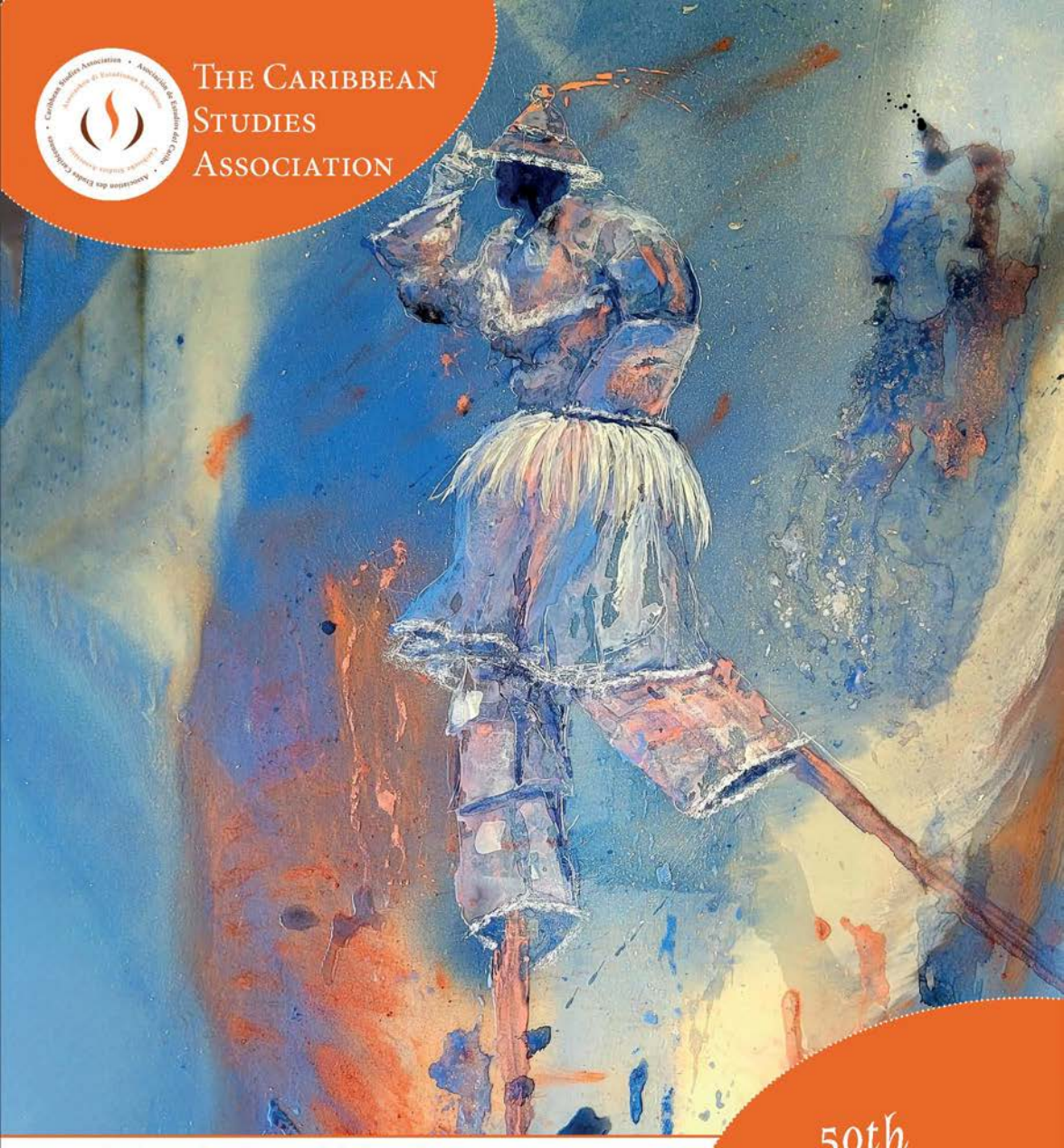

The Caribbean Studies Association

Volume 2 • Issues 1 & 2 • June 2025

50th Anniversary Issue

Caribbean Conjunctures

THE CARIBBEAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

Caribbean Conjunctures

THE CARIBBEAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

Volume 2, Nos. 1 & 2 **June 2025**

50th Anniversary

The Caribbean Charting a Response Strategy

Published under the Journals of the Caribbean Programme
for
The Caribbean Studies Association
by
The University of the West Indies Press

The University of the West Indies Press
7a Gibraltar Hall Road
Kingston 7, Jamaica
www.uwipress.com

Published in association with The Caribbean Studies Association @2026
A catalogue record of this journal is available from the
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Print ISSN: 0799-6500
eISSN: 0799-6519
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37234/CSAJ

Cover image: *Hot Stepper* by Lucien Downes

Cover and journal design by Robert Harris
Set in Minion Pro 11/ 14.5 x 27
Printed in the United States of America

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Website: https://www.caribbeanstudiesassociation.org/csa-journal
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Caribbean Conjunctures: The Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) Journal aims to promote the field of Caribbean Studies from multilingual, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and multicultural perspectives. It seeks to disseminate the works of scholars and practitioners that reflect the Greater Caribbean region – including Central America and the Caribbean coasts of Mexico and South America and extending to Northeast Brazil. The peer-reviewed, academic journal seeks to collaborate and support research and analysis which document the importance of the Caribbean's connection to the African continent and to the Caribbean people throughout the Diaspora, especially in United States, Canada, and Europe.

The journal publishes research articles, book reviews, reviews of visual art exhibitions, and scholarly commentaries – after a double-blind peer review for research articles and a single-blind process in the case of the rest. Submissions are welcome from the Humanities, the Social Sciences, and the Visual & Performing Arts in five languages – Papiamento, Dutch, French, Spanish, and English (both US and UK English). The CSA journal is leveraging the longstanding trajectory of the association as a premier annual convergence point for the global Caribbean Studies community of scholars. It is tapping into the association's significant body of knowledge producers and intends to be a permanent repository of scholarship.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S NOTE

CSA – A Regional Institution

Incubator for Caribbean Scholarship

OPAL PALMER ADISA

I ATTENDED MY FIRST CARIBBEAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION (CSA) conference in Curaçao, the Netherlands Antilles, in May 1980 at the invitation of Percy Hentzel and Jan Carew. At the time, I was new to California, pursuing a master's degree at San Francisco State University. I had met Percy at UC Berkeley (where I would later earn my doctorate), and he encouraged me to attend the CSA conference.

I had no prior knowledge of the institution or its mission, and, truthfully, I was more excited about visiting Curaçao for the first time than about the conference itself. However, that changed the moment I sat through the opening remarks. I was awed by the assembly of scholars, mostly men, and invigorated by the depth of intellectual exchange. That conference was a transformative experience – my first academic conference – and it left an indelible mark on me. Curaçao, with its rich cultural diversity, further reinforced my identity as a Caribbeanist, expanding my perspective beyond my Jamaican roots.

I knew then that I wanted to be affiliated with an organization like CSA. I was deeply interested in Caribbean scholarship and eager to stay abreast of regional developments. However, I noticed a gap: the humanities, my primary area of study, were underrepresented. At the time, CSA panels were predominantly focused on sociology, politics, and economics.

Reflecting on his tenure as CSA President (1979–1980), Wendell Bell once remarked:

> My presidency in many ways was a continuation of the work of Angel Calderon Cruz when he was President and I was Vice President. We were concerned that

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000001

> not all Caribbean scholars were willing to accept CSA as a worthy endeavor and to participate in its conferences and activities. Of course, CSA was still very new then, only four or so years in existence, so it was still in the process of establishing itself.

Now, CSA has marked its 50th anniversary – a remarkable milestone for a regional organization. Its longevity is a testament to its resilience and commitment to fostering Caribbean scholarship. Year after year, CSA has provided a vital space for scholars and researchers to share their work, network, and promote the Caribbean as not only a culturally vibrant region but also an intellectually dynamic one. While many CSA scholars reside outside the region, those in the diaspora remain deeply connected to their Caribbean heritage, with much of their scholarship rooted in the region.

The concerns Wendell Bell raised in CSA's early years are no longer relevant:

> As President, I was committed to ensuring that CSA was perceived as a fully legitimate professional organization, free from political bias and welcoming to all Caribbean scholars and researchers, regardless of their backgrounds or perspectives.

This commitment to inclusivity and intellectual rigor is what has kept CSA relevant and vibrant. Another defining feature of the organization is its insistence on incorporating all the colonial languages of the region. While English remains dominant, there is active participation from scholars working in Spanish, French, Dutch, and Papiamento, fostering a truly pan-Caribbean discourse. The CSA journal further supports this multilingual inclusivity.

Over the years, I have attended many CSA conferences, though I have also missed several. Nonetheless, I have always maintained my affiliation with CSA and taken immense pride in the conferences I have attended, as well as those I could not. CSA's greatest strength lies in its ability to convene leading scholars and ensure that Caribbean intellectuals, whether based in the region or abroad, have a platform to engage, collaborate, and share their work with those passionate about the Caribbean.

As Editor-in-Chief of this special 50th-anniversary journal issue, I wanted to highlight key regional institutions that support Caribbean scholarship, preserve its cultural heritage, and serve as vital archival networks. This issue features a segment on publishers, recognizing their critical role in

disseminating scholarship and promoting local creatives. Additionally, we spotlight museums, galleries, and exhibitions that have emerged over the past three decades to preserve and showcase the region's history and artistic contributions.

While this issue does not encompass essays on the region's political history, healthcare systems, or educational development, it nonetheless reflects a rich diversity of disciplines and addresses pressing contemporary themes shaping the Caribbean today.

I hope that both scholars and non-scholars alike will recognize the significance of this journal and its future editions. A journal is an essential component of CSA – a symbol of its maturity and its standing as a think tank for the region. My hope is that CSA's future leadership will continue to champion the journal's role, secure the financial and intellectual support it requires, and ensure its broad distribution. The Caribbean's scholarly output is extraordinary, and this journal must remain a beacon for its dissemination.

It has been a tremendous honor to be part of CSA's journey and legacy. I extend my heartfelt wishes for the continued success of this journal and the ongoing advancement of Caribbean scholarship.

For more information on CSA Past Presidents and Conferences, visit:

- Past Presidents: CSA Presidents Archive
- Past Conferences: CSA Past Conferences

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Expanding CSA and Engagement in the Caribbean

RHODA ARRINDELL

I WAS MERELY FOUR YEARS OLD WHEN THE Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) was founded in 1970, and until the 1990s, I don't believe I'd ever heard of CSA. I certainly did not during my undergraduate years at Syracuse University in New York, although I was an active member of the Caribbean Students Association, under the umbrella of the Student African-American Society.

As I sat among the distinguished honorees and other members at our 50th anniversary celebration in St Lucia, where I was also bestowed the honor to hold this post for the next year, I deliberated on how I could enhance the evolution of this noble organization. Hence, I set out to align my background, my short stint at Howard University, and my anticolonial work to grow our organization during my tenure and to explore how the people and institutions of our region could profit from our collective engagement.

I started by revisiting the objectives set by the CSA founders and the Constitution, which asserts that the primary aim is "to foster contact, communication and cooperation among scholars, professionals and other persons interested in the study of Caribbean affairs and concerned about the realities and aspirations of the Caribbean peoples."

I subsequently challenged the vagueness of being "concerned about the realities and aspirations of the Caribbean peoples." Questions I asked myself included: How do we as Caribbean scholars measure our concerns? Is it enough to issue press statements after an event like a natural disaster or during conflict in the region? Does our concern about Caribbean peoples' realities also include activism on their behalf, and, if so, how far should this extend? How does all this align with the assertion of some senior CSA members' proclamation of the organization's neutrality? The theme for the 49th conference – Reparations: Resistance, Resilience, Reproduction,

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000002

and Rehabilitation – was carefully chosen to encourage healthy discourse on how to combat colonialism, dismantle dated structures, and repair the underdevelopment of the Caribbean peoples.

Prevailing for 50 years is no small feat. Over the years, CSA members have served laudably in many capacities in the region and further afield. While I appreciate the opportunity to reconnect with fellow academicians and students as we share our work annually, I submit that this is not enough if we are going to genuinely make a difference in the lives of the Caribbean peoples.

The Caribbean is a dynamic space, where the people, like all peoples, aspire to do more than just survive but to thrive. Some live in wholly sovereign spaces, where generations are unfamiliar with the realities of colonialism. Others are still colonized by external forces, their leaders powerless to fully engage with the region. Consequently, Caribbean neighbors generally have a narrow understanding of each other.

Our region is also a space vastly vulnerable to climate change and brain-drain of some of its most needed professionals like nurses and teachers. As we embark on the next phase in our evolution as CSA, we have a great opportunity to use our collective and individual talents to impact the lives of the Caribbean peoples more meaningfully. It is not enough to hope that our work will improve life for the peoples of the Caribbean. Optimism requires activism.

Our work in service to Caribbean communities must be optimized in ways that empower all the peoples to reach their full potential and restore them to their natural greatness. We must become more intentional and consistent about our level of engagement with them, and we must include them at every step of the research process, from design to execution of our research projects.

It is also imperative for us to remain purposeful with the language we use to refer to the peoples and the region. We cannot on one hand argue for decolonizing the Caribbean and, on the other hand, still speak of "French West Indies" and "Dutch Caribbean" to refer to the space or "West Indians" to refer to the people. We are not mere regurgitators of concepts fashioned in foreign institutions and outmoded terminology like "creole languages" to refer our languages. As scholars, we are also producers of knowledge based

on our awareness of the lived experiences of our people, and which ought to be imparted for the empowerment of all the peoples.

So, what is the vision for the next 50 years of CSA? What will the future leaders and members say about the organization at its centennial observance? I envision a fully decolonized Caribbean, where all peoples live in peace and prosperity, demonstrating to the world how to live in harmony with each other and our environment as we have done for centuries. Our imminent scholars are inclined to seek practical and exciting solutions to social challenges. As we mentor the next generation to further advance the field of Caribbean studies, may we remain mindful that the Caribbean can only be as strong as the people who live there and that a bright future will only be possible through our collective action.

As my presidency comes to an end, I pledge to continue working to not just increase our membership or strengthen our partnerships but also to expand our active engagement with the Caribbean region. I invite you to do the same.

The Mischief of "Race"[1]

Practical Truths and Some Philosophical Reflections

ANTON L. ALLAHAR
CSA, President 2007–2008

Abstract

This essay challenges what I call "race" thinking and explores the fascination with human physical differences that has fueled the persistent myth of "race." Often driven by fear of "the other," those who engage in "race" thinking classify and separate human beings based on physical characteristics, treating these non-scientific criteria as meaningful. As W.I. Thomas and Dorothy Thomas observed nearly a century ago, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (1928:572). In other words, irrespective of scientific validity, perception shapes behavior, often with serious consequences. While I acknowledge that many will disagree with my assertions, the essence of scholarship is to think abstractly, philosophize, and imagine alternative perspectives. Readers are thus encouraged to consider the arguments presented while setting aside personal emotions.

Keywords: "race," racism, ethnicity, color, shade, identity, belonging, biology, culture

The Banality of "Race" Thinking

More than thirty years ago, in an article titled *When Black First Became Worth Less* (Allahar, 1993), I sought to understand when in human history certain individuals first came to be valued as less equal than others solely due to their darker skin color. That study traced the origins of the dangerous notion that physical differences, including skin color, could be used to mark

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000003

the existence of inferior and superior human "races." Over two thousand years later, human societies remain plagued by this same flawed idea.

Given the preeminent place it occupies on the world stage, the point of departure for this essay is the United States and its continuing struggle with the diseases of "race" and racism. The savage racial beating of Rodney King by four white police officers in 1991, the 2012 racial killing of a black teenager, Trayvon Martin, by a white neighbourhood watch captain, and the subsequent racial murder of George Floyd by a white police officer in 2020 have reenergized concerns with "race," racism, and racialization among scholars and community activists, not only in the United States, but in the Caribbean and so many other countries. Thus, infected by the poison of anti-black racism, especially in the current era of rejuvenated white supremacist ideology and the increasing popularity of fascism around the globe, scholars have directed a great deal of attention to the question of social inequality, especially as it occurs along lines of "race" and ethnicity.[2] Relatedly, concerns with gender and class inequality have been added to that of racism and are dealt with collectively under the rubrics of *Intersectionality* (Crenshaw 1991; 2011) and *Critical Race Theory* (Bell, 1995; Mills, 1997).

A clear theme in the resulting scholarship relates to the racial scars of colonial empire building that have persisted even after the collapse of the empires that fueled and sustained them. In fact, long before Rodney King, Trayvon Martin, and George Floyd in the US, the world has had constant reminders of the savagery of racist ideas and their roots or origins: colonialism, imperialism, genocide, slavery, indentureship, capitalist accumulation, and 'man's inhumanity to man.' For although routinely denied and dismissed by those who enjoy 'white privilege' (McIntosh, 1989), the fashioning of the contemporary world has embraced the idea of "race" and the unarticulated role played by skin colour, shade, and hue among diverse groups of human beings. In that world, "race" thinking has become so banal or commonplace that, whether explicitly or implicitly, it informs the general sensibilities of the modern subject in that world.

In this essay, therefore, my principal concern is *to explain* in part the fascination with human physical difference and the invention of the myth of "race" to explain it. The grouping or separation of human beings according to physical characteristics is based on non-scientific criteria that are widely treated as meaningful. However, while based on untested, non-scientific

assumptions, "race" thinking is not to be casually dismissed for, as W.I. Thomas and Dorothy Thomas observed almost one hundred years ago, "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (1928:572). In other words, science aside, perception often influences behaviour, and sometimes with very devastating outcomes.

The argument begins with the idea of "race" and the popular custom of using the facile designations of *white* and *black* as examples of different "races." In this line of thinking, physical, phenotypical, or biological resemblances among groups trump individuality, culture, and human agency, and group attributes such as intelligence, morality, civility, or aggression are said to stem from biology. Stated differently, "race" thinking places human beings into heaps based on physical characteristics and seeks to explain their individual behaviours in group terms – "race" or biology. Hence, we get such generalizations as 'black people are violent,' 'Natives are lazy,' 'Chinese are dirty,' 'Indians are untrustworthy,' 'Muslims are terrorists,' and so on. Individual members of these groups are denied individuality, so the actions of Osama bin Laden are lain at the feet of all Muslims as terrorists, while the collective notion of "race" is never invoked to explain the actions of individuals like Adolph Hitler or Timothy McVey, who bombed the Oklahoma City Building. They are cast simply as *individual* bad actors.

The untested assumption that underlies "race" thinking is that there is a human tendency to feel a sense of individual comfort, belonging, and acceptance simply from being among one's own *kind*. Sameness is thought to breed security for there is a certain levelling that comes from being part of a multitude who are all *alike*, an anonymity that increases individual feelings of belonging and security in the group. One does not stand out, is not easily targeted. And further, the resulting sense of comfort or reassurance tied to association with one's own *kind* has been cast as a *natural,* biological proclivity. *Likes*, we are told, attract *likes*, for they are seen as sharing the same or similar biological or physical characteristics, which in turn define a "race" (Shils, 1957, 1968; Geertz, 1973; McKay, 1982; Eller and Coughlan, 1993; Grosby, 1994; Allahar, 1996).

Further, biological racists do not accept that *racism* is learned social behaviour, and, as noted above, they are convinced that biology can also influence non-biological attributes such as intelligence, propensity for law abidingness, overall civility, frequency of sexual urges, marital fidelity, and

so on. It is important to note, however, that racial discrimination is not practiced only by those who subscribe to the idea of biological "race." For discrimination on the basis of "race" may also be tied to opportunism as in those who seek to treat different ethnic groups differently, not out of biological conviction, but for political gain. An example may be seen in the politician who, while she/he may not subscribe to the idea of biological superiority/inferiority, nevertheless plays the "race" card to secure votes from those who are deemed to be of her or his *kind* (Lewis, 2024:86–87). Donald Trump's white supremacist rants are right at home in such political posturing. But this phenomenon of the *opportunistic racist* is for a different study.

How Black is Black?

In common parlance, discussions which hold that "race" is synonymous with 'colour' or 'shade of skin' are both nonsensical and confusing, for colours and shades lie on a continuum and there is no clear cut-off point at which *black* ends and *brown* begins or where *brown* ends and *white* begins. "Race" is a constant, and in no system of logic can a constant be used to explain a variable. Stated differently, if "race" is fixed and intelligence is variable, and if "race" is used to explain black academic failure or underperformance, how can one explain a black nuclear scientist or a black Nobel Prize winner for literature or a black steelpan maestro? To treat "race," colour, and shade as synonyms is sheer mischievous nonsense and feeds into such silly politically correct terms as 'visible minority' and 'people of colour,' 'blacks,' 'brown people' etc., as if these are real and meaningful categories of human beings. The same goes for the widely accepted proxies of 'race,' what W.E.B. Du Bois referred to as "the grosser physical differences of color, hair and bone" (2007:180).

The nonsense and confusion are even better grasped when one looks at a typical Northern Indian or Chinese person, whose skin is as 'white' as any Anglo-Saxon's, yet, following Du Bois, that person is never classified racially as 'white.' This is the mischief of "race" thinking to which I refer, and I agree with Gordon Lewis, who emphasised the social, not the biological construction, of colour and tells us that in the Caribbean "it is the *degree* of skin color, not the possession of 'negro blood,' that has been the criterion of social acceptance" (1985:237). This concept of 'social color' recognizes the

socially invented nature of "race" and informs Lewis' comment: "In U.S. society, money talks; in Caribbean society, money whitens. It is possible to be black in physiognomy yet white in social terms" (ibid). In straightforward language, money can rescue one from "the epidermalization of inferiority" (Fanon, 1967:13).

To cite an example of the mischief of "race" and colour prejudice that the colonial masters have bequeathed to Caribbean peoples, we may consider the case of Trinidadians, who have developed fine distinctions of skin shade and hue that are widely accepted as meaningful descriptive markers in everyday speech: white, near white, half white, local white, white-by-association, brown skinned, sapodilla brown, dark skinned, real black, light skinned, red skinned, and so on. There is also the notion of having "good skin" (lighter complexion), but this too is nuanced as indicated when Trinidadians speak of the above-mentioned "locally assembled whites," who are distinguished from "true" whites from abroad. This mischief regarding "race" is compounded by a whole host of other desirable and undesirable phenotypical attributes associated with hair type, thickness of lips, nose shape, etc. But through it all, so hegemonic is the notion of "race" that even members of the most shunned or despised racialized groups are known to harbour sentiments that contribute to or define themselves as inferior – self hate.

And what is most notable is that in the eyes of ordinary Caribbean and non-Caribbean people, these racial identifiers of hair type, nose shape, lip thickness, etc. are as real as they are imprecise, especially when it *shades* into culture. Consider the case of Haiti, for example, and the highly subjective and refined criteria used to separate individuals and groups based on skin colour, shade, and hue. To this end, Alex Dupuy (2019:72–74) presents the pre-revolutionary picture of class and colour differences that may not be easily recognizable by outsiders but are very real to Haitians. These included the *grands blancs*, *petits blancs*, *affranchis*, mulattoes, 'free people of colour' and blacks.

But the confusion does not end there. For the cumbersome term 'free people of color' could refer to once-enslaved, African-born black persons, who were freed as a result of abolition *after* the revolution, e.g., Jean Jacques Dessalines (*nouveau libres*), to native born black persons, who were freed *before* abolition in 1793, e.g., Henri Christophe (*anciens libres*), or to other freed persons of mixed African, European, and indigenous origin, e.g.,

Alexandre Pétion, a *quadroon* or a person who was one-quarter African. And again, while they may not have been meaningful to outsiders, Haitians were particularly sensitive to these gradations or divisions.

In sum, in Haiti as elsewhere in the Caribbean, the purity on one's blood is more malleable than biology might suggest. For, as the foregoing indicates, if you are black, rich, and powerful, your blackness is more muted. But if you are black, poor, and powerless, your blackness will always stand out. So, unlike the United States and its simple black-white racial divisions, even today in the ex-slave colonies of the English, Spanish, French, and Dutch Caribbean, there is a very sophisticated hierarchy of racial classifications, a pigmentocracy that goes beyond color *per se* and targets shade. This is exactly what Dupuy denotes as *la aristocratie de la peau* (2019:74). In his words, "the purity of blood" and its association with the biological conception of *race* "occurred with the European colonization of the Americas in the sixteenth century, the capture of Africans, and their transplantation to the colonies to create the system of chattel slavery to supply the labour force for the plantation economy" (2024:66).

This is what led Barbara Fields much earlier to declare that "race is not an element of human biology, nor is it an idea that can be plausibly imagined to live an eternal life of its own. Race is not an idea but an ideology" (1990:101). And even before Fields, John Thornton reminded us that blacks "were not homogeneous and came from different parts of Africa; had different cultures, skin complexions and hair textures; and spoke different languages" (1988:183). But this is not all, for Philippe-Richard Marius' comments on the Haitian situation speak to a form of self-hate that, black power notwithstanding, may also be found to resonate in the wider Caribbean.

As emblematic of the mischief of "race," then, while the politics of colorism presents the Haitian mulatto as seeking "to foreground traces of whiteness or to efface traces of blackness in the person" (2022:134), Marius reminds us that there are the "privileged dark-skinned Haitians [who] discursively seek to move away from blackness to achieve a deblackening of the *person* rather than the body" (Ibid:135). The challenge is for the latter to rid himself of the paralyzing obsession that "the idea is to become *not-black*" (Ibid:135). Marius also rounds out the picture of colourist confusion when he identifies a series of other racialized categories: the enslaved blacks, who comprised African-born *bossales* and the Haitian-born creole slaves, along with the

griffes, black-skinned with curly hair, the *marabou*, very dark-skinned but with "naturally straight and supple hair" (Ibid:136) and the *brun* (brown), an inexact "elastic" term that can cover "skin complexion ranging from dark to just short of what elsewhere might be 'white'" (Ibid:xxiii). It is also noteworthy that well-placed blacks do not see themselves as 'black,' a term reserved to indicate class positioning or the 'social color' of the poor black (Ibid). Once again Thomas and Thomas (1928) are brought to mind: regardless of how nonsensical it is, if something is defined as real, it can have very real consequences.

The Social Psychology of Attraction

As hinted above, the thorny proposition is one of 'likes' and 'un-likes' and whether *likes are naturally attracted to likes* (Chu and Lowery, 2023; Montoya and Horton, 2013; Heine et al, 2009; Byrne, 1997). But beyond this proposition, it is crucial to ask whether that attraction is primarily natural and only secondarily social. Answers to this question lie at the heart of the matter for attraction is of two different types or degrees. First, there is the basic form of physical similarity or attraction, while the second is tied more to cultural similarity or attraction. The physical appearance is the first thing that one notices in an initial encounter with 'the other' and is based solely on phenotypical characteristics, e.g., sex, size, skin colour, hair texture, nose shape, and lip size etc. Later in the encounter, one may discover similar or 'like' tastes in food, music, literature, belief systems, and so on, but they are not likely to be discovered if the initial encounter is not one that is attractive or pleasing. Beyond the physical, the attraction can also extend later to similarities that are socio-cultural and non-physical. Of course, this is a matter of context, yet we can relate to the fact that two black people, who do not know one another, and who find themselves in a gathering of non-black people, are likely to take notice of, and smile familiarly with one another as if to acknowledge a common or primordial origin that needs no specific articulation (Shils, 1957, 1968; Geertz, 1973). And the same goes for two whites, Chinese, Indians, and so on, who can *recognize* one another simply by the physical appearances mentioned. Once more the key question is whether that initial attraction natural or learned.

Philosophical Questions and Reflections

At the strict animal level, from the perspective of both individual or group survival, the notion of likes attracting likes makes sense for it implies some version of the claim that there is 'strength in numbers.' Hence, protection and security of the group, which invoke the 'instinct for survival,' are ensured when those of the same *kind* band together for mutual benefit (protection, procreation). This is why, even in the pre-social context, belonging is important. For example, individual lions may dislike one another but as a pride, lions will get together and cooperate to defend themselves against non-lions that are perceived as a threat, if only because they may look or sound or smell *differently*. And the natural reaction to difference is caution, aversion, or even fear. This is why an important consideration is the nexus between personal, individual security and the extent to which that security is rooted in group or community membership; once more, strength in numbers. For presuming that the lion does not know what it looks like, it nevertheless associates other lions as belonging to its own 'kind' based on smell, sounds, hunting patterns, choice of prey, etc. And although lions of different prides fight against one another over mating rights and territory, the lion from one pride will mate with a lioness from another to establish a new pride. *Similarity breeds consent!*

The reference to lions raises a very complex matter that I invoke only to set the stage for a philosophical discussion of human behaviours and the designation of the human 'self' and the human 'other.' How much is that designation biological and how much is it social? In other words, moving beyond the lower animal kingdom to humans, is the drive for self-preservation natural or social? And very importantly, is the 'human self' a category of nature, a single natural species, or are the 'black self' and the 'white self' two separate species that are even more naturally distinct and that challenge the notion of a single 'human self'?

The human animal is unique for it is the only animal that is capable of fashioning tools and creating culture, and that has what Irving Zeitlin paraphrases Jean Jacques Rousseau as naming "the potential for society" (1987:24–25). This points to the matter of 'the social' and is tied to the fact of human gregariousness and herding behaviour, which in turn begs the question of whether such herding is based entirely on physical attraction, and

for purposes of security, protection, and survival. And as with the lions, are *likes* naturally more comfortable with and hence more naturally attracted to others of the same *kind*? Do similarities attract for purely biological and reproductive reasons?

Biology vs. Culture

Clearly these questions invite the definition of terms. That is, in reference to human beings, what is the meaning of the key words *likes* and *kind*? And how might biology trump culture, or vice versa? Further, my reference to 'basic kind' begs a consideration of 'non-basic kinds.' The former is bio-physical and relates to blood ties, an argument that has been labelled the *hard version* of primordialism (Allahar, 1996:6–7). The *soft version,* on the other hand, speaks more to the phenomena of cultural sameness and the social and political ties that, for example, mark nationalist and patriotic sentiments (Ibid). As noted above, unquestioned acceptance may also be socially manufactured and found among members of the same sporting team or political party or a religious congregation, where members do not necessarily share physical attributes, yet are known to defend one another with great passion and ferocity, even to the death.

I hypothesise a *hierarchy of kinds* according to which the physical constitutes the first or the basic kind. It is the one that sets the table for the other social and cultural *kinds* to be experienced later. But for those who think that biology trumps culture, who are stuck in the experiences of first encounters, "race" is real, and they are convinced that those who are grouped as belonging to the same biological *kind* are united in a pre-social, automatic sense. For them, when facing a threat, whether immediate or long-term, humans are likely to revert to the automatic identification of their own kind and the assumption that the odds of survival are enhanced if they are with those whom they judge to be physically most *like* them. It is akin to Durkheim's notion of *mechanical solidarity* (1984:57–87), and this is why I label it *automatic* (Ibid:68) or *basic*. Taking self-protection as given, then, when it comes to group survival, 'likes' are expected *automatically* to protect 'likes' especially in an unplanned situation, when there is no time for deliberation and reflection.

This self-identification as belonging to a group may also extend to a Rodney

King or George Floyd type of encounter, or Barack Obama's declaration that "you know, if I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon." Obama was invoking their common blackness in a racialized white society. Where, given the racialization of consciousness black people can imagine themselves in that situation in a way that *white* people, even progressive white people, cannot. In the US and Canada, for example, *white* people do not have to have 'the talk' with their children before they leave home at night. Yet there are limitations to the basic, biological identification, for, as we know, while 'it is true that all my brothers are black, not all blacks are my brothers.' This is the point at which biology ends and society or culture begins – where we encounter such *social inventions* as black music, 'white supremacy,' anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Christian values, indigenous cultures, etcetera.

Biologically speaking, while human beings of all skin shades, heights, weights, bloods, eye colours, hair textures, nose sizes, and so on can intermingle or mate and produce human babies, they can do so regardless of where they live, what languages they speak, and what gods they worship. But the black person can only give a blood transfusion to a white person if they have the same or compatible blood types and cannot give a blood transfusion to another black with a different blood type. So, why is the literal blood involved in the transfusion not seen to define biological "race," while if they were to marry, they are said to have a "mixed marriage" and are going to produce "mixed-race" babies? This is pure confusion and mischief.

Hierarchy of 'Kinds'

Beyond the biological diversity of human beings, what unites them unmistakably as humans is not their blood type but their basic humanity, their capacity for *culture*. Unlike lower animal forms, they can construct mental images of being and living and deliberately make and use tools to concretize those images. They can develop an abstract idea of a house and proceed to build and finetune it as they go along. They operate not solely on instinct, but on learning. Therefore, as Emile Durkheim (1984) noted when speaking about *social sameness* as a basis for *social solidarity*, human beings are capable of being guided more by social than by natural instinct or biological attraction and belonging. As he writes: "we all know that a social cohesion exists where cause can be traced to a certain conformity

of each individual consciousness to the common type." Further, he notes that the similarity that is rooted in the collective social consciousness automatically leads members to "love their country . . . to like one another, seeking one another out *in preference to foreigners*" (1984: 81; my emphasis). And "foreigners" in this context are best understood as belonging to the realm of "the other," real or imagined, according to Robert Miles (1989:11–30). But those foreigners are also human beings.

Further, on the basis of his review of the psychological literature on perception and aversion, Kenneth Gergen tells us, "The other appears strange, alien and unknown . . . [and] the common reaction to the unknown, the unpredictable, or the strange is aversion" (1968:116). Thus, merging Durkheim and Gergen, one can say that a total identification with the whole, born perhaps of xenophobia, binds the individual directly to his or her community or society. As a consequence, members are moved to react passionately against anything that is perceived to threaten the solidarity or cohesiveness of the whole.

Security, Curiosity, and the Search for Home

As stated, my questions about identity and belonging are aimed at the presumed naturalness of human belonging and human roots (primordialism) and ask whether those are stronger than their socially constructed ties. I prefer to highlight the complex make-up of human beings and postulate a dialectical tension that may be observed in that make-up. This tension is tied to people's individual, existential vulnerability and varies between the poles or extremes of (a) security/insecurity and (b) curiosity/incuriousity. I trace the roots of humans' existential vulnerability to human physical vulnerability. We know that unlike some animal species, at birth (and for several years after that), the human infant is totally helpless. Its survival is heavily dependent on the support and protection of others. And, while some individual humans are more independent and self-sufficient than others, no one is completely independent.

Thus, to survive, humans must rely on others who may be said to be of their *kind* – whether family, clan, tribe, village or nation –and who may share similar physical, cultural or group attributes. I hypothesize further that the degree to which one feels secure or insecure is at the core of the

sense of self that feeds the sense of security and belonging. But, in addition to the concern with security, humans also share an inborn curiosity, which is tied to their sense of security. Security and curiosity are variables and thus differ in degree, yet they are present in all humans.

Secure people are curious people, and curious people tend to be more open to new things: new ideas, new friends, new adventures, new foods, and so on. Insecure people, by contrast, are fundamentally incurious about the world. They are anxious and fearful of difference and of change and, as a consequence, tend to be more conservative and closed to new ideas, people, experiences, and the like. Further, because of their sense of security, curious people have a desire to explore the unfamiliar, while the insecurity of the incurious leads them to feel comfortable with the familiar, the routine, and the predictable.

Thus, as Gergen notes, since positive feelings are experienced as less burdensome than negative ones, "similarity is said to breed mutual attraction. We can all attest perhaps to the inclination to feel friendly to 'one of our *kind*.'" (1968, 115, my emphasis). In other words, 'belonging' is a nuanced concept and differs with context. Thus, the conservative impulse is seen in humans who cherish the personal and psychological comforts which come from being rooted in the familiar and the predictable terrain of 'home' where those of their own kind abound and where they belong. Such familiarity calms their anxieties and fears and leads them to cling to what they know, be it ideas, foods, gods, smells, sounds, even friends and spouses.

For the conservative in all of us, home is a matter of social and spiritual location or belonging, a place that offers a sense of security that is enhanced by rootedness. At the same time, those roots may be a belief (God), a dream or fiction or an imagination of what constitutes 'home' (Allahar 2004). This manufactured notion of *home* as a spiritual place of belonging, escape, or refuge has today become very politicized and feeds into the politics of identity, nationality, and belonging.

Identity and Belonging: The Nation as Home

Given the general gregariousness of human beings, their search for home is fuelled by a desire not to be left alone, for such aloneness is unnatural and leads to feelings of insecurity, discomfort and vulnerability (Allahar 1996:7–10).

This is partly why Benedict Anderson could write that a sense of national belonging could be so powerful: "nation-ness and nationalism command such profound emotional legitimacy" (1983:13–14). Much like being a member of a family, to be rooted in one's own land implies an unquestioned acceptance by others from that land and a sense of rootedness that is both physically and emotionally reassuring. Importantly, however, and recalling Thomas and Thomas (1928), Anderson (1983) speaks of the nation as "an imagined community" where *imagined* sentiments of belonging and groupness can have serious consequences such as fueling a sense of national or patriotic fervour among co-nationals, who may not know one another, likely have never met one another and may not even care for one another personally. This is where racist sentiments such as those symbolized by Christian nationalism can fire up white supremacist mischief regarding whether the defence of the nation is a natural/biological or social/cultural duty.

For the individual, then, being among one's 'national kind' is a higher form of rootedness than the basic rootedness of one's 'biological kind.' Hence, speaking specifically about the individual in the group, Harold Isaacs wrote, "He is not only not alone, but here, as long as he chooses to remain in and of it, he cannot be denied or rejected" (1975:43). *Home* is a safe space, a place of belonging and acceptance, he continues, "It is *home* in the sense of Robert Frost's line, the place where, when you've got to go there, they've got to take you in" (Ibid). And these exact sentiments are captured in the popular quote by Maya Angelou: "The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned" (1986:196). In this poetic rendering, 'home' represents safety and is associated with unconditional acceptance.

Primordialism and Natural Community

Following Gergen's (1968) observation that positive affect or feelings are experienced less burdensomely than negative ones, it stands to reason that being with one's own 'kind' produces warm feelings and a sense of comfort that comes from familiarity and predictability – the same familiarity and predictability that reduce feelings of insecurity and simultaneously increase the sense of safety that in turn fuels mutual attraction. Of course, looking *alike* is just the first trigger of primordial attraction. And as time passes, beyond that initial recognition of physical sameness or similarity a certain

implicit trust will result. The initial fear or apprehension that comes from encountering the unknown or the strange will be gradually muted, and, instead of rejection, *the other* will be either casually ignored or trusted. In other words, human beings do not only trust those who look alike, for beyond physical sameness, dissimilar human beings have been known to meet peaceably and to discover other mutual or common likes, e.g., religion, politics, music, literature, sports, and so on. My point is that the initial encounter, which triggers the primordial responses (attraction/repulsion) among humans are mistaken by biological racists, who use those features as proof that there are different "races" of human beings.

This is the context in which I examine the complexity of belonging and acknowledge that while there may be a basic biological attraction to one's *kind,* that attraction is to be contrasted with the socially created meaning of belonging to a nation, a religion, a culture, or a tribe, and so on. The biological is automatic, unconscious, non-rehearsed, natural. The social involves learning, reflection, context, and deliberation regarding a course of action. The socially conditioned meanings of "race," colour, nation, God, even gender, must be contrasted with the notion of primordial programming. For the solidarity associated with all primordial communities is steeped in make-believe and myth and tied to the notion of "retrospective illusion" (Bergson, 1959:1263–1264), which may encompass the notions of a common territory of origin and residence, a common place of work or common lines of descent.

In other words, primordial attachment can extend beyond that felt towards a parent, sibling, or community to encompass a country, a nation, or a region, as is evident in the context of a general or specific type of Caribbean regional or West Indian identity as emerges during the World Cup cricket tournament. And from there the leap to invoking a common "race" is not too great.

As noted earlier, people who are similar to one another, who are of the same *kind*, be it in terms of attitudes, interests, values, personality or phenotype, feel more comfortable with one another, and feel more positively towards one another than those who are dissimilar. But while the "hard" primordialist views that attachment to one's kinship, biological, national, or regional group as attributed to the ancestral tie of blood (Shils 1957, 1968), the imagined nation is based more on the social inventions of national and regional identity, common ethnicity, religion, and culture. Thus, the actual

existence of a blood tie between a given person and his or her community is less important than the fact that he or she *believes* it does exist and acts in accordance with such a belief (Thomas and Thomas 1928, 572). For example, one's parents are one's blood relatives, but we can only hope that one's mother and father are not themselves blood relatives.

Conclusion

In sum, group identity often operates on a hierarchy or continuum, where outsiders who share certain traits with an in-group may be seen as less threatening and conditionally accepted. For example, a white Christian nationalist-supremacist may tolerate a light-skinned Argentinian or Italian Roman Catholic who shares his prejudices. This distinction highlights the difference between "asserted identity" – how one claims to belong – and "assigned identity" – how others perceive and accept or reject that claim (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). The famous case of Rachel Dolezal illustrates this tension.

Beyond physical appearance, cultural and social markers play a crucial role in defining identity. Groups that look alike – such as Hindus and Sikhs, Irish Catholics and Protestants, or Shia and Sunni Muslims – rely on dress, names, and rituals to distinguish themselves. However, in the face of a common external threat, these divisions may dissolve, suggesting that identity is fluid and context-dependent.

The interplay between biology and culture depends on perceived threats and allegiances. A Black American and a Black African may unite around race before a Black American and a White American might unite around nationality. Similarly, an African-Guyanese may feel greater kinship with an African-Jamaican than with an East Indian Guyanese. This raises the question: Does national belonging outweigh deep-seated ethnic or racial ties?

When national belonging is tied to citizenship, identity becomes a mutual process – where individuals seek to assimilate, and the dominant group either accepts or resists their inclusion. Since physical traits are largely unchangeable, the real question is: How do we define "kind"? Is it rooted in biology, nationality, culture, religion, language, or class?

This brings us back to the case of White police killing Black men in the U.S. and, specifically, to the 2023 murder of Tyree Nichols in Memphis, Tennessee.

Nichols, a 29-year-old Black man, was brutally beaten to death by five Black police officers. I argue that this was a racist murder – despite the officers being Black – because they had internalized White racist stereotypes about Black males. This case exemplifies how deeply ingrained "race" thinking is, to the point where institutional identity ("blue") overpowered racial solidarity ("Black"). It is not a stretch to say that if Nichols had been White, he would still be alive.

Notes

1. In this essay I use the term "race" in inverted commas to highlight my conviction that it is an illegitimate term for, in the biological sense, "races" do not exist. Yet *race thinking* is widespread and takes on coded meaning or form. For example, the word 'immigrant' is used to mean a person of colour, who, in Donald Trump's white supremacist thinking, comes from a *shit hole* country and poisons the supposedly 'pure blood' (white) of those in the host country.
2. Unlike racists who use biological criteria to define a "race," sociologists prefer to use the term "ethnicity," which speaks to *cultural* differences among human beings.

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ANTON ALLAHAR, born in Trinidad, earned his PhD in Political and Economic Sociology from the University of Toronto. He is Professor Emeritus at Western University (Canada) and was president of the Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) in 2007–08. His research and publications focus on the sociology of development, Caribbean race and ethnic relations, sovereignty, democracy, nationalism, and the political economy of higher education. In 2014 Dr. Allahar received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the CSA.

Reflections on 20 years of Love With CSA

PEDRO NOGUERA
CSA, President 2005–2006

I ATTENDED MY FIRST CSA CONFERENCE IN TRINIDAD IN 1988. One meeting was enough. I committed myself to never missing another if I could help it, for the next twenty years attending the annual conference each year. Regardless of where it was held, I made it a point to find a way to get there. CSA became a highly anticipated tradition.

There were many things I loved about CSA: its interdisciplinary focus, sessions held in multiple languages, the discussion and debate over all things Caribbean. I was especially drawn to CSA by the opportunity to experience serious intellectual engagement with scholars who were doing interesting and important work at the intersections of history, politics, economy, and culture. It certainly helped that each conference was held in some lovely part of the Caribbean, allowing for the perfect combination of networking and fellowship, as well as excursions and engagements in the host nation where we could learn about local conditions from our hosts.

As a Caribbeanist doing doctoral work at Berkeley, I had few peers or mentors (with the notable exceptions of Percy Hintzen, Barbara Christian, Michelle LaGuere, Steven Small, Gail McGarity, Jocelyne Guilbault, etc.). For that reason, after attending my first CSA conference, I was committed to becoming an active member and participant. I was thrilled by the opportunity to learn from and with this amazingly diverse, accomplished, sophisticated, rambunctious, and at times cantankerous, collection of scholars. I eventually moved from just being a member to becoming an active participant. I served on committees, helped devise strategies to address our financial challenges, and served as program chair (Dr Jean Stubbs was our outstanding President) when we held the conference in Belize in 2001.

Finally, I made the plunge. I ran for and was elected president of CSA in 2006. Once again, we planned to hold the conference in Trinidad. Given my Trinidadian heritage, I had the advantage of strong connections on the island and knew many people based on the island who could help with

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000004

planning and implementation. I expected a relatively easy presidency, but a few months before the conference, I learned that my wife, Patricia Vattuone, would die from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The cancer had been aggressive and proved to be resistant to treatment. Patricia, who had also been an active member of CSA, died on May 7, 2006, just a few weeks before the meeting.

I/we were devastated. It was only in the last month before she passed that my children and I realized that her death was imminent. Although I was still grieving and contemplating how I was going to parent four kids ages 11–24 on my own, I was committed to being present and engaged at the annual meeting. For that reason, despite the tragedy, I participated as fully as I could in the conference. Fortunately, my CSA family showed up for me and showered me with support. They took on the many duties that normally befall the president and made the conference a success.

At CSA I became connected to a community of scholars who were actively engaged in studying, and at times directly participating in, efforts to address the most complex and pressing problems facing the Caribbean.

I met others who like me who were connected to social movements in the region, and who were doing research on some of the most complex and pressing problems facing the region.

As a doctoral student, I had done my research in Grenada (1982), during the period when the country was led by the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG). The scholars who mentored and advised me – Percy Hintzen, Troy Duster, Selwyn Ryan, and Paget Henry – drew upon their vast knowledge of the region and their networks to help me carry out my work. They also provided me with critical feedback to keep me from allowing my political leanings to overwhelm my scholarship and connected me with a community of scholars who I learned from and with over many years at CSA. Scholars such as Brian Meeks, Cora Christian, Anton Allahar, Carolle Charles, Horrace Campbell, Locksley Edmondson, Nalini Persaud, Hilbourne Watson, Dwaine Plaza, Rhoda Reddock, Lynn Bolles, Irma McLaurin, Horace Enriquez, Gabrielle Hosein, Godfrey St Bernard, Lisa Outar, Patricia Mohammed, and many others.

Since the beginning of my academic career, my interest in the Caribbean has never waned. However, the Caribbean has become tangential to my primary work in higher education, and it has become more difficult for me to justify the annual trip to CSA, especially when it conflicted with

commencement at the university where I was employed. Over the last thirty years, I have served as a professor of education at various North American universities, studying the ways in which educational institutions are influenced by social and economic conditions, and how historically marginalized populations can use education to resist subjugation. My research has involved working with schools and school systems throughout the world, but too infrequently has it allowed me to return to the Caribbean for more than a short visit.

I still have family in the Caribbean, so I visit at least once a year, but I would be lying if I described myself as a Caribbeanist today. Though I have attended a few meetings and been invited to lecture, I haven't written about the Caribbean or engaged in any research related to the region in many years.

Today, I describe myself as a Caribe-phile (lover of the Caribbean). This love not only includes appreciation for the rich variety of music (both contemporary and classics), food, dance, literature, and ecosystems of the region. It also includes paying close attention to the economic, political, social, and environmental trends affecting the region and its people. I owe CSA so much for deepening that love in ways that have made it possible for me to contribute to the challenges facing the region.

Despite my estrangement, over many years, I have remained close with many of the scholars I met and connected with at CSA. Some I now regard as members of my extended family. I have cried with friends when we lost our CSA comrades, and celebrated with them when as we witnessed their children achieve critical milestones such as graduating from college, getting married, or moving on with their lives and careers. I have also seen them – children or your peer/scholars – thrive in their careers, retire as they grow old, and transition to a different phase of life.

Almost 40 years after I joined CSA, I remain connected to this community of scholars to this day. Although we are scattered across the globe, we remain united by our friendship, solidarity, and a common interest in the welfare of the Caribbean and its people.

Has COVID-19 Transformed *Thinking* and *Doing* in Local Government?

Lessons from Jamaica

ERIS D. SCHOBURGH

Abstract

The paper examines the nature and scope of local government involvement in the management of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Jamaica, to determine critical capacity endowments necessary for supporting local government as a 'first responder' and for increasing its risk tolerance profile. The aim is to generate prescriptive and generalizable information in support of continuous organisational change in Caribbean local governments. A qualitative research design was adopted. The main findings are that the local authority in Jamaica is endowed with significant levels of knowledge capital generally, and specifically with respect to its role and functions in emergency responses. However, capacity gaps were revealed in the nature of the interactions between central and local government, in key features that benchmark the local authority's risk-readiness profile and in the execution of its role as coordinator.

Introduction

There is strong advocacy for local government everywhere, but more so in small island developing states (SIDs), to assume a *risk tolerance* profile and shed post haste the *risk averse* orientation exhibited historically. The assumption is that there is a positive correlation between successful risk and crisis mitigation and local government involvement. This activism comes on the heels of substantive reframing of risks against the backdrop of two interrelated forces, namely, rapid technological advancements within the context of ongoing industrialization and a quest for responsive public management and governance systems and processes, surfacing as customer-

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000005

oriented public services. The transformations being wrought have compelled changes in thought about the role of government as well as the actions taken to affect the role envisaged. In tandem, public and policy management discourses and actions have become less dogmatic and are more open ended and pragmatic evidenced by the emerging paradigm of new public governance (NPG).

Public management and governance at different levels function within a "volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous" (VUCA) environment,[1] which is a critical consideration relative to the quality of organisational response. A VUCA environment spells significant degrees of unpredictability whether the variables are operating singly or in combination and in the latter mode can evolve into a crisis if the appropriate response is not developed. The concept of crisis is interpreted through different disciplinary lenses, but for this paper Verba's (1971) definition in Svensson (1986, 133) is sufficient: "a change that requires some governmental innovation or institutionalization." Further, adverse outcomes of risk and crisis, whether emerging as natural/environmental disasters, or human-created, or social events with disastrous consequences, are felt first and foremost in localities, rendering the health and safety of both spatial and social communities priorities for any system of local government.

Local government is increasingly being seen as a 'first responder,' a term typically used to describe personnel or services that are first on the scene of an emergency. The association of this term with local government is of recent vintage and is gaining momentum as countries grappled with managing the health pandemic. This is not a far-fetched idea, as the Local Governance Act (LGA) 2016, a significant outcome of local government reform in Jamaica, signals the manner in which local government[2] is being (re)positioned for the future. The Act establishes that "local authorities will be granted greater scope and autonomy in the management of local affairs." (Local Governance Act, 2016, 1) Such an overarching mandate sets in motion substantial deviation, at least in theory, from the institutional norm of a unitary system of government in which local government is at the behest of central government. The law was promulgated prior to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic,[3] which has wrought fundamental changes in organizations at all levels of government. Drawing on the experience of the management of COVID-19 in Jamaica, this paper examines the nature

and scope of local government involvement to determine critical capacity endowments necessary for supporting local government as a 'first responder' and for increasing its risk tolerance profile. The arguments are developed over four sections: sections one and two situate the analysis within a conceptual framework and describe the research design; sections three and four present and discuss the results of the research, followed by a conclusion.

Literature Review: Towards a Conceptual Framework

The nature of central-local relations

In 2015, the Bill to entrench local government in the Constitution of Jamaica was passed by the Senate, giving local government constitutional status which it hitherto lacked. In 2016, the Local Governance Act was passed. The extent to which these policy actions have shifted the balance of power in central-local relations in Jamaica in favour of local government is debatable. Undoubtedly, constitutional status provides for continuity and stability in the system of government, and LGA 2016 has rationalized the legislative framework governing local services provision, delivery and regulation. For sure, LGA 2016 represents the *de jure* source of local autonomy and, being the most visible output of the reform process, it boldly declares a new *modus operandi* in central-local relations. This declaration implies serious consideration of the subordinate role local government has played in central-local relations historically, for which deliberate action is required to change the *status quo*. However, as Schoburgh (2010) argues elsewhere, tendencies towards centralization have defined central-local relations in the Caribbean and, in the case of Jamaica, have precipitated negative policy stances on local government operations. While the new law is suggestive of a new order, the underlying philosophy of the institutional context remains unchanged, that is, "power and decision-making reside at the centre" (Schoburgh 2010, 35).

The outcomes of reform have been tenuous, as a consequence. Reformers exhibit an academic understanding of the value of local government, but at the same time there is a preponderance in administrative practice of the viewpoint that central government must assume oversight of decision-making and policy implementation to achieve unity of purpose. For one, central government's power is absolute on account of the sovereignty of

Parliament in which local government has no *locus standi* even with its current constitutional status. Perhaps, the hierarchy in central-local relations remains constant because local self-government is regarded as aspirational rather than practical, given the high level of suspicion that central government officials have about how local government would use the power at its disposal. Interestingly, the problem of central government interference in, or control of, local government operations has been the subject of many studies, exemplars of which are Elcock (2017) and Chandler (2001). It therefore should not come as a surprise that the issues have persisted despite a protracted period of reform in governmental systems.

Rebalancing central-local relations: The whole-of-government approach

New public governance (NPG) emphasizes "enduring inter-organizational relationships, where trust, relational capital and relational contracts act as the core governance mechanism" (Osborne 2006: 384). The "working across jurisdictions" mantra, appearing as 'joined-up government' or 'one stop-government' and at times as 'partnerships' or 'networks' is in response to the complexity and fragmentation that new public management (NPM) reforms have brought (Christensen and Laegried 2011; Halligan et al. 2011) and provides the backdrop to the emergence of the whole-of-government approach (WGA). The WGA describes a more integrated approach to problem-solving in public sector organizations. It promotes collaboration, coordination, and integration as indispensable to the pursuit of public value creation. WGA is touted as the solution to the silos through which public services are processed and which generally contribute to the pathologies in government. A few definitions of WGA from the literature are set out in table 1.

Molenveld et al's (2020) proposition that the purpose of WGA is "to align activities across organizational boundaries toward particular goals of public policy without removing the boundaries themselves" (12) is instructive. It raises the value of coordination to the top of the list of typologies of organisational relationship structuring and has made it the preeminent task. Once again Molenveld et al's (2020) work is important as it brings the most poignant frameworks and perspectives on coordination together. The institutional perspective on coordination provides insights into the culture and myth of the practice. A *cultural-institutional perspective* of coordination

Table 1: Select definitions of WGA

Grossi and Newberry (2009, 209)	The provision of public services through decentralized entities with increasing role for co-ordination and control by governments
	Government collaboration as a pathway to more efficient service delivery
Hunt (2005)	Cross-departmental and inter-organizational cooperation in the development and implementation of public policy and/or the delivery of services
United Nations (2012: 55)	A shift from structural devolution and single-purpose organizations towards a more integrated approach to public service delivery

concerns the embeddeness of certain informal values and norms that shape organisational behavior over time in a path-dependent way. Thus "cultural change is possible through major crises acting as critical junctures or through more gradual processes such as layering" (ibid., 12). Following this perspective, supporting values for the WGA can be implanted by "setting common ethical standards and cultural values and, more generally, by a supportive, trusting culture conducive to problem solving, where staff are free to find 'work-arounds' to problems." (Ibid., 12). While in the *myth-institutional perspective*, coordination is seen as "public officials introducing reform ideas, concepts, and symbols to enhance their legitimacy" (Ibid., 12). The myth is that coordination occurs in a framework characterized by territorialism and departmentalism that remains strong despite repeated organisational interactions.

The critical appeal of WGA for Christensen and Laegreid (2011) is that it "entails reaching out to society, enabling individuals and organized private actors in civil society to be better informed about public policy and participate in making policy more representative" (133). And the associated goal is to "gradually counteract the disintegration or fragmentation brought about by NPM and to restore public-sector organizations to a situation of greater integration and coordination" (Christensen 2012, 3). In the final analysis, the WGA consigns politicians to the role of guarantors of compromised deals between multiple stakeholders, while civil servants are network managers and partnership leaders" (Ibid., 2). In practice the WGA promotes three values: (a) multi-sectoral and stakeholder collaboration; (b) government as 'steerer' of collaborative efforts to achieve agreed objectives; and (c) collective

decision-making and action. Altogether these values are aimed at effective policy and improved service delivery.

Understanding 'first responder' in risk and crisis mitigation

The risk management literature is replete with perspectives on the nature, scope, and significance of risk and will not be reviewed here. It is important nonetheless to convey what is meant by risk. Suffice it to say that many definitions of risk incorporate the fundamental aspects of the VUCA acronym. Wildavsky (1998) sees risk as "the probability of encountering negatively valued events" (3) which Drennan, McConnell, and Stark (2014) relate to forecasting (2). Risk is explained as a series of social phenomena and, in this case, is distinctive of the analyses of Beck (1992, 2002) in which certain economic, political, social, and cultural conditions are thought to produce uncertainties and fundamental transformations in social structures and relationships (Adam Beck and van Loon 2000). It is within this discourse that the notion of the risk society is introduced, which Hood, Rothstein, and Baldwin (2004) interpret this way: "human activity and technology in this era of advanced modernity produce risks that require specialized expertise to assess and recognize" (3). To translate, modernity and post-modernity have pioneered considerable variability in how socio-political and economic interactionswhether between citizen and government; government and government; citizen-as-customer and business; business and government; or business and business--are structured. The International Standards Organisation (ISO) applies risk as the effect of uncertainty on objectives (ISO31000, 2018). As Hood, Rothstein, and Baldwin (2004) correctly observe, the side effects of contemporary risks are collective, global and irreversible, and the potential for these risks to create catastrophe increases each day (3).

The increased use of 'first responder' in reference to local government is devoid of a clear meaning. In fact, definitions from Cambridge and Merriam-Webster dictionaries might have been the source of its application in general administrative practice or *vice versa*. In case of the former source, a 'first responder' is "someone who is one of the first people to arrive to deal with an emergency" and from the perspective of the latter, it is "a person who is among those responsible for going immediately to the scene of an accident

or emergency to provide assistance." Noticeably, the individual, and not the organization, is the point of focus in these interpretations.

The term 'first responder' was made popular during the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the United States, September 11, 2001. It appeared in testimonies during congressional committee hearings and in bills that were never enacted (McDaniel, et al., 2013). Outside of these instances of use, there has been little attempt to provide clear delineation neither from a legal nor an academic standpoint. Nevertheless, the discourses on risk and crisis mitigation in local government are slowly usurping the term of 'first responder' as a descriptor of the role of this level of government in the VUCA environment that characterizes public governance and in light of the emergencies with which local government has to deal. Local government as 'first responder' translates into actions taken at the local level to resolve a situation that threatens safety which might include: acting as the first provider of emergency response services; activating emergency operation systems; coordinating emergency response services provided by other agencies in the public and private sectors; advising central government of the scope and severity of the situation; and proclaiming a local state of emergency.[4]

The potential negative impacts of climate change on life and livelihoods of populations, the perennial problem of poverty in small island developing states (SIDS) especially, coupled with the adverse outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic generally, necessitate an institutional response in which context the idea of 'first responder' is being pitched. Additionally, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have implied an expanded role for local government. However, in terms of its role as 'first responder' Amina J. Mohammed, the United Nation's Deputy Secretary General (UN's DSG), has been the most vocal advocate. In her opening remarks at The Local and Regional Governments' Forum, July 2018, the UN's DSG recalled the relevance of local government systems to the attainment of the (SDGs) in at-risk countries while acknowledging the perennial issue of limited capacity and support that have to be overcome by this level of government. According to the UN's DSG:

> . . . local governments are on the front-lines of the world's most daunting challenges – from climate-related drought to human-inflicted conflicts. They require support from the national and international levels, as well as from

> the private sector and civil society . . . We need to transform the way the UN system works and supports local governments to help you own and lead on SDG implementation via the Local2030 strategy.[5]

Application of the concept of 'first responder' in local government operations is not novel. Emergency management systems in developed economies have assigned a role for local government at the initial stage of emergencies. For instance, the United States' Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in its *Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning Guide for Local Governments,* published February 2017, states:

> Successful planning for recovery requires participation by local government and community leaders, officials, organizations, and individuals who are able and ready to take responsibility for shaping the future of their community. Additionally, government and community leaders who are involved in pre-disaster recovery planning should have the ability to encourage participation from all segments of the community (5)

FEMA's guidance document notes further:

> Local governments, businesses, NGOs, and their community members in particular have the primary responsibility for many recovery decisions, investments, and actions. Therefore, local governments serve in the lead role in planning for and managing many aspects of community recovery. Local recovery organizational structure must have a direct nexus with local government. Local input is also needed by State, tribal, and Federal partners so that they can design programs and policies to meet local needs. (11)

In the United Kingdom, public management practice exhibits a similar understanding about the role of local government in risk and crisis mitigation. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published its *Local authorities' preparedness for civil emergencies: A good practice guide for Chief Executives*, November 2018, in which it posits:

> When emergencies happen, the public expect local authorities and other organizations to be prepared to respond quickly and effectively to meet the urgent needs of affected local communities. Experience tells us that the public, the media and government have high expectations for public services to be maintained whatever the circumstances (5).

The UK's MHCLG guidance document further decreed:

> Local authorities are seen as the fourth emergency service. They are expected to protect, advise and provide humanitarian assistance, even outside of normal working hours (5).

Local authorities in the UK are directed "to provide leadership when responding to emergencies and in recovering from them" thus ensuring civil resilience acting on the authority of the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004. The US and the UK emergency management frameworks are unequivocal about the role of local government in risk and crisis mitigation evidenced in an expressed philosophy that *local governments have primary responsibility* (FEMA) or a designation of local authorities as *category 1 responders* (UK-CCA 2004). The differentiated political ethos is a determinant of the scope of each responder's decision authority but the lesson from these examples is that the assignment of a 'first responder' role to local government does not preclude deployment of an integrated risk and crisis management strategic framework.

In Jamaica, three pieces of legislation ascribe a risk mitigation or crisis response role to local government. First, the LGA 2016, which in Part 111 Section 21[1f] assigns a local authority responsibility for:

> Engaging in disaster preparation, mitigation, and recovery, as well as emergency management and responses within the area of jurisdiction.

Section 21[1g] clarifies the manner of execution:

> Encouraging and facilitating effective coordination and collaboration between bodies or entities that are within the public, private or non-governmental sectors and that exist or operate within the area of jurisdiction to ensure greater or better synergy, service delivery and responsiveness to the needs, concerns and priorities of inhabitants within the area of its jurisdiction.

Second, the Disaster Risk Management Act (DRMA) 2015 stipulates the duties of a local authority as being responsible for:

> . . . the functions of managing and giving effect to matters within its local jurisdiction relating to the prevention of, mitigation of, preparation for, response to and recovery from disasters.

The DRMA 2015 requires the local authority to establish a Parish Disaster

Committee and appoint a Parish Disaster Coordinator to carry out its functions on a daily basis which includes, according to Section 3[a]:

> . . . coordinating the preparation, by the Parish Disaster Committee, in consultation with the Office, of a Parish Disaster Risk Management Plan that is consistent with the National Disaster Risk Management Plan.

Importantly, the DRMA 2015 directs the local authority to not merely preserve copies of the Parish Disaster Risk Management Plan for its offices and the National Headquarters but ensure distribution to police stations, schools, churches and to oversight offices of other emergency, essential services, and voluntary organizations within its jurisdiction.

Third, the Public Health Act (PHA) 1985 (and subsequent amendments) provide for the establishment of a Local Board of Health in each parish which it further designates the local authority. Understandably the PHA 1985 specifies the functional authority of the Local Board of Health. Section 6[b-c] state:

> . . . to carry on all activities which appear to . . . be requisite, advantageous or convenient in the interest of public health . . . to enforce all regulations and orders made under this Act.

The existing legislative framework for risk and crisis mitigation in Jamaica illustrates quite lucidly that local government is indispensable to the process. The legislation has accorded local authorities different roles. It is silent, however, on the notion of 'first responder' although it might be deduced from the formal procedures emanating from the laws and informal practices, that the local authority might be the first point of call for residents, depending on the nature of the emergency.

Activation of the role of 'first responder' is not without problems in an institutional context in which the Minister has the final say in policy. Interestingly the PHA 1985 is a proverbial double-edged sword. It vests certain powers in the local authority as the Local Board of Health but simultaneously permits divestment of these powers by giving the Minister *carte blanche* to re-assign functions of the Local Board of Health to another entity or person(s) deemed fit for the purpose. There might be two reasons for this: First, the services for which local government is responsible in Jamaica are limited in scope and in the area of health is preventative in orientation.

Application of the idea of 'first responder' might be problematic in such a restrictive local services provision and delivery context and, certainly in the case of emergency responses with respect to health services, reveals a level of incompatibility with Section 14 [1a] of PHA 1985 that empowers the Minister to make regulations concerning "notifiable and communicable disease, the treatment and prevention thereof and the isolation of patients suffering therefrom." Because local government's responsibilities for health objectives are circumscribed, this provision allows the Minister the latitude to take action from the centre to deal with health emergencies. Second, the legislation promotes collaboration and coordination in all instances in which local government has a risk or crisis mitigation role which is understandable given concerns about adequate capacity to respond at the local level and which aligns with the global norm of integration. However, at the time of this research, a *Guidance Document* akin to that exemplified by the US and UK's conceptualization of 'first responder' was not found and therefore the scope of the multi-actor framework has not been clarified, with questions about leadership or other roles in the context of multi-level or multi-sectoral responses remaining unanswered.

In summary, this section explored the encroachment on administrative practices of the ideas of NPG and the integrative nature of problem-solving in risk and crisis mitigation, making the WGA a useful tool in organisational interactions. The ability of the WGA to flatten to any degree the existing hierarchy in central-local relations in an institutional setting like Jamaica is questionable. Therefore the 'first responder' role offers an opportunity for resetting organisational relationships in consonance with the new ethos. The grey literature hints of this understanding, but there is need for further action in conceptual disaggregation and classification of the hierarchy of risk and crisis mitigation roles as undertaken in contexts where local government functions as a 'first responder.'

Research Objective and Methodology

The research activity straddles two dimensions – the nature and scope of local government's involvement in pandemic management and the perception of local government as 'first responder' in risk and crisis mitigation. These two dimensions were pursued via three research objectives:

- RO1 Assessment of local authorities' involvement in the management of COVID-19;
- RO2 Determination of the critical capacity endowments necessary for supporting greater risk tolerance; and
- RO2 Determination of whether local policy officials consider the local authority as a 'first responder'.

A series of structured elite interviews targeting mayors and chief executive officers (CEOs) in local government was conducted during March 2021. The leadership of the fourteen (14) municipal corporations was invited to participate in the interviews, but only nine (9) mayors and nine (9) CEOs, representing 64% of the target population, consented. Interview questions focused on perception of local leaders' understanding of role and functions of the local authority in emergency services; knowledge of legislative framework supporting role and functions; and manner in which local authority has been involved in COVID-19 management. Questions also unearthed understandings of the concept and application of 'first responder'; the application and utility of the WGA; and organisational capacity requirements for a post-COVID era.

Presentation of Results

Understanding Role and Functions

The first line of questioning concerns local political/policy leadership's interpretation of *the role, jurisdiction and responsibility of the municipal corporation*[6] *in emergency responses*? This inquiry follows the position that knowledge and understanding of organisational mandate is a prerequisite for effective organisational response. Figure 1 indicates that the majority of the sample of Mayors (89%=8) and CEOs (89%=8) are of the view that local political/policy leadership understands the role and functions of the local authority in emergency response services. Two deviations were noted: one mayor who did not give a reason for his response in the negative and one CEO, who opined that: "the mayor understands . . . not sure about the other political representatives."

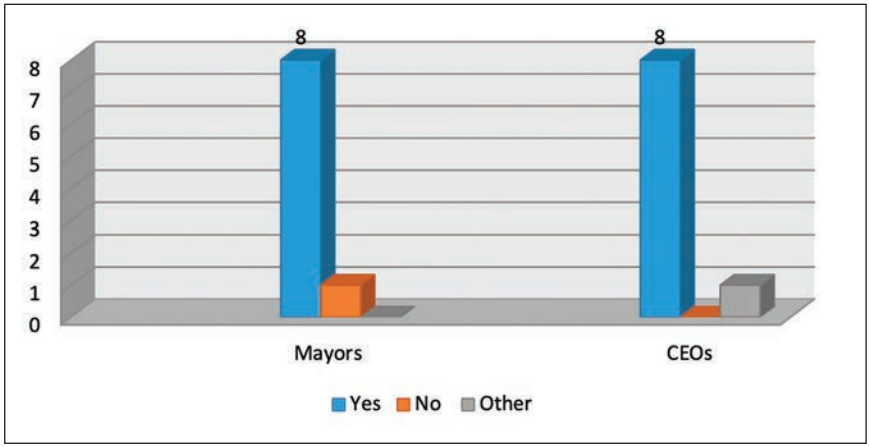

Figure 1: Perception of local leaders' understanding of role and functions

Further probing into interpretation of role and functions and knowledge of instruments authorizing the local authority to act in emergencies reveals intersections in the answers. *Leadership, management, coordination, collaboration, monitoring* are the most frequently used role descriptors. The predominant role of leadership/management rests on mayors' assessment of the municipal corporation as *primus inter pares,* evidenced in responses such as: (it) "plays a primary role and forms the core of the emergency response entities"; "anchors the response process by managing and providing information and tools"; "is the 'driver' of activities at the local level"; "is the government of the parish"; and "the first stop for resolving matters." The CEOs are of a similar view but offered other role types such as *facilitator* and *first responder* to the list. Tables 2 and 3 show summaries of the answers. In fact, when the interviewees were asked directly if they considered the municipal corporation to be the *first provider of emergency response services,* the majority of mayors (89%=8) and CEOs (67%=6) said "yes" (see figure 2). And even those who were not definitively positive in their response were neither negative. For instance, one (1) mayor said "it would depend on the emergency" while one (1) CEO made a distinction between the kind of emergency answering "yes" for natural disasters and "no" for pandemic-like threats. For the remaining CEOs (22%=2) the answer was "no."

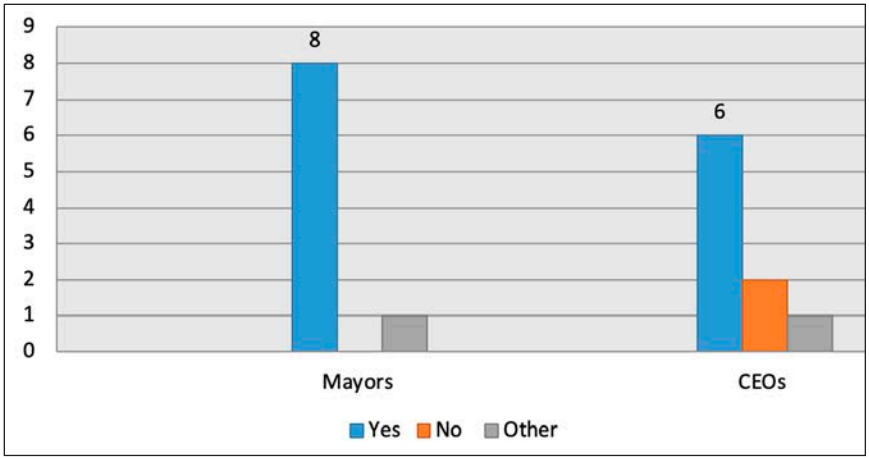

Figure 2: Is the municipal corporation a first responder?

Table 2: Mayors' interpretation of role and functions in emergency management

Role	Functions
Leadership Management	The Municipal Corporation: • Is responsible for leading emergency responses • Manages disaster preparedness strategies • Provides information and tools for disaster risk management • Assumes leadership role in disaster reduction activities M1 M2 M3 M5 M9
Collaboration Coordination	• Partners with medical professionals to form the core of emergency response • Coordinates disaster risk management activities with local police • Collaborates with agencies to strengthen the capacity of the municipal corporation to respond to emergency situations M6 M7 M8

Table 3: CEOs' interpretation of role and functions in emergency management

Sub-Themes	Summary of Responses
Leadership Management	The Municipal Corporation: • Plays both leadership and coordinating roles • Designs and implements emergency response activities through a disaster risk management team chaired by the mayor C1 C2 C6 C8 C9
Collaboration	• Collaborates with Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management in implementing community disaster preparedness activities and to train volunteers • Ensures collaboration between Parish Disaster Preparedness Coordinator
Coordination	• Coordinates activities of agencies–SDC, NSWMA, NWA, ADRA- through Disaster Preparedness Committee C3 C4 C5 C6 C7 C8 C9

Interviewees demonstrated little difficulty in identifying the legislative instruments authorizing emergency responses in local government, but the scope of responsibilities that attaches to each piece of legislation was not always clearly outlined. The perceived opaqueness could be as a result of what one mayor opines: that "the scope of responsibilities is in accordance with the type of emergency or risk," which implies that responsibilities might be shared among different organizations or between levels of government. The general consensus, however, is that the emergency response measures in local government are based in law more so than a policy directive.

Managing COVID-19: Nature and scope of involvement

A majority (83%=15) of the interviewees answered in the affirmative that their local authority was an active participant in the management of COVID-19 (see figure 3). For this group, involvement ranged between pre-emptive actions such as erection of sanitization stations in townships and operational actions such enforcement of social distancing and other safety protocols. Welfare or relief functions were also undertaken in the form of distribution of care packages to vulnerable populations such as the homeless and to communities that were quarantined. A minority (17%=3) of interviewees reported that their local authority had not been actively involved in the management of the health pandemic but pointed to local responses that were devised and initiated prior

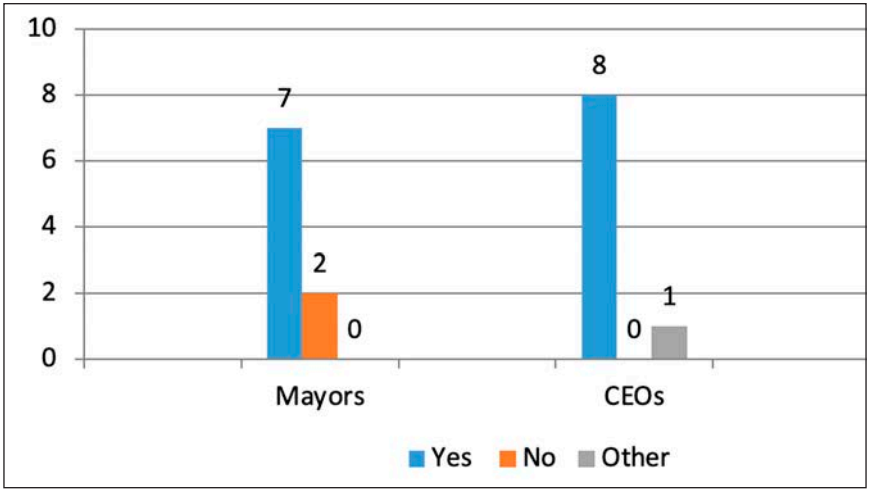

Figure 3: Has the municipal corporation been 'active' in management of COVID-19?

to, and at times independent of, actions undertaken by central government. The inference is that 'active' participation means engagement of the local authority at all stages of decision-making on the management of COVID-19 and because this was an issue for these local leaders their assessment was on the basis that their local authorities were not involved at the stage of decision-making. The reasons offered for their non-representation at the decision-phase are summarized as "weak communication channels between central and local governments leading to information asymmetry that placed the local authority at a disadvantage, and a general underestimation of the capacity of the local authority" (see table 5). Two decisions taken by central government without prior consultation with the local authority were cited: (a) lock-down of the parish of St Catherine, which includes the Portmore Municipality;[7] and (b) the ban placed on funerals and burials in March 2021.

From the answers given by interviewees, it can be concluded that local government's participation in the management of COVID-19 in Jamaica manifests as a combination of local initiatives that are derived in the main from its functional authority as the Local Board of Health. In cases where policy directives are given by central government, these are predicated on legislation that assigns a role for local government. Table 4 consolidates COVID-19 measures that were adopted and implemented in the local authorities studied. These fall into four (4) categories of activities, viz., *public education, sanitization, regulation/enforcement and welfare/relief* and from which, a general view of local government's COVID-19 management profile can be gleaned. Essentially, local government contributes to COVID-19 management efforts as an implementer rather than as a (co-) decision-maker.

