80%). In an endeavor to identify the main problems of the project, we discovered that 5.2% felt that it ridiculed the police, 4.2% considered that the project caused problems in the work timetable and 3.1% claimed that carrying out assistential work in slums is not the role of the police. These arguments also arose in the focal groups and interviews and seem to sum up the main arguments of those policemen who are “against” the project or who have some “doubts” about it.

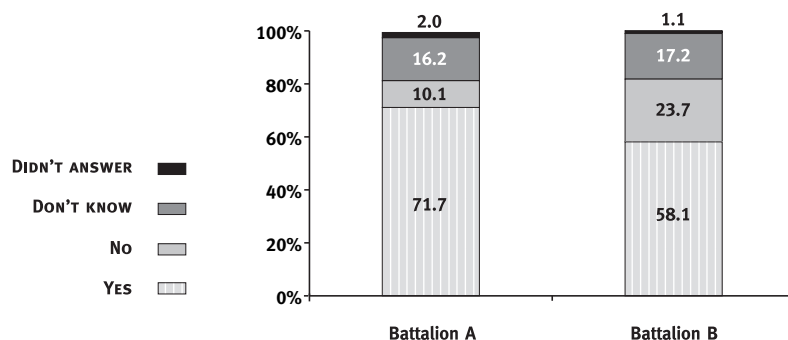
Graph 1

**DO CULTURAL WORKSHOPS FOR MUSIC, SPORT AND ART
FAVOR POLICE-COMMUNITY INTEGRATION?**



Graph 2

**IN YOUR OPINION, HAS THE YOUTH AND THE POLICE PROJECT
HELPED TO INTEGRATE THE POLICE AND THE COMMUNITY?**



b) Impact of the actions on young people

As of 2005, 20 policemen trained as instructors in percussion, theater, graffiti art, street dancing and basketball began to work with young people from slums in nuclei of the Fica Vivo (*Stay Alive*) project and in a municipal school in Belo Horizonte located between two slums, the Oswaldo Cruz Municipal School (EMOC).¹⁹ In 2006, the project has developed at the EMOC and in a different school each month. The actions are carried out according to a scheme of daily workshops for one week, with a final workshop open to the public to present the results of each workshop. These closing events are attended by the other pupils of the school, as well as the families and policemen responsible for making the rounds in the area, besides the media.

In two schools, evaluation surveys were held with the young participants at the end of the week's activities. The questionnaire was answered by 245 young people (123 from one of the schools and 122 from another). In one of the schools (a secondary school), 73.9% of the students belonged to the age bracket from 14 to 17 years old. In the other school, 53.3% of the young people were aged 12 to 13 and only 26.2% from 14 to 15, being just a primary school. The participation of boys was 55%, with 45% of girls, without any important differences per school. The most popular workshop was percussion, with 35% of participants (86 young people from among the 245 who answered the questionnaire), followed by the workshop on graffiti art (22%), basketball (17%), street dancing (15%) and theater (11%).²⁰

In answer to the question "Did your image of the police change after the project?", 80.8% said yes, with this percentage reaching 85.5% in one of the schools (**graph 3**). In answer to the question on what had changed in their image of the police, many young people used words to define "before" and "after". In open answers, the expression "insolent bastard" was used 17 times to describe impressions about the police. The words "hateful" and "violent" appeared 6 times each. "Ignorant", "gross", "tyrants", "cowards" and "arrogant" also appeared to an expressive degree, in a surprising

variation of strong and sincere adjectives to describe earlier opinions about the “new friends” (Table 1). The repetition of the expression “insolent bastards”, according to an interview with the principal of one of the schools, conveys the idea of abuse that is not physical but rather moral, related to humiliation and scorn. The words most used to describe the new view of the police were “respect” and “cool”. When asked about what had changed in their opinion of the police, 64.8% mentioned the discovery of “a good side” to policemen. Only 7.6% mentioned the presence of policemen in the school to reduce violence.

