



Crime rising in Trini communities abroad

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For years now, concerns have been growing as regards the crime rate in Trinidad and Tobago. Now, concerns are being raised about growing crime in the Trinidadian community in the United States (US).

In September, officials at Trinidad and Tobago consulate in the US told the Sunday Express that they are alarmed over the frequency and the numbers of Trinidadians who were being picked up by law enforcement officers, all over the US, for various crimes.

"Every day the police sends over the numbers and they are increasing when compared to a few years back," one official said.

Another said the deportation figures for Trinidad have been soaring because of the increase in crime.

But the consulate officials are not the only ones expressing concern over the crime increase in the T&T community in the US.

Trinidadians living in New York said they too are bothered by the increase in crimes they are hearing about and seeing within the Trinidadian community.

Nina, giving one of the many aliases she goes by, is a Trinidadian living illegally in the US who not only knows about the immigration racket going on within the Caribbean communities but has had first hand experience with some of the schemes that people use to become legal there.

Sitting comfortably on a couch in the well furnished apartment of one of her US citizen friends in New York on a chilly Saturday afternoon Nina said:

A lot of the crime taking place within the Trinidadian community is related to immigration fraud and the authorities here are picking up on it more than before and we are looking bad because of it. This is probably impacting on people getting visas back home.

Nina, who arrived in the US ten years ago on a non-immigrant visa (NIV), and has lived in New York since then, said there was a time when she interacted with the people from her homeland but recently she said she has opted to stay away from the Trinidadian community because of the crime.

"Just last year an entire family from Trinidad was arrested for immigration fraud. The guy, who was living here legally, was working in US immigration but was doing up paper work for undocumented people.

"His sister was the one on the outside getting the people to pay the money, between US\$15,000 and US\$20,000 for the papers. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had been tracking him for at least five years but he was doing that for years before they caught up with him and arrested him right here in New York," she said.

She said five Trinidadian men were arrested along with the man's sister, the latter owning about six houses which were all seized by the US government after the arrests.

As to how she got to the US, Nina she said nothing she took with her to the Port of Spain US embassy more than 10 years ago was legitimate.

"Not my job letter, because I never worked, my bank statement came from the bank but it was just an estimate of how much we, my husband and I, would be able to withdraw from the account. We didn't have any money in there. But we had an inside contact at the bank who gave us the statement the day before we went to the interview," she said.

The only thing that was legitimate was the fact that her husband had a good job, she said.

And although she used an NIV to gain access to the US, she said there are many different ways to get into the US and people know that.

"I know a girl who came to the US through Canada. She travelled to Canada and crossed the border as a stowaway and entered the US. She bought a ticket here and went to Trinidad and she now has her papers."

"She's living here legally now, so within this little community there is a lot of racket and many of these people are making things bad for other people.

"Right now there is another Trinidadian who was held earlier this year, making three years in Federal jail because of fraud.

Nina said there are people she once called friends who have had their visas revoked after they had children in the US.

"When they asked this woman what was her longest stay in the US, she told them one month but that wasn't true. She stayed and had her two kids and then she got their passports before she went back to Trinidad."

She left the US about three years ago but she hasn't been able to return since then.

Nina said after trying other ways to become legal, she has now filed her paper work through legal avenues and is waiting to be called by immigration officials.