This particular finding is borne out in the interview with local leaders on their perception of the WGA and the extent to which it is practised generally in their interactions with central government and specifically with respect to the management of COVID-19. The majority of mayors (67%=6) and CEOs (56%=5) demonstrated an awareness of the WGA (see figure 4), using nomenclatures such as *inter-agency collaboration*, and *joined-up governance*, and illustrating ways in which it manifests. However, when asked whether the local authority was consulted as a matter of course by central government on *issues of local or national significance and on local or national policy*

Table 4: Local government's COVID-19 management profile, Jamaica (March 2020-March 2021)

	Mayors	CEOs
Category	**Description**	**Description**
Public Education	• Utilizes town-criers to disseminate information (flyers, notices) to communities in real time about COVID-19 and health & safety protocols • Leads and organizes public awareness campaigns M1 M2 M3 M6 M7 M8 M9	
		• Hosts community-wide consultations with medical professionals C1 C2 C3 C4 C6 C7 C9 • Collaborates with the Social Development Commission (SDC) to communicate and enforce protocols in communities C2 C4 C5 C8
Sanitization	• Assumes function as the Local Board of Health working in consultation and collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MOH) M1 M2 M3 M7 • Installs and maintains hand-washing stations at strategic locations in town centres and in infirmaries • Distributes masks to residents/citizens • Schedules periodic cleaning and sanitization of markets, town areas and equipment • Strengthens human resource capacity at infirmaries through employment of additional staff C1 C3 C4 C6 C8 and M1 M2 M3 M7 M8 M9	
Regulation and Enforcement	• Ensures residents/citizens observe protocols • Collaborates with the health department and police to enforce rules • Manages public access to rivers and beaches in line with guidelines established by the MOH and Orders promulgated under the Disaster Risk Management Act C2 C4 C5 C8 and M2 M3 M6 M8 M9	
		Ensures local businesses adhere to COVID-19 protocols established by the MOH
Welfare/relief		Spearheads relief activities targeting vulnerable populations

formulation and implementation, the responses provide much clarity on local government's placement in central-local relations. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate that mayors and CEOs agree that the local authority is consulted 'frequently' on local issues and local policy but 'seldom' on national issues and national policy. Perceptions were not as sharp among the CEO group on the question of policy consultation as there was an equal number who described the interaction as 'frequently' as it is 'seldom'.

Table 5: Reasons for non-integration into management of COVID-19 (3 Respondents)

General theme	Sub-theme	Summary
Central government mistrust or underestimation of the capacity of local government	Centralizing tendencies or top-down approach of central government Lack of collaboration between central and local government	Central government: • Appears to have limited trust in the capabilities of local government • Does not recognize the potential of local government to direct and manage emergency responses • Underestimates the ability of local government to respond effectively in emergency situations • Does not recognize what local government can offer in the management of emergency situations and national development M4 M5

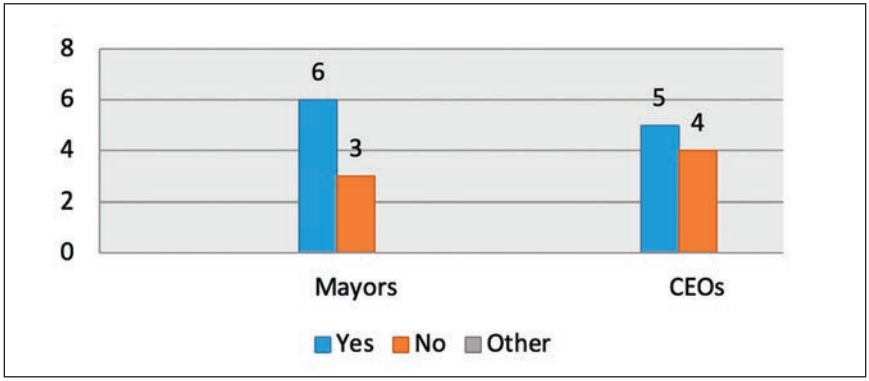

Figure 4: Awareness of WGA

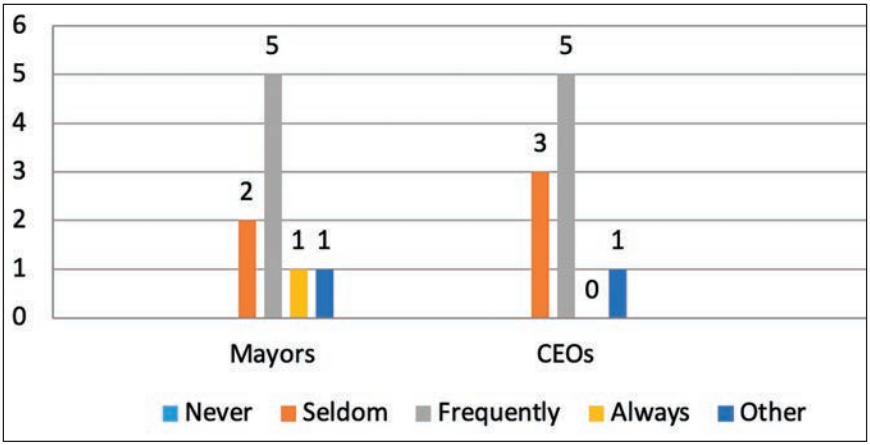

Figure 5: Frequency of consultation on local/national issues

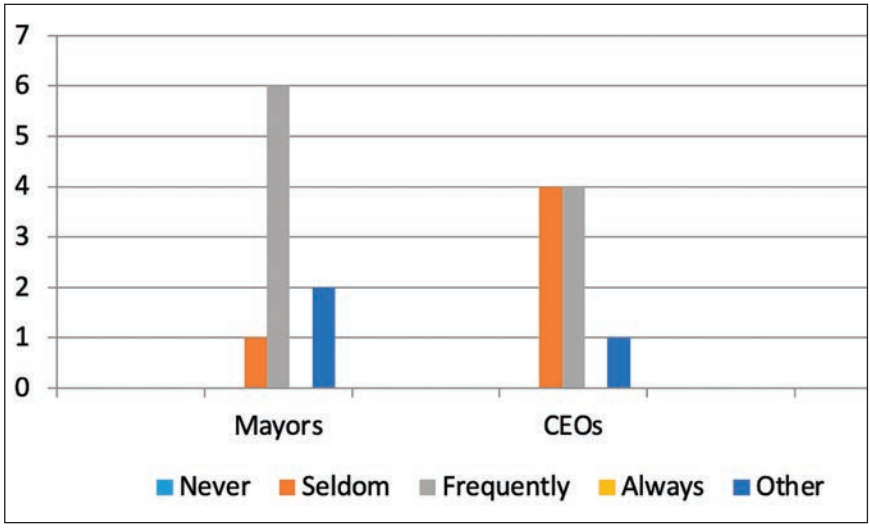

Figure 6: Frequency of consultation on local/national policy

Capacity appraisal and benchmarking

Whether an organization is directly or indirectly involved in managing COVID-19 has not changed the fact that no process or system has remained untouched in how it functions in the context of the global health pandemic. It was therefore necessary to learn from those at the forefront of ensuring the health and safety of communities, their perception of the capacity issues that have been revealed during the current crisis, which must be addressed for the local authority to be able to perform at an optimal level in risk and crisis mitigation in the future. The results shown in table 6 are classified into *personnel gaps* – number and quality of staff as well as knowledge base of political representatives; *decision-making and communication gaps* – weak channels for communication and absence from planning efforts; *infrastructure gaps* – inadequacy of internal work environment; limited diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into work processes; and *funding gaps* which are self-explanatory.

Table 6: Perspectives on capacity needs for post-COVID reconstruction and beyond

Personnel	Decision-making/ Communication	Infrastructure	Funding
Insufficient human resources to carry out and monitor emergency responses M6 M7 M8 M9 Need emergency volunteers of a younger age group Political representatives need training to address knowledge gaps in disaster risk management C3 C4 C5 C6 C7 C8 C9 Training additional persons to assist with investigation and information dissemination Additional municipal police and increased enforcement authority akin to the Belize Model	Inadequate communication channels between the municipal corporation and the public Information sharing between the national and local level is constrained Information flow from the centre to the municipal corporation is sporadic C3 C6 C2 Need for greater cooperation among the local authority, the health department and the ministry of labour and social security in formulation of plans M1 M3 M7 Municipal corporation's management of COVID-19 could be enhanced through greater consultation and collaboration with central government Members/representatives of municipal corporation should be a part of the decision-making process	Municipal corporation lacks the relevant equipment for emergency responses M6 M7 M8 M9 Services provided by the municipal corporation could be improved through digitization C3 C6 C2 Inadequate ICT infrastructure in municipal corporations C3 C4 C5 C6 C7 Work from home orders create challenges for municipal corporation functioning owing to lack of modern office tools and equipment that allow for portability Limited spaces for isolation at infirmaries C3 C4 C5 C6 C7 Need for dedicated vehicles to transport emergency response staff	Limited financial resources M6 M7 M8 M9 and C3 C4 C5 C6 C7

A very small percent of the sample of mayors (22%=2) pointed to "a list of stakeholders with interests in the work of the local authority and resources" that could be mobilized to enhance its capacity in risk and crisis mitigation. According to them, "the municipal corporation has established partnerships with critical service agencies working at the local level and as a consequence collaborating to leverage additional capacity is possible." Local political representatives were for one (1) CEO, a significant source of informational capacity for the local authority in terms of the feedback loop in implementation as they "are visible, fully engaged with communities, . . . have critical knowledge about community happenings and can assist in building acceptance especially in the case of the inoculation process." The minority position indicated by the foregoing answers is that in its present organisational form, the municipal corporation has the capacity to assist in the management of COVID-19 or a similar crisis. Lesson-drawing and organisational learning are thought to be other sources of capacity to which the local authority can avail itself. The inference is that successful risk and crisis mitigation does not rely solely on internal organizational capacity but also on sources external to the local authority. However, mobilization of external sources of capacity brings into focus the capability of the local authority to structure and maintain these inter-organisational relationships and networks.

Local leaders were asked to say to what extent the local authority meets a generalized standard of operating, which based on international experience, undergirds application of the concept of 'first responder,' and more broadly delineates the nature and scope of local government's involvement in risk and crisis mitigation. A determination could then be made about risk-readiness of the local authority and by extension of local government, as well as the attendant capacity needs. The criteria covered, inter alia, division of functions, specification of role; control of funds and decision, emergency response strategy, cross-coordination/communication; and citizen participation. Figures 7 and 8 illustrate the results.

Both mayors and CEOs estimate that the local authority meets the international norm for risk and crisis mitigation readiness. Of the fourteen (14) criteria, the local authority meets thirteen (92.8%=13) from the perspective of mayors, and eleven (78.6%=11) from the perspective of CEOs "to a large extent", "to a moderate extent" or "to some extent". The local authority was

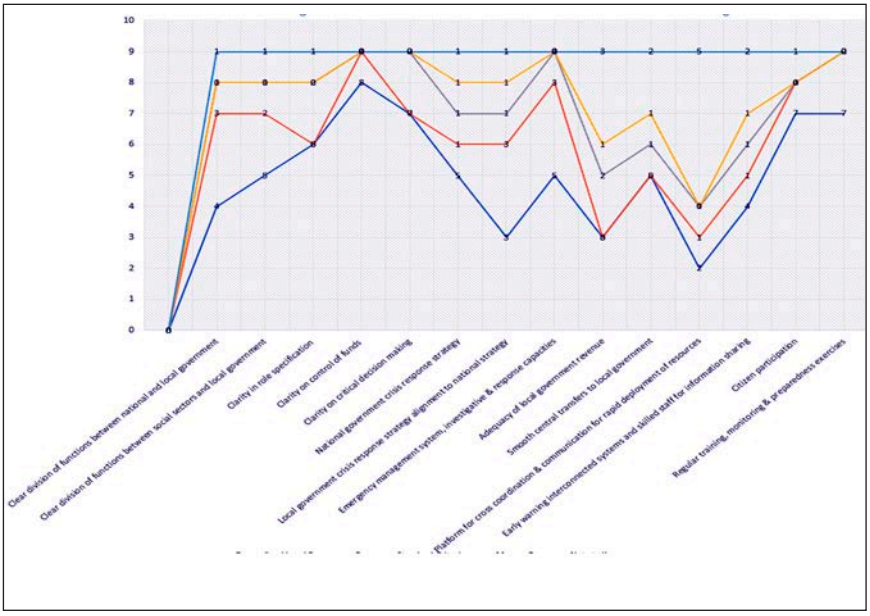

Figure 7: Mayors – Emergency Response Benchmarking

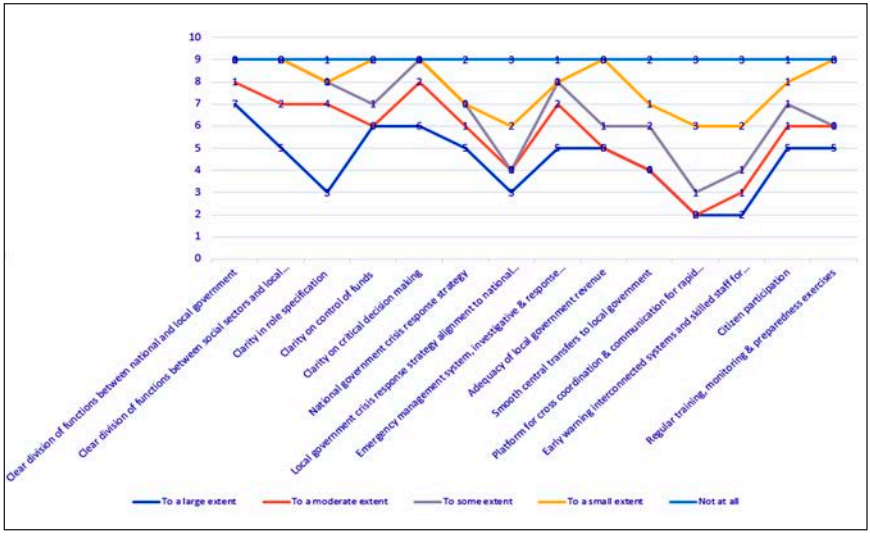

Figure 8: CEOs – Emergency Response Benchmarking

adjudged as failing to meet the criterion that requires it to have *a platform for cross coordination, communication and for rapid deployment of resources*. The majority of mayors said the platform was non-existent, while the majority of the CEOs vacillated between the values "to a small extent" and "not at all". A few mayors and CEOs claimed that this criterion is met through the use of 'networks' such as the professional grouping of mayors and CEOs, whose members communicate in real-time via WhatsApp messaging, outside of regularly scheduled meetings, as well as by other traditional media and communication technologies during the pre-COVID-19 period. Noticeably, the CEOs broke ranks in the assessment of the local authority against three (3) criteria: On the matter of a *local government crisis response strategy that is in alignment with a national strategy*, CEOs recorded "to a small extent" (2) or "not at all" (3); on whether there are *smooth central transfers to local government,* CEOs evaluated the experience of the local authority "to some extent" (2), "to a small extent" (1), and "not at all" (2); on the question of the existence of *early warning interconnected systems and skilled staff for information sharing,* the majority of CEOs noted the limitations in this area, hence the answers "to a small extent" (2) and "not at all" (3). Although the majority of CEOs were positive about the conduct of *regular training, monitoring and preparedness exercises,* it must be noted that selection of the value "to a small extent" (3), even by a minority, suggests a level of concern about sufficiency.

Discussion

What might be surprising to many commentators on local government systems in Jamaica are the significant levels of knowledge capacity with which the local authority is endowed generally, and specifically with respect to its involvement in risk and crisis mitigation. This is revelatory given that the general theme running throughout Caribbean rhetoric on local government systems is the assertion of limited to non-existent capacity. This position is accepted even in the absence of clarification about types of capacity. Yet knowledge and information capital are levers for organisational learning and ultimately organisational response-*ability,* which according to A. Pratibha (*HuffPost* 2017), is the ability to *consciously* and *deliberately* choose responses with *intention* and *care*.

The research found that there was no ambiguity in local leaders' understanding of the role, jurisdiction, and responsibilities of the local authority. Further, there was lucidity that emergency response measures in local government are based in law, more so than on policy directives, even with an acknowledgment that the legislation makes provision for a Minister to promulgate policies that activate an emergency-type response from local government at any time. It was also found that local leaders' interpretation of local government's role and functions in risk and crisis mitigation as depicted in figure 9 aligns with the legislation as seen in the phraseology of respective instruments – *engaging in*; *encouraging and facilitating effective coordination and collaboration* (Local Governance Act 2016 {Section 21[1f-g]}); *managing and giving effect to matters within its local jurisdiction* (Disaster Risk Management Act, 2015); and *carry on all activities . . . enforce all regulations and orders* (Public Health Act 1985). Arguably, local leaders' perception of the local authority as a 'first responder' in risk and crisis mitigation suggests a degree of prospective analysis towards the objective of continued organisational relevance and response-*ability* to community. That the legislation might not have been explicit in the idea of 'first responder' does not disqualify this conceptualization of function

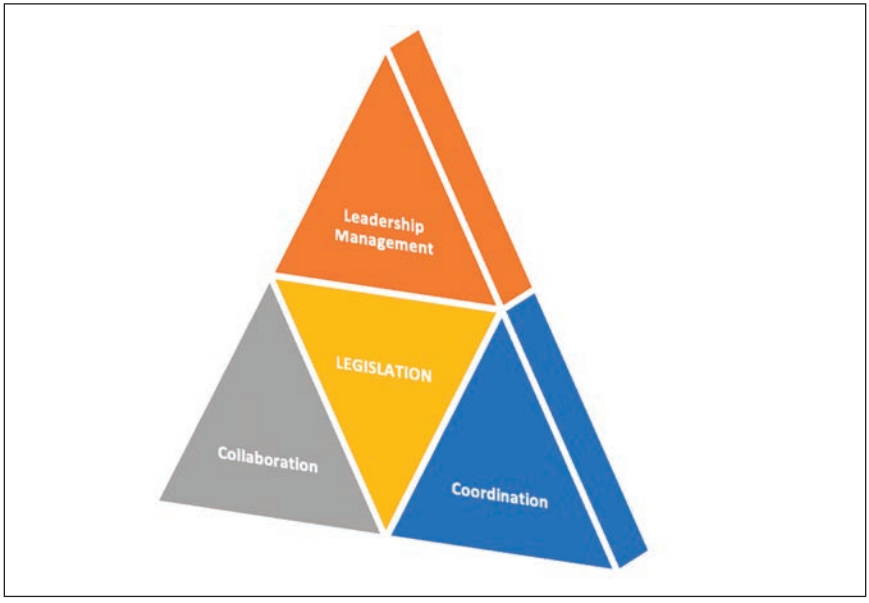

Figure 9: Local leaders' interpretation of local authority role in emergencies

from being inferred as it sets the foundation for local government to shift the balance of power in central-local relations in its favour and reposition itself to leverage critical resources.

The idea of a 'first responder' is pertinent to building efficacious and sustainable local government systems because it modernizes the philosophy that underpins the existence of that level of government, particularly in small political economies like SIDs where issues of size and resources are used to eclipse local government operations. It expands associated principles and values that might induce rethinking and redefinition of the role of local government making its organisational framework better prepared for functioning in, and leading communities to navigate, a VUCA setting. On a practical level, application of the idea of 'first responder' or 'first provider of emergency services' places the local authority in a more powerful bargaining position. But it is the latter in which lies the challenge because formal application of the idea of the local authority as a 'first responder' demands cognitive engagement with *what*–entailing definition and classification of risks and crises; *how*–concerning rationalization of roles and functions; and *when*–dealing with parameters of response through construction of a hierarchy of response-typologies. The idea of 'first responder' obliges both central and local governments to grasp dimensions of application such as content, method, and timing of this particular role enactment against the backdrop of the encroaching ideas of NPG.

Moreover, local government is one actor in a system of local governance in Jamaica. Central government is another and, without a doubt, the policy actor with which to reckon in subnational matters. And when civil society actors as provided for under LGA 2016 are inserted into the mix of interactions at the local level, a complex web of dealings and contacts is created. Local leaders intimated at the fluidity in roles that the local authority assumes in emergency responses. For sure the management of COVID-19 at the local level reflects this fluidity and reinforces the integrative nature of risk and crisis mitigation. However, the local authority as *coordinator* is more demanding than current practice suggests or perhaps than what local leaders perceive and thus represents an area for urgent capacity enhancement. Coordination emerges as a legitimate role for local government (as it is for central government) because the authority *to coordinate* is derived from a democratic process, and, therefore, local government has a duty to oversee a

range of social and economic activities and to ensure equitable distribution among its constituents. Local government has both legitimacy and a duty to coordinate all systems of distribution at the local level. But coordination in government at any level has not been unproblematic. Recent experience with the local authority's involvement in the management of COVID-19 in Jamaica throws up overlapping functions and repetition as well as hints of departmentalism.

The *cultural-institutional perspective* of coordination exposes the capacity issues with which local government must contend to build organisational resilience in the future. Molenveld et al. (2020) drawing on (Carayannopoulos (2017) define coordination as "creating a common whole-of-government identity and a collaborative culture where collective outcomes and means of working are prioritized over individual goals" (260). Robinson, Hewitt and Hariss (2000) see coordination as "a way to bring disparate agencies to make their efforts more compatible in the interest of equity, effectiveness and efficiency" (7). Clearly, coordination involves more than working together; it demands:

(a) a break from established norms–engendering culture shift;
(b) articulation of vision, mission, and strategy–fashioning commonality of interests; and
(c) strong political capital–claiming authority and legitimacy.

Fundamentally, coordination is premised on the coordinator having authority to act. And in this case local government has that authority. Capacity enhancement in the area of coordination must attend to horizontal and vertical as well as internal and external coordination. And from the local authority's experience with the management of COVID-19, these dimensions of coordination are no easy feats.

The participation of local government in the management of COVID-19 revealed that local authorities were largely implementers of decisions taken by central government and for the most part were not 'active' participants in shaping the decision-making process. Some argue that the nature of the emergency required a centralized response. While a valid point, implementation of these decisions is done in communities over which the local authority has formal oversight and jurisdiction. The local authority has a role to play at the problem definition and the solutions design stages. Weak

communication channels and centralized decision-making were among the capacity gaps local leaders identified. But given the nature of central-local relations in Jamaica, this problem might not be resolved unless local government strengthens its internal capacity and leverages the appropriate external capacity to ensure access to and/or command and control over policy relevant information relative to its jurisdictions. Post-COVID-19 reconstruction of local government organizations is about moving beyond the obvious deficiencies in human, physical, and relational capital to dealing with capabilities that appear imperceptible at present but on which are predicated its source of greater autonomy. Some of these are:

(a) capability to collect, store, and retrieve data and information on communities in real time and disaggregate data/information for historical and prospective analyses;
(b) greater diffusion of ICTs as an administrative and policy tool;
(c) spatial/mapping or environmental scanning capabilities to identify environmental and social risks which capabilities raise the value of policy relevant information on number, size and placement of factors such as informal 'people' settlements; formal and informal businesses; market utilisation;
(d) psycho-social analytic capabilities to understand culture and behaviour;
(e) data-driven local policy and planning;
(f) organisational reshaping to enable cross-coordination to strengthen internal capacity.

Implicitly, the proposition is that modern local government must acquire its organisational risk appetite by establishing innovative inter-organisational relationships and assuming its position in the arsenal of crisis and risk mitigation strategies at any given juncture to remain responsive to citizens' needs.

Conclusion

The conclusion highlights the main findings of the research which are: (a) the local authority in Jamaica is endowed with significant levels of knowledge capital generally and specifically with respect to understanding its role and functions in emergency responses; (b) emergency response functions are

provided for in a body of laws, but role-specification is open to interpretation. The LGA 2016 provides a broad framework for risk and crisis mitigation in local government but which is somewhat open-ended and requires administrative actions to establish an integrative framework for risk and crisis mitigation and clarify organisational boundaries at the local level; (c) there is considerable fluidity in the role-enactment of the local authority in emergency responses; (d) local leaders view the local authority as a 'first responder' in emergencies whose assessment is expressed in *the spirit* but not *the letter* of the law; (e) the local authority participated in the management of COVID-19 at the level of implementation but appears 'absent' from the critical stage of decision-making; (f) capacity gaps were revealed in the nature of the interactions between central and local government, in critical features that benchmark the local authority' risk-readiness profile and in the execution of its role as coordinator.

Notes

1. The VUCA acronym first appeared in the language of military planners in the United States shortly after 9/11 but has crept into the discourses on contemporary public management and governance to illustrate the nature of the environment. An article by Jeroen Kraaijenbrink published in *Forbes* December 19, 2018 explains the terms: volatility refers to the speed of change; uncertainty refers to the extent to which the future can be predicted confidently; complexity concerns the number of factors, the variety and their relationships that have to be taken into account; and ambiguity which is the lack of clarity about how to interpret an event. Webbed at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeroenkraaijenbrink/2018/12/19/what-does-vuca-really-mean/?sh=2362bcf117d6.
2. For a description of the system of local government in Jamaica, see Schoburgh (2006; 2009).
3. On March 4, 2020 Jamaica recorded its first COVID-19 infection with intermittent increases in the rate of infection triggering a raft of measure adopted by the government to flatten the curve. Similar to global responses, measures included lock-down of geographic areas; island-wide curfews; work-from home orders. At the time of this research, infections were in the range of 2000 persons. An inoculation programme began in April 2021, but rate of take-up by the population is affected by access to vaccines and fear of the effect of vaccine, none of which is unique to Jamaica.

4. See e.g. FEMA's training modules.
5. Deputy Secretary-General's Opening Remarks at the Local and Regional Governments' Forum, July 16, 2018. Webbed at un.org.
6. Local government authorities (local authorities) in Jamaica are known as Municipal Corporations
7. Following a sharp rise in the number of COVID-19 cases in Jamaica, from 73 to 105 in less than 24 hours, with 31 of the cases being linked to the Portmore-based Alorica call centre, the government announced a seven-day lock-down as of April 15, 2020.

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A Small Remainder of Teeth

The National Art Gallery of the Bahamas and the Aesthetics of Anti-Paradise

LETITIA MARIE PRATT

AT THE END OF THE WESTERN CORRIDOR IN THE National Art Gallery of The Bahamas' Temporary Gallery (T2) hangs Stan Burnside's *Communion with Nature* (1998) and *Communion with Nature 2* (1998). The two square oil paintings are substantial in their subtlety: the muted colors clash and bleed into arid black, looking–sounding–like an echo in a great void. Suffice to say, the moody palette and the chaos of the composition are antithesis to the serene, bright imagery we typically see representing the Bahamian landscape–particularly considering the history of tourism advertisements in The Bahamas where American photographers like Jacob Frank Coonley and William Henry Jackson sought to market the islands as an idyllic escape. This juxtaposition is one of the main arguments put forth in *A Small Remainder of Teeth: Ecohorror and the Anti-Paradise*, an exhibition that opened on September 19, 2024. Burnside's paintings represent a long tradition of Bahamian artists critiquing ideas of beauty and upturning notions of the picturesque, a tradition that the National Art Gallery has historically exhibited throughout its twenty-year run.

Opened in 2002, The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas often highlights work that critique coloniality and the aesthetics of paradise. Its permanent collection features pieces that expound on this history – from the pre-independence postcards, to tourism photography, to the eventual post-independence era of decolonial self-representation. For the past twenty years, the gallery has created a space to record these artistic and cultural movements, framing its mission to support nation-building and the intellectual ingenuity of the Bahamian people. In fact, the very genesis of the museum was borne

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000006

out of a desire to create a space for the Bahamian people to explore their identities. In the early nineties, historian and scholar Dr Gail Saunders thought that the young nation needed a place to not only talk about Bahamian history, but a place to imagine where our culture can go; an art museum was the perfect vehicle for this type of imagining. She soon connected with art collector Vincent D'Aguilar, and, together, they formed a founding board dedicated to the opening of the museum.

With this mandate in mind, the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas has been careful in selecting curators that critique colonialism and imageries of the picturesque, as the museum is used as a space for unearthing these histories. The Inaugural National Exhibition (INE), curated by the museum's first chief curator and director Dr Erica Moiah James, displayed artwork that that was emerging in the Bahamian art community from the nation's independence in 1973 to 2003 – to codify the decolonial representations of Bahamian identities and new aesthetics in relation to nationhood. On the Bahamian artist's role in revealing and creating new histories, James writes: "The time has come for The Bahamas to embrace the rich, complex, and sometimes ugly aspects of its history. Not in a romantic uninformed way, but centering this grounding on the history of this coming together." (p.8). James' vision for the institution was instrumental in solidifying the NAGB's tradition of colonial critique and exhibiting artworks that reflect the honest and often overlooked parts of Bahamian identity beyond the boundaries of paradisical representation.

Thus, there have been many shows at the museum that upturn the aesthetics that emerge from the colonial imagination. A notable example of this is Dr Krista Thompson's *Developing Blackness,* an exhibition that was a direct response to the tourism photography of Coonley and Jackson. The exhibition explored the Bahamian people's traditions of photography that emerged during The Bahamas' independence era in multiple studios located in the over-the-hill communities. Thompson argues that this photography practice was instrumental in the development of Bahamian identities, especially the identity of the black local who, in a traditional Coonley photograph, is often regulated as a prop of the environment. The aesthetics of selfhood and self-determination thrived in the independence era, as the nation contended with building a strong identity separate from the hegemony of colonial rule.

This sensitivity to the community's response to coloniality is essential in

creating exhibitions that tap into the ways local artists respond to feelings of repression and myths of paradise. Accompanying the need for honest self-representation is the desire to reflect the relationship that the local has with the environment that upturns ideas of serenity and openness. An exhibition that recorded this history was Holly Bynoe's *Transversing the Picturesque,* a survey show that spans landscape representations from 1856 to 1960. In it, Bynoe draws a throughline from paradisical aesthetics to the colonial imagination of the exotic and tropicality, ultimately showing how these aesthetics influenced Bahamian contemporary artists like Eddie Minnis and Brent Malone. When it comes to *A Small Remainder of Teeth,* the relationship the artists have with their environments are discussed through the lens of ecohorror, bringing to focus the complicated emotional relationship to beauty and the picturesque, especially considering that the often-lauded serene environment is plagued by new ecological crisis and legacies of colonialism.

A Small Remainder of Teeth is an abstract show that reveals the emotional and often anger-ridden relationship that the Bahamian people have with the landscape. The imagery presented by the sixteen artists in the show is wreaked with darkness, decay, and chaos, reflecting both what they see and feel as they contend with the notion of survival. In the last few decades, there have been numerous studies asserting the precarity of The Bahamas in the wake of climate change, arguing that the islands are among the most vulnerable in the Caribbean because of its low elevation and limestone makeup (Gerhardt, 2023). The nation is currently experiencing more intense heat, powerful rains, and violent hurricanes than it has ever witnessed before, and with the violence of Dorian, a powerful hurricane that devastated the Abaco and Grand Bahama Islands in September 2019, anxieties around survival have become the new normal. Yet, there is hardly anything normal about this. In an article written about the mental health condition of survivors, scientists found that "high proportions of Dorian survivors seen at the clinic had significant symptom elevations for major depression, generalized anxiety, or PTSD" (Shultz et al, 2020). The fraught relationship that locals have with the environment has long been intertwined with our social history, and as the nation learns how to contend with the mounting vulnerabilities to the climate crisis, artists find new ways to depict our islands and our emotional response. *A Small Remainder of Teeth* is not the first exhibition to tap into this reality: The National Exhibition 5, held in 2010 and curated by Holly

Parotti, also called for artists to respond to the climate crises by asking them to consider the theme "Carbon Footprint." Almost certainly, the exhibition would have been inspired by the string of devastating hurricanes that The Bahamas was starting to experience, like Jenne and Wilma five years prior, which struck Grand Bahama with unexpected force. Parotti also considered the repercussions of the 2010 earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti and the oil spill that same year in the Gulf of Mexico, and what these natural disasters were beginning to mean in the wider Caribbean. "[These events] also bring forth the fear and probability that we may not or are not paying due care and attention to the consequences of our exploitative conduct," Parotti writes in the curatorial essay for the show, urging people to consider the consequences of environmental exploitation.

Living in a state of fear of losing your home to flooding, hurricanes, or earthquakes is certainly different from the advertised tropical haven that has been mythologized for centuries. Many Bahamian scholars and poets have challenged the myth of paradise for this very reason. Ian Strachan, in his book *Paradise and Plantation,* asserts that these advertisements are tactics used to seduce the traveler to re-colonize the landscape. The imagery used in tourism advertisements are meant to tap into this colonial imagination, where, as Strachan writes, "The beach is uninhabited. . . . It is a sunny day; presumably as it always is. The land awaits the arrival of the tourist" (p.30). It is a tactic to continue the cycle of exploitation. The work in *A Small Remainder of Teeth* has been organized under the different ways the artists depict the horrors of environmental loss and how it affects people that live on the islands. Separated into four chapters, [1] Decay, [2] Anger, [3] Limit, and [4] Chaos, it portrays new ways ecohorror permeates the Bahamian psyche: from the putrid malaise of the landscape to the boundaries enacted on residents by barriers of colonialism.

The exhibition is inspired by Sonia Farmer's *A True and Exact History* (2018), a hand-pressed artist book that upturns these imageries imposed by the colonial imagination. Farmer, a contemporary Bahamian poet, has long used her poetry as a tool to upturn voices of oppression and create new narratives of liberation. Because of this, Farmer often writes erasure – a genre of poetry where the poet takes a primary text and "erases" or "lifts" phrases to create new poems. The result of this is a text that often problematizes the original, as tension emerges between the original phrasing and the clever

interplay that the poet creates. It is a playful way to abstract language and create new meanings that critique the intentions of the original author. The same tactics are used in the work within *A Small Remainder of Teeth:* the artist upturn, problemetize, and critique the master narrative of the colonial eye. The abstract thus becomes a tool for liberation.

The erasure poem within *A True and Exact History* is lifted from Richard Ligon's *A True and Exact History of the Islands of Barbadoes* (1657), which Farmer discovered during a writer's residency at Fresh Milk, Barbados, where she completed an artist residency in 2016. She refers to it as "part guidebook, part candid travelogue, part serious natural history, and another part business manual" in an artist statement of the text. In the book, Ligon outlines managing a plantation during his life on the island, and his depictions of the environment are full of the colonial myth of the tropics, not dissimilar to the eye of a traveler looking for the ideal paradisical postcard. *A Small Remainder of Teeth* draws a relationship between this text and the colonial myth created about the islands of The Bahamas. Farmer's upturning creates an image of a people that are grappling with the anxieties of an environment being constantly plagued by the effects of colonialism and paints images that are filled with anger rather than sanguine or tropical. The poem has in total eleven speakers: ONE: an ex-pat; TWO: an immigrant; THREE: an undocumented island resident; FOUR: an island citizen; FIVE: an African slave; SIX: an historian; SEVEN: a colonial slave master; EIGHT: an indigenous person of the Caribbean; NINE: the Edenic island; TEN: the colonized island; and ELEVEN: the free nation. The title of the show emerges from the mouth of FOUR, the island citizen, who laments over the embedded anger that the land holds within its history because of the abuse it endured.

> FOUR:
> yet spring
> is not to be endured without spoyl
> these roots have a small
> remainder of teeth
>
> ONE, TWO, THREE & FOUR:
> feed upon
> the soil of this place
> (p.9)

According to Steven Rust and Carter Soles (2014), ecohorror is found in

"texts in which humans do horrific things to the natural world, or in which horrific texts and tropes are used to promote ecological awareness, represent ecological crisis, or blur the human/non-human more broadly" (p 509). Sharae Deckard (2023) also defines it as "nature that oozes, claws, bites, swarms, strangles, creeps or seeps, splattering capitalism's environmental history into gory consciousness" (p.3). And while most of the speakers in Farmer's narrative are human – apart from speakers NINE, TEN, and ELEVEN, whose voices are of the islands and the nation–the speakers always reference the uncanny nature of being and living in an environment that is (re)negotiating methods of survival under imperialism. The poems result in voices that conjure feelings of uneasiness with violent, gnashing imagery. "To feed upon the soil" or "roots-teeth" are among many unsettling images within *A True and Exact History* that reflect this embedded anger.

The method of deconstruction in Farmer's text is often used as a tool of reclamation within Bahamian art history and can be found as a chief methodology within all the works exhibited in *A Small Remainder of Teeth*. You can follow this method throughout all the texts found within the show. For example, Lavar Munroe's *Never Again Shall this Beautiful Land Experience the Oppression of One by Another* (2012) also upturns traditional landscape representation with unsettling imagery. "My intentions were to construct a chaotic environment with dismay, filth, and disaster," writes Munroe about the piece in an artist statement" (p. 442). This is also true of Jordanna Kelly's *Nostalgia Series,* where Kelly's use of organic materials and manipulation of the landscape taps into the shared social memories of place and childhoods enmeshed in chaos and eco-disaster. Like Farmer's *A True and Exact History,* their depictions of the land – the disorderly mis-mash of the apparent garbage piling atop each other, the swirling mass of found objects – not only reflects the violence enacted on it but also symbolizes the chaos that erupts from class and social hierarchies. Within all the pieces within the show, artists metaphorically sift through the debris to find the true validity of the colonial ideal – uncovering the truth of living in a space in constant negotiation with the power structure of colonialism.

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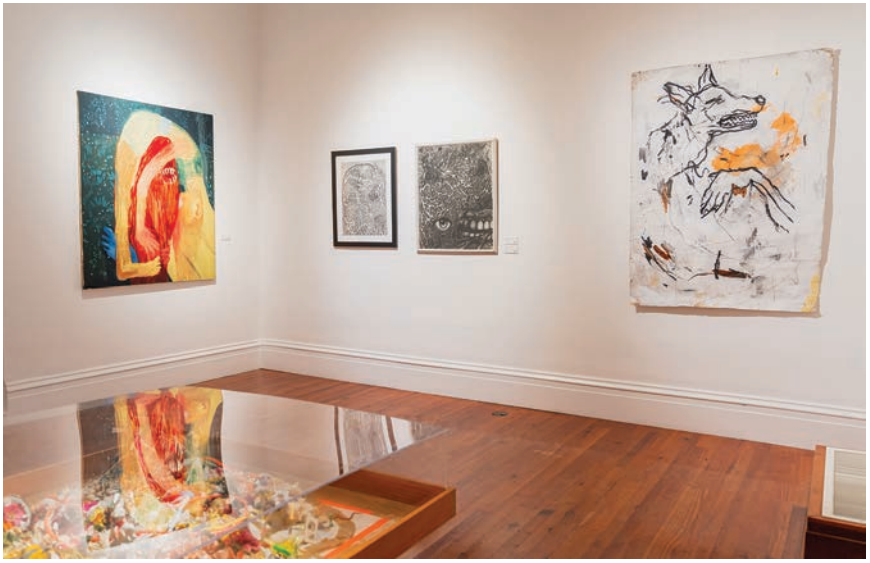
Front View of the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas.



(*From left to right)*: Allan Wallace, *Mental Apocalypse* (n.d.). 32.75" x 26.75", graphite; Allan Wallace, *Twisted Emotions* (1996). 31" x 21.5", graphite; Heino Schmid, *Potcake 8* (2018). 59" x 44", acrylic, graphite, and charcoal on paper; *Potcake 7* (2018). 52" x 42", acrylic, graphite, and charcoal on paper; (mounted on floor): Lavar Munroe, *Never Again Shall this Beautiful Land Experience the Oppression of One by Another* (2012). 57" x 52" x 11", mixed media on plywood.



Lavar Munroe, *Never Again Shall this Beautiful Land Experience the Oppression of One by Another* (2012). 57" x 52" x 11", mixed media on plywood.



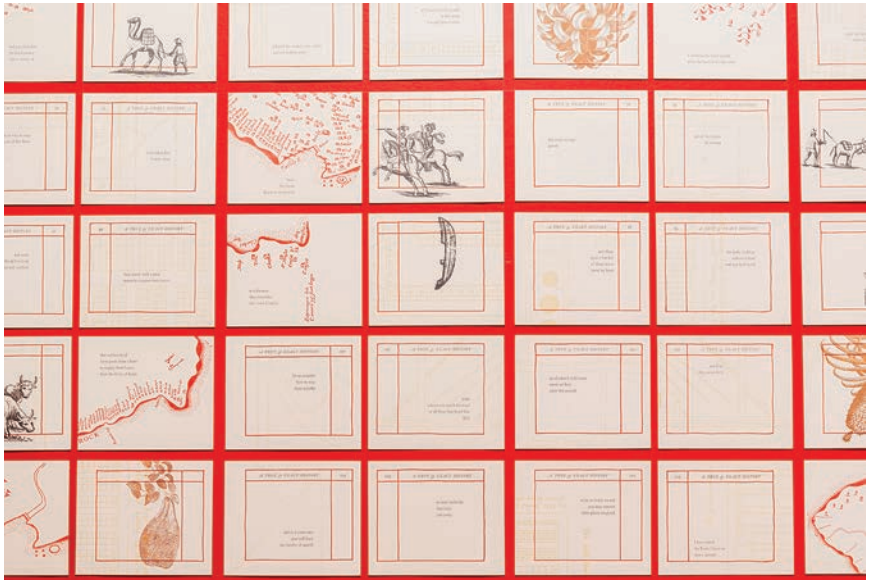
(*From left to right*): Tessa Whitehead, *Mine* (2018), 40" x 24", oil on canvas. Allan Wallace, *Mental Apocalypse* (n.d.). 32.75" x 26.75", graphite; Allan Wallace, *Twisted Emotions* (1996). 31" x 21.5", graphite; Heino Schmid, *Potcake 8* (2018). 59" x 44", acrylic, graphite, and charcoal on paper. (*Lower left corner*): Lavar Munroe, *Never Again Shall this Beautiful Land Experience the Oppression of One by Another* (2012). 57" x 52" x 11", mixed media on plywood.



Sonia Farmer, *A True and Exact History* (2018). 3" x 13" x 5", display of handprinted pages and handmade artist box.



Sonia Farmer, *A True and Exact History* (2018). 3" x 13" x 5", display of handprinted pages and handmade artist box.



Detail shot: Sonia Farmer, *A True and Exact History* (2018). 3" x 13" x 5", display of handprinted pages and handmade artist box.



Detail shot of poetry excerpt: Sonia Farmer, *A True and Exact History* (2018). 3" x 13" x 5", display of handprinted pages and handmade artist box.



(*From left to right*): Stan Burnside. *Communion with Nature* (1998) 18" x 18", acrylic on linen; *Communion with Nature 2*, (1998). 18" x 18", acrylic on linen.

The National Gallery of Jamaica

A Shift in Perspective

O'NEIL LAWRENCE

ONE OF THE KEY MANDATES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF JAMAICA (NGJ) is to "promote our artistic heritage for the benefit of future and present generations." In practice, this means curating exhibitions that foster active engagement between the public and the cultural and social heritage conveyed through the multigenerational visual practices of our artists.

The Kingston Biennial is the NGJ's flagship exhibition. It serves as a dynamic platform for dialogue between Jamaican and Caribbean artists – both in the region and its diasporas – and their audiences. Conceptually anchored in Dr. Krista A. Thompson's seminal text *An Eye for the Tropics*, its current iteration, *Green X Gold*, co-curated by Dr. Ashley James and me, showcases the work of 28 artists who explore, interrogate, and challenge the tropical imaginary.

Beyond the biennial, many of the NGJ's exhibitions, such as the *Explorations* series, aim to create meaningful connections between local communities, the broader Caribbean, and their diasporas. Our commitment to expanding the visibility of Jamaican art extends beyond our walls to international collaborations. For example, our participation in projects like *Historias Afro-Atlânticas / Afro-Atlantic Histories* at MASP (São Paulo, 2018) and *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting* at Zeitz MOCAA (Cape Town, 2023) has not only introduced Jamaican art to new audiences but also contributed to scholarly discourse through publications and online platforms.

When curating an exhibition, we begin by establishing a thematic framework that guides the selection of artists. While retrospectives often focus on a single renowned figure, most of our exhibitions encourage a broader search for emerging and established artists whose work aligns with the chosen theme. Unearthing underrepresented voices can be challenging,

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000007

which is why the NGJ hosts biennial submission-based exhibitions at both our Kingston gallery and National Gallery West in Montego Bay. These open-call exhibitions provide opportunities to discover and engage with artists who might not have otherwise been on our radar.

In selecting works for exhibitions, we prioritize feasibility – ensuring we have the necessary space, technological capabilities, and thematic cohesion to showcase each piece effectively.

Historically, the NGJ has played a vital role in shaping national identity. In the post-colonial era, nationalist movements, led by figures like former Premier and National Hero Norman Washington Manley, leveraged art and literature to forge a sense of Jamaican identity. Many works from that period remain iconic within the national artistic landscape. A key aim of our collection is to document artistic expression in a way that reflects pivotal socio-political moments in our history. Through exhibitions and publications, our curators and researchers seek to provide nuanced, critical, and accessible perspectives on Jamaican culture.

As a national institution, the NGJ operates within a unique framework – balancing public interest, legal obligations, and curatorial innovation. While our status as a government agency presents certain limitations, we remain committed to fostering exhibitions that challenge perspectives, amplify underrepresented voices, and create spaces for meaningful discourse.

Addressing social issues is a fundamental part of our curatorial practice. Our current exhibition, *Kingston Biennial 2024: Green X Gold*, confronts contemporary concerns while situating them within historical contexts. Through diverse mediums, participating artists explore themes such as the environmental and social impact of deep-sea and bauxite mining, the exploitative nature of Caribbean tourism, and the politics of beach access in Jamaica.

Similarly, past exhibitions like *Masculinities* (2015) have tackled pressing social issues. By juxtaposing historical and contemporary works, *Masculinities* examined evolving perceptions of masculinity in Jamaica, sparking critical conversations about normative and transgressive identities. Such exhibitions are supported by educational programming featuring artists and scholars who provide deeper insight into these complex themes.

Engagement and accessibility are central to our exhibition planning – from conceptualization and naming to physical design. We strive to ensure our

research-driven exhibitions resonate with diverse audiences. To enhance visitor experience, we incorporate technology, such as QR codes that link to recordings, videos, and contextual texts.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, we expanded our digital outreach through webinars for art teachers, demonstrating how NGJ resources could be integrated into classrooms. We also developed online resources for CSEC Visual Arts students, available on our blog and YouTube channel.

In 2021, I curated *Surreal Black*, a virtual exhibition exploring artistic dialogues surrounding the African Diaspora, including themes of systemic racism and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. This digital approach allowed us to reach a global audience despite physical restrictions.

Our social media presence continues to grow, providing a space where education and entertainment intersect while maintaining a strong connection with our audiences.

At the NGJ, we function as both a museum and a contemporary gallery. Our first floor houses permanent displays of seminal Jamaican artists such as Edna Manley, Mallica "Kapo" Reynolds, and John Dunkley. The *Historical Galleries* and A.D. Scott Galleries present a survey of artistic production from the Taino era through colonial times to Jamaica's development as an independent nation.

On the ground floor, we stage two to three exhibitions annually, often pairing historical and contemporary works to create thematic, narrative, or historical dialogues.

Predicting future exhibition trends is inherently difficult, as cultural shifts can have sudden and significant impacts. However, we anticipate that advancements in digital media technology and the increasing complexity of conceptual frameworks will continue to shape our programming.

For me, decolonization begins with a shift in perspective, and art has th – power to inspire such change. From the early Jamaican nationalist movement to the present, artists have consistently challenged colonial structures and contributed to progressive thought.

Looking ahead, I hope the NGJ broadens its reach and impacts a greater number of Jamaicans. Dispelling the notion that the gallery is an exclusive space for the affluent is crucial – our mission is to serve all Jamaicans.

Since 2015, the NGJ has conducted *Writivity*, a program supporting

Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Visual Arts students in developing their reflective journals, a key component of their school-based assessment (SBA). This five-day workshop blends theoretical and practical exercises, utilizing our exhibition spaces and research materials to teach students how to analyze and contextualize art. Representatives from the Ministry of Education also participate, ensuring students understand assessment criteria and expectations.

The NGJ's Education Department offers a range of guided tours tailored to primary and secondary students, fostering art appreciation and hands-on creativity. Strengthening partnerships with the Ministry of Education and Youth and the Jamaica Tourist Board presents significant potential for expanding our impact. Aligning our mandates can create mutually beneficial opportunities for all involved.

Private sector sponsorship is always welcome, but strategic collaborations – such as joint events and consultations – could also yield substantial benefits for both the NGJ and its partners.

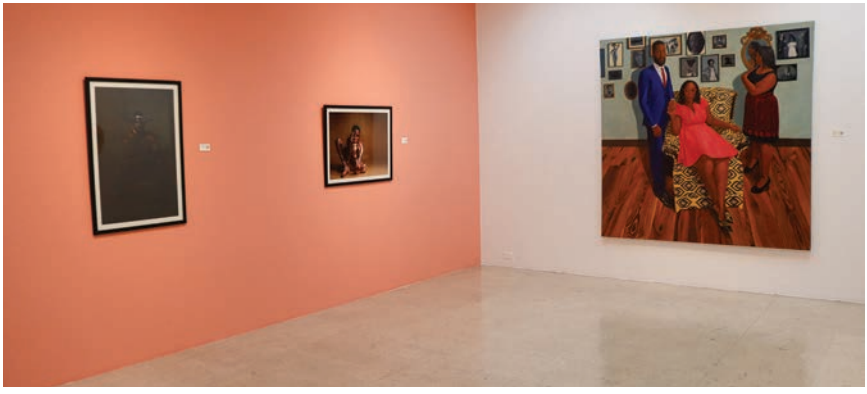
Growing up on Jamaica's north coast, I was surrounded by artists and regularly attended exhibitions by the Western Jamaica Society of Fine Artists. I became aware early on of the tensions between North Coast and South Coast artists regarding access to opportunities and exhibition spaces. My time at the NGJ has given me a more nuanced understanding of these dynamics, but it hasn't changed my fundamental goal: to create greater equity within the Jamaican artistic community. I strive to put artists at the forefront of our initiatives, ensuring their voices and work receive the visibility they deserve.

I hope my legacy as a curator will be one of challenging the status quo while fostering a sense of community.

O'NEIL LAWRENCE is an artist, curator, researcher and writer. Lawrence has worked at the National Gallery of Jamaica in various capacities since 2008, most recently as Chief Curator. He was the lead curator on the exhibitions Seven Women Artists (2015), Masculinities (2015), I Shall Return Again (2018) and Beyond Fashion (2018). His research interests include race, gender and sexuality in Caribbean and African Diaspora art and visual culture.


NATIONAL GALLERY OF JAMAICA
GREEN AND GOLD
KINGSTON
BIENNIAL
2024-2025


THE 30th
ART of REGGAE
EXHIBITION







Blackfullnes

Emancipation 2024, St Croix

DAISY HOLDER LAFOND

> *"Here in the Virgin Islands is where I've chosen to live. I feel that the strength, the beauty, the peace of life in St Croix is part of my defense kit; it's a part of what keeps me alive and able to fight on . . .*
>
> *Being surrounded by Black people's faces . . . Basically there is a large and ever Present Blackfullness to the days here that is very refreshing . . ."*
>
> —Audre Lorde, *Above The Wind, An Interview, Callaloo*, by Charles H. Rowell

BLACKFULLNESS: EMANCIPATION 2024 **IS NOT ONLY THE MOST** appropriate title for an art exhibition celebrating the 1848 Emancipation of enslaved Africans in the U.S. Virgin Islands (former Danish West Indies), at Fort Frederik Museum, Frederiksted, but the fact that the fort is the site where the emancipation occurred 176 years ago is more than staggering. Indeed, it is exactly where 8,000 enslaved Africans led by General Buddhoe (John Gottlieb) gathered peacefully with conch shells blowing and church bells ringing that fateful day on July 3, 1848, to demand their freedom. The result: Governor General Von Scholten responded in the affirmative:

> All unfree in the Danish West Indies are from today free . . .

Freedom at last! What joyfulnes . . . What *Blackfullness!* And now 176 years later, approximately nine generations, we are here still, and the joy of freedom continues as the spirit of resistance is alive and well. Indeed, *Blackfullness* is at "the core of the Virgin Islander's identity etched into everything that makes Virgin Islands' cultural production so powerful," says Chief Curator Monica Marin of the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Div. of Libraries, Archives, and Museums.

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000008

In planning the exhibit, which opened July 12, 2024, the chief curator invited artists from the Virgin Islands, those connected to the Virgin Islands, and those across the African-Caribbean Diaspora to imagine a more just future for the Black majority of Virgin Islanders. She asked that their art respond to a variety of pertinent questions to include:

- What new structures can we build, and what old ones can we reclaim and reconstruct?
- How has the history of Black protest and activism in our region influenced transatlantic Black radicalism and liberation?
- What are the histories of colonialism that are etched into the landscape?
- What remnants remain and what is our new coloniality?
- How do we promote inside-out growth in our region instead of continuing to overvalue outside thinking and development?
- What does Blackfullness mean to you, how would you define it through the five senses?
- As we close out the 175th year since Emancipation and reflect on what it means to be free under the liminal status of being a territory owned by, but yet not a part of, the United States, imagine a more just future for the Black majority of Virgin Islanders.
- How can we use our differences to work together better against the exploitation and destruction of our children, our land, our resources, our planet?

Following the call to artists, thirty-three artists responded with awe-inspiring work, to include: Waldemar Brodhurst, Jeffrey Rezende, Victoria Rivera, Lucien Downes, Elisa McKay, Danica David, Niarus Walker, Adrian Edwards, Ray Llanos, LaVaughn Belle, El'Roy Simmonds, Elwin Joseph, Stuart Rames, Quiana Adams, Mike Walsh, Danielle Kearns, Rob Gibson, Tralice Bracy, Therese Trudeau, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Ra Malika Imhotep, Eric Paxton, Ayanfe Olarinde, Paloma McGregor's A'we Study Group featuring Sayeeda Carter, Nina Mercer, and Rosa Navarette, Afreekan Southwell, and the CHANT artisans: Allem Harry, Ny'Jah Eugene, Patrick Albuja, Daniel St. Jean and Mathew Ramos.

The 2024 exhibit was a success. Visitors and residents alike have verbalized their enjoyment. Most special was the work of Lucien Downes, who received much praise for his *Queen of the Dance*. The ephemeral image of a bamboula

dancer captures the movement of this sacred dance and African drum rhythm used to organize without the colonizers knowing.

The Bamboula and the drums were banned during the enslavement period, but, fortunately, it was revived during the 1950s when Carnival was also revived. According to the Europeans, the dance was "too free, earthy and African; rotating, agitating their posterior lobes . . . the dance becomes an obscene fertility rite." That was the Eurocentric view; but no longer.



Queen of the Dance by Lucien Downes

Fortunately, the cruise ship dock in Frederiksted is only a few steps away from Fort Frederik; thus, many visitors view and enjoy the exhibits.

Indeed, the spirit of resistance is alive and at the core of the Virgin Islander's identity, as Marin so rightfully acknowledged, and, indeed, the art exhibit powerfully highlights the significant influence of Black protest art.

Hence, several works from the exhibition are featured on ensuing pages below. All photos were taken by Stephanie Chalana Brown. Also featured is a photograph of Fort Frederik.

- Adrian Edwards' Coming in from the Fields represents a free and jubilant people celebrating the Emancipation.
- Elwin Joseph's *Mending My Nets* depicts a timeless image of a fisherman crafting a fish net somewhere in the Caribbean or Africa.
- La Vaughn Bell's *Effluvia* is a short video filmed in the swamps of South Carolina. Bell traverses former rice plantation sites of slave rebellions to explore what histories ooze from the earth and water.
- Stuart Rames' *West End Social* illustrates a traditional sense of community



Coming in from the Fields by Adrian Edwards



Still image from *Effluvia* by La Vaughn Bell

in Crucian culture – Blackfullness, our traditional rhythm, a sound born and developed from the ebb and flow of Slavery.

- Elisa McKay's *Moondance:* "Blackfullness is what I feel through dance. It is my innovation to the ancestors for their wisdom of self-love and healing that I can embrace and share . . ."
- African Southwell's *Duality* is his woodwork with an African face inside a conch shell.
- Mark Feijao, II Milligan with Danica David and St Croix Educational Complex High School students' Keepers of the Flame (Mural detail 1/5 panels) illustrates Emancipation night in the moonlight, a conch shell blower, and free, jubilant people dressed in white with Fort Frederik in the background.

The Fort Frederik Museum, also known as Frederiksfort, was built between 1752 and 1760 and is a U.S. national historic landmark. It was named in honor of the then reigning Danish monarch, Frederik V. An earlier fort, St James, built by the English, was constructed on the same site during the 1640s, captured by the Spanish in 1650, and later used by the French between 1650–1695.

And what better site to establish a museum – a site of more than 300 years of history, good and bad? And best of all, the birthplace of freedom for Virgin Islanders, the fort is located on the west side of Frederiksted, overlooking the turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea. It was renovated in 1976, and continues to serve as a museum. Additionally, it is a popular venue for many cultural and social events.



Keepers of the Flame, 2023 by Feijao Milligan and Complex High School

According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, a museum is an institution dedicated to preserving and interpreting the primary tangible evidence of humankind and the environment. However, in many cases, they are removed in time, place, and circumstance from their original context.

Not so with Fort Frederik museum; it is still standing strong. Besides being the birthplace of freedom, it is also the venue for many other important historical events, including the 1878 Firebun (Fireburn).

Thirty years after Emancipation, the situation of workers on St Croix was not much improved. The people were still in bondage – this time forced to sign an annual contract that bounded them to the plantation and meager wages. On Oct. 1, 1878, instead of signing the contract, the workers revolted, setting fire to Frederiksted and all the sugar works and cane fields. The leaders

were Queen Mary (Mary Thomas), Queen Agnes (Alexina Solomon), and Queen Mathilda (Bottom Belly, real name Susanna Abramson).

The title "queen" was based upon the African concept of family. The woman/mother was the nucleus of the family. She was revered and in charge of all social activities. Under Slavery, the concept was broadened. A queen was chosen for each plantation or estate, and she was usually noted for her skills, bravery, and intelligence and presided over various celebrations and functions, according to *The Umbilical Cord* by Harold W. L. Willocks, and thus they were large and in charge of the 1878 Firebun.

In recent history, the fort has been used by the Virgin Islands government as a police station, jail, court, fire department, public library, and telephone exchange. Indeed, since 1848 and forevermore, Fort Frederik will be remembered as the site of freedom – the July 3, 1848 Emancipation, which ended Slavery in the Danish West Indies, now U.S. Virgin Islands.

Today there are rotating and permanent exhibits in every space on the ground level including contemporary art by Virgin Islands artists, an Indigenous exhibit, an Emancipation in the Danish West Indies exhibit, a Vernacular Architecture exhibit, Chaney and Seaglass, and a Moko-Jumbie exhibit, among others.

On the second floor there is a permanent exhibit highlighting locally crafted mahogany antique furniture from the 18th and 19th centuries, which were handcrafted on St Croix by Afro-Crucian woodworkers.

Indeed, Fort Frederik is more than 300 years old and obviously in need of more than a facelift; thus, the building will undergo a $6.2 million restoration scheduled to begin sometime in 2025. The DPNR-DLAM staff strives to share the authentic stories of the powerful history of Frederiksted and has been working alongside community stakeholders to center the Fort Frederik Museum as the cultural anchor of Frederiksted. Future plans include the redevelopment of the permanent exhibitions, to include a gift/book shop.

Over the years, the museum has curated and produced many important exhibits and facilitated educational outreach and community programs that reclaim, honor, and memorialize the authentic stories of Frederiksted, St Croix, and its role in the global history of Black liberation. Indeed, Fort Frederik provides a door to a deeper understanding of the legacies of freedom for the descendants of Africans who resisted oppression. Thus, St Croix was

recently designated a National Heritage Area, and Fort Frederik Museum is positioned to be the primary landmark for heritage tourism.

The restoration of permanent exhibits will unite and instill pride in all Virgin Islanders, whether living in Christiansted, Charlotte Amalie, Cruz Bay, or Frederiksted. As this is what museums do: keep us in touch with our past, our ancestors, and each other. Fort Frederik is indeed the primary historical and cultural landmark in the United States Virgin Islands that tells the triumphant history, herstory, and *Blackfullness* of the people.

DAISY HOLDER LAFOND is a former newspaper editor, columnist, and magazine publisher whose work has appeared in various publications. In 2012, she received The Caribbean Writer's Marguerite Cobb McKay Prize; in 2016, second place winner, Small Axe Poetry Competition; and in 2022, *Interviewing the Caribbean's* Catherine James Palmer Poetry Prize. She presently resides on the island of St Croix, United States Virgin Islands.

The History of The National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago

RUBADIRI VICTOR

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (NMAG) is located at #17 Frederick Street in Port of Spain, the capital city of the island of Trinidad. Trinidad lies 11km (6.8 miles) off the north eastern coast of Venezuela.

The Museum prospectus identifies the Museum's mission thusly: "To foster public awareness, understanding and enjoyment of T&T Human and Natural Heritage through the collection, preservation, research, presentation, and interpretation of significant and representative collections of that heritage."

The Museum has been closed for renovations since May 2023 and is due to be re-opened in 2025. The renovations – which include roof repair, structural retro-fitting, and general restoration to make it fit-for-purpose – are reported to cost TT$27 million (US$3.98 million).

Establishment

The Museum was declared open on September 17th 1892 as the Victoria Institute. It was built to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria and as a part of general English policy to build and increase cultural buildings in the colonies. It was built in the German Renaissance style designed by the architect Daniel M Hahn. On its opening, the Institute provided amongst other things: rooms of scientific research and a branch of the British Medical Association; an Office of the Agricultural Board; a Museum of Commercial Samples; a Museum of Natural History, Art, and Models; and room for Microscopic and Scientific Apparatus and for classes in Science and Art. The cost of the building was $6,500.

Two years after opening members and associates of the Institute added reading and recreation rooms to the structure, with a game room. It was also a meeting place for naturalists, literary, medical, and agricultural societies. The Museum also served as a teaching centre with classes for instruction – from

Caribbean Conjunctures
DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000009

Spanish to bookkeeping to dress-making. There were also evening meetings for the discussion of scientific questions and annual courses and lectures.

Expansion and Tragedy

The designation 'Royal' was added in April 1913 when the Marie Louise Hall was opened by Princess Marie Louise, a cousin of the king. From then on, the building was called the Royal Victoria Institute (RVI).

On April 1st 1920, tragedy struck when fire destroyed the interior of the building. The bulk of the valuable collections were lost.

In 1928, the interior was restored – with the assistance of business firms – to match the original design, but instead of an Institute of Science and Art, the RVI was used for drama and theatrical and musical entertainments.

In 1945, exhibition and activities were expanded to give the Institute the official status as Museum.

Federation and Independence

In 1958, the Federal court was set up to hear cases involving the historic attempt at the West Indies Federation in the Marie Louise Hall. The West Indies Federation unfortunately collapsed in January 1962.

The Museum then transitioned to the newly constituted local government upon Independence on August 31st 1962.

From Independence, the Museum building was used as an arm of the then Ministry of Culture under the leadership of art educator and artist MP Alladin, who was also director of culture from 1965 to 1979. Renaissance woman choir master curator, and visual artist Pat Bishop helmed the Museum for a period in the 80s and attempted to deepen the collection.

In the post-Independence history of the Museum, its dominant personality was Dr. Claire Broadbridge, who served as director from 1983 to 1997. Her tenure was productive, even though somewhat controversial. She renovated the displays, saw to the repatriation of a number of Cazabon paintings, and expanded the Museum footprint to the Museum of San Andres by renovating the old Spanish Fort. She was very proactive at a time when the Museum and the arts were on the government back-burner and personally

campaigned for private sector funding to sustain Museum operations, but she was criticized for her lens being too Eurocentric and her curatorial style as being too conservative and dry.

As director, Broadbridge was succeeded by Vel Lewis in 1997. Vel's tenure started off with a cosmetic change to the Museum layout that updated its look, and a lot of great plans and vision. Unfortunately, many of these plans did not materialize, leaving the greater cultural stakeholders disappointed. The calls for the renovation of the Museum and for the expansion and intensifying of its curatorial activity rose especially in the 2000s when there was an unprecedented oil and gas boom in T&T, with billions of dollars being spent on what many deemed non-essentials. This period was also marked by expansions and innovations in museums globally – in terms of architecture, design, displays, curation, and outreach. For many, it seemed that T&T was stagnating in its facilitation of its creative industries and cultural forms.

Strangely enough, the Museum has always had a lot of expertise sitting on successive boards, but seldom have these boards had success in the implementation of their more progressive ideas.

The Museum is now under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and the Arts. There is presently no director. The chairman of the current board is senior artist Ken Crichlow, with vice-chair Edric Murray. Other board members include curator Nimah Muwakil, writer Barbara Jenkins, artist Brianna McCarthy, artist Clayton De Freitas, financial services professional Bliss Seepersad, and Tobagonian artist Desron Clarke.

Branches

Branches of the NMAG include the Museum of the City of Port of Spain, whose main exhibit is the Humming Bird II, the 40ft ketch that the Trinbagonian La Borde family circumnavigated the world with from 1969–1973. At one time it was designated for a 'museum of social movements' to document the history of T&T's many transformative individuals, organizations, and communities. These range from Native resistance to European colonization to the Black Power movement of the 1970s, from the Hindu movement to cultural self-affirmation to T&T's global role in establishing the Pan-African movement through George Padmore, Henry Sylvester Williams, and CLR James.

Despite the need for such a compelling museum, this never materialized.

Lately it has been designated a museum of the City of Port of Spain, documenting the history of the capital city. To date, the facility has remained effectively closed. During its stop-start existence, the facility has been used as a general all-purpose exhibition hall featuring shows by individual artists and curated historical exhibitions.

Also under the NMAG is the Museum of the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago and the Money Museum located in the Central Bank at Eric Williams Financial Complex, Independence Square.

In 1989 an 11-person team was appointed by the government to serve on an interim committee overseeing the development of the Carib Street Power Station in San Fernando, which was supposed to become the South Trinidad Museum and Art Gallery. This Museum never materialized.

As it stands at the moment, the southern part of the island does not have a branch of the National Museum.

The Collection

The Frederick Street main National Museum and Art Gallery manages a permanent collection of some 10,000 items. The Museum has seven major galleries internally: Art, Social History, Natural History, Economic History, Petroleum, Geology, and Sports. The Natural History, Petroleum, Geology, and Social History exhibits have remained unchanged for more than three decades. There also is a break-out room featuring T&T's Sports Hall of Fame.

The Museum houses a permanent collection of paintings by the 19th century painter Michel-Jean Cazabon in a small gallery and is the world's leading repository of his works.

The Art Gallery normally shows a rotating exhibition of pieces from its larger permanent national art collection. That collection includes paintings, sculptures, and objects from great T&T artists like the founding generation of Sybill Atteck, Amy Leong Pang, and Hugh Stollmyer; to the folk generation of Leo Glasgow, Louison, Boscoe Holder, MP Alladin, and Alfred Codallo; to the Independence generation of Carlisle Chang, Willi Chen, Le Roy Clarke, Ken Morris, Carlisle Harris, Ken Crichlow, Ralph and Vera Baney, Pat and Mary Chu Foon, Isiah Boodhoo, Holly Gayadeen, Shastri Maharaj, the Singh Brothers, Glen Roopchand, and others; to the moderns like Wendy Nanan, Chris Cozier, Eddie Bowen, Irenee Shaw, and Steve Ouditt. There

are also pieces by Mas Man Peter Minshall and the brilliant chair sculptures of Francisco Cabral.

There is also a small gallery on Trinidad's Carnival arts.

The Museum's art collection itself has been criticized by many artists and stakeholders for a lack of rigour in its representation of the schools of T&T art and for numerous blind spots in its repertoire. In a multi-ethnic and hotly contested class and cultural space like T&T, such debates are expected and necessary. The Museum itself needs to have a transparent collections policy accompanied by a more public sharing of the full extent of its National Collection. A properly constituted national collection of artefacts, artisan and art pieces from a nation of such a rich and diverse history and population as T&T, would make the Museum an international destination of note.

Greater Questions Surrounding The National Collection

Given T&T's phenomenal history there is a cogent argument for the Museum to be split into three major collections in three separate buildings that can properly house them – as is standard international museum best practice. The three separate institutions would be a Museum of Natural History, Museum of Social History, and a properly constituted National Art Gallery that can house the rich variety of Trinidad and Tobago's visual arts.

For instance, a proper permanent collection of grand master artist Le Roy Clarke's paintings and illustrations could take up a sizeable building four times the size of the entire National Museum complex! If the nation is serious about having a representative national collection, it needs to seriously rethink its current NMAG footprint and start annexing and constructing buildings that can house it fitfully. Such an expansive view can also precipitate T&T entering the global art dialogue – touring and sharing its collection and battling to establish its master artists as part of the global canon. Because of the miserliness of space and political attention that art receives locally, a lot of these greater civilisational agendas have gone abegging.

There is also an argument to be made for a separate carnival and steelband museum to house a permanent collection of T&T's phenomenal Carnival history and artefacts like its majestic King and Queen of Carnival costumes. Such a facility would be stadium-sized and would be a wonder of the world. This writer curates an annual exhibition entitled 'Pantheon: an Exhibition

on the King and Queen Costumes of the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival'. That exhibition takes up the entire building and grounds of Mille Fleurs, one of the Magnificent 7 buildings around the Queen's Park Savannah, a building as large as the RVI.

All these dreams and debates point to a significant truth. As it stands, the current footprint of the all-purpose NMAG on Frederick Street can scarcely contain its modest collection, far less its potential collection, and severely restricts the acquisition of the diversity and abundance of work that should be part of a Trinidad and Tobago permanent collection.

Temporary Exhibitions

The Museum also mounts a lively programme of exhibitions each year. Because of space limitations, these exhibitions are normally housed in the Museum Annex, with larger shows warranting the removal of the Museum's Art Gallery exhibition to facilitate them.

Extra Facilities

The facilities at NMAG also include a 50-seat audio-visual theatre.

Research and Documentation

The Museum does not have a dedicated research and publication unit, but continues to initiate or support modest research projects in art, history, and biosystematics.

Sales

There is a modest Museum souvenir desk where the Museum sells souvenir prints, cards, and other items.

Off-Site Storage

The Museum maintains a climate-controlled storage facility at Chapmans in the Fernandes Complex in Laventille.

Migrating the Institution to a Statutory Body & International Best Practice

Administratively, the Museum was declared a statutory body in 2000, changing its original post-Independence designation as an arm of the Ministry of Culture and the Arts. The statutory body designation would give the Museum more autonomy to go about its larger curatorial and international work. That migration of the Museum administratively was held in limbo for over a decade and officially began with the board of 2012 (and still continues to this day, two decades later)!

The Tobago Historical Museum

The Tobago Historical Museum, located at Fort King George in Scarborough, Tobago, is not under the National Museum but a separate entity. The Museum boasts a collection of Amerindian artifacts, military relics, and documents from colonial times. The Museum is an excellently landscaped and run facility with well-deployed exhibits. The Heritage Building that it exists in has been excellently preserved.

The Future

The NMAG is still arriving at its identity. In its present incarnation (pre-renovations), it is a serviceable Independence-era (1960s) container of ideas and artefacts. But given the innovations in Museum design, outreach, and curation of the last 40 years, NMAG seems stuck in its namesake. It has remained 'Victorian' in its outlook and collections.

Especially given the sheer riches of T&T's social and cultural history and its plethora of artists and artforms, the Museum's collection needs to be expanded and diversified. Diversifying its collection would mean filling in the narrative holes in its current catalogue. This may entail pursuing expanding its collections of female artists, working class artists, naïve artists, and imaginative artists versus the landscape artists that dominate the collection; T&T's artisan crafts; modernist and young artists; and upgrading the Museum's sculptural collection.

Also, in a nation of festivals where there are so many artefacts created for processional and outdoor-based rituals, the Museum shows a disturbing

absence of such artefacts. The Museum has to ask itself a question of how it engages the collection and display of such artefacts and the curation of festival and ritual phenomena which characterize the Trinbago landscape. Does the Museum deploy satellite museums inside the communities that such rituals emerged from? Does it simply support the emergence of such heritage-based museums as independent entities? Or does NMAG need to create space in another building for such an important part of the T&T national identity?

The challenge of real estate confines not only the ambition and possibilities of the institution, but the larger dreams of the civilisation. The Museum footprint remains much too small and modest for a country with the rich visual arts and artifact heritage that Trinidad has. From 40 ft x 40ft King and Queen of Carnival costumes, to 16ft to 30ft Hosay Tadjahs, to 60ft Ramayan Ravan effigies, to 10ft x 30ft steelpan racks, T&T creates hundreds of large beautiful and unique objects annually. None of them are represented in the NMAG; none can be permanently housed there. It remains a Western European paintings-on-canvas-led space. It is a cultural schizophrenia that needs to be healed.

There are a number of solutions suggested over the years. The entire Savannah architectural ecosystem is a cultural corridor for the country. A Memorial War cenotaph sits next to the Museum next to a performing arts centre with Art Academy next to architectural marvels and the Savannah home of the Trinidad Carnival. It may be time that Trinidad leans into the DNA of this space and crystallise it by expanding the Museum footprint. The NMAG could become a sprawling complex that annexes buildings like the Zen Cinema and Night Club, and the Atlantic LNG building opposite, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs one block away. It can also deploy niche collections in the Magnificent 7 Heritage buildings around the Queens Park Savannah. At the other side of the Savannah is Queen's Hall, the nation's pre-eminent performing arts venue. Next to that is the new Prime Minister's building and Diplomatic Centre. A proposal exists for the conversion of the Prime Minister's Residence and Diplomatic Centre into the National Art Gallery! The facility and grounds is big enough to house the collections. The gesture would be a global viral news event. Such a designation would complete the cultural hub of the Savannah and crown Port of Spain as the cultural capital of the Caribbean.

T&T is also the originator of more than 12 forms of music – from calypso to kaiso jazz, from chutney to steelband – with a recording industry dating as far back as 1912 (predating jazz by five years). Calypso is one of the 10 core forms of popular music in the world and has midwived into existence numerous other forms like rock steady and ska on one side of the Atlantic to hi-life and Afro beat on the other. It is an island that has produced dozens of global musical stars from the Mighty Sparrow to Hazel Scott to Billy Ocean to Nicki Minaj. None of this legacy is visible in T&T. The argument thus exists for the creation of the House of Music – a Museum of T&T Music – another important memory institution missing from the landscape. Plans for such a building were championed by activists for years and adopted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) amongst its recommendations for the rehabilitation of the city of Port of Spain.

Conclusion

The National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago is an important institution in the T&T landscape. As repository and interrogator of national, ethnic, gender, class, and other identities, it is a crucial instrument in a post-native genocide, post-slavery, post-indentureship, post-colonial, multi-ethnic society wrestling with global economic and cultural forces. The Museum has done a serviceable job thus far within the political and economic confines of the times, but it now has to rise to its full height to meet the nation it is in charge of consecrating. The modern global museum and art gallery has moved forward light years ahead of the NMAG. Is it going to embrace the modern idea of the living museum, one that is dynamic and interactive and engages with the contemporary as much as the ancient? Can it find ways to interact with the urban landscape that surrounds it – the city of Port of Spain, the leisure life of the Savannah, and the Hills of East Port of Spain with its urban poor who have contributed so much to the culture and life of the country? Will the Museum embrace a mandate to decolonise the very idea of 'the museum' and challenge not only its collection, but its practice? With the new facility due to be opened in 2025 with a new mandate and with stakeholders ready to engage, the future of the NMAG still dances between ashes and golden.

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RUBADIRI VICTOR is a multi-media artist from Trinidad & Tobago working in eight mediums. He is founder of the Artists' Coalition of T&T (ACTT) – T&T's primary Creative Industries representative organisation. He is author of 'Meditation on the Traditions' – A photo-essay on Trinidad Carnival's traditional masquerade. Rubadiri's *New Adventures of Anansi* is a 21-part series of illustrated novels depicting three generations of the Anansi family.

All pictures belong to the author, Rubadiri Victor



Southern entrance of the museum, Exhibition of the Guild of Masters, the creation of a 30ft Cedros Hosay tadjah Feb–April 2014, National Museum inner courtyard



Exhibition of the Guild of Masters





FEATURED ART



Event Horizon, 2014

About the Artist
Lucien Downes / St Croix

Caribbean Conjunctures
DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000010

A Critical Analysis of the Windrush Generation's Impact and Struggles in British Society

MYRTLE EMMANUEL

Abstract

This essay critically examines the Windrush Generation's influence on British society, highlighting their contributions while addressing the racism and discriminatory policies they encountered. Central to this discussion is the Windrush Scandal, which exposed systemic injustices and the failure of the UK government to safeguard the rights of Commonwealth migrants. This analysis explores how the Windrush community has asserted its identity, preserved cultural heritage, and empowered future generations. Drawing on interviews with community leaders, the paper evaluates achievements and ongoing challenges, emphasizing education, advocacy, and cultural preservation as pillars for fostering sustainable community resilience.

Key Words: Windrush Scandal, racism, intergenerational legacy, resilience, cultural preservation.

Introduction

Community resilience, explored across various disciplines, reflects a community's ability to adapt and thrive amid challenges (Koliou et al., 2020; Vaandrager & Kennedy, 2017). The Windrush generation exemplifies this resilience, overcoming racism and limited opportunities to build strong communities and contribute to British society, particularly the

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000011

NHS (Gentleman, 2019). This essay explores how the Windrush Generation preserves and transmits Caribbean cultural heritage through activism and education, while addressing the challenges faced by their descendants. It highlights education, advocacy, and cultural preservation as essential pillars for fostering sustainable community resilience among Caribbean communities in Britain.

The Windrush Journey: From Invitation to Britain's betrayal

Post-war Britain faced an acute labour shortage, prompting the recruitment of workers from the Caribbean. The 1948 British Nationality Act granted UK citizenship to Commonwealth subjects, facilitating significant migration. The arrival of the HMT Empire Windrush on June 22, 1948, carrying 1,027 passengers, marked the beginning of a substantial movement of Caribbean migrants to Britain (BBC, 2018). By 1961, Caribbean workers constituted approximately 5% of the NHS workforce, filling crucial roles across manufacturing, construction, and public transport (The Guardian, 2018).