Graph 3

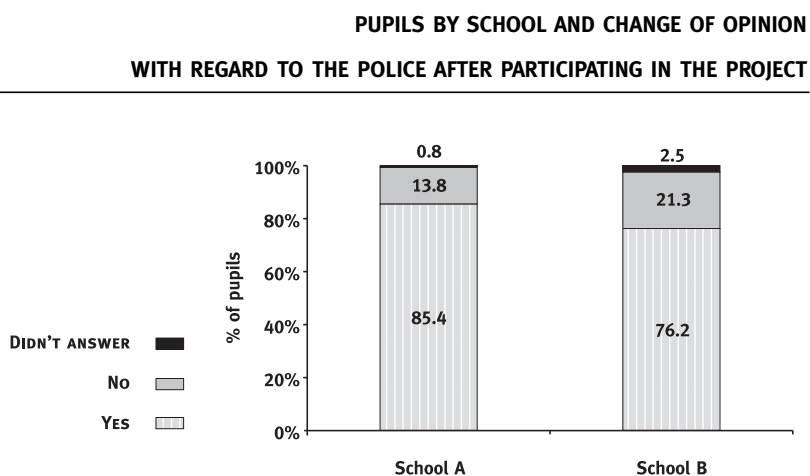


Table 1

WORDS MOST USED BY THE YOUNG PEOPLE CONCERNING THE POLICE

OPINIONS ON THE POLICE - BEFORE	TOTAL	OPINIONS ON THE POLICE - AFTER	TOTAL
INSOLENT BASTARDS	17	COOL	11
HATEFUL	6	RESPECT	10
VIOLENT	6	FRIENDLY	5
A NUISANCE	5	HUMAN BEINGS	4
GROSS /IGNORANT	5	GOOD FOLK	3
BARBARIANS, EXECUTIONERS, TYRANTS	4	POLITE	3
FRIGHTENING	3	NORMAL PEOPLE	2
COWARDS	2	FUNNY	2
ARROGANT	2	GOOD BLOOD	2
DISRESPECTFUL	2	BEGINNING TO LIKE THEM	2

Preliminary conclusions and outlook Preliminary evaluations indicate that the project causes a strong positive impact on changing the image of the police, both among young slum-dwellers who have direct contact with policemen and the population at large, when policemen appear in cultural activities in the media. Nevertheless, the impact produced among the police themselves is more moderate. Even though most of the policemen interviewed enthusiastically support the project, an important portion demonstrates mistrust and concern precisely about what the project can generate with regard to their image.

The second phase of the Youth and the Police project – begun in August 2005 – has not yet had its effects tested. The new strategy for developing actions (policemen going to work as instructors of young people in slums) was the result of the understanding between the MP commands and the Secretariat for Social Defense that the project had acquired a lot of visibility, but little legitimacy within the corporation. The CPC (Command of Policing the Capital) likewise insists that the project should be in harmony with the spirit of all MP actions: planning and measuring the results. In other words, the feeling is that the project has to be developed by seeking long-term results rather than just immediate impacts. The second round of *surveys* will take place in the second half of 2006. Besides repeating the questions posed in 2005, an attempt will be made to verify how much policemen from other battalions know about the project.

If the instruments tested in this project (direct dialogue between young people and use of culture and art as the mediating elements of these encounters) have demonstrated enormous potential to change young people's images of the police, it is necessary to await and accompany the internal results culled by the police in respect to the ability of such instruments to bring about changes in the images that policemen have of the young people who live in the urban periphery.

On the national level, even though the impact has proved to be positive among officers of several states, obviously there are enormous obstacles to be overcome. The first of these is to persuade authorities and Police commanders to recognize that the barriers between young people and policemen affect the whole of society. The second is to convince them that initiatives in which young people enjoy direct, first-person encounters with policemen are powerful instruments for creating a more modern and more democratic police force.

In May of 2006, the CESeC started a research project called Youth and the Police. Conceived within the sphere of the Altus Aliança Global (www.altus.org), the project was initially designed to be developed in four cities (Lagos, Santiago do Chile, New York and Rio). With the support of the Dutch agency CORDAID, the CESeC began the research in Brazil before the other centers.