However, this history took a dark turn with the Windrush Scandal in 2018 which exposed the devastating impact of the UK government's 'hostile environment' policy. The BBC (2018) described it as 'a fiasco that shamed Britain', as thousands of legitimate residents faced wrongful detention, deportation, and denial of legal rights. The policy, designed to combat illegal immigration, led to devastating consequences for long-term UK residents of Caribbean origin (Gentleman, 2019; Williams 2020). Home Office figures revealed at least 83 wrongful deportations and 850 cases of incorrectly refused documentation, affecting an estimated 50,000 people overall (Williams, 2020).

The scandal's impact resonates personally in my family's story. As a daughter of Windrush generation parents, I witnessed the complexities of Caribbean migration firsthand. My brother, one of the 'Barrel Children' left behind before joining our parents, was granted indefinite leave to remain upon his arrival at age 12. Yet, four decades later, he faced the unthinkable challenge of proving his UK citizenship to avoid deportation and maintain access to essential services. My parents, Matthew and Helena Emmanuel, like many others, faced difficult choices due to racism, including sending their children to be raised by grandparents in the Caribbean.

Today, many affected by the Windrush compensation scheme remain

in limbo, either stranded in the Caribbean after deportation or awaiting compensation and reinstatement of their UK citizenship. This ongoing struggle highlights the lasting impact of discriminatory policies on a generation that helped rebuild post-war Britain.

Professor Patrick Vernon, OBE, a leading campaigner, has spearheaded the 'Justice for Windrush Generations' campaign started in July 2022, garnering media attention with a public letter endorsed by celebrities. He has also championed the cross-party Windrush Manifesto Rally, held at the House of Commons and laments: 'Over 50 have already died, and we're yet to understand the full psychological and traumatic impact on the Windrush Generation'. The Windrush Manifesto aims to correct the injustices following the Windrush Scandal and transfer the administration of the compensation scheme from the Home Office to an independent body.

Migration scholars argue that the Windrush scandal reflects structural racism within British institutions, not just administrative errors. El-Enany (2020) highlights how colonial ideologies shape immigration policies, creating 'internal border control' that disproportionately affects people of colour. The Windrush Compensation Scheme, launched in 2019, has faced criticism for delays and bureaucratic hurdles, with many victims still awaiting compensation (Gentleman, 2022). This raises questions about the government's commitment to addressing historical injustices. Despite these challenges, the Caribbean community demonstrates resilience through activism and cultural preservation.

Resilience in Action: Political and cultural advocacy of the Windrush Generation

Professor Vernon has tirelessly campaigned for justice, advocating systemic reforms and an independent Windrush Compensation Scheme. His efforts emphasise the need to address both the immediate consequences of the scandal and the deeper issues of institutional racism and historical erasure. He highlights the lasting psychological scars, with many still awaiting justice and recognition.

The scandal has united the Caribbean community, driving efforts to reclaim their narrative and demand accountability while underscoring broader challenges in achieving equitable treatment and preserving their

place in British society. Dr Pamela Franklin, Founder of the Caribbean Social Forum, leads a weekly social group engaging in activities like music, games and talks. Initiatives such as 'Games Without Wires' promote intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, while 'Walking Images' explores historical depictions of Black people in the UK. The Forum fosters a strong sense of community cohesion among Caribbean Islands and has earned accolades, including the National Diversity Award and the BBC Make a Difference Award. Dr Pamela Franklin, who personally has been recognised with an honorary doctorate and a community hero plaque, highlights the Forum's far-reaching international influence:

> We do a lot outside our curriculum activities to bring different groups together . . . creating little communities within communities. With our various intergenerational activities with museums and other communities, it's really good to see how the young people are integrating with the older people and vice versa.

Many young Windrush descendants in Britain have established new organisations to continue their grandparents' legacy of activism and cultural preservation. Organisations like Power Mobile Gym, a Community Interest Company (CIC) founded by my granddaughter, Shannia Gordon, focus on youth empowerment. Her programme entitled 'Rude Boys to Role Models' use boxing and personal development programmes as vehicles to connect young people to their heritage through cultural exchanges with Jamaica. Participants gain confidence and identity through these experiences, learning about historical figures and traditions. Shannia adds:

> Our mission is to combat childhood poverty while supporting race-related initiatives. We work with other Black grassroots organisations in the UK and Caribbean. In Jamaica, young participants explore interests through activities like visiting Bob Marley's homes to learn about his cultural legacy or budgeting and cooking meals at Coronation Market with local peers, feeding 50 community members. These experiences teach life skills and foster appreciation for heritage and cultural cuisine.

I was also fortunate to interview another two third generation Caribbean CICs, Mandy and Marlon Preville-Findlay who founded Beyond Iyanola CIC and Kimhia and Indira Toussaint, founders of Twossaints Ltd a cultural educational company. Beyond Iyanola amplifies Caribbean voices through

publications, showcases, and virtual sessions. Their work connects grassroots initiatives to global networks, fostering collaboration and innovation. Similarly, Twossaints, uses creative workshops, language courses, and storytelling to preserve cultural knowledge and promote intergenerational learning. According to Mandy:

> We connect, celebrate and amplify our community and support greater understanding of our identity and historic roots. This has manifested through partnership forming, new business ideas being sparked and the development of more collaborative working. We will continue to provide avenues into work, education etc to meet our socioeconomic, mental and physical health needs.

Likewise, Twossaints creole language courses, heritage supper clubs and creative arts connects younger Windrush generation with their cultural heritage. Indira states:

> We tell the stories, and we share the stories of how we're all integrated, and you know, a huge part of our work is about looking beyond the Saint Lucian community as well as enhance that sense of identity, but also connection with others. The impact of that journey has travelled through generations, becoming integrated into their lives. They actively try to speak Creole, even if they're not fluent, and I think that's a beautiful thing. It's perhaps one of our proudest achievements.

Storytelling, arts, and education have been instrumental in preserving Caribbean culture. Founder of Iyanola Pictures, actress, writer and speaker, Dr Mathurine Emmanuel, has released four feature-length films (Ribbons of Blue, Troubled Waters, and Nana's Paradise and Shantaye's World). Her films and talk shows have addressed socio-economic issues and passed on cultural narratives to younger generations. Dr Mathurine who was honoured with an honorary degree in the UK for her work articulates that:

> Young people across the Caribbean region have mentioned memorable moments and lessons that they took away from the films. The talk show educated many families and little-known experiences were shared.

Similarly, Power Mobile Gym's programmes instil a sense of pride and identity via their cultural and learning programmes about historical landmarks like Emancipation Park in Jamaica. For instance, Shannia recollects a young participant in the Rude Boys to Role Models programme

returned from Jamaica with a transformed sense of self, exemplified by his decision to grow dreadlocks as a tribute to his heritage. Such experiences underscore the transformative power of cultural education.

These Caribbean organisations and leaders have created lasting networks of support and cultural affirmation, helping to preserve and honour the Windrush Legacy across generations. Organisations like Beyond Iyanola CIC have developed intergenerational connections, empowering youth to embrace their heritage while facilitating new partnerships and collaborative initiatives within the Caribbean community.

Advocacy campaigns, such as the Justice for Windrush Generations movement, have raised awareness of systemic injustices and driven calls for reform. These efforts have also highlighted the need for intergenerational learning, ensuring that the stories and struggles of the Windrush Generation are not forgotten. In one of his articles Professor Vernon advocated for a National Holiday called Windrush Day as a way of recognising the excellent work done by Arthur Torrington CBE and many others including Sam King MBE (who coined the term Windrush Generation). Patrick recounts his efforts, staring:

> Years later I started a campaign for National Windrush and wrote letters to the Times and started the Windrush compensation scheme, which is ongoing, but I just simply took the next level as national campaign which then got adopted by the British government to recognise the achievements of the generation now for young people to understand the history of contributions.

Professor Vernon now chairs the Windrush 100 Network, launched in July 2023 at the Houses of Parliament by Labour MP Dawn Butler. Building on the success of the Windrush 75 Network, it brings together diverse voices to honour the Windrush legacy, foster dialogue on Britain's racial history, and advocate for equality for future generations. Professor Vernon expresses:

> The network aims to preserve and memorialise the lived experiences of the Windrush generation, ensuring their achievements resonate with future generations. As we approach the 85th and 90th Windrush Days, it is vital for younger generations to understand this rich history before the first and second generations fade from memory.

Cultural preservation: Challenges and future steps

Despite significant achievements, Caribbean communities face persistent challenges. Fragmentation within the community remains a barrier to collective action. Professor Vernon has emphasised the need for greater unity to amplify the community's voice in political and social arenas.

Cultural dilution, particularly in events like the Notting Hill Carnival, raises concerns about the commercialization of traditions deeply rooted in Caribbean heritage. Community advocates like Shannia Gordon of Power Mobile Gym emphasise the need for cultural "gatekeeping" to safeguard authenticity while promoting inclusivity. Similarly, Indira, from Twossaints Ltd, call for a focus on the genuine essence of artistry, encouraging young people to connect with empowering narratives of their heritage. Indira highlights the importance of understanding a legacy that extends beyond the history of slavery, encompassing stories of rebellion, honour, and the fight for equality. This reframing empowers young people by grounding them in a rich and dignified ancestry. Kimhia highlights reconnecting with ancestral roots to challenge cycles of systemic oppression. She critiques how psychological conditioning tied to historical narratives can confine individuals, asserting that breaking free requires a deeper understanding of one's full history. While acknowledging the difficulty, she expresses optimism that knowledge and reconnection can lead to liberation from these cycles.

Together, these voices call for a reclamation of cultural identity and empowerment through a deeper awareness of heritage and history. This call intersects with the broader issue of representation and leadership within the Caribbean diaspora. Professor Vernon observes

> The limited representation in politics and other spheres further hinders progress. While the number of Black MPs has increased, few are of Caribbean heritage. This highlights the need for targeted efforts to nurture Caribbean leaders who can advocate for their community's interests.

To secure a sustainable and empowered future for Caribbean communities, several key actions are necessary. Incorporating Caribbean history into the national curriculum is crucial in promoting awareness and appreciation of their contributions to British society. Expanding mentorship programs and

cultural exchanges can equip young people with the skills and confidence for leadership.

Dr Pamela Franklin emphasised the importance of sustainable cultural preservation:

> While connecting with Caribbean high commissioners is valuable, we need our own British-Caribbean institutions – a self-sustained community space where British-born descendants can gather, share meals, exchange stories, and preserve our culture. Our community has the financial resources; we just need to mobilise them effectively for sustainable investment in our own spaces.

Interviews with Windrush community groups revealed their dedication to preserving Caribbean culture, addressing internal challenges, and creating inclusive spaces for future generations. Beyond community groups, safeguarding traditions like the Notting Hill Carnival is vital but must balance authenticity with modern inclusivity. Younger Windrush descendants continue their grandparents' legacy through advocacy for Windrush compensation reforms and cultural preservation.

This resonates with Dr Mathurine Emmanuel's emphasis on the power of historical education and cultural authenticity, where she states:

> Caribbean people will be empowered if they understand their history. Education and evaluation should be constant and consistent, including our narrative before the transatlantic slave trade. We need to reconnect with the roots we were cut off from and remain authentic despite external cultural influences.

Together, these voices highlight the importance of fostering a deeper connection to heritage while ensuring future generations have the tools and spaces to thrive. This call for cultural preservation, education, and fair compensation reflects the resilience of the Windrush generation, as captured in Labi Siffre's *Something Inside So Strong* – a testament to their enduring spirit.

Conclusion

The resilience and contributions of the Windrush Generation highlight the importance of cultural preservation, advocacy, and intergenerational solidarity in addressing systemic challenges. Incorporating Caribbean history

into the national curriculum, fostering self-sustained community spaces, and ensuring political representation are critical steps toward sustaining the Windrush legacy.

Ultimately, cultural preservation requires active resistance against erasure and systemic injustices. As Britain continues to reflect on its colonial history, acknowledging and addressing the injustices faced by the Windrush Generation is essential for fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

The emphasis on self-sustained community spaces highlights the role of solidarity in creating environments where traditions can thrive, stories can be shared, and cultural roots can be reconnected. Such spaces reflect the community's resilience in adapting to and overcoming systemic challenges.

Balancing modern inclusivity with authenticity in traditions like the Notting Hill Carnival exemplifies the delicate act of preserving cultural essence while addressing contemporary societal dynamics. Intergenerational teaching further strengthens this effort, passing on the spirit of resistance and resilience that has been a hallmark of Caribbean contributions to British society.

Sustained cultural preservation demands more than celebration – it requires active resistance to cultural dilution and a resilient commitment to honouring the past while building an empowered future. As Britain continues to reflect on its colonial legacy, embracing the Windrush generation's contributions and addressing systemic inequalities are crucial steps toward fostering equity and a shared sense of belonging.

A call to action

Please join in fight for Justice for Windrush Generations by taking the following steps below:

1. Signed the Open Letter Click here to sign
2. Encourage your friends and family to sign or send an email
3. Email your local MP. Once you've signed the open letter, follow these steps to tell your MP that we are demanding justice for the Windrush generation. It takes less than 5 minutes!

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The Repair We Want vs What We Have So Far

SONJAH STANLEY NIAAH AND MIA McMORRIS

Abstract

The CARICOM 10-Point Plan on reparatory justice (2013) has played a pivotal role in shaping the Caribbean reparations movement. It addresses critical issues stemming from colonialism and the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans while posing fundamental questions: "What do we want?" and "What constitutes success in the reparations movement?" As the call for reparatory justice gains mainstream traction, these questions become even more urgent. What defines victory, and how much further must we go? This paper provides a historical overview of the Caribbean reparatory justice agenda in relation to the UN-declared International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024), which emphasized 'Recognition, Justice, and Development' and invigorated the movement. While challenges remain, progress is evident in the growing support from both public and private sectors, despite the simultaneous rise of denialism, colonial apologists, racism, and neocolonialism. The CARICOM 10-Point Plan (currently under revision) serves as a crucial anchor, positioning reparations as a cause for every Caribbean citizen and advocating for a new definition of negotiating structures and stakeholder engagement within the region. Furthermore, this paper underscores the importance of interdisciplinary research in expanding the movement's scope, countering increasing dissent from Europe through a robust educational campaign.

Key Words: Reparation; Reparatory Justice; Transatlantic Trafficking; Africans; African Diaspora; CARICOM 10-Point Plan

OVER THE LAST DECADE, THE CARIBBEAN REPARATORY JUSTICE movement has gained unprecedented momentum, drawing support from governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, families, and activists. Building upon a centuries-old struggle for emancipation and decolonization, this movement has become institutionalized within The University of the West Indies (UWI) and

CARICOM, with key organizations such as the Caribbean Centre for Reparations Research (established in 2017) serving as the research arm of the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC) and its network of National Reparation Committees (NRCs). These institutions form the backbone of regional representation and have significantly influenced global discourse on reparatory justice.

Over the past two decades, reparations movements have gained traction in the USA, the UK, and Africa. However, alongside this progress, there has been a concerted effort to discredit the movement. Despite this resistance, significant alliances and successes have emerged. Advocacy efforts within CRC and NRC networks have strengthened ties across the Caribbean and the African Diaspora. The movement has transcended academia and conferences, reaching broader audiences through radio programs, documentaries, newspaper articles, and stakeholder forums. Yet, a crucial question remains: Has it made a tangible impact on the lives of ordinary Caribbean citizens? Do they recognize the importance of the Caribbean movement and its global influence? Where do we stand today, and what do we want?

Origins and Influences

The modern organized reparations movement did not emerge in isolation. Influential figures such as Marcus Garvey, Kamau Brathwaite, Rex Nettleford, Erna Brodber, Elsa Goveia, Walter Rodney, Hilary Beckles, Barry Chevannes, and Verene Shepherd have long championed the cause. Before them, abolitionists and freedom fighters such as Bussa, Chief Takyi, Nanny of the Maroons, and countless others laid the foundation. Their advocacy, writings, speeches, and creative works provide a crucial platform for advancing reparatory justice by eliminating systemic racism and colonial oppression. The movement must continue evolving, incorporating contemporary justice frameworks, including environmental justice, racial equality, and sustainable development.

The CARICOM 10-Point Plan

Published in 2013, the CARICOM Ten-Point Plan remains a cornerstone of the Caribbean reparatory justice movement:

1. A Full and Formal Apology
2. Indigenous Peoples Development Programs
3. Funding for Repatriation to Africa
4. Establishment of Cultural Institutions and Return of Cultural Heritage
5. Addressing the Public Health Crisis
6. Education Programs
7. Enhancing Historical and Cultural Knowledge
8. Psychological Rehabilitation from Intergenerational Trauma
9. The Right to Development through Technology
10. Debt Cancellation and Monetary Compensation

Within the regional reparations ecosystem, efforts in research, stakeholder engagement, and multilateral negotiations have yielded substantial progress. Since the establishment of the Jamaica National Reparation Commission in 2009, the Caribbean now boasts 15 reparation committees, with additional nations consulting the CARICOM Reparations Commission to join the regional network. This movement has ignited a wave of apologies and mobilization toward reparatory action.

Progress and Challenge

The path to reparatory justice remains long. The UN's declaration of the first International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024) provided an opportunity to highlight progress and the enduring legacy of colonialism. However, most governments failed to fully commit to the decade's objectives. In many cases, government responses were reactive, driven by global outcry following the murder of George Floyd in 2020 rather than a sustained commitment to reparatory justice.

The Black Lives Matter movement underscored the need for unity across the global African community. While specific needs vary, collective support for all reparations initiatives is crucial. The movement must also diversify its strategies. In recent years, descendants of former colonizers – such as the 'Heirs of Slavery' – have begun mobilizing in support of reparations. Organizations like The Repair Campaign, in collaboration with UWI SALISES and the CRR, have conducted country-specific studies to assess individual Caribbean nations' reparatory needs. The movement has also aligned with

broader justice efforts, including climate justice and gender-based violence, recognizing the colonial roots of these issues.

A New Decade for People of African Descent

On August 29, 2024, the UN's Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a joint statement advocating for a second International Decade for People of African Descent (2025–2034). Following the Durban Declaration and the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, it is evident that systemic oppression persists. The new Decade seeks to further highlight and address the ongoing consequences of colonialism, apartheid, genocide, and neo-colonialism.

Advocacy must now shift toward mobilising every Caribbean citizen. A reparatory justice agenda for development would integrate learning outcomes into education curricula, addressing systemic issues in health, legal and constitutional reform, and social structures rooted in the colonial past.

The Brattle Report and Economic Justice

A critical milestone in the movement has been the Brattle Report, which quantifies the economic case for reparations. Presented at two major fora, the report provides irrefutable evidence of the harm caused by transatlantic trafficking in and chattel enslavement of Africans and its lasting impact. While significant, further research is needed to assess the psychological toll of the African holocaust and its correlation with contemporary health disparities, particularly non-communicable diseases linked to the 'slavery diet.'

Apologies and Institutional Actions

In recent years, formal apologies and financial commitments have increased. Notable examples include:

- The University of Glasgow (2018) pledged £20 million for reparatory initiatives.
- Lloyds of London (2020) issued a formal apology and followed up with a £52 million endowment (2023).

- The Church of England (2023) pledged £100 million for Caribbean development.
- The Trevelyan and Gladstone families pledged £100,000 each for educational initiatives in Grenada and Guyana, respectively.
- Public apologies have also come from institutions and families in the Caribbean – including Grenada, Jamaica, and Guyana – and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The Way Forward

How do we measure success? Have we bridged the colonial gaps still present today? The reparatory justice movement cannot be defined solely by financial compensation or formal acknowledgment. Its success lies in the unwavering commitment to remembrance, advocacy, and action.

The time for passive reflection has passed. Now is the moment for collective action. Engage in discussions within your community, your home, and on social media. The future of reparatory justice depends on all of us. The time is now.

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Thinking About the Black Radical Tradition for the Round Table on Hubert Harrison

Caribbean Studies Association, 2023

BRIAN MEEKS

I HAVE A CAVEAT. WHEN CAROLE BOYCE DAVIES asked me to speak at the CSA on her round table, I demurred, as, while I admire and am influenced by Hubert Harrison's work, and while it would afford me time to do further reading around Harrison and his times, I readily admit I am no expert. She insisted, however, that I come, and I suggested that I could speak on the Black radical tradition, to which she added, what about adding Caribbean to that title? I thought about this for a long time but arrived at the conclusion that if we are speaking about a certain twentieth-century Black radical tradition, then it is difficult to disaggregate it into Caribbean and non-Caribbean components. Yes, we can identify where people came from and where they mainly agitated, organized, and developed their ideas, but beyond that, it becomes more complicated. Let's call a few names from a far from complete list to try to make this point: Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Frantz Fanon, Claudia Jones, Cyril Briggs, Suzanne Cesaire, Aime Cesaire, WA Domingo, Audre Lorde, CLR James, George Padmore, Claude McKay, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Otto Huiswood, Ras Makonnen, and Hubert Harrison.

These people, all I'm sure well-known to persons in this audience, are all from the Caribbean (I've included Malcolm X who is second generation), but I suggest that while it is a worthwhile exercise to consider why the Caribbean cohort played such an inordinate leadership role in Black thought and Black movements of the twentieth century (a discussion for another day!), it is also impossible to neatly corral them off, indeed, disaggregate them from this other list, again, one that is definitely not thorough and all inclusive: WEB Dubois, William Munroe Trotter Paul Robeson, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Huey Newton, Angela Davis, Fred Hampton, Kwame Nkrumah, Steve Biko, Amilcar Cabral, and Thomas Sankara.

It is impossible, I propose, because this list, incomplete as it is, suggests

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000013

an interlinked, intertwined history of traveling, sharing, corresponding, agitating for common causes, and thinking across colonial boundaries – what Kamau Brathwaite brilliantly coined as "tidalectics" – all directed against racism, capitalism, colonialism, and, in many instances, their neo-colonialist successors. So, in brief, I am far happier with our conceptual focus being on the Global Radical Black Tradition writ large, and to emphasize its interconnectedness, certainly in this brief moment as I raise a number of questions.

The first question, then, is Why "radical"? Radical derives, as is well known, from the Latin "radix" or "root," suggesting that "radicals" went to the root, the foundation of existing social and political problems, and sought to root them out. If we are to think of radicalism in this way, then Black radicalism indubitably began with the slave trade and on the plantation and is embodied in those who resisted, who were committed to rooting it out via the panoply of forms of engagement and disengagement, by running away, foot-dragging, poisoning, and, most potent of all, by insurrection. But even with the one decisively successful model of insurrection (the Haitian Revolution), it is useful to pause on the distinction between degrees of commitment to a radical agenda, i.e. an agenda of rooting out. So we can think of Toussaint at the beginning and how he evolved – or the increasing gap between Toussaint and his nephew Moise as to how fast and in what direction the movement should proceed or, ultimately, how Dessalines moved to the historic conclusion that independence was the only path going forward – to remember that there is no fixed definition of radicalism and what may be far to the left (to use the French revolutionary references!) in today's reckoning may be hopefully conservative and lagging behind the popular will tomorrow. There is, in other words, no fixed definition of what it means to be radical.

All this is to take us where I want to go in my remaining minutes, which is to say that Black radicalism really is a set of ideas and practices about freedom, about liberation, about defining what is the human, which, as Padmore, James, Rodney, Robinson, Wynter, Bogues, Makalani, Kelley, Adi, and so many others have argued, goes back to the sixteenth century, precedes the consolidation of capitalism and global imperialism, and, therefore, cannot be subsumed within them, nor within the primary ideational bodies of thought that have emerged to resist and overcome capital. To put it another perhaps cruder way, Black struggle precedes the proletarian struggle.

Which brings me, quite intentionally, to my second query: What precisely is the relationship between the Black radical tradition and Marxism? First, to return briefly to my point just made: Global Black radicalism precedes the emergence of modern capital. Marx says as much when he says in Capital that the "commercial hunting of Black skins in Africa signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production." But Marx is unable, I suggest, beyond this insightful recognition to elaborate on the meaning of this for the future trajectory of these people (and their descendants) or why even he chooses to use the phrase Black skins to describe Africans and not Igbo, Congo, Fon, etc., in other words, their own names, embodying histories and memories of real nations and peoples.

Let us remember that alongside the overarching example of Garvey and the UNIA and the influential religious movements, such as the Nation of Islam and Rastafari most notably, there are few individuals or movements of Black people in the twentieth century that were not overtly Marxist or influenced by Marxism. This is in itself cause for significant theorizing. What is it that Marxism brought to the table that made it so attractive to Black radicals? The first, I suggest, is that Marx, using the dialectic as the foundation of his methodology, elaborated a compelling theory to both explain the powerful, exploitative, rapacious hold of Capital and its political system of colonialism/imperialism over the world and its peoples. But, critically, he also proposed that in the logic of the dialectic, this seemingly immovable object was inevitably transient and might (though not must) eventually be transcended. This remarkable prediction/prognostication gave hope to toilers and oppressed people worldwide, in proposing a route to the inevitable downfall of the systems that kept them poor and wretched.

But I suggest that the second and more powerful attraction was only indirectly from Marx and it was the October Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917. October demonstrated that it was possible to overthrow one of the most powerful white European powers and, to boot, by a movement that was stridently anti-capitalist. This was immediately followed by Lenin's and the Bolsheviks' declaration of the right to self-determination of the vassal states of the Russian Empire and somewhat later at the various congresses of the Third International, the overt declaration of support for colonized peoples in Africa and Asia and for the oppressed "Negro" peoples of America and beyond.

The powerful magnetic pull of Marxism and of the emergent Soviet republic can only be grasped in this context and, to quote David Scott, this "problem space." In a world of rampant exploitation, scientific racism, Jim Crow, and Ku Klux Klan terror, and the carnage and devastation of an imperialist war, the Bolsheviki utilizing Marx's theories seemed to stand against all this and to provide a bulwark and a global framework for struggle that carried with it the hope of victory, foretold, as it were, in the October Revolution. But while global Black radicals were enthusiastically allied with and drawn compellingly to the Russian Revolution, beginning in the 1920s and stretching across the next few decades, significant numbers (think of CLR James, George Padmore, and Aime Cesaire, most notably) distanced themselves from not only the white-led communist parties within their own domiciles, but from the Comintern and the Soviet Union itself. Why is this? I suggest that this was less a rejection of Marxism as a theory of capital and its possible trajectory, as it was the inadequacies, particularly the lacunae on the question of race as a central problematic in global exploitation and the failure to elaborate a consistent anti-colonial and anti-imperialist praxis from the Comintern itself and beyond, as well as, frankly, open racism in some of these parties and racial blindness in the global communist movement. And these features were not absent from its hated and marginalized opponent, the global Trotskyite movement.

To repeat then, Marxism as an anti-capitalist lodestone has been, at least since the time of the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), viewed with great respect but also regarded critically for its silences around the deeply embedded structures of global racism which preceded it and which were seldom frontally addressed. If we can advance a century beyond the struggles of Hubert Harrison, Cyril Briggs, Claude McKay, Grace Campbell, and all the other leaders of the ABB, the question that they grappled with has yet to be fully resolved: What kind of theory and praxis can effectively both explain the insidious power of racism as a hegemonic system and at the same time recognize the all-encompassing (and possibly world destroying) capability of capital and to elaborate new theories and a praxis able to provide platforms and methods of fighting in order to resist and ultimately transcend them?

And, finally, what can we learn from Hubert Harrison, Cyril Briggs, Claude McKay, and their comrades, from both their significant and bold intellectual and political initiatives, as well as the inevitable gendered

absences in their praxis (the name after all was "Blood Brotherhood" and women were often relegated to the margins) that might help us in forging and elaborating novel intellectual, moral, and organizational foundations for the new revolutionary movements that are already effervescing in response to racial capitalism in the twenty-first century? Among them, I suggest, would be the need for a renewed and unwavering attention to political economy. This era of identity politics, as though one can simply relegate an analysis of capital to the margins of intellectual debate without emptying theory of any analytical strength, must end. Intellectual pathways must be found to both recognize and engage with the big picture of global economic and technological movements alongside an appreciation and involvement in the local and micro-movements of the day-to-day class struggle. There needs to be an unwavering focus and attention on how capital has brought the world to the edge of the abyss of catastrophic environmental collapse, and how to resist and search for possible avenues that might avoid this looming existential disaster. Despite and indeed because of my warning of the dangers of certain modes of identity politics, close attention must always be given to the ways in which race is inevitably bound up in the hegemonic project, demanding a nuanced understanding as to how it operates dialectically within the system of class exploitation in order to overdetermine structures of domination. We must remember from Briggs and his allies that all popular struggles must begin with the people, their expressions, and their movements, and theory must be rooted in, and return time and again to, popular engagement. We must not forget to underline the critically imbricated questions of gender and sexuality and how they have been historically sidelined, but now demand to be centered in any narrative of resistance and all popular struggles.

That is my cursory and final response to what we can learn in this brief excursion into Hubert Harrison, his comrades in the ABB, and their role as a formative cohort of the Black radical tradition.

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AI Trends in Caribbean Education and Entrepreneurship

Potentials Driving Innovation and Virtual Learning Futures

RAONA WILLIAMS

Abstract

With a concerted focus on the Caribbean archipelago, this article explores the transformative potentials afforded by artificial intelligence (AI) in education and its ability to stimulate economic entrepreneurship. By providing a summary treatise of AI trends in education, the review highlights how innovative virtual learning technologies can address systemic challenges in the region. Virtual learning technologies, explainable AI models, personalized learning platforms, immersive AI technologies, and teacher augmentation tools can improve teacher development, expand access for learners, and promote equity and inclusion. There is a reveal of institutions and enterprises that are integrating AI into curricula and creating economic opportunities in the Caribbean to foster digital literacy and prepare individuals for workforce demands while nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets. A critique on ethical challenges is given with examples of suggested actions and innovations. By embracing AI advancements thoughtfully and equitably, Caribbean nations can transform their educational systems into hubs of innovation, equipping future generations with the skills needed to drive sustainable economic growth and global competitiveness.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI), over recent years, has emerged as a transformative force across various sectors, with education being no exception. Where education systems face unique challenges such as resource constraints, teacher shortages, and the need for inclusive learning environments, AI presents a

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000014

promising opportunity to address these issues and pave the way for economic growth within communities through entrepreneurship. This article explores how AI research trends in education can enhance Caribbean education and foster economic entrepreneurship, looking at four areas: personalized learning and student performance prediction; teacher augmentation and professional development; digital literacy and entrepreneurship; and ethical considerations and implementation.

Personalizing Virtual Learning and Predicting Performance

One of the most significant contributions of AI to education is its ability to personalize learning experiences and predict learner performance. Explainable AI models, as highlighted in recent research (Molenaar and Nguyen, 2024), have shown remarkable potential in analysing student behaviour patterns to identify at-risk learners and provide targeted interventions. For instance, studies such as that from Asif et al (2017), Parry (2023), and Ghosh (2024) have demonstrated that machine-learning models can predict final exam grades in programming courses based on assignment data, offering valuable insights into learners' problem-solving strategies and learning behaviours. In the Caribbean context, where dropout rates are a pressing concern, such predictive tools could be instrumental in helping educators, particularly in at-risk and rural communities, to identify struggling learners in their initial stages. Recent developments, such as the Caribbean Examinations Council's (CXC) launch of an AI-powered literacy and numeracy system as part of its digital transformation strategy (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2024), are looking into this. The initiative highlights the growing recognition of AI's potential to enhance educational outcomes and address regional challenges, including early identification of Caribbean learners needing support. Data analytics companies help educational institutions improve student outcomes through a multi-faceted approach. They begin by gathering diverse data from various sources like student information systems, learning management systems, and even demographic information. This data is then cleaned, standardized, and stored in a centralized repository. Next, they employ statistical methods and machine-learning algorithms, to analyse the data, identify patterns, and build predictive models that can identify at-risk learners, forecast academic performance, and personalize

learning. Personalized learning platforms adapt to individual learning styles and paces, offering customized resources, assessments, and feedback. Crucially, these companies collaborate closely with educators, providing data visualizations and training to ensure the tools are effectively used. Throughout the process, they prioritize ethical considerations, including data privacy, bias mitigation, and transparency to build trust and ensure responsible use of AI in education. By providing transparent explanations for their predictions, small or medium enterprises (SMEs) and larger corporations with this focus can assist in academic planning and build trust among stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and administrators. This transparency is crucial for embedding acceptance of AI-driven solutions in educational settings, particularly in regions where technological adoption may face scepticism or resistance. A Caribbean success story of an SME enacting this is 'Umbrelytics', a data analytics company founded by Jamaican educator Danielle Strachan, dedicated to empowering teachers. The company focuses on providing valuable insights into test papers, guiding teaching practices, and accelerating learning outcomes.

An increasing supply of AI-powered personalized learning platforms are revolutionizing how educational professionals and learners engage with educational content. The diversity of Caribbean learners spread across the archipelago highlights learners who often have varying needs and backgrounds. Therefore, personalized learning can play a pivotal role in bridging achievement gaps and promoting inclusivity. Personalized tutoring has shown to significantly improve academic outcomes. Implementing AI tutors capable of providing additional support to learners who struggle with specific subjects or concepts may expand improvements. The economic implications of personalized learning are substantial. By equipping learners with tailored skills and knowledge, these AI-driven platforms can improve professional employability skills that increasingly demand digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. In the Caribbean, where economic diversification is crucial for sustainable development, personalized learning can also help create a technical and vocational workforce that is adaptable and prepared for the challenges of the 21st-century global economy.

Teacher Augmentation and Professional Development

While AI offers benefits for learners, its potential to enhance the role and expertise of teachers is equally significant. Contrary to perspectives of AI replacing human educators, research trends indicate that AI is well positioned as a tool to augment and support teachers in their critical work (US Dept of Education (2023), Jin et al (2023)). By automating administrative tasks such as grading, attendance monitoring, and basic student inquiries, AI allows educators to focus more on mentoring, providing emotional support, and engaging in high-value interactions with learners. Where teacher shortages and low morale may be prevalent, AI-powered tools can alleviate workload pressures and improve job satisfaction among educators. For example, AI-driven analytics can provide teachers with real-time insights into student performance, enabling data-driven instructional strategies and more effective classroom management. This not only enhances the quality of education, but, in the long term, may also improve sustainability and potential retention for those in teaching. Furthermore, AI has the potential to revolutionize training and continual professional development. Adaptive learning modules tailored to educators' skill levels and specific needs can offer continuous, personalized professional growth opportunities. In the Caribbean context, where access to high-quality teacher training programs may be limited, especially in remote areas, AI-powered platforms can bridge this gap. These platforms can offer virtual communities of practice, simulate classroom scenarios for developing teaching skills, gaining classroom management experience, and provide feedback on teaching strategies, all of which contribute to the overall improvement of educational quality across the region.

The integration of AI in teacher support systems also opens new possibilities for collaboration and knowledge-sharing among educators and wider stakeholders of the sector. AI-facilitated professional learning communities can connect teachers across different Caribbean islands and internationally, encouraging the exchange of best practices and innovative teaching methods. Additionally, the development and deployment of these AI-powered teacher support systems represent significant entrepreneurial opportunities within the education sector. Companies can create and market these platforms, generating revenue through subscriptions, licensing agreements, or premium features. This entrepreneurial activity can drive

innovation and create a competitive market for educational technology solutions, benefiting both teachers and learners. By focusing on specific needs within the Caribbean context, such as addressing teacher shortages or improving access to specialized training, businesses can create targeted solutions that are both profitable and impactful.

Considering the concept of professional development of Caribbean educators from a holistic and global perspective, initiatives and strategies involving the Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) and associated stakeholders cannot be discounted. The CSA is renowned for building and maintaining excellent relations with a wide and diverse base of stakeholders who place the success of the Caribbean as a high priority in their mission aims and visions. CSA's annual conferences provide a broad platform to discuss equitable strategies for AI integration across diverse fields of education, addressing systemic inequities while fostering innovation through partnerships with governments, educational institutions, and private organizations. Purposeful collaborations and knowledge-sharing amongst participants are driving forces behind mentorship programs, virtual education hackathons, and continuing education workshops to address knowledge gaps in implementing AI and virtual learning. With members of the CSA being located all over the world leveraging these strategies is impactful for the Caribbean and can lead to positive learning futures driven by AI, transforming teaching methodologies and creating an inclusive educational ecosystem as rapid progressions continue to develop in digital education.

When considering future focused developments to maximise success for the region in incorporating AI strategies and initiatives, the Caribbean Studies Association and its stakeholders make invaluable contributions to holistic and global learning opportunities for Caribbean educators. A significant strength of the CSA is in facilitating collaboration among educators, policymakers, and researchers to address educational challenges and promote innovations in Caribbean education and entrepreneurship. Its conferences, which take place in different Caribbean counties each year, serve as an excellent platform for showcasing academic research and gifted talent amongst presenters and participants, discussing equitable AI integration strategies across diverse educational fields. It provides opportunities to discuss novel ways to tackle systemic inequities while simultaneously driving innovation through partnerships with governments, educational

institutions, and private organizations. These purposeful collaborations and knowledge-sharing activities can serve to fuel mentorship programs, action-based research, virtual education hackathons, and continuing education workshops designed to bridge knowledge gaps in AI and virtual learning implementation for educators. With a globally dispersed membership, the CSA's influence extends far beyond the islands, leveraging these strategies to create impactful futures for Caribbean economies. These efforts, driven by rapid advancements in digital education, have the potential to transform teaching methodologies and embed greater inclusivity of AI across the region.

Approaches such as these mentioned encourage sustainability and advancements in education and are driven by both pedagogical goals and market forces. This educational and economic interconnectedness not only enhances the professional growth of individual teachers, but also contributes to the overall advancement of Caribbean entrepreneurship.

Digital Literacy and Small Medium Enterprise Entrepreneurship Catalysis

As the global economy becomes increasingly digitalized, equipping learners with digital literacy skills is no longer optional but essential. AI can play a pivotal role in this transformation by integrating coding, data analysis, and problem-solving into curricula from early education stages. This early exposure can spark creativity and encourage learners to think critically about how technology can address real-world problems specific to their communities. Integrating AI in education can also facilitate the creation of innovation hubs within schools and universities. Countries like the United Arab Emirates have already implemented AI-focused educational frameworks in their teach curriculums and assessment strategies, recognizing the importance of preparing learners for a technology-driven future. Dubai's AI Teacher Continual Professional Development Programme exemplifies this commitment, focusing on upskilling educators to effectively integrate AI into their teaching, personalize learning, and strengthen teacher-student connections. Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University (HBMSU) is pioneering AI-powered educational tools, including platforms that automate lesson planning and assessment creation, enhance distance learning, and support data-driven academic decisions. Underpinning these efforts is

the UAE's National AI Strategy, a comprehensive plan aiming to establish the nation as a global AI leader by 2031. This strategy prioritizes AI talent development and widespread adoption across sectors, with education as a key focus. Consequently, UAE schools are actively incorporating AI concepts and applications into their curricula, recognizing the importance of equipping learners for the future workforce. The UAE's integrated approach to AI in education encompasses teacher training, curriculum evolution, and the strategic deployment of AI-powered tools and platforms. With substantial investments in AI, the UAE is dedicated to leveraging this technology to enhance educational quality and prepare its learners for a technologically advanced future. For the Caribbean region, incorporating digital literacy through AI-enhanced education is not just about preparing learners for employment and advanced technologies but also about nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets to solve regional challenges. Caribbean Institutions in the region are exposing learners to AI tools and concepts early on, to stimulate the development of seeking innovative solutions to local challenges, from tourism management to sustainable agriculture. For example, the University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI) is working in conjunction with the government initiative to offer an AI driven digital skills certificate program (Enterprise Cayman (2024)). By providing UCCI with resources, support, and connections to the tech industry, this aims to ensure the island can achieve its goal of building a skilled workforce in special economic zone to support the growing technology in STEM sectors, along with local businesses that address local issues such as disaster management, healthcare access, or environmental conservation. AI-driven education systems can inspire a new generation of tech-savvy entrepreneurs who are well-equipped to compete in the global digital economy.

Developments are also positively impacting Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the Caribbean, creating a demand for specialized training programs that equip individuals with the skills to operate and manage these AI-driven systems, notable mentions being within transportation and hospitality sectors. Customer service training for taxi operators, with AI-powered apps featuring chatbots for booking rides and handling inquiries, empowers TVET learners with the skills to manage technology-driven customer service efficiently, thereby enhancing their employability and the overall quality of service in the transportation

sector. These advancements are reshaping and creating new opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation. In Jamaica, the Amber Group has revolutionized taxi services by integrating AI into dispatch systems, route management, and driver behaviour monitoring. AI-powered features such as dashcams and panic buttons have enhanced security for both passengers and drivers, while predictive analytics optimize operations, setting new standards for the industry.

Simultaneously, the culinary education landscape is including AI-based adaptive learning platforms. These innovative tools personalize learning experiences for culinary learner, offering real-time feedback on cooking techniques, automating assignment grading, and providing virtual simulations for skill practice. This approach not only enhances the quality of education but also makes it more cost-effective and accessible. AI applications in culinary programs are also advancing food safety education by analysing data on food preparation processes. Predictive tools can now identify potential hazards in recipes and suggest ingredient substitutions based on dietary requirements or local availability, stimulating creativity and positively influencing standards of food safety. Furthermore, AI is making significant inroads into culinary tourism, with virtual assistants providing real-time recommendations for local Caribbean cuisines. Training learners to leverage these tools in engaging tourists, offering authentic Caribbean food experiences while promoting sustainable practices, not only enhances the visitor experience, but also creates new avenues for domestic entrepreneurship, bolstering efficiency, safety, and innovation across industries in the Caribbean region.

By fostering skills such as data analysis, machine-learning, and AI application development, Caribbean educational institutions can produce graduates who are not just job seekers but job creators. Such initiatives not only enhance sustainable development potentials in education, but also may catalyse economic diversification and entrepreneurial growth. This shift towards entrepreneurship can help address unemployment issues in the region and stimulate economic growth through innovation and technology-driven ventures.

Addressing and Overcoming Ethical Considerations and Implementation Challenges

While the potential benefits of AI in Caribbean education are significant, it is necessary to seek addresses to the ethical considerations and challenges that come with this technological integration and implementation. Issues around algorithmic bias and data privacy require careful governance and thoughtful implementation strategies. A primary ethical concern is the risk of algorithmic bias in AI systems used for educational purposes. If not intelligently designed and monitored, these systems could perpetuate or even exacerbate existing inequalities in education. For instance, predictive models for student performance might inadvertently discriminate against certain student demographic populations based on historical data that reflects societal biases. Therefore, with the diverse cultural context of the Caribbean, it is essential to ensure that AI systems are developed with a deep understanding of local demographics, with fair representation from all island nations, and are regularly audited for fairness and inclusivity. Data privacy is another critical issue, particularly when dealing with sensitive information about learners. As AI systems collect and analyse vast amounts of data to personalize learning experiences and predict outcomes, there is a need for robust data protection measures. Caribbean nations must develop comprehensive data governance frameworks that safeguard student information while still allowing for the beneficial use of data in educational AI applications. This includes clear policies on data collection, storage, usage, sharing, and cybersecurity. The implementation of AI in education also raises questions about the potential for increased surveillance on those who form part of data collection processes. While data collection is necessary for many AI applications, there is a risk of creating an environment of constant monitoring that could infringe on privacy rights and create undue pressure on both learners and educators. Striking the right balance between leveraging data for educational improvement and respecting individual privacy is a challenge that policymakers and educational institutions in the Caribbean and across the world are currently navigating.

Innovative Implementations

Beyond ethical considerations, there are significant practical challenges to implementing AI in Caribbean education systems. Limited digital infrastructure in many parts of the region poses a major obstacle to the widespread adoption of AI technologies. Various countries around the world struggle with inconsistent internet connectivity, lack of access to modern computing devices, and insufficient technical support staff. Addressing these infrastructure gaps in the Caribbean region requires substantial investment and long-term planning from governments and educational authorities. A further challenge is the need for capacity-building and connections among educators and entrepreneurs. RISE Caribbean, a three-year, multi-faceted initiative covering Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean islands, aimed to drive educational and entrepreneurial growth through accelerator programs, competitions, ecosystem-building, policy advocacy, and capacity-building (Caribbean Educational Research Centre, 2024). Performance indicators included the measure of startup launches, investments secured, revenue generated, job creations, participant numbers, project quality, growth of investor networks, and the increased ability of individuals to start and grow businesses. These indicators could be improved by AI integration, therefore highlighting that educators must be trained not only in how to use these technologies but also in how to critically evaluate their impact on learning outcomes. This requires a significant redevelopment and expansion on teacher education programs and continual professional development initiatives in the corporate and academic sectors. Within a Caribbean context, where resources for such training may be limited, a range of innovative approaches occurred in various Caribbean countries over 2024. This is in line with the existing Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap published by UNESCO (2024) guiding AI and virtual learning integration in education and entrepreneurship. An example of this and more are potentially forthcoming in light of discussions being held around reparations to Caribbean countries, thus raising interest, innovation, and inclusion of local, regional, and international stakeholders (Caribbean Educational Research Centre, 2024, CARICOM (2025)).

The first example of this is the Blended Learning Challenge competition developed by the UWI School of Education, Jamaica (University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, School of Education, 2024). The competition, featured

alongside a conference theme on hybrid learning, sought to identify and celebrate effective blended learning practices in the Caribbean, sharing best practices. Recognizing the growing importance of digital transformation in education, the challenge encouraged educators to share innovative uses of technology and pedagogical approaches. By highlighting exemplary work, the initiative aimed to highlight innovative educational leaders and consultants that are inspiring and informing others through their creative solutions, improving education quality, and addressing regional needs.

The incorporation of online learning platforms and peer-to-peer mentoring networks further builds capacity across the Caribbean islands. An excellent example of work being done on this area is by the University of West Indies Global Campus (UWI) with its extensive online learning platforms providing accessible education across the region, offering a variety of programs designed to support development workers, entrepreneurs, and lifelong learners. The institution has taken a leadership role in maximising collaboration and knowledge-sharing by organizing initiatives such as the Caribbean's first AI conference which was held in Five Islands Campus 2024 Antigua. This milestone event brought together experts, policymakers, and learners to explore AI adoption strategies and ethical considerations. This conference included practical components like a robotics hackathon, providing learners with firsthand experience while promoting peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities. UWI's partnerships with global leaders such as Meta, Google, UNESCO, and IBM further enhance its capacity-building efforts by facilitating knowledge transfer and interdisciplinary collaboration. Additionally, the Global Campus supports professional development through continuing and professional education (CPE) courses that include AI-related training in learning technologies, an example of which is the UWI Global Campus EON XR training program, a partnership between the University of the West Indies' online arm and EON Reality, providing training in augmented, virtual, and extended reality (XR) technologies. It equips learners and faculty with XR skills for education, skills development, and research, bringing cutting-edge technology to the Caribbean and preparing individuals for future careers. By combining these strategies, UWI is not only building a network of AI-savvy professionals but also preparing learners to address local challenges contributing to regional economic growth and innovation.

A third notable inclusion was the AI Global South Summit, held in St

Lucia in October 2024, a landmark event focused on AI's role in different sectors of developing nations, exploring and developing tangible actions based on the transformative potential of AI and emerging technologies to foster innovation and collaboration in a range of sectors, including culture, technology, tourism, health, the future of work, environmental sustainability, and education. A key feature was its emphasis on youth empowerment, with a dedicated youth panel giving young leaders a voice in shaping AI's future. The summit addressed how AI can tackle challenges like inequality and access to education, closer working between Caribbean government officials, tech professionals, NGOs, academics, and learners. It aimed to explore AI's potential for sustainable development in the Global South and equip participants with the knowledge and connections to drive positive change through AI initiatives. The summit positioned AI as a crucial tool that must be upheld and built on for addressing local challenges and empowering the next generation of AI leaders and entrepreneurs from the Caribbean.

Conclusion

This article has revealed meaningful potentials for the future of Caribbean education and stimulating economic entrepreneurship through AI and virtual learning technologies. Successful implementation requires a carefully orchestrated collaborative approach that balances technological advancement with ethical considerations and practical strategies. The review has identified trends and initiatives that hold promise for the Caribbean context. Personalized learning platforms, predictive AI data-driven analytical performance, and AI-augmented virtual teaching and learning tools stand out as particularly relevant innovations that have taken place across the region. These technologies have created more inclusive, effective, and economically relevant educational experiences tailored to the unique needs of Caribbean learners. Nevertheless, significant hurdles remain. Funding constraints pose a major challenge, as Caribbean nations face the combined limitations of reduced resources and compromised connectivity. The costs associated with AI implementation, including technology acquisition, infrastructure upgrades, and continued staff development can be prohibitive. To overcome these obstacles, the review suggests exploring creative funding solutions such as public-private partnerships, international development assistance,

regional cooperation bolstered by impactful research led innovations from organisations such as the Caribbean Studies Association and connected, competitive initiatives. Ensuring equitable access to AI-enhanced education across diverse socioeconomic groups and geographic areas is another critical concern. There is a risk that AI benefits could be concentrated in urban or affluent areas, potentially exacerbating existing educational disparities. To mitigate this, policymakers must prioritize inclusive strategies that bridge the digital divide and extend AI-driven educational opportunities to rural and underserved communities. The review highlights the need for robust and island connected frameworks to guide AI integration in education. Whilst there is an existing Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap published by UNESCO, further work is needed to develop a framework which represents the region's efforts to guide AI integration in education, focusing on governance, skills development, ethical considerations, and quality assurance. With a strong focus on using AI to drive economic growth, innovation, and social development, this framework should encompass ethical guidelines emphasizing fairness, transparency, and accountability; substantial investment in digital infrastructure; and comprehensive teacher training programs that cover both technical AI skills and pedagogical applications. Collaboration among educators, technologists, policymakers, and community stakeholders is essential to ensure that AI solutions align with local needs and values. It is encouraging to highlight institutions like the University of West Indies campuses in Antigua, Jamaica, and Trinidad, alongside University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI), and various stakeholders of St Lucia are already powering forward with pioneering innovative approaches to serve their student body and associated local communities. Through impactful initiatives, strategies, and events, they are demonstrating how AI can effectively prepare and upskill their communities for the future workforce, solve local problems, and nurture generations of entrepreneurs. Collaborations such as those between Enterprise Cayman and UCCI further illustrate how AI-driven education can create opportunities for learners to work together with businesses to address local challenges while contributing to economic diversification. By embracing AI advancements with strategic planning and inclusive implementation, the Caribbean has the potential to transform its educational landscape profoundly. The future of Caribbean education lies in cultivating generations of creatively and logically skilled,

adaptable individuals capable of critically thinking and thriving in a global digital economy, driving innovation within their communities. With AI as a catalyst for change, the region can position itself as a hub for technological innovation and entrepreneurship, fostering sustainable economic growth. Caribbean nations can harness the power of AI to build a more prosperous and innovative future for their people. As the region moves forward, continued research, policy development, and stakeholder engagement will be crucial to fully realize the promise of AI in education and economic development.

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Transforming the Caribbean's Cultural Landscape

Implementing the Four-Pillar Cultural Policy Model

DENNIS HOWARD

Abstract

This paper critically examines existing cultural policy models and advocates for a paradigm shift tailored to the Caribbean's unique cultural heritage and economic realities. It challenges the uncritical adoption of Western-centric neoliberal frameworks, arguing for a more culturally nuanced approach.

The study explores four dominant cultural policy models – traditionalist, cultural industries/economy, market-driven, and cultural democracy – before proposing the **Four-Pillar Cultural Policy Model**. *This framework prioritizes* **cultural dissemination, crystallization, diplomacy, and Kulcha Economy incentivization**, *emphasizing cultural confidence, stakeholder participation, and the Kulcha Economy as a driver of sustainable development.*

To ensure an inclusive and culturally sensitive policy development process, the paper introduces **Burke's Five-Factor Model of "Nocal" Engagement**, *which provides a structured approach to stakeholder consultation and data gathering. By integrating the Four-Pillar Model with Burke's engagement framework, this study presents a pathway to a cultural policy that authentically reflects Jamaica's identity while fostering economic growth.*

Keywords: Caribbean, cultural policy, cultural industries, Kulcha Economy, cultural democracy, cultural dissemination, stakeholder engagement, sustainable development, Caribbean studies, neoliberalism

Introduction

The Caribbean region is renowned for its cultural diversity, producing some of the most significant cultural artifacts and events that have gained global recognition. However, while the region takes pride in its cultural output at

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000015

both national and regional levels, public policies governing these cultural assets remain inadequate or non-existent. This gap prevents the region from fully maximizing the economic and reputational benefits of its cultural wealth, which holds significant financial potential.

This paper highlights the slow pace of implementing appropriate cultural policies and the absence of models specifically suited to the Caribbean. Instead, neoliberal policies – promoted by supranational organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) – are widely adopted. At the regional level, Caribbean governments have long acknowledged the role of culture in economic development, yet meaningful policy action has been slow. As Suzanne Burke observes: "The role of cultural policy in mediating these systemic developmental challenges has been widely acknowledged, promising as it does to redress the protracted issues of social alienation and economic stratification" (Burke, 2019, p.3).

The inclusion of cultural policy in Caribbean governance is a relatively recent development, emerging after independence and gaining traction in the 1980s. The establishment of the Regional Cultural Policy (RCP) by the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) in 1997 signaled recognition of culture's potential as a catalyst for economic transformation. However, while regional leaders acknowledged culture's importance, the RCP was primarily seen as a mechanism to unleash creativity rather than as a structured economic solution (Burke, 2019, p.2).

Several Caribbean nations, including Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and Jamaica, have attempted to develop cultural policy documents. However, these efforts have largely failed to result in effective implementation. In Jamaica, for instance, the first cultural policy draft in 2005 was never ratified by Parliament. Since then, multiple attempts have been made to complete a comprehensive policy, but none have been successfully finalized. The current Jamaican government, through its Ministry of Culture, is in the process of drafting a new document.

Historically, culture has never been a priority on Caribbean governments' main agendas, resulting in slow or non-existent policy implementation. As Burke (2019, p.2) argues, this issue stems from the Caribbean's historical dependence on external influences in shaping public policy, often in ways that do not align with the region's best interests.

This dynamic aligns with the neoliberal approach to the creative industries, where culture is treated as a commodity. As a result, aspects such as heritage, rituals, spirituality, and traditions are often sidelined in favor of market-driven cultural products. This imbalance leads to a lopsided cultural development, where intangible cultural heritage is neglected, weakening the region's cultural identity. The outcome is an inauthentic, homogenized "exotic Caribbean" culture viewed through a Western lens, rather than one that genuinely reflects the region's rich and diverse heritage.

Cultural Policy Models

Cultural policy refers to the policies, laws, and initiatives governments implement to support and promote their countries' arts, cultural heritage, and creative industries. Cultural policies can take various forms, varying from country to country, depending on their cultural, social, and economic contexts. One of the earliest cultural policy models can be described as the traditionalist model. A by-product of the cultural welfare state (Bonet & Négrier, 2018) which focuses on preserving national cultural heritage and supporting high culture. This model is based on the idea that cultural policy should be separate from other areas of public policy, such as economic or social policy. In this model, culture is seen as an end in itself, and the government's role is to preserve and promote the cultural traditions and practices of the nation.

This model is also known as the state-driven model, which is based on the belief that the cultural sector is a public good and that the state is responsible for ensuring access to cultural activities for all citizens. In this model, the state plays a central role in planning and funding cultural activities, and the cultural sector is seen as a means of promoting national identity and values. "Under this paradigm, the role of audiences is ultimately subordinate to quality, a controversial criterion due to aesthetic, social and political subjectivity" (Bonet & Negirer, 2018).

One of the advantages of the state-driven model is that it can protect cultural heritage and diversity, as the state has the ability to preserve and promote traditional cultural forms that may not be commercially viable. This model can also ensure that cultural activities are accessible to all citizens, regardless of income or location.

However, the state-driven model may also have its limitations. The state's role in planning and funding cultural activities may result in bureaucratic control and inefficient resource allocation. The state may also limit creative freedom by imposing its values and preferences on cultural production, leading to a lack of diversity in cultural expression. Additionally, the state-driven model may need to be more responsive to market demand or changes in cultural trends. The state may invest in cultural activities that are no longer popular, resulting in a waste of resources.

Another cultural policy model is the cultural industries/economy model, which emerged in the 1980s in response to the growing economic importance of cultural goods and services. This model focuses on the creative industries, such as film, music, and design, and seeks to develop policies that support their growth and competitiveness in the global marketplace. In other words, as (Bonet & Negirer, 2018) outlined, "It focuses on the direct economic impact and externalities of the cultural sector, traditionally considered more as a domain of expenditure." Many countries, led by the United Kingdom, shifted their focus from fundamental arts and cultural activities to human talent outputs that create intellectual property rights. As a result, the sector has expanded to include diverse creative businesses not previously regarded as legitimate targets of cultural democratization and growth (Garnham, 2005; O'Brien, 2014; Bonet & Negirer, 2018).

This model emphasizes the economic benefits of culture and the potential for cultural industries to generate employment and contribute to economic growth. Luis Emilio Cecchi (2015) observed,

> The growing interest in cultural industries and their rapid acceptance as a fairly general model for addressing development problems at the economic and political levels have contributed to the fact that cultural industries have become a key component in formulating economic policy and strategic development planning.

The market-driven model, also known as the neoliberal model, emphasizes the role of market forces and private sector involvement in the cultural sector. This model treats cultural goods and services as commodities, subject to the same market forces as any other product or service. The focus is on encouraging private investment and innovation, fostering competition, and creating a sustainable cultural industry that can contribute to economic growth and development.

One of the main advantages of this model is that it encourages private investment, which can stimulate innovation and create new opportunities for cultural entrepreneurs. By focusing on the market and competition, the model seeks to create a self-sustaining cultural industry that generates revenue and creates jobs.

However, there are also some significant drawbacks to the market-driven model. One of the main concerns is that it may lead to the commercialization and homogenization of cultural content. When cultural goods and services are treated as commodities, there is a risk that they will be produced primarily to meet market demand rather than to reflect diverse cultural traditions and identities. This outcome can lead to losing authenticity and diversity in cultural expression.

Another concern is that the market-driven model may limit marginalized groups' access to cultural goods and services. When cultural products are treated as commodities, they may become too expensive for some people to access, leading to a situation where only those with the means to pay can participate in cultural life. This can lead to a situation where certain cultural traditions and expressions are marginalized or even lost entirely.

The cultural democracy model is a more recent approach to cultural policy that emphasizes the diversity of cultural expression and the participation of citizens in cultural decision-making. The primary aim is "to facilitate access to the broadest number of people to high-quality cultural goods and services that, without government support, would not be supplied by the market." (Bonet & Negirer, 2018) This model is based on the idea that culture is not just the preserve of the elite but should be accessible to all members of society.

Cultural democracy policies aim to support grassroots cultural initiatives and encourage the participation of marginalized communities in cultural production and consumption.

The cultural democracy model is a concept that aims to democratize cultural production and ensure that people from diverse backgrounds have equal access to cultural resources.

The cultural democracy concept has its own set of benefits and drawbacks. On the plus side, this model has various advantages.

For starters, it broadens the cultural landscape by allowing diverse views and perspectives to be heard, fostering inclusivity. Second, it fosters social and economic equality by guaranteeing all individuals equal access to cultural

resources. Third, the paradigm fosters creativity and innovation by valuing and supporting various kinds of cultural expression. Finally, it promotes cultural understanding by promoting the exchange of ideas and perspectives, resulting in greater awareness of various cultures.

However, there are some disadvantages to consider. One disadvantage of the cultural democracy paradigm is that it may favour diversity over excellence, thereby lowering cultural standards. Furthermore, implementing this paradigm can be difficult, necessitating significant resources and effort to ensure equal access to cultural resources. Another issue is that the emphasis on cultural democracy may lead to a lack of support for conventional cultural institutions, causing them to deteriorate. Finally, there is a risk of cultural homogenization, which occurs when various voices blend into a single, dominating cultural expression, thereby erasing distinct cultural identities.

Finally, the cultural planning/creative city model is an integrated approach to cultural policy that seeks to link cultural development with broader urban and regional planning objectives. The concept of 'arts-led' regeneration was first explored in US cities in the 1970s and early 1980s, and it has since spread to European cities such as Glasgow, Barcelona, and Bilbao, and Caribbean countries such as Jamaica (Beatriz Garcia 2004).

This model recognizes that culture is an essential factor in urban and regional development and seeks to integrate cultural considerations into all aspects of planning and policy-making. Cultural planning policies aim to create vibrant and sustainable cultural ecosystems that benefit local communities and contribute to society's overall wellbeing. Also known as the hybrid model, this approach seeks to strike a balance between the market-driven and state-driven models, taking into account the specific cultural and economic context of a given society.

This approach recognizes that cultural goods and services are both commodities and public goods and seeks to balance the need for commercial viability with promoting cultural diversity, access, and artistic expression.

One advantage of the hybrid model is its flexibility and adaptability. Policymakers can tailor policies to meet the specific needs of their cultural sector and can adjust policies as circumstances change. This allows for a more responsive approach to cultural policy-making that can take into account the evolving needs of the cultural sector.

Another advantage of the hybrid model is that it addresses some of the

limitations of the market-driven and state-driven models. By combining elements of both models, policymakers can harness the advantages of private investment and innovation while ensuring that cultural heritage and diversity are protected, and that all citizens have access to cultural activities.

However, the hybrid model also has its limitations. It may be challenging to implement and monitor, particularly in societies with limited resources or weak institutional capacity. Policymakers must have the skills and expertise to strike a balance between conflicting objectives. They must be able to manage the tensions that may arise between market-driven and state-driven elements of cultural policy.

Overall, the hybrid cultural policy model is a complex and challenging approach that requires careful consideration of a given society's specific cultural and economic context. While it offers some advantages over pure market-driven or state-driven models, it also requires skilled policymakers to balance competing objectives.

One of the more significant findings of this paper is that cultural policy can take many forms, ranging from traditional preservationist approaches to more contemporary models that emphasize economic growth, cultural democracy, or integrated planning. The choice of policy model depends on a country's cultural, social, and economic priorities, as well as its political context and institutional arrangements.

It's the kulcha, jackass, not the economy

The last section of this essay discusses an alternative to the neoliberal notions of cultural policy that have guidıed the directions in the Global North and have been mainly adopted in the Global South without considering the sociocultural specificities of these countries' incredibly diverse cultures. To the disadvantage of the majority of the population, neoliberal capitalist ideologies have been fully embraced in nations like Jamaica. One essential element of the foreign direct investment model that many developing countries have been obliged to accept by supranational organisations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is a significant population of inexpensive labor.

The economic-driven solutions these organizations have recommended to address issues and hardships brought about by developed countries that

control the policy direction of these organizations so far have failed miserably and have caused untold suffering to the residents of these territories (Howard 2022).

Let us now consider how an indigenous approach to national development can provide the well-needed shift in tactics which can bring about the development goals necessary to achieve actual development.

Additionally, I have noted that it is crucial to develop a comprehensive cultural policy to direct the process of making our cultural products, traditions, way of life, and art an essential part of our export portfolio. Real development can be realized only when our economy reaches a balance of payments equilibrium and when the development requirements of everyday Jamaicans are met. Through our culture and the creative sector, Jamaicans have the opportunity to flourish and live in liveable conditions (Howard 2022).

To this end, the four-pillar cultural policy has been developed to provide a blueprint for the development of a "kulcha" economy, which has the ability to position Jamaican culture in all its facets at the centre of our long term national developmental goals. The key pillars of the policy include cultural dissemination, cultural crystallization, cultural diplomacy and creative industry incentivization. It is important to note that this approach has borrowed from the existing models previously outlined. It underscores the fact that "in contemporary cultural policies, distinct overlapping paradigms thus coexist" (Bonet & Négrier, 2018).

Cultural dissemination refers to spreading and sharing cultural practices, traditions, and knowledge within or across different societies. Cultural dissemination can occur through various channels, such as **education**,

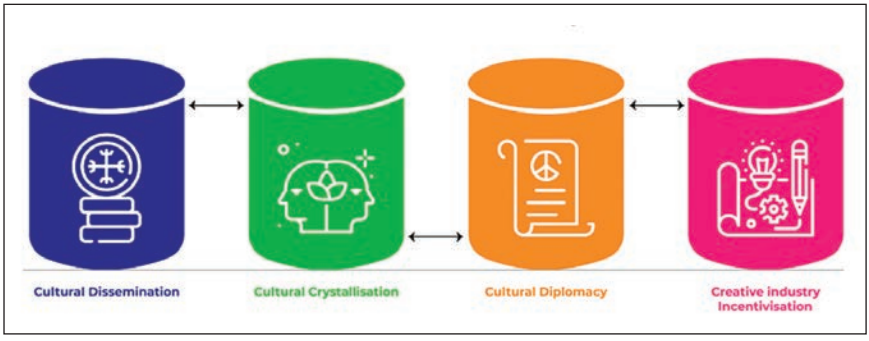

Figure 1: Four Pillar Cultural Policy Model

media, tourism, and social media. It can involve transmitting **cultural knowledge** and skills from one generation to the next and exchanging and sharing cultural practices and traditions between different groups and communities.

Cultural crystallization refers to the process by which a culture becomes more stable and defined over time. This can involve the consolidation and standardization of cultural practices and traditions, as well as the development of cultural norms and values that are widely accepted within a society. Cultural crystallization can occur due to various factors, such as social, economic, political, and cultural influences.

Cultural diplomacy refers to using cultural exchange and cooperation to promote international relations and understanding between countries and communities. Cultural diplomacy can involve various activities, such as cultural exchanges, educational programs, and artistic and cultural events that governments, cultural organizations, and other stakeholders can carry it out.

Creative industry incentivization refers to using financial or other incentives to support the development and growth of the kulcha economy which include a wide range of sectors, such as the arts, media, entertainment, design, and technology. Kulcha economy incentivization can take a variety of forms, such as grants, loans, tax breaks, and subsidies, and it can be used to support a wide range of creative projects and initiatives.

The pillars must be executed on the foundation of cultural confidence. **Cultural confidence** refers to the belief and pride in one›s own culture and traditions and the ability to express and share those cultural practices and values with others. Cultural confidence can be developed through various experiences and activities, such as participating in cultural traditions and practices, learning about one›s cultural heritage, and engaging with other cultures and traditions.

According to Adams and Goldbard (1995), three types of action are required to create a truly comprehensive cultural policy. To begin, mechanisms that facilitate defining cultural values, goals, and priorities are required. This first phase lays the groundwork for creating a practical cultural policy framework.

Secondly, there must be programs of initiatives and expenditures that

can actively promote the identified cultural goals. This domain is often called the explicit cultural policy-making terrain, where specific actions and investments are undertaken to further cultural objectives.

Lastly, it is crucial to establish mechanisms for monitoring indirect policy. It entails a watchdog process that evaluates the cultural impact of every social action in relation to defined standards. By doing so, it provides a means of handling implicitly defined cultural policy, ensuring that cultural considerations are taken into account across various realms of social activity.

Adams and Goldbard also highlighted the dilemma of who decides what policy is. They noted, "An entirely *laissez-faire* approach leaves those with the most power and wealth with the greatest opportunity to affect the nature and quality of their cultural lives, and leaves the poor and disenfranchised out." As a result, it is critical to acknowledge the importance of cultural democracy, which emphasises the participation of all citizens in decision-making processes in developing comprehensive cultural policy. The ultimate goal is for everyone to participate in shaping cultural values, goals, and priorities to the greatest extent feasible. This necessitates a precise balance between decentralization and central power. While decentralization brings decision-making closer to the local level, there are times when central intervention is required to preserve minority rights in the face of repressive local majorities.

Social Participation and Inclusive Policy Development

The Caribbean region has a rich and diverse cultural heritage, with a vibrant and dynamic cultural economy that includes music, dance, literature, visual arts, and crafts. However, the development of appropriate regional cultural policies has been hindered by a lack of stakeholder consultation, inadequate data gathering and a culturally inclusive approach to stakeholder consultation and policy outcomes.

One of the main issues is the reliance on Global North methodologies for data gathering and policy development. These methodologies are often based on Western cultural norms and values and may not be appropriate for the Caribbean context, devoid of the cultural democracy paradigm, which assumes any social group can gain acceptance for its cultural activities. For example, standardized surveys and questionnaires may not capture the nuances and complexities of Caribbean cultural practices and traditions.

As a result, critical stakeholders in the Caribbean cultural economy have been excluded from the policy development process, and their voices have not been heard or considered. This exclusion has led to a need for more understanding and appreciation of the unique challenges and opportunities facing the cultural economy in the region.

The Jamaican Government's Culture, Creative Industries and Values Task Force in 2009 identified ten broad areas to be addressed through the implementation of the Culture Creative Industries and Values Sector Plan. This was identified under the Vision 2030 national development plan which would see Jamaica being a developed country by 2030, with culture as a key avenue of doing so. The ten broad areas included:

1. Individual and National Identity
2. Institutions and Infrastructure
3. Promoting and Preserving Our Cultural Expression
4. Agents of Socialization
5. Culture and Education
6. Culture and Development
7. Heritage Preservation and Development
8. Nation Branding
9. Protection of Intellectual Property
10. Respect and conformity with international standards

The document goes on to note, "From these broad areas, the plan articulates a clear vision of culture in national life that includes recognition of the importance of cultural expressions, full participation of communities in cultural development . . . and the enhancement of cultural education." (p.46)

Therefore, as early on in the region's prioritization of cultural policy development as possible, social inclusion and participatory methods of development may be identified as key to their methodologies.

However, there are still examples of breakdowns in these methods. One specific example of this in data gathering is the need for more attention to traditional knowledge and practices in the Caribbean. Traditional knowledge, such as herbal medicine, storytelling, and spiritual practices, has been passed down through generations and is a vital part of the Caribbean cultural heritage. However, this knowledge is often overlooked in policy development because it is not easily quantifiable or standardised.

Another example is the underrepresentation of marginalized groups in the cultural economy, such as women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities. These groups face unique challenges and barriers to participation in the cultural economy, and their perspectives and experiences must be included in policy development.

On the other hand, one may identify the need to meet international standards as a challenge in focusing on traditional culture. As posited by Jones and Schoburg (2004), "There are discrete and overt pressures in the Caribbean and other developing states to design and implement domestic policies that are internationally acceptable or deemed credible . . ." (p.42). Therefore, in the midst of trying to engage in culturally appropriate policies, the Caribbean undergoes pressure to maintain the balance between context and international legitimacy. As such, you find many examples of Cultural Policy Development in the region representing a collaborative effort between the regional countries and international organizations such as UNESCO. Additionally, in the example above note that Jamaica identifies the "conformity" to international standards as a key focus area in their sector development.

In 2021–2022, Jamaica received technical support from UNESCO and the European Union for the global project Support for New Regulatory Frameworks to Strengthen the Cultural and Creative Industries and Support South-South Collaboration. The UNESCO Expert Facility on the Governance of Culture in Developing Countries was key to the execution of this project. While the project included stakeholder consultations and the development of a National Advisory Group to support the drafting of the Creative Economy Act, one may argue that the participation of UNESCO and the EU was more than an offering of resources but a legitimacy to the drafting of this legislation. As of the writing of this paper, the Creative Economy Act that this project supported has not been tabled in parliament.

Another example is Burke's identification of the UNESCO 2003 Convention on Intangible Heritage, which has become a key focus for recent cultural policy developments in the Caribbean. She identifies that the revised Cultural Policy of St Kitts and Nevis privileges this aspect of their policy as previous initiatives saw the development of a catalogue of the island's intangible cultural heritage, as defined and categorised by UNESCO.

In order to address the issues of unique context, there is a need for a more

culturally specific approach to data gathering and stakeholder consultation in the Caribbean cultural economy. This could involve using more participatory and community-based research methods, such as focus groups and interviews, that are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the Caribbean region.

In addition, there is a need to prioritize the inclusion of marginalized groups in the policy development process and to ensure that their perspectives and experiences are given equal weight to those of more privileged groups. This could involve establishing dedicated consultation mechanisms and funding opportunities for marginalized groups in the cultural economy.

A more culturally specific approach to data gathering and stakeholder consultation is needed to ensure that the diverse voices and perspectives within the Caribbean cultural economy are heard and considered in developing appropriate cultural policies.

An important aspect of forming an appropriate cultural policy is stakeholder consultation that will ensure the various cultural creative and heritage individuals, organizations and political representative researchers and technocrats are included, and all voices are ventilated, heard and considered. From a Caribbean perspective, consultation and data-gathering frameworks must be more robust. This is due to the reliance on Global North methodologies lacking the cultural nuance and specificity required to gather data, information and policy advice from the various sectors within the kulcha economy eco-system.

Burke's Five-Factor Model of "Nocal" Engagement

In her experience conducting the creative industry mapping of Trinidad and Tobago, Suzanne Burke has devised an indigenous approach to consultation and data gathering that considers the local context and cultural nuances. Her research revealed that local stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago had developed a series of responses that operate along a continuum, ranging from full engagement to no engagement. These responses are determined based on five pairs of indices: knowledge/ignorance, capacity/incompetence, governance/impotence, authority/incapacity, and leadership/irresponsibility.

Burke distilled these responses into a Five Factor Model of "Nocal" Engagement. It is important to note that local constituents may adopt different levels of engagement with the national policy domain over space

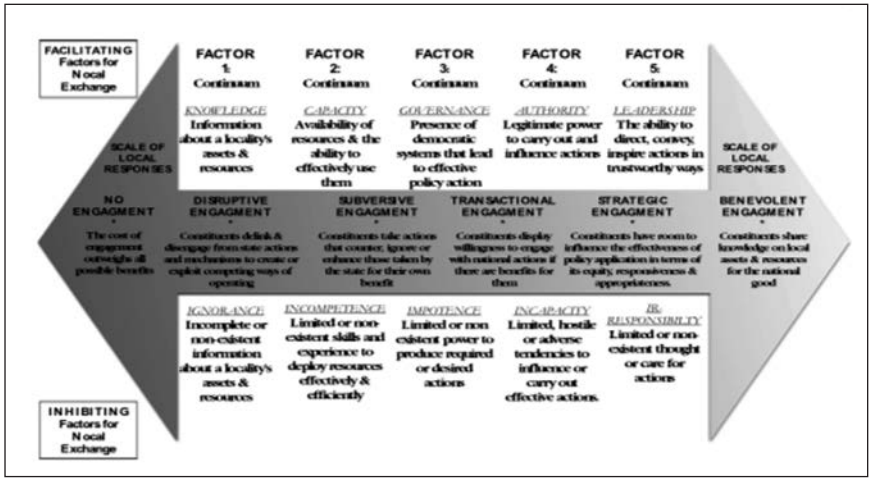

Figure 2: Burke's five factor model of nocal stakeholder cultural policy engagement

and time, and engagement can also vary from program to program. Local constituents sometimes employ various strategies to negotiate the policy terrain, including advocacy, lobbying, and networking.

Burke's approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the local context and the unique challenges and opportunities facing the creative industry in Trinidad and Tobago. It also highlights the need for a flexible and adaptable approach to stakeholder consultation and data gathering, considering local stakeholders' diverse perspectives and experiences. By adopting a culturally specific approach to policy development, it is possible to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are heard and considered, leading to more effective and sustainable policies for the creative industry.

Burke's Five-Factor Model of "Nocal" Engagement highlights the importance of engaging with local stakeholders in a culturally appropriate and meaningful way. This approach recognizes that local actors have unique knowledge and perspectives essential for developing effective policies and programs that reflect the needs of the creative industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

One of the critical strengths of Burke's approach is its emphasis on building trust and relationships with local stakeholders. By engaging with stakeholders respectfully and collaboratively, policymakers can foster a sense of ownership and participation among local actors, leading to more sustainable and effective policy outcomes.

Another strength of Burke's approach is its focus on flexibility and adaptability. By recognizing that engagement strategies may vary over time and in different contexts, policymakers can tailor their approaches to meet the specific needs and challenges of the creative industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

However, one potential challenge of this approach is the need for policymakers to understand the local context and cultural nuances deeply. This requires significant investment in research and capacity building and a willingness to listen and learn from local stakeholders.

Burke's indigenous approach to consultation and data gathering in Trinidad and Tobago highlights the importance of building trust, relationships, and collaboration with local stakeholders. By adopting a culturally specific approach to policy development, policymakers can ensure that the voices and perspectives of all stakeholders are heard and considered, leading to more effective and sustainable policies for the creative industry.

For years, various Caribbean nations have attempted to, while not directly, take on this 'nocal' approach as put forth by Burke. In 1997, CARICOM developed the Regional Cultural Policy Approach which, although had its limitations, Jamaica, St Lucia, Barbados, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, and St Kitts and Nevis developed cultural policies that mirrored the RCP's framework in structure, style, themes, and philosophy. Each policy emphasized the importance of a regional approach to cultural development, guided by the RCP's direction.

The RCP set the stage for the continued context-specific development of cultural policy in the region. Barbados currently has one of the region's most comprehensive cultural policies, the National Cultural Policy for Barbados (2010). Outlining the methodologies, it shows engagement with Burke's Five-Factor Model of Nocal Engagement. Prioritization of consultations, public discourse recommendations, and more, the Barbadian cultural policy is to be informed by "1. an honest and open discussion on our history and the role it has played in defining our present reality. 2. the cultural and artistic manifestations that demonstrate our uniqueness as a people. 3. a critical analysis of who we are as a people and where we are going. 4. contributions from all participants in what is defined as the 'cultural milieu.'" (p.8)

What Barbados shows is that although the RCP was a crucial starting point in the development of cultural policies across the region, all nations

are individually different and therefore a nationally community-driven method is key in the development of a rich, culturally appropriate policy.

Conclusion

The Four-Pillar Cultural Policy Model provides a framework for understanding the different dimensions of cultural policy, including cultural participation, expression, heritage, and industries. This model emphasises the importance of balancing these dimensions to achieve a comprehensive and inclusive cultural policy.

Burke's Five Factor Model of "Nocal" Engagement can be seen as a complementary approach to the Four-Pillar Cultural Policy Model, as it provides a culturally specific framework for stakeholder consultation and data gathering that can help to inform and guide policy development across all four pillars.

For example, in cultural participation, Burke's approach emphasizes the importance of engaging with local stakeholders respectfully and collaboratively to foster a sense of ownership and participation among local actors. This helps ensure that policies and programs aimed at increasing cultural participation are developed in consultation with the communities they are intended to serve, leading to greater uptake and impact.

Similarly, in the context of cultural industries, Burke's approach can ensure that policies and programs are developed in consultation with local stakeholders in the creative industry, including artists, entrepreneurs, and cultural institutions. This can ensure that policies are tailored to the specific needs and challenges facing the creative industry in Trinidad and Tobago, leading to more sustainable and effective outcomes.

Burke's Five-Factor Model of "Nocal" Engagement can work well with the Four-Pillar Cultural Policy Model by providing a culturally specific approach to stakeholder consultation and data gathering that can help to inform and guide policy development across all four pillars of cultural policy. By combining these two approaches, policymakers can develop more comprehensive and inclusive cultural policies that reflect local stakeholders' unique needs and perspectives.

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The Caribbean Sporting Journey

Development, Branding and Technology

ORVILLE BYFIELD AND **MELISSA SANDERSON**

Abstract

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) Journal, this article examines the performance of Caribbean athletes at the Paris 2024 Olympics, the current state of sports in the region, and future prospects. Caribbean athletes have once again demonstrated excellence on the global stage, further solidifying the region's reputation as a powerhouse in athletics. From legendary figures like Usain Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce to rising stars such as Julien Alfred and Thea Lafond, Caribbean sports continue to thrive.

This article explores sports development in the region, highlighting existing programs that fund and support emerging talent. It also assesses the state of sports infrastructure, ongoing partnerships aimed at increasing accessibility, and the persistent challenges related to funding and resources. Additionally, it discusses the branding of Caribbean sports, showcasing how nations leverage their athletic success to promote sports tourism and strengthen national identity.

Furthermore, the article examines the training and coaching programs necessary to sustain athletic excellence and integrate sports into the region's broader development agenda. Looking ahead, it explores emerging disciplines, technological advancements, and the Caribbean's potential for greater global impact. Offering a holistic perspective, this article reflects on the past, assesses the present, and envisions the future of Caribbean sports over the next 50 years.

Keywords: Caribbean athletes; sports development; youth sports programs, training methodologies, coaching programs; economic development agenda; Caribbean sports

CARIBBEAN ATHLETES SUCH AS USAIN BOLT, CHRIS GAYLE, and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, have been in the spotlight for many years, transforming the Caribbean into a sporting mecca. For many Caribbean countries today, athletic success

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000016

has emerged as a mark of regional pride and invested nationalism. There is potential for the region to further build upon and strengthen its position through strategic growth. This article examines how better training, increased emphasis on branding and getting the best in training, can define the Caribbean region in the next evolution of Caribbean sports. Through consistent growth in the region's athletic prowess, fostering a sports-driven environment, and promoting sports as an economic catalyst, Caribbean countries should be able to capitalise on athletic successes while improving their socio-economic prosperity. This perspective views sports as not just a competition but as a way to develop the region economically, culturally and technologically, along with improving unity and gaining international recognition.

Historical Athletes in the Caribbean

For years now, the Caribbean has been a powerhouse of global sports, pumping out an endless list of athletes who have left the world's sporting fans in awe of their talent and dedication. Jamaican sportsman Usain Bolt redefined sprinting, contributing to global pride for his country and cricketing master Sir Vivian Richards dominated the international stage. The region has also produced world-class talents; footballer Dwight Yorke and boxer Lennox Lewis have also represented the region on the world stage. This generation of sporting icons has not only put Caribbean sports on the international map, but they have also given the islands a boost along the way as they have instilled a feeling of pride among thousands of youth who have taken up the sports mantle and gone on to make a living out of their career in sport. And their achievements have become symbols of the region's potential for greatness, and a source of inspiration to future generations. Caribbean sports development grows on the track the legacy of these greats continues to inspire new athletes to dare to write their legacy and ensure that the region's sporting excellence remains a beacon of admiration on the global stage.

Paris 2024

Ramón Fonst of Cuba won the first Olympic medal for an independent Caribbean country, as he won his first Olympic medal in the amateur épée

fencing event at the Paris Olympics in 1900. He then went on to win both the épée and foil events in the 1904 Olympics. It was not until 1948 that the Caribbean tasted gold in the Olympic games, where Arthur Wint triumphed in the 400 metres, signalling the start of the Caribbean's dominance in track and field.

Fast forward to the XXXIII Olympiad in Paris 2024, the Caribbean shone brightly as new stars brought medals and recognition to their islands. Additionally, sprinting powerhouse Jamaica expanded its repertoire as a track and field nation, in addition to being the "sprint capital of the world." The contingent of Caribbean athletes left Paris with a total of 25 medals, 6 gold, 4 silver and 12 bronze, with seven countries having the pleasure of seeing their athletes on the podium. Standout athletes included Julien Alfred and Thea Lafond, who became the first to deliver a gold medal to St Lucia and Dominica respectively. Jamaican duo, Rojé Stona and Kishane Thompson, also performed exceptionally well in the games.

St Lucia is the only country named after a woman, so it is fitting that Julien Alfred, a woman, won the first-ever Olympic medal for St Lucia. In fact, Julien Alfred is the first athlete to deliver any medal to the island of St Lucia. Known as a top tourist destination in the Caribbean, Alfred's remarkable performance has filled her nation with pride, happiness, and a realisation that despite your circumstances, "hard work pays off," a well-known connotation throughout the Caribbean. Alfred has since been appointed as a tourism ambassador for her nation. The Olympic success of Alfred has now opened the door for St Lucia to develop as an island with a burgeoning sports identity.

Thea Lafond of Dominica shares a similar story of courage and determination as Julien Alfred. Both left their home countries at a young age to pursue their dream of becoming athletes, with Alfred heading to Jamaica at age 14 while Lafond migrated to the USA at age 5. Lafond entered Paris as a leading contender and lived up to expectations, earning Dominica, an island with a population of just over 70,000, its first-ever Olympic medal in the triple jump. An outpour of celebration on the island followed, with Lafond being awarded the Dominica Award of Honour, Dominica's highest national award, among a host of other rewards signifying the importance of her feat.

The Jamaican pair of Rojé Stona and Kishane Thompson will undoubtedly have left the Olympic games proud of their achievements. Jamaica, renowned

for its sprinting prowess, has continuously produced excellent field events athletes over the last decade. Tajay Gayle, Wayne Pinnock and Shanieka Ricketts have consistently kept the flame of Jamaican field events lit, and at Paris 2024, Rojé Stona amplified that flame as he became the first Jamaican Olympic champion in the discus event. He achieved that feat with an Olympic record, further etching his name in the history books as a discus thrower. On his return to Jamaica, he echoed a cry of encouragement to the youths, motivating them to believe in themselves and to chase and achieve their dreams in the best way possible.

Another bright spark for Jamaica, Kishane Thompson, clinched a silver medal in the 100m at his first Olympic games. After the Usain Bolt era of Athletics, Jamaican male sprinting has been slow out of the blocks as the nation sought its next superstar male sprinter. Thompson became the first to rise through a talented pack of sprinters, with a breakthrough 2024 season which culminated with a podium finish in Paris. Thompson also became the first Jamaican male sprinter to get an Olympic medal in the 100 metres since Usain Bolt won gold in Rio 2016. With international experience under his belt, the expectation is for Thompson to become a force in sprinting in the coming years.

Sport Development in the Caribbean

Government and Institution Support

The development of sports across the Caribbean requires government and institutional support. This can occur through financial backing, facility improvement and talent development. For example, the governments in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas provide money for sports programmes to help athletes get the resources they need to succeed. Regional forms of organisation, including the Caribbean Association of National Olympic Committees (CANOC), seeks to promote, encourage and bind sport with culture and education, developing sport competitively and recreationally for the benefit of Caribbean nations and people. Local talent is also connected with global opportunities by institutions. Caribbean athletes have partnerships with organisations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to gain access to funding and funding initiatives. If the

Caribbean is to develop a comprehensive sports framework which supports elite athletes, youth programmes, and balances sports development as part of the economic and cultural landscape of the region, it will require sustained support.

Grassroots and Youth Programmes

The cultivation of talent in Caribbean sports is rooted in grassroots programmes and youth development initiatives. Identifying young athletes and helping them grow is also the responsibility of community-based programmes and school competitions. If sports become accessible at an early age, these initiatives will supply impetus to physical activity and healthy lifestyle behaviours, resulting in more children blossoming into athletes. Many Caribbean nations have set up youth leagues in cricket, track and field and football for children to compete locally. In Jamaica, the Sports Development Fund (SDF) supports sports projects so that they can be used to increase wide-scale participation and community engagement. In under-served communities, these programmes are especially important, as without access to facilities and coaching, youth development will not be achievable. Investing in grassroots sports creates pathways for young athletes to engage in a more competitive environment, producing a steady stream of skilful athletes that can later represent the region internationally.

Infrastructure and Facilities Improvement

The Caribbean needs to upgrade sports infrastructure to enable athletes to have high-quality training environments. Improved infrastructure allows athletes to train and compete locally rather than in expensive overseas locations. The National Stadium in Jamaica and Hasely Crawford Stadium in Trinidad and Tobago are vital facilities for training and hosting regional competitions. In addition, attracting international events in which the Caribbean's talent and hospitality can be showcased can benefit the local economy, but that requires investment in infrastructure. Upgraded facilities also facilitate access to more advanced equipment for the athletes that are needed to meet international standards for sports preparation. Some infrastructures in the Caribbean that require investment are grassroots

facilities, elite senior-level competition facilities, training facilities, and sports medical facilities. In doing so, the Caribbean can build a foundation to support elite and amateur athletes, and further advance a region that can nurture and showcase top-tier athletic talent.

International Partnerships and Exchanges

Caribbean athletes and coaches benefit from partnership and exchange opportunities with international partners. Through collaborations with global sports bodies, universities, and professional clubs, we enable athletes within the Caribbean to access advanced training methods, research, and facilities that are simply not available locally. For example, partnerships with North American and European institutions provide Caribbean athletes with the ability to train in some of the best training camps in the world, giving them access to premium resources and coaching. The other benefit exchanges bring to coaches is learning about modern training methods, sports science developments and their personal experiences, which can be reintroduced on their turf once they return home. Such programmes strengthen the Caribbean's competitive edge by bringing new knowledge back to local teams and programmes through athletes and coaches. International partnerships are a way for Caribbean sports to grow in expertise and build networks that help the region be a part of the global sports community.

The Role of Caribbean Universities in Advancing Sports Development

In recent decades, higher educational institutions like the University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech) and the University of the West Indies (UWI) have been at the forefront of driving sports development in the Caribbean. Their contributions span athlete training and research in sports science positioning the region as a hub for athletic excellence.

An official sports programme was established at the University of Technology Jamaica (UTech, Ja.) by Dennis Johnson OD in 1971. This programme delivered Jamaica's first home-grown Olympian, Anthony Davis and gave birth to the now Department of Sports. Under the guidance of Johnson, UTech, Ja., (then known as CAST), created the Bolts of Lightning

4x100m relay team, which became the first club team to break 40 seconds in the sprint relay.

In 1995, Johnson formed a partnership with renowned coach, Stephen Francis, who had a mission to develop world-class athletes after the high school level. A partnership between the two provided the necessary groundwork for Stephen Francis, Paul Francis, David Noel and Bruce James to form the MVP track club in 1999. The partnership between Johnson and Francis paved the way for a MOU between UTech Ja and MVP. This resulted in the establishment of a home for MVP and the production of several world-class athletes, giving credence to the university's moniker, "The Home of World-Class Athletes." Some of these athletes include Asafa Powell, Shelly-Ann Fraser Pryce, Elaine Thompson, Shericka Jackson, Michael Frater, and Sherrone Simpson to name a few.

UTech, Ja., the home of world-class athletes has played a significant transformative role in Jamaica's sporting success. The University's collaboration with local and international sports organisations has produced a steady stream of world-class athletes, including Olympic champions like Usain Bolt, Asafa Powell, and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce. The Caribbean School of Sport Sciences (CSOSS), one of the three schools in the Faculty of Science and Sport at UTech provides academic programs in Athletic Training, Coaching, Sport Management and Physical Education. These programmes train the next generation of Coaches, Athletic Trainers and Sport Administrators. The university houses state-of-the-art facilities, equipped to train elite athletes while also serving as a research base for sports performance optimisation. The university provides access to academic support, enabling athletes to balance education and sports and as such the legacy of Utech is not only about producing medal-winning athletes but building a sustainable ecosystem for sports.

UWI with the Faculty of Sport has a strong focus on academic research and sports medicine. UWI, having campuses across Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and other territories, is uniquely positioned to impact sports across the region.

G.C. Foster College, named after the legendary Gerald Claude Eugene Foster, is an institution driven to create exceptional sports professionals. With educational programmes for physical education, coaching, and sports administration, G.C. Foster is a pioneer in producing excellent coaches

and administrators. G.C. Foster has seen success with many of its athletes, including Olympians Demish Gaye, Rasheed Dwyer and Ronda Whyte, and excellent coaches such as Maurice Wilson and Marlon Gayle.

The collective efforts of these institutions contribute significantly to the Caribbean's reputation as a breeding ground for elite athletes as they can influence policy and community development and foster economic growth.

Branding Caribbean Sports

Sports, Culture and Tourism

Brazil is known for football, the USA, basketball and Japan, martial arts. These countries are universally known for these sports due to their branding. Sports revenue is projected to reach US$112.40 billion in 2024 and by 2029, US$ 137.80 billion (statista.com). In the Caribbean, branding sports is an under-utilised tool in strengthening the region's identity as a sporting hub. With the constant evolution of traditional and social media, sports events are now broadcast globally with the click of a button or the swipe of a phone. This makes branding sports even more important as the financial sponsorships and partnerships that can be gained are innumerable. Add to that the display of the Caribbean's unique identity, and the benefits of branding Caribbean sports become rewardable.

Fusing sports with Caribbean culture is an excellent and underemployed means to brand Caribbean sports. The Caribbean is a leading destination for festivals, which are executed to great success yearly. An intriguing idea following this successful template is a sports festival. From major sports such as football, athletics and cricket, to some lesser developed sports such as sailing, basketball, and beach volleyball, the diversity of sports on offer can encourage participation and display the wide array of talent in the Caribbean. This provides an opportunity to showcase and celebrate local talent in the region while simultaneously offering the traditional dance, music and food that is enjoyed by many globally, making the event attractive to tourists interested in sports and culture. Furthermore, a legacy can be created, one that sees the Caribbean sports brand being associated with sports development and inspiring athletes, emphasising the importance of sports in daily life and advancing the region's aim of becoming a sports

hub. A few examples of sporting events that mix culture and sports are the Jamaica Boys' and Girls' Championships, the Caribbean Premier League (CPL), the CONCACAF Caribbean Cup and the Carifta Games.

Another viable option to brand Caribbean sports is to appoint successful athletes as cultural and tourist ambassadors. Branding Caribbean sports can provide great potential for economic growth. Sports tourism can be a key economic strategy for the region by prioritizing sports as a key economic strategy, attracting international events, stimulating local business and promoting Caribbean culture. In this capacity, athletes can share how their culture has helped them to achieve success. Through creative storytelling, such as campaigns, documentaries, docu-series and more, athletes can foster a compelling narrative that resonates with fans, which can attract tourists to the unique lifestyle, tradition and attractions that the Caribbean offers. A fine example of this is Cool Runnings, which marvellously told the story of the Jamaican bobsled team's Winter Olympics journey. Additionally, an option for sports merchandise becomes available as the popularity of the athletes can result in merchandise being created that mirrors the culture and identity of the athletes.

Finally, athlete-hosted camps are another option to trigger the branding of Caribbean sports. The Caribbean could host destination camps, where fans, tourists and aspiring athletes could meet with top sports figures for immersive training and cultural experiences, with athletes acting as hosts. These camps would be held in stunning locations in the Caribbean where participants would have the opportunity to learn directly from renowned Caribbean athletes in a multitude of different sports. The camps would feature physical training and guided tours, cultural workshops, and social events to bring physical training together with local culture. These camps would be designed to attract all skill levels and help build a tourism draw that is unique and helps build the region's sports identity and celebrate its cultural richness.

Training and Coaching Programmes

Structured Training

Athlete development requires structured training programmes as they offer a methodical way to build skills and prepare the mind and body by utilising mental and physical conditioning. If athletes follow a well-designed regimen, they can progressively increase strength, endurance, and technique, which will in turn improve their performance in the sport they play. Training also helps to prevent injuries through the use of proper warm-up, cool-down, and recovery protocols. Furthermore, structured training develops athletes' discipline and consistency while instilling a professional mindset at an early age. This lays a strong foundation for success, as athletes learn to set goals, celebrate their accomplishments, and to adjust training accordingly based on performance. In addition, structured training facilitates communication between coaches, athletes and support personnel, so that all parts of an athlete's development are covered.

Regional collaboration between Caribbean nations is also an excellent way to develop structured training. Sharing resources, knowledge and training facilities could benefit all athletes in the region. Training hubs across the Caribbean can help to pool countries' expertise and provide athletes with access to and knowledge of elite-level coaching, nutrition, and recovery strategies. Another collaborative regional programme could be to coordinate joint training camps, where athletes from various countries will come together to train with each other and learn from one another. Furthermore, local partnerships with international sporting organisations could foster knowledge exchange and improved access to high-tech and sports science that would improve training effectiveness and foster a path to global success. Ultimately, structured training is key to long-term success in sports and helping to grow the competitiveness of Caribbean athletes on the global stage.

Education of Coaches

Investing in the education of coaches is important for the improvement of the various sports, and athletes in the region. Professional and formal development keeps coaches informed about the emerging trends in coaching

practices, sports science and research. Essentially, the main path of continuing education for coaches includes developing and strengthening their ability through practice and participation in workshops, seminars, and certification programmes. All of which will ensure the subsequent improvement of athletes' performance. Qualified coaches are key to ensuring that the appropriate training environment is enhanced, and teamwork and spirit encouraged. They also act as trainers and give directions and support to athletes, even more so to those at the grassroots level. Moreover, expenditure on coaching education aids in the creation of expert coaches that are vital for the betterment of the standard of coaching in the Caribbean. Making the education of coaches a priority can result in the Caribbean producing more talented and equipped athletes to represent in international competitions.

Sports Associations in the Caribbean

Many training programmes and sports clubs in the Caribbean exist to nourish athletic talent in a variety of different disciplines. Jamaica Athletics Administrative Association (JAAA) is behind the track and field athletes' initiatives in Jamaica, offering them workshops and camps to help them develop their skills from an early age. Track and field structured training in Trinidad and Tobago is provided by the National Association of Athletics Administrations (NAAA) which offers athlete progression through specialised coaching. Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board also has youth development programmes that cater for young cricketers through training camps and inter-school competitions. The Caribbean Football Union (CFU) and the Caribbean Basketball Confederation (CBC) are organisations across the region that are involved in increasing youth participation through coaching clinics and competitive leagues. Without these programmes, it is likely that the Caribbean will not sustain its status on the global stage of showcasing world-class athletes capable of dominating internationally.

Regional collaboration among Caribbean sporting organisations, by combining resources, expertise, and infrastructure, will greatly improve the Caribbean's global competitiveness. Countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados could share training hubs to provide high-quality facilities and coaching to help develop athletes across the region. More competitive opportunities and visibility would be available in inter-regional

leagues in sports such as football, basketball and cricket and international sponsorships could be attracted through joint marketing efforts. Finally, pooling technological resources for AI and performance analytics would lift athletes' training and injury prevention. Funding, mentorship and scholarships from global bodies like the IOC can be found in partnerships and will help strengthen the Caribbean's position on the global sports stage and collectively raise the bar in competitiveness.

AI and Technology Developing Sports

Performance Analysis and Enhancement

AI-driven performance analysis tools are changing how athletes and coaches train and compete. These tools use motion capture technology, wearable sensors, and video analysis to deliver real-time data on an athlete's technique, biomechanics and physical output. With these detailed insights, it comes down to looking at the athletes and seeing strengths and weaknesses, identifying what to work on next and optimising athletic performance. Moreover, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) provide an exciting potential for virtual sports training for athletes. VR is capable of putting athletes in realistic game situations, allowing them to practice under sustained pressure minus the risk of injury. AR, on the other hand, is advantageous in presenting real-time bio-feedback data during training.

AI-driven tracking systems can sufficiently contain information about what athletes are engaged in at any moment. Concurrently, AI algorithms can analyse game footage to predict opponents' strategies and coaches can change game plans and tactics accordingly. These advancements give Caribbean athletes a competitive advantage by giving them the ability to train at international standards from regional locations. Until now, this level of analysis was available only to elite teams, however with AI, Caribbean sports programmes can now leverage and incorporate cutting-edge data analytics, narrowing the gap between regional and global standards in the preparation and performance of athletes.

Injury Prevention and Recovery

AI and wearable technology help athletes recover from training sessions and prevent injuries. AI algorithms can use devices that monitor heart rate, muscle fatigue and physical load to detect signs of physical strain and can thereby assess an athlete's risk of injury. Coaches can make instantaneous modifications to training sessions to lessen over-exertion and risk of injury. For example, wearable sensors can alert coaches to intervene when athletes are edging closer towards dangerous fatigue levels. Also, through the automation of developing unique and individual-based rehabilitation plans, AI can facilitate and boost recovery effectively. AI can track the consistent data of an athlete's recovery process and adjust the exercise and intensity for the best results. These tools are important in the Caribbean, where access to sports medicine may be limited. Additionally, athletes will now be able to stay at peak performance levels for a longer period during competitions. This is crucial to the longevity of athletes' performance and regional sports development.

Fan Engagement and Virtual Experiences

Today, AI and technology are making sports more interactive and accessible; they're even embracing sports. Fans that use VR and AR can take advantage of immersive experiences including virtual attendance of games, or even interactive training with their favourite athletes. AI algorithms can also drive social media platforms that serve personalised content to fans through real-time updates, stats, and highlights. These technologies can help expand audience reach in the Caribbean, where sports fandom is passionate and growing, and reach a global fan base. Caribbean sports can use virtual experiences to engage fans globally and raise the region's sports identity to an international level.

Conclusion

In the midst of Caribbean athletes winning all over the globe, the region stands on the precipice of using sports as a force for good. The lack of sports science integration, limited financial resources and lack of infrastructure

require strategic investment and creative thinking. This can be overcome through the prioritisation of multipurpose facilities which are resilient to extreme weather and youth development initiatives like grassroots infrastructures, community sports centres, and school sports facilities among others. Branding Caribbean sports also has plenty of room to grow, from sports tourism to leveraging athletic success and expanding on the sports fashion industry. Technology and international partnerships will be vital, featuring world-class training methods and sports science to local talent, who will train to world-class standards. If these measures are put in place, Caribbean nations will have more World and Olympic champions in addition to using sports to spur economic growth, instil pride in the community and shine the light on the island's rich cultural heritage. This future-focused approach to Caribbean sports will help build resilience and unity across generations and leave a legacy that touches beyond the podium.

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Ritual, Residue and The Photograph

Considerations on Some Traces of Ana Mendieta

AKIMA McPHERSON

Abstract

This paper uses close visual analysis to situate the Cuban-born artist's photographic traces of her performative actions as art rather than mere documentation. It argues that these traces do not function as mere signs or indexes but instead become the signified. Additionally, the paper also situates Mendieta's work in relation to the aesthetic frame of 'marks of indifference' while also acknowledging its socio-political critique – an outcome shaped by her unique background.

The discussion also examines how Mendieta's photographic traces enter the realm of art as a byproduct of collaboration with her primary collaborators being the camera and viewers who occupy emic and etic spaces defined by the camera's lens. Selected works from the Untitled (Glass on Body Imprints) (1972) and Siluetas Series (1973–80) are analysed. Ultimately, this paper advocates for broadening the critical lens applied to Mendieta's work beyond the conventional feminist perspective.

Keywords: Ana Mendieta; Photographic Traces**;** Performance Art**;** Socio-political Critique**;** Feminist Art Discourse

Introduction

The oeuvre of conceptual artist Ana Mendieta (b. 1948, d. 1985) poses interesting and exciting problems for scholars. How does one locate and discuss her work given its breadth of artistic forms and thematic content, the complexity and near obscurity of some of her referents, and the ephemeral nature of substantial portions and the partiality of their traces? The performative actions[1], photographs, films, drawings, and sculptures for

which Mendieta is known encompass the years from 1972 to 1985. Mendieta's early work explores themes related to human indifference to violence and sexual violence meted out to women. Often in a multivalent manner, throughout her oeuvre, she explores themes related to displacement, life/death, and rebirth. Her work also occasionally intersects with discourses of 'race,' the indigenous Taíno, and the Afro-Cuban syncretic religion Santería. Consequently, Mendieta foregrounds "her personal experience and critiques the inherited social relations where women and ethnic Others are viewed as objects" (Cabañas 1999, 12).

Mendieta depended on photography to record her performative actions. Therefore, the photographs function as traces of performed actions, fixing and framing as possible. In privileging the visual through the photograph, Mendieta ensured a partial afterlife for her ephemeral works. Thus, the other sensual aspects such as the auditory and olfactory must be inferred. Nonetheless, these photographic traces hover above the indexical; they function as more than markers of an event. This essay explores this aspect of Mendieta's oeuvre. By focusing attention on a mere fraction of her work, the propositions made may be extrapolated, as appropriate, to understand her larger body of work. I will also show how the photographs surpass the document as they enter the realm of art and demonstrate an excavation and decoding of Mendieta's oeuvre through lenses that are more varied than that of feminism, the usual analytic lens for Mendieta's oeuvre.

Mendieta's Early Years

Crucial to understanding Mendieta's oeuvre, is her lived experience of forced displacement from Cuba and away from her original cultural realities. In 1961, Ana and her older sister Raquelin were sent from Cuba to the United States of America (USA) by their parents after Castro's overthrow of the Batista regime posed threats to the family. Mendieta's politically prominent father Ignacio Mendieta had refused Castro's request to sign his name to the Communist Party leading to the sisters being sent away for their safety on the final flight of Operation Peter Pan/Operación Pedro Pan. After a short period spent in Florida in the care of the Catholic Church, the sisters were sent to Dubuque, Iowa, USA. The transition from life in Cuba to Iowa was challenging for both sisters. It was also marked by a brief period of separation

when Raquelin left for college. The sisters were eventually joined by their mother and brother in 1966. Their father remained in Cuba until 1979, where he was held as a political prisoner.

Despite the psychological implications of unfamiliarity with the Dubuque environment, separations from family, and her experiences as a minority in several regards, Mendieta completed secondary education and enrolled at the University of Iowa in 1966. There, she completed an undergraduate degree in art in 1969 followed by a MA in Painting in 1972. However, shortly after completing the MA and wanting her art "to have power, to be magic" (quoted in Cabañas 1999, 13), Mendieta abandoned painting to make socio-cultural and politically potent art. Abandoning painting, Mendieta enrolled in the University of Iowa's experimental intermedia MFA programme founded and led by the German artist Hans Breder (b. 1935, d. 2017). Through the programme Mendieta was exposed to visiting artists for whom

> emphasis on process and the body and the relationship between artwork and viewer contributed to the redirection of [her] style. Photography and video also became integral components in documenting her increasingly ephemeral works (Cabañas 1999, 12).

Therefore, Mendieta's work took a contemporary turn enabling her to engage with a variety of approaches and processes that were neither typical nor traditional to art.

Transcending the indexical

Mendieta's photographs are considered indexical - serving as an indication that something occurred. However, Mendieta's photographs are neither documentary nor indexical. The terminology – 'documentary' – is ill-fitting. The category, although a pliant one, includes a broad spectrum from war photography to social investigations to as Edwards (2006, 26) points out, "more open-ended projects of observation." Therefore, 'documentary' does not coalesce with Mendieta's images and they lack the anticipated character of the "photographic document" (Edwards 2006, 12). Instead, Mendieta's art and artmaking have a *symbiotic* relationship with photography whereby the photographs surpass a solitary 'documentary' gesture as they ensure an eternal, although partial, afterlife for her performances. Consequently, it is as

a collaborator of performance that Mendieta uses photography and as a result, they often eclipse their indexicality and serve the realm of photographic art.

Edwards (2006, 40–53) in defining the difference between the "photographic document" and "photographic art" classifies the term 'photographic art' as a problematic one to define as it refers to an amalgam of photography traditions. Edwards (2006, 40–53) further argues that art photography employs diverse approaches from soft focus to suppress detail to combination printing to create compositionally complex images that mimic painting, embrace street photography which records the "popular life of the streets" in working class and immigrant communities, and foreground the results of artists using photography. Mendieta's photography immediately satisfies the third of the aforementioned conditions of art photography.

The case for positioning Mendieta's work as art photography is furthered by considering that Mendieta's photographs promote self-discovery as American photographer Minor White (b. 1908, d.1976) proposes of the camera and the gesture of picture making. (Sontag 1977, 122) For instance, Mendieta's images of her earth/body works, as she terms them, stimulate individual confrontations with constructions of gender, gendered racism, and esoteric cultural practices. Concomitantly, her earth/body works participate in a dialogue about presence and absence, visibility and invisibility – realities of the culturally and geographically displaced Other.

In positioning Mendieta's images as photographic art and consistent with the elements ascribed to the genre, they lack neutrality and possess subjectivity, intention, spiritual affect, and aesthetic effect. Therefore, they do not present as "objective, mechanical copies characterised by a superabundance of detail and practical utility" (Edwards 2006, 16). Mendieta's photographs are primarily concerned with ingratiating themselves within moments, to perpetuate conversations proposed by the performed action. Consequently, Mendieta's photographs do not bear as Canadian artist Jeff Wall (b. 1946) describes photography of the period - "marks of indifference" (Wall 1995), nor do they engender a stance of indifference in the viewing. Instead, Mendieta's photographs evidence a desire to become the principal gesture of a series of gestures; they refute their natural status as signs or indexes and seek to assert themselves as the signified.

"Marks of Indifference"

In challenging photography's indexicality of social life - a legitimate act of Conceptual Art, Mendieta uses it as a collaborator to support "investigations of the self and the social body" (Company 2003, 5). Due to the specificities of her background as a Cuban transplant to the U.S.A and her self-identification as "non-white"[2] (Mendieta 1980, 1) and "other"[3] (Mendieta 1980, 1), Mendieta's 'investigations' intrinsically contain "registers of political significance" (Baker and Moran 2016, 87) as she challenged the homogeneity of cultural production. In assessing how Conceptual artists engaged photography and how it "decisively realized itself as a modernist art in the experiments of the 1960s and 1970s" (Wall 1995, 32), Wall asserts that photography did so through auto-critique. As artists sought to disrupt photography's status as a medium for picture-making, it became the essential tool of Conceptual art's achievements and its mediator. (Wall 1995, 36) In this new dispensation, photographs and critical writing were often paired and in their mediating role, photographs often lost their autonomy and became a "new kind of anti-autonomous yet autonomous work of art" (Wall 1995, 38).

This notion of art's autonomy is critical. Between 1961 and 1969, as he no doubt observed art redefining its relationships with society, German philosopher Theodor Adorno (b.1903, d.1969) wrote *Aesthetic Theory*, published posthumously in 1970. He writes,

> The autonomy [art] achieved, after having freed itself from cultic function and its images, was nourished by the idea of humanity. As society became ever less a humane one, this autonomy was shattered. [. . .] All efforts to restore art by giving it a social function – of which art is itself uncertain and by which it expresses its own uncertainty – are doomed. (Adorno 2002, 1)

Thus, art gained its freedom to exist for its own sake in repudiating its ancestral relationships with religious, political, and economic hierarchal organisational structures that exploited its communicative potential to their advantage. Humanity's increasing *inhumanity,* however, challenged art to re-establish itself as an instrument of society. Nevertheless, art rejected this proposition and retained its autonomy. Adorno asserts that any effort to renounce this autonomy by restoring art to its traditional functions is doomed.

Instead, Adorno advocates that autonomous art disavowing its

manipulation by power elites should subtly critique the societies they emanate from, thereby simultaneously establishing autonomy from the insidious 'culture industry,' as he termed it. This industry seen through Adorno's Marxist orientation has cultural workers as its producers who work for a ruling class in the standard dichotomy of proletariat and bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie-ruling class through their consumption and their direction determines the proletariat-cultural workers' productions. Unlike Karl Marx's (b.1818, d.1883) theoretical formulation which posits that the bourgeoisie-ruling class is the sole consumer of the proletariat's/working class's production, Adorno saw the proletariat as the consumers of 'products' conceived of by the ruling class, the capitalist bosses with the financial wherewithal to determine production. These 'products' support the perpetuation of the status quo as proletariat masses are never equipped through the products they are exposed to or use to challenge the authority of the bourgeoisie-ruling class. (Adorno 1991)

Thus, freed from service to Church and State, art in the 1960s and 1970s was free to engage in a critique of culture on its terms. Photography, despite its auto-critique, could not renounce its depictive/mimetic capabilities and artists instead adopted "an aesthetic of the amateurish" (Wall 1995, 41). According to Wall (1995, 42), this aesthetic exhibited a reduction in artfulness and encouraged the use of low-skilled, "mass-market gadget-camera[s]" paired with deadpan techniques. Artists stripped their photographs of emotion and individual subjectivity, photographing subjects as they would naturally be encountered by a non-sentient being, leading critics to assess the work as exhibiting 'marks of indifference.' Adorno writes (Wall 1995, 41),

> At present time significant modern art is entirely unimportant in a society that only tolerates it. This situation affects art itself, causing it to bear the marks of indifference: there is the disturbing sense that this art might just as well be different or might not exist at all.

Thus, photography (as did much art) in the 1960s and 1970s reflected disengagement with the social milieu of its origin and existence. Photography in being self-referential was modern.

Aggravating its loss of importance to society, Modern Art (1860s to 1970s) in its auto-critique refused traditional mandates and associations with depiction by which societies understood art. Without the recognisable

limn character and with an internalised codified dialogue that changed as its art movements did to differently justify art's existence, Modern Art further separated itself from audiences. Art, therefore, increasingly lost relevance and significance external to its community of artists and its intelligentsia. Accelerating the public's disconnect with Modern Art was their increasing access to affordable and uncomplicated cameras that facilitated their insistence upon the primacy of naturalistic depiction and the mimetic functions of the discipline that made sense to them. This insistence in turn created an opportunity for photographic art – a new form of mimesis whereby instead of mimicking the natural world, artists used photography to mimic the new image-makers and their unavoidable amateur aesthetics. (Wall 1995, 42)

Hence, 'amateurism' as an aesthetic ploy proposed terms for photography's participation in art. Amateurism as a deliberate aesthetic also reinvigorated the debate about how photographs can gain and lose status as art. In other words, why are some photographs considered art, and why are others not? In acquiring its 'marks of indifference' through renunciation of the visual sophistication of art photography – for instance, rejection of soft focus and combination printing – the new photographic art visualised questions and answers about art's nature and functions, pivotal to the new art - Conceptual Art.

In Conceptual Art, the evidentiary character of photography was initially used in a perfunctory manner as evidenced by American artist Edward Ruscha's (b. 1937) photobooks and American artist Joseph Kosuth's (b. 1945) 'proto-investigations.' (Company 2003) "Such art accepted photography as an anonymous condition of everyday life" (Company 2003, 5), one without a viewpoint or subjectivity. However, Company (2003, 5) notes that Conceptual Art simultaneously critiqued photography's authority and used it to challenge the role of the artist. Eventually, within Conceptualism, photography was used to "[restage] and [estrange] its social character" (Company 2003, 5). No longer was the camera to be used just as a marker of the family trip or picnic. Therefore, photography when employed in the art of the 1960s and 1970s was not as an index or recorder of occurrences and happenings but as a tool to redefine art and the maker of said art.

Armed with a 35mm camera – a relatively low-skill camera, and occasional assistants, Mendieta responded to the questions of how photography can function within the new art. She assimilated aspects of the deadpan and

rejected others. Ultimately, her images rejected the notion that contemporary photographic art needed to exhibit 'marks of indifference' to its subject and audience in order to be art.

Using the camera to sculpt, photography as sculpture

In the *Untitled (Glass on Body Imprints)*, Mendieta photographed herself pressing her face and nude body parts against a square sheet of plexiglass, transforming their physical appearance. While these gestures suggest a re-examination of the "[archetypal] human subject and the gaze in photography" (ICA Miami, n.d.), they can be read as an affront to demands placed on women to be beautiful, to appear beautiful. Through the plexiglass, Mendieta mediates viewing of her body and is able to de-sexualise the gaze, and at times renders her body un-aesthetic. Mendieta like many other feminist performance artists, "interrogated the ideology of gender and the female body as a field of masculine control" (Blocker 1999, 11). Mendieta unmasks the body, deliberately doing what the sexualised gaze instinctually does in imaginatively removing the mask of clothing. Opening the registers of meaning, with the plexiglass that permits unencumbered viewing, Mendieta touches the body, proposing what the sexualised viewer could do, and her aggressive touch reflects the potential violence of the gaze. In a deadpan style of photography, she captures with the camera her unmasked, aggressively touched, and violated form. Her photographs challenge those propagating images of ideals of feminine beauty framed in angles to further idealise or accentuate attractiveness. Furthermore, Mendieta's manipulation of her own flesh with the resultant "canivalesque perversion" (Blocker 1999, 11) of it situates her "body art towards such feminist issues as the normative construction of beauty and the female body as monstrous other" (Blocker 1999, 11).

Mendieta's placement of her body in the realm of the carnivalesque is achieved through its intersection with the 'grotesque body'. According to Mary Russo in *The Female Grotesque* (1994) this "grotesque body of carnival [is] "open, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple, and changing (McWilliam 2003, 218) unlike the "classical body of modernity [which is] "transcendent and monumental, closed, static, self-contained, symmetrical and sleek" (McWilliam 2003, 218). Therefore, Mendieta's plexiglass pressed

against her protrusions, orifices of secretions, areas for expulsions, and other parts of her body render them irregular, abnormal, and at times grotesque. Additionally, according to Russo, grotesque bodies are "only recognisable in relation to a norm" (McWilliam 2003, 218). Thus, Mendieta's body made-grotesque through the pressing against it with the plexiglass recalls a tradition of measuring bodies against an assigned norm.

As a consequence, Mendieta's series *Untitled: Glass on Body Imprints* can also be read as a critique of the ethnographic records of the nineteenth century. The headshots of the colonial Other were "predicated on an idea of essential racial difference and a concomitant vision of racial superiority" (Edwards 2006, 24). Edwards alludes to the work of photographers like John Lamprey (active 1870s). In satiating colonial curiosity about the peoples of the colonised lands, Lamprey photographed[4] colonial subjects against a grid following rules and is thereby credited with the systemisation of photography for anthropological use in the nineteenth century. An example of this can be seen in *Chinese Male* by Lamprey, in which the unidentified naked subject standing in profile against a grid invites scrutiny of every aspect of his being. Thus, in photographing different 'race' types in front of the grids in strict profile and frontal views comparisons could be made. Echoing Lamprey, Mendieta presses one unit of the grid – the plexiglass square – in front of her body, distorting what could be viewed for comparison and differentiation. Mendieta, therefore, mocks the pseudo-scientific application of photography in the nineteenth century as she recalls the similarly damaging uses of photographs in contemporary glossy women's magazines.

Reflecting a tendency to layer her work, Mendieta appears to significantly draw on a childhood experience and feelings of being Other. In Dubuque, Iowa schoolmates used a racial slur for African-Americans towards her. Mendieta's relatively darker complexion made her "racially spurious" (Blocker 1999, 53). This and other experiences led to her eventual rejection of Whiteness, identification as a "woman of color" (Blocker 1999, 53) and as she declared, reveling in "a personal will to continue being 'other'" (Mendieta 1980, 1). However in Cuba, 'White' would have been her likely 'race' assignment. Consequently, *Untitled: Glass on Body* can also be read as exploratory of the bodily traumas of Brown bodies, which in racialised discourses receive treatment of Black bodies, historically touched with violence in assessing their suitability for work on plantations and in their sexualised corners. In

these images, Mendieta claims a history of the oppressed and exploited as her own as she presses plexiglass against her back denoting work, the area of her womb and mons pubis denoting breeding, and breasts and buttocks denoting non-consensual sex work. In the duality of her nude form and the pressing of the plexiglass to encourage looking and scrutiny, Mendieta associates her body with invasive and exploitative treatment meted out to Black and Brown female bodies.

In these gestures, the past is brought into the present. Additionally, the present is made a subject of scrutiny and evaluation. In *Untitled (Glass on Face)* by pressing her face against the plexiglass, Mendieta distorts her facial features causing them to look wider or fuller. In this process, she recalls derogatory denotations of these fuller features on some Brown and Black women. Consequently, through her aggressive action on her own nude body and her manipulation of her facial features, she demands a coming to terms with the full scope of historic and contemporary violence meted out to women of colour, especially African-American women.

Further transcending the indexical, Mendieta's staccato actions in front of the camera in *Untitled: Glass on Body Imprints* inhabit the space of the sculptural. In pressing the plexiglass against her face and body, Mendieta molds a new form out of the materiality of her body. Meanwhile, the camera in its varied positions carves the body, removing large portions from view, leaving only the framed aspects to be seen. These photographs also evidence a negation of distance, placing the viewer in the space with Mendieta as the sculptor carving out portions of her body. Concomitantly, the camera positions the viewer as perpetrators of the violations and crimes the photographs summon to our collective memory. The photographic traces, therefore, shift Mendieta's proxy aggression on her body from temporal to hypothetical eternal moments. These moments will last the eternity of the photograph. Through their longevity, Mendieta repeatedly asks for acknowledgment of the dimensions of violence against women, particularly *certain* women. Hence, Mendieta's photographs are collaborators without which potent ideas lose embodiment, critical substance, and exigency.

Photography and an emic-etic dichotomy, further transcending the indexical

> For the last twelve years I have been carrying on a dialogue between the landscape and the female body. Having been torn from my homeland (Cuba)

> during my adolescence, I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (Nature). My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source. Through my earth/body sculptures I become one with the earth . . . I become an extension of nature and nature becomes an extension of my body. This obsessive act of reasserting my ties with the earth is really the reactivation of primeval beliefs . . . [in] an omnipresent female force, the after-image of being encompassed within the womb. —Ana Mendieta, 1981 (Manchester 2009)

In 1971, Mendieta made her first of many visits to pre-Columbian sites in Mexico. Perhaps because of its proximity to Cuba, Mexico becomes a proxy space for her to reconnect with her ancestral and spiritual home. In her *Silueta Series* (1973–1980), begun during her second trip in 1973, Mendieta rejects the self-referential content of Modern Art and the tendencies of traditional Western object-making. Instead, she turns to the non-Western, establishing a relationship with cultures whose image-making engages the earth, esoteric mytho-religious beliefs, and ephemeral practices. In making these earth/body works, Mendieta laid on, laid in, carved into, and additively manipulated the surface of the earth based on her silhouette. She often added natural elements such as flowers, tree branches, and moss. Mendieta occasionally filled her body's traces with the elements of water, air, and fire or used man-made materials like gunpowder or red fluid substances that recall blood. In her cumulative actions, Mendieta works outside Christian Providence, calling upon Goddess energies through personal ritual and performance. Separation from the Christian West is further accentuated by her embrace of blood (Cabañas 1999,12) or the blood motif, a literal life source. Cumulatively, these actions reinforce her claims of "Otherness," and proposes an *emic* – 'native' – viewpoint.

It is clear, Mendieta's practice is grounded in performative actions. While she 'performs' in the *Siluetas* (and other works) as the emic participant, her photographs take the vantage point of the audience and can convey an etic (outsider/observer) viewpoint. Due to the intimacy of the photographic angles, the etic character is reduced and the audience is allowed to feel like an emic viewer. However, the photographs demand individual knowledge of their particulars and initiation into the ritualistic performances to convey full meaning, thereby facilitating full transcendence into a shared emic space. For instance, in *Untitled: Silueta Series (Figure with Hay Burned)* Mendieta's

photographic eye simulates the duality of viewing as a knowledgeable participant and as an outsider; intimacy and distance are simultaneous in the vantage point. Here the etic-turned-emic-participant (and vice versa) has ceased participation and reverentially watches as fire meanders around the body. This coalescing of positions and vantage points is yet another way that Mendieta's photographs move beyond their indexicality into the appreciable space of art photography.

Additionally, in the *Siluetas* the sense of cultural displacement for the uninitiated viewer is made less problematic by a reciprocal gain of aesthetic beauty and an invitation for this viewer to participate in the photographed actions. By cropping the scene, Mendieta leaves the viewer displaced in time and space to focus attention on the *silueta*. She gives credence to the notion that "[p]hotography [. . .] has the capacity both to record and displace performances, shifting them from their origins in time and space, [. . .]" (Baker and Moran 2016, 18).

Disruptions to the visual, Challenging the homogeneity of the visual

Over seven years, Mendieta used her body or a cardboard cut-out of it to make over one-hundred impressions of her body in or on the earth in Mexico. These she photographed using a timer and a 35mm camera[5] or Super 8 film.[6] At times she enlisted the help of friends or colleagues. In mediating the use of her body for this series,

> [a] typology of *Siluetas* emerged, including figures with arms held overhead to represent the merging of earth and sky; floating in water to symbolize the minimal space between land and sea; and with arms raised and legs together to signify a wandering soul. (guggenheim.org)

In *Tree of Life*, Mendieta covers her body in mud and stands against a large tree, assuming one of her typologies. Undressed, but masked in mud, this goddess of the earth is fecund, asexual, and richly textured. The photograph while being an index (a record) of a mythical encounter invites a total survey of the complete work. It invites touching and possibly a resultant further modification of Mendieta's body covered with mud. It also invites careful

listening to nature and the possible sounds from the figure enmeshed in the bark of the tree.

The shift of the vantage point from etic to emic invites the completion of other sensorial qualities to the photographs. The olfactory sensations gained by Mendieta and her numerically limited audience from the breaking of the earth as it is carved into, the scent of the flowers, fire, and the environment become the emic viewers' along with the auditory dimension of the performance – the sounds within the environment that greeted the performance, those that accompany it as it was ongoing, and those sounds heard as the performance drew to a close. Does Mendieta sing? Does she hum? Does she speak and in which language and to whom? Thus, the photographs stimulate questions and engage the viewer in imaginative completion. By requiring imaginative completion from the viewer, the photographs exist more in the realm of art than of documents. They excite the imagination as art is capable of rather than singularly delivering information in a perfunctory manner.

On many levels, Mendieta's art privileges performance. Posing before the early camera – the daguerreotype was a kind of limited performance; this act constituted a frozen gesture with the scope to be as dramatic as one could maintain for the duration of the process. In 1840, Hippolyte Bayard (b. 1801, d. 1887) first exploited the ability of photography to make statements beyond a register of likeness when he used the medium to protest the decision of the French authorities "to announce, celebrate, support and buy for the nation the awkward metal daguerreotype [although his invention was] cheaper, safer and easier to use" (Baker and Moran 2016, 19). The result was *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man*. Baker (2016) writes,

> Bayard claimed to have invented photography before Daguerre, who received all the credit for the invention. In the photograph, he appears rejected, ignored, sinking without a trace below the high watermark of Daguerre's fame and fortune. Bayard's silent protest is probably the earliest, and certainly the greatest, of the first real performances made purely for the camera, and existing only as a photographic print.

Thus, even as the instrument of photography was being developed it was paired with performance as inevitable and life-long mates. In Mendieta's case, through a collaboration between the eyes, the intellect, and the imagination one can be substantially present within her work, accepting

or refusing invitations to participate in a sensory-rich and individual ritual-like performance.

Below the surface of the *Siluetas*

Whereas *Untitled: Glass on Body Imprints* evokes the denigration of the female body and particularly that of the female Other, Mendieta's *Siluetas* offer healing for them. The female body is whole, returning to a rejuvenating source – the earth. In her *Siluetas*, the traumatised body is *not* open – the legs are always together, *not* sexualised, and *not* available for sexual denigration. Through the body's closure, Mendieta claims power against centuries of assault, pain, and trauma, and mediates reconciliation through the soil of their anguish. Photography as a collaborator of the *Siluetas* disavows indifference, participating in a restorative gesture using angles that suggest presence and participation rather than predation. Mendieta's body touches the earth and becomes one with and enveloped by it. She, therefore, invokes notions of the primordial associated with the Black and Brown female body, a vessel whose earthiness was assumed inherent to it and was exploited and denigrated much as the earth has been.

It is noteworthy that while Mendieta's photographs propose viewer ownership of her naked form by simply existing, she rejects its possession by others through the masking of her body in blood and feathers, soil or water, or other materials. In masking, she often discourages touch and, in the process, stymies the denigration possible through imaginative looking and touching. The strangeness and mystery of her masking do not allow for "'woman' and 'Black' [to be] subordinated and denigrated even whilst being fetishised and desired" (Young 1996, 184). Likewise, her masking of her body does not allow for subordination and denigration of the Other. Mendieta's authorship asserts her ownership of her self-identifying non-white body and in these photographs it is neither appropriated by the medium nor the product – the camera or the photograph - and cannot be further appropriated by the viewing audience.

Discussing the representation of Black women in film, British actress and cultural critic Lola Young (b. 1951)[7] makes observations that are relevant when speaking about the representation of Black women in the photographic still image. Young writes,

> [It] is the visibility of racial difference – of Blackness – that is such a potent signifier of racial and cultural Otherness. [In] constructing a representational system for the Other, visible, physical signs of difference are sought out: skin colour and physiognomy are identified as being the antithesis of the idealised 'white' self (Young 1996, 180).

Mendieta in her performances and collaborations with photography repeatedly reasserts her Otherness in presenting signifiers of difference through her skin and physiognomy.

Finally, Mendieta's absent body is as poignant as when present. Whether made with her body or a cut-out of it, through the *Siluetas* she claims land and a reconnection with the earth-womb, articulates presence and invisibility, and demonstrates loss and disappearance. Therefore, her absent-present body on the earth, in seaside sand within reach of water, or in snow resonates meaningfully for one who is Other and culturally and geographically displaced.

Conclusion

Mendieta's art is the performative actions and collaboration with the camera in making an open-ended trace of the occurrence. It is also the deliberateness in photographing and displaying these to allow ambiguity thereby opening interpretive possibilities. In her oeuvre, the photographs (and films)[8] are foremost as without them, Mendieta's gestures would go without an audience and lose their affective potential.

Principal to my argument has been the proposition that the 'traditional' approach to Mendieta's oeuvre as a dynamic unit of feminist expressivity is insufficient, Consequently, more encompassing readings that take on race are necessary. This is especially advocated, as Mendieta rejected White-ness, appropriating Other-ness with all its registers of meaning. While Critical Studies has no specific subject of inquiry and no specific principles, theories, or methods employing as it does multiple methodologies (Sardar and Van Loon 1997, 6–8), its breadth allows for varied questions that can reveal Mendieta's oeuvre. For instance, what new meanings can be excavated when the body present in her work is looked at as that of the Other? How does her use of her body relate to the non-white cultures of her Cuban heritage? How

does self-identification as a person of colour affect the reading of her work within the context of 1970s feminist art and the rifts that emerged between white feminists and differently 'raced' voices within the cause?

Additionally, a position explored is that Mendieta's photographs reject the dominant 1960s aesthetic of de-skilled, indifferent, amateurish documents for images that evidence their determined collaboration with her ritualistic performances of an appropriated self of Otherness. Therefore, her photographs are not indexes or documents of performances. Instead, Mendieta's oeuvre appears to be an archaeological site, partially excavated and minimally understood. Her work is hybrid Caribbean, historically referential, and a confrontation with the Western White middle-class cultural and intellectual dominance that characterised 1970s Contemporary art. Consequently, Mendieta poses questions about how peripheral artists can negotiate themselves into dialogues within Contemporary Art in art centres while retaining the inherent distinctiveness of their aesthetic values and socio-cultural vantage points. For instance, will refusal to wear the artistic clothing of the West result in the reduction of the works' aesthetic merit and associated content? How will the unavoidable multivalence be handled in works attempting to bridge complex East-West, Nort-South divides? Consequently, in decoding Mendieta's oeuvre, foregrounding the dominant feminist reading must be avoided to allow for as many "meaning potentials" (Lewis 2008, 104) as evidentiary possible.

If Sontag (1977, 10) is correct in saying "people robbed of their past seem to make the most fervent picture takers" then not only did Mendieta have much to photograph, but so do the peoples of the Caribbean who have lost much in the passage of time since the arrival of Christopher Columbus and his crew. The Indigenous Peoples of the region have lost entire collectives within their multi-nation complex and continue to experience contemporaneous threats of erasure to their culture and lands. The Africa-descended Peoples have also lost a great deal through forced migration, servitude, exploitation, and Western cultural impositions. The mosaic of Indentured Peoples has experienced losses too. While the blood of all has watered the soil and the bodies of some fed the sea, the losses suffered continue to be palpable and ever-present in the mythologised, and sanitised-made-paradisiacal Caribbean lands. Through meaningful collaborations, photography (and by extension visual art) can present the losses of the dispossessed people of the region

while showing their cultural complexity, past and present, with as much eloquence and poignancy as Mendieta proposed.

Notes

1. Mendieta was clear that she was not a performance artist. The Estate of Ana Mendieta uses "performative acts/action".
2. In the introductory essay for the catalogue for Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States (1980) A.I.R Gallery, Mendieta wrote: "As non-white women our struggles are two-fold. This exhibition points not necessarily to the injustice or incapacity of a society that has not been willing to include us, but more towards a personal will to continue being 'other.'"
3. See note ii
4. There is no consensus on whether Lamprey did the photographs himself or directed others to do so.
5. This is a user-friendly camera. It produces Cibachrome prints, which maintain their colour over extended periods due to the printing process.
6. These films number about 80 and remain largely unknown to the public. Raquel Carmen Mendieta, Mendieta's niece, is the film archivist of the Estate of Ana Mendieta and has done work to digitise them.
7. In the 2001 New Year Honours, Young was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE). In 2004 she was appointed a life peer and with it the title Baroness Young of Hornsey.
8. A discussion of Mendieta's films is beyond the scope of this paper. Mention is made here as they are as important as the photographs. Some photographs are in fact stills from the films.

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Regional Integration, Socio-Economic Development and People Mobility Rights:

The Case of the OECS Free Movement Regime

NATASHA KAY MORTLEY

Abstract

The free movement regime of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is fundamental to circular migration flows and regional integration. It recognizes that the free mobility of people fosters economic growth and regional development. While the regime primarily addresses skilled labor shortages and enhances economic opportunities within the region, it also allows citizens to engage freely in social, cultural, and sporting activities. Additionally, in times of natural disasters, the regime provides allowances for displaced nationals or those needing to relocate.

Migration within the OECS free movement framework is predominantly temporary or circular, leading to the creation of transnational networks, diverse family structures, and concurrent flows of economic and social remittances (Mortley & Lunt, 2022). This paper is based on a qualitative study examining efforts to strengthen the regime, improve the management of human mobility, and enhance citizens' rights within the region. It explores the extent to which these initiatives are gender-sensitive, rights-based, and uphold the safety and dignity of migrants.

Keywords: OECS, free movement of people, regional integration, human mobility, migrants' rights

Introduction

Imagine a world without borders, where people had the right to move freely from one country to another, to settle down, live, and work wherever they wished. Today, with states strictly controlling their frontiers, this sounds like Utopia.

> But what if the idea of migration without borders was worth considering? Is it not natural to let people decide where they wish to live? Is it not natural to give people equal rights to move more freely throughout a globalizing world? (Pécoud & de Guchteneire, 2007).

The free movement of people is a fundamental human right, encompassing three key elements: the freedom to move within a country and choose one's residence, the right to leave any country, and the right to return to one's own country. Under human rights law, this right does not guarantee entry or residence in a foreign state unless governed by a formal agreement between states. Free movement, as a form of migration, facilitates economic and social exchange and has long been recognized as a cornerstone of regional integration (IOM, 2020). It takes various forms, from the removal of visa requirements to allow intra-regional travel to comprehensive free movement rights within a shared economic and domestic space.

Free movement regimes are widely regarded as essential for reducing barriers to mobility and migration, and they have been implemented in various regions worldwide. Over the past five decades, countries within the OECS have developed and adopted regional agreements, national legislation, and policies facilitating the free movement of persons, goods, services, and labor. These efforts recognize the Eastern Caribbean as a single, integrated space.

The OECS was established in 1981 in Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis, through the Treaty of Basseterre. It comprises seven Protocol Member States, which enjoy full free movement rights, and four Associate Members. The organization aims to:

> . . . foster closer economic cooperation through the creation of an Economic Union . . . [and] strengthen existing institutions for social and political cohesion to advance development and present a unified voice in regional and international fora. (OECS, 2002).

Although the OECS is a subgroup within the broader Caribbean Community (CARICOM), it has distinct economic and social characteristics (IOM, 2017). While aligned with CARICOM, OECS countries have demonstrated stronger political will and established legislative and policy frameworks specific to their regional integration goals.

Within the OECS, the free movement regime is central to circular

migration flows and regional integration, recognizing that mobility enhances economic and social development. While primarily designed to expand labor and economic opportunities, the regime also enables nationals to participate freely in social, cultural, and sporting activities. Research indicates that migration within the OECS is predominantly temporary or circular, resulting in newly established transnational networks, diverse family structures, and concurrent flows of economic and social remittances (Mortley & Lunt, 2022).

Additionally, the free movement framework provides crucial support in times of crisis. Natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, severely impacted OECS countries, demonstrating the value of mobility in facilitating relocation and resilience-building.

Eastern Caribbean nations have a long history of intra-regional migration and deep socio-economic ties. Through the Revised Treaty, OECS countries established new mechanisms for integration and coordination, reinforced by regional commitments and intergovernmental collaboration. However, regional integration has faced challenges, including weak implementation, political mistrust, and institutional shortcomings (Bishop et al., 2011).

Despite these obstacles, the need for regional cooperation remains pressing. The challenges facing the Caribbean extend beyond economic competition in a globalized world. They include existential threats such as climate change, transnational crime, declining regional industries, food insecurity, governance weaknesses, and shifting international diplomatic dynamics. Addressing these issues requires coordinated regional responses.

In an increasingly transnational world, people will continue to move regardless of legal restrictions. A regional approach to managing mobility is essential, as sovereign states may act more decisively, coherently, and legitimately if they delegate certain decision-making powers to regional institutions (Kleinschmidt, 2006). By strengthening the OECS free movement regime, member states can better manage migration flows, enhance regional economic resilience, and ensure that the rights and dignity of migrants are upheld.

Caribbean free movement of people and regional integration towards a single domestic space are undergirded by discourses on what defines the Caribbean or 'Caribbeanness.' Many scholars and authors have written on varying iterations of 'Caribbeanness' and what it means to identify. Their definitions and understandings of 'Caribbeanness' traverse geography,

gender, race, socio-economic status, and language to offer a wide array of Caribbean realities (Ferrante and Fox 2016). Within the context of migration and diaspora, Bénitez-Rojo (1996) contends that the Caribbean flows outward past the limits of its own sea with a vengeance. This statement signifies that the very decision and act of migrating is an act of 'Caribbeanness' because to be Caribbean is to be globally resourceful and unbound (Baldwin and Mortley, 2016). For this paper on free movement of people and their mobility rights, Edouard Glissant's 1989 definition of Caribbean stands out. He contends that while capable of empowering Caribbean people to "possess their world and their lived experience" despite the remaining post-colonial divisions that continue to plague the region, Caribbeanness must be made tangible and necessitates multiple examples in order to make it an accessible tool for all people and not simply the region's intellectuals; it must make the transition from "shared experience to conscious expression" (Glissant 224; 222). The free movement of people not only draws on the idea of Caribbeanness but also provides multiple opportunities, through common identity, institutions and practices to operationalise what it means to be Caribbean.

The purpose of this paper on free movement and mobility rights of migrants within the OECS sub-region is twofold. First, the paper contributes to migration scholarship, management and governance in a period of increasing global crises around migration and free movement of people. Free movement within the OECS comes amid shifting global mobility patterns and emerging migration issues- refugee protection, border governance, climate change, displacement and an emerging US policy of repatriation of undocumented migrants, all of which present both challenges and opportunities for the Caribbean. The United Nations Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration which is rooted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, reinforces the concept that migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the sustainable development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive (UN, 2021). According to Nita (2017) within the 'patchwork' of international migration management, the regional level has emerged as an important layer of governance where cooperation becomes easier among States with similar migration interests and concerns. This paper sheds light on the intrinsic value of regional cooperation and integration and critically reflects on issues related to free movement and migrants' rights and safety.

Further, critical reflections contribute to strengthening of existing frameworks and institutions for social and political cohesion to cement advances in Caribbean development.

Secondly, the sub-region remains under-researched because it is often subsumed under migration discourses and empirical studies on CARICOM or Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Yet the small developing States of the OECS have common economic, social and cultural institutions and have made significant advancement towards regional integration a single domestic space. While CARICOM's commitment to full free movement is manifested in ongoing policy and high-level dialogues and strategies related to harmonization and a Caribbean migration policy, this broader union has adopted a phased approach to free movement. The achievement of full free movement of people with the OECS and successes to date are instructive and need to be amplified. The paper brings visibility and raises awareness on free movement within the sub-region. The OECS represents an ideal case to spotlight strategies and good practice on this form of human mobility and migrants' rights, with implications for broader frameworks for action and migration governance.

The paper is based on qualitative and participatory research that the author has been engaged in over the past five years. Consultations and expert interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of ongoing work being done on migration and free movement in the region, emerging migration patterns, trends and challenges. The research adopted a participatory and collaborative approach in that it prioritized the perspectives of the key stakeholders, who were fully engaged at all stages in the project from research design, interrogation of data and validation of findings. The project of deepening regional integration and advancing a truly borderless sub-region is one that the author has been engaged in as a scholar, researcher and advocate for related initiatives that are gendered, rights-based and that respect and protect migrants' safety and dignity.

Intraregional migration and emerging trends within the OECS

Intraregional migration refers to movement of people within a geographic region, often between countries of the same region or from rural to

urban areas within the same country. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs data reveals that for many regions, intraregional movements make up most of migration flows. In 2020 there were 21 million intraregional migrants in Africa, 44 million in Europe and 69 million in Asia. Free movement arrangements have been pivotal in enabling increased migration within these regions. In the OECS sub-region and wider Caribbean migration has historically been predominantly movements to the Global North, but the Caribbean also has a strong tradition of intraregional flows. Migration within regions takes place in a context marked by deep historical, political, economic and social ties between countries, significant internal and intraregional socioeconomic disparities, political instability, insecurity, and violence in some countries, as well as severe and frequent natural hazards compounded by slow-onset environmental changes.

The OECS is no exception where in the contemporary period the sub-region has witnessed emerging trends in migration, including a growing trend of displaced migrant movements in light of climate change, natural disasters and other crises. Some of these natural disasters and crises most recently include impacts from hurricanes, volcanic eruptions and the COVID-19 health pandemic (Mortley and Lunt, 2022). The entire island of Barbuda was evacuated in preparation for hurricane Irma in 2017 and there was massive displacement from Dominica in the aftermath of hurricane Maria also in 2017. Caribbean migration discourse has rarely focused on displaced migration due to climate change or environmental factors, as the region has traditionally been viewed in terms of movements to the Global North, attributed by push/pull theorists to the underdeveloped character of Caribbean economies (Palmer, 1990). Intraregional flows due to displacement has also been a sensitive topic since it exposed governments' lack of formalized infrastructure and policy to deal with the phenomenon (IOM, 2017). The lack of empirical migration data, especially gender disaggregated migration data, coupled with these emerging migration flows have left OECS leaders and policy makers unprepared and ill-equipped for decisive action.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the restrictions on international and domestic mobility, socio-economic consequences and health risks have led to changes in human mobility patterns, accelerating existing ones and raising new challenges for migration governance within the region. According to one high level official interviewed,

> Political will is better now due to COVID and recent crises in the region have been a wakeup call for us. There is political will for harmonization of protocols.

As it relates to environmental issues, climatic shocks may trigger, mitigate, or have no impact on migration depending on the nature of the shock and the region in which it occurs. On the one hand, the impact of the severity of the climate shock on migration depends on households' capacity and vulnerability. On the other hand, it is thought that climate-related migration is less likely to cause international migration, but rather within-country or within region migration (Kanga et al., 2024). Many people who migrate across borders do so within their immediate region, to countries that are close by, countries to which it may be easier to travel, that may be more familiar, and from which it may also be easier to return. For people who are displaced, finding safety quickly is paramount and people tend to be displaced to safer locations nearby (IOM, 2024). In the OECS, human mobility in the context of climate related events is predominantly to neighbouring islands due to closeness or the existence of strong familial and kinship ties. One interviewee involved in the Relief Fund in Dominica spoke about relief efforts after hurricane Maria,

> One of the things the OECS gives us is the ability to resettle people without too many immigration challenges. I was not happy that more Vincentians were willing to go to Barbados than St Lucia or other OECS countries. This says a lot about how we socialize our people. We have to see the OECS as our home and when a disaster happens that platform should be wide open. Our natural cultural and warmth should allow us to be wide open . . . One of the beauties of the Antigua and Dominica thing is that there are about 16, 000 Dominicans here and more than likely they will find a family member here. So there are strong ties and connections.

This both contributes to increased intraregional flows and underscores the need for an enhanced and harmonized approach to free movement in the region, to ensure safe, orderly and rights-based migration management.

The Venezuelan situation of deep economic and political crisis under the authoritarian rule of President Nicolás Maduroand and the resulting migration crisis are instructive. This crisis is one where many Venezuelans have left their homeland and entered other nation states with unclear statuses (migrants or refugees) seeking greener pastures (Wallace and Mortley,

2020). Venezuelans continued to be among one of the largest population displaced across borders in the world in 2022. By end of 2024, about 6.7 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees resided in Latin America and the Caribbean (Amaya and Batalova, 2025). While the US represents the main destination for Venezuelan migrants and refugees, the Caribbean region is a major pathway to the US, and countries such as Curacao, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago are also destinations. For many small islands developing states (SIDS) in the Caribbean, the increased migration of Venezuelan nationals into these locales has stretched the already limited capacity of these countries' public institutions to respond to the social and economic needs of displaced Venezuelans. As the increase in migration from Venezuela has surpassed the capacity of public institutions in many nation states to effectively respond to the needs of the Venezuelan migrants for legal status, access to health care and other basic needs, several receiving communities are demonstrating untenable virtues of discrimination and xenophobia towards the migrants (Wallace and Mortley, 2020). The return of the Trump administration has brought profound changes to US immigration policy, and specifically for Venezuelans (Amaya and Batalova, 2025). These evolving migration trends have implication for the sub-region and underscores the need for a coordinated and rights-based approach within the context of free movement of people.

A Case for Free Movement and Regional Migration

While free movement of people may be difficult to achieve at the global level, it may be a more realistic and desirable migration option to consider at the regional level. The IOM (2019) reported significant progress has been made towards regional integration evidenced by the over 2 million movements facilitated up to 2017 via the regional mobility regime of the CSME for citizens of CARICOM and OECS Member States, allowing them to travel, to live and work freely in other Member States, and capitalise on the social and economic benefits derived from the free movement of goods, services and labour. As discussed above, a significant part of today's cross-border movements takes place within regional spaces. This is true for the Caribbean, which has strong traditions of intraregional mobility where, the local networks of the indigenous communities across the historical divides echo these

overarching patterns of migration, mobility and interaction between the islands and mainland since the onset of human colonization of the islands (Hofman et al., 2014). Further, regional agreements are usually easier to reach in comparison to global frameworks. Due to the smaller number of States involved, comprehensive agreements are more likely, especially if countries show similar levels of socio-economic development. Countries of the same region may share common interests with regards to specific migration challenges and cooperation may be easier due to existing personal links and mutual trust. In addition to being close in size and proximity, the countries of the OECS have a shared colonial history and common social and cultural institutions and a long history of free interaction in social, cultural and sporting activities. In many ways the sub-region is a transnational space, organically created by citizens and familial, kinship and social networks.

Regional migration schemes may also display certain weaknesses and experience challenges. Traditionally, migration in the Caribbean has been strongly correlated to economic and social development, and much of the legislative and institutional policy framework, particularly around the free movement regime, has had a keen focus on boosting economic development (Busso, M. et. al, 2023; Juapuart, 2023). Free movement is seen as an important tool for regional economic integration and as a driver for regional economic growth (Castillejo, 2019). However, changing migration patterns and trends, have seen an expansion of migration governance, with a widening focus on security, trade, labour mobility, social integration, diaspora engagement, disaster management, and humanitarian protection. The opportunities for partnership and collective decision making are more relevant now than in the past, especially given intensified climate crisis and emerging refugee problem in the region.

Full free movement within the OECS has allowed citizens hassle free travel and to continue to move without visas or passports within the sub-region. While this has yielded great economic benefits in terms of boosting intraregional trade, supporting the livelihoods of citizens, enhancing labour distribution and increasing remittance flows, there are still challenges associated with the treatment of migrants at borders and in host countries. Protocols on rights and benefits are yet to be fully realized. Longhurst and Gouretskaia (2021) argue however that there hasn't been enough focus on the social side of mobility in the OECS and the authors note that while is generally

accepted that freedom of movement hasn't made national situations worse, not much is known on if it has made them better. Discourses and dialogues on free movement of persons and migration are taking place in the absence of reliable data. This glaring gap impacts the ability to sufficiently understand the various types of human mobility, how citizens are experiencing free movement and challenges faced by migrants. With more attention given to the economic facets of regional integration, the absence of data, comparable data, has made it increasingly challenging to understand the social dynamics and drivers of mobility.

The recent health pandemic, the explosion of displaced people induced by climate and environmental factors and emerging refugee situation have exposed the vulnerabilities of the OECS sub-region and revealed the need to broaden migration research and discourse for better frames of analysis and action. Governments are open and pragmatic and have signaled commitment to deepening regional integration. Vulnerabilities and challenges underscore the need for accelerating actions, harmonization, comprehensive and collective approaches to free movement of people. The OECS regional approach, supported by responsive policy and legislative instruments, ensures that there is protection of rights of all persons under the protocol of contingent rights regardless of gender, age, social class or ethnic origin, including through countering xenophobia, racism and discrimination and securing their access to protection. It also ensures that forced migrants are protected in accordance with humanitarian law and human rights principles.

Free Movement of People and Mobility Rights

Free movement of persons within the OECS is conducted within a policy framework on Rights Contingent on the Right to Free Movement or Contingent Rights. This instrument is geared towards clearly articulating rights to be conferred on migrants and their families and creating an enabling environment for support, social protection, security, and well-being of families especially in the face of increased vulnerabilities (OECS, 2015). The Protocol in (Article 23) recognizes the core values of the OECS Social Safety Net and Social Protection Framework, the policy that is agreed to for the rights contingent to the right of freedom of movement must be in keeping with the spirit of the OECS integration process and notes that an

> environment is needed to support social relations and cohesion for children, youth, men and women in the Economic Union Area," and further ". . . including individuals and families having security and general well-being in the face of vulnerabilities and having access to health care, education, employment and income generating activities, income transfers and working safety.

The mention of key items in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals is also promoted as important to the spirit of the countries. These include access to health care, education, employment, and income generating activities, income transfers and working safety. Special mention is made of men, women, youth and children, with a focus on protecting the structure and unity of the family. While this is in keeping with the principle of non-discrimination and considers international conventions on human rights, the rights of children and migrants, the extent to which it is inclusive and gender-responsive is not guaranteed given data, implementation and monitoring gaps. Policies tackling different aspects of free movement of persons whether irregular or regular ensures that the vulnerable groups are identified and accorded special type of protection. It also ensures that irregular migrants are able to access basic rights such as health, education and access to justice (Chepkorir, 2019).

Human mobility within the subregion is becoming increasingly complex as the migration landscape continues to evolve. This includes a wider range of persons moving including vulnerable, undocumented and illegal movements. According to one senior official interviewed,

> We don't know how many OECS nationals are in various countries other than their own. We don't know the data flows and the demographics of who is moving . . . only when someone reports a case to OECS Commission are we aware of breaches. Otherwise, we don't have data to monitor the implementation of the contingency rights

Mobility data is therefore central in examining profile of persons moving, and what risks and opportunities they face because of their decision to move. Migration, given the multi-faceted factors involved, encompasses wider sustainability development opportunities and challenges. Mobility data also plays a critical role in better management of free movement, in terms of the protection of nationals who are moving within the OECS. Better management means receiving countries can better plan for migrants and

that the vulnerable, displaced and undocumented do not face exploitation, abuse, discrimination and violation of their human rights. The Global Compact for Migration upholds the principles of non-regression and non-discrimination that ensure effective respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, across all stages of the migration cycle. It also calls for a commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance against migrants and their families. This underscores the need for better coordination, data sharing and planning among States.

The research findings revealed that while progress has been made on implementation of the policy of contingent rights, it has not been implemented in full. Full implementation for OECS nationals in the areas of indefinite stay and access to the labour market (right to work without work permit) but these rights have not been transferred to their spouses and dependents who are not OECS nationals. Stakeholders interviewed revealed that major challenges persist related to spouses and dependents accessing health and education in receiving countries. This is due in part to the lack of sufficient capacity and resources which affect countries' ability to finance full rights for spouses and dependents. This is further complicated by the lack of domestic legislation to guide and monitor the policy implementation. Legislative change is historically one area where Caribbean governments are slowest to act. Effective reforms will require a decolonial lens that take a regional, indigenous and transformative approach for new and inspiring legislation that is based on these new realities around human mobility in the region.

Rights-Based and Gendered Approach to Free Movement of People

Migrants rights refer to the legal and human rights of people who move across borders, whether for work, safety or a better life. These are essential to ensuring migrants are treated with dignity and fairness. The OECS policy of contingent rights promotes free movement within the ambits of protocol, but the extent to which a gender transformative approach is applied to address issues that may arise from free movement relative to marginalized groups is questionable. There is urgent need for evidenced-based data and comprehensive statistics for implementing and monitoring progress toward full contingent rights related to free movement. Stakeholders interviewed

also believe that data play an important role for political leaders to better educate their constituents on free movement and contingent rights, for better decision making and development planning on their part. Lack of awareness among OECS citizens on their contingent rights and the absence of comprehensive data on free movement flows and demographic profiles of who is moving creates fear, suspicion, xenophobia and assumptions among citizens in receiving countries.

On the issue of political will among governments, major events and crises over the past five years have created a seismic shift in attitudes and commitment among political leaders. One stakeholder interviewed explained,

> Political will is much better now due to COVID and recent crises in the region which have been a wakeup call for us all. There is political will for harmonization of protocols in the region and lots of high-level discussions for collective legislative reforms.

One of the strengths of the contingent rights policy is its collaborative and integrative approach to the revision of the policy and OECS countries have been working with partner agencies for review and reforms. The policy incorporates several relevant international instruments as it relates to the rights of people across several broad categories, for example children, youth, men, and women. However, voices and lived experiences of diverse groups and sub-populations such as the youth, LGBTQ communities and Indigenous communities who have traditionally not had a voice, are critical in ensuring gender-responsiveness of policy and ensuring inclusivity related to the needs and priorities of all. Further, the policy needs to consider different modes of human mobility, what happens after people move and the gender needs of various groups moving during disasters. Free movement of persons data both contribute to a more rights-based and responsive policy as well as effective implementation of the policy so that there is enhanced border management and data collection.

Conclusion

While Caribbean emigration to the Global North persists, recent decades have seen the emergence of vibrant intraregional migration, as well as return migration in some countries of the region. These emerging trends have

led to an evolving migration management architecture that includes new policies, instruments, and institutions in individual countries and the region. Within a context of historical closeness, the small states of the OECS have been working towards advancing free movement and deepening regional integration. Initiatives have generally worked well at the OECS level and there have been notable gains around harmonization and citizens' rights that the wider Caribbean can draw on. The paper has highlighted free movement of people for socio-economic development and people mobility rights in the OECS with critical reflections for more responsive planning and enhanced migration governance.

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Caribbean Reparations in the Aftermath of Memory

The Case of Grenada

CANDIA MITCHELL HALL

Abstract

Over the last forty years, Caribbean reparations studies have expanded significantly, with scholars from the University of the West Indies leading the charge in exposing the atrocities of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Slavery, and the injustices of Black Emancipation. This study contributes to reparations studies by examining the Grenadian experience of reparatory justice. It contextualizes Caribbean reparations within Grenada's colonial history, emphasizing the personal narratives of slaveholding families, particularly the Trevelyan family, who profited from Slavery and received compensation following Emancipation in Grenada. In 2023, the Trevelyans issued a public apology and provided monetary reparations to the people of Grenada. While some Grenadians accepted this gesture, others rejected it, highlighting deep-seated tensions within the Caribbean Reparations movement. This paper critically examines the reparations process in Grenada, the public debates, and contestations surrounding the Trevelyan reparations, and the broader contradictions in the Reparations discourse. Through the lens of memory, this study seeks to deepen social understanding of reparative justice in the Caribbean.