Part of the research will be supported by FINEP in an initiative to be developed in partnership with the Laboratory for Analysis of Violence at UERJ (Rio de Janeiro State University). The objective of the investigation is to identify and create standards for the production of indicators capable of monitoring and evaluating the relation between young people and police forces in different cities and at different periods. This is an undertaking to create a field of interest that will gather together researchers in

the area of public security, policemen, scholars of the theme of youth and specifically groups of young people. The project provides for the use of quantitative instruments such as population, *expert and administrative*-data surveys, like the indicators produced by the police forces themselves.

In the twenty years since the process of transition from the military dictatorship began in Brazil (1985), the sector that has made least progress as regards modernization and democratization is criminal justice, and police institutions in particular.²¹ The democratic Constitution of 1988, which changed important aspects of social policies, left police institutions intact. Only in the second half of the 90s were the first systematic efforts registered to draw up public security policies based on a modern perspective identified with a blend of efficiency and respect for civil rights. Up to then, the theme was relegated by most governments to the corporate spheres of the police forces themselves. The silence in respect to the escalation of lethal violence among poor young people was also predominant among wide sectors of the intelligentsia, in the media and even among non-governmental organizations during the 80s and part of the 90s. In the academic and university context, with rare exceptions, research centers dedicated to the themes of violence within the scope of public security are relatively recent. Social movements that helped to change the face of Brazil in this broad period of democratization, such as the women's movement, the black movement and the homosexual movement, had and still have scant participation in influencing public-security policies, especially when compared with their capacity to interfere in health agendas – as is the case of Aids, women's health, psychiatric reform and so on – where they were decisive forces.²²

In this sense, it is emblematic that the first experience of national impact in the last few years, based on the idea of influencing the police forces and working directly with them, started with an organization of young people from the slums, a group that in some aspects expresses the big novelty that arose in the sphere of social movements over the past ten years, the “new mediators”. Also worth mentioning is the fact that this process is being carried out in partnership with a university research center, the CESeC, and that it has been adopted as public policy in the scope of a state government. These are possibly the most positive and innovative aspects produced by the Youth and the Police experience, and may be important indications that the scenario of distancing and indifference with regard to the police forces and security policies will undergo some changes in the next few years ■

**Statements
of young people
and AFROREGGAE
leaders**

*“When I saw myself there, inside the wolves’ den,
with those who were my oppressors,
and me their teacher, with all due respect... man, that was too much.”*

LG, VOCALIST OF THE AFROREGGAE BAND



*“I thought the police were no use, very violent
and if I could I’d kill all of them that come breaking into
the houses and beating up anyone who stands in their way.
Now I’ve started to think that they are not all like that
and that being a policeman isn’t easy.”*

PUPIL OF THE OSWALDO CRUZ MUNICIPAL SCHOOL,

BELO HORIZONTE, SLUM-DWELLER, 2006.

*“The difficult thing is to get over the bad feeling about the police.
But if you think about changing, if you believe that you have changed,
then you understand that the police can change too.”*

SAMUKA, MUSICIAN AND SOCIAL AGENT

*“Some days ago I said: I don’t like the police, I’m angry, I don’t trust them.
Now I’ve learned that those that are putting terror on the streets,
making the population afraid and distrustful of the police,
aren’t policemen, they’re animals. Now I know good policemen.”*

PUPIL OF THE OSWALDO CRUZ MUNICIPAL SCHOOL,

BELO HORIZONTE, SLUM-DWELLER, 2006.

*“What we felt about the police, all those bad memories,
it was all a big barrier, not only professional, personal too.
I confess that at first I had to break my own taboos.
Then, when I saw what had saved our lives
(the percussion instruments) in such a happy way,
in the hands of those policemen, them playing with absolute joy,
thrilled, laughing, dancing ... I was so moved.”*

LG, VOCALIST OF THE AFRO REGGAE BAND AND

INSTRUCTOR IN THE WORKSHOPS OF THE YOUTH AND THE POLICE PROJECT



*“We got tired of denouncing, of just hitting on the police.
So we decided to do something different.
After three years, I think that this project can be summed up like this:
“there’s a light at the end of the tunnel.”*

JOSÉ JUNIOR, COORDINATOR OF THE AFROREGGAE CULTURAL GROUP IN AN INTERVIEW

ON THE PROGRAM PAINEL, GLOBO NEWS, FEBRUARY 2006.