Key Terms: Caribbean Reparations, Slavery, Emancipation, Trevelyan, Public Debates, Reparative Justice, Colonial History, Apology, Monetary Reparations.

Introduction

In the Caribbean, the concept of reparations is mainly associated with the crimes committed against the enslaved peoples during Slavery and its

aftermaths in the period of Emancipation. In this context, reparations, as a key term, is best defined as an act of repairing or making atonement for the historical injustices and alienation of the descendant communities due to Slavery and Emancipation under the period of colonialism. These atrocities include but are not limited to offenses committed against the enslaved peoples like racialised oppression during the Slave Trade and Slavery *and* the inequalities endured during the long period of Emancipation after Slavery was abolished in 1838 (by the British). Emancipation did not repair or make amends for the injustices of Slavery; instead, it consolidated the control of the ruling classes over the masses socio-economically, economically and politically. For many scholars, including Beckles (2013), the post-Emancipation period was a form of "reformed Slavery." The case for reparations in the Caribbean (as elsewhere) is based on a wide/long list of injustices comprising forced migration, psychological, mental and emotional psychosis during the middle passage, Chattel Slavery on the plantations (the worst form of slavery akin to treating humans as cattle by branding and chaining them) and then persistent deprivation, dispossession, disenfranchisement, marginalisation, and inequalities in the period of /and (post) Emancipation eras. Scholars argue that the link between the crimes of Slavery and the present conditions of the descendant community are deep as it affects how Caribbean people experience identity and citizenship (Beckles, 2013, 16). Many Caribbean people hold the view that the Caribbean has a strong reparations case. In the 1950s, the discourse actively resurfaced when Rastafari first petitioned the British crown for reparations in the form of repatriation to Africa. (Rauhut, 2020, 2).

In 2013, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) established the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC) to establish the moral, ethical, and legal case for the crimes committed against the enslaved peoples during Slavery. It created a ten-point plan, a step-by step formula which provides a framework for reparations, including an apology from those involved in Slavery, and socio-cultural and economic development of the region in the areas of culture, education (reducing illiteracy), health facilities, debt cancellation, and transfer of technology from former European slaving countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. It seeks Caribbean reparations as collective restitution as opposed to an initiative bringing material gain to individuals (CARICOM Reparations Commission 2014). Most nations of the

Caribbean have also created National Reparations Commissions to conduct research and inform/empower the public in understanding the significance of reparations. By 2016, 12 nations of the Caribbean had established National Reparations Commissions, including Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Jamaica was the first nation to establish a reparations commission in 2009, and the Grenada National Reparations Committee (GRNC) was established in 2020. One major argument of the Caribbean Reparations Commission is that reparations for Slavery and Emancipation is better approached from the perspective of justice as a means of reconciling the impact of the past on socio-economic conditions experienced by the masses in the present. However, despite the efforts of the CRC, the British state has not officially apologised nor offered material reparations for its role in the atrocities of Slavery.

By 2023, the Caribbean had witnessed an historic apology for Slavery in the form of reparations made to the Grenadian people by the Trevelyans, a slaveholding family from Britain who owned plantations in Grenada between the 1760s and 1840s. The descendants of the Trevelyan family formally apologised and made material(monetary) recompense in the form of £100,000 or $EC325,000 to establish a community fund for economic development in Grenada and the Eastern Caribbean. It is considered as a form of familial or personal reparations. Many Grenadians at home, the diaspora, and the Caribbean weighed in on the Trevelyan reparations, displaying both a pro-reparationist (support for reparations) and anti-reparationist (opposition to reparations) stance. This paper is concerned with the reparations processes in Grenada and public debates/tensions surrounding Trevelyan reparations in 2023. It evaluates the Grenadian reparations discourse through the lens of what it calls the aftermath of memory. The point made by the paper is that memory, defined as a recollection of an event from the past, affects how the descendant community interacts with reparations. An aftermath of memory is defined as an experience/event that recurs long after the original act. Aftermaths are sealed in time through memory of the actual event itself, which is replayed through the experiences of those who interact with the original event as an "impact." As lawyer and activist Randall Robinson (1987, 216) long pointed out, Slavery reproduces its victims *ad infinitum* long after the

active stage of the actual crime has ended. Within the context of reparations, Robinson's utilisation of *ad infinitum* reiterates this paper's arguments: successive generations who did not directly experience Slavery (what is often called original sin) live with its *affect* as a direct "impact" through the socio-economic and economic conditions. In the introduction of his book *Britain's Black Debt*, Beckles (2013, 17) mentions how Slavery was still alive in the memory of his maternal great-grandmother, who spoke about the atrocities her great-grandparents experienced under enslavement. The memory of Slavery has negative consequences on how the descendant community/communities perceive what might be expressed as residues of the past in the present including the act of reparations. The reparations itself materialise the fact that Slavery was real, not an abstraction of the past. Reparations also signify the socio-economic and economic inequities of Emancipation. The reparations discourse is therefore caught up in the continuous inequalities of the lived experiences of the people who question whether the masses would/could truly benefit from the 'devils of their existence', particularly the British Church and State after 187 years of "Emancipation"/"freedom" that was unjust and inequitable. In Grenadian society, it is also believed that reparations have been delayed for too long. Therefore, reparations signify the unfinished business of Slavery in the present. This paper utilises content analysis, social media narratives, editorials, documentaries and the reparations apology by the Trevelyan family to examine the Grenadian experience of reparative justice. It approaches reparations from the lens of memory to understand how Afro-Grenadians respond to/and contest non(un) reparatory "freedom" in the present by questioning whether the Trevelyan reparations was an act of performance, reconciliation, "tokenism," White Saviourism and politics, or reparative justice.

Caribbean reparations studies have created a niche in Caribbean historiography, but none of these works specifically draw on the Grenadian experience of reparations, which was a recent event. Presently, there are no published works on reparations for Grenada. Elsewhere in the Caribbean, the connection between reparations and inequalities/injustices have been examined; however, the interplay between reparations and what this paper calls the aftermath of memory have not been the focus of previous work on reparations. Of course, one of the ground-breaking works on reparations entitled *Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native*

Genocide by historian and Vice Chancellor of the UWI Hilary Beckles, published in 2013, was an important intervention in the Caribbean reparatory movement; it not only inspired other works on reparations, but in 2013 it provided the fodder necessary for CARICOM to establish the Caribbean Reparations Commissions, of which Beckles is the chairman. Beckles (2013) argues that Britain and other European nations that participated in Slavery should take full responsibility for their actions by apologising and pay reparations for the crime they committed against humanity. He approaches reparations from a moral and legal perspective and then he links Slavery to the continuous inequalities experienced by the descendant communities in the Caribbean (Roopnarine, 2013, 351). Earlier, Nicholas Draper (2010) had published his book entitled *The Price of Emancipation: Slave Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery* which comes closest to addressing how the aftermaths of the compensation made to individuals, families, and corporations contributed to intergenerational wealth, investment opportunities, and social status of the elites in Britain. According to Draper, 80% of the claims from the planters represented absentee claimants including families like the Trevelyans (2010, 147). In other words, 16 million out of the 20 million in compensation monies went to absentee claimants/planters owning plantations in the British colonies (Morgan, 2010, 682). The work reiterates two facts: no financial provisions were made for the enslaved peoples to be compensated for Slavery, and the British slaveholding families were never really made to answer for the crimes of Slavery until recent times. Nevertheless, it does not cover the reparations process in small island developing states; nor does it deal with the tensions that arise from public discourse/narratives on reparations. This paper locates the Trevelyan reparations within the reparations discourse as a means to provide insight on how the aftermath of memory impact how the descendant community perceive reparative justice in Grenada.

Historical Context

Grenada was first colonised by the French actively between 1674 to 1762 and from 1779 to 1783. At the beginning of French colonisation, Grenada was considered a "minor" French colony with a small, enslaved population of 525 Africans, 257 Whites, and 53 Coloured peoples (Brizan, 1998, 30). There were

only three sugar estates, 52 indigo estates, a total livestock count of 64 horses, and 569 cattle (Brizan, 1998, 30). However, by 1753, the economy had grown to 83 sugar plantations, and a population of 11, 991 enslaved Africans, 1,262 Whites and 179 free negroes (Brizan, 1998, 32). Grenada was then colonised by Britain for 211 years from 1763 to 1779 and from 1783 to Independence in 1974. After Grenada was ceded to the British in 1763 at the culmination of the Seven Years' War between Britain and France (1756 to 1763), the plantation system expanded during British colonisation with Grenada becoming the second most important/profitable sugar producer after Jamaica in the British West Indies (Mullen, 2022, 2). Between 1763 to 1779, the British government earned over 1.1 million in revenue from sugar and rum produced in Grenada (Steele, 80). By 1783, there were 334 estates cultivating coffee, cocoa, and indigo by 24, 000 enslaved peoples. Hundreds of planters were attracted to the wealth and profits that were made by others/could be made by themselves and the networks it could establish in other business ventures like banking, shipping, trade, and commerce (Mullen, 2022, 90). As the plantation system developed, thousands of enslaved peoples from West Africa were forcibly transported to the island via the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It has been argued that 128,000 West Africans were enslaved in Grenada during Slavery (Dabiri, 2019, 612). Moreover, the most oppressive/draconian/inhumane system of Slavery called Chattel Slavery developed in Grenada and the Caribbean to generate profits for the planters. "chattel" is a hybrid term referencing chains and cattle, signifying that the West Africans were classified and treated as "cattle"/"property" while they were chained and tortured under Slavery. Since the commencement and expansion of the plantation system/slavery, the demography of the West Africans has been the largest on the island. Approximately, 82% of Grenadians are descended from the enslaved West Africans out of a population of 124,000 in 2021 (Martin, 2022).

Grenada remained largely underdeveloped during British colonialism. The revenue from Grenadian exports helped to finance roads, canals, schools, and hospitals, leading to industrialisation of Britain, not Grenada (Brizan, 1998, 45). As Williams (1944, 52) had poignantly argued, the growth of British businesses and industries, including shipping, shipbuilding, woollen, cotton and metallurgical and sugar refiners, and rum distilleries owed its development to the Slave Trade and Slavery, of which Grenada was linked. Undeniably, Britain's wealth was created from exploiting and oppressing

the enslaved African peoples. The enslaved peoples' daily lives were filled with physical, emotional/mental, and psychological torture. Slavery was horrific, the back-breaking work was un-ending, and brutal punishments were traumatic. Slavery was long, and Emancipation did not materialise into freedom. Instead of ending Slavery, immediately after the Emancipation Act was passed in 1833, Slavery was forestalled for four years by a period of labour called the apprenticeship period. The latter perpetuated the system of domination by retaining the brutalities of Slavery and secured the enslaved labour force for the planters' benefit. After Slavery ended, when full Emancipation came in 1838, little was done by the British state to improve the conditions of the newly freed peoples. No apology was offered, and Emancipation failed to transform Afro-Grenadian lives economically, socially, and politically. Emancipation had come with no material gain to the newly freed peoples, and it perpetuated injustices and inequalities. Local historian George Brizan (1998, 124) had noted that Emancipation had come without "even a square inch of land or a shilling" (or one red cent as the people would say) to help the masses construct freedom. Furthermore, the planters failed to acknowledge/recognise Emancipation; laws were passed to control the freed peoples, wages remained low, housing conditions were bad, resistance was violently suppressed, and the health system was poor. In the decades following Emancipation, Afro-Grenadians continued to live in extreme poverty, endure horrible working and living conditions, experience limited access to education and social opportunities/mobility, high unemployment, and lacked access to voting rights.

Historically, Afro-Grenadians responded to the alienation and injustices of Slavery and Black Emancipation by utilising Black cultural expressions, including jab-jab (*diable-diable*), a traditional Grenadian masquerade meaning "devil-devil" to critique their conditions in the society. During Slavery, the enslaved peoples were referred to as "devils" by the planters; hence after Emancipation, they would increasingly satirise and mock the planters by bedaubing their entire bodies (from head to toe) in a black substance (ole oil, molasses, charcoal) to (re) define the planters as the real devils, especially in extreme moments of injustice. Afro-Grenadians would utilise jab-jab to comment on the fact that Blacks were not compensated for Emancipation via a jab-jab chant/lament called "Pay De Devil" or "Pay Jab a Coppa." Considered the oldest jab chant in Grenada, it dates to 1920, eight decades

after Emancipation (Payne 1990, 55–56). The song can be read as a plea for reparations. At that time, the socio-economic and economic conditions of the post-Emancipation period had worsened. Expressed in French and English creole, the song demands a coppa/money to be paid to the jab-jab for him/her to return to hell, the plantation, the hell of their existence. It conveys its demand for compensation in 7 lines: Eau tee lee, eau tee lambè/Eau tee lee, eau tee la/Gi' Jab a coppa/To pay è passage/To go back to hell!/Eau tee lee, eau tee lambè/Eau tee lee, eau tee la (Payne 1990, 56). In an attempt to secure the coppa, this demand was/is made to the elites, upper classes, non-jab-jab spectators who were often left with no choice but to acquiesce to the demand or be "smeared" with the "blackness" of jab-jab. The denominal value of the coppa suggests that freedom was cheap, hence it is an attempt to buy the freedom that they were denied. The demand for coppas also suggests that Afro-Grenadians were extorted out of true emancipation and reparations. Additionally, this demand for coppas can be read as a call for recompense or restitution for the historical injustices of Afro-Grenadian collective existence and it reiterates Afro-Grenadians/jab-jab's grammar of reparations.

Slavery and Family Wealth

The profits of Slavery expanded the wealth and influence of British planter families. As Beckles (2013, 130) has shown, there is a strong link between Slavery and personal family wealth across successive generations. The Trevelyans was/is one such family that benefited immensely from Slavery business from the 18th century. In a family biography entitled *A Very British Family: The Trevelyans* (Trevelyan 2006), Laura Trevelyan, a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) journalist and descendant chronicled the social and political history of the family and inadvertently highlighted how Slavery contributed to the family wealth. Originating from Cornwall, England (a marginalised, rural county) as small farmers, the Trevelyans' fortunes changed in the 1760s when they actively engaged in Slavery as plantation owners (Trevelyan, 2006, 7) in Grenada and Jamaica. From the wealth generated from Slavery, the Trevelyans rose from virtual obscurity to become members of the British aristocracy (along with wealthy families like the Devonshires, Salisburys, and Cecils) owning several imposing stately homes, hundreds of acreages, and educating their children at prestigious

universities and commanding political influence as politicians, activists, statesmen, public servants, and historians. One of the known family portraits of the 18th century visualises the wealth of the Trevelyans (Trevelyan, 2022). It shows the extensive and lavish landscapes of the Trevelyan family home in Wallington, Northumberland in the north of England, underscoring the grandeur of the family's fortunes. It was taken at the time that the family came into ownership of six estates in Grenada, and its renovation was done with profits acquired from Slavery (Lashamar & Smith, 2023). Both John Trevelyan and his wife Louisa Simond (the great-great-great-great-great-grandparents of Laura Trevelyan) are centred in the foreground with a monumental statue, a marble bust of Lord Zachary Macaulay, the anti-Slavery campaigner whose daughter Hannah Macaulay had married into the Trevelyan family to Charles Edward Trevelyan, the great-great-great-grandfather of Laura Trevelyan (Trevelyan, 2006, 4). The text does not present the family's role in Slavery in a direct way although it highlights the material wealth generated from Slavery. It also presents the family's interest in India, but it does not contextualise those ventures within the backdrop of colonialism. From the writings, it is possible to assert that the author had not discovered the link between the family's wealth and Slavery or did not let on that she was aware of the family's slaveholding past. The author notes that the discovery that the Trevelyans had profited from Slavery would be made when the database of Britain's Slave Compensation records became available to the British public in 2016, three years after the release of the compensation records (Trevelyan 2022).

In 1757, the Trevelyan family came into ownership of six sugar estates in Grenada. The estates were transferred as part of the bride price/dowry paid by Peter Simon, a London merchant, to John Trevelyan (his son in law) on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter, Louisa Simon. They included Tempe and Beausejour, (Lower) Simon, Requin, La Sagesse, and Crochu Estates, spanning the three parishes of St George, St David, and St Andrew across hundreds of acres. The Trevelyans were absentee planters (owning plantations in the Caribbean but residing in Great Britain) who left the management of their estates in Grenada to John Alexander Hankey, a merchant, business partner and adopted son of Peter Simon. The latter was Laura Trevelyan's great-grandfather six times removed (Trevelyan 2022). Based on the 1834 slave register, the Trevelyans "owned" 1,206 enslaved adults and children and were compensated £34,000 (the equivalent of £37 million in

2023) in compensation reparations (what was also called Slave Compensation or Planter Compensation) for the "abolition" of Chattel Slavery and Black Emancipation. Between 1834–1838, over 3000 families (most of whom were absentee owners) across the British West Indies were compensated with over £20 million by the British government in reparations for the "loss of their property," the enslaved peoples. The Trevelyan slave compensation was in keeping with the practice of absentee slaveholders in Britain; 80% of the £20 million went to planters who had never set foot in the Caribbean, but benefited immensely from Slavery and Slave Compensation (Draper, The Price of Emancipation, 2010, 147). In Grenada, 24,000 enslaved peoples were emancipated with no material recompense while 1002 planters (UK Parliament, House of Commons, 1838) were paid reparations of £616, 255 (an equivalent of £7.5 trillion in 2015) (Roopnarine 2015). According to the database from the Centre for Legacies of British Slavery (2013), five members of the Trevelyan family were beneficiaries of the compensation, including the children of John Trevelyan, (Rev George Trevelyan and John Trevelyan), their spouses (Harriet Trevelyan, the wife of Rev. George), and grandchildren, including Walter Trevelyan. Ultimately, Britain's compensation to the planters, a significant amount of monies then as now, amounted to 40% of government expenditure in 1834 alone. It was finally paid off in 2015, indicating that successive generations of Blacks contributed to paying compensation taxes to the descendants of the planters.

Trevelyan Reparations

In May 2022, Laura Trevelyan visited Grenada to enquire further about her family's role in plantation Slavery, to confront her family's slaveholding past, to learn about the legacies of Slavery, and to understand how reparations can shape the nation's future. In 2016, she learned that her family had "owned" enslaved people when the University College of London launched its Legacies of British Slave Ownership database (Rauhut, 2020, 128). She would document her visit/findings in a documentary created by/for the BBC entitled "Confronting my Family's Slave Owning Past in Grenada." It attracted over 42,000 views and 530 comments from Grenadians at home, the diaspora, and Caribbean world. It maps the memory-path of Trevelyan from her arrival to departure, highlighting the Grenadian landscapes, plantations,

and consultations with the Grenada National Reparations Committee, stakeholders, local Grenadian authors, and school visits. It begins with a consultation with Nicole Phillip, local historian and vice chair of the GNRC showing Trevelyan Slave records of births, deaths, and conditions of the enslaved people. Then it covers the tour to the ruins of Beausejour Estate, located in the interior hills of Grenada's West Coast, which was once owned by the Trevelyans. Local historical novelist DC Campbell acted as tour guide. French for beautiful stay/living, Beausejour overlooks the Caribbean Sea. Trevelyan noted how the landscape stood in direct contrast to the conditions of the enslaved people on the estates. For her, the horror of life and death on the plantation seemed at odds with the spectacular geography. According to death records on the Beausejour estates, the enslaved people suffered/died from diseases including dysentery, smallpox, obstruction of bowels and punishments leading to missing limbs, and other body parts. It can be argued that Trevelyan was confronted with the residues/aftermaths of memory. Sites of memory are never neutral or innocent spaces, but they are actively shaped by historical, social, and political processes. The memory work of Trevelyan reproduced the shame and guilt over the Slavery past, especially in a society that often ignored, silenced, or repressed its history of Slavery and colonialism. Slavery sites are mnemonic codes/devices of the suffering and oppression endured by the enslaved people especially in the ways they narrate the stories of the past and omit the enslaved people's efforts to construct freedom through resistance.

In 1834, the Trevelyans received compensation monies of £6,543 5S 11D for 435 enslaved persons on the Beausejour Estate although the enslaved population on the Estates had decreased by at least 44 enslaved persons by 1832 (Centre for Legacies, nd). From the vantage point of the estate house, which appears to be preserved, Campbell identified the features of estate labour to underscore the brutalities inherent in the daily act of producing sugar cane for the planters to make profits. He explained that the bodies of the enslaved people were often crushed in the grinding machines (whose ruins could still be seen on the estate) or body parts such as limbs were cut off if caught in the rolling blades, as opposed to turning off the machines. The latter was considered to be costly to the planters; hence, it was considered cheaper for the enslaved victim to lose a limb as he had two and could still perform tasks with one arm. By the time Trevelyan witnessed the other instruments

of control, including manacles, mouth guards, whips, neck braces, and small shackles for children, it was clear to her that Slavery's profits were built on a system of torture. These instruments were first used on the trek to the coast in West Africa, the middle passage from West Africa to the Caribbean, and on the plantations. As the weight of the past weighed down on Trevelyan, she wrestled with and asked herself a stream of unending questions. Were the Trevelyan ancestors aware of the conditions endured by "their slaves"? Did they care? Should the descendant Trevelyan family pay reparations to the descendant community in Grenada? What kind of reparations should the Trevelyans make to Grenada? As a descendant of the planters, is she responsible to make amends to the descendant community in Grenada?

To gain perspective on the significance of reparative justice, Trevelyan sought the academic advice of Hilary Beckles in his capacity as chair of the CARICOM Reparations Commission. Beckles pointed out that Slavery is part of the present experiences of the descendant community via the socio-economic and economic injustices. While the descendant communities did not directly experience Slavery, they live with the oppressions and "open wounds" passed down from the period of Slavery and Emancipation in the present. According to Beckles, the harmful effects of Slavery, which he called "negative dimensions," include endemic poverty, illiteracy, endemic hypertension, and diabetes, among others. Beckles confirmed that a debt was owed as slaveholding families inherited wealth, property, and prestige from enslaving West Africans. Concerned about how family reparations would be received, Trevelyan enquired whether her family's gesture at making amends would be seen as an "empty gesture." In this regard, Beckles responded that the act of reparations would signify symbolic import that could benefit small island developing states through an educational fund. (Trevelyan 2022).

A major part of the Trevelyan visit included consultations and interviews with Grenadian stakeholders. She visited St Joseph's Convent, St Georges's, a traditional high school for girls erected in 1875 during colonialism which was/is run by the Roman Catholic Church. It was the only secondary school for girls on the island and mainly students from the upper classes could attend. Increasingly after Independence, the school opened its doors to students from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds. Trevelyan consulted with mostly history students between 14 to 16 years, who were in forms 4 and 5. Trevelyan explained the rationale of her visit to the students

and underscored her intention of paying reparations. Trevelyan asked the students two major questions: whether they saw themselves as descendants of the enslaved people and whether reparations would contribute to social and economic development in the future. Answering in the affirmative, the students explained how the psychological trauma of Slavery and colonialism affects the psyche of Grenadians who, having imbibed the colonial mentality, experience varying forms of psychosis, including colourism in a largely Black dominated society (Trevelyan 2022).

A salient feature of the reparations process was the actual reparations forum, called the Trevelyan Apology Ceremony, which occurred on 27 February 2023. It was the first of its kind for Grenada and considered an historic reparative apology. The intent of the forum was for the Trevelyan family to make a public apology to the descendant community of Grenada for the wrongs committed by their slaveholding family during the 18th and 19th centuries. It was hosted by the GNRC and the University of the West Indies and held at the Grenada Trade Centre (the largest conference venue on island) located in the Capital City, St George's. It was attended by the Prime Minister of Grenada Dickon Mitchell; government ministers; CRC Chairman and Vice-Chancellor of UWI, Professor Hilary Beckles; chair and vice chair of the National Reparations Committee of St Lucia and Antigua; members of the Rastafari community; students and teachers, civic society groups, diplomats, and the public. It was moderated by Vice Chair of the GRNC Nicole Phillip, and the opening prayer was made by Ras Stephen Josephs of the Rastafari Movement in Grenada who invoked the presence/spirit of Jesus Christ, Jah, and the ancestors over the ceremony. The cultural presentations included poetry and drumming by local poet and drummer Nigel DeGale, who delivered a satirical rendition called "Harvest Time" which reversed the roles of the Europeans and West Africans during Slavery with the former being enslaved and the latter operating as the "masters" to elicit empathy for the suffering of those who truly endured the brutalities and trauma of Slavery. DeGale's poem underscored the pain and suffering endured by the enslaved people and the inequalities of "freedom" which haunt the present generations. In "Harvest Time," the memory, haunts, and trauma of Slavery could only be assuaged (forgiven) when Black descendants enslave White descendants for another 400 years. Without this equalisation of memory (evening out the score between enslaved and enslaver), the past

impact of Slavery and "emancipation" in the present cannot be reconciled.

Moreover, the presentations and speeches explored the significance of reparations socially, historically, socio-economically, and politically. Arley Gill, the chairman of the GNRC, made three striking appeals. The first was to the governments of CARICOM to provide institutional support for the reparations process in the fight for reparative justice, which could foster further social and economic development of the region. Secondly, he called on the British government and other slaveholding families to follow the Trevelyan example to acknowledge the wrongs committed by their ancestors. Thirdly, he noted that reparations should be included on the school curriculum from the primary to tertiary levels. In his discussion, Prof. Hilary Beckles explained the political economy of Slavery by discussing the concept of Chattel Slavery, which institutionalised enslaved Africans as "property" and "non-human" and the genocide of the enslaved people as signified by the brutalities/punishments (including rape and emasculation of their bodies), which contributed to the reduction in their overall figures. Then he located the Trevelyan family as beneficiaries of the Slavery system (which he called a slave-ocracy) which contributed to their extensive wealth and family sustainability across generations. Another prominent feature of the ceremony was the unveiling of the "Say My Name Exhibition", a memory installation naming the 1,206 women, men, and children enslaved on the Trevelyan estates as underscored by the 1834 slave register. Designed by heritage expert and curator John Angus Martin and artist SueLin Chew Tung, it showcased the names, birthplace, colour, gender, possible age, and conspicuous marks of the enslaved people on metallic name cards. Martin (2023) noted that the initiative was a demand for the personal identities of the enslaved people to be inscribed within the cultural repertoire of the nation. One intent of the installation is to bring awareness to the significance of these names within the naming tradition of Grenada.

An important feature of the ceremony was the public apology by the Trevelyan family. Leading the group, Laura Trevelyan and cousin John Dower verbally apologised to the descendant community for their family's role in enslaving 1,200 persons in Grenada by reading out a letter of apology collectively written by the Trevelyan family. They were accompanied by five members of the Trevelyan family, including Humphrey Trevelyan, Peter Trevelyan, Tom Trevelyan, George Trevelyan, and Alex Dower. The seven

family members present signed the written apology, which had already been signed by 104 descendants of the Trevelyan family across the world. The apology was divided into seven parts, and it was aimed at repudiating the actions of the Trevelyan slaveholding ancestors "in holding yours in Slavery." It also urged the British government and other slaveholding families to make appropriate reparations to the respective descendant communities of the Caribbean. Additionally, it announced the launch of the Trevelyan Family Reparations Fund in the form of £100,000 (the pension of Laura Trevelyan) to establish an education fund at the UWI, Open Campus Grenada. While it did not go into the details, it pledged monies from other Trevelyan family members to fund bursaries to support the Grenada Education Development Program (GRENED). The apology letter was then presented to Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell, who accepted the apology both personally as a descendant of the enslaved peoples and on behalf of the collective Grenadian people. In his speech, he asked for a moment of silence for the enslaved ancestors; he applauded the contribution of the Rastafari community in their struggles for reparations and then he contended that reparations involved more than material recompense. It also includes educating oneself about the past history of Slavery, the resistance of the ancestors, the impact of Slavery on the present society, and the collective responsibility of the descendant community to fight for reparative justice (Reparations Forum, 2023). In recognition of the collaborative work between the Grenada National Reparations Committee and the University of the West Indies, Mitchell would then call upon the chair and vice chair of the GRNC, Gill and Phillip-Dowe, along with Professor Beckles, to accept the Trevelyan apology on behalf of the Caribbean community. It was a symbolic act underscoring the legitimization of state authority on the reparatory processes in the Caribbean.

Public Narratives on Reparations

The public narratives emerging out of the Trevelyan reparations underscore two kinds of positions on the question of reparative justice. Both a pro-reparation (pro-reparationist) stance (support for reparations) and anti-reparation (anti-reparationist) stance (opposition to reparations) was discerned from the public responses to the Trevelyan apology. Both positions also reflected how the reparations discourse is implicated by the aftermath

of memory. The pro-reparationist perspective largely accepted the Trevelyan apology and monetary reparations as a first step in fostering economic and psychological reconciliation (Longman-Mills et.al, 2019, 94). The pro-reparationist positions also included the view that the enslaved ancestors and newly freed people contended that they were victims of injustice and lamented about the 'unpaid labour' which contributed to the wealth of the planters; hence they vehemently resisted Slavery (see also Marshall, 1996, 12). This perspective also noted that the newly freed people saw reparations as redress, compensation, atonement, and repayment in the form of land, housing, and educational opportunities (see also Araujo, 2017, 2). As Marshall (1996) had shown, the newly freed people had several hopes/expectations of Emancipation, all of which had to do with repairing/resetting their conditions to a state of freedom. Land ownership was the most important criterion of freedom for Afro-Grenadians in the period of Emancipation (Brizan 1998, 137). Another view argued that the descendants of slaveholders should pay reparations, as compensation is necessary for healing for the horrors and injustices committed against the ancestors. A line in this view also argued that descendants of slaveholders are not really obligated to apologise or make reparations hence familial/personal reparations should be accepted from an ethical perspective when it is genuine.

Generally, most Grenadians are unsettled by the memory of Slavery and the persistent deprivation experienced in their daily lives due to the haunting past in the present and believe that reparations should be made to the nation. It is largely argued that Britain should compensate Caribbean nations for Slavery as it was a crime against humanity. Furthermore, an argument was made for a Caribbean reparation program for individual families like the descendants of the slaveholders to benefit from reparations. A few responses also opposed the view contending that the past should be forgotten. They raised questions about the British government's reluctance to pay the enslaved people some form of compensation while it did not forget to pay the slaveholders for the loss of their property. Another prominent assertion was that the legacies of Slavery live in the present in the form of poverty, poor health conditions including chronic diseases, and psycho-social/mental health issues. It was also suggested that reparations should take the form of scholarships and bursaries. A few persons applauded the "courage" and "bravery" of Laura Trevelyan and appealed to the descendant community to confront the past

and not sweep it under the carpet. It is imperative to note that reparations for Slavery are often repressed by the descendants of slaveholders who feel a sense of shame, embarrassment, or even anxiety within their psyche that often led to mental conditions. (Longman-Mills et.al, 2019, 94–95). Other reparation proponents argued that the Trevelyan compensation of 100,000 was noteworthy but inadequate in comparison with the ill-gotten gains amassed by the family due to Slavery. The transgenerational transmission of wealth was seen as a strong justification in support of reparations.

The pro-reparation stance indicates that the descendant communities have a heightened understanding of the history of Slavery (its brutalities and inhumanities) and the injustices of Black Emancipation which was drawn out across decades. In Caribbean society, supporters of reparations believe that compensation money paid to the planters was a slap in the face to the newly freed people. To many, it was like adding salt to the wounds of those who had been dehumanised under Slavery (Thompson 2022). This position asserts one of the popular views of the descendant community that those whose ancestors experienced Slavery and "unfree" Emancipation have a historical right to reparations ('blood money' or debt). As Lewis (quoted in Rauhut, 2020, 130) pointed out, Caribbean people feel that the compensation paid to the planters was unfair as those who laboured under Slavery received no start-up and nothing to go into freedom with. Additionally, it is also argued that many Caribbean people (whether in Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, St Vincent or Jamaica) responded to the injustices of non-reparative Emancipation by squatting on Crown lands as a clap-back to the unequal distribution of land whereby Whites had access to prime lands while most of the people were denied access to land (Antoine 2023). Of course, the lack of access to lands after Emancipation demonstrates the extent of the injustices experienced by the Black descendant community. It is not only that they could not afford to buy land due to their poor socio-economic and economic conditions but also due to the structural economic infrastructure that was put in place, they were not granted land titles to pass on financial independence to their generations. Hence, the descendant communities inherited instability and the uncertainties and vulnerabilities from an Emancipation that was not reparative.

Furthermore, many Grenadians conceded that, despite the memory of Slavery and injustices of Emancipation (what I call the aftermath of memory),

the Trevelyan reparations was an act of reconciliation and reparative justice. For one, the Trevelyan family confronted the entire nation and sought out Grenadians with their last names/or the last names of their managers like John Alexander Hankey and personally apologised for their family's role in Chattel Slavery. Secondly, Laura Trevelyan retired/resigned from her lifelong job as journalist of the BBC to become an activist and campaigner for reparative justice especially advocating for the CARICOM reparations agenda. Thirdly, Trevelyan plans to widen the scope of the processes of reparations by encouraging the UK parliament and British slaveholding families to make amends to the descendant communities across the Caribbean. Ultimately, the Trevelyan reparations signified the historical encounter bridging time, space, and memory. It is therefore possible to surmise that the Trevelyan reparations opened up a pro-reparatory grammar that may influence other slaveholding families to bear collective responsibility for the legacies of Slavery and Emancipation in small island developing states.

However, the anti-reparation stance opposes the act of reparations when it is made by descendants of slaveholders. It is split between three camps. One group rejects reparations fully as they hold the view that descendants should not be made to make amends for their ancestors while the another believes that reparations cannot repair the past. A third group rejected the Trevelyan familial or personal reparations as it is not on the same scale as state reparations, which remains the primary mode of reparations sought after by post-colonial societies. This perspective generally held the view that familial/personal reparations personalises Slavery and colonialism in a real way. However, familial reparations cannot address the root causes of the long-lasting inequalities and injustices (what this paper calls the aftermath of memory) of Caribbean societies stemming from Slavery and colonialism. Arguably, the Trevelyan reparations was culturally sensitive as the OCES is in need of an educational programme to fund its initiatives to educate the mass of the population and reduce illiteracy. However, the Trevelyan reparations did not convince the critics that their recompense was a *prima facie* ethical attempt to repair/make amends to the victims (McCarthy, 2004, 752). The common position of some descendants of the enslaved people is that White familial reparations reinforce the power dynamics of Whites over Blacks as it was the *very act of injustice* (Slavery and Planter Compensation) that bestowed White descendants with these positions of dominance *ad infinitum*. Many

viewers read the Trevelyan reparations as an act of White Benevolence/White Saviourism in a bid to heroize themselves as the saviours of the enslaved descendant community. Both White Benevolence and White Saviourism or White Saviour Syndrome are defined as acts of "goodness" performed by White persons based on an internal need to save Blacks from injustices. Within the context of making reparations, it is critical to understand the feelings evoked by the Trevelyan reparations through the lens of White benevolence. Some viewers argued that the Trevelyan reparations was a form of White guilt to ease the consciences of planter families who enjoyed/continue to enjoy a life of wealth generated by "exploiting" and "abusing" the enslaved people. Gudjohnson (1999, 83) has shown that feelings of guilt heighten reparations-giving in the descendants of slaveholders. It has been argued that when the descendants of slaveholders make reparations a kind of "negative benevolence" is produced within the recurring memories of the past in the present. In that sense, the act of giving operates within the past historical context between the two groups (Gearin 2022, 52) – the enslaved/descendant and enslaver/descendant – and it reproduces feelings of oppression and control over Black minds and emotions. For instance, a prevailing perspective was the sense of erasure/loss of identities and distance between the enslaved ancestors' memories and Black descendants in the present. Another line of thought within this argument included the kind of structural inequalities including social marginalisation (LLiff et al, 2011, 12). One common view noted how upsetting it was that "she [Trevelyan] can check her ancestors easily and see how many slaves they owned but poor me can't even find my family tree or where it sprang from." Moreover, several comments centred around the actual monetary reparations and noted its inadequacy or true "value" in disrupting the legacies of Slavery and unjust Emancipation in Grenada. As one commentator plainly noted "£100,000 ain't gonna cut it"; another pointed out that it was a form of "charity." Of course, the Trevelyan descendants *themselves* noted how inadequate the compensation reparations were, given the atrocities committed by their ancestors. The act of reparations by the descendant community was viewed as "self-flagellation that was difficult to watch." Ultimately, the Trevelyan reparations was viewed as a form of tokenism, a small symbolic gesture given to override the traumas and brutalities of the past. The act of reparations then is seen as a performance meant to shift the focus from the injustices of

Slavery and Black Emancipation to the reparative act of recompense in a bid to settle the score in a perfunctory way, as opposed to making a real mark to correct the inequities in the system – housing, health care, education or employment. One dominant position was that the Trevelyan family should "hand over *all* their family's ill-gotten gains." Another perspective satirically opined that Trevelyan cannot truly feel "Grenada's pain" as a wealthy English woman enjoying the best experiences of life (like travelling in Business class) from the proceeds of Slavery. Moreover, White giving via reparations may give credence to the notion that White descendants are proud of their family's slaveholding past in disguise. This position was supported by the idea that "Laura looked quite proud that her family owned slaves."

Additionally, within the context of the anti-reparation stance, the language of reparations was explored. As Rinehart (2022, 1) has shown, the semantics of reparations have been advanced by groups seeking to redress the legacies of Slavery by centring questions of the use of appropriate language to speak to the memories of the West Africans who were subjected to a life of Slavery. As a case in point, viewers were offended by Trevelyan's use of the word "slaves" and the Trevelyan reference to their family "owning slaves" in Grenada and Jamaica. As a means of countering the erasure of the West Africans' humanity under Slavery, scholars argue that the term "enslaved" is more politically sensitive (Hall, 2023). The term "slave" represents the sustained relations of domination between Whites and Blacks. It conjures oppressive recollections that continue to demean the memory of the enslaved ancestors (Hall, 2023) as it reduces them to property. This perspective asserts the significance of acknowledging that humans, first and foremost, were subjected to enslavement, whereas the term "slave" objectifies, dehumanises and commodifies people (Rinehart, 2022, 1). One position argued that "language [utilised by the descendants of slaveholders] is decisive" while another contended that "saying my family-owned slaves is getting on my nerves." A common thread of the discourse included the popular question "how many times is she going to say my family-owned slaves here in Grenada." The use of the term "slave" by descendants of slaveholding families regenerates the power of slaveholding families over the memories of the past. Nevertheless, in "Reparative Semantics," Rinehart (2022, 1) argues that the notion "slave" defines the legal status of West Africans under the system of Slavery. He argues that denying West Africans were "slaves" implies that slavery was a

state of being rather than law or social practice and makes the understanding of "slavery" extremely difficult. Both positions surrounding the language of reparations are valid. Nonetheless, due to the sensitivity of the reparations discourse within the public space, it is possible to allow the perspective of the descendant community concerning how it experiences the memory of Slavery (the aftermaths) to override theoretical constructions in the historiography.

The larger debate concerning the reparations process surrounds questions dealing with the politics of reparations. Defined as a political act producing a sense of dominance in the "giving of reparations," the politics of reparations (within this context) contends that slaveholding descendant families make reparations for political reasons. The anti-reparations stance argued that familial/personal reparations is rooted in the quest for power. Critics argued that neither the reparations nor the apology was genuine. It was argued that the Trevelyan reparations was an attempt to "exploit a loophole" and to secure "all the praise for apologising" while keeping all the wealth generated from Slavery. A few opponents rejected it on the grounds that it sought to assign a cash value on the suffering of the Black descendant communities. Another perspective protested that the reparations was a political strategy to attract attention and insinuated that the *very act* of reparations was a means to create wealth for the Trevelyan family. It can also be seen as an attempt to create a bridge between the present and future discourses on reparations thus shifting the political discourses to remake the memory to serve its contemporary objectives (Mitchell, 2013, 443). Trevelyan was sure to point out that the reparations was a means of asking how reparative justice can shape the future, in terms of improving the conditions of victims. Some critics saw the Trevelyan reparations as mere symbolism as opposed to its future prospects of making an impact on the social development of the nation. As Lliff et al (2011, 2) has shown, the reparations process is fraught with political issues, including tensions between the two primary subjects of familial reparations: the descendants of slaveholding families and the descendants of the enslaved peoples. While the Trevelyan descendants accepted responsibility for the "White privilege" they enjoyed, some Black descendants questioned whether the apology and monetary compensation were authentic and sincere.

The public narratives on the Trevelyan reparations underscores the correlation between the pro-reparations stance and the anti-reparation stance.

Both positions (for and against reparations) recall/underscore the facts of history; that Slavery and unjust Emancipation were real. In this way, it is possible to assert that reparations can provide a framework through which small islands like Grenada which had been historically silent on the Slavery past can reckon with its memories. This kind of reparative tenor can elevate the consciousness of the descendant community by fostering community participation utilising townhall meetings as was seen with the Trevelyan reparations. While reparations can perpetuate social marginalisation, the Trevelyan reparations, which was managed by the CARICOM Reparations Commission and the Grenada National Reparations Committee, aimed at including marginal groups/voices like Rastafari and Black conscious figures to play an integral role in the dialogue of/on reparations. However, it cannot be ignored that reparations can retraumatize groups who have been historically exposed to Slavery and its aftermaths/legacies. It has been argued that trauma was transmitted transgenerationally from the enslaved peoples to their descendants (Longman-Mills et al, 2019, 87). The trauma was transmitted via the family structure inherited from the plantation. It involves authoritarian parenting styles modelling the system of control and intimidation on the plantation (Longman-Mills et al, 2019, 88). Moreover, Graff (2014) had argued that survivors of a brutal regime can experience feelings of shame which becomes apparent through discourses about 'good hair' or 'being too Black' (Morgan and O'Garo 2008) or attempting to conceal one's class or home address due to the negative reactions of others. A few protestors of the Trevelyan reparations expressed feelings of shame or inadequacy as they feel disconnected from the identities of their ancestors. Due to the aftermath of Slavery memory, some Blacks across the Caribbean deny their Blackness and adopt European assumptions/biases concerning Black cultural expressions, including religion and language use etc. The prevailing thinking of Afro-Caribbean people is that their Blackness brought pain, shame, misery, and poor economic, socio-economic, and political opportunities needed to improve their conditions; hence, they threw their lot with the dominant ideologies as a means of surviving the aftermath of memory.

Conclusion

In 2023, the Trevelyan family, the descendants of slaveholders, made personal/familial reparations to the descendant community of Grenada, opening up a reparative discourse on the legacies of Slavery and Emancipation in Grenada. Some Grenadians accepted the reparations while others rejected the act of reparations. Both a pro-reparations and anti-reparations stance were discerned from the reparations processes in Grenada, suggesting that the descendants are split/divided on the question of reparative justice. The pro-reparations stance generally supports reparations while the anti-reparations stance is split in three positions: one position rejects reparations fully, one perspective holds that reparations cannot repair the past, and the final viewpoint specifically rejected the Trevelyan reparations due to the low value of the reparations. This group saw the reparations as an act of tokenism. It is my contention that the descendants of enslaved peoples are inflicted/afflicted by the aftermath of memory whereby successive generations of Blacks who did not directly experience Slavery (original sin) live with its affect as a direct "impact" due to the injustices of Slavery and Emancipation. I also hold the view that these aftermaths provide the very answers as to how Caribbean peoples may approach the question of reparative justice due to the facts of history. I wish to make the following suggestions/interventions to contribute to the reparations discourse. Firstly, the enslaved peoples' and freed peoples' perspectives on reparations must be considered. Both groups anticipated reparations whether as a shilling(coppa), land, education, housing, etc. In Caribbean society, planter compensation was seen as "blood money" that was owed to the enslaved people and their descendants, not the planters. In the post-Emancipation period, the newly freed people lamented that Emancipation was unjust as they did not have access to education, proper housing, and health care, and they lived with the hope that they would be compensated for Slavery. Secondly, there is a need for a sensible public educational campaign/programme to sensitize the public on the connection between the impact/legacies of Slavery and Emancipation on the descendant communities and reparations. Europe's lack of accountability should be part of these public conversations. Europe should take the lead in conscientizing its citizens who benefitted from Slavery and "Planter Compensation" to make reparations to the Caribbean as reparations

is a response to the problem of Slavery and colonialism. Thirdly, Caribbean reparations is one example of reparations; other groups of oppressed peoples have received/accepted reparations for the atrocities of the past including, the Jews for the Jewish Holocaust committed under World War 2 by Germany/Hitler. The argument that Slavery occurred in the past, and the victims are no longer alive to benefit from reparations, is an inconsiderate one. The Black descendant communities inherited and lived with the aftermath of Slavery memory – poor healthcare, low wages, unemployment, poverty, diseases from malnutrition and chronic conditions including diabetes and hypertension, psychological trauma, and political disenfranchisement, etc. Hence, the descendants of the enslaved peoples share claim to reparations especially as the past cannot be undone, and their ancestors cannot (and did not) benefit from reparations. Fourthly, the education curriculum, beginning at primary schools, should be used to teach Caribbean students about the significance of reparative justice for future economic development, psychological reconciliation, and healing for the horrors and injustices of the past that continue to affect the aftermath of memory. Students must be taught that reparations cannot undo/cancel/nullify the oppressions that took place under Slavery and colonialism, but it can acknowledge the fact that Blacks are *owed* collectively for the underdevelopment of their societies due to Slavery and colonialism. The point is, European nations were developed as a direct consequence of Slavery and colonialism while the Caribbean's development was distorted and stagnated due to these haunts (Slavery and colonialism) of the past. Fourthly, sincere and genuine slaveholding families who wish to reconcile the past in the present should be allowed a space to confront the ills of Slavery and Emancipation. As the Trevelyans have shown, some descendants of slaveholders are fully aware that the historical context of Slavery and colonialism shaped their aftermaths having benefitted from the proceeds/profits of Slavery and planter compensation living with intergenerational wealth, social status, political influence, and access to economic networks. Finally, how Caribbean people respond collectively to the cry for reparations will serve as a means of cementing or rejecting the integration movement. The collective call for reparations by CARICOM signifies the collaboration between island-states whose citizens experienced reparations due to racial factors not national issues as the nation had not yet been formally forged. Hence, it is important for CARICOM to launch

a sustained cultural campaign initiative across the Caribbean to inform Caribbean people of its core mandate, plans, and benefits of reparations in the present and for future generations. Such a campaign may include television and social media videos/advertisements/documentaries/announcements to enhance public understanding of reparations and reparative justice.

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Poverty and Development in the Caribbean through the Eyes of Distinguished Professor Clive Thomas

DIANNA DASILVA-GLASGOW AND DIONNE FRANK

Abstract

In this qualitative research essay, we take a look at the views of economist Clive Y. Thomas on poverty and development in the Caribbean. While Clive Y. Thomas has written on a range of economic and social issues, poverty and underdevelopment was an area of immense concern for him given the development challenges that the region confronted during the 1970s and the pervasive impacts on social welfare in decades that followed. In this paper, we seek to (1) reflect on his views regarding the core underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment in the Caribbean; (2) identify the key policy prescriptions that were outlined in his writings; and (3) ascertain the continued relevance of some of his policy prescriptions in an evolving Caribbean.

Key words: Clive Y. Thomas, Poverty, Development, Economic, Social, Caribbean

Introduction

Clive Y. Thomas is a Caribbean economist of immeasurable standing. He is the only distinguished professor produced by the University of Guyana over its 60 plus-year history. With an impressive academic career, he has authored or co-authored around 28 books and research monographs, published 154 academic papers, read 159 papers at conferences/seminars/symposia/ colloquia and invited special lectures, and made extensive contributions to the media and journals of opinion on Caribbean development. He has written on a number of issues relevant to Caribbean development, which could be broadly classified under the core areas; regional integration, international trade and

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000020

development, macroeconomic policy, growth and industrial development, governance and political economy, and poverty and social development.

In this qualitative research essay, we take a special look at his views on poverty and development in the Caribbean. Clive Y. Thomas' works on poverty and development have addressed issues related to the measurement of poverty and the underlying causes and policy prescriptions to address poverty. While only a small number of his publications centrally address the issue of poverty, his wider focus on Caribbean development undertones all of his publications. The significance of his scholarly insights on poverty are also tremendous. Among his works are a seminal publication produced in 1988 *The Poor and the Powerless Economic Policy and Change in the Caribbean* where he addresses issues of colonialism, independence, nationalism and industrialisation.

As Thomas' writings cover over five decades, he has witnessed and captured the evolution of the region post its independence. Although he is now retired from academia, he continues to write on development issues in his weekly newspaper column *Guyana and the wider world*, which has proven quite valuable in demystifying economic policy issues in a manner that allows the general public to understand the implications of policy and economic and political issues for their daily lives.

As the region charters its development over the next 50 years, what does the development glass reflect *vis-a-vis* policy accomplishments over the last 50 years of our post-independence history. It is useful to juxtapose the views of Thomas on poverty and development issues with policy accomplishments in the region, both with a view toward understanding the historical context of the region's development and contemporary relevance given the current development challenges and the path that lies ahead. We give special consideration to Guyana in this essay. Most of Thomas' works reflected on his native land. Guyana now finds itself at a watershed moment in its economic development with a new oil and gas sector, which now affords the country the resource capacity to address many of the underlying hurdles to its economic progress and with the capacity to positively impact wider regional development. We therefore extract Thomas' policy considerations with a view towards ascertaining their continued relevance in the shifting tide of Guyana's and the Caribbean's economic landscape.

The general goal of this essay is to examine Clive Y. Thomas' work,

to specifically (1) determine the core underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment in the Caribbean from his perspective; (2) identify the key policy prescriptions he advanced; (3) ascertain the continued relevance of the policy prescriptions in an evolving Caribbean. We use mainly the JSTOR, EBSCOHOST and ProQuest search platforms and the *Stabroek News* to assemble works by and about Thomas and extract the core ideas using thematic analysis. As with other Caribbean writers who have addressed Thomas' work, an important disclaimer to note is our inability to comprehensively discuss his very extensive body of scholarly writings, as such the emphasis is restricted to writings treating primarily with the issue of poverty and underdevelopment.

Underlying Causes of Poverty and Underdevelopment

Some thinkers would describe Clive Y. Thomas as a heterodox economist because he challenged mainstream views of development in the Caribbean region (see for instance Weis and Singh 2016). While his writings cover a range of issues, poverty and underdevelopment was a core concern for him. Thomas was of the opinion that during the 1970s the Caribbean was in a permanent state of crisis reflected by stagnant growth rates and high levels of poverty, among other considerations (Thomas 1988; Danns and Henry 2016). As a corollary, he considered that the poor constituted the majority of the region's population. In *The Poor and the Powerless* he stated that:

> For the whole of the region's recorded history, the poor and the powerless have comprised the majority of the population". [The powerless are] "all those who, under prevailing social and institutional arrangements, are unable to exercise any control over the workings of the state, the machinery of production and all other established institutions of social authority (they are) excluded from the dominant or ruling political groups or classes". Hence "within the region, the poor and the powerless have invariably been the same people" (Thomas 1988, 2).

Thomas thought it important that development be centralised in economic policymaking as opposed to the approach of mainstream economics that emphasised economic growth, with development as a corollary. He was also of the view that development must centralise people rather than abstractions such as per capita GDP. In a 1992 publication, *Alternative Development Model*

for the Caribbean, he noted that development "is about people, about the concrete context of their existence, and this is largely influenced by the social conditions they inherit and the movements and rhythms underlying them" (Thomas 1993b: 215). Thomas was particularly concerned about vulnerable sub-groups, which, Weis and Singh (2016) note, has always been his 'point of departure'.

Thomas saw underdevelopment in the Caribbean as being largely the result of structural underdevelopment. He was associated with the 'New World group', which also included George Beckford, Norman Girvan, Lloyd Best, and Michael Witter (Weis and Singh 2016). The ideas of the dependency school of thought permeated the views of this group, leading to them being described as the School of Caribbean Dependency Theory (see, for instance, Danns and Henry 2016). Thomas therefore saw underdevelopment in the region as being defined by global power structures which were evident during the era of imperialism and colonialism but persisted after and were reinforced through the globalization process. In his seminal book *The Poor and the Powerless* (1988), he wrote about the transition from colonialism to center-periphery relations. These power structures created structural dependence that have had a persistent influence on social structures and relations, institutions and policymaking in post-colonial societies and economic structures (Thomas 1988). On the latter, Thomas drew attention to deep-rooted factors emanating from the colonial experience that have shaped economic and social conditions in the Caribbean (Thomas 1982; 1988).

Three notable conditions are evident in his writings on the structural dependency and economic conditions in post-colonial Caribbean societies. *First* is the fact that agricultural systems were plantation-based/monocrop and heavily export-oriented with key strategic crops such as sugar for the Caribbean and Africa, Banana for the Leeward Islands, and cotton and cocoa for Africa. In his book *Plantations, Peasants, and State: A Study of the Modes of Sugar Production* (1984), Thomas drew attention to the political, social, and cultural impacts of colonialism on agricultural systems in the region.

Secondly, economic structures in the Caribbean were heavily dependent on production and export of a small array of primary commodities destined for the industrialised world when compared with importation of a more diversified array of value-added goods. This posed limitations to the development of Caribbean economies due to declining terms of trade, as

the price of primary commodities tended to fall over time when compared with the more diversified basket of largely value-added goods imported from industrialised countries and, therefore, increased their vulnerability to balance of payment imbalances and large public debts (Thomas 1982). Thomas saw market-driven systems as reinforcing the pattern of production and exports. In *Dependence and Transformation* (1974), he expressed the view that market systems essentially are designed to ensure that small developing countries respond to export demand rather than human needs. He also saw the nature of production, exports, and imports as accounting for some degree of inequality within territories. He spoke to inequality in consumption expenditures with the rich mainly consuming imported goods and the needs of the poor and powerless remaining unmet due to income disparities.

Thirdly is the relative importance of the markets of former colonial masters to the economic performance of Caribbean countries for services-oriented economies as sources of tourists, migration destination for nurses and teachers (see for instance, Thomas and Hosein 2007) and for commodity producers, as the main destinations for commodity exports. On the latter, Thomas wrote on the role of trade and development agreements in reinforcing export dependence. Trade and development agreements between former colonies and colonizers have helped to sustain the historical patterns of their bilateral trade. Trade agreements such as the Yaoundé trade agreements, the Lomé commercial conventions and the Cotonou Agreement granted preferential access and protectionism to former colonies from competition in former colonisers' markets (Stack, Ackrill and Bliss 2018; Khadan 2019; Bernards 2020). However, Thomas questioned whether these agreements were developed to safeguard the interests of former colonies or for Europe's own self-interest. For instance, in *Smoke and Mirrors, Reform or Rip-off: The EU Sugar Reform Proposals and CARICOM Sugar,* Thomas (2005) points to sustaining supply of a strategic tropical product as the basis for Europe's creation of sugar protocols with African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries. Access to sugar did provide the impetus for development of the rum industry in the UK. At the time of the negotiation of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement, Thomas was one of the most vociferous advocates against signing the agreement, calling for the region to demand more from Europe given the professed development focus of the agreement and Europe's obligations to support the region's development following decades of plunder

under colonialism. Guyana's delay in signing the agreement is largely as a result of his advocacy.

Fourthly is the dominance of foreign capitalists which Thomas saw as aggravating internal inequality (Thomas 1982). In his own words:

> The dominance of foreign ownership and control of the country's productive assets was paralleled by the dominant role of foreign financing of 'development', foreign control of technology, extensive reliance on foreign trade with the countries from which the external owners and Controllers of the productive assets originated (UK and North America), a decisive role for the foreign element in economic decision making, and foreign control of the financial mechanisms. All these facilitated the heavy drain overseas of the surpluses internally appropriated within these economic structures. (Thomas 1982b).

Key Policy Prescriptions to Address Poverty and Underdevelopment

Thomas points to the importance of centralizing people in development policy so that adequate mechanisms are put in place to respond to their needs, particularly those who are already vulnerable. Writing on the issue of structural adjustment for instance, he noted that "[t]he crucial consideration is that people are perceived as the subjects of macroeconomic adjustment in the determination of the outcomes, and not objects of public policy in disregard of their role in the process" (Thomas 1993, 134).

Thomas was also concerned about the impact of policy reforms, particularly reforms linked to western neoliberalist ideologies such as structural adjustment, privatization, competition and trade adjustment (Danns and Henry 2016; Thomas and Bynoe 2008). His concern was the fact that reforms created ripple effects on national economies and led to the emergence of new vulnerable sub-groups. For instance, in a 1993 publication he noted that

> The present emphasis in policy reform on liberalization, privatization and marketization, therefore, do not seem adequate by themselves to ensure economic security for groups historically impoverished, and for the new vulnerables [sic] emerging out of the womb of policy reform. Thomas (1993, 134)

In order to centralize people in development, Thomas was of the opinion that the state must intervene in markets given that markets are prone to failures (e.g., Thomas 1978a, 1978b, 1974). The state's role would be to create adequate compensatory and redistributive mechanisms under any condition where inequality is likely to emerge. For instance, following the discovery of oil and gas resources in Guyana, Thomas advocated for unconditional cash transfers as a mechanism to ensure equitable distribution of the wealth associated with new-found oil and gas resources (Thomas 2018)[1]. Beyond redistribution, Thomas advocated for social equity considerations to be consistently factored into development analyses and planning (e.g. Thomas 2004, 1998, 1988). He spoke to the importance of knowing who and where the poor are and the importance of data collection in ensuring that policy interventions do not take place in the dark (Thomas 1993).

Thomas' views of state intervention also relate generally to coordinating economic activities such as through import substitution, which he saw as a solution to export challenges related to volatility and, according to Phillips (1978), as a way of ensuring that trade is effective in achieving the development goals of the region. Thomas' views (and others under the Caribbean Dependency School of thought) of import substitution was a deviation and critique of the views of another prominent Caribbean economist, Arthur Lewis, who advocated for export-oriented industrialisation and 'Industrialisation by Invitation' (Payne 1989). It is also an area of criticism in Thomas' work. Leys (1996), for instance, alludes to the fact that Thomas may have assumed that the state was benevolent, but according to Weis and Thomas (2016), 'Guyana painfully endured the reality that this is not always the case.' But Thomas was also concerned about state failures as reflected by the fact that he wrote on issues of democracy, political freedom and participation, corruption and the underground economy (see for instance Thomas, Jourdain and Pasha 2009; Thomas 2015). In his views, development 'implies that work, politics and social organisations are based on democratizing power in society and on the effective exercise of fundamental rights' as well as 'a participatory political process in which the ordinary Caribbean's status as a citizen, producer and consumer of wealth is enhanced' (Thomas 1993, 320). Thomas would in fact spearhead the creation of the State Asset Recovery in Guyana as a policy response to reduce state failures.

Regional integration and South-South cooperation is another policy

area where Thomas saw much scope to address the underlying causes of underdevelopment in the region and to respond collectively to the dynamics of the global political economy. On the former, Thomas saw regional integration as being an important part of the region's consciousness, which he thought was important to people-centered development solutions (Thomas 2005b; Higman 1989) and for advancing its economic development through developing globally competitive industries. In this regard, he had written on production integration with Havelock Brewster, but subsequent writings addressed issues related to innovation (1977) and functional cooperation (Thomas 2008b; Scott 2016). He, however, also critiqued the inertia and malaise that had characterized the integration process arguing that the underlying capitalist philosophy, driven by the desire to imitate the EU and limits of the capitalist ruling class, would lead to failure (1977; 1979).

As it relates to collectively responding to the global political economy, having spent time at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and influenced by Walter Rodney who had produced a seminal publication on *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, Thomas saw much value in South-South cooperation (See for instance, Thomas 2000).

Continued Relevance of C.Y. Thomas' Policy Insights

The development performance of the region has increased steadily over its post-independence history. According to the 2024–2025 World Bank classification of countries by income level, five (5) countries are now classified as high income as at 2023: Guyana, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad; while six (6) countries are classified as upper middle income: Suriname, Belize, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica. Only Haiti is classified as a lower middle-income country. In 1997, there were no high-income countries in the region. Six (6) countries were classified as upper middle-income countries: Trinidad, Saint Kitts, Saint Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada; five (5) countries were classified as lower middle income countries: Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize; and Haiti was classified as low income. What accounts for the improved economic performance? New resources and shifting economic structures, among other considerations. Notwithstanding the region's improved economic standing,

there are several areas of C.Y. Thomas' policy insights that continue to be relevant because the underlying factors that drove those insights still exist.

The *first* underlying factor we wish to point out is the reality that both the macro economy and policymaking space continue to be subject to external influences as a result of the region's high degree of openness and reliance on external markets. Examples include health and climate shocks, economic performance in hegemonic economies such as China and the United States. The region finds itself in a persistent 'juggling-act' to maintain economic stability while simultaneously addressing long term structural issues. As a result, it confronts challenges related to high public debt levels and high rates of inflation, all of which affect living conditions (UNDP 2025; Thomas 2024, 2025).

A *second* underlying factor is the nature of productive activities and, consequently, export structures. There continues to be strong reliance on primary products for commodity producers and services exports for services-based economies and, as a result, low levels of production and export diversification (see, for instance, Salehizadeh; Berezin and Santana 2002; Francis, Iyrare and Lorde 2007 and McClean, 2022). New industries rather than transforming productive structures towards greater diversification in value-added activities, replace old ones, as in the case of Guyana with sugar and rice, gold and petroleum (see DaSilva-Glasgow and Bollers 2024). McClean points to the fact that the top 10 export commodities account for over 70% of exports over the period 2010 to 2020. Other studies have reinforced these findings. See, for instance, Satnarine-Singh, Hosein and Saridakis (2022) who had examined export sophistication for CARICOM and generally found very dismal results in that relative to other regions, CARICOM was found to have the lowest number of export lines, a low number of commodities with comparative advantage, and a very small number of highly sophisticated exports. Taylor (2003) and De La Cruz (2005) make similar conclusions having done empirical analyses of export flows in the context of bilateral trade or preferential trade agreements, looking at the US market and the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA).

Interestingly, Berezin, Saleizadeh and Santana (2002), while positing that the region does in fact have a generally undiversified production and export base, note that export earnings in the region have not suffered from volatility but have been quite stable. This is perhaps linked to the sizable services

sector as Durant, Boyce and Descartes (2003) had found that countries that specialize in services exports experience faster growth. However, several other Caribbean researchers reiterate the importance of diversification to Caribbean economic development, particularly in repositioning the economies and in building resilience (see, for instance, McClean 2022). Lorde, Alleyne, Hosein and Yifei (2020) also discussed the importance of structural change in allowing Caribbean countries to capitalize on the export potential of markets in East Asia including China, Singapore, and others.

Albeit writing from a structuralist mindset, C.Y. Thomas supported improved industrialisation, which would help to diversify the region's export base. He did criticize the Lewisian export-oriented approach but his support for import substitution industrialisation and state coordination of economic activities did not produce better results than the Lewisian approach, which while not working in the Caribbean did work in the East Asian region.

Among the factors requiring urgent attention to improve diversification are the regulatory environment, the degree of technical progress, high trade costs due to administrative regulations and rules of origin regimes in preferential trade agreements (see for instance, Satnarine-Singh, Hosein and Saridakis 2022).

The *third* underlying factor that persists relates to the malaise in the advancement of Caribbean integration. An effectively functioning regional integration apparatus is needed to support regional growth and development through, for instance, support to address internal limitations to industrialisation as well as coordination of negotiations of trade terms (such as rules of origin) with third parties.

To date, the region has made several policy achievements in support of a framework for intra-regional trade. To begin with, substantially all intra-regional trade is liberalised and the region has advanced to the stage of a customs union where a common external tariff regime has been established and is in full use. In addition, several functional bodies have been established and the Caribbean Court of Justice has also been established with an appellate and original jurisdiction. However, there has been a protracted malaise in fully implementing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy as envisioned by Heads of Government in 1989 in Grenada. Further, while tariffs have been liberalised, progress has been slower in fully harmonizing technical standards and sanitary and phytosanitary measures which also affect trade and in fact

fall under the umbrella of non-tariff measures regarded as 'new protectionism'. As a consequence, intra-regional trade in goods has languished, accounting for, on average, just about 20% of CARICOM's total trade with the world. The limitations of current transport infrastructure and structural weaknesses in the productive sectors of member states have also restricted the development of regional value chains and production of value added and technically sophisticated products for export markets. New trade agreements have emerged with third parties, such as CARICOM-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement. However, there is need to collectively revisit the terms (rules of origin) of hemispheric agreements such CBERA/CBTPA (Caribbean Trade Partnership Act) in order to reduce barriers to market access.

Thomas in a 1979 publication identified the following weaknesses within CARICOM:

> (i) The polarization of growth among the four (4) MDCs – Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados and Guyana. (ii) Distorted industrialization, which follows from polarized growth thus leading to skewed development and dependency. (iii) Regionalization of Economic Crises through the transmission of Jamaica's and Guyana's crises to other territories. (iv) State Trading Conflicts as existed between Trinidad and Guyana as well as Trinidad and Jamaica. (Thomas 1979 in Scott 2016, 263).

Thomas was of the view that these weaknesses produce three tendencies that account for the malaise of regional integration. Two of these are still clearly evident as the constant reference to barriers to trade by various sections of Guyana's private sector allude to. In Thomas' own words:

> (i) A "Dog-eat-dog" syndrome especially between Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica. He points out that CARICOM, "although harmonizing the overall interests of the present ruling classes, is still the area for struggle of sectional interests within it." This was with reference to the trade conflicts between Trinidad & Tobago vs. Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago vs. Guyana. . . . (iii) Operation of the Political Superstructure of the region. Thomas identifies two rules of operation (a) The fostering of "Capitalist integration" already alluded to, while minimizing the extent of supranational authority in the respective countries. (b) The fostering of capitalist integration while maximizing their degree of cooperation in maintaining existing political structures. (Thomas 1979 in Scott 2016, 264).

A *fourth* underlying factor is the state of multilateral reforms. Multilaterally, the WTO has been able to complete negotiations on fisheries subsidies, but the global policy reforms needed to really ensure that developing countries do not continue to face barriers to trade due to trade distorting subsidies and domestic support is still to be achieved. Delays in these policy reforms will continue to pose barriers to market access for developing countries. Other multilateral issues which reinforce the structural inner workings of the global system that Thomas had spoken to have emerged; an example is climate change. These all reinforce the importance of South-South cooperation and an effectively functioning regional apparatus given that foreign policy coordination is an important pillar of Caribbean integration.

The *fifth* and final underlying factor that we wish to point to is persistent concerns regarding the dominance of foreign capitalists and their influence on national development (Thomas 1982b; Thomas 2024). This is reinforced in the protracted and multiple crises in Haiti and in public outcry in Guyana and the diaspora regarding the terms of oil contracts negotiated with global oil giant Exxon Mobil.

In concluding, it is useful to reiterate that Thomas was a firm believer in centralizing people in development policy. In fact, we consider this to be one of the most important policy insights from his work. The region has made progress in adopting a people-centered approach to development as reflected by the adoption of several United Nations conventions and the mainstreaming of issues such as gender and vulnerable groups (the differently abled children, youth) in development policy. Even as Guyana contends with increased wealth from a new sector, Thomas has reminded us of equity in the distribution of resources through his writings advocating for unconditional cash transfers at the household level, which is now being administered by Guyanese policymakers[2] (Thomas 2018). Also worthy of note is that our data collection systems have improved, allowing us to be better able to identify the vulnerable in society. This is evident by the number of socio-economic and other studies and reports produced consistently by statistical offices across the region, such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and the Survey of Living Conditions.

Notes

1. Commonly referred to as the Buxton proposal, named after the community where he first publicly touted the idea.
2. Guyana is currently in the process of disbursing G$100,000 from oil revenues to every adult Guyanese; and outside of that G$35,000 to every person living with a disability.

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Beyond the Pilot

Exploring the Lessons and Possibilities of Harnessing AI-Driven Research to Inform GBV Social Intervention Programming in Jamaica and the Caribbean

RUTH HOWARD

Abstract

This research leverages artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze Jamaican online discourse on gender-based violence (GBV) by examining over 245,000 Google search queries and 16,000+ social media posts from 2021 to 2023. The study identifies 11 dominant narratives surrounding GBV, categorizing them based on their nature, drivers, sentiment, prevalence, and growth trends. Additionally, it maps the age and gender demographics contributing to each narrative and assesses their implications for key population groups.

Commissioned as part of a broader five-year GBV-reduction initiative, this study highlights the potential of AI-driven research for social interventions in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean. A key outcome of the research was the identification of gaps in Caribbean-centric data, prompting strategies to mitigate AI and online data biases in social research. The study's detailed disaggregation of findings presents vast predictive and practical applications, offering a framework for data utilization in social interventions.

This research serves as a pilot at the intersection of technology, social research, and programming. Since its dissemination, a recurring question has been: How can this study be expanded or improved to generate more impactful data for addressing GBV and other pressing social issues in the Caribbean? This paper explores those possibilities.

Keywords: gender-based violence, GBV, artificial intelligence, AI, social media, Jamaica, research, social intervention

Under the *WE-Talk for the Reduction of Gender-Based Violence* project (WE-Talk project), an analysis titled *Tapping Social Media Using Artificial*

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000021

Intelligence to Understand Gender-Based Violence (Oxfam Canada, 2023) was conducted. This study used artificial intelligence (AI) to explore Jamaican online discourse on gender-based violence (GBV) between 2021 and 2023. The AI analysis process – from initial consultations to the final report – along with its findings, offers valuable lessons on the potential of AI-driven research for anti-GBV interventions in Jamaica and the Caribbean, with broader implications for global applications.

The WE-Talk project is a five-year initiative (2022–2027) funded by Global Affairs Canada and Oxfam Canada. It is implemented by two local partners in Jamaica, including WMW Jamaica. WMW Jamaica (formerly Women's Media Watch) is a volunteer-driven women's rights nonprofit based in Kingston, with over 35 years of experience in gender justice advocacy, research, and training. The organization is committed to "creating equal spaces" and works with diverse stakeholders locally and regionally.

The WE-Talk project operates under two main pillars:

Pillar 1 aims to foster the adoption of positive behaviors among adolescent girls, boys, women, and men that promote GBV prevention and response. This is achieved by:

- Raising awareness among key target groups, including teenage mothers, high school youth, women in inner-city communities, adult women, and individuals aged 60+ years, about harmful norms, practices, and myths related to GBV.
- Engaging influencers and community leaders to advocate for positive social norms supporting women's rights.

Pillar 2 focuses on strengthening collective action to advocate for policy and practice changes by:

- Building community capacity to address GBV.
- Engaging duty-bearers to reinforce commitments and actions for gender-transformative services for survivors.

The AI analysis was conducted as part of Pillar 1 to inform the project's media campaign and community training workshops across Jamaica's 14 parishes. The study aimed to:

- Examine and explain recent and ongoing conversations on GBV in Jamaican traditional and social media.

- Identify major trends and key messages in gendered discourse on GBV, including the most trusted sources of information.
- Determine the media platforms most frequently used by the target population for GBV-related discussions.
- Provide actionable recommendations for behavioral change campaigns, including:
    - Integrating key findings into innovative, culturally relevant communication strategies.
    - Encouraging media platforms to adopt gender-sensitive and proactive reporting practices.
    - Amplifying communication efforts through knowledge-sharing and community engagement.
    - Establishing feedback mechanisms to monitor how messaging is received and track engagement outcomes. (WMW Jamaica Instagram, 2023)

By leveraging AI to analyze public discourse on GBV, this study provides insights that can enhance advocacy efforts, media strategies, and community engagement in the fight against gender-based violence. The consultants were also asked to pay special attention to findings alluding to any intersectionalities arising from the WE-Talk project's target groups, defined, for the purposes of the analysis, as teen moms, youth (16–24 years), elder women (60+ years) and economic dependents.

Methodology

The research process involved alternating AI analyses with sensitisation and sense-making sessions in what became described by the WMW Jamaica team as a "human-AI sandwich" approach. The nexus of the process was the harnessing of AI's capacity to digest and make sense of large datasets with astounding speed – a service provided by consultants Quilt.AI, who used proprietary tools to analyse "search data, keywords, videos, images, profiles, and posts" (Oxfam Canada 2023, 5) from Google, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube and Reddit. The analysis included more than 245,000 Google search queries and more than 16,000 social media posts made between 2021 and 2023 (Oxfam Canada 2023).

Following a sensitisation session in which the Jamaican GBV landscape was explained to Quilt.AI team members and relevant literature shared with them by the WMW Jamaica team and a local GBV expert hired to inform ongoing contextual sensemaking and data validation, a preliminary analysis was conducted, focusing specifically on "GBV conversations in Jamaican newspapers, online and social media" (Oxfam Canada 2023, 13), with emphasis on WE-Talk target populations. Next, a search analysis was done, leading to the generation of GBV-relevant keywords, and categorisations around emerging themes and their size, volume and growth rate. The local GBV expert was instrumental to the process of sensemaking for the search analysis findings, after which Quilt.AI conducted a social analysis (identifying primary themes, influencers, sentiment and top words), followed by a counter analysis (which identified anti-GBV counternarratives and potential advocates). Sentiment, in this context, referred to "the prevailing emotional opinion within the text to determine a writer's attitude as positive, negative, or neutral" (Oxfam Canada 2023, 8), a process that was aided by Quilt.AI's Classification Tool, which was used to nuance findings for WE-Talk purposes based on how text spoke about gender and GBV-related issues.

An iterative process of sensemaking and data refinement ensued, which helped inform Quilt.AI's development of recommendations for WE-Talk's behaviour change communications efforts. The final report was also produced through an iterative process of reflexive and reflective sensemaking. Unique to this research was the fact that up to the time of its publication, no team member was aware of any other similar research conducted using AI to look at how GBV was treated by Jamaicans online, leading them to believe that this research was an important, landmark pilot.

GBV in Jamaica and the Caribbean

Despite decades of efforts to reduce and eradicate it, GBV remains a formidable 'silent pandemic', with a lifetime prevalence among women of one in three globally (UN Women 2024), two in five in the Caribbean (UN Women 2020), and one in four in Jamaica (Watson Williams 2018). Gender inequality – evidenced in unequal power relations, harmful cultural norms and religious beliefs, economic dependence and poverty, and inadequate legislation, enforcement and supporting institutional frameworks – remains

a dominant root cause for GBV in the Caribbean (Biholar & Leslie 2024; Bureau of Gender Affairs 2017; Muturi & Donald 2006; Watson Williams 2018), exacerbated by a history of slavery and colonisation that gave rise to generational replications of traditional gender roles characterised by dominant, controlling and violent masculinities and submissive, victimised and/or hypersexualised femininities (Bean 2024; Beckles 2004; Bissessar & Huggins 2023; Chevannes 1999; Lewis 2004; Wiltshire 2012).

The global explosion of information and communication technology (ICT), social and digital media, and AI has expanded the scope of GBV beyond traditional, somewhat geographically-contained manifestations into boundaryless cyberspace, largely amplifying, replicating and reinforcing existing patriarchal and misogynist prejudices (Browne et al 2023, D'Ignazio & Klein 2020, UNFPA 2024). Technology-facilitated GBV (TFGBV) – online harassment, trolling, doxxing, cyberstalking, cyberbullying, deep fakes, revenge porn, hacking, etc.– already affects 85 percent of women globally (who reported witnessing online violence against other women), and 91 percent of women in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNFPA 2024, The Economist Intelligence Unit 2021). Thakur et al's 2015 study on violence against women and the use of ICTs in Jamaica found that 65 percent of respondents had observed some kind of abuse or harassment online. The study noted a strong relationship between online and offline GBV as part of a mutually reinforcing continuum (Pavlova 2024, UNFPA 2024), and the vulnerability of young women aged 18 to 29, who were most likely to experience TFGBV – a notion supported by the Jamaica Women's Health Survey's (Watson Williams 2018) identification of the same age group as the primary victims/survivors of GBV (women and girls under 24 years) and as more at-risk for both physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner (women under 30). Both GBV and TFGBV are perpetuated through the same sociohistorical root causes grounded in inequitable valuing and treatment of genders, gender roles and social identities.

Research findings

The WE-Talk AI analysis identified 11 popular narratives about GBV, namely:

1. *Genderless Violence:* The shared belief that there is no such thing as GBV (or it is a non-issue)

2. *Trivializing Risk Factors:* The shared belief that GBV risk factors are so ingrained in Jamaican society that they should be mocked rather than taken seriously
3. *Unfaithful & Unfeeling:* The shared belief that in relationships with men, women are unfaithful and deceitful by nature
4. *Invincible Matriarch:* The shared belief that women hold more power and privilege in Jamaica than men – interpersonally and institutionally and therefore cannot be victimized
5. *Hypersexualization:* The shared belief that women are inherently sexual objects, available for the sexual pleasure of others
6. *Mastering Masculinity:* The shared belief that in order to assert masculinity, a man must be dominant and controlling, both sexually and in society
7. *The Puritanism Ideal:* The shared belief that behaviours or identities in an intimate partner that deviate from biblical purity or 'goodness' are wrong
8. *Unsafe Sex:* The shared belief that sex for women is supposed to be rough, painful, even violent
9. *Sex Education (avoidance of):* The shared belief that sex education is superfluous, inappropriate or controversial, particularly for young persons below the age of 16
10. *Transactional Relationships*: The shared belief that it is normal for sexual acts to be driven by exchange of material items such as money, goods, services or protection
11. *A Child "Disciplined"*: The shared belief that physically harming children through corporal punishment is acceptable as a means of disciplining a child (Oxfam Canada 2023, 13)

These narratives reflect pervasive social norms which gender and anti-GBV scholars and researchers have identified as contributing to GBV prevalence in Jamaica and the Caribbean. The Mastering Masculinity and Unsafe Sex narratives both assume and encourage male dominance, even through violence and controlling behaviours, in society in general, and specifically in the bedroom – a phenomenon traced back to a history of slavery, sexual exploitation and hypermasculinity (Bean 2024, Chevannes 1999, Levtov & Telson 2021). The Unfaithful & Unfeeling, Invincible

Matriarch, Hypersexualisation and Puritanism Ideal narratives, while seemingly contradictory, all encourage limiting, stereotypical placements of women as carriers of single social identities – a viewpoint with primarily religious origins, reinforced through social norms, popular culture and media portrayals (Barratt 2018; Hope 2008). The Unfaithful & Unfeeling and Invincible Matriarch narratives encourage denial and dismissal of women's capacity to be victims of violence; while the Puritanism Ideal and Hypersexualisation narratives prescribe violence against women – either as a natural outcome of their bodies and sexual being (and an entitlement of men), or as a sanction for deviation from expected 'purity' (Barratt 2018; Watson Williams 2018).

The Genderless Violence narrative feeds into a wider debate challenging the legitimacy of specialised attention to women's experiences of GBV (Jamaica Gleaner 2021), and of a gendered analysis of violence at all, calling for greater attention to men's experiences of violence (Nunes 2021). An example of a tweet (post made on X, formerly Twitter), given in the AI analysis, makes the point:

> There's no such thing as gender-based violence . . . Males are violent, females are violent. No crime at all weh committed inna Jamaica or anywhere else inna the world should be distinguished by gender. So, when unno a go put out this big thing a road as if to say, 'Oh, geezam, women are dying and this is serious'. Of course, this is very serious, but people are dying and if the man dem a dead at such a rapid rate, why is there no importance placed on this fact, this reality? (Oxfam Canada 2023, 20)

While there are important questions and gaps around men and boys' experiences of GBV and violence in general, these questions can be asked without downplaying the reality of violence against women and girls (VAWG), and without feeding into backlash against women's assertion of their right to safety and freedom from violence. The attempt to de-center women as primary victims/survivors of GBV, despite a proliferation of supporting evidence, undermines the voices and experiences of victims and survivors.

The Trivialising Risk Factors narrative functions in a similar way, downplaying the seriousness of GBV and helping to reinforce the normalisation of risk factors. In a culture that habitually "tek serious ting mek joke", the trivialisation of especially street harassment and intimate partner

violence (IPV) against women downplays the importance of help-seeking behaviours and preventative measures. This trivialisation also warrants further study as a culturally unhealthy response to trauma.

The Transactional Relationships narrative speaks to the statistically proven vulnerability of younger women to GBV when they engage in relationships with older men (Thakur et al 2015, Watson Williams 2018). The (Avoidance of) Sex Education and Child Disciplined narratives are both concerned with cultural beliefs and practices around exposing children to violence and sex education. The use of violence as a disciplinary measure, still popular in Jamaica, has been proven to predispose children to antisocial and aggressive behaviours, and to replicate patterns of violence (Bott et al 2021; Haarr 2024; Planning Institute of Jamaica 2022). This is compounded by a societal reluctance to provide sex education to children formally (despite the proliferation of exposure they receive through pop culture and social media), further predisposing them to risky behaviours and potential GBV (Haarr 2024).

The AI Analysis' detailed classification of each narrative provides additional layers of insight. Identifying the drivers and nature of each narrative helps tell the story of how individual beliefs, institutions and systems reinforce GBV-perpetuating norms through prescriptive and descriptive assumptions about each gender. Analysis of the size and growth rate for each narrative helps identify which ones are dominant (large in size and growing quickly), stable (also large in size but not growing as quickly), emerging (small in size but growing rapidly) and receding (small in size and growth), providing a basis from which to inform behaviour change intervention efforts. For example, identifying the Genderless Violence narrative as a dominant, individually driven, prescriptive belief helps inform priority (high since this belief is dominant), messaging (addressing or countering the prescriptive nature of the belief) and approach (targeted at individuals). A simplified version of the narrative categorisations is shared in Table 1 (read across, not down), followed by Figure 1, showing the narratives by nature and driver, and Figure 2, showing the narratives by size and rate of change.

Even more insights are provided through the study's sentiment analysis and breakdown of the age and gender cohorts contributing to each narrative. The study also highlighted the underlying causes, social sanctions and key reference groups for each narrative; made recommendations of entry points,

Table 1: Narratives by Size & Growth, Driver and Nature

Size and Growth	**Dominant** • Genderless Violence • Hyper-sexualisation	**Emerging** • Invincible Matriarch • A Child Disciplined • Trivializing Risk Factors • Puritanism Ideal	**Stable** • Unsafe Sex • Mastering Masculinity • Sex Education	**Receding** • Unfaithful and Unfeeling • Transactional Relationships
Driver of Belief	**Individual** • Genderless Violence • Unfaithful & Unfeeling • Invincible Matriarch • Unsafe Sex • Transactional Relationships	**Institutional** • Hype-sexualisaton • Mastering Masculinity • The Puritanism Ideal • [Avoidance of] Sex Education • A Child Disciplined	**Both** • Trivialising Risk Factors	
Nature of Belief	**Prescriptive** • Genderless Violence • Mastering Masculinity • The Puritanism Ideal • Transactional Relationships • A Child Disciplined	**Descriptive** • Unfaithful & Unfeeling • Invincible Matriarch • Hype-sexualisation • Sex Education	**Both** • Unsafe Sex • Trivialising Risk Factors	

diffusion strategies and counternarratives; and identified which players and platforms could contribute to effective behaviour change and awareness-raising interventions. Table 2 provides an example of snippets of insights provided for the study's dominant narratives.

The analysis was not without limitations: Its search data was based only on Google searches; the social media data did not include private online communities (as a matter of ethics); and other forms of media, including other social media platforms and traditional media, were not consulted.

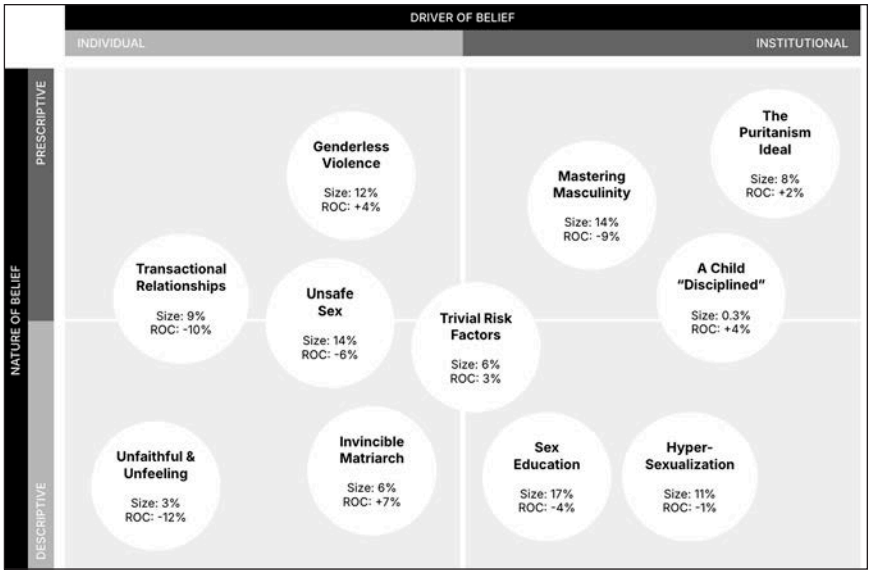

Figure: 1: Narratives by Driver and Nature (Oxfam Canada 2023, 16)

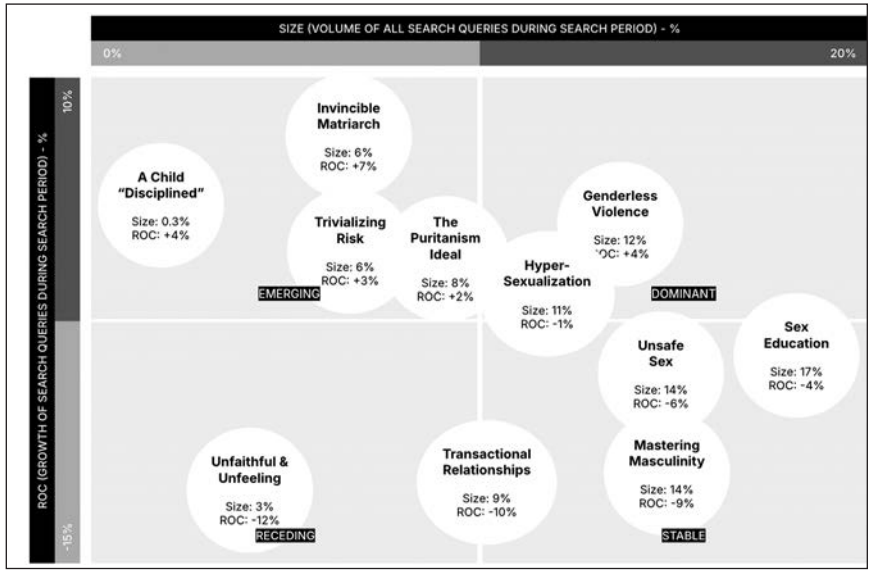

Figure: 2: Narratives by Size and Rate of Change (Oxfam Canada 2023, 16)

Table 2: Additional Insights for Dominant Narratives

Narrative	Underlying Causes	Social Sanctions	Reference Group	Size & Growth	Primary Sentiment
Genderless Violence	"Shared history of violence (slavery, colonization) makes men feel equally, if not especially, victimized"	"Appeases men by mitigating need for male accountability and engaging male victims of violence (general)"	"Central media outlets or media influencers speaking on VAM [violence against men], a lack of conversation around violence against women"	12%, 4%	Negative (59%)
Hyper-sexualisation	"Historical experiences of sexualization, commercialization of sexuality, reinforcement of gender norms"	"Normalization and desensitization of GBV, silencing and dismissal of victims, victim-blaming"	"Mainstream music artists and producers, celebrity influencers, music communities, peer groups"	11%, -1%	Negative (53%)
Narrative	**Primary Demographic**	**Search Insight**	**Social Insight**	**Entry Points**	**Diffusion Strategy**
Genderless Violence	Middle-aged men 25–34 years old	"More widespread circulation of studies and statistics that emphasize the ubiquity of GBV"	"Remind men that a gendered framing of violence does not exclude them"	"Journalists, reporters, radio hosts, media personnel that distribute information on violence country-wide"	"Training media outlets on violence against women sensitivity, training comment moderators, evidence-based incentivization to frame violence as gendered"
Hyper-sexualisation	Middle-aged women 25–34 years old	"Engage parents, caregivers and educators in dialogue and training sessions, equipping them with knowledge and tools to counteract hypersexualization. "	"Advocate for the development, implementation and monitoring of stronger policies and guidelines that regulate the depiction of minors in the media."	"Musicians and other influencers in the music industry, meme pages, male influencers"	"Encourage a shift towards more humanizing and inclusive content, educate on healthy attitudes on sexuality"

(Oxfam Canada 2020)

Key Learnings on Using AI in Jamaican/Caribbean Research

Local Input and Insight Are Critical

AI's ability to conduct rapid, large-scale research is well-documented and undeniable. However, it also has the potential to reproduce algorithmic biases, online data prejudice, and perpetuate colonial "coded inequity" (Mohamed, Png, and Isaac 2020; Pavlova 2024). This underscores the importance of intentional decolonial practices that prioritize accuracy, safety, balance, and equity in data production (D'Ignazio and Klein 2020; Mohamed, Png, and Isaac 2020).

In the WE-Talk AI analysis, local input from the WMW Jamaica team and insights from a gender specialist helped mitigate bias and prejudice. To train the classification tools, the specialist provided the Quilt.AI team with a 'landscape tutorial' on Jamaican culture and norms, along with a mini-dictionary of Jamaican terms related to gender, sex, and violence (Beckles 2021). Frequent sensemaking sessions after each iteration of data analysis were crucial in bridging the 'AI data gap' and ensuring data validity and reliability. While local insight carries the risk of introducing some bias, it can also be viewed as a necessary and balancing limitation of the study.

In similar research efforts, further validation can be achieved through triangulation with online and in-person surveys, key informant interviews, and the inclusion of a broader, gender-specialized team (Udupa & Koch 2024). This approach highlights an area where the WE-Talk AI study could have been strengthened.

Ethical AI Use

AI's capacity to rapidly spread misinformation and disinformation, which can contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based violence (GBV) (Ward, Spencer, and Kalsi 2023), highlights the need for clear ethical guidelines in social research. As Mohamed, Png, and Isaac (2020) state:

> AI communities can develop foresight and tactics that better align research and technology development with established ethical principles, centering vulnerable peoples who continue to bear the brunt of negative impacts of innovation and scientific progress.

A critical aspect of the WE-Talk AI analysis was its grounding in a **Feminist Approach to Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (FMEAL)**. This approach prioritizes:

- Positioning FMEAL as an integral part of social transformation
- Valuing collective, context-driven, local knowledge generation
- Rooting feminist MEAL in safe programming, guided by the principle of "do no harm" (WMW Jamaica Instagram 2023)

Feminist praxis has been widely advocated (Browne, Cave, Drage, and McInerney 2023; D'Ignazio and Klein 2020) as a means to interrogate how AI can exacerbate, reproduce, or sometimes challenge existing inequalities and power structures. This framework proved valuable in critically assessing both data and data collection methods during sensemaking discussions.

Replicability and Wider Applicability

The WE-Talk AI analysis was a modest first step into the vast potential of AI-driven knowledge creation for intervention design and implementation. Its findings suggest a much broader scope for application – beyond Jamaica and the Caribbean, and beyond GBV research.

The data generated in this study indicate AI's potential to **predict trends** in GBV and other social phenomena by identifying the growth of online narratives. Specifically, tracking emerging narratives – examining their nature, drivers, reinforcement by different age and gender cohorts, underlying causes, social sanctions, key reference groups, entry points, diffusion strategies, and counter-narratives – can serve as a blueprint for addressing present and future social issues. This has implications for government, law enforcement, civil society, academia, and beyond.

Additionally, the **replicability of this AI analysis framework** allows for the possibility of scaling up to encompass larger datasets, leading to more nuanced findings. This iterative refinement process can further enhance its effectiveness and impact.

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(On)Winin Colonial Cartographies

Inscribing Caribbean Selfhood Through Erotic Performance Praxis

CAMILLE QUAMINA

Abstract

This paper examines the work of Tracey Sankar-Charleau, a Trinidadian traditional mas practitioner whose contemporary performances challenge the rigid constructions of Caribbean identity as solely Black, white, or creole. Her work delves into gendered narratives of violence, tracing the past's impact on the present. Through her performances, Caribbean selfhood emerges as a dynamic, contested space, framed by the trans-Atlantic enterprise and the plantation as central sites of historical entanglement.

Tracey's mas reveals the complexity of everyday Caribbean realities, offering a critical lens on imperialism and its often-overlooked intersections with gender, race, and sexuality. Her performances engage Caribbean folklore, popular culture, and sacred mythologies, transforming them into embodied archives of violence, misogyny, trauma, and resistance. These works invoke longstanding genealogies of Caribbean poetics and diaspora histories, threading through dominant ontologies of pain, fragmentation, and dislocation rooted in the plantation experience. Consequently, Tracey's work unsettles conventional Caribbean historiographies, using mas to exemplify the regenerative power of Caribbean eroticism. This challenges singular narratives of oppression and rigid tropes of whiteness, mixedness, and Blackness.

As a female researcher and teaching artist, I shift the gaze toward new configurations of Caribbean queer, feminist, and erotic selfhoods – emerging through transgression, resistance, resilience, joy, and the pursuit of pleasure in art-making. This paper asks: How is Caribbean selfhood redefined through the performance of the erotic in aesthetic praxis? The theoretical framework incorporates queer discourse, postcolonial and poststructural feminisms, and the erotic as a form of resistance and healing.

Keywords: Caribbean, Intersectionality, Feminism, Queer Performance, Gender, Carnival, Cultural Studies, Embodiment, Resistance, Identity

Introduction: Resistance in Erotic Praxis

My engagement with gender politics in performance praxis is rooted in my teaching of drama at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts (EMCVPA). My pedagogy is guided by a simple yet profound objective: to help students articulate their identities in all their complexities, particularly in spaces where they often feel pressured to constrain their full self-expression. My approach aims to disrupt the practice of negating core aspects of their humanity by tapping into what Audre Lorde describes as 'erotic power.' This reclamation of self through art fosters a deeper awareness of the unresolved tensions between historical narratives and everyday lived experiences.

To 'make art dangerously' (Danticat 2010) is to place students in conversation with practitioners who, as Lorde asserts, take on the "energy-sapping work" of confronting "corrupt and distorted sources of power" (Lorde 1984). Tracey Sankar-Charleau embodies this ethos. A traditional mas woman, her work inscribes the intersectionality of gender, identity, race, class, and decoloniality into evocative performances that challenge oppressive structures. Her mas is an intricate interplay of the sensual, political, and spiritual – engaging with Gill's interpretation of Lorde's erotic while actively resisting imperialist legacies.

Tracey's work problematizes Caribbean selfhood, positioning the trans-Atlantic enterprise and the plantation as its central historical reference points. This necessitates an interrogation of how Caribbean selfhood can be redefined through the performance of the erotic in aesthetic praxis. By centering Tracey's artistic processes, I will also explore Derrida's theory of différance in the Caribbean context.

(On)Winin (De)Colonial

Tracey's portrayal of her mas La Diablesse (see figure 1) may well be read through the trope of the scorned and bitter mulatto maiden defiled by a lover and left to wreak havoc on all men.[1] Trope because many readings of mythologies tend to revel in the belief that a woman's struggle renders her malevolent and broken, as is the case with the Greek Gorgon Medusa [2] and the Hindu Goddess Kali[3], the latter being the personification of wrath, "the black one". The ontological nature of blackness (chaos) is now seated



Figure 1: "Tracey Sankar-Charleau portrays Erzulie the La Diablesse", 2015 (Photograph by Maria Nunes. Used with permission.)

in dialectical opposition to whiteness (order).[4] However, Tracey (admittedly the black sheep of her family) does not identify as black nor with blackness. Her stance, therefore, forces us to trouble blackness, constructed out of the experience of European enslavement.[5] When Minshall declares that he is an "Afro-Saxon", black immediately takes on a cultural construct moving it away from a "skin colour" and making it a "cultural category" (Gill 2018).[6] The logic of his mas making stems from Africa, Asia and Europe, working from a formal and informal knowledge pool. Tracey is yet to resolve this as her experience of these conflicting cultures is not so definitive. Her access to whiteness is not always stemming from the seat of its institutionalised power. Tracey is drawing on what Lorde calls "erotic knowledge", giving agency to both the political and the spiritual by bridging the dichotomy through the

"sensual" as her experiences of selfhood are latent in all her expressions, problematising what Minshall has seemingly resolved (Lorde 1984).

European ancestry has the tendency to be flattened in many post-colonial discourses, essentialised as Imperialist oppression. Tracey's embodiment of her European ancestry through her mas forces us to confront the more nuanced narrative. Designated French Creole in Trinidad, what obtains is a historically "diverse white population" consisting of French, Syrians/Lebanese, Portuguese, English and Spanish that eventually solidifies itself as the "local white" community of Trinidad. However, as Gill notes, "many of these not-so-subtle distinctions still haunt the contemporary community of "local whites" in Trinidad despite the elasticity of whiteness over time" (Gill 2018). Recognition of this "elasticity" must also consider the varying cultures within this community.

Whiteness assumes Christianity, and this is not the case with Tracey. Instead, she exists within Brathwaite's space/time continuum of creolisation employing her European pagan heritage to navigate her creative energy through the Caribbean space.[7] Hers might be a process of "inter/culturation" as her "colour" grants her power over a black mass, but her beliefs complicate that power. Braithwaite speaks of "creative ambivalence" and "shifts" resulting from "waves of cultural incursion", none more damaging, however than the intimate relationships established despite what he terms "white creole apartheid policy" (Brathwaite 1974). Her ambivalent heritage (being of German, Scottish, Indian, and African extraction) grants her access to the divine feminine principle in all of these. The wellspring of her creative power stands in complete opposition to what she views as Christian patriarchy, a subjugating force long before its relationship with African and Asian cultures.[8]

Hers is not what Lorde describes as the male modality of power, which negates the spiritual plain as a reservoir of strength and information.[9] By extending the concept of the erotic beyond the sexual, it creates agency in other areas of our lives so that Tracey's mas can carry the historical, political and the spiritual tracks of our palimpsestic human experience, characteristic of the Caribbean with its unresolved historical legacies of fragment and trauma, echoing through time, and through space. Tracey's erotic power, however, is not without pain, loss and suffering as Lorde prescribes, as torment fills the path towards that kind of liberation. Lorde significantly downplays the chaos that is Eros. Tracey carries the weight and bears the scars of all that



Figure 2. "Fancy Jab" 2016 (Photograph by Maria Nunes. Used with permission.)

she invokes as she purges the space if even for a Bakhtinian moment. She overturns victimhood, wading deep inside the waters of the macabre to free herself and us from these cartographies of pain. She intertwines the cartography of pleasure, the personal and the political in aesthetic activism to subvert the power of the gaze, making the pleasurable difficult, and the difficult pleasurable.

Tracey's mas speaks too of her gender fluidity, experiencing/manifesting as both male and female through her Fancy Jab (see figure 2). She troubles what Butler (2015) terms the "materiality of gender that conforms to a positivist way of seeing" as she inscribes her performance with Dame Lorraine and Jab signifiers.[10] Her body becomes a critical site for contesting binary formulations of male/female, blackness/whiteness, good/evil, high/low; gender and culture formulations in constant 'winin' interplay interrogating the imperial through her mas. She radicalises the performance and in so doing reformulates the trope of the exotic island paradise. Her body is, as Butler describes, "a dynamic field of relations always dependent and interdependent", inscribed as wife, man, widow, victim, woman, goddess, mother, lover, artist; an evolving body understood through its interaction with others in the space yes, but also through the gaze of both the past and

the present and certainly through a metaphysical 'Nettlefordian' "inward stretch outward reach".[11] She embodies her enactment, ritual performance, and "intersubjectivity" of a "third kind". Through her performance, the "modality of reality" is disrupted as she ventures into multiple "temporal" realities, only realised if we suspend our positivist notion of the body alone as a "material fact" (Butler 2015, Nettleford 1993, Gibbons 1979, Tewes, Durt and Fuchs 2017).[12] She embodies all this through the Asiatic principle of Om.

Critical resistance is established and maintained by creating a fertile space through erotic power – this power bridges coloniality's politics and the spiritual realities of the masses by drawing on the sensual power of artistic praxis. Art now functions as liberatory praxis. The performativity of the embodied enactment transcends the positivist notion of materiality used to define selfhoods shaped by societal oppressions rooted in imperialist structures. Tracey's interview gives us insight into how her process reads through this lens.

Cartographies of Selfhood

> "Mas is not fucking arts and craft."
> —Tracey Sankar-Charleau

Tracey's interview left me drained and, quite frankly, terrified at first. Her creative processes are unlike any I have heard articulated before. She talks openly and honestly about her positionality as mixed-raced and gender-fluid. She understands the power and privilege her 'colour' affords, notwithstanding the ambivalence her pagan leanings might engender in anybody willing to submit to such 'authority'. Her riveting and detailed descriptions of episodes of spirit possession while making her mas reveal a woman who is working through a nexus of historical, personal, and political traumas. Here is a woman who describes the Hindu Om[13] and Orisa[14] praise songs as her processes. Any interaction with a traditional 'masman' or 'maswoman' tells you that their relationship with their mas is more profound than what Tracey calls "arts and craft". The mas possesses the masquerader. Hers is a mas at the crossroad revealing the conjunctures of Caribbean selfhood.

The Unspoken Dis/ease

Tracey's mixed heritage is crucial to her and may account for the ambivalence towards the designation. She describes:

> I grew up with women with blue eyes and grey eyes, and blonde hair. On my mother's side, the women are brown skin. There are no black women like that in that sense. So, I didn't have all these things to grow up seeing, so it was a bit confusing to me; it's an insult to me if I say that I am a pure black person because of my ancestors. That does not mean that I would dispute that I have African blood in me, we have done a family tree, and we know we have Scottish and German in us. (Sankar personal interview)

Tracey's framing of blackness is in keeping with the unspoken dis/ease Caribbean selfhood always had with it, relegating it to skin colour and ascribing it to Wynter's chaos. In the interview she mentions, "The African powers are always arguing amongst themselves. When coming to certain things they do see colour. But it's always to get what they need to get done for themselves". She alludes too to the fact that her European heritage is what is desired by the spirit "mounting" her, but this is not her negating blackness. Here we begin to see how she makes blackness a generative force in the same breath.

"Becoming"

Tracey is a manifesting body. She states, "I started allowing myself to be a little more open to something that was happening to me even before since I was a child. But you have another religion literally demonising all your senses where this is concerned". Her story is familiar. My spiritual mother, Iyalorsisha Melvina Rodney[15] recalls her earliest manifestations occurring as a child. Her family viewed them as seizures, evil spirits, and signs of mental illness. At one point, they confined her to a mental institution. This attitude forms part of a standard narrative among the elders of the Oriśa community and is entirely in keeping with Tracey's experience and probable cause for her search explaining, "I was never just curious about one religion." Her strict Christian upbringing was overturned by her grandmother, "what was taught to me from the age of five was tarot card reading, and that was

from my Portuguese grandmother, and she told me I have the veil. It was removed. It was there. I have the eye". Tracey invokes all her ancient heritages during her work having now a keen understanding of the spiritual language of each. She mentions:

> People performing anything in the Indo diaspora pertaining to their Gods, that transic sensation they talk about, I have never felt anything like that being under manifestation in any of the African powers. I always feel grounded, like something is always holding me here, and you can transcend and go anywhere, but you always feel like you stuck on this plain. (Sankar personal interview)

When performing her Fancy Jab, she taps into her Asiatic heritage, pointing out:

> I just feel infinite when I form that character. It doesn't take on a face; it goes beyond that. All what we know with teachings of manifestations, it almost feel as the Hindu word Om which is a vibration. That word amen, Amon Ra, comes to a halt when we say it, amen, so shall it be. But with the Om now, it's a never-ending it's an infinite vibration, and that is how I feel when I perform it. (Sankar personal interview)

Her word for what she experiences is "becoming", not performing, as she clearly distinguishes between her practice and theatre. Hers feels like what Iya Melvina categorised as "work", constantly reminding us that this is what "spirit' comes to do. So, when Tracey speaks of the grounded nature of the African possession, I hear Iya.

"You will find me mixing."

Tracey's process is Brathwaithe's inter/culturation. Her creole sensibility is a source of pride. She teaches mas performance at Caribbean Yard Campus[16] and professes:

> I teach about if a Hindu saint comes upon you, but you dealing with a traditional mas that is known for the African diaspora, don't fight it because a mixing is there. Don't fight off because it is only dominated by African, or by Indian, or by European powers. When I say that, talk about Christianity, and I go way back to the paganism and Wicker. My house deals with a lot of synchronising. (Sankar personal interview)

This process, however, is not without bounds. Tracey describes:

> I take piece from everywhere, so you will find me mixing and matching Wicker with Voodoo, or I will sit down, and I will take something from Santería, and I will come over back to an Oriśa, and I will go into the European folklore and pull something from there even and mix and match. But I don't always get that permission to do that. Some things you can't do that to. (Sankar personal interview)

Here, creolisation is employed as methodology and can be considered liberatory, given its resistance to colonial attitudes governing non-Western and non-Christian beliefs.

"The Mother Goddess"

Tracey's work challenges the inherited patriarchal systems of Christianity (see figure 3). Her alignment with pagan European practices leads this charge, stating:

> The Wicker mythology, their Mother Goddess, their three in one, had to take on a new face with the ending of a certain era, and Christianity was born out



Figure 3. "Lady Solanaceae, Lagahoo and Duen", 2017 (Photograph by Maria Nunes. Used with permission.)

> of it. You see, I am going all the way back because, again, it makes my point. It never had anything to do with a patriarch; it was all about the divine, the Mother Goddess. (Sankar personal interview)

However, the patriarchy is not only located in the European systems of knowledge:

> If you take the Blue Devils, for instance. Why is it now a patriarchist thing? Why is it now a male thing? If you look at that traditional mas, men perform it. Men perform it. This is also one of the reasons why I came out with the Fancy Jab. Moko Jumbies, too; when you see it in parts of Africa with children on their sticks, it's boys that do it. When I teach my children the traditional mas, and it's open to any gender. (Sankar personal interview)

Tracey invokes the sacred feminine in all her work, but none is more provocative and painful than the La Diablesse.

"(In)Violation"

It is bone-chilling to hear Tracey speak about the process of giving birth to her now-infamous 2015 portrayal of the La Diablesse.[17] Her distorted gait lays bare her pain and personal torment as a woman. It connects with generations of women across all heritage, classes, and hues in the Caribbean, and manifests for us our generational trauma and the unending cycle of violence. This mas makes terror palpable. She states:

> I'm taking two and three hours to gather myself and gather my thoughts because coming out of the Erzulie[18] manifestation with the La Diablesse, I wanted to strip every piece of clothing off of my body. I didn't feel dirty, but at that point, it's as if consciousness was now on the top level. I was just being taken over by something that I invited into this part, but yes, I don't want to say I felt dirty or violated even though when I was having the manifestations with Erzulie, that is how I felt. One minute I'm standing, and then I'm hunched straight over from the pavement, and this is when I literally was now strapping on the hoof. I was violated more than once, whipped across my back and at one point, I was like, these people are seeing something here that in their mind they know it's not the power what you get from in church, your manifestation; this is on a whole different level. (Sankar personal interview)

Tracey is aware of the gaze and asks questions about the nature of the spectatorship reading the performance. She acknowledges that the ideological moorings of the spectators may not allow them access to the experience she wants purged. Nonetheless, this mas calls forth the spectatorship of the social self, the cultural self, and the private self. In her dance, guided by Erzulie, Tracey makes the personal political; so, there is (re)cognition.

Coda: Inscribing Selfhood

> . . . the erotic must be reconceptualised as a perspectival trinity that holds together the political-sensual-spiritual at their most abstract; in other words, "the erotic" describes various formal and informal power hierarchies (the political), sexual as well as nonsexual intimacy (the sensual), and sacred metaphysics (the spiritual) simultaneously. (Gill 2018)

Tracey's embodied praxis's purpose and social significance make her body a contested site of Caribbean selfhood. It demonstrates the power of the masquerade performance to provide insights into our everyday, sacred, and festival ways of being. Our histories and her/stories are possessed and dispossessed through an embracing of the erotic power latent within the spiritual. Her aesthetic praxis has the potential to address the varying discourses inscribed on our selfhood by inviting this spirituality. It is not essential to label her black but to recognise the shifting relationships of the texts she manifests in her mas. This reading embraces her as a mother, once wife and now widow. Her tangible everyday existence is never divorced from her God energy, chaos, and creativity. It demonstrates the potentiality of "precarity" by using these "embodied methods to navigate the dispossessions and "chaos" of colonialism, enslavement . . . the practice of artfully living in "a state of death" "(Chapman and LaMothe 2021). This duet of (or duel between) art and death echoes Narri Approo's Black Indian mantra of "dance and fight", the tactical logic of the Carnival traditions of Trinidad. While Nietzsche equates the measure of freedom to "the exertion required to remain on top" (Hoy 2004), resistance, for Tracey and the carnival, manifests in the dance. It is her body and her mas that reveal how "our histories have been irrevocably interlaced with that of our oppressors" (Hoy 2004). The mas here provides us with what Hume calls a "public reckoning" that is too often silenced, yet

this resistance through mas would not be possible without some degree of freedom (Hoy 2004). The ambivalence holds the potential to create radical selfhoods with the powerful agency to stand at the centre of our historical chaos, denying ourselves nothing, not even the pain and transcend it, as Tracey does every day, in and out, invoking erotic energy, making mas with and in her complicated truths, dancing the macabre without fear.

TRACEY SANKER-CHARLEAU is an independent mas woman working at the intersection of traditional mas and contemporary performance making and is one of the Anglophone Caribbean's leaders in this regard. She can be contacted for commissioned work and performances at tsankarcharleau@gmail.com

Notes

1. See "T&T Folklore Part 4: The La Diablesse Trinbago Stories", YouTube, uploaded by Trinbago Stories, May 6, 2018, https://youtu.be/vnHVbpDdbZI
2. "The Roman author Ovid describes the mortal Medusa as a beautiful maiden seduced by Poseidon in a temple of Athena. Such a sacrilege attracted the goddess' wrath, and she punished Medusa by turning her hair to snakes." https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/medu/hd_medu.htm
3. "Kali's name derives from the **Sanskrit** meaning 'she who is black' or 'she who is death', but she is also known as Chaturbhuja Kali, Chinnamastā, or Kaushika." https://www.worldhistory.org/Kali/
4. Theorist Sylvia Wynters raises questions about the systems that determine these dichotomies and how they may contribute to prevailing attitudes around these differences.
5. I want to note here that Walter Rodney's definition of "Black" is discussed in the article "Insurgent Knowledges: Reading *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* alongside the Rupture in Guyana. Black for the Caribbean is an anti-capitalist political orientation encompassing working-class descendants of enslaved Africans and indentured Indians. (Trotz and Westmaas 2023)
6. In a conversation about mas man Peter Minshall with Milla Raggio, Richard Schechner declares, "He embodies the fact that . . . that black is a cultural category and not a skin color" (Narine 2009) (Gill 2018).
7. Brathwaite has other definitions for the term creolisation. The following is

what is referred to, ". . . a cultural process perceived as taking place within a continuum of space and time…divided into two aspects of itself: ac/culturation, which is the yoking (. . . derived from power/prestige) of one culture to another . . . ; and inter/culturation, which is unplanned, unstructured but osmotic relationship proceeding from this yoke" (Brathwaite 6).

8. Gill contends, ". . . in large part, colonial exploration and exploitation in the Caribbean and Latin America . . . provided an "Other" against which modern European nationalism defined itself . . . (Anderson 1983)" (Gill 2018).
9. Lorde states, "It has become fashionable to separate the spiritual (psychic and emotional) from the political . . . The dichotomy between the spiritual and the political is also false, resulting from an incomplete attention to our erotic knowledge. For the bridge which connects them is formed by the erotic – the sensual – those physical, emotional, and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us, being shared: the passion of love in its deepest meanings" (Lorde [1978] 1984, 56).
10. Butler expounds, "To say that a body is constructed is not to say that it is fully constructed or that it is nothing but a construction. We have to understand in what sense, to what extent a body is shaped and endowed with significance by virtue of the historical framework in which it is understood and the historical discourses through which it is formed". "Judith Butler: "Why Bodies Matter" – Gender Trouble | Full Conference" YouTube, uploaded by Lbtavares Tavares, *30 May 2015*, https://youtu.be/IzWWwQDUPPM
11. In the introduction, Nettleford states that creativity is a "social, psychological and cultural necessity in Caribbean development", and "The hope of a civil society, full-blown, cannot be realised unless such issues as gender, class and race, freedom, culture and ethics are boldly and squarely faced" (Nettleford 1993).
12. "The concept of enaction is generally meant to capture the active sensorimotor engagement of the organism with its environment by which the organism makes sense of the environment and potentially changes it… Humans collectively constitute the world not by creating it in a constructivist sense but by disclosing its intersubjective significance" (C. Tewes, C. Durt and T. Fuchs 2017).
13. "**om**, in Hinduism and other religions chiefly of India, a sacred syllable that is considered to be the greatest of all the mantras, or sacred formulas. . . . *om* mystically embodies the essence of the entire universe." https://www.britannica.com/topic/Om-Indian-religion
14. "**orisha**, also spelled **orixa** or **orisa**, are the deities of the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria. They are also venerated by the Edo of southeastern Nigeria; the Ewe of Ghana, Benin, and Togo; and the Fon of Benin (who refer to

them as *voduns*)." https://www.britannica.com/topic/orisha The trans-Atlantic trade in Africans accounts for their presence in the West.

15. Before her passing, she was ordained Iya Gbogbo (Mother of All) by the Ooni of Ifé in Trinidad and Tobago.
16. "Caribbean Yard Campus is a network of Caribbean Yards (community, grassroots, and traditional knowledge institutions) engaged in the practice, research and application of Caribbean culture in education, enterprise and development." https://www.caribbeanyardcampus.org/
17. This mas was first performed at the Traditional Mas competition at Adam Smith Square in 2015 and was presented again in 2025 at the same competition. Tracey calls these presentations "folk-mas".
18. ". . . ground-breaking scholarly work is now being done on such Vodou deities as the venerated Ezili Freda, exploring the complex yet contradictory notions of social constructions surrounding colorism, femininity, and sexuality in these representations, all of which are grounded in their unique social and historical contexts." https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/an-equilibrist-vodou-goddess/

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LATIBONIT

Folklore, Feminism, and Freedom

MAGDA DESGRANGES

Abstract

This essay analyzes maroonage through a Black feminist lens tracing the trajectories of articulation and agency in Haitian women's orality. Infusing the verbal and visual, holistic and healing sounds of cultural ambassadors will be considered. Furthermore, a deepened understanding of freedom practices foregrounded within the charges provided – demonstrate both ancestral and contemporary pulses of liberatory identity politics. The essay will converge in the multimodal and polylayered intentions of history, Kreyòl, and musicality, placed among a pantheon of women warriors who enunciated and echoed a rally cry with the masses.

Keywords: Maroonage, Haitian women, Black feminism, Kreyòl, Freedom, Orality, Power

MY WORK USUALLY FUSES THE VERBAL AND THE visual in **contextualizing** Francophone Caribbean women's lives. In this essay, I will **also incorporate** the 'audial' by integrating the intonations and frequencies of African and Antillean oral traditions. More specifically, I will focus on **maroonage** and Haitian women's orality, **examining** the power and purpose they hold. Music provides **a framework for** orientation, and by taking a feminist critical lens, I will demonstrate **temporal freedom practices** in the musicality and Kreyòl lyrics of the Haitian folk song "Latibonit." Emeline Michel's version of the song will be **analyzed alongside** a pantheon of women warriors who **inscribe** life, healing, memory, and motion into the souls of generations in Haiti and throughout the Diaspora.

Tracing Haitian liberatory techniques, both embodied and expressed, **this essay will address three main trajectories**: First, **it will delineate** maroonage, Haitian feminisms, and women warriors. Secondly, orality as a liberatory

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000023

practice will be placed in the context of history, power, and agency. Thirdly, Emeline Michel's version of "Latibonit" will be **examined vis-à-vis** the folk song's long memory. As a result, a **parenthèse** is opened **to discuss** ancestral and contemporary liberatory identity politics.

Maroonage, Haitian Feminisms, and Women Warriors

The etymology of "maroon"[1] derives from the French *feral* or Spanish *cimarrón*, meaning "wild" or "mountaineer." The term is defined as both **"a firework that makes a loud bang used as a warning signal"** and **"enslaved people who fled into the mountains for freedom."** Both derivations will be considered **through** a holistic and interdisciplinary understanding of maroonage. **Resistance leaders who searched for refuge in the mountains also strategized ways to help others escape, often raiding colonial areas.** Maroons embodied both the **fire** and "loud bang" that became memory signals for generations to come. **Fire, in this sense, functions both literally and metaphorically**: as a natural element that purges and eradicates.

Historically, Caribbean agricultural practices included clearing large sugarcane fields for the next crop season by burning them. Cannes brûlées or kan boulé is Kreyòl, is a necessary step during harvest to prepare the soil for clarified growth. Later, kan boulé was used as a tool of resistance, to burn plantation fields, diminishing the economic expansion of imperial profitability. In *Les Marrons de la Liberté* (*The Haitian Maroons)*, Jean Fouchard notes Boukman, a maroon chief and revolutionary, in 1791 inciting burnings in Noé, Clément, Limbé, and Acul, to name a few areas (Fouchard 1972, 98). Alongside the physical practice, fire was also used verbally and metaphorically to connote the potency and passion in oral traditions that derived from maroon societies. Djelis, djalis, and griots alike, were the keepers of tradition, walking repositories of cultures, and entire knowledge systems were transferred across generations through folkloric traditions. Like fire, metal is another material and metaphorical element integrated by maroons. The machete is a symbol of war, combat, and protection and was given added power by forging it in fire. Skilled in knife work, particularly that of iron, maroons employed the phrase "koupé tet, boulé kay" ("cut off heads, burn houses") that merged the use of both fire and metal. This was a battle utterance declared by Jean-Jaques Dessalines during the Haitian Revolution.

Haitian Maroons incorporated different instruments as sources of liberation, in sacred and military stratagems. Freedom fighter Dutty Boukman is aforementioned. Another widely known figure is the healer François Makandal, who blended African and Muslim practices in spiritual, herbal, and verbal configurations to fight against the French; he was also an organizer and coordinator of maroon groups. Additional notable **maroons** include: Romaine-la-Prophétesse, who was a crossdresser and perhaps a genderfluid coffee plantation owner as well as resistance leader and Marie-Jeanne Lamartinière, who escaped slavery and later was a fierce military soldier in the Revolution. Other Haitian women leaders include Cécile Fatiman, mambo and co-organizer of the Bwa Kayiman Vodou ceremony, that offset the 13-year revolt; Adbaraya Toya, also known as Tante or Gran Toya, a Dahomey healer skilled in knife combat, and Sergeant Sanité Bélair, a lieutenant in L'Ouverture's army and the only woman on a Haitian gourde. Across the Caribbean, there was also Queen Nanny and Coobah from Jamaica, and Petra Carabalí from Cuba, among others.

After the Haitian Revolution, women **continued** the warrior spirit, **extending** their commitment to freedom across **vectors of gender, class, and sexuality**. **From activists and stateswomen to cultural amplifiers and leaders,** their feminist articulations, like fiery **sparks**, continue to resound, both individually and collectively.

In her article "Conjure Feminism: Toward a Genealogy," Kinitra Brooks frames the notion of "conjure feminists" – women who stand on the threshold of past, present, and future, linking storytelling to ancestral memory **and knowledge transmission**. Haitian women **embody** this practice in social, cultural, artistic, and political sectors. Gina Athena Ulysses localizes her feminism, **engaging with** the duality of roots and routes in **her work** "Papa, Patriarchy, and Power." Marie José N'Zengou Tayo documents, in **"Fanm Se Poto Mitan,"** an intentional focus on women's daily social lives as well as their political activism, highlighting the first Haitian Women's Civil Rights Movement **that fought for access** to higher education and voting rights.

Haitian Women Warriors engage in a multimodal and polyrhythmic framework where feminisms are layered, circular, intersecting, and dynamic, rather than linear and monolithic. Madeline Sylvain Bouchereau's **establishment** of Ligue Féminine d'Action Sociale **ensured the continuation of advocacy** for women's bodies, **later reflected** in the work of Lise Marie

Dejean and **her fight for** Haitian abortion rights. Political pioneers like Michèle Duvivier Pierre-Louis and her work with FOKAL, as well as Myriam Merlet's advocacy with ENFOFANM, **demonstrate** how Haitian women have fought for social and political recognition, including the renaming of streets to **remember and honor the legacies of Haitian women.**

Writers and artists such as Marie Vieux Chauvet, Odette Roy Fombrun, Évelyne Trouillot, and Paulette Poujol-Oriol, embolden three dimensional representations of women in texts and images and navigate through a spectrum that presents the centrality of experiential knowledge. Musicians like Mimerose Beaubrun, Martha Jean-Claude, or Mamita, and Emeline Michel infuse African rhythmic sounds and folklore within multiple sectors, often crossing more than one genre in their repertoire. These daughters of Dessalines, pitit Tante Toya, and 'Fanm Zanset' respond and continue the rally cry of temporal freedom fighting.

Orality as a Liberatory Practice

Orality is a medium for change, and opens a parenthése on music that traces its importance in Haitian traditions, then and now. Haitian maroons used the conch shell, the African drum, and the Banza as forms of resistance and these instruments are still in use today. My current book project delineates the conch shell in full exploration. Of the three instruments, the banza has been given little recognition, especially within the framework of revolutionary cultural expressions. Duke University's collection on Banjology mentions Cahouet, a Haitian maroon, noted in 1784 to have played the Banza, or banjo and its sound being distinct and laden with depth. The Haitian banza was carved out of a calabash with strings attached. It emanates from Central Africa, like the country Kongo where cultural traditions like pois Kongo, or Kongo beans, that are still eaten in Haitian cuisine, nods to the population of people enslaved from that region and brought to Haiti, after Dahomey, Guinea and Benin. In *Les Affiches Americaines*, a newspaper chronicling runaway people of St Domingue, Cahouet was both a banza player and a "shouter." In a 1772 entry, another maroon, Pompée, was also documented to play the instrument in the northern area of Ounaminthe. As the name states, Pompée also incorporated movement in the way he walked and danced.

Right alongside musicality and movement, is vocality in discussing orality as a freedom practice.

"Liberté ou la mort" was the revolutionary cry that pulsated and echoed throughout the Haitian Revolution (Fouchard 1972, 344) and on May 18, 1803, Dessalines instructed his goddaughter **Catherine** Flon to sew red and blue cloth pieces together to create the first Haitian flag (Méléance 2006, 91). Etched into the minds of the people as a reminder of their liberatory motto, the same phrase was imprinted on the Declaration of Independence in 1804 and today remains an echo of solidarity and remembrance in the Haitian imaginary. Dedée Bazile, a national heroine and revolutionary fighter, charged soldiers to advance forward as she stated "defilez, defilez" earning her the name Dedée Defilée as well as Dedée la folle. Noted to be "crazed and lost," she reassembled and buried the body of Dessalines (Dayan 1995, 40,44). Chants and songs held hope in the hearts of many and served as reminders to continue moving into the future with resolve. From battle cries to folk songs, these oral traditions remain. Additionally, there were songs that bridged ancestral connections with the past, embodied declarations in the present, and framed continuity with the future, as evidenced in "Depi m soti nan Ginen:"

Depi m soti nan Ginen,
moun y ap sonde mwen
Se mwen-menm rasin o
Depi m soti nan Ginen,
moun y ap sonde mwen
O se mwen-menm o gwo wòch o!

Since I left Guinea
People have sounded (tested) me
It is me, root
Since I left Guinea
People have sounded (tested) me
It is me, great rock!

In this song lies affirmations that parallel the Zulu Personal Declaration, foregrounding self and society. Also stated are reminders that one is both grounded in the earth, below the earth, and across waters in connection to Nan Ginen or Guinea. Ginen is both a spiritual and physical place of

historical origin for Haitians, a cosmic Africa, as well as a cite of return as the cycle of life continues into the next realm. An ancestral acknowledgement, "Depi m soti" also pledges the constancy and solid structure of roots that grow endlessly, as well as not being able to break the mineral of a rock easily, despite tempestuous conditions.

Similarly, 'wonn'[2] songs, folk songs taught to children, are embossed onto Haitian memory, culturally and socially across time and space. The words of "Gade w bel ti wob, ki es ki fe l" ("What a nice dress, who made it?") implies recognizing beauty in another, going through the process of articulating who made the dress worn and asking each child to perform an impromptu dance during the break portion by saying "kasé filet." This alludes to both the step in sewing where a thread break occurs if too much tension is placed on the stretched spool, as well as "break it down," in reference to the child's solo dance segment.

"Ti Zwazo" is another folk song usually directed at children, having historical and political inferences. The first line of "Ti Zwazo" states "ti zwazo, koté ou pralé, mwen pralé kay Fiyèt Lalo" ("little bird, where are you going? I am going to Fiyèt Lalo's house") and lends to an entire backdrop of the Fiyèt Lalo, a Women's Macoute or militia group during the Duvalier era, the group named after the woman in the folk song. Two interpretations of "fiyèt lalo" include "a girl named Lalo," and "une fillete de l'eau" or "little girl from the water." Songs like "Ti Zwazo" warn children from going to the home of strangers and imbeds proverbial sound intonations, a feature common in folktales around the world. The song ends with the line "Brik kolon brik, brik kolon brik, wosignol manjé kowosol" ("Brik kolon brik, brik kolon brik, nightingales eat soursop"), referencing the sound that nightingales make when eating the soursop fruit.

Folklore is the gourd that holds cultural memory and societal knowledge. Jean Price-Mars (1928) states in his comparative ethnographic treatise, *Ainsi parla l'Oncle*, that folklore encompasses and allows space for history, customs, beliefs, and particulars that pertain to the culture of a people (14). Dr Vincent Mũli wa Kĩtukũ (1997) denotes that "voice is the vehicle in which knowledge was passed on from one generation to another . . . the enforcement of customs depends on voice and it unifies a family or community" (3). Carrying the customs and knowledge of a region, folklore connects people to land to water to power, as is evidenced in the folk song "Latibonit."

Emeline Michel and Latibonit

From Emeline Michel's historical encapsulation of Toussaint L'Ouverture and Makandal's struggle for Haiti's freedom in "Beni Yo" ("Bless Them") to the drum echoes of "zi-pi-ti-pi-tim" in "La Karidad," reflecting her Gonaïves neighborhood – Michel's orality spans an intersectioned lyrical and tonal quality that fuses Konpa, Zouk, Rara, Reggae, Merengue, Jazz, among other genres. Her style is a holistic bouillon or stew that features distinct instrumentality reinforcing each other. Her album, *Rasin Kreyol* embodies an earthy, soulful and passionate undertone of her reminiscence and allegiance to Haiti, as evidenced in "Nasyon Solèy" ("Nation of the Sun"), an anthem in duality about the country and its people but also a temporal charge of remembrance and responsibility to the Diaspora.

In the song "Latibonit," featured on her 2015 *Gratitude: Live in Paris* album, she sings a duet with James Germain, Haitian singer and composer known for his traditional tones and patterns. The song starts with a slow tempo with only the guitar as accompaniment, and then quickens as it progresses inviting a full band in parlance. The lyrics give a distinctive melancholy mood as the song says "Latibonit O, yo voye rele m, di m soley malad" / "Latibonit, they called and told me that Soley (the sun) is sick" and "when I arrived, I saw the sun was laying down." Understanding the holistic meaning of the song requires a historical, cultural, and environmental expanse of Latibonit.

Latibonit is a department in the Western part of Haiti. Gonaives serves as the Capital city, and is also where Emeline Michel was born. Her singing this song is in dedication to her 'rejyon natal' but also an underscore of the layered crises and challenges of the area. Home to the Artibonite River, it is the longest river in the country and on the whole island of Ayiti. Ayiti and Kiskeya are the indigenous names of the island pre-colonization, and the Artibonite River runs through both Haiti and Dominican Republic with ravages of environmental circumstances such as deforestation, drought, and pollution, as well as the flooding of Gonaives in 2004 and 2008. Gonaives' topography contains mountain ranges and hills on three sides opening into the Caribbean Sea on the fourth end, causing water to build up, without enough space to flow.

In "The Long Unknown Struggle of the Haitian People," Arnold Antonin accounts for the role of 'Workers and farmers struggles' in Artibonite as they

fought, and continue to fight, against "expropriation of land, forced labor, and unpopular laws" (Libete 152). Similarly, Gonaives was central in Haitian history for being the "focal point of protest" since the Duvalier dictatorship (Haiti Progrès 154). Thus, when Emeline says in the song "it would be horrible to bury Artibonit," whether the subject is personified, with Soley being a person or literally the area of Latibonit, there is an acknowledgement, hope, and continuity that forges through, about not being ready to let go of it. The intent is to revive Latibonit.

Latibonit, oh,
Yo voye rele mwen, yo di m Soley malad!
Latibonit, oh,
Yo voye rele mwen, yo di m Soley malad!
Lè mwen rive mwen jwem Soley couche!
Lè mwen parèt mwen jwem Soley mouri, wo!
Sa se dè regrè, wo,
Pou'm antere Soley.
Oh, Latibonit.

They called me and said Soley (the sun) is sick!
Oh, L'Artibonite,
They called me and said Soley is sick!
When I arrived, Soley was lying down,
When I got there, Soley was dead.
It is awful, oh,
For me to bury Soley.

Juxtaposing the lyrics with what Michel adds to the song, the upbeat tempo she infuses with the fast-paced drumbeat, lends to an alternate interpretation – the foreshadowing of healing and rejuvination. How restoration will come in the song is unspoken. Life carries on into a cycle, so the journey is never a full stop, but a comma that continues the narrative. Metaphorically, Soley as the Latibonit Department, can be seen as Haiti entirely, and illustrates the 'sickness' and desolate stance that marks reality, even to this day. Michel continues, "Nou pap entere soley . . . non non non" / "We will not bury the sun . . . no, no, no." Repetition of the vamp, and the closing of the song, demonstrates her charge to all those who hear it.

The recitation and reclamation of folk songs like "Latibonit," provide

a pathway for archival insistence. Archives are fueled with life and are living memorials of a two-way mirrored existence that reflects the past and propels the future within the present. There is no separation of time, as it is experienced in a contemporary framework, under different conditions than when the words were first uttered. However, the potency of "Latibonit" being a call to action is inscribed; the declaration of deciding not to "bury the sun" is a stance. Not burying the sun is equivalent to allowing it to thrive, or remembering the sun, in a dual position. Remembering is both to recall the past and re-membering, as bell hooks notes in "Writing Autobiography," placing fragments of oneself back together to form a whole. The importance of "Latibonit" is nestled in acknowledging the current state of Haiti, continuously making a pledge to not forget it, and actively working towards freedom in various sectors. The process of collectively keeping the traditions as well as the place it originates from alive, is one that is rooted in the proverb "men anpil, chay pa lou" ("with many hands, the load is not heavy"). The layers of "Latibonit" pierce into the essence or "soul" of the nation as a whole.

Folklore includes spatial and temporal traditions, customs, and practices of a people. Folklore affirms communities and sets timeless intonations by reminding many who they are, where they came from, and the power they possess. As vessels of knowledge, ancestry, wisdom, and healing, folklore, as W.E.B. Du Bois frames in *Souls of Black Folk*, are the core fibers of a society.

Du Bois culminates the last chapter of his seminal 1903 text into a declaration about folklore, specifically folk songs, the utterances of a people and core composites of a society. He states, "the songs are indeed the siftings of centuries; the music is far more ancient than the words, and in it we can trace here and there signs of development" (Du Bois 1903, 157). As the African drum is the heartbeat of the Black masses, music is the articulation of a populace and explains why Du Bois starts every chapter of *Souls* with a musical epigraph. He provides a melodic collection, an archive of lyricism denoting the essence or souls of Black folk. Du Bois' father was Haitian, and perhaps in addition to the closing of *Souls* being a sociological research treatise, it is also a reflexive ancestral ode to his own African Diaspora heritage, via the Caribbean and America. He respected music as a form of art, conveying the voice of an African nature, land, and her people globally, holding the function of hope. It is likely that Du Bois intended to forge a personal and public Pan-African declaration with his assertion, "through all

of the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope . . . the minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence" (Du Bois 1903, 167). Like the Sorrow Songs Du Bois references, "Latibonit" has a 'both/and' purpose – melancholic in orientation, but nestled within are gems of progress and resilience.

"Latibonit" ends with ellipses, where signs of development can be traced as well as an ongoing configuration. The story is not yet finished. We as the masses, continue to write the narrative. Folk songs do not carry out action in themselves, they are vehicles that need to be activated to invoke the power therein. These actions go beyond singing them, into the postures of agency, advocacy, and longevity. Folk songs are not just words said or stored, they do not exist in a shelved archive. Tales like Bouki et Malice and Anansi, are more than stories to provide children with a moral compass; they are elements and minerals for a community that when utilized, turn into activators for what can become. Folklore provides both a reflection and a tool of engagement for a people. Like the Cameroonian dish of 'achu' where limestone is used to change the entire composition of the soup, geologically and chemically, folklore is the catalyst that shifts and propels people forward, once ignited.

Conclusion

In *Framing Silence*, Myriam J.A. Chancy (1997) asserts that storytelling is a vital means of "retrieval," a process that draws from a vast array of knowledge – shaped by experience, ritual, and tradition. Spirituality is woven into nature and embodied by those who carry memory, sparking a transformation that shifts the linear conceptions of time and space into a circular vision of interconnectedness. Other Black feminists build on Chancy's notion of retrieval and "re-composition," grounding their work in various forms of orality. As a liberatory practice, orality requires continual retrieval – what has always existed but has been overlooked and relegated to private and domestic spaces, particularly for women. This act of retrieval seeks public acknowledgment, recognition, and circulation.

bell hooks argues that true change and freedom are not only confined to identity or lifestyle but require a political stance. She also championed love as a method of liberation. Similarly, Angela Davis advocated for a praxis-oriented theory, where theory and action meet. Audre Lorde, in "A Master's Tools Will

Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1984), underscores interdependence as vital to creating transformative change. Odette Roy Fombrun further illustrated this vision with her philosophy of *kombitism*, advocating for collective effort as a means of progress.

The concept of retrieval connects revolution with the present moment, centering women whose voices not only shaped history but continue to reverberate throughout the Haitian landscape, the diaspora, and the collective imagination. This retrieval amplifies the "loud bang" and "fire" of folklore, expressed through traditions, practices, customs, words, chants, songs, paintings, proverbs, and tales – affirming the ongoing power and presence of these cultural expressions both on the ground and across the waters.

Notes

1. *The Oxford New American Dictionary*. 2010, 2021. Oxford University Press, s.v. "maroon."
2. 'Wonn' or 'ronde' songs are sung in Kreyòl by Haitian children as they hold hands, forming a circle, and dance in a rounded direction.

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Solidarity and Community Mobilization in the Early-Twentieth Century Caribbean

The Case of Medardo de Marchena

MARGO GROENEWOUD

Abstract

[ENG] *Curaçaoan anticolonial thinker and radical Pedro Pablo Medardo de Marchena (1899–1968) is known for criticizing Dutch colonial authorities and railing against the influence of the Catholic Church on Curaçao. In his publications and speeches, he also provoked the marginalized Afro-Curaçaoan population and Curaçaoan women to reflect on their behavior. In this brief essay, I discuss solidarity in the work of De Marchena. Interrogating what the small Caribbean late-colonial society was like in the 1920s and 1930s, I approach solidarity by looking at elements of compassion, conformity, and responsibility in the lives of the people De Marchena was trying to mobilize.*

Abstract

[NL] *De Curaçaose antikoloniale denker en radicale activist Pedro Pablo Medardo de Marchena (1899–1968) staat bekend om zijn kritiek op de Nederlandse koloniale autoriteiten en zijn fulmineren tegen de invloed van de katholieke kerk op Curaçao. In zijn publicaties en toespraken daagde hij ook de gemarginaliseerde Afro-Curaçaose bevolking en Curaçaose vrouwen uit om na te denken over hun gedrag. In dit korte essay bespreek ik solidariteit in het werk van De Marchena. Ik onderzoek hoe de kleine Caribische laatkoloniale samenleving eruit zag in de jaren twintig en dertig van de vorige eeuw, en benader ik solidariteit door te kijken naar elementen van mededogen, conformisme en verantwoordelijkheid in de levens van de mensen die De Marchena probeerde te mobiliseren.*

Keywords: Caribbean radicalism, anticolonialism, solidarity, decolonization

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000024

IN THIS BRIEF ESSAY, I DISCUSS SOLIDARITY IN the work of Curaçaoan anticolonial thinker and radical Pedro Pablo Medardo de Marchena (1899–1968). Using recent publications on his work[1], I analyze his legacy in the context of social change and interrogate what the small Caribbean late-colonial society was like in the 1920s and 1930s. Based on my previous work on the development of civil society in twentieth-century Curaçao[2], I look at elements of compassion, conformity, and responsibility in the life of the Afro-Curaçaoan population he was trying to mobilize. The paper was prepared and discussed at the Solidarity in Action symposium organized at Radboud University in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, in February 2025.[3]

Pedro Pablo Medardo de Marchena was born in 1899 in Curaçao. His mother, the Afro-Curaçaoan Delphina Wiel, was the child of parents born in slavery and his father Benjamin de Marchena, a Sephardic Jewish merchant. Their children grew up with their mother in an Afro-Curaçaoan Catholic community where color, religious conformity, and social status defined social mobility. It can be assumed for Medardo that his father's influence made a difference in this regard, as he received more education than average in his community. He left school at 16 and landed a job in the family's retail company.

In the summer of 1919, Medardo sailed to New York City in support of the family trade. Even though he was away for a few months only, traveling must have influenced his thinking. This was the case for many young Caribbean men and women of his generation. In these decades passenger shipping was booming and thousands of people of all ages set sail from the Caribbean to New York. Some of them were intent on migrating, whereas others traveled as laborers, adventurers, or seafarers. All encountered worlds in which the approach to race and class, and the critical response to inequality, differed completely from what they were used in the colonial societies they left behind.[4] One of the key differences was the explicitness of resistance against inequality, and the level of organisation around criticism and ideological movements. Many Caribbean migrants, both men and women, developed radical thoughts in this context, such as the New York-based Surinamese Otto Huiswoud, who became a prominent leader in the black communist labor movement.

Medardo de Marchena would return home to Curaçao. After starting a family and a business here in the early 1920s, it would take De Marchena a few years to develop his openly critical voice in society. In 1929 his first

pamphlet appeared, "*Ignorance, or to Educate a People*"[5] followed by a series of lectures, published letters, and speeches, almost all in Papiamentu and aimed at the Afro-Curaçaoan island population. Repeatedly he would rail against the influential Catholic clergy on the island, whom he held responsible for the in his view extreme meekness of the predominantly Catholic Afro-Curaçaoans. What was unique in his approach was the fact that he also criticized the Afro-Curaçaoans for not speaking up. With this majority comprising about 85 to 90 percent of the population, the message was a dangerous one for colonial authorities and commerce on the island, and in particular for the booming oil refinery and harbor industries.

When De Marchena stood up for 'his people', he was usually implicitly or indirectly referring to blackness and explicitly to elements of patriotism. The relationship between him and the community he stood up for and wanted to unite is complicated, always a mixture of support and reproach. In the early 1930s in particular, he must have had a following, though his work did not kindle a social movement of any sort. Archival traces relative to his impact are scarce. This 1933 journal article statement by De Marchena reveals a historical observation about support for black equality that – in my view – for many reasons seems plausible:

> If we consider how much interest there is here in Curaçao, and know who is supporting these movements, we will understand that we need to unite in action. Our prestige as a civilized people will then be seen, instead of us being regarded as a people below the level of humanity.[6]

The 'we' here clearly refers to the Afro-Curaçaoan population, in line with many other references to this part of the community. The 'imagined community' that is often a binding force for solidarity, shines through in this quote but remains implicit.

With this statement, De Marchena comes close to the solidarity of Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association. Garvey was extremely popular in the year that De Marchena visited New York. I believe his investment in the movement got further than that of an observer and that it is highly plausible that Medardo was involved in the writing of the 1921 letter on the Dutch Caribbean situation in *Negro World*.[7] Elements of black pride, and the claiming of equal space, would remain prominent in all his writings.

Medardo's much less known 1934 pamphlet on "Women and Modern-day Life",[8] was recently published in an English translation in the *Handbook for Dutch Caribbean Gender Studies*.[9] In this, we are confronted with the usual contradictions and high emotions. In this pamphlet expressions of support and solidarity are ambivalent. Reading this text on a higher level though, looking beyond his sometimes-petty warnings, pieces of advice, and reproach, his writing informs us about the impact of large-scale transnational experiences in the mid-twentieth-century Caribbean societies. He points us to the risks of disruptive dynamics in the growing and transforming island societies that were still colonial. Limited opportunities for formal education and social mobility for women on the island posed a major barrier to their emancipation in the long term. In this message, he was the pioneering voice of his generation.

Through his publications and speeches of the 1930s, De Marchena tried to provoke the Afro-Curaçaoan population and Curaçaoan women to reflect with rigor and honesty on their life choices and their behavior. He explicitly wanted them to see how their ways of living were backward, naive, or shallow and stood in the way of progress and emancipation. In all of this writing, blindly following religion or using it as an excuse for not taking responsibility is foregrounded. If an individual or society is to move forward political decolonization will not be enough, Medardo wants all to know. People themselves need to open their eyes and take responsibility.

In the day-to-day reality of Curaçao, a majority of the population lived a life of marginalization and exclusion, standing at a distance from the prospect of social mobility. This marginalized majority, as I have analyzed in my 2017 dissertation, was silenced through a dynamic in which this distance was framed as a virtue.[10] The 'good people' in this internalized framing were at a distance of modernity, leading a simple life, and embracing humility, their worlds not extending their family and neigbourhood (*bario*). A silent compliance by this majority resulted, at least on a superficial level. Because of this, allegiances remained often opaque, the truths surrounding them complex and multifaceted. On the verge of decolonization, levels of social and political trust were low overall. Medardo de Marchena wanted to break through that wall and change exactly that reality of conformity and humility. The opposition he encountered was based in that same reality of silenced conformity: though he did have an impact and must have had a following,

no contemporary traces are found of allegiance to or appreciation of his stance and his work.

Expressions of allegiance, elements of compassion, and community building are often the main ingredients in theorizing solidarities, compassion being the driving force, and community building a vital element of turning mobilized masses into social movements. For solidarity to take shape in the Curaçao of the 1930s, the chances of mobilizing masses were small. The compassion needed at that point would not easily transcend the small safe bubble of the neighborhood community.

In this aspect particularly, Medardo's call to action seems to have missed target. Taking responsibility beyond the direct family circle was a far cry for a majority in the 1920s and 1930s. Only a handful of people had voting rights and harbor strikes were ended by simply sacking obnoxious people and replacing them with cheap labor from elsewhere. Civil society still was hardly developed. It was this context that made Medardo a courageous pioneer (or: lone wolf). It would take the prospect of democracy and autonomy of the late 1940s to see the successful emerging of social movements and political responsibility. Solidarity now would take shape in the popular frame of nationalism and with supporting narratives of black self-esteem.[11]

This all came too late for De Marchena. When the Second World War broke out, the colonial government decided that to protect the oil industries in Curaçao and Aruba, all people who may pose a risk would be isolated in a guarded camp in Bonaire. Among the people arrested and imprisoned in May 1940 was Medardo. He would fiercely protest his fate for years, until eventually, in 1943, the government psychiatrist Dr De Regt was assigned the task of assessing the mental state of De Marchena. After his verdict – stating that nothing was wrong with him – the government decided to grant him some liberties, provided he would "refrain from scribbling political pieces." Like all other anticolonial writers in the Dutch Caribbean, De Marchena never in his lifetime received any apology or reparation payment. His business was ruined by the repressive actions and by the subsequent public judgment. This public judgment would impact his family until well into the 1980s. Medardo would remain in Bonaire and quietly live his life here, still politically active but now behind the scenes, as an ideological advisor to the Democratic Party.[12]

Notes

1. Margo Groenewoud, 'New York, Cuba and the Birth of a Subversive Dutch Caribbean Writer An Introduction to P. P. Medardo De Marchena's "Women and Modern-Day Life" (1934)', in *The Dutch Caribbean Gender Studies Handbook*, ed. Sruti Bala and Rose Mary Allen (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 57–65; Margo Groenewoud, 'Curaçaos antikolonialisme bereikte honderd jaar geleden al een miljoenenpubliek', *de Lage Landen*, February 2024; Margo Groenewoud, 'Decolonization, Otherness, and the Neglect of the Dutch Caribbean in Caribbean Studies', *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 64 (2021): 102–15.
2. Margo Groenewoud, 'Social Exclusion and the Entanglement of State, Religion and Civil Society in Mid-Twentieth Century Curaçao', *Journal of Caribbean History* 56, no. 1 (2022): 81–95, https://doi.org/10.1353/jch.2022.0003.
3. https://www.ru.nl/en/about-us/events/symposium-solidarity-in-action
4. Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London ; Verso, 1999); Joyce Moore Turner and W. Burghardt Turner, *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Margaret Stevens, *Red International and Black Caribbean: Communists in New York City, Mexico and the West Indies, 1919-1939.* (Pluto Press, 2017).
5. P. P. Medardo Marchena, *Ignorancia ó educando un pueblo* (Curaçao, 1929).
6. *De Onpartijdige*, 6 December 1933.
7. Groenewoud, 'Curaçaos antikolonialisme bereikte honderd jaar geleden al een miljoenenpubliek'; Groenewoud, 'New York, Cuba and the Birth of a Subversive Dutch Caribbean Writer An Introduction to P. P. Medardo De Marchena's "Women and Modern-Day Life" (1934)'.
8. P. P. Medardo Marchena, *Muher i bida moderna: estudio intima di muher como nos compañera den bida acompaña di algun consehos* (Willemstad, Curaçao: Tip. Nacional, 1934).
9. Sruti Bala and Rose Mary Allen, eds., *The Dutch Caribbean Gender Studies Handbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2024).
10. Groenewoud, 'Social Exclusion'.
11. Eugene Boeldak, *Mr. Dr. Moises F. da Costa Gomez: voorvechter voor de politieke emancipatie der Nederlandse Antillen* (Santa Barbara, CA: Publishing by the Seas, 2014).
12. Trix van Bennekom, *Abraham. Kroniek van een politieke dynastie* (Leersum: Village, 2018).

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FEATURED ART



Natural Mystic, 2012

About the Artist
Lucien Downes / St Croix

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000025

Written in Reggae

Jamaica's Calabash International Literary Festival as a Caribbean Pioneer

MELVILLE COOKE

THE CALABASH INTERNATIONAL LITERARY FESTIVAL, HELD IN CALABASH BAY, Treasure Beach, St Elizabeth, Jamaica, began in May 2001 with 300–400 attendees on the grounds of Jake's Hotel (Cooke, 2011) and is free and open to the public, as "passion is the only price of entry" (*Info*, n.d.). However, donations are welcome and audience members are vigorously encouraged to buy commemorative T-shirts and programmes to support the festival financially (observation).

The festival grew in attendance (the expansion accommodated by a relocation and reorientation of the stage at Jake's and public stature), attracting renowned overseas writers and increased Jamaican and tourism attendance as it was held annually up to its 10th staging in 2010. In 2011, it was announced that Calabash would be cancelled because of lack of sponsorship, although the Calabash International Literary Trust would still be operational (Cooke, 2011). It was not the first time that sponsorship issues had threatened Calabash's existence. In 2009, a possible cancellation was headed off by a US$40,000 contribution by the Ministry of Tourism, an increase on the US$25,000 approved previously, as well as private donations (Silvera, 2009). The festival returned in 2012 and was held biennially up to the COVID-19 crisis, when Jamaica instituted containment measures from March 2020 to March 2022. The Calabash International Literary Festival returned for from May 26–28, 2023 and will mark its 25th year of existence in 2025.

Ahead of that landmark staging, this paper focuses on Calabash's formative years, during its first decade, as the literature event was strategically grounded

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DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000026

in a connection to Jamaican popular music – specifically reggae – and a sense of pilgrimmage was fostered by its location, attributes which have carried through the festival's life. A number of literature events started in Jamaica and the English-speaking Caribbean after 2001 are noted, the timeline clearly establishing that the Calabash International Literary Festival is a pioneering event in its home country and the wider English-speaking Caribbean, even as organisers of two Jamaican events started in 2011 acknowledged being prompted by Calabash's cancellation.

Personal Connection with Calabash, Methodology

I was a freelance journalist with national publication *The Gleaner* in 2001 when a colleague, Janet Silvera, mentioned a poetry reading taking place in Treasure Beach. I was working from the Western Bureau, based in Montego Bay, St James parish, and St Elizabeth falls in its coverage area. Professor Edward Baugh was one of the featured poets and, having become deeply interested in his poem 'Truth and Consequences', I wanted to see him read it in person. I travelled approximately 106 kilometres to Treasure Beach with driver Herbert 'Wayne' McKinnis, returning to Montego Bay that night, for my first Calabash pilgrimage, which would be repeated annually through most of the decade as it became an annual family working vacation. I also read at Calabash 2003 as part of a Poetry Society of Jamaica quartet which opened the festival and participated in two workshops run by the Calabash International Literary Trust in Jamaica's capital, Kingston. Notably, however, I did not attend the 2010 renewal which initially seemed to have signalled the Calabash International Literary Festival's end, before it resumed in 2012 on a biennial schedule. This long-term engagement with the festival during its first decade has given me a first-hand perspective on its activities as a reporter and access to interviews with its organisers for publication in *The Gleaner* and, to a lesser extent, its sister tabloid *The STAR*.

Those observations and reports, along with newspaper articles by other journalists, information from the Calabash website, along with newspaper reports on the other festivals noted, as well as their websites, form this article's sources. The intrinsic case-study approach, where the case is studied for its own sake (Stake, 1998, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), is utilised, with the first 10 years of the festival forming the case's time boundaries.

Research Questions

The questions guiding this research are:

1. Is the Calabash International Literary Festival a successful articulation of literature and reggae?
2. Has the Calabash International Literary Festival played a pioneering role in English-speaking Caribbean literature events?

Written in Reggae

Each edition of the festival was staged under a theme which embodies the spirit of that year's renewal. Among the themes have been Life is An Open Book (2004), The Fire Is Lit (2005), Mix But Don't Blend (2006), Great Minds Think A Lot (2007), Imagine (2008), Peace. Love (2009) and So Much Things To Say (2010) Jamaican Popular Music is a constant at Calabash, and a specific form is ingrained into the festival's formation. According to co-founder Channer, "Calabash is nothing more than a translation of the spirit of reggae into a literary experience. In this sense, the festival is earthy, inspirational, daring and diverse" (Cooke, 2009). Dawes identifies the festival's character as reggae and aligns the Calabash workshops' (first staged in 2004) function of identifying and developing talent with the role of the music studio in Jamaica (Tepper, 2023). Channer does not distinguish between music and literature, saying:

> Music has always been an important part of Calabash, because music has been the most vital storytelling, poetic and dramatic form in Jamaica for decades. We know our audience very well and we know that they appreciate good music as much as they appreciate good literature. For them and for us, the separation between music and literature is a false one. (Cooke, 2008)

The Calabash co-founders' perspectives encapsulate the uniqueness of the festival as a literature event fused with a reggae sensibility and performances, allowing for application of Paleo and Wijnberg's (2006) seven-point classification of popular music festivals to Calabash, which is elaborated on further in the article. The reggae ethos has been maintained so that in 2010, after the last annual staging of Calabash before going to a biennial format, the *Wall Street Journal* summed up the festival's personality:

> Calabash is the sort of literary festival to whom the label 'literary festival' applies only because there's no neat phrase for 'reggae-fied', rootsy-intellectual, interdisciplinary extravaganza for those who worship words, abhor pretension and believe that 'smart' and 'fun' need not be mutually exclusive. (The music of Calabash, 2012).

Among the Jamaican popular music vocalists who performed at Calabash during its first decade were Freddie McGregor, Ernie Smith, Nadine Sutherland, Johnny Clarke, Pam Hall, Tarrus Riley, The Clarendonians and Bob Andy. The Calabash Acoustic Ensemble, which includes Seretse Small, Wayne Armond, Billy Mystic and Steve Golding, with Ibo Cooper also having participated, was a staple at the festival's Sunday afternoon sessions, celebrating the catalogues of Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer, among others. The Zinc Fence Band performed at the first Calabash, and the Lloyd Parkes and We the People Band have also been on the festival's stage. These vocalists, musicians, and celebrations of outstanding deceased singers' work places reggae's imprint permanently upon Calabash. Channer attributes the festival's ability to attract Jamaican popular music performers to shared values, contributing their talent and time to the non-profit's objectives in an environment of respect and high-quality technical facilities. Additionally, at Calabash they were able to present a wider range of their artistry and catalogue than accustomed at a commercially focused event (Cooke, 2009).

> The Calabash International Literary Festival has incorporated Jamaican popular music through the celebration of albums (among them the 30th anniversaries of *Exodus* by Bob Marley and the Wailers and Third World's *96 Degrees in the Shade* in 2007, Bunny Wailer's *Blackheart Man* in 2007) and songwriters (Peter Tosh in 2004, Bob Andy in 2006), the Calabashment beach party and Cala-Clash's recorded music battles, which pit disc jockeys against each other, notably Colin Channer vs. poet and broadcaster Mutabaruka in 2009 and 2010. In 2006 vocalist/songwriter Tanya Stephens was featured as a writer. During the stagings of Calabash, which this paper covers, music tended to be programmed in the evening (hence the Midnight Ravers concert, aptly named after the final track on The Wailers' 1973 album *Catch A Fire*) and closing Sunday afternoon sessions, while the days were dedicated to literature readings.
>
> Jamaicans and persons of Jamaican descent who read at the festival in its first decade included Mervyn Morris, Edward Baugh, Raymond Mair, Staceyann Chin, Kei Miller, Marlon James, Erna Brodber, Lorna Goodison, Olive

Senior, Millicent Graham, Mutabaruka, Jean 'Binta' Breeze, Oku Onoura, Anthony Winkler and Linton Kwesi Johnson, with festival co-founders Colin Channer and Kwame Dawes limiting their reading appearances at Calabash. Therefore, Calabash maintains a core of Jamaican authors, which is critical to its authenticity as a Jamaican experience.