**Statements
by policemen**

*“I was a monster. We raided the slum,
humiliated the people, I thought it was cool to be violent.
This project has changed my life.
Now the police is changing,
the new ones already learn human rights in the police course.”*

CORPORAL OF THE PMMG (MOBILE TACTICS),

IN A “ROUND OF CONVERSATION” WITH YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE TAQUARIL SLUM, 2005.

*“You’ve got to be humble to understand that when Rappa,
the Racionais and AfroReggae beat on us, singing, for example,
“all Paddywagons look a bit like slave ships”, they aren’t wrong ...
but when you begin to talk their language, with respect, then that changes.”*

CAPTAIN OF THE 22nd. BPM – PMMG

*“This is working to humanize policemen, to bring society closer,
sending us a teacher, a young guy from the slums.
And they are seeing another side to the policeman:
us shouting, singing, dancing ...
it must be different for them as well”*

SERGEANT OF THE 34th BPM – BELO HORIZONTE, PMMG.

Notes

1. 28.5 homicides per one hundred thousand inhabitants, according to data of the Information System on Mortality of the Integrated Health System (SIM – DATASUS) in 2003.
2. Soares, Gláucio Ary Dillon & Borges, Doriam. *A cor da morte*. Revista Ciência Hoje, October 2004.
3. A national research conducted by the Ministry of the Interior of Chile in 2003 revealed that only 33.9% of young people between 16 and 25 years of age felt that the police respects personal rights, in contrast with the average opinion of the population, 50% of whom consider the police “good” or “very good”. In Lagos, Nigeria, the rate of young people detained by the police is significantly high, and research on victimization carried out in 2004 revealed that young people are also almost twice more the victims of robbery and bodily injury than the average population. Cf. data of the project “Repairing Youth and Police Relations”, presented by Altus Aliança Global (www.altus.org).
4. Ignacio Cano. *O uso da força letal pela polícia no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Iser, 1997.
5. Novaes Regina e Mello, Cecília. *Jovens do Rio*. Rio de Janeiro: Iser, 2002.
6. Minayo, Maria Cecília de Souza et. al. *Fala galera: Juventude, violência e cidadania na cidade do Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 1999.
7. Ramos, Sílvia e Musumeci, Leonarda. *Elementos suspeito: abordagem policial e estereótipos na cidade do Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2005.
8. On the characteristics of the young people of AfroReggae as “new mediators”, see Ramos, Sílvia. Brazilian responses to violence and new forms of mediation: the case of the Grupo Cultural AfroReggae and the experience of the project “Youth and the Police”. *Ciência e Saúde Coletiva*, 11 (2), 2006.
9. Mention should be made of the decisive role played by Elizabeth Leeds in supporting not only this project but several innovative research projects in Brazil in the field of public security. Head of the Governance and Civil Society program of the Ford Foundation in Brazil between 1997 and 2003, Leeds perceived the importance of the theme for Brazilian democracy and stimulated developing a new perspective with regard to the relation between police and society.
10. Luis Flávio Saporì, sub-Secretary for Social Defense of Minas Gerais, has coordinated since 2003 the implantation of a set of innovative programs in public security, the results of which became evident as of 2006, with the consistent decrease in homicides and other violent crimes in Belo Horizonte. Among the most important programs, mention should be made of Fica Vivo (*Stay Alive* – a cultural and social program focusing on young slum-dwellers), GPAR (Specialized Risk-Area Group of community policing in slums), IGESP (Integration and Management in Public Security, inspired by CompStat in New York, a program to monitor reduction in criminality by areas, gathering together Civil and Military Police forces and other organs of the criminal justice system).
11. Details of the figures involved and spending in this stage of 2004 can be found in the project report of November 2004 available at <http://www.ucamcesec.com.br>.
12. It is important to acknowledge the symbolic force of these public appearances, since there was strong skepticism (especially within the Rio police) with regard to the “courage” of the young people associated with AfroReggae in appearing publicly playing together with policemen who belonged to the same force that in the past victimized – and often still victimizes – the slum populations.
13. The closing workshops are a constitutive part of the methodology used by AfroReggae: at the end of a week working together, “instructors” and “pupils” present themselves to other people who did not participate in the workshops. When this happens inside the battalions, the presentations are for other policemen, commanders and their families. When they take place in the slums or schools, the presentation is for other pupils, teachers, relatives and the policemen who patrol the area. The media are always invited and are often present.
14. As occurs, for example, with policemen who work in programs with children such as PROERD (Program to Prevent the Use of Drugs and Violence), which is quite common in military police forces in Brazil. In such cases, the police are removed from their normal duties and begin to work exclusively in the classrooms. Invariably, these policemen are then seen by their colleagues as being “less a policeman” and more a social worker.
15. Part of this file is available in the sites of the CESeC (<http://www.ucamcesec.com.br>) and AfroReggae (<http://www.afroreggae.org.br>).
16. Produced by Pindorama Filmes.
17. The sample was composed of 12% of the contingent of each battalion, per rank group, namely: major/captain/lieutenant; sub-lieutenant /sergeant; corporal/soldier. No probabilistic technique was used, but the questionnaires were distributed homogeneously among the battalion companies and sectors.
18. It should be made clear that the police battalions in Belo Horizonte are made up of companies, which are organized in separate physical spaces, and it is common for a policeman to appear only rarely at the battalion headquarters.
19. EMOC, with 1,535 pupils in the primary and secondary grades, is situated between the Morro das Pedras and Ventosa slum areas. More than 90% of the pupils come from these communities. The school symbolizes the capacity to overcome problems in the context of integrated and planned actions, with the participation of pupils and the community: in 2003, the school suffered its worst crisis, with the teachers’ room being painted by graffiti vandals. The principal, Luciana Maria Oliveira, has given talks on the process