Additionally, among the internationally renowned non-Jamaican authors who have read at the festival are Junot Diaz (Dominican Republic), bell hooks, Sonia Sanchez and Amira Baraka (USA), Salman Rushdie (India), VS Naipaul (Nobel Laureate, Trinidad and Tobago), Derek Walcott (Nobel Laureate, St Lucia), Wole Soyinka and Chris Abani (Nigeria), Geoff Dyer (England), and Earl Lovelace (Barbados). Although by no means exhaustive, this range of countries shows the diversity of voices which Calabash has presented. In addition to the structured readings, the festival encourages audience participation through its open mic section.

The Calabash International Literary Festival extends its reach beyond the weekend of readings and the Treasure Beach community through fellowships and workshops, which are free to participants. In celebrating the festival's heritage, contributions from readers at previous stagings were compiled in 'So Much Things to Say: 100 poets from the first 10 years of the Calabash International Literary Festival' in 2010. There have also been chapbook publications, *A Six Pack For the Soul*, featuring poets Niki Johnson, M'Bala, Owen 'Blakka' Ellis, Saffron, Andrew Stone, and Ishion Hutchinson stemming from the inaugural 2004 poetry workshops. Calabash has also produced the collection *Iron Balloons: Hit Fiction From Jamaica's Calabash Writer's Workshop*. In tandem with publishing partner Akashic Books, Calabash has also celebrated outstanding Jamaican novels with anniversary reissues, including *Brother Man* by Roger Mais (2004), John Hearnes' *Voices Under the Window* (2005) and *Banana Bottom* by Claude McKay (2008).

Communitas

The theory of communitas is applicable to the Calabash International Literary Festival. Communitas is both "the fount and origin of the gift of togetherness" (Turner, 2004, p. 98), and "the feeling of communion or oneness" (Turner, 2004, p. 98). Turner (2004) says "communitas invites critique of established rules and structures" and, arising from liminality, marginality, and inferiority,

often produces "sacred accounts, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art" (p. 98). Although it is a popular tourist destination, Treasure Beach is physically a marginal space, accessed mainly by a single road. With its community tourism focus and absence of immense all-inclusive hotels, Treasure Beach is also marginal to the mainstream model of tourism on Jamaica's coastline where, except for Port Antonio, the all-inclusive model is dominant although community tourism still exists.

> Treasure Beach is approximately 144 kilometres away from the Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston on Jamaica's South Coast and 110 kilometres from the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay on Jamaica's North Coast. As Calabash attracts Jamaicans from these urban centres, especially Kingston, as well as closer urbanised spaces such as Mandeville (approximately 48 kilometres away), within St Elizabeth and across country to varying degrees, the sense of pilgrimage, which is essential to communitas (Bell, 2008; Turner, 2004), is enhanced.

This marginality contributes to the sense of liminality at Calabash, where performers and audience members enter a distinctly separated space and stay for a part of or all of the festival before returning to the rest of Jamaica to reside or travel outside the country. In terms of popularity, despite producing outstanding writers, literature is seen as the inferior in the range of Jamaican artistic expression, one common saying being that 'Jamaicans don't read'. This sense of being the underdog in terms of size, not only in itself but also its location in Jamaica and in turn Jamaica's miniscule stature globally, is reflected in the festival's often repeated tagline tagline of being "the greatest little festival in the greatest little district in the greatest little country in the world" (Peru, 2021). A version of this in Jamaican Creole on the festival's Instagram page profile says that Calabash is "the best likkle festival in the best likkle district in the best likkle country in the world" (Calabash Lit Festival, n.d.).

Pilgrimmage is central to communitas, with bonds being built among travellers as they voyage to distant places which are considered sacred. This travelling is often done in large groups (Turner, 2004), with persons tending to participate in subsequent trips. This bonding was evident at Calabash and hosts regularly canvassed the audience each year after the first staging for repeat attendees (including displaying commemorative T-shirts from previous stagings as proof of attendance), which became a point of pride. Turner (2004)

also points out the breaking down of preset hierarchies, as their regular roles and status become irrelevant in the space. This is symbolised by the open seating at Calabash, which is free and open to the public, where there are no distinctions based on the entry price paid. This is unlike many other events with various entry prices, which determine how close an audience member is to the stage. Bell (2008) notes the spontaneity of communitas, which makes it hard to grasp and retain (p. 134), but was successfully rekindled at each staging of Calabash during the research period.

Articulation

The theory of articulation was developed by Stuart Hall, who defines it as ". . . the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time" (Grossberg, 1986. p. 53). Slack (1996) reinforces that it is a process, not simply a point where there is a linkage, saying "articulation is, then, not just a thing (not just a connection) but a process of creating connections" (p. 115). However, this process of making connections changes the individual elements which are now linked, as Laclau and Mouffe (2001) say articulation is ". . . any practice establishing a relation among elements that their identity is modified as a result of articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse" (p. 113).

As stated by Channer and Dawes and carried through in the festival's consistent programming of literature and music sessions at each renewal, the Calabash International Literary Festival is an articulation of a literature festival model with Jamaican popular music, specifically reggae.

Classifying Calabash

Paleo and Wijnberg's (2006) seven components of a popular music festival are applicable to the Calabash International Literary Festival:

1. Character distinguishes between competitive and non-competitive events, based on the performers at a public event vying for a placing by those appointed judges. In this sense, Calabash is non-competitive.

2. Purpose is determined by the festival being run for a profit or not. Calabash is a non-profit event.
3. Range refers to the level of socio-economic diversity in a festival's attendees. As a free, open to the public event, Calabash inherently has a wide range, although naturally not everyone is able to afford accommodation in Treasure Beach for the festival's duration. Coupled with food and transportation costs, as Calabash is not easily accessible via public transportation, especially for sessions which end late at night, there is the distinct possibility a narrowing of the festival's range to higher socio-economic groups and unintended elitism.
4. Format is determined by a number of elements:
    i. Whether the festival is one-track, with the performers presented consecutively, or multivenue, with simultaneous performances. As indicated by the 2007 schedule, Calabash is one-track.
    ii. If performers are ranked explicitly or implicitly, by running order position or venue allocation. While performers are not ranked in their allocated segment, reading in alphabetical order of their last names, the names of particular sections, such as 'Tongues of Fire' and 'Four the Hard Way' indicates the level of artistry expected by the organisers and audience.
    iii. Aural goods only or multidisciplinary. Calabash is an aural goods only festival, with the inclusion of film (for example, Perry Henzell's *No Place Like Home* in 2008 and Trevor Rhone's *Smile Orange* in 2010) too sporadic to be taken into consideration.
5. Degree of institutionalisation. This depends on:
    i. The festival's level of connectedness to networks in the field. Calabash enjoys a high level of connectedness, as evidenced by the calibre of writers it is able to attract for a non-profit event.
    ii. Maturity, how long it has existed. Over the course of the decade Calabash matured, reaching its 10th staging in 2010.
6. Degree of innovativeness. This is assessed by the extent to which the festival presents performers who have not yet benefitted from media attention. Calabash's programming displayed a high level of innovativeness, blending writers who were relatively unknown with those who had already made a name for themselves. Additionally, the hugely popular

open mic section offered totally unknown writers an opportunity before a large, receptive audience.

7. Scope. A festival is national, regional or international, based on the performers it presents. From its outset the Calabash International Literary Festival's intention was stated in its name and the objective was achieved, with a line-up which presented non-Jamaican as well as Jamaican writers. As Channer puts it, "when it comes down to it, Calabash is fundamentally a local festival that has national, and international appeal and relevance. (New features for Calabash 2006, 2006)

Literature events started after Calabash

After the Calabash International Literary Festival debuted in 2001, a number of literature festivals were started in Jamaica and the wider English-speaking Caribbean. While this paper does not attribute the inception of them all to Calabash's influence, with such acknowledgement left to the organisers of the individual events, the timeline establishes a pioneering role to the Jamaican literary festival. Neither does this paper claim that Calbash was the first literary festival in Jamaica. For example, although the Ananse Soundsplash Storytelling Conference and Festival was rebranded under that name in 2012, the multi-location event was started in 1998 (About Us, n.d.) the same year that the Gimistory International Storytelling Festival began in the Cayman Islands (Gimistory festival to cap off Pirates Week District Days, 2024). However, as their titles state, both festivals were focused on a specific oral format, storytelling, while Calabash had a broader mandate from its beginning. In the following listing, the Jamaican events which were started after Calabash are identified first, then the English-speaking Caribbean festivals. In each category, the festivals are listed in chronological order of their inauguration, with their first location identified.

Jamaica

- Poetry in Motion (PiM) (2004, Mandeville, Manchester)
- Asante Adonai Literary Lime (2011, Winefield, St Ann)
- Two Seasons Talking Trees Literary Festival (2011, Treasure Beach, St Elizabeth)

- Jamaica Poetry Festival (2011, Kingston)
- Dis Poem Wordz and Agro Fest (2011, Passley Gardens, Portland)
- Kingston Book Festival (2012, Kingston)
- St Mary Literary Festival (Port Maria, St Mary,2024)

English-speaking Caribbean

- Word Alive (2005, Castries, St Lucia)
- Nature Island Literary Festival and Book Fair (2008, Roseau, Dominica)
- Alliougana Festival of the Word (2009, Little Bay, Montserrat)
- Bocas Lit Fest (2011, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago)
- Anguilla Literary Festival (2012, Long Bay Village, Anguilla)
- Bim Literary Festival and Book Fair (2012, Bridgetown, Barbados)
- Virgin Island Literary Festival and Book Fair (2015, St Croix, US Virgin Islands)
- Blue Flamingo Literary Festival (started 2017, renamed Blue Flamingo in 2018, Nassau, The Bahamas)
- British Virgin Islands Literary Festival (2021, Tortola, British Virgin Islands)

The organisers of the Asante Adonai Literaty Lyme and Two Seasons Talking Trees Fiesta stated publicly that their events were started because of the Calabash cancellation after the 2010 staging, while the Jamaica Poetry Festival had been in the planning stages for some time (Brooks, 2011). The Talking Trees event, which was also held in Treasure Beach, is especially strongly connected to Calabash, as it was first staged in the late May slot when Calabash 2011 would have been held and the organiser stated an intention of maintaining the tourism influx caused by Calabash. While this article does not claim that all the literary festivals in the English-speaking Caribbean which were started after Calabash were inspired by that event, the statements by the organisers of Asante Adonai Literary Lyme and Talking Trees Literaty Fiesta are an indication of Calabash's influence, in this instance especially in its brief absence. On the other hand, Marina Salandy-Brown of the Bocas Lit Fest has stated publicly that Calabash was not a factor in starting the Trinidad and Tobao event, the idea for which was birthed at a literature reading in Grenada (Dowrich-Phillips, 2019).

Conclusion

During the research period, the Calbash International Literary Festival has been a successful articulation of a literature event with reggae, as its programming reflects the stance of Channer and Dawes on not distinguishing between music and literature. Additionally, although only the Asante Adonai Literary Lyme and Two Seasons Talking Trees Literary Fiesta organisers' direct connection of their events' inceptions to Calabash's brief absence after 2010 is stated, the chronology of literature events outlined establishes Calabash as being ahead of other literature festivals.

Therefore, as the Calabash International Literary Festival marks a quarter century of existence in 2025, its standing as a pioneering event in Jamaica and the English-speaking Caribbean is clear. Further research on the longevity of the festivals which were started after Calabash is necessary, as not all have enjoyed longevity, and sustainability of a network of Jamaican and English-speaking Caribbean literature events has to be addressed. Calabash's fusion of literature and Jamaican popular music, especially reggae, has been successful in its formative years of annual stagings and Colin Channer's reflection on his 2009 music clash with poet and broadcaster Mutabaruka in 2010, ahead of a rematch at Calabash's 10th staging, restates the combination upon which the festival was founded, as well as its non-hierarchical nature, consistent with communitas:

> That night was a great example of what Calabash is on the level of the soul. It is nothing less than a transmutation of the positive vibration of reggae's welcoming, unifying, non-materialistic spirit into a literary experience, into a festival that is earthy, inspirational, daring and diverse, into a public festival with no cover charge or VIP sections that is deep rooted in its local community but international in its standards and scope. (Colin Channer reflects on 10 years of Calabash, 2010)

Additional research on Calabash during its biennial phase, now chronologically longer (including the COVID-19 interruption) than its annual stagings, is required to follow the progression of a literature event written in reggae.

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One Caribbean

A Celebration of Poetry

DYANNE KNIGHT MARTIN

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CARIBBEAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION provided a compelling reason to pause and reflect on the tremendous gains West Indian literature has made not only over the last fifty years, but also since its inception in the seventeenth century. Although the formal notion and classification of Caribbean literature as such did not arise until the mid-twentieth century when twelve or so authors published over fifty books in a ten-year period, free creole and enslaved Caribbean writers began speaking back to the empire long before then in both poetry and prose. George Lamming notes the cultural disadvantages bygone and contemporary Caribbean authors had to overcome to find and express their endemic literary voices. The mystery, he tells us, "is that there should be West Indian writers at all. For a writer . . . has no function as a writer if those who read and teach reading in his society have started their education by questioning his very right to write" (27). Lamming suggests here that the first impediment to the recognition of Caribbean literature as a distinct regional form was not censure of the native language – although that certainly was a factor – but an assumption that natives were incapable of generating what Europeans and Britons would consider literature, even if those locals wrote in the formal grammars of colonial languages.

Resilience, however, is one trait found on every island in our archipelago, so it should surprise no one that a multiethnic people endowed with artistic gifts from various migratory streams into the Caribbean persevered and produced world-celebrated literature, which includes Nobel Prize winners. That production continues today as we enter the quarter-mark of the twenty-first century. The literary genre in which we see the most concise, most concentrated expressions of what it means to be West Indian is poetry, so I have chosen that form to pay homage to the region and to the CSA's fifty-year investment in and promotion of Caribbean voices.

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000027

The Roman poet Horace reminds us, "The aim of the poet is to inform or delight" – or better yet, to combine them in "both pleasure and applicability to life" (83). The twofold purpose of poetry, he argues, is not only to make us think, but also to bring us joy. The best of Caribbean poetry does both as it looks back across time, looks within at the present, and looks forward to the future. One of the delights of West Indian poetry is the linguistic diversity and language play in which authors engage as they duck in and out of colonial and creole tongues that demarcate the syncretic history of each individual island. Caribbean literature, Antonio Benítez Rojo tells us, "cannot free itself totally of the multiethnic society upon which it floats" (27). Far from freeing that literature from the many strands that strengthen its rich tradition, Jose Luís Gonzalez affirms its unity in variety: "The great community of the Caribbean is multilingual" (30). We sing our songs through many tongues. Caribbean poetry illustrates that reality in myriad ways as it communicates in multiple languages where we came from, who we are, or where we are going. Derek Walcott argues that even if we conflate language with empire, "great poets are not its vassals but its princes" (51). We see this reversal of attitude and roles in much of the work that characterizes West Indian poetry.

To commemorate the CSA's fifty years of service to our multidisciplinary, multicultural community, I have chosen fifty lines from fifty multiregional poems to create a new "found poem" that represents the plurality throughout the territory. Out of many, one poem – and one people. I am grateful to Dr Opal Palmer Adisa and Dr Mary Ann Gosser Esquilín for their excellent contributions to the list of authors from the Hispanic, French, and Anglophone provinces. I must also extend my immense appreciation to Linnea Diersen, teacher assistant extraordinaire, who tracked down and sourced the full text of over half the poems suggested and who organized the bibliography.

To craft the artifact, I began by compiling all the poems I planned to use. I then culled from each poem several lines that reveal vital aspects of the Caribbean. The challenge was in choosing from this great body of literature only one line from each reduced list and placing single lines from different poems in stanzas that united in a pleasing whole that expresses the spirit of the Caribbean while drawing from four different languages. The final product is a "found poem" – a poem made from pre-existing lines or sentences in poetry or literature. In the unconventional bibliography,

readers will find the author and title of each *original* poem for each line of the *found* poem. Robert Frost declares that "[a] poem begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a lovesickness." The poignancy evident in so much of West Indian poetry gives proof to Frost's observation. The words that our Caribbean poets whisper or howl into the abyss might do more than begin, as Frost states, with a lump in the throat: they might leave readers with one as well.

Our Caribbean: A Found Poem

DYANNE KNIGHT MARTIN

Where sea and land meet, begin there
an turn history upside dung.
Todavía huelo la espuma del mar que me hicieron atravesar,
where fear is a door.
Un doló masjá scondí.

History, as repetitious as a gun.
Worlds overlap,
the land swells into an existence that is its own battle –
how well we have performed.
Jah-Jah know is not any small thing him require of you.

Corpses are scattered through a paradise,
like shadows, like black leaves –
is they who heard the shell blow and the iron clang.
The present is a caterer for the future.
The moon takes on the glint of sun.

We plant new seeds for every season.
Gardening in the Tropics, you never know
until the vegetable years
suda que sangra,
piedra de llanto y de sangre.

Doubt is a storming bull, crashing through
ce cœur hanté qui ne convient pas
the dance of flames,
bruised with the memory of chains.
Our knowledge cannot become unknown.

We speak because we dream.
I praise the legends we made,
intention, sound, and word of death would come together
y mi niñez fue toda un poema en el río,
the benediction on every late-night lime.

And thinking a new word spoken,
seeking to meet ourselves
(*la lovée massive des races nostalgiques*),
let each act well his chosen art.
Arte soy entre las artes.

That ritual of Word and Gesture
thrashing and stumbling through the underbrush,
emerging out of the shadows,
an ecstasy like singing, oh, and the sea's strength.
You cannot sentence memory to death.

Poetry bubbles from peat bogs,
life and desire and dreams and death.
History moved down the river, leaving free –
the spirit of freedom is resurrected in me.
The whole earth is filled with the love of God.

Stranger, these are Siren Isles.
I see the possibility of reconciliation.
I dwell in the center of the sun,
tropical to the bones.
The heritage is safe.

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DYANNE K. MARTIN'S work focuses on cultures, languages, and literatures with a concentration on diasporic literatures across the Americas. She holds a dual appointment as an assistant professor of English and Core Studies at Wheaton College. A native of Jamaica, Dr Martin's multicultural background deeply informs her scholarship, particularly her passion for Caribbean literature and her exploration of overlooked spaces of healing and reconciliation in ethnic studies and conflicts.

FEATURED ART



Golden Dawn, 2024

About the Artist
Lucien Downes / St Croix

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000028

Ian Randle Publishers

From the Caribbean to the World

IAN RANDLE

IAN RANDLE PUBLISHERS (IRP) IS AN INDEPENDENT SCHOLARLY and trade publishing company based in Kingston, Jamaica. Founded in 1990, the company will, in 2025, experience 35 continuous years of publishing across a wide range of genres and formats. It was the pioneer in locally owned scholarly publishing, preceding the establishment of The University of the West Indies Press although not the first to enter the field. In 1970 the Caribbean Universities Press (CarUP) was established in Barbados by British publishing interests with a young graduate of The UWI, Ian Randle, as its manager and first and only employee. However, CarUP had a short life, and after a few years of inactivity, finally folded.

By then, Randle had moved on to a stint in bookselling, managing the UWI campus bookshop for the legendary Sangster's Bookstores chain before being asked by British textbook publishers Heinemann to establish a branch of its operations in Jamaica. Randle not only took the branch local by creating Heinemann Books Caribbean Limited but rapidly transformed the company into becoming the leading textbook publisher in the English-speaking Caribbean. By the time IRP was incorporated in 1990 Randle had amassed 20 years' experience in all aspects of the book chain and an impressive list of international connections.

Today, Ian Randle Publishers remains the sole independent publisher of scholarly books in the English-speaking Caribbean. Its authors are drawn from the regional academy, as well as Caribbeanists in the academies of the US and the UK among others. The IRP mission was to build confidence, trust, profitability, and viability in indigenous publishing, and to give voice

Caribbean Conjunctures
DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000029

to a new generation of academics, researchers, and writers, who, before then, had to rely on the benevolence of metropolitan publishers to get published. Throughout the years of its existence, the principals of the company have not deviated from their original mission guided by the mantra that 'size is not grandeur' and the desire to remain a 'small company that does big things.'

Those 'big things' are evident in IRP's extensive list, numbering over 400 titles in print, (www.ianrandlepublishers.com), making the company arguably the best source for published material on Caribbean history and culture, politics, the economy and the social sciences in general, gender studies and in Caribbean integration(CARICOM). Several titles are to be found on reading lists of universities in the Caribbean, North America, the UK and Europe, as essential resources for courses in Caribbean Studies. A continual source of pride is to scour every new scholarly manuscript presented for publication as well as published books, to see the number and range of the citations of IRP books! Its legal imprint, the Caribbean Law Publishing Company (CLP) (originally established as a joint venture partnership with South African interests) is the only publisher of primary legal and practitioner materials for the court systems of several Caribbean countries. Overall, the company produces twelve to fifteen titles annually. However, with advances in technology and the advent of Print on Demand (PoD), the company is planning to expand its output of new books to twenty in the current year and beyond.

As a publisher of general trade books, IRP has few rivals in the Caribbean with bestselling titles in literature, biography and memoirs, cookery, sport, art, and music that are accessible through global distribution networks. The company has had a long history of developing active partnerships with publishers across the globe resulting in co-editions with publishers in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa, as well as the UK, Canada, and the USA. In 2017, IRP was instrumental in helping to conceptualise and establish the University of Guyana Press.

IRP's progress has not been without struggle. Finance has always been and continues to be a major impediment to growth as the value of intellectual property remains an elusive concept for bankers and investors. An equally, and perhaps greater impediment, is the common perception of publishing as an arcane occupation born from centuries of people like us being cast as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' bereft of intellectual capability.


Richard Charan
The Village of One
Essays on Trinbago's Past • Places • People
THE ASSASSINATION OF
Maurice Bishop
Godfrey Smith
FOOTPRINTS in the SAND
The Jamaican Economic Policymaking Experience 2016–2024
Nigel A. L. Clarke
Foreword by Christine Lagarde
Janet Jagan
Freedom Fighter of Guyana
Patricia Mohammed
Hilary McD Beckles
BARBADOS
Cuffee's Kingdom
First Black New World Freedom Plan: Barbados 1675 Anti-slavery Strategy
The Story of the Jamaican People
Philip Sherlock & Hazel Bennett
The Impossible DREAM
René Simões
IAN RANDLE PUBLISHERS
From the Caribbean to the World
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It's been a major struggle convincing Caribbean people that we do have a proud intellectual tradition and that our writers, poets, academics, scientists, and philosophers number among the best in the world. For this reason, publishing is not seen as a viable career for bright, young graduates of our educational institutions so that next to the financial challenges, attracting and keeping imaginative and committed young professionals, ranks highly among our struggles over the years. In that context, IRP's greatest sacrifice in its contribution to the advancement of the region's development has been to bequeath its Managing Director of over ten years, Christine Randle, to the UWI Press as its first local director.

The company's founder and current executive chairman, Ian Randle, has over 50 years publishing experience and has consulted with regional governments on textbook development and textbook policy formation and has led teams of professionals in providing training in textbook materials development and management. Ian Randle is the Caribbean region's most decorated publisher; he is a laureate of the Prince Claus Foundation of the Netherlands; the recipient of a Jamaica National Honour, the Order of Distinction for services to publishing; an honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD) from the University of the West Indies; a Silver Musgrave Medal from the Institute of Jamaica; and the 2019 Henry Swanzy Award from the Bocas Litfest in Trinidad.

Ian Randle Publishers' contribution to the development of Caribbean publishing is best summed up by UWI Vice-Chancellor, Sir Hilary Beckles, who writes:

> Over time, a sense of institutional nobility has surrounded Ian Randle Publishers. It is the Caribbean's premier commercial publisher of academic and trade books. It has created an international community of writers on Caribbean matters who have partnered with their indigenous counterparts in building the brand that is now IRP. Ian Randle Publishers is now embedded in the development agenda of the region and serves to focus the intellectual and artistic efforts of thought leaders and policy makers.

IAN RANDLE PUBLISHERS
From the Caribbean to the World www.ianrandlepublishers.com

Peepal Tree Press

Decolonising Bookshelves Since 1985

JEREMY POYNTING

PEEPAL TREE PRESS IS AN INDEPENDENT COMPANY, FOUNDED in 1985, that publishes on average 15 books a year. We have published over 450 titles and are committed to keeping most of them in print. Our list features new writers and established voices. In 2009, we launched the Caribbean Modern Classics Series, which restores to print essential books from the past with new introductions.

Prize successes include the Costa Novel and Book of the Year Awards for *The Mermaid of Black Conch* by Monique Roffey; the T.S. Eliot Prize and Ondaatje Award for Roger Robinson's *A Portable Paradise*; the Casa de la Américas Literary Award for Jennifer Rahim and Anthony Kellman; the OCM Bocas Prizes for Caribbean Literature for Vladimir Lucien and Jennifer Rahim; the Felix Dennis (Forward) Best First Collection Prize for Kwame Dawes; the inaugural Jhalak Prize, awarded to Jacob Ross; and the Clarissa Luard Award for innovation in publishing to the press.

We are grateful for financial support from Arts Council England as a National Portfolio organisation since 2011. Arts Council funding allows us to sustain Inscribe, a writer development project that supports writers of African and Asian descent in England and our local Readers and Writers Group in Leeds. ACE funding also supports our ability to employ a larger part-time team, who fulfil our goal of public education through social media, newsletters, and website postings.

Our focus is on what George Lamming called the Caribbean nation, wherever it is in the world, though we are also concerned with Black British writing of different heritages. We support writing that seeks the decolonisation of society and culture on both sides of the Atlantic. We recognise that a consequence of colonialism and geography has been to make it difficult to sustain literary publishing in the Caribbean. We see ourselves as co-workers with UWI Press, Ian Randle Publishers, House of

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000030

Nehesi, Blouse and Skirt, Papillote Press, and others in publishing writing that explores the consequences of 400 years of colonial empire, resistance to it, and the emergence of post-colonial identities.

In the UK, one of our goals is to publish work that documents how much British society has been shaped, in economic and cultural terms, by an exploitative relationship to the Caribbean, such as the legacy of Slavery in the making of British cities, institutions, the landed elite and country houses, and to support writing that offers readers images of a post imperial world that is multi-ethnic and culturally diverse. We publish fiction, poetry, and a range of academic and non-fiction titles. Our goal is to publish books that make a difference, and though we want to achieve the best possible sales, we're most concerned with whether a book will still be alive in the future. In 2024, we agreed a partnership with HopeRoad Publishing, including their imprint Small Axes, in which they maintain editorial independence, and Peepal Tree supports the organisation and financing of their publishing.

We are based in Leeds in Yorkshire, part of the independent publishing sector outside London. Everything used to happen at 17 King's Avenue, in the Burley area, a rundown, multicultural part of Leeds. Since Covid and enforced working from home, we continue to work more remotely, though meetings and the business of mailing book orders continues from King's Avenue on a daily basis, and we welcome visitors given some notice. Peepal Tree now has a team of ten people, all part-time, except Jeremy Poynting as managing editor and Hannah Bannister as director of operations. Kwame Dawes and Jacob Ross are respectively associate poetry and fiction editors; Kadija George and Dorothea Smartt are the directors of Inscribe; Lucy Kent is sales manager; Adam Lowe and Rawan Mohamed organise and create our social media; and Khadijah Ibrahiim is the organiser, with Jacob Ross, of the Leeds Readers and Writers Group.

A Brief History of Peepal Tree Press

The idea for Peepal Tree began in the ruins of the former Lusignan sugar estate on the East Coast Demerara in Guyana in 1984 when founding editor, Jeremy Poynting, was with his friend Rooplall Monar, who was acting out several of the stories he had written but was in despair at ever seeing them in print. Writers in Guyana usually self-published through a local printery or

went to Sheik Sadeek, himself a writer, who had an Adana press, but in those bad, grim Burnham days, there was no paper to be had since the government was keen to keep the means of communication out of the opposition's hands. Berkley Wendell Semple's recent novel, *Kipling Plass* (2024), gives a vivid portrait of those days. Jeremy promised Rooplall to organise the printing of a small run (400) of his stories, *Backdam People* (1985), about the lives of Indian sugar workers, when he was back in England. The idea for the name of the press came from the doctoral research Jeremy was doing on Indo-Caribbean writing. There are peepal trees in the Indian-settled areas of the Caribbean, the seeds of which had evidently been brought by indentured labourers, and there's a poem by an early Indo-Guyanese poet, Jacob Chinapen, that describes estate workers sitting under a peepal tree telling stories.

Peepal Tree Press has been through four distinct phases. Between 1985 and 1992, it was an expensive hobby, run from home as a sole tradership, whilst Jeremy Poynting still worked full-time as a college lecturer. In this phase, he began the experiment of buying ancient printing equipment and printing books in the garage. In this period, it published 30 books. In 1992/93-1996, Peepal Tree received development funding from the Arts Council of England, and it moved out of home to the King's Avenue premises, where it established a print shop, office space, and storage for books. Its model was to print its own books and subsidise their costs by undertaking printing for other small publishers and local NGOs and sometimes the local council. For a time, it operated as two partnerships, both of which ended in some acrimony. This was a period when Peepal Tree struggled with inexperience in running a business, and it accumulated threatening debt, including a visit from bailiffs. It was rescued by two Caribbean poets who were also businessmen, Ian McDonald and Ralph Thompson, who organised some friendly investors as shareholders and encouraged Peepal Tree to become a limited company. The other turning points of this period were the arrival of Hannah Bannister, initially as an intern – who possessed all the practical skills that has kept Peepal Tree functioning since 1994, and who is now the director of operations – and the fact that in 1996 Jeremy Poynting was able to take early retirement from his lecturing job on a small pension and devote all his time to the company. All this was essential because the Arts Council's funding finished in 1996 and was not resumed until 2006. In time, the model of subsiding publishing through printing and making books for others was

gradually realised, and business skills were learnt. This enabled Peepal Tree to publish many more books itself than if it had outsourced that work. In this period (1993–2009), we published 190 books. It is possible to search the Peepal Tree website to see who and what was published each year. It was, though, a period when the company ran on what Kwame Dawes described as "pathological optimism," a fuel with costs for all concerned.

In 2008, we had an unexpected windfall, when the Trinidad government decided to put Caribbean libraries into secondary schools. From the profits of these sales, we were able to launch the Caribbean Modern Classics series, which now stands at over 50 books and continuing. The first titles included books by Neville Dawes, Denis Williams, Jan Carew, Andrew Salkey, John Hearne, Wilson Harris, and Edgar Mittelholzer.

In 2010/2011, because backlist sales were now contributing a significant income, and because we became part of the Arts Council's National Portfolio, we took the decision to wind up the printing operation and concentrate solely on publishing and writer development work. In the period between 2010–2024, we published around 18 books a year, except for the years of Covid lockdown when bookshops were closed for significant periods. It has been the most secure period of Peepal Tree's life, a period of consolidation, of gradually rising sales, though in the post-Covid (and post-Brexit) period in the UK, we have been faced by sharply rising printing, distribution, and carriage costs at the same time as inflationary costs in food and housing have hit personal spending. We have been, though, cushioned by the sales revenue from two prize-winning books and the subsequent sale of rights of *The Mermaid of Black Conch*.

In addition to exciting new fiction and poetry due out in 2025 (visit the website and look up upcoming), we have several important projects to complete in the immediate future, including a properly documented edition of Seepersad Naipaul's pioneering fiction; a three-volume collected poems of the published and unpublished poetry of Anthony McNeill; and the collected poems of Jennifer Rahim, whose early loss we still sorrow over. We still nurture the hope that one day we will persuade Kamau Brathwaite's literary estate to allow us to publish *The Love Axe/l*, his magisterial and very personal account of the revolution in the Caribbean Arts. In the meantime, new submissions arrive daily.



In memory of writers, whom Peepal Tree published, who died during the 40 years of our existence, many of whose departures we felt in personal ways:

- Savi Naipaul Akal, Funso Aiyejina, Edward Baugh, Dale Bisnauth, Kamau Brathwaite, Wayne Brown, Hazel Campbell, Jan Carew, Martin Carter, David Chanderbali, Austin Clarke, Mahadai Das, Gloria Escoffery, Howard Fergus, John Figueroa, Michael Gilkes, Beryl Gilroy, Anson Gonzalez, Cecil Gray, Wilson Harris, John Hearne, June Henfrey, Abdul Rahman Slade Hopkinson, Arnold Harricharan Itwaru, Janet Jagan, Kamta Karran, Peter Kempadoo, Ismith Khan, George Lamming, Laurence Lieberman, E.A. (Archie) Markham, Rooplall Monar, Lakshmi Persaud, Jennifer Rahim, Colin Robinson, Gordon Rohlehr, Andrew Salkey, Brinsley Samaroo, Dennis Scott, Judaman Seecoomar, Sam Selvon, Garth St Omer, Ralph Thompson, Edgar Nkosi White, Denis Williams, Milton Vishnu Williams, and Gwyneth Barber Wood.

The University of The West Indies Press

Celebrating 35 Years

CHRISTINE RANDLE

SET TO CELEBRATE ITS 35TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2027, The University of the West Indies Press (UWI Press) was founded in 1992 by University administrators committed to creating and sustaining a vibrant university press at the centre of Caribbean intellectual discourse. Aligned with the mission of The University of the West Indies (UWI), UWI Press publishes research that addresses critical regional needs, fostering intellectual discourse and strengthening connections with esteemed research and teaching institutions in the Caribbean and beyond. Led by its first Caribbean-born director, Christine Randle, the Press today is the largest university press in the Caribbean and the only regional member of the international Association of University Presses. With a diverse range of high-quality scholarly and academic works across the humanities and social sciences, UWI Press is particularly well known for its work in Caribbean history, Caribbean cultural studies, Caribbean literature, gender studies, education, and political science.

Located in Kingston, Jamaica, the UWI Press, with a staff complement of less than ten, serves the five campuses of the University and delivers accessible personal service to all of its stakeholders. Publishing 12–15 books and 10 journal editions annually, the Press has over 450 books "in print" available in various formats – print: hardback and paperback; digital; electronic, and audio. Many of the books published are meant primarily for scholars or persons interested in a concentrated field of research. However, books of more general or popular interest in the fields of history, poetry or fiction have from time to time been embraced. As a result, the Press's books reflect the rich, complex diversity of the Caribbean region and the diaspora.

Supported with distribution in the US and the Caribbean by Longleaf Services, Inc. and Mare Nostrum in the UK, Europe and rest of the world, the Press's robust marketing department coordinates reviews, conference participation, and displays; conducts sales conferences; prepares the annual

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000031

catalogue of new publications; and updates the Press's website (www.uwipress.com) from which publications can be directly accessed. All of this intersects with social media promotion, overseeing course adoptions, and liaising with the several partners and online platforms for sales of the Press's digital editions.

Among the Press's most successful publications are *Jamaican Food: History, Biology, Culture* by eminent historian and anthropologist Barry Higman, a well-illustrated, fascinating yet authoritative and highly regarded resource on Jamaican culture and the relationship between Jamaican food and Jamaican identity and nationalism. *Central Africa in the Caribbean: Transcending Time, Transforming Cultures* by Maureen Warner-Lewis is an important contribution towards the identification of themes from African culture within the Caribbean. Distinguished economic historian Hilary Beckles's trifecta of *Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide*; *The First Black Slave Society: Britain's "Barbarity Time" in Barbados, 1636–1876*, and *How Britain Underdeveloped the Caribbean: A Reparation Response to Europe's Legacy of Plunder and Poverty* are bestsellers advocating for reparatory justice, addressing the atrocities of the transatlantic trade in Africans and its lasting impact on contemporary Caribbean society. *Dying to Better Themselves: West Indians and the Building of the Panama Canal* by Olive Senior is a monumental record of the diasporic experience of hundreds of thousands of West Indians and an exposition of how the United States built its industrial and financial power on the backs of non-white workers.

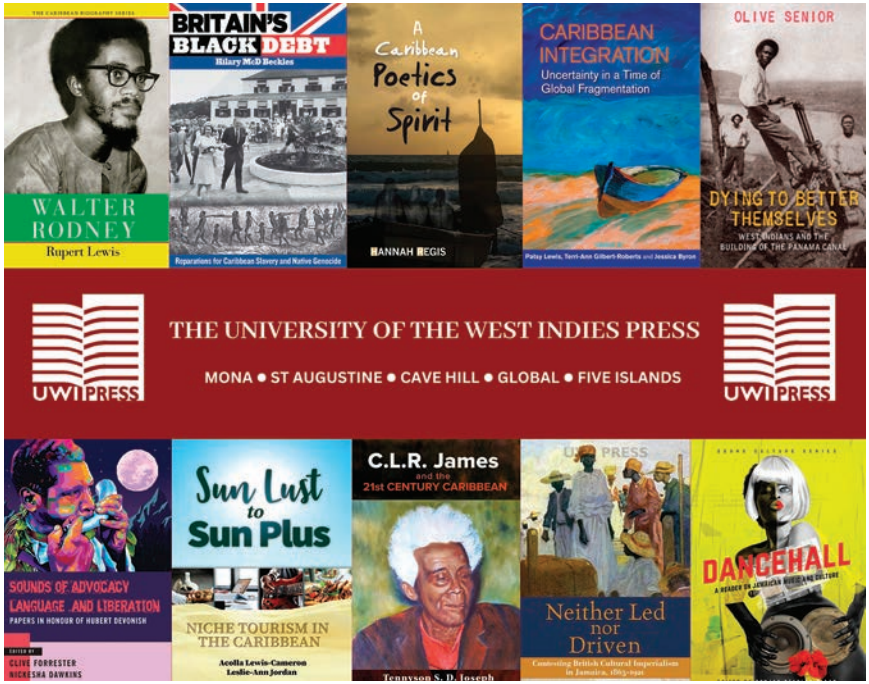
The recent release of *Walter Rodney* by political scientist Rupert Lewis in the Press's highly acclaimed Caribbean Biography Series, has enjoyed an overwhelming reception from general readers. So too, Hannah Regis's *A Caribbean Poetics of Spirit*, ambitious in its exploration of Caribbean literary expressions of Afro-Caribbean and Indigenous mythologies, spirituality and religious practices and traditions, has made a groundbreaking contribution in the fields of Caribbean, postcolonial and African diaspora literary studies, and stands as a strong contender for award-winning recognition.

There is a bounty of new titles coming from the Press in 2025/26. Highlights from the list include *Re-Ordering Caribbean Futures in the Fires of Global Change*, lead by editors Pat Northover, Hamid Ghany and Natalie Dietrich Jones, an interdisciplinary collection assessing the dominant tensions in contemporary international geopolitics and regional cooperation dynamics

and implications for Caribbean states. Damian Cohall's long awaited second edition of *Medicinal Plants of Barbados* builds on his earlier exploration of the sociocultural evolution and current knowledge of the use of medicinal plants. This updated edition features a comprehensive medicinal plant formulary and offers a rigorous scientific analysis of their folklore uses by an investigation of their bioactive constituents and the scientific validation of these practices. *The Catastrophe of Disaster Aid: Post-2010 Earthquake Haiti, NGOs, and New Vulnerabilities* by Jean Max Charles, takes a searing look at the roles of NGOs in disaster relief. A comprehensive account of Haiti's underdevelopment and vulnerability, it will be an important addition to those who are interested in Haiti and Caribbean studies.

The journals published by the UWI Press cover an array of disciplines and offer dissemination of high-quality research, some using the open access model. *Caribbean Quarterly* (*CQ*) is one of the oldest periodicals in the English-speaking Caribbean. Regarded as UWI's flagship publication, it was launched by the then Department of Extra Mural Studies, UWI, in 1949, to be a platform from which research findings and general knowledge could be effectively disseminated within the campus and non-campus territories. *CQ* is now produced under the umbrella of the UWI Press. *CQ* is an outlet for the publication of results of research into, considered views on, and creative expressions of matters Caribbean. *CQ* publishes scholarly articles, personal and critical essays, public lectures, poetry, short fiction and book reviews – a lively diversity of types of writing reflecting the diversity of Caribbean culture. The *Journal of Caribbean History* is another longstanding journal published by the UWI Press on behalf of the UWI departments of history and comprises articles on aspects of Caribbean history, including the histories of the mainland territories of North, Central, and South America, where they intersect with the Caribbean.

As members of both the Association of University Presses and the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, among numerous other organizations, the UWI Press stands at the forefront of new and emerging trends in academic and scholarly publishing. Keeping abreast with technological advances, UWI Press collaborates with a host of digital developers within and outside of academia as well as global distribution partners to make its works accessible to as far and wide an audience as possible. Embracing the opportunities presented by the new era of social



media and digital marketing, the development of the UWI Press App in 2023 heralded a new era of content development and distribution. The advent of AI presents a unique opportunity to further disseminate the wealth of intellectual property entrusted to us by our authors, to the benefit of UWI, the Press, and its authors. While navigating the implications of AI software and AI large language models (LLMs), the Press maintains its close collaboration with industry partners to consolidate and focus resources.

With its 35th anniversary on the horizon, the UWI Press stands proud of its accomplishments to date in service of the University of the West Indies and the people of the Caribbean.

CHRISTINE RANDLE is the Director of The University of the West Indies Press having taken up the appointment in January 2023. A strategic, solutions-oriented and results-driven publisher with over 15 years of market-leading commercial management and over 20 years of broad-based experience in all areas of publishing operations, she was previously the Managing Director of Ian Randle Publishers from 2007 to 2022 where she oversaw the development and expansion of the Title list and the company's global reach.

House of Nehesi Publishers

The Vision and the Mission

FABIAN ADEKUNLE BADEJO

Guard-wall & guard well gayelle anguilla eluthera

Sint Maarten's House of Nehesi Publishers at Philipsburg
from island to island to islands

the wide spread of the good news of yr 30
unbelievable years already

the books & the fairs and the poets of seminars. scimitars
of truth & light from islands to islands & the meaning
of mainland(s)

Let us give Thanks. Guard the well well

The verb of the bell of this year's gift & *mkissi*

The House of Nehesi.
—Kamau Brathwaite (2012)

How many publishing outfits get to have a poem written for and about them by a literary colossus like Kamau Brathwaite to celebrate the 30th anniversary of publishing their first book? The poem, written in 2012, was not just a "birthday present" born out of the generosity of spirit of an icon like Brathwaite. The poem actually encapsulates the vision and mission of House of Nehesi Publishers (HNP).

When Lasana M. Sekou conceived the idea of establishing a publishing concern in the late 1970s, profit was obviously not his motivation. As a high school student in New York City and an immigrant from the Caribbean island of St Martin, Sekou simply wanted to publish his poetry. He thought that the

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000032

responses he received from journals and large publishers were limiting for Black writers and aspiring authors. His early adolescence in St Martin was spent around the printing shop of his father and newspaper publisher José H. Lake, Sr. Living in the USA, Sekou admired the poetry and independent publishing efforts of writers like Amiri Baraka and the small Black presses that emerged from the country's turbulent 1960s. For Sekou, publishing was not a mystery; it was a natural pursuit.

The name Nehesi was also deliberate. While it may sound exotic, it carried deep symbolism in the African tradition of naming. Nehesi was a Pharaoh of the 14th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt during the second intermediate period, a turbulent time for the civilization. The name means "The Black One" or "The Nubian," and when applied to a person, it signifies "Master of their own Destiny," "caring," "charismatic," and even "restorer." Sekou discovered the name through his readings of historian and Egyptologist Yosef ben-Jochannan. The vision for the publishing enterprise Sekou would eventually launch from his undergraduate dorm room at the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1980 was encapsulated in one word: "Nehesi." The network structure of independent editors, illustrators, graphic artists, fundraising projects, quality printers, and advisors – an HNP standard that would evolve and endure – was established in that founding year. In 1982, HNP published its first book, *For The Mighty Gods . . . An Offering* by Lasana M. Sekou, with an introduction by none other than Amiri Baraka.

In 1984, with three titles at HNP and completing his graduate studies at Howard University, Sekou returned to St Martin. He was aware of Kenneth Ramchand's observation, that "London was the publishing capital of the Caribbean." To shift that dynamic and relocate the capital of Caribbean publishing where it rightfully belonged, Sekou understood he needed to continue building a "house." He would establish the House of Nehesi, with a "guard-wall" of fierce independence "in a world of hostile publishers" as Brathwaite would characterize it.

George Lamming, the first major author House of Nehesi would publish, saw that vision, bought into it, and invested in it by lending his name to the imprint. In 2007, he would write on the occasion of HNP's anniversary of publishing its first book:

> Throughout our Caribbean region, economic activity is to a large extent externally propelled. Investment initiates from outside and the collective

> investors are elsewhere: tourism, insurance, banking are some of the major pinnacles of authority which determine what choices we make in exercising control over our daily lives. The governments may govern, but they do not rule. It is against this background of an imagined sovereignty and an enforced dependence that we must measure the audacity – and there is no other word for what I mean – the audacity of those who initiated from within the adventure of House of Nehesi Publishers. Such boldness of enterprise in the area of publishing can easily collapse in five months; so the 25th anniversary of Nehesi can arguably be celebrated as though it were the 50th. And the evidence of the distinguished volumes it has produced is so abundant that the founders and their supporters are entitled to invent their own calendar for this purpose. Year 25 should be accorded the applause due a 50th anniversary in recognition of Nehesi's capacity for digging deep in their indigenous human resource, and surviving the perils of waiting for some external force to determine your own agenda. We celebrate House of Nehesi as a symbol of what it could mean to achieve a genuine sovereignty of the imagination.

The "audacity" Lamming highlights is one of the distinguishing features of HNP. Publishing, a relatively new industry in the region, is dominated by the Big Five – Penguin Random House, Hachette, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, and Macmillan – whose combined revenues total hundreds of millions. Until recently, they were the sole gateways to an author's success. For an indie press like HNP, registered in St Martin in 1986 as a not-for-profit foundation, to venture into the competitive world of publishing was a bold move. Offering traditional, subsidy, and self-publishing, this small NGO demonstrated considerable courage. Brathwaite and Baraka also admired that bravery and embraced the vision. That vision would transcend political and linguistic borders across the Caribbean, rallying a network of collaborators committed to its Pan-Caribbean mission.

The impact of HNP on the emergence of written literature in St Martin is undeniable, as I argued in *Salted Tongues: Modern Literature in St Martin* (2003). Before HNP, few works by St Martin writers were published. Most were self-published or, more accurately, printed manuscripts that were poorly edited or not edited at all, often failing to meet the professional standards HNP introduced. Vanity publishing was rare, likely due to the high cost of local printing. HNP's efforts over the last two generations are clear in the quantity and quality of published works by the island's writers. From Ruby Bute to Charles Borromeo Hodge, Esther Gumbs to Drisana Deborah Jack,

Daniella Jeffry to Joseph H. Lake, Jr., and Louis Duzanson to René Baly, the list of published St Martin writers has grown exponentially.

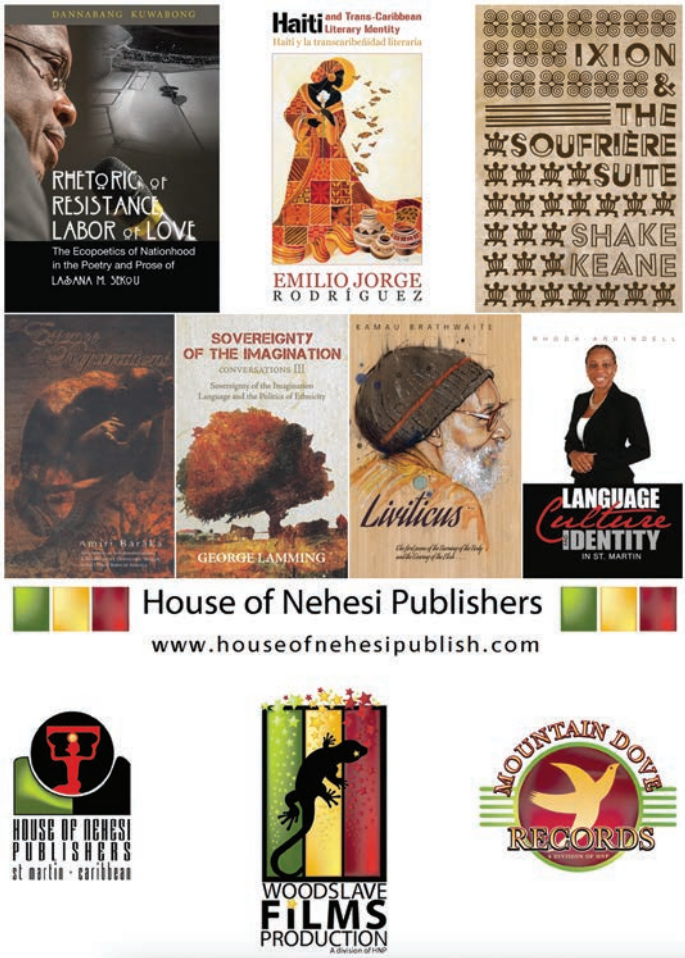
With Lamming (*Coming, Coming Home: Western Education and the Caribbean Intellectual*), Brathwaite (*Words Need Love Too*), Baraka (*Somebody Blew Up America & Other Poems*), Shake Keane (*The Angel Horn*), Marion Bethel (*Guanahani, My Love*) and other A-list authors, HNP had become the answer to Derek Walcott's imperative that we must publish our own books. When it launched its Caribbean poetry anthologies under the title *Where I See the Sun* – St Martin, Anguilla, BVI – HNP furthered its mission ". . . of truth & light from islands to islands," according to Brathwaite. Beyond the Caribbean, Nidaa Khoury (Palestinian/Israel), Tishani Doshi (India), Dannabang Kuwabong (Ghana), Sara Florian (Italy), and Charles Matz (USA) have been published by HNP.

A salient feature of HNP that deserves more attention is its commitment to publishing Caribbean authors in multiple languages within the same volume. Lamming's *Coming, Coming Home* was released in English with a French translation, followed by a Spanish edition. HNP then focused on the Dominican Republic, publishing Chiqui Vicioso's *Eva/Sion/Es* in Spanish, English, and French. Similarly, Rafael Nino Féliz's *África en mi piel* was released in all three languages simultaneously. Cuban scholar Emilio Jorge Rodríguez published his bilingual anthology of Sekou's selected poetry, *Pelican Heart/Corazón pelícano*, spanning 30 years, through HNP.

Why is this important?

The Caribbean is divided into three main linguistic zones – English, Spanish, and French – divisions rooted in colonial history that hinder communication across them. With his Pan-Caribbean vision and St Martin's unique linguistic tradition, Sekou aimed to provide readers with books that include translated versions in the same volume. This approach highlights the importance of making major works by Caribbean writers accessible to a broader audience. While others might publish translations in separate volumes, HNP includes the original and translated versions in the same book. This may seem like a small step in uniting the Caribbean through literature; however, it is a powerful challenge to the region's linguistic balkanization.

Khoury, a leading post-monotheism thinker, published her trilingual poetry volume *Book of Sins* in Arabic, along with its English and Hebrew translations. Similarly, Renaissance scholar Matz published his Atlantic World



epic *Columbus, the Moor* at HNP, offering the English original alongside Spanish, French, and Italian translations.

It is this progressive and inclusive mission that continues to endear HNP to both established and aspiring authors, within the Caribbean and beyond what Lamming called its "external frontiers." The year 2025 marks the 45th anniversary of the founding of House of Nehesi Publishers, and it is clear that any business that has survived for 45 years deserves our unstinting admiration and respect.

FABIAN ADEKUNLE BADEJO, literary critic, journalist, editor, author.

Papillote Press

Independent Publisher in the Rainforest

POLLY PATTULLO

PAPILLOTE PRESS, A VERY SMALL INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER, IS based in Dominica (in the rainforest) and in the UK (in an inner London street); both places are conducive to the birth of books though the former is greener. Just as importantly, those two locations have inevitably informed both its possibilities and its development.

Its journey – one with no clear arrival point – could perhaps be described as somewhat haphazard. It is certainly not a model which you would find on "how to be a successful publisher" websites. However, somehow it remains extant.

Papillote Press had its beginnings in self-publishing, with the book *The Gardens of Dominica* in 1998. It happened because I knew that if I did not publish that title, then no one would. It was too niche a subject, and I wasn't a celebrity. The research and the writing were the fun bits – helped by my co-author, Anne Jno Baptiste, a great gardener whose Papillote Wilderness Retreat lies at the head of the Roseau Valley in Dominica; the name would later lend its name to the press itself. With the manuscript written, then came the next stepping stones to publication: the format (paperback), layout (done for the first and last time by myself), illustrations (black and white line drawings were provided by a talented artist, Nancy Osler), printing (printers with sympathy for small print runs were emerging), then promotion/marketing and finding sympathetic bookshops who would stock it. I had 1000 copies printed. And lo and behold, this modest but informative little book sold, mainly in Dominica, but also to a market of gardeners from all over the world. I don't think that Amazon was an active player then, at least not for me (it had been selling books for only three years and Papillote Press was not up there with the fast crowd).

But I was emboldened. I thought that if I could manage to go through the hoops of publishing a book that I had written myself, maybe I could do

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DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000033

the same for someone else. That did not happen until six years later when Professor Lisa Paravisini-Gebert, the biographer of Phyllis Shand Allfrey, the writer and politician from Dominica, suggested that she would like to put together a collection of Allfrey's short stories (long out of print or never published) and asked whether I like to publish them. I thought "I can do that." And so Papillote Press came into being, with *It Falls into Place*. The fact that Allfrey was the reason I had first visited Dominica made the idea even more attractive.

At first, I kept to titles by writers from Dominica, but later I branched out into the wider Caribbean. Now the list encompasses writing from Jamaica, St Lucia, Puerto Rico, and Trinidad and includes books of many genres, including children's picture books.

If I have a mandate, it is to acknowledge and to try and strengthen the culture and literary heritage of these islands and make them known to a wider audience. Over the years, I have been encouraged by those who have said nice things about Papillote Press. "The small and invaluable," according to emeritus professor of literature at the University of Essex, Peter Hulme; while Marina Salandy Brown, founder and former director of Bocas Literary festival, Trinidad, kindly said: "Papillote Press is committed to telling our stories in books that are made to be treasured."

I remain a nano-sized publisher. I wish I were bigger, but there's only so much one person can do. Keeping the ducks in a row is not always easy, especially with the demands of social media (I have an excellent helper for that who pushes me to do more and better posts). Publishing two books a year is a labour of love, and I love each and every one of the books that I have published. There is something magical about knowing that books that I have helped nurture will always be there, adding to our storeroom of knowledge of the Caribbean. That is what I have to remind myself when I venture into a bookshop in the UK and fail to find a single Papillote Press book on its shelves. Perhaps it's not surprising when in 2018 (last available figures) 188,000 titles were published in the UK in that one year.

I hope each Papillote Press title makes an impact on someone somewhere, whether it's a gorgeous children's picture book or history, or memoir, or poetry or fiction title. I would wish to sell more books, improve my authors' bank balances, but if that doesn't happen, I hope Papillote authors feel a sense of, if only briefly, belonging to an enterprise of integrity.



There is such a wealth of great writing from the Caribbean. No one would dispute that. This is illustrated by the book festivals that have sprung up all over the region in the last 15 years, showcasing the region's literary range. Dominica was one of the first, with its Nature Island Literary Festival. Perhaps the most significant of the festivals though is BOCAS, which is not just an annual festival, but a year-round forum that continues to support and encourage writers and writing in every which way. Its key award is given to poetry, non-fiction, and fiction categories with an overall winner chosen from the winners of each category. In 2021, Celia Sorhaindo's poetry chapbook *Guabancex* was long listed for that award, a first for Papillote Press.

One crucial way which BOCAS has supported the triangle of writers, readers, and publishers was with the late lamented CODE Burt Award for Young Adult Caribbean Literature. This award ran for seven years. It

enabled the winning Caribbean authors of Young Adult novels to choose the Caribbean publisher they wished to publish their books. The books were then distributed into schools throughout the Caribbean. Three winners chose Papillote Press: Diana McCaulay with *Gone to Drift* from Jamaica, Lisa Allen-Agostini with *Home Home* from Trinidad, and Viviana Prado-Núñez from Puerto Rico with the beautifully titled *The Art of White Roses*. All three writers incorporated important themes into their novels: McCaulay with the environment, Allen-Agostini with mental health and gay relationships, and Prado Nunez's exploration of the effect of violence on family life in pre-revolutionary Cuba. Sadly, the Burt Award, which distributed some 40,000 books into schools and libraries throughout the Caribbean, is no more. The charity changed direction.

Unable to find a local publisher, many aspiring Caribbean writers still look to find a publishing company overseas – in the metropoles, with their reach, muscle, financial resources, contacts, and so on. And no one would blame them for that. Publishers in the Caribbean (and I can't really lay claim to be wholly that given that I have a foot in both camps) have a tough time. The post-colonial axis is still tightly fixed. For example, Papillote Press books are conceived and written in the Caribbean, but they are largely printed in the UK, stored there (in a Scottish warehouse or under my bed in London) before being shipped to the Caribbean. The value added remains elsewhere. The metropolitan centre still holds (much as I would like it to fall apart).

A similar situation faces Caribbean bookshops, far from the seats of power. I know they struggle too, but as a publisher, I would like to feel a bond with Caribbean bookshops, those that ask: "Hey, do you have any new books we might like?" And, what about the university bookshops that need books for students and faculty alike? Where are you, UWI? Initiatives to support Caribbean bookshops and publishers have come and gone, but I am confident that nothing stays the same, and writers will continue to find inspiration in the islands that sustain them. I hope that publishers, including Papillote Press, will continue to do their best to support them.

Papillote Press seeks all genres that extend an understanding of the Caribbean but is particularly interested in finding new non-fiction titles for the general reader, whether it is biography, history, sociology, ecology, the arts or politics.

The website is www.papillotepress.co.uk

Blue Banyan Books

Shaping the Caribbean Literary Landscape

TANYA BATSON-SAVAGE

SEATED IN THE HEART OF JAMAICA'S CAPITAL CITY, Kingston, a restless city crouching below the towering Blue Mountains, Blue Banyan Books strives to reshape the contemporary Caribbean literary landscape. Currently one of the fastest-growing independent publishers in the English-speaking Caribbean, the publishing house is dedicated to sharing the best Caribbean voices with readers worldwide. We're driven by the compelling belief in the power of stories to re/shape perspectives, preserve culture, and ignite the imagination and strive to position ourselves at the forefront of a literary movement that champions the richness and diversity of Caribbean narratives.

A Commitment to Radical, Riveting, Caribbean Stoytelling

Since our inception (or re-conception as we emerged from Blue Moon Books) in 2017, Blue Banyan Books has built an impressively diverse catalogue spanning multiple genres and age groups, from richly illustrated children's books to young adult and adult fiction and poetry, the latter published under its Blouse & Skirt Books imprint. At the company's core is the vibrancy of Caribbean life. Each book is imagined as creating a window or magical mirror into Caribbean culture. Whether through the lens of romance, fantasy, historical fiction, comedy, contemporary drama, or poetry, we aim to foster a literary tradition that is both deeply rooted in the Caribbean experience and universally relevant.

Additionally, through the breadth of our catalogue we aim to capture the multifaceted nature of Caribbean experience and imagination, which is one of the main pillars on which the company is built.

Blue Banyan derives its name from the Banyan tree. I chose that name because of the aerial root structure of that tree I see as a reminder to always remain rooted, no matter how high you reach.

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DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000034

We strive to create children's books that feature engaging characters that resonate with Caribbean children but can arrest the imagination of children around the world, fulfilling their aim to create stories that are fun, dynamic, and memorable.

Bringing Stories to Life

Blue Banyan currently showcases both emerging voices and award-winning writers who have hailed from Barbados, Bermuda, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The company aims to publish at least one writer from every country in the archipelago.

Beyond publishing, Blue Banyan Books actively fosters literary engagement, creating spaces that facilitate literary discussions to deepen readers' connections with Caribbean stories. The company has sought strategic alliances to help revive and bring to light essential yet untold Caribbean narratives. To that end, Blue Banyan partnered with the National Library of Jamaica to publish two seminal Caribbean works.

The first was the collection of two of writer, activist, and editor Una Marson's important plays *Pocomania* and *London Calling*. Secondly, they published the poetry collection *In This Breadfruit Kingdom* – featuring poems selected by Mervyn Morris. A legacy project from Morris' tenure as Jamaica's first official Poet laureate, *In This Breadfruit Kingdom* is a significant collection of major Jamaican poets including Lorna Goodison, Olive Senior, Kwame Dawes, Claudia Rankine, Kei Miller, Mutabaruka, and Oku Onuora among others.

The impact of these efforts is evident in the acclaim their books have received. Blue Banyan Books' authors have been featured at prestigious literary festivals, including Calabash, the Miami Book Fair, and the Brooklyn Book Festival and the Brooklyn Caribbean Book Festival. Their titles have also earned recognition in major publications such as *Oprah Magazine*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and the *School's Library Journal*.

A Legacy of Award-Winning Literature

Despite being a relatively young publisher, Blue Banyan has garnered significant international recognition and accolades. The company has

successfully launched the careers of several first-time writers and illustrators while also working with award-winning authors. Blue Banyan has published nine (9) winners of the Burt Award for Caribbean Literature (2014–2019), five (5) novels longlisted for the Dublin International Writing Award.

Some of its most celebrated titles include:

- *A Different Me A Better You* by Janet Morrison – winner Jean D'Costa Prize for Children's Literature, shortlisted for the Caribbean Children's Prize (2021)
- *Girlcott* – featured in Oprah Magazine's Best Caribbean Books for Read Caribbean Month (2021)
- *A Million Aunties* by Alecia McKenzie – earned starred reviews in *Booklist* and *Publisher's Weekly*, with rights sold for North America, Rest of World, and World Audio (2020)
- *All Over Again* by A-dZiko Simba Gegele – winner of the Burt Award for Caribbean Literature, longlisted for the Dublin International Writing Award (2014), with Italian rights sold (2019)
- *Dreams Beyond the Shore* (by Tamika Gbson) and *Girlcott* (by Florenz Webbe Maxwell) – included in the School Library Journal's Best Books for Caribbean American Month (2018)
- *Dancing in the Rain* (by Lynn Joseph) and *Dreams Beyond the Shore* – named among Kirkus' Best Books for Young Readers in the USA (2016 & 2017)
- *Bolo the Monkey* by Jonathan Burke and illustrated by Nicholas Martin – Winner of Best Cover and Reader's Choice Award for Best Children's Book at Jamaica's National Book Awards

Redefining the Caribbean's Place in Global Literature

At its core, Blue Banyan Books seeks to redefine the Caribbean's role in the global literary landscape. Its publications reflect the region's cultural dynamism, telling stories as varied as mangoes – each offering a unique flavor, texture, and experience. The publisher is dedicated to ensuring that bookshelves worldwide reflect stories where seasons are marked not just by falling snow, but by the blooming of poui trees and the ripening of mangoes.

We want to bring stories as diverse as mangoes – stories that celebrate our common humanity as well as our differences. This commitment to diversity



extends beyond mere representation to encompass a broader literary mission of ensuring bookshelves showcase worlds where seasons are marked not just by the falling of snow or the birth of new leaves, but also the blooming of the poui, the reddening of the poinsettia, and the ripening of fruits.

Through romance, adventure, history, and contemporary fiction, Blue Banyan Books remains committed to storytelling that is entertaining and transformative. By uncovering, recovering, and discovering the voices that shape the Caribbean literary tradition, the publisher continues to expand the reach and influence of Caribbean literature.

Blue Banyan Books publishes because everyone deserves to know the joy of that first sweet bite of sunshine made solid – a mango. Through our stories we ensure that readers everywhere can taste the richness of Caribbean life, one book at a time.

TANYA BATSON-SAVAGE is an award-winning writer, filmmaker, publisher and creative consultant who loves mangoes. She is the author of *Pumpkin Belly & Other Stories*, and *My Name is Mary*, produced *Agwe* (animation, short), a critically acclaimed play – *Woman Tongue* and won Best Script for *Endeavour* (animation, short).

FEATURED ART



Contemplation

About the Artist
Lucien Downes / St Croix

Caribbean Conjunctures
DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000035

INTERVIEWS

Lost in Transition

Supporting Youth in Conflict with the Law in the Eastern Caribbean

LEIGH-ANN WORRELL INTERVIEWS **MELISSE OGILVIE**

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT/YOUTH 'NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, OR TRAINING (NEET)' has been a central developmental concern within recent years in the Eastern Caribbean, particularly as the region confronts a rise in crime and violence. The issues faced by NEET youth are often exacerbated within a sub-set of this group: youth (formerly) in conflict with the law.

However, it is often the case that preparing justice-involved youth for involvement in further education or the workforce often does not adequately address the psycho-emotional, social and environmental constraints that may impede their success. It also does not focus on how we figure the 'at-risk' child as simultaneously agentic, flawed or capable of learning from mistakes. Using Barbados and Grenada as sites of inquiry, this conversation with Melisse Ogilvie – a social worker and child protection expert – considers the significance of community-based systems to build resilience within families, while paying greater emphasis on psycho-social support.

In this discussion, Leigh-Ann Worrell, Project Coordinator at the Institute for Gender and Development: Nita Barrow Unit, and project coordinator of a mentorship programme at the sole juvenile rehabilitation centre in Barbados – framed the issue within key legislative changes in each country, namely, the revisions to the Education Act in Grenada and the Child Justice Bill in Barbados, which were both passed in 2024. It also is framed within the findings from the Youth Resilience, Inclusion, and Empowerment (Y-RIE) programme, a youth-centred, systems-strengthening programme which uses the public health model to address youth risks for participation in crime and violence. It was undertaken in Grenada, Guyana, and Saint Lucia, and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000036

Leigh-Ann Worrell: So, you were the first director of the Grand Bacolet Juvenile Rehabilitation and Treatment Centre. Can you share a bit about what it was like in its early stages?

Melisse Ogilvie: It was part of the whole Eastern Caribbean Juvenile Justice Reform Project, which was funded by USAID (in Grenada). We didn't have any laws with regards to how juveniles were supposed to be treated, and the facilities they should be rehabilitated in. As a result of the project came a Juvenile Justice Act, which kind of piggybacked on the existing Child Protection and Adoption Act that we had here in Grenada.

That was kind of like a baptism of fire. In preparation for the passage of the Juvenile Justice Act, there was training with the magistrates, police, and even like prison officials because, prior to that, the youth who needed to be in a facility would go to the adult prison, including children as young as 14. They found ways to separate the youth but were not always successful because the prison itself is overcrowded, and needs its own kind of refurbishment, and so forth.

Leigh-Ann Worrell: A lot of the measures throughout the Caribbean are really modelled after British laws and systems which were put in place to manage black people in a way that was not beneficial. Certainly, Jamaica is going through a constitutional change. Not that they've done much, and that was part of what was to be addressed. So, it's important that we state the colonial context out of which these laws and lack of approaches to our youth are being conducted. How do you think these colonial ideologies toward children and parenting in general impact the transition experience of the young people leaving Grand Bacolet?

Melisse Ogilvie: Prior to the passage of the Juvenile Justice Act, the magistrate could have ordered that youth in conflict with the law be beaten in the police station as a sentence.

It's just those things are so ingrained in us. . . . A child has to be beaten; a child has to be shouted at. A child having a voice and having feelings and having a right to express their wishes and feelings is (considered to be) new. And people think, 'Oh, we're bringing the white man rules to our society. . . .' They think that this is why the youth are going astray, because they have

more freedom and opportunities to express their wishes and feelings, which the other generations didn't, but that's a whole other debate, so I digress.

Leigh-Ann Worrell: No, I really appreciate it, Melisse, because you see this argument in other spaces, that whole idea of what truly is the colonial imprint or the neocolonial imprint on how we view our children. So, we can understand, just as Professor Adisa says, the sort of colonial legacies around how we manage children, and our relationship to them. For us to talk about children as having agency, having feelings [and] having voice, the narrative becomes that that is a neocolonial imposition: this is not who we are. Interestingly enough, our juvenile justice space, the Government Industrial School, is actually over a hundred years old, making it truly a colonial-era institution; it's the same thick walls, it's the same dormitories. The Act that just recently governed the space was centuries-old.

A lot of the literature shows that Grenada has quite an issue with youth unemployment. But when you read the research on why young people become in conflict with the law, financial gain is not often stated as a motivation. Actually, more youth are likely to say that being associated with a particular clique or gang will assist in gaining social capital. So, I was wondering in terms of your time at Grand Bacolet, and even with a sort of macro level view with your new role, do these trends still hold in Grenada, or has the rising cost of living in the Caribbean caused things to change?

Melisse Ogilvie: We did some research in 2023 [in the Y-RIE project] with a total of 25 youth in the juvenile justice system. Twelve were at Grand Bacolet, and the rest were from the community. We were trying to find out more about the offending behaviours because one of the things that we wanted to do was to ensure that our activities or programmes were very targeted to the needs of the youth. Based on the research, unemployment did not come up as a reason for offending behaviours. What we did find, however, was the role of normative beliefs, aggression, peer delinquency, of course, the ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), and, to some degree, some mental health concerns.

It's not that poverty wasn't a factor. . . . We know that unemployment is a problem here in Grenada, but for youth offending, I guess for them it wasn't a primary reason. It was all those other issues in their lives: the emotional issues, the psychosocial issues that affect them, the influence of

peer relationships, and the connection to communities where violence and crime exist. Those were the primary risk factors.

Leigh-Ann Worrell: Interesting. I was also wondering what could we make of the ideas of masculinity, especially when in speaking about the role of peer influence, and aggression.

Melisse Ogilvie: Those questions were not posed in the study, but I feel like for youth throughout region, they come from single-parent households and, well, female-headed households. Having access to male role models . . . it's not very often you find them having that. And so, for them, their own ideas of what a man should be, or what a man should do, and those sorts of things come from peers, and, of course, from outside of the home.

In addition, some of them have experienced domestic violence in the home and some sort of intimidation in school and, of course, the feeling of having to defend themselves or to protect themselves. . . . I think this is what, in my experience with young people, that's what leads them [believing] they have to be big and bad, right? And that's the normative beliefs: it's normal to have to defend yourself; it's normal to respond in an aggressive way, even though it's not helpful. They've normalized aggression and violence because of where they come from and also within the peer grouping. But, as I said, we didn't ask.

Leigh-Ann Worrell: What is the profile of a juvenile who is in conflict with the law in Grenada? Are there girls who are incarcerated or in juvenile rehabilitation centres?

Melisse Ogilvie: Yes, we do have females who commit offences. But typically, in my experience, the females who came to the juvenile centre came through the Child Protection route. They would have come to the attention of the police but were known to Child Protection already. As a matter of fact, to be admitted to the juvenile centre, you had to come through Child Protection and the High Court. You would have to prove that all other solutions failed, and so it was in the best interest of this youth now to be accommodated, and also, because of course, you're now taking away their liberties. But what we found is that for females in particular, the police charged them for maybe an assault, or running away.

Leigh-Ann Worrell: Let me just back you up for a little bit in terms of education. Are you also seeing school attrition with the youth at risk in Grenada?

Melisse Ogilvie: Several of them are underperforming with poor school attendance, poor academic performance, and, of course, poor motivation and limited support of parents too. There were some of the youth who came into the system motivated and [who got their] CXCs. Some of them also have some learning difficulties. We've also seen students who don't feel connected to the school community.

Leigh-Ann Worrell: What do we think needs to change? How do we train people to work with at-risk youth?

Melisse Ogilvie: One of the things that we've also done in preparing to implement programmes is to look at the crime hotspots. We looked at those areas where juveniles in conflict with the law tend to come from. Using police data, we also looked at where the prisoners are coming from. We're moving into interventions that we're able now to target particular communities based on the data. It's not necessarily that other communities are going to be overlooked, but we are realising that we have to have a multi-layered approach.

The government also has to be strategic if they want to eradicate or lessen youth crime. Whatever the intent of the goal is, there must be some sort of focused interventions. We've also heard of mentorship programmes. So, let's think about it. Let's be specific: how do we want to train our mentors? What are some of the interventions we want to train our mentors in so that they understand the youth? We also know that mentorship alone will not be enough. So, maybe they, on top of that, need some sort of psychosocial skill-building programme. I think this is one of the things that's part of the solution: layered, focused approaches so that you are hitting those risk factors at different levels in different ways. And maybe, for some youth, you might need two years of doing that to see progress.

Too many of our programmes are time-bound, and they are not youth-led. So, for instance, when I was at the Centre, we were able to follow a youth for a year, but we were limited in what we were able to do.

Another thing we have to do also is to upskill our counsellors. You and I

can counsel a youth, but really and truly, to address those traumatic issues, counsellors need access to proper psychological tools and being able to, you know, develop a therapeutic plan and interventions. Now, that was a huge challenge for us. Locally, we do have people who are trained therapists. So, even at the school level, the counsellors are really guidance counsellors. So, even if you're trained in therapeutic interventions, and maybe you have the advanced training, they're called guidance counsellors, so they are limited as well in what they can do with the youth. And then there's something that, for some reason, the youth do not trust counsellors in the school environment.

Of course, some parents [of at-risk youth] are unable to pay for a private counsellor, but when youth get into the juvenile justice system, they can access psychosocial counselling. If you're in Child Protection, or come through the Ministry of Social Development, there's a waiting list to get to see a counsellor. So, I think there should be an improvement in the offering of psychosocial services, not just within institutions, but externally, for our young people to have improved access to those services.

Leigh-Ann Worrell: Thinking about the transition back into the community, I've been reading some quite wonderful things about how children were supported in there to transition back into the community in Grenada. So, I wanted to know how juveniles tend to be prepared to return home, and if that takes into account the youth unemployment situation for young people in Grenada.

Melisse Ogilvie: Okay. I think we do good at mapping the way for the youth to be trying to effectively transition back into the community. I think on paper it looks good. I have had some youth who have not reoffended. Just before I left the Centre, we had a consultant working with us who calculated our recidivism rate, which was about 10%.

During their time at the Centre, we offer them remedial math and English and some skills, but we didn't have sufficient resources to really support them once they are out there. They have to have someone to be on them. But, as you said, once they get back into their life, they're not consistent. We don't have a system where, let's say, if a child has a two-year sentence, they can go home after 18 months and continue their rehabilitation. Once they serve their sentence at Grand Bacolet, there's nothing holding them to have meetings with the social worker, or to go to the counsellor. We will

help register them to go to the skills training agency, or if they have to go back to school, we make sure that they receive the subsistence to support that, but that is not enough.

Leigh-Ann Worrell: I think that even for us that's where we fall down in our mentorship programme. Our programme does not follow you that closely when you transition back into the community, and then even working alongside the transition support and welfare officers at the GIS, we see that there's only so much they can do with the time and human resources they have. Behavioural therapy really can stand in the gap to gauge whether an intervention can be successful or not. In that regard, I wanted to find out from you whether you think that a psychosocial intervention can do this work of transforming how you view the world and how you view your future within a transition period.

Melisse Ogilvie: I like to tell people to think about the habits that they want to change or stop . . . and consider what it takes to do that as an adult, even as a high-functioning one. Why are we so hypocritical and expect youth to change within a specific timeframe when the environment around them does not support that? I'm saying that just as how, when if someone's grieving, or needs some sort of therapy, there shouldn't be a timeframe on that, similarly, we should give youth time to change. A psychosocial intervention can support that [change], but, individually, the penny has to drop. There has to be an 'Aha moment', and I don't know if we can bring them to an 'A-ha moment.' It's something internal.

Melisse Ogilvie is a social care professional with over 20 years of experience specializing in child protection, juvenile justice, and early childhood development. She holds a bachelor's degree in social work from Midwestern State University and a master's in social work from Stephen F. Austin University, both in Texas. Currently, as Program Manager for Y-RIE, a USAID-funded project in Grenada, Melisse oversees the development, implementation, and evaluation of actionable, data-driven strategies to advance youth resilience to crime and violence.

Leigh-Ann Worrell is the Project Coordinator at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit. Since 2019, she has been running the mentorship programme at the Government Industrial School, a juvenile detention centre in Barbados.

Offshore Attachments:
Oil, Intimacy, and the Dutch Caribbean

WIGBERTSON JULIAN ISENIA INTERVIEWS **CHELSEA SCHIELDS**

Wigbertson Julian Isenia: *Offshore Attachments: Oil and Intimacy in the Caribbean* by Chelsea Schields offers a reexamination of the oil industry's imprint on Aruba and Curaçao during the 20th century. The book reveals how the establishment of some of the world's largest oil refineries by Standard Oil of New Jersey and Royal Dutch Shell fueled global energy demands and redefined intimate lives. Schields unpacks how oil production intersected with race, gender, and sexuality, as colonial powers and corporate interests orchestrated racial hierarchies. The book traces the islands' transformation from bustling, diverse hubs driven by industrial growth to communities marked by economic decline and mass emigration in the mid-1980s. By spotlighting how imposed norms surrounding intimacy and domesticity both enforced segregation and inadvertently created spaces for resistance and personal agency, *Offshore Attachments* enriches our understanding of the relationship between global capitalism and local life. The book already won many prizes, including the Joan Kelly Memorial Prize in Women's History and/or Feminist Theory by the American Historical Association and the Gordon K. and Sybil Lewis Award of the Caribbean Studies Association. *Offshore Attachments*, written with beautiful prose and meticulous attention to detail, reveals the overlooked intimate subtleties that have long shaped the Caribbean oil industry.

First let me congratulate you on *Offshore Attachments*. I'm very grateful for this book, which brings together different strands of scholarship: history of the Caribbean, history of sexuality, and history of fossil fuel industries. Can you share a bit about your background and what inspired you to write about the relationship between oil production and intimacy?