of restoring relations of trust and identifies the Youth and the Police project as a link between the various elements of this process. A group of 30 young people from EMOC has appeared at public events with the Youth and the Police Band of the Military Police.

20. One of the characteristics of participation in the workshops, identified in interviews with school principals, is the low dropout rate. In the EMOC school the percussion workshop has grown so popular that the policemen-instructors opened two classes each week, totaling 70 pupils a week. It is interesting to observe the attraction that the graffiti-art workshops exert when they are announced. Considering the constant combat in the schools against "graffiti vandals", it is odd that cans of spray are offered, that graffiti teachers are in the school during the week and that policemen teach graffiti art.

21. For an in-depth discussion on the theme, see Leeds, Elizabeth. Rio de Janeiro. In Koonings K & Dirk K (org.). *Fractured Cities: Social Exclusion, Urban Violence and Contested Spaces in Latin America*. Verso, London, in the press.

22. One exception to the omission of agendas in the field of public security by the social movements was the struggle of the women's movement for Women's Police Stations in the late 70s and during the 80s. For a discussion of the role of the social movements in the field of health and security, see Ramos, Silvia. O papel das ONGs na construção de políticas de saúde: a Aids, a saúde da mulher e a saúde mental. *Ciência e Saúde Coletiva* 9 (4), 2004.

**CENTER FOR STUDIES ON PUBLIC SECURITY AND CITIZENSHIP
VEICE-PRESIDENCIE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS
UNIVERSITY CANDIDO MENDES**

Rua da Assembléia, 10, sala 810 - Centro - RJ - CEP: 20011-901 - Telefax: (21)2531-2033
email: cesec@candidomendes.edu.br - www.ucamcesec.com.br

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Anna Amendola
www.nitadesign.com.br

PHOTOS
Ierê Ferreira

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT



FUNDAÇÃO FORD

**SUPPORT FOR
PUBLICATION**



CONSULADO BRITÂNICO
RIO DE JANEIRO

**SUPPORT FOR
THE PUBLICATION
IN ENGLISH**



**SUPPORT FOR THE
YOUTH AND THE POLICE
INDEX PROJECT**