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000037

Chelsea Schields: My own family history made the connection between energy and intimacy clear. During the Great Depression, my U.S.-born grandfather boarded a freighter to China, where he began selling kerosene door-to-door. He spent the rest of his career working for U.S. oil companies abroad, eventually marrying and raising a family overseas – a path that was expected of many men in the industry.

While researching oil in Aruba and Curaçao, I realized his experience wasn't unique. My interest in these islands began after moving to the Netherlands – the country that colonized Aruba and Curaçao – as a teenager, when I noticed how conventional metropole-colony narratives overlooked key actors, particularly foreign fossil capital. On Aruba and Curaçao, however, this was well understood. Most islanders have deep, multigenerational ties to the massive refineries established in the early twentieth century by Shell and Standard Oil. In the archives, intimacy emerged as both a mechanism of labor control and a marker of social status – echoing the stories I grew up hearing.

WJI: The Dutch Caribbean is often overlooked in mainstream Caribbean studies. For readers who may be unfamiliar with the region, what are some key historical features of Aruba and Curaçao that set the stage for your research? What are your thoughts on its marginalization, and how do you believe its unique history and experiences can contribute to a more inclusive understanding of the Caribbean narrative?

CS: The "Dutch" Caribbean – a moniker that flattens the linguistic and cultural diversity of these islands – share a consequential past and present of Dutch colonialism. Before the arrival of oil companies, Aruba and Curaçao were profoundly shaped by colonial hierarchies of race, class, and religion – categories that were always inseparable from understandings of gender and sexuality. Similarly, and contrary to corporate narratives, oil companies did not arrive in empty societies eagerly awaiting industrialization. They encountered communities rooted in subsistence agriculture and communal land practices – forms of autonomy that were fiercely defended in the post-slavery Caribbean.

Oil companies both reinforced and reshaped existing colonial hierarchies, exploiting racialized divisions while promoting industrial labor as a means of "uplifting" the population. Curaçao's Isla refinery, built by Royal Dutch

Shell in 1915, and Aruba's refinery, which Standard Oil of New Jersey acquired and significantly expanded in the 1930s, were strategically placed a short distance from Venezuela's oil-rich Lake Maracaibo. The colonial status of the islands made them "ideal" for corporate investment. European Dutch officials and light-skinned elites also welcomed oil as an economic lifeline after abolition and as a means of promoting European-style family structures.

Multiple interests converged in making these refineries central to the islands' histories – and to the world more broadly. Stunningly, these plants became some of the largest in the world before the Second World War, ushering in the global age of oil. Yet, the Dutch Caribbean occupies a marginal position within an already marginalized region. One reason for this erasure is the way the Caribbean has been framed in global imagination. Often depicted as a tourist paradise, the region is assumed to be disconnected from industrial modernity. As Ryan Jobson has argued, the idea that the Caribbean is an "unlikely" center of petrocapitalism ignores the deep histories of racialized labor exploitation that made it a prime site for industrial projects.[1]

Language is often cited as a barrier to integrating the Dutch Caribbean into broader Caribbean studies, but I don't believe that's the main issue – languages can be learned. The deeper challenge lies in the region's "queer sovereignties," to borrow a term directly from you, Julian. Its territories don't fit neatly into postcolonial narratives.[2] But as you've shown, this very complexity makes the Dutch Caribbean a rich site of analysis. Islanders possess sharp insights into global power, capital, and resistance. By centering these histories, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of the Caribbean as a crucial site for theorizing modernity, petro-capitalism, and the afterlives of empire.

WJI: You write, "Like the substance itself, the archive of oil is at once slick and viscous. It is slippery in the sense that corporate archives remain elusive to most researchers" (p. 16). What were the greatest challenges you faced in accessing archival material for this project? Relatedly, the book discusses the "offshore" as a space of legal exception and a site of attachment. How does the concept of the "offshore" as a methodological lens challenge traditional archival practices and the ways in which we categorize and interpret historical evidence?

CS: The inaccessibility of corporate records was both a limitation and an opportunity. When these archives are accessible, they of course tend

to amplify company voices. But oil permeated everyday life in ways that extended far beyond refinery gates – hence the viscosity of oil, or its ability to stick to cultural ephemera and documents besides those authored by the corporation. In particular, wherever I found debates about sexual life, intimacy, or reproductive practice in the archive, I also found references to the immense changes wrought by oil.

This led me to look at the relationship between oil and intimacy, or how an oil economy was built through the differential regulation of race and sex. What became clear in archives in Aruba, Curaçao, the Netherlands, and the United States was that oil companies and their state allies didn't just evade taxes and labor laws – they also circumvented regulations on intimate life, from family formation to reproduction.

The concept of the "offshore" was helpful in this regard. While the term often evokes tax havens or oil rigs, spaces where laws are selectively applied to facilitate profit, in Aruba and Curaçao this appeared equally germane to the dubiously licit or expressly illegal forms of intimacy that oil companies and colonial authorities promoted in order to accumulate wealth and manage labor.

The offshore, then, allowed me to trace histories beyond the metropole-colony binary that has dominated colonial studies. It introduced fossil capital as a crucial actor and context, and it demanded that I approach the transnational not as a ready-made container but a puzzle to be resolved.

WJI: You describe how the oil industry spurred significant population growth and brought a diverse workforce to the islands. Could you discuss how this influx, primarily through the intersections of labor migration and the movement of sex workers, transformed social dynamics beyond traditional labor relations?

CS: For a long time, the literature on oil industries followed two paths. Scholars either lionized the predominantly white US-American and European company men who pursued this commodity across the world's mineral frontiers, or else they focused on male dominated labor at sites of extraction. But scholars like Rose Mary Allen, Ann Philipps, and Paula Aymer have shown that oil towns were not just populated by male laborers.[3] Women played a crucial role in social reproduction – feeding, clothing, and caring for workers, maintaining homes, and laundering clothes. My book extends

this conversation to show how oil companies and governments deliberately structured an oil economy through the organization of intimacy. Recognizing this allows us to rethink who created wealth and affirms, as feminist scholars have long argued, that sexuality and subjectivity are central to economic structures.

Oil companies, convinced that local labor was insufficient for industrial work, recruited a global workforce: Caribbean and Latin American migrants, Chinese laborers on tanker fleets and in mess halls, and Portuguese construction workers. By forcing these men to migrate alone, companies benefited in several ways: they could house them in cheaply built barracks, pay them lower wages, and deport them if they became politically active.

Yet, while companies sought to delimit migrant workers' personal ties, they also believed sexual pleasure could pacify them. The Dutch colonial government, in direct abrogation of its own stated laws, orchestrated a foreign sex worker recruitment scheme, justifying it as a necessity for maintaining productivity and labor management strategies. Simultaneously, oil companies invested in the family lives of white workers. European tradesmen, brought to construct refineries, were seen as a challenge to white colonial respectability due to their disorderly behavior in bars and gambling halls. To uphold racial privilege, companies funded the passage of white wives and children and provided them with high-quality housing. Thus, intimacy was strategically managed not only to sustain labor but also to reinforce racial hierarchies at a time when the industry was profoundly transforming these societies.

For local workers, companies pursued a different approach. When local workers were eventually hired in great numbers in the run-up to the Second World War, oil companies agreed with colonial officials and Catholic religious authorities that marital bonds and nuclear households would "discipline" these men to the industrial environment. This was not a new belief, but the company had new modes of incentivizing these ties. Thinking about these kinds of wider transformations, then, reveals two things: first, that the industry thought very carefully about the management of intimacy. And second, it widens the scope of the kinds of "relations" we study when we think about labor in the oil industry.

WJI: Throughout your work, you trace how debates over family values, erotic freedom, and even religion were mobilized to support and resist oil

company practices. Could you share concrete examples of these cultural and political contestations, such as the perspectives of organizations such as Famía Planiá (Foundation for the Promotion of Responsible Parenthood), the leftist critiques of family planning and prostitution, and discussions around "erotic liberation" as a way to reinterpret the legacy of racial slavery and the struggle for independence? How did these debates shape public perceptions of labor, exploitation, and social transformation?

CS: Caribbean people confronted industry practice from a range of political and moral positions. Some broadly agreed with the industry's efforts, albeit not always in ways wholly aligned with corporate prerogatives. We could take, for instance, the historic mobilization of Aruban women against state-facilitated sex worker migration in 1951. As mothers and wives of men working in the industry, these women embraced the paternalist discourse of oil companies and their putative promise to turn local families into respectable models of domesticity. But they turned that very discourse *against* the widely accepted practice of recruiting foreign sex workers, believing this to be a threat to newly idealized domestic lifestyles.

Similarly, family planning campaigns in both Aruba and Curaçao – both of which originated in part at the refineries – also promoted small nuclear families as a solution to what were ultimately structural issues of strategic underdevelopment and inequality caused by colonial fossil capital. When Famía Planiá opened in Curaçao in 1965, it served the entire island, but its programming was largely geared toward recently unemployed workers: it encouraged, in the words of Belinda Edmonson, the "making [of] men" by discussing responsible financial practice and reproductive restraint as panaceas to rising unemployment following autonomation at the refineries.[4] This, too, was an echo of company practice and discourse – but this time as a way to mitigate the *bust* of oil.

Not everyone agreed with these moral positions. Some of the most compelling sources I worked with were the writings of anti-imperial leftists in Curaçao, which challenge assumptions about the sexual politics of global decolonization. While many in the Global South criticized family planning as a tool of population control, leftists in Curaçao and the Caribbean diaspora took a nuanced stance. They acknowledged the challenges of overpopulation on small islands but insisted that reproductive freedom must be accompanied

by investments in education, healthcare, and decent wages. They saw collective organizing for these rights as an act of sovereignty. They argued that sexual unfreedom – manifest in coercive labor regimes, exploitative migration policies, and the policing of nonmarital and nonprocreative intimacy – was central to racial and economic oppression. True liberation, they contended, required transforming not just economic structures but intimate relationships as well.

WJI: The book concludes with the sale or closure of the refineries in the 1980s and the mass emigration to Europe that followed. What was the impact of these developments on the emerging diaspora?

CS: For decades, the refineries on Aruba and Curaçao faced mounting competition from newer facilities and, following the "oil shocks" of 1973–74 and 1979–80, a global excess of refining capacity. In 1985, Exxon (formerly Standard Oil) shuttered the plant on Aruba and Shell sold the Isla refinery, leaving it operational but with just a skeleton crew.

Oil companies were shrewdly aware that the profits of oil and colonialism flowed unevenly to the Netherlands and the United States. They knew that the Netherlands had a more robust social safety net than what existed in the deliberately underdeveloped mono-export economies of Aruba and Curaçao. And so, Exxon actually encouraged migration to the Netherlands as a way to mitigate the effects of their sudden retreat. Because people born in the Caribbean territories of the Netherlands were and are Dutch citizens, migration to the Netherlands became a way to access the full economic benefits of citizenship that were not otherwise available in Aruba and Curaçao.

Despite the ostensible equality of citizenship, however, European Dutch welfare providers quickly began to disaggregate Caribbean-born Dutch citizens moving to the Netherlands, fixating especially on Caribbean family repertoires. They portrayed so-called "matrifocal families" as inherently tied to welfare dependency. In a willful and racially-motivated form of erasure and hypocrisy, however, Dutch Caribbean families were scrutinized at precisely the same time that European Dutch women also untangled marriage and reproduction – a perceived victory of the sexual revolution. By tethering Caribbean kinship to welfare reliance, European Dutch policymakers helped fuel the erosion of the welfare state in the 1990s. Yet, Caribbean Dutch citizens actively resisted this narrative. They contested both the dismantling

of social programs and the racialized assumptions underpinning social science research, calling on the Dutch state to reckon with its own racism and its colonial entanglements.

So even with the collapse of the oil economy, the same racist sentiments that animated its rise appeared in new ways to manage the effects of its decline.

WJI: Given the book's focus on the past, what lessons can be learned from the history of oil in the Caribbean to imagine a more just and sustainable future?

CS: The history of oil in the Caribbean underscores how fossil fuel economies have shaped not only energy systems but also social relations, identities, and desires. As energy humanities scholars have shown, oil is not just a commodity. It is embedded in our ideals about what constitutes a good and successful life. I hope then that the book can spur on some of that imaginative work: if oil shapes our social imaginaries, how can we begin to rethink meaningful sociality without it?

Crucially, another lesson is that any transition away from oil must account for the uneven distribution of benefits and harms. In the Caribbean, the offshore economy ensured that oil wealth flowed to corporate headquarters in the Global North while toxicity, economic instability, and racialized governance remained. A just transition must not replicate this dynamic; instead, it should center the material needs and communal vitality of those who have historically borne the costs of the fossil economy.

Notes

1. See Ryan Cecil Jobson, "Black Gold in El Dorado Frontiers of Race and Oil in Guyana," *Items: Insights from SSRC*, January 8, 2019, https://items.ssrc.org/race-capitalism/black-gold-in-el-dorado-frontiers-of-race-and-oil-in-guyana/; and Jobson, *The Petro-State Masquerade: Oil, Sovereignty, and Power in Trinidad and Tobago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024).
2. Wigbertson Julian Isenia, "Queer Sovereignties: Reimagining Sexual Citizenship from the Dutch Caribbean," in *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism*, eds. Chelsea Schields and Dagmar Herzog (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 274–82.

3. Rose Mary Allen, "An Intersectional Approach to Understanding the Social Life of Female, British Caribbean, Immigrant Domestic Workers in Twentieth Century Curaçao: Controlling Sexual Morality," in *Dissolving Disciplines: Tidal Shifts in the Study of Language, Literatures and Cultures of the Dutch Caribbean and Beyond*, ed. Nicholas Faraclas, et al. (Curaçao and Puerto Rico: University of Curaçao and Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2018), 113TK; Paula Aymer, *Uprooted Women: Migrant Domestics in the Caribbean* (Westport: Praeger, 1997); Ann E. Philipps, "De migratie van engelssprekende dienstboden naar Curaçao (1940–1960)," in eds. Richenel Ansano, Joceline Clemencia, Jeanette Cook, Eithel Martis, *Mundu Yama Sinta Mira: Womanhood in Curaçao* (Willemstad: Fundashon Publikashon Curaçao, 1992),
4. Belinda Edmondson, *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

Three Generations: Chef Darian Bryan

OPAL PALMER ADISA INTERVIEWS **DARIAN BRYAN**

Opal Palmer Adisa: What factors made you decide to be a chef?

Chef Bryan: Back in Jamaica, my mom had a cook shop. I have to explain that to Americans. A cook shop is a takeout Jamaican spot. We served oxtail, curry goat, jerk chicken, steam fish, all that stuff. That's how I grew up, helping my mom in the cook shop. She used to have me do stuff that she didn't want to do, like break the crab claws and scale fish. Lemme tell you, I hate scaling fish, man. It's the worst – scaling 200 pounds of fish wasn't a good feeling as a kid growing up. That's how my cooking started. My mom left Jamaica when I was 15, and I took over the cook shop. I came here when I was 20, and I told my sister, "I wanna be a chef. Put me in culinary school." And that's where it started, mon.

OPA: Where in Jamaica did you grow up? Where was the cook shop?

CB: Salt River Road, Clarendon.

OPA: Who inspired you most on your culinary journey?

CB: My grandmother used to cook too; she was the cook of the house. Saturdays were my favorite day because I's always in the kitchen with her and she always gimme the cock soup, you know, the Grace cock soup? And we used to like lick the bag out because of the salt, you know, and it's so tasty. So, I used to always watch Granny sweating over that pot every Saturday and every day. That was at home and at the restaurant. My mom, she did all of that stuff.

OPA: What would you say is your philosophy as a chef?

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000038



CB: My philosophy . . . the way I do one thing is the way I do everything. I dress up in the kitchen. I dress up in the street. Appearance is everything to me. Like when I show up, I show up, you know? I mean, you gotta stand out. And my thing is always taking the chef from the back of the house, put them in the front. I've been on this journey for a long time. I did culinary school for four years, hospitality and all that fun stuff. I'm like, why am I spending all my life doing this in school and be locked away? So I decided, "you know what? People need to see me." So I'm front and center, like the space you're seeing right now. I created this. This is where I cook. My little studio that I built.

OPA: So for you it's the food, but it's also the chef and how the food looks, how it's displayed, right?

CB: Yes, it's a package. I tell people all the time. They're like, "why you so expensive?" I'm like, "because you're paying for all of it." I've got custom jackets. You can see them on Instagram. I got a guy who makes all my suits for me and all my custom chef jackets. I'm like, "you're paying for all of that. You're paying for the swag."

OPA: It's a nice look. Where did you study to be a chef?

CB: Leme backtrack a little. My first job in the US was at Denny's diner. Up until then, I never seen pancake a day of my life. Never seen bacon. Where I grew up, there's no electricity, there's no running water. We have to go to river every day to get water and all that fun stuff. So when I came here, first job, they teach me about American food. Then I went to the community college, ECC downtown for culinary arts, and while I was in school, I started

my program called the Caribbean Cuisine because when I was in school, nobody was cooking Caribbean food. I wanted to bring something new to the table. People loved it. I used to go back and teach every semester. Then I went to Buffalo State for hospitality management, which is where I learned the business side of stuff. So I pretty much teach both the back and front of the house. There's nothing you can say or do about the kitchen or the restaurant business because I've seen it all. Service is my thing though, hospitality. When you leave any of my restaurants, it's just like, "wow!" It's not just the food, but the way I make people feel. That's my thing. That's what keeps them coming back.

OPA: What would you say is unique and special about Caribbean food? How do you share this uniqueness with your clients?

CB: I can talk on Jamaican food because that's my background. Jamaican food is unique because of the techniques and the flavors; you can't mistake jerk for anything else. It's just in its own category of deliciousness. And people just love Jamaican food. When I open my Jamaican restaurant, people ask "Is there a need for Jamaican food in Buffalo?" I'm like, "not really. I'm gonna create it though." People love Jamaica, right. They love the culture, they love the music, they love the Red Stripe, and they love the food. Most importantly, the food man. It's the spices and the bold flavors and the technique, like the ackee and the saltfish, a tradition to Jamaica. Jerk! Yeah.



OPA: I often wonder who first decided to put ackee and saltfish together? It's perfect!

CB: My thing is taking all those classic dishes and change them.

OPA: You're in Buffalo, New York, so do you grow any of the spices that you use?

CB: It's tough in Buffalo. I try over and over to have a nice garden outside. Buffalo's like the coldest place in this world, As soon as winter comes, stuff just die. But right now I'm growing basil, oregano, chives, and a lot of sage. A whole lot of sage and thyme. I got lavender, too, which I don't really use in cooking too much. It's just for tea.

OPA: What's your shopping technique? How did you decide on the menu that you have?

CB: Shopping techniques. What I do as a private chef is very unique. Last night I had three people in here. Tonight I got seven, and my guests make their own menu. It's not the same thing every night. Every night it's completely different because it's whatever you want to eat, I'll cook.

OPA: So it's not a regular restaurant then?

CB: Yeah, this is not a regular restaurant. It's private dining. My other restaurant, there's a two-in-one concept. In the daytime, we got a fast, casual Jamaican takeout that we know and love, and at night we have the upscale fine dining Jamaican restaurant.

OPA: What does that upscale consist of?

CB: We got this thing called a jerk experience. The head chef comes out with a cart. He chops up jerk chicken, jerk pork. And he serves the jerk on (I got this custom made) the Jamaica map. We have a lot of experiences. For example, there's Rasta Ramen. That name was inspired by my son because his sister loves ramen noodles. And one day, when we were traveling to Toronto, we're talking about ramen, and my son says, "Dad, for your new restaurant you should have a dish called Rasta Ramen." I'm like, "I like that." And we just cook this dish. But this dish is fun because the broth is cooked on the table right next to you in a vacuum pot; it's like a chemist bath. People love it. We have oxtail ragu, we have, escoveitch sea bass that we do like a deconstructed escoveitch sea bass. We got a coffee rum steak, a Blue Mountain steak with a jerk compound butter. We have an ackee and saltfish spring roll, we got cassava fries. That's something new. I'm like, "How can we use ackee and saltfish in the restaurant and elevate it a little bit?" So we did that. We have the island ceviche. We got the lamb ribs. I was trying to find goat ribs, but I

couldn't find any. We have lamb ribs. We got like a plantain hummus.

OPA: So, what would you say is your signature dish, and what is your process of developing it?

CB: You know, that's a good question. I believe it constantly changing because I hate to sound like this guy, but I do a lot of stuff well. Whatever I put my hand on, it's always magic.

OPA: Why did you come up with a mini restaurant concept where people decide what they want to eat and you fix it for them?

CB: It's a chef's table, like a boutique. When I first started out, I was doing popup restaurants, partnering with small businesses to use their space. The tables and chair are arranged in a fine dining style, and I'll cook on a table right in front of them. Every month I would host at a different location. Sometimes, I'm on a farm, I'm in a yoga studio, wherever the business is, I'll do it right there. And then I'm like, "I need a home base." And then I used to do a lot of like brand deals. People would send me product and I have to cook and talk about it. I used to borrow all my clients' nice kitchens for the videos. They're kind and nice enough to say yes because they get to eat the food afterwards. Then, I'm like, "I need to create my own space where I can do my cooking videos and also dinner parties at the same time." So, the wife and I designed this space and build it out.

OPA: Is your wife a chef too?

CB: No, but she quit her job four years ago to come on board with me. She does all the behind the scene management stuff.

OPA: What ingredients or techniques have you incorporated into your cuisine that you wouldn't have used if you were back home?

CB: I would say saffron. I never even heard of it until I come here. I use it a lot because I do a lot of Spanish and French dishes. I use it a lot for paella, for Rasta Pasta, that's very popular here in Buffalo, also jerk Alfredo, combining the Italian and Jamaican together. I didn't grow up seeing celery either. Like all of these stuff is just so new. Sometimes I do interviews on TV and people will dog me out because they're like, "You make it sound like Jamaica don't

have anything." I'm like, "Listen, I never seen any of this stuff growing up in the country. We didn't have any of that stuff." It's just like the regular stuff we grew, we eat. Techniques. I never used to cut onions on a board. I'd cut it in my hand. And searing meat. For example, my mom, when she cook oxtail back in the day, she never used to sear a hundred pounds of oxtail. You know, I mean, she just dump it in a pot and pressure it, but me, now coming here and noticing the techniques that enhance flavour, I do it differently. We cook like 500 pound of oxtail a week. My staff have to sear each and every one of them. Braising. I learned folding in stuff instead of mixing. Slicing, dicing, and not just chopping everything. It's much easier when we have everything in front of you.

OPA: Are there any chefs who are mentors? I met you through Alexander Smalls, who's a great African American chef who has traveled all over the world. I was in Dubai with him for the World's Fair. Are you a member of a chef society or a chef organization? Who are some of the chefs that inspire you?

CB: I'm glad you asked that, but my answer is gonna be no because I'm so different from most chefs you're gonna ever see and interview. My style and my flair, a lot of chefs don't go for that. I pretty much just stay in my own lane because a lot of them are against everything I do. I wear jewelry in the kitchen. I wear a fedora, I got custom jackets. I love cologne. So it's just everything that's a red flag for the kitchen, that's what I do. I don't feel bad about it. So, people who I look up to all throughout my career, like my instructors, big-time chefs, they don't really mess with me because I'm so different. But there is really one guy, Gordon Ramsey. He's one of the only chef that I really like, admire throughout my career, watch his videos every day. He can cook, man. And his personality comes through the tv. I'm like, "I wanna be that guy one day. I wanna be the Jamaican Gordon Ramsey, you know, because he's an entertainer, and he can cook." That's what I'm striving towards.

OPA: How do you blend the rich flavors of Caribbean cuisine with the local food culture of Buffalo? And can you describe a dish that exemplifies this fusion?

CB: All the stuff I grew up having fresh and at my fingertip, I don't have here. So, I just gotta be creative. For example, callaloo, we can't get it fresh here. Ackee, we can't get it fresh here. So we have a cheese and callaloo dip in the restaurant. It's like an artichoke dip, and we serve it with cassava fries. We have a garlic parmesan, cassava fries. A bunch of those stuff are on my website and Instagram. You just gotta become creative. You can't just cry and say, oh, we don't have this. We have this, what can we do with this, so people know that we're still trying to stay within the Jamaican culture and provide the same Jamaican flavors.

OPA: Do you come to Jamaica and do demonstrations or guest-chefing at any restaurant?

CB: I would love to, but I don't. I've been reaching out to every hotel I could possibly reach out to, but no bite so far. Which is crazy. Whenever I go to Jamaica, I'm amazed. I'm surprised how many Jamaicans know me. I'm like, "Oh, wow! That's pretty cool." And whenever people from Buffalo go down to Jamaica and mention my name to like an Uber driver, they will like, pull up my Instagram or whatever because Jamaica's so small. And when you're doing stuff on a national level, people will pick it up. Like, for example, Maran commercial. It's nationwide; it is in Mexico, it's in Canada, it's all over. So all these Jamaicans find me; they reach out to me; they want to connect. It's a good feeling. I tell my wife that I would love to do more stuff in Jamaica because that's my home.

OPA: I understand that you are collaborating on a book. When is that coming out?

CB: Do you know Von Stafford Gray? He's a Jamaican. He's the one that's doing the book. It was supposed to be done last year. I'm still trying to figure out what's going on with that. I have to touch base with him.

OPA: What are the biggest challenges you face as a Caribbean chef in a predominantly non-tropical environment? And how have you adapted to sourcing ingredients or managing the different food preferences?

CB: I'm Jamaican. So it's like from one extreme to another, moving to Buffalo. With the weather, it's ridiculous, right? I just have to adjust. When I first

started out, people didn't really trust me because they're like, "Who is this kid?" They always ask, "Can I try your food first before we book you?" Once, I pulled up to this dinner party, and these folks saw me when they opened the door. It was me and another black guy, Dwayne, and they're like, "Oh, are you guys the DJs?" They don't trust me as a black chef to like, "Oh, can we trust you to do our daughter's rehearsal dinner?" I'm like, "What do you mean?" They always come down on my price too. I'm like, "The price is the price. If you go to those big restaurants and they tell you the price, you're not gonna say, why should you pay so much? So why you wanna tell me that?" Oh, my price is too much. That's the biggest challenge being a black chef here in Buffalo. You gotta constantly prove yourself over and over again to people for them to finally believe that. Listen, I do what I do and what I do, you're not gonna find anywhere else. I'm bringing the swag, the personality, and the flavor and the service, and you want all of it. So that's the challenge for me, just constantly having to prove myself to people so they can trust me.

OPA: What do you like most about being a chef?

CB: I like bringing people together. That's the reason why I started my dinner parties, because – you can see it's a big long table in the back right here – and it's like family. Food is love. Food brings people together, and I just love the conversations. I just love to see the joy on people face when they enjoy my food, man. That's why I didn't wanna be locked away in the back of the house. I create something where I can watch the folks eat and just get to know them. I love taking care of people, I love the food, the culture, and all that fun stuff. The food is rare in Buffalo. Not many people know much about Jamaican food; they heard about Jamaica; they've been there before. But with me bringing all these flavors and the fusion of food here to Buffalo, people, it's just like, "Wow, very receptive! Ooh, this is awesome." And they make it seem like I'm some type of savior in this area for Jamaican food. My plan is to educate people more about it. Many people always think Jamaican food is so spicy, not approachable. But my job is to spread the love that way. Listen, a little bit goes a long way. For example, jerk. They are afraid of jerk 'cause it's so spicy. But, I just see myself expanding, teaching people about the food 'cause I just love my Jamaican food and its culture.

BOOK REVIEWS

Understanding SELF in the Anglophone Caribbean

REVIEW BY F S J LEDGISTER

Brian Meeks, *After the Postcolonial Caribbean: Memory, Imagination, Hope*. London: Pluto Press, 2023. 214 + x p.

AFTER MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY OF SCHOLARSHIP and activism, there can be little doubt that Brian Meeks is one of the most important contributors to the self-understanding of the Anglophone Caribbean. In this collection of essays – conference lectures and journal articles – he seeks, as the subtitle defines in brief, to connect the past to what he hopes will be a better world.

While the subtitle summarizes the content in three words, the title raises the question of defining the history of West Indian independence at a point when persons born on the independence days of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago are, at the time of writing, sixty-one years old, and the people running government, commerce, and industry in the region have little connection to, and certainly no experience of, the colonial epoch. Words and phrases such as "postcolonial," "recently decolonized," and "decolonial" have no real meaning any more. We are past the postcolonial, and the fundamental issue is in what direction we are going.

Meeks is hopeful that the younger countries of the Caribbean will find a path to a better life for their peoples, but long experience indicates that achieving this will be difficult. He is not, however, pessimistic. The first half of the volume is entitled "Memory" and, obviously, points to the past of the early post-independence era; the second half, entitled "Imagining," suggests possibilities that could overcome the stagnation of much of the past six decades. His introduction is written under the Naipaulesque subtitle "A Bend in History's River," a heading which suggests a guarded optimism.

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000039

The introduction includes an overview of the Caribbean present, and a call to rethink and reanalyze that present. It also considers the question of how to overcome the continuing domination of the region by external powers and international capitalism.

The first section, "Remembering," begins with a brief essay, "Reminiscing in Black, Gold, and Green," the colors of the Jamaican flag, situating Meeks himself in the history of post-independence Jamaica. This begins, appropriately enough, with a question of immense interest to this reviewer, an interrogation of the author's own authenticity as a Jamaican because of his having been born abroad.

This is followed by a chapter analyzing the 1970s in Jamaica through examination of the emerging genre of dub poetry, with more academically conventional verse, including that of the author himself, also considered. Meeks closes the chapter with a brief discussion of his, most regrettable in this reviewer's eyes, abandonment of poetry at the end of the 1980s.

This is followed by an examination of the political thought of Edna Manley, generally thought of as an artist of national self-expression and mentor to a generation of writers and artists. He raises the questions of how she influenced both the intellectual development of the People's National Party, Jamaica's oldest political party, and that of her sons Douglas and Michael, particularly the latter.

The next chapter is also devoted to the politics of a foundational figure in West Indian culture, the Barbadian novelist George Lamming. Lamming was, Meeks states, "with little dissension, the most consciously political" Anglo-Caribbean writer of the post-World War II generation (95). Lamming is considered in the context of the era of change – from colony to post-colony – in the West Indies that his long life spanned. The author concludes that Lamming sought to "fold together two discourses," that of self and meaning, and the critique of capitalism (109).

The chapter following, "Jamaican Roads Not Taken, or a Big 'What If' in Stuart Hall's Life," examines the 1960s and 1970s from both the perspective of an active participant in the radical and revolutionary politics of that era and the possible perspective of the foundational cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall had he taken a greater interest than he actually had in the politics of his native Jamaica.

The second part of the volume, "Imagining," begins with a chapter applying

Hall's thought to the possible futures of the Caribbean through examination of a political text, *The Kilburn Manifesto*, co-written by Hall. Although *Kilburn* was an intervention in the politics of the United Kingdom, Meeks applies its principles to analysis of the Caribbean present. He concludes by considering the possibility of "more human, more environmentally sensible, and more radical alternatives for the mid- to long-term future, *if there is to be one*" (italics added) (144).

The next chapter considers the concept of hegemony in "the Trumpian moment" (145). The author's worry that the absence of "a vibrant new set of ideas" from the center and left, the United States, and the countries over which it exercises hegemony risks the "domination of dangerous men with messianic messages" (162).

The chapter following raises questions of hegemony, and considers, again from the angle of the historical experience of the author's lifetime, the possibility of hope for the Caribbean, the "flotsam and jetsam on the riptide of a capitalist system in existential crisis" (175). Meeks calls urgently for reform and regional cooperation to create true hope for the Caribbean.

The concluding chapter, "On the Question of Optimism in Troubled Times: Revolution, Tragedy, and Possibility in Caribbean History, begins with a reconsideration of "the long Caribbean seventies," the period of radical possibility between 1968 and 1983. This involves, inter alia, interrogation of the thought of David Scott, and the replacement of "the romantic, progressive" (187) view of" Caribbean history with a "tragic sensibility" (188). Meeks counters Scott with an argument that the possibility of revolution should not be abandoned.

With that tentative, yet hopeful, conclusion Brian Meeks, having analyzed the Pandora's Box of the Caribbean of his lifetime, leaves us with the possibility that the fabled box still contains hope. This reviewer's own hope is that Meeks's optimism in the face of a history of failure and defeat will be justified in a more hopeful, human, and just future.

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Who are the Kalinagos of Dominica?

REVIEW BY PHILIP NANTON

Resistance Refuge Revival: The Indigenous Kalinagos of Dominica, Lennox Honychurch, Papillote Press, 2024, ISBN 978-1-7391303-2-9 282pp. 15.99 GB pounds

HISTORIAN AND ANTHROPOLOGIST LENNOX HONYCHURCH'S DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE of the society and history of Dominica is probably unrivalled. His commitment to the study and cultural enhancement of Dominican society in all its forms is legendary and needs little elaboration. In his most recent book, *Resistance Refuge Revival: The Indigenous Kalinagos of Dominica,* Honychurch turns his attention to the historical development of the Kalinagos in that island state. He brings together a wealth of information that is clearly expressed and that the general reader would otherwise find difficult to access. The text will also be an important reference book for readers seeking to understand the changing pattern of Kalinago cultural practice and social incorporation of the community into Dominican society. As one would expect of a story that began as a doctoral thesis at Oxford University, the text is meticulously researched, well documented and clearly argued. Essentially the author explores the question, how has the survival and adaptation of this community contributed to the shaping of Dominican society?

The Kalinagos can be described as a creolised community of Amerindian, African and European backgrounds, which originated in an identifiable pre Columbian lifestyle. This included independent language and belief systems, and regular material practices focused on sea faring nomadism, hunting and fishing, inter island family connections, and trading relations. Although they held out against colonial encroachment, the imbalance of British military power ranged against the Kalinagos in the late eighteenth century battlegrounds of St Vincent was described by the historian, Robin Fabel, as taking "a blowtorch to incinerate a wasp." (Fabel, R F A , *Colonial Challenges: Britons, Native Americans and Caribs, 1759–1775,* University Press of Florida, Gainsville, 2000,196) When the second so called Carib War

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000040

in St Vincent concluded, the Kalinago sued for peace with the British. The battle-scared remnants who opposed the British land grab were rounded up and held in the small island of Balliceau where many died, before being shipped off to Honduras.

Drawing first on recent archeological discussion about pre Columbian artefacts, then later French and British colonial sources, Honychurch traces this story through the specific case of the 'Kalinagos of Dominica', from their precolonial communal, nomadic lifestyle to the mixture of trade, warfare and delaying tactics by which they attempted to slow down colonial – essentially British and French – intrusion into the Windward Islands in the region. Three of his middle chapters trace the material lifestyle of the community by describing their dominant cultural practices of sea faring trade, making canoes, basket weaving and cassava growing. After early periods of resistance and withdrawal, Honychurch attributes what he perceives as the Kalinago revival to the creation of the Carib Reserve in 1903 by the island's then British Administrator, Henry Hesketh Bell. This process notably merits a chapter to itself. Honychurch's use of 'revival' as a key term in his three-part title suggests a trajectory that culminates in a process of communal recreation around the 'imagined' idea of Kalinago indigeneity, creolisation notwithstanding.

It appears that land holding rights became a key feature of this revival, eventually enabling full community participation in Dominica's local government structure. Beyond this achievement, Honychurch's final chapter presents a diverse range of indicators – local and international – that paint a positive picture of Kalinago societal 'upliftment' through participation and inclusion in the society, reflected in formal education, participation in tourism and the revival of indigenous knowledge and practices. Kalinago descended individuals now hold the highest formal office of state and lead the official political opposition.

In framing Kalinago history as ultimately an onward and upward story, an important question arises. Why is it important for the social history of the Kalinago, from sea faring nomadism to creolisation in Dominica, to be framed as one of national incorporation? In other words, when and to what extent did an essentially renegade creolised community resistant to colonial control and direction, become incorporated into the body politic of Dominica? A mark of becoming colonially civilised is the abandonment of

your language and acceptance of the language of the coloniser. According to Honychurch, Dominica's last remaining speakers of the Kalinago language died around 1930. In this way an essential feature of a more distinct culture was quietly lost.

A second question that arises might be who, in the Dominica story, emerges as dominant? Is it simply French or British colonialists and free wheeling planters seeking to control the land? Or might it be a more insidious form of dominion, the imposition of a sedentary lifestyle? From this perspective, the role of Henry Hesketh Bell in championing the 'Carib reserve' settlement was perhaps somewhat more questionable than Honychurch allows. Bell's admittedly well-meaning concern for 'stability of land tenure for the Kalinagos' could be considered as the final nail in the coffin of a nomadic sea based society, by forcing it to become a sedentary one. 'Resistance', another key term in Honychurch's title, was evident as recently as the 1930s in the fact that ten canoes were still trading with the French islands. However, the emphasis on revival plays down this element in favour of 'fortifying concepts of territory and identity' particularly since Independence in 1978.

What is missing from Honychurch's approach, with its exclusive focus on Dominica, is what Atlantic historian Tessa Murphy calls the 'archipelagic' perspective, encompassing the wider Windward islands. (*The Creole Archipelago: Race and Borders in the Colonial Caribbean,* University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021). In this perspective, incorporation is never complete but always shot through with rogue elements. I would argue that, in the process of promoting contemporary island nationalism, this perspective is lost. Murphy's vision of historically 'overlapping borderlands' could be applied imaginatively to the modern Caribbean, with obvious implications for Honychurch's story of the Kalinago.

To illustrate some of the rogue elements that exist in tension with nationalism, Dominica's longstanding postcolonial patterns of outward migration could be seen as a sign of dissent to aspirations of unity. Census statistics for Dominica indicate that since the 1980s Dominica's population has remained static at around 70,000 people, largely due to emigration. This engrained push towards freedom of movement is a rogue element that undermines the sedentary culture imposed by metropolitan colonialism and inherited and maintained by postcolonial governments. I am thinking here not only of formal passport-based emigration, but of the advantage that

speaking Creole offers Dominicans as an unofficial passport to Martinique or Guadeloupe, and ultimately, perhaps, to France. Could this not be seen as an example of 'overlapping borderlands', a world-view bequeathed by the Kalinago, in the 21st century context? These minor cavils, however, in no way undermine Honychurch's manifest commitment to telling the story of this under-researched community.

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Recovering the Caribbean Mother of Malcolm X

REVIEW BY CAROLE BOYCE DAVIES

Merle Collins, *Ocean Stirrings.* Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2023. 428 pp.

ON READING MERLE COLLINS'S FORMIDABLE NEW WORK *Ocean Stirrings*, and like many who has previously read The Autobiography of Malcolm X (1964), the recognition of a glaring/gendered conceptual omission in reading practices re-appeared. Already knowing the classic story of Malcolm's dynamic rise to global recognition as an African-American Black radical thinker, leader and activist coupled with his tragic betrayal and assassination, propels one quickly past the important introductory chapter of his autobiography which describes his mother's Caribbean origins. Instead, the reader is captivated by subsequent chapters that provide the details of his transformation from a street-wise youth to Minister Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam, to El Hajj Malik el Shabazz, and finally "our shining black prince" as Ossie Davis described him in his eulogy. Indeed, it is that desire to get to all the major triumphs at the core of Malcolm X's legendary existence which moves readers quickly past that now important beginning chapter. Yet, it is a common tendency recognized by those who are conscious of and committed to studying women's intellectual, creative and political lives. Women's life stories, often themselves heroic, remain shockingly erased, marginalized or overlooked until brought back to presence by a deliberate process of recovery. *Ocean Stirrings* is the story of precisely such a recovery of Louise Langdon Little, the Caribbean mother of Malcolm X, now brought back to full recognition in this work by Merle Collins.

I returned to that first chapter of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as I began to read *Ocean Stirrings* and the details of the life of Malcolm's Grenadian mother were all there in summary form. I reflected on Jan Carew's *Ghosts in Our Blood. With Malcolm X in Africa, England and the Caribbean* (1994) and Erik McDuffie's paper and documentation of Malcolm's mother from his

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000041

historical study of the UNIA in the Midwest (presented at "Global Visions of Freedom: New Perspectives on Black Women & Internationalism. Brown University. April 5–6, 2024. Brown University, 2024). We learn that the woman who became Malcolm's mother was actually as involved in UNIA political activity as was his father and indeed was also central to the transmission of the values of Black nationalism. This brief chapter provides the basic material that Merle Collins's *Ocean Stirrings* uses to recenter and bring back to life the importance of Louise Langdon Little. To achieve this, she re-creates her story in multiple ways, using multiple archival techniques: historical, contextual, cultural and imaginative.

While historical emphasis has been placed on Malcolm's father and his suspicious death in the Midwest as formative and rudimentary in Malcolm's political consciousness, in *Ocean Stirrings,* we also recognize Earl Little as a complicated figure, a minister thwarted by US racism even as he remained committed to political projects, but also as a man physically and emotionally abusive at times. This particular detail of abuse is also documented in Malcolm X's autobiography. What *Ocean Stirrings* presents instead is the revivifying of a narrative of a woman also important in the history of another great man. Hers was a story waiting to be told in its entirety. We learn that Malcolm's mother all along was the one to maintain the family after his father's demise; that she too was a victim of the state's control and machinations which robbed her of a full life and her children and also incarcerated her; that her beginnings in Grenada have to be accounted for in order to provide Malcolm's and their full historical context; that her story is also one of Caribbean migration and consequent loss of community; that trauma can render one voiceless. As happens in the biographies of black women, a writer of a subsequent generation recovers, re-configures and re-presents that voice and therefore that story.

Royal Readers

Ocean Stirrings is a book organized into five large sections. **Part 1: Grenada Beginnings** is organized into 41 chapters which create a beginning in 1896 in Grenada and into which a great deal of the historical research is placed. The author creates a possible family story for young Louise re-imagining her with grandparents conscious of their African heritage; and the complicated

story of what could have happened to her absent mother who, like young girls in that time, were always the desire and victims of plantation owners, as had slave masters in the generations before them. Across the Americas, the progeny become the mixed but nonetheless racially-subordinated population to which Louise Langdon belonged. For little girl Louise, Merle Collins creates a fictional biography in which the care and protection of grandparents like her Ma, provided that intense and deep love that guided and protected children born out of these difficult circumstances, always with the determination to see them become their best, within the contours of what was available at that time. A critical component in that drive to become the best was ensuring the schooling of the next generation was central even though what was available was a colonial education in which the eponymous *Royal Readers* marked the British educational model transported to the Caribbean. The name *Royal Readers* indeed says it all as these colonial processes were sanctioned by the British royal family who were also deeply involved in plantation slavery and its effects. The result was a generation which learned everything about British history and literature and became adults who could recite obscure poems which were central to the colonial educational system and its valorizing of that same colonizing power.

Merle Collins has described in other places examples from her own family being steeped in this British colonial knowledge system and has created poems that also captured the ways that her grandmother happily recited these British colonial lessons. That entire first section of Grenada Beginnings then is loaded with perhaps too much of this history which would have been lived by Louise during her childhood. Collins develops this section of her book via these stories and more detail, giving us a thorough immersion in the Royal Readers, via the little girl Louise, who is described as becoming a star student, which meant, in that context, one fully informed and entrenched in that same British colonial education system. What we also get simultaneously is the history and geography central to that colonial period.

Still, the resisting reader feels overwhelmed by this colonial immersion which seems to go on interminably broken only sporadically with lessons from Ma until we get finally to a budding West Indian nationalism from T.A. Marryshow in Chapter 33 which finally brings us to a time that contemporary readers re-connect, in particular a following chapter "1915–1916 – Garvey and Marryshow." Finally, we come to the consciousness that another world was

possible outside of colonial control. Her uncle Eero, who migrates ahead of her to Canada, is hopeful about his own migration, his identity and already has a Black consciousness which imagines a future that is much larger than what the island can provide and is one of the connecting points the author creates to take us to the bridge to a larger global context and engagement with Garvey/UNIA movement in North America that migration provides.

The historical sweep that *Ocean Stirring* provides for this section begins with her birth in 1896 and ends in 1917 on the eve of departure of young Louise, renamed Oseyan by the author, for Canada. The selected name itself is interesting as it also echoes the title *Ocean Stirrings*. A lovely poem as "Preview 1917: On the Way to Canada" opens the book:

> I turn to the ocean
> That swallowed my ancestors
> I stand on deck
> Dare the waves to be calm
> I'm here again, Atlantic . . .
>
> I want to listen to what the ocean says
> Whisper to me, ocean
> I want to find a way to tell my story . . .

It is both the author's meditation as she begins this important narrative as it is another immersion in the Atlantic which has been the theoretical-historical-poetic muse of so many writers from the Americas. But it also takes us to the movement also away from the Caribbean. Many studies have revealed the impetus for migration from the Caribbean: the colonially-limited educational system meant being consigned to life within the laboring class, already built into how far one could go in the British colonial hierarchies of the time. Secondary schools at that time of Louise Langdon and until independence in the 1960s were created largely for children of the colonizers to prepare them for further education in England. Yet as with all of these outward migrations, there is a clear ending of a kind of Edenic experience which we experience through the girl Oseyan, which the author handles with a touch of magic realism which overlaps with the grandmother's passing. Still, Ma becomes the imagined audience through which the story is communicated.

Part Two: Letters to Ma 1917–1919 develops this aspect of her story using the epistolary mode. This chosen way of developing this history via internal

communications, actual and imagined letters or "talking letters" as the author (215) describes them. It is a combination of journalling, reflecting and creating an imagined audience to capture these failed dreams of migration. The gap between the expectation of the dream of migration and its actuality dominate this section. Beginning with a goodbye letter to her grandmother: "Ma, I am on a boat – going to Canada (219)," each letter in this group gets its own name: "Memory Letter," "Sea Letter," "Listening Letter," "Decision Letter" until we get to "Letter: I married him." Collins here is explicit about the reference to the 1847 *Jane Eyre* story as had Jean Rhys before her in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). We already know from each of these stories that the ending is less than positive. Deliberately providing this intertextual reading of prior texts in which women lose their independence through marriage in earlier periods linger over the text as it leads us to the next section: **Part III: The United States of America 1919–1931**.

We experience here the full reality that Louise Langdon experiences in the United States, a married life of racial and economic difficulty in in Philadelphia and in the US Midwest – Nebraska, Milkwaukee, and later Lansing, Michigan – culminating in that difficult period that the Malcolm X autobiography documents well, leading to state intervention and his mother's consignment to a mental institution in Kalamazoo for over 24 years.

This is America

This is America is a good way to think of **Part III** and **Part IV "Premonitions and Endings** which cover critical periods in which racism dominates even as the family that she is now a part of tries to weather the storms of activism, economic poverty, and life under these conditions. Above all, repeated pregnancies for women in that period enhance but also limit her life and she wonders if this is what she had imagined her life in America would be. A floating descriptive title of the book on its cover says: "A Work of Fiction in Tribute to Louise Langdon Norton Little, Working Mother and Activist, Mother of Malcolm X and Seven Siblings."

The Caribbean migration story has several variants but is dominated by the "in search for a better life" narrative with the expectation that living in America will eventually provide its promise. By contrast, many Caribbeans before the period of Civil Rights, migration to the United States became an

entry into American Jim Crow segregated life and its brutal consequences. For those politically inclined, membership in political organizations, is well documented in Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia. Caribbean Radicalism in Early 20th Century America* (1999) provided avenues for activism and resistance. This is also her story, along with the gendered implications of experiencing racism and sexism, and having to make a living without the extended family help that would have been assured in the Caribbean and which in many ways eased the difficulty of child care and other maternal obligations. Her sadness and sense of failure dominates this period. This is not the life she had planned or expected. We are provided with several evocative subtitles like "Eating the Bread the Devil Knead," ending with another powerful intertextual reference to incarceration, in the section titled "They Came for her in the Morning."

Malcolm X's mother's story is another version of the Caribbean migration story of that period, presenting to the reader a personal tragedy in the making in extreme. Consigned to a mental institution for many years, subject to its medications, surrounded by other versions of mental illness, the complications of a kind of willful detention, actually an incarceration for 24 years, could only be captured by the author's toolbox of poetic improvisation. **Part 5: Leavings and Returnings – 1939 to early 1960s** can be told only via the imaginative, via a series of self-reflective poems. The most powerful of these poems is "They Stole my Life" (408):

> They say I mad and they drug me
> That is a dangerous thing.
> They could burn down your house,
> Take your land,
> Drag you from your house,
> Put you in a madhouse prison. (408).

The use of multiple creative forms to tell this story

Merle Collins provides an insightful afterword (419–435) to her text which begins with that same fleeting presence of Louise Langdon in the Malcolm X autobiography with which we started this review: "Her appearance in that book is brief because the work is aimed at providing the story of her son, the famed political activist" (419). Yet, in my own re-reading of the autobiography,

I found it interesting that the biographer, Alex Haley, gets Malcolm to talk at first by asking about his mother. I also found it interesting that Malcolm describes visiting her once when she was institutionalized, but she did not have a recognition of her children as now grown adult men.

Our author's assessment in the end in which she describes her process provides important paratextual information on her research – archival, contextual, historical, linguistic – and on her relationship to the material as herself a Grenadian writer. For example, she describes her own grandmother's and mother's "powerful chanting" of "remembered lessons," "recited stories," and poems from the *Royal Readers*. Many of these she infuses in this text as it captures a certain form of education in coloniality but also in memory-training as many of these lessons were taught by the rote learning technique where one had to memorize taught material and reproduce it: A benefit in this regard but a simultaneous mental colonization.

A lovely bonus of this text is the deliberate cultivation and use of Caribbean French creole. Important research assistance in this process Collins indicates is provided by Lisa LaTouche, current PhD student at Howard University, from Dominica where the language is still spoken, and from scholars studying Eastern Caribbean French Creole. The authorial decision here is for a deliberate conservation of what is available of the language her great-grandmother spoke, at a time which coincides with the childhood of Louise Langdon Little.

Finally, the book provides us with one approach to the major task of how to tell a missing woman's story and re-create her life. In the end, Merle Collins *Ocean Stirrings* becomes an amazing archival collection of materials, a fictional biography in parts, comprised of poetry, history, and above all the attempted recovery into full presence of another major Caribbean woman who lived the diasporic intersection between the Caribbean and African American cultures which produced one of the world's major Pan African activist figures later known popularly as Malcolm X. Above all, we are given one model of how to recreate the missing biographies of women who contributed but somehow get lost in the erasure which has been central to an inherited historical model which has privileged male-dominated narratives and simultaneously erased women who were also major historical contributors.

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A Powerful Collection by Prolific Caribbean Writer

REVIEW BY CHRISTOLYN A WILLIAMS

Opal Palmer Adisa. *The Storyteller's Return: Story Poems.* Ian Randle Publishers, 2022. pp. 194, price 16.95. ISBN 978-976-8286-46-8

THIS BOOK OF STORY POEMS IS A FASCINATING read, which will resonate with all readers, particularly those who are drawn to strong female narrators. The style of this story book is rich and vibrant. The locations of the stories and the subtopics indicates a storyteller who knows it all and who possesses an exceptional recall. This is the skill of the traditional griot in both west African and Caribbean culture. But in traditional oral societies, the dependence on memory and the creative urge can jumble the details. Adisa's memoir is an exciting read, made vibrant by the subjects and the language of her storytelling. In *cleromancy,* a story recalling the Middle Passage, the Atlantic Ocean is a graveyard, in which the modern swimmer/storyteller still encounters the bones of the victims of the passage, *whenever she swam in the ocean/bones scraped her feet/tugged at her arms/pulled her down to be with them . . .*

The 58 stories tell of complex emotional ties to home on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. They are arranged in five parts. Part I – *home is a stolen memory locked away in a forgotten time* – hosts 18 poems with titles which includes *rubicon*, *cleromancy*, *home*, *home again*, *bar the doors*, *accident*. These are just nine of the eighteen stories in this section.

Part II includes ten stories titled *turning*, followed by 11 stories titled *knowing*. The *turning* stories range in subjects from happy pampered childhood to complex interactions with nature and the ancestors. The stories in Part iii of the book takes a dark turn. In *sorting,* the first poem/story of this section, is a story of the death of a grandmother killed by falling breadfruit *. . . the breadfruit tree from which the fruit dropped/and killed your grandmother is much taller than you imagined/you stand under it daring a breadfruit to fall and bust open your head/*

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000042

But tempting fate is the least of the storyteller's challenges, as she recalls her experience of a return home to a society in which sexual harassment, gun violence, rape, and body shaming are visited on women. It is also in this section that Adisa introduces men into the stories, and these few chosen are humble and bewildered men, in the role of taxi driver, male elder, and a market man, a quaint character with tired ears, racing to return home.

The language of the poems captures the very nature of Caribbean society as Adisa switches between the queen's English and the lyrical cadences of Jamaican patois. Some stories just had to be told in the language of the speaker. *You eva see a dam idiot like that?* Spoken by the taxi driver, as he drives her on her return, *look pan that idiot woman driving*. The story poems connect the audience to Adisa's personal history. Even as she makes clear that return is problematic, there is no overwhelming sense of regret. Home is a chance to start over.

Part IV – *returning spaces* – introduces social class tensions, as university educated middle class subjects of these stories exhibit shame and scorn towards their employees, despite or maybe because of their dependence on these individuals. These stories are painfully honest, stories, from this eyewitness, herself a member of the middle class of returnees. But. unlike the rest of that tribe, she rejects the insecurities that drives their colorism and classism, and which feeds their scorn for the poor and underclass gardeners, housekeepers, and day laborers.

Despite its big themes and emotional ranges, this is a very enjoyable and uplifting book. I was quite surprised at the complex themes concealed within the cover imagery of a woman strolling along a beach, with mountains and a canopy of tropical foliage in the background.

The Storyteller's Return may read autobiographical to readers from the Caribbean diaspora, and as such a reader, I am thrilled to feel part of a community. It is a personal entreat, from a storyteller, looking to use the stories to save lives, or at a minimum to warn potential returners of challenges they may face. In *returning to return*, the final story poem in the collection, the author shared *every time you leave and return you have to invent another story.* This storyteller could just be the wisest of the group because *she knew the listeners of her stories came for healing and guidance.*

Adisa's seminal collection on a universal theme is autobiographical. Her voice is clear in this collection, and as a reader with some knowledge of the

author, there is no ignoring the personal in these stories. In Part V *you are born into a home/you grow into that home/and no matter how far you travel/ how hard you try to disassociate/you will spend the rest of your life/reliving home/trying to wash it from your skin/but/for better or worse/home is etched into your pigment*.

I strongly recommend this book to readers and for assignment in high school and college literature classes. The stories will resonate with all cultural groups and with both female and male readers alike.

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Caribbean Women Provide Salient Leadership

Review and Responses to Carole Boyce Davies' *Black Women's Rights: Leadership and the Circularities of Power*

ON JULY 21, 1980, EUGENIA CHARLES MADE HISTORY as the first Prime Minister of Dominica – and, in fact, the first female Head of Government in the Caribbean. Her leadership was groundbreaking in many ways. As a co-founder of the Dominica Freedom Party in 1972, she played a critical role in shaping the nation's political landscape. Under her leadership, Dominica fully relinquished its colonial status on November 3, 1978, stepping into independence with resilience and vision.

Since then, Caribbean women have continued to rise in political leadership. We've seen figures like Portia Simpson Miller of Jamaica and, now, Mia Mottley of Barbados – leaders who are making waves on the global stage. Mottley, in particular, is redefining leadership, championing climate action, pushing for stronger alliances between Africa and the Caribbean, and holding European nations accountable for their historical and environmental impact on the region. Under the leadership of women like her, the Caribbean is proving that its future is in strong, capable hands.

Today, more women than ever are holding high positions across the Caribbean, shaping policies and driving change. This growing presence of female leadership makes Carol Boyce Davies's book on Caribbean leadership an essential and timely work. Her analysis sheds light on the power and impact of women in governance, which is why we have chosen to feature three respondents – one providing a formal review and two offering critical reflections on her work.

Opal Palmer Adisa, Editor-in-Chief

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000043

Black Women's Leadership in the African Diaspora

REVIEW BY REIGHAN GILLAM

Boyce Davies, Carole. *Black Women's Rights: Leadership and the Circularities of Power.* Lexington Books, 2022. 346pp, ISBN: 978-1793612403, 42.99 (on Amazon)

WITH THE RECENT CANDIDACY OF VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS for president of the United States and the election of Black women to other prominent political positions inside and outside of the US, the strategies of Black women as leaders requires more attention and understanding. Black women throughout the Americas, Africa, and Europe are achieving more visibility and leadership gains and losses in the public sphere. Carole Boyce Davies' recent monograph, *Black Women's Rights: Leadership and the Circularities of Power,* examines the ways Black women lead through focused case studies of different Black women leaders from the United States, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The project opens a space to examine "the manifestation of leadership as expressed, narrativized, and represented by women of African descent in a selected number of African diaspora and regional contexts" (13). To the study of leadership, Boyce Davies brings her expertise in Black women's studies and the expansive experiences of Black people across Africa and the African Diaspora. Now is the time to open this conversation such that Black women can benefit from these understandings in order to further their advances in leadership on the global stage.

Boyce Davies takes as a point of departure Claudia Jones' idea that women make up "half of the world" and thus have a right to leadership. At stake are women's ability to "determine how the resources of the world are distributed and what the actual progression of humankind should be like" (5). Given this proposition, Black women also have the right to power, and Boyce Davies proposes that Black women are transformational leaders but face raced and gendered barriers to enter these positions and exercise their power. One of the central barriers to leadership for women and Black women is the construct of leadership through the charismatic leader. This model of

leadership endows charismatic men as natural leaders. These men have developed or possess the oratorical skills and personal charm to attract loyal followers into their orbit and move them to act (25). This model of leadership is based on patriarchy and naturalizes men as leaders. On the other hand, when asked about leadership, women tend to offer other definitions. For example, some may "assert feminist leadership as emphasizing collaboration, power sharing, and advancing women in general" (28). Women may push for social change and focus on areas of gender inequality or issues that disproportionately effect women. In pursuing their right to lead, women leaders pioneer new models of leadership that center women even as they navigate sexism and gender inequality.

Black women in the United States have a history of advancing their own leadership positions in politics and society. Social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power have propelled Black people into the spotlight and unsettled the traditional image of a leader as White and male. In Chapter 5, Boyce Davies centers Shirley Chisolm and her presidential campaign as events that made possible the campaigns of Black women such as Stacey Abrams and Kamala Harris. Indeed, Chisolm ran for president in order to create this possibility for those Black women that came after her. Chisolm has the distinction of being the first Black woman elected to Congress, which occurred in 1968. Chisolm's Barbadian heritage, knowledge of Spanish, and engagement with women's rights marked her as distinct in her candidacy for Congress and president. She did face sexism from some Black men who thought she was taking away attention from Black male candidates. Although Chisolm did not win her presidential campaign, she advanced a form of political leadership that made Black women visible as possible contenders for such positions.

While Black women have pursued leadership positions in the United States, Black women outside of the USA in Latin America and the Caribbean have begun to enter into more prominent roles. Chapter 7 gives close attention to Marielle Franco in Brazil. Franco was a Black, queer, single mother who was elected to the city council of Rio de Janeiro. She came from the favelas, or the communities of working class and poor people that mark Rio's urban landscape. On March 14, 2018, Franco and her driver were assassinated while in their car. This killing occurred during the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro, the far-right president who spoke openly using racist and sexist comments

during his campaign. Her killing drew international attention due to its suddenness and the brutality of killing a sitting politician. Boyce Davies articulates Franco's leadership strategies as "meeting the emotional needs of her larger community" through her campaign slogan "I am because we are" (234). She advanced gender equality and rooted her political identity in her background as a Black woman from the favelas. Boyce Davies places Franco in a longer trajectory of Afro-Brazilian women political leaders, including Benedita da Silva, Antonieta de Barros, and Theodosina Rosário Ribeiro. Franco's death also spurred several Afro-Brazilian women candidates to run for political office, and some won, thus ensuring that Marielle's influence remains present in Brazil and globally. Marielle presente!

Black Women's Rights: Leadership and the Circularities of Power opens up a comparative frame through which to understand how Black women exhibit leadership, how they access power, and what they do with their influence. Although Black women may be dismissed as leaders or people may be indifferent to their messages, Black women have amassed a considerable amount of experience and capital to mobilize communities and propel themselves into the public sphere. Yet, Black women do not become visible alone. Boyce Davies shows us that leadership for many Black women includes fighting for improved conditions in their own communities as well as for others. Their leadership brings to mind Anna Julia Cooper's statement that, "only the Black woman can say when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me." Rejecting the individualistic impulse of leadership and centering communal needs may be what constitutes Black women's leadership as a challenge to the status quo. Boyce Davies and her book demonstrate that closely examining Black women's leadership unearths wells of knowledge, action, and skill that expand our understandings of how Black people and women lead and inhabit spaces of authority.

What Now? Reflections on *Black Women's Rights*:

Leadership and the Circularities of Power by Carole Boyce Davies

REVIEW BY CHRISTEN A. SMITH

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SILENCE HALF OF THE WORLD? What happens when half the world refuses to be silenced? Inspired by Claudia Jones, Carole Boyce Davies critically considers these questions and the implications and meanings of Black women's political leadership in her newest book, *Black Women's Rights: Leadership and the Circularities of Power*. Through an examination of "legal, political, and social and creative texts" (4), throughout Africa and the African diaspora, Boyce Davies reflects on the impact of Black women's political leadership not as a monolith but as a complex landscape of uneven yet resonate experiences across space and time in Africa and the African diaspora. She asks: How do Black women harness political power in a world that has traditionally proven itself to be both racist and sexist? To answer, Boyce Davies considers the trajectories of diverse Black women political leaders across the globe, and the journeys they have taken to gain a political foothold – from the "organic leadership of activist women" like Winnie Mandela (79) in South Africa, to the Black Left feminist leadership of Marielle Franco in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (chapter 7). Indeed, what is unflinchingly impressive about this book is its methodological and conceptual commitment to transnational Black feminism not as symbolic gesture, but rather as methodological commitment and consistent conceptual frame. Boyce Davies does not merely infer the global dimensions of Black women's political experiences. Rather, through meticulous research and careful storytelling, she charts Black women's political stories on both micro and macro levels, mapping geographies, genealogies, socio-political trends, and cultural terrain. In other words, the book accomplishes a true transnational, comparative framework by unwaveringly attending to the nuances of Black women political experiences with pursuing and gaining leadership influence in and around the world. To do this, Boyce Davies pays attention to the intersectional dynamics of race, gender, history, governmental policy, political epochs, and interrelated global

politics that constitute each story she investigates. As a result, we have in *Black Women's Rights* a veritable handbook to Black women's transnational political organizing in the modern era.

In the wake of the 2024 presidential election in the United States, and the devastating political defeat of Vice President Kamala Harris which dealt a crushing blow to U.S. democracy, *Black Women's Rights* feels urgent. This sense of urgency emerges both from the topic (Black women's political leadership) and its shadow (Where do we go from here now that heteropatriarchal White supremacy seems to have won?). Much was made of the promise of Black women's political leadership during the 2024 U.S. presidential campaign. There was a palpable buzz around Kamala Harris's nomination and vice presidency, as Boyce Davies notes (chapter 5). Harris's nomination as the democratic presidential candidate, and her campaign, embodied "legacies of struggle" (164) – a publicly interwoven herstory of Black women's political leadership and our insistence on bringing a folding chair to the table of patriarchal White supremacy despite not being invited. Figures like Shirley Chisholm (who ran for U.S. president in 1972) became ubiquitous references to Harris's fatefulness as the democratic presidential candidate: It was, it seemed, Black women's turn to lead. However, despite the multiple warnings and alarm bells warning the world of what would happen should Harris not win, Harris did not win. Instead, we find ourselves facing one of (if not) the most dizzying moments of political upheaval in U.S. history. Now, what are Black women's global political futures?

There are clues within this book which take us back to the future (in the spirit of Sankofa). Black women's pursuit of political leverage in the wake of colonialism/Slavery has always been akin to Sisysphus's fate. In the face of the impossible realities of heteropatriarchal, capitalist, genocidal White supremacy and its refusal to either acknowledge Black women's rights or give us a seat at the political table, Boyce Davies argues that we have historically developed strategies of political maneuvering that allow us to harness power even when all pathways forward seem foreclosed. Take, for example, apartheid South Africa, the home country of businessman Elon Musk, the senior advisor to the current U.S. president. In chapter 3, Boyce Davies outlines the story of Winnie Nomzamo Madikizela-Mandela, who "created another leadership paradigm than what was expected and actually became then de facto leader of South African resistance to apartheid during the incarceration

or exile of the ANC male leadership which included her husband [Nelson Mandela]" (79). In exile and facing constant death threats, Winnie Mandela managed to thwart the traditional gender role of the "mythical 'First Lady'" (81) generally ascribed to the wives of political leaders, and "[maintain] a political presence that consistently provided alternative leadership and service to her immediate and larger national communities" (ibid). Indeed, even when Black women political leaders "have faced the experience of incarceration," (125) Black women have historically refused to be contained and controlled, particularly Black women on the Left.

We can learn as much from our missteps as we can our triumphs. One lesson that Boyce Davies also chronicles in this book is the failure of Black women to succeed in leadership when they simply reify patriarchal and masculinist normative power structures. We must remain wary of "extremely high premiums [that] are placed on entry to political office, and accessing political power, which often allows individual women to secure social and economic power in ways that compromise even the most basic commitment to national woman-centered and anti-imperialist ethics" (137–138). In the case of the Caribbean, "all relatively new Caribbean nations, where independence movements and efforts toward neo-colonial leadership also repeated the embedded logics of the European nation-state . . . leaders utilized the governmental structures already in place, generally without any major changes in these structures, under the guise of maintaining order" (202). As a result, women remained pushed aside in the power structure even after the explicit colonial order was disbanded. What is the lesson? Black women's political futures depend not only upon an insistence on representation but also an insistence on the creation of an entirely new political paradigm that refuses neo/colonial, imperialist, patriarchal, capitalist, and White supremacist frames. The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

There is a new horizon of possibility that refuses to let us lose hope. The political trajectories of Marielle Franco (Brazil, chapter 7) and Fráncia Marquez (Colombia, Coda) remind us that refusal is possible if also daunting and at times deadly. The brutal assassination of queer Black feminist politician Marielle Franco in Rio de Janeiro in 2018 brings the stakes of our refusal into stark relief. However, as Boyce Davies observes, although Marielle's assassination robbed us of her physical presence, it unwittingly made her

permanently into a global icon." (238). Even in death our political voices matter. Yet, to follow Francia Marquez, Vice President of Colombia, we must also look forward and seek a flavorful life (*viver sabroso*).

From Representation to Transformation

Black Women's Leadership and the Politics of Power

REVIEW BY ZOPHIA EDWARDS

Carole Boyce Davies' *Black Women's Rights: Leadership and the Circularities of Power* is a meticulously researched and a deeply nuanced analysis of Black women's leadership across Africa and the African diaspora. Examining diverse political, social, and cultural contexts, Boyce Davies presents a compelling case for Black women's historical and ongoing contributions to political institutions and struggles, despite structures and efforts to exclude and erase them.

Central to the book is a critical examination of two key questions: to what extent are Black women represented in leadership positions, and what do they do with their power once attained? Boyce Davies draws upon a range of examples – from African women during pre-colonial and colonial periods to contemporary figures in the Caribbean, Latin America, and North America – recovering their voices and roles in political movements and institutions. The author's exploration is grounded in the "half the world" discourse developed by Black revolutionary Claudia Jones, which asserts that women, constituting half of the world's population, must be equally represented in access to the world's material resources and representational structures (3). Applying this framework, Boyce Davies offers a sweeping comparative analysis of Black women's leadership across geographic borders and time. From South Africa to Liberia, the United States to Colombia, Boyce Davies uncovers how Black women navigated racism and sexism while leading as founders of organizations, decision-makers, grassroots and community organizers, intellectuals, fundraisers, military personnel and advisors, social workers, health care professionals, cultural workers, and more. Moreover, the author

also reminds readers that African women's leadership is not new, as they were matriarchs, ruling queens, military leaders, and more in pre-colonial and colonial times.

Boyce Davies challenges essentializing narratives about Black women's leadership, refusing to frame it within a singular ideological lens. Instead, she highlights the diversity of leadership orientations among Black women, shaped not only by gender, race, and class backgrounds but by their unique experiences and political contexts. "Transformational feminist leadership" occupies a prominent position in the text as a commitment to "remedying gender inequities" and "economic, political, and social transformation" (29). However, throughout the book, Boyce Davies demonstrates that simply being or identifying as a Black woman does not guarantee a transformative feminist leadership approach. The book illustrates vast variations in political commitments and practices, particularly among high-ranking political leaders. As discussed in chapter six and the coda, in the Caribbean alone, there is a broad spectrum. For example, Mary Eugenia Charles, Dominica's first and only female prime minister, was ideologically conservative, autocratic, upheld the economic status quo, and supported US military interventions, most notably Ronald Reagan's invasion of Grenada in 1983. Charles' leadership neither "empowered" Black women in the political sphere nor improved their material conditions.

Conversely, Cuban women's achievements stand out, particularly in gender parity in parliamentary representation and transformative feminist leadership. The 1959 Cuban Revolution did not erase racism, colorism, and sexism imposed upon the society in hundreds of European colonialism, capitalism, and racial slavery. Still, Boyce Davies notes that 21% of the women in leadership are Afro-Cuban and actively push an inclusive and redistributive agenda. In the middle of the spectrum are leaders like Kamla Persad Bissessar (Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 2010 to 2015), who adopted a discourse of gender transformation during election campaigns but failed to show interest in advancing this agenda after winning power. Notably, the author praises Mia Mottley (Prime Minister of Barbados, 2018 to today) for her transformative feminist leadership in advancing LGBTQ rights, decolonization, and Caribbean economic integration. The author praises Mottley as a model who offers "new paradigms of leadership worth emulating on the global level" (207). However, not all would agree. Mottley's

support for the most recent US/French/Canadian military invasion of Haiti and her prominent role in deepening neoliberal policies that have harmed Barbadian working people have drawn significant criticism and point to a much more complicated use of political power in her still unfolding prime ministership. Regardless, Boyce Davies offers a way to make sense of the diversity and complexity of Black women's political commitments and the multifaceted ways in which they navigate systems of power. Drawing these distinctions is crucial for understanding the limits of racial and gender representation. It helps elucidate the distinct political stances of former US Congress member Cynthia McKinney, on the one hand, who supports Palestinian liberation, and US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield and White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on the other, who serve as agents of US imperialism and the ongoing genocide of Palestinians.

This book also goes beyond its own stated contributions and provokes a serious consideration of the relationship between the state institutions and social movements. Boyce Davies discusses how Black women in positions of power within the state apparatus often face pressures to conform to existing norms, which may lead them to abandon or moderate their transformational agendas (if they ever had such agendas). In contrast, women who remain outside state institutions and/or successfully resist co-optation – such as Claudia Jones or Afro-Brazilian activist Marielle Franco – might retain their radical commitments but face severe consequences. Jones was deported from the U.S., and Franco was assassinated for unrelentingly advocating for oppressed communities. Boyce Davies' thoughtful and nuanced analysis reveals the challenges Black women face in states and social movements, balancing the expectations placed upon them, challenges to their legitimacy, and their visions of leadership.

Black Women's Rights is an essential reading for those studying race, gender, class, politics, and leadership studies. The book extends scholarship that offers a counter-narrative to the historical minimization and erasure of Black women leaders. It also invites readers to confront the uncomfortable reality that even when Black women gain access to power, their own ideologies and the systems they enter may prevent transformation. Boyce Davies' approach applies beyond the study of Black women's leadership to other marginalized groups: "What happens when members of a subordinated

group rise to power within an oppressive system? Who do these people end up representing?" (47). This indispensable resource for activists and academics is more than a scholarly text; it is a call to rethink leadership, power, and transformation, underscoring Black women's ongoing role in shaping the world.

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CHRISTEN A. SMITH is Associate Professor of Anthropology and African American Studies at Yale University. Her work focuses on the immediate and long-term impact of policing on Black people in the Americas – particularly as it relates to gender, space and time – and Black women's intellectual contributions to the Americas. She is the author of, *Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence and Performance in Brazil* (University of Illinois Press, 2016), co-author of *The Dialectic is in the Sea: The Black Radical Thought of Beatriz Nascimento* (Princeton University Press, 2023) and co-editor of *Black Feminist Constellations: Black Women in Dialogue and Translation* (The University of Texas Press, 2023).

ZOPHIA EDWARDS is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University. Her research examines race, labor, colonialism, state-building, and comparative development in the Global South. She is the author of *Fueling Development: How Black Radical Trade Unionism Transformed Trinidad and Tobago,* (Duke University Press, 2025). She has published in academic journals such as *International Journal of Comparative Sociology, Political Power and Social Theory*, *The Sociological Review,* and her public scholarship appears in outlets such as *Monthly Review* and *Clash!*

Discrimination in Some Caribbean Societies

REVIEW BY KERRY SUMESAR-RAI

Allison O. Ramsay and Jerome Teelucksingh eds. *Independence, Colonial Relics and Monuments in the Caribbean* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2024), 224 pages.

THE BOOK CONTAINS ELEVEN CHAPTERS ON PRIMARILY THE Anglophone Caribbean and one on the Dutch Antilles. There are four chapters on Trinidad and Tobago, three on Barbados, two on Jamaica and two on the Anglophone Caribbean issues.

The organization of the work suggests that the editors wanted to "mix-up" some things to ease the burden of reading. By and large, they accomplished their objective. The chapters are in the main properly constructed with the authors keeping to their themes. A point of note is that all the works illustrate evidence of good research with some new or previously hidden data being exposed.

The authors aptly illustrate that the Caribbean is rich in history, but some are stagnated in political ideology, and that impacts on the capacity to develop appropriate, modern, and independent political thought and policies. Given a wider net, this scholarly assessment can be tested for its validity.

According to the editors, the goal of the work "is for the book to appeal to a global audience . . ." One question to be asked is the work on target to reach the targeted audience. What can it add to the development of the minds of the general audience and more specifically the intellect of researchers?

One of the key themes in some of the works was that of "persistent racism." The use of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and other examples common to the Caribbean provided a comparative baseline and attempts to address burning societal concerns of post-colonial states.

The co-edited publication contains good insights into the history of some Caribbean states and societies. The slow development of policy for the creation of symbols and monuments to support the development of national pride, patriotism, and the societal thoughts.

The struggle is to change the colonial mindset, and this includes

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000044

monuments and symbols of the former colonies, development of islands' pride, shortage of independent political and nation-building thoughts, the stronghold of the colonial ideals, ideas and legacy on the people, and the lack of tolerance for some immigrant communities with reference to Trinidad.

The Caribbean is rich in history and political history, but some of it remains hidden and needs to be shared. Chapter three by Sheron Johnson, "Examining the Contested Heritage Value of Historic Bridgetown in Barbados," chapter four by Ashleigh John Morris, "Crossing the Threshold: Exploring the Five Islands' Role in Trinidad's Indian Indentureship Legacy," and chapter nine by Lynette Mills, "Codrington College and the Problematic Legacy of Christopher Codrington," provide good historical data and analysis on what took place and why we are here.

Margo Groenewoud in chapter ten, "To Be Joined Together in Freedom: Statues, Identity Politics, and Agency in the Netherland Antilles, 1940–1960 (ch. 10, p. 125–140) and Timothy Affonso in chapter 10, "Independence Undermined from the Beginning: Deconstructing Legal Vestiges of Colonialism," provide sound insights to the struggles we have with our identities and the fear of losing what we were taught to believe was true.

Other works in the book illustrate the extent of our timorous and the underdevelopment of our political leadership. The work of notable historian Professor Bridget Brereton, "A Colonial Relic? Trinidad and Tobago and the Trinity Cross," is an excellent example of analysis of what has gone wrong and why we are where we are. The chapter provides riveting information on the development of public policy as Allison Ramsay, in chapter five, "Monuments to Freedom and Nationhood: Preserving the Heritage of Barbados in Metal and Stone," does and Renee Nelson, in "The West Indian Federation and Jamaican Independence," in Chapter 11.

One will find some works in the book that address contemporary issues of discrimination based on race and gender but also provide some historical account. This includes chapter two by Stanley Griffin, "The George Floyd Effect in the Caribbean: Re/Igniting Popular Discourses on Colonial Public Memory," and chapter eight by Danalee Jahgoo, "Gender Imbalance in Statues and Building Names in Trinidad and Tobago and at the University of the West indies," and Shaian Albert, "The Survival of Hinduism through Temples: The Case of the Temple in the Sea, Triveni Mandir and Brothers Road Hindu Mandir in Trinidad."

The Caribbean diaspora would find the work to be good reading of the contradictions that post-colonial societies face. The intellectual body would be interested to understand the context in which the societal contradictions exist and the slow reactions of policymakers to create a dynamic platform to move society along.

The journey for national definition and political development is long if not gruesome. The remnants of the colonial mindset encased in an inherited education system negates the development of liberal, innovative, and creative minds.

Notwithstanding, the works provide good case studies for political science, leadership, and public policy. On that basis, the book should find fair buyers and can be useful in academia and for the general edification of some.

Certainly, we look forward to a second volume of similar works. It will be enlightening to have contributions from other states and societies such as the Spanish-speaking, Francophone, the United States territories, Belize, Guyana, and Suriname perhaps.

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Louise Bennett's Cultural Contestation

REVIEW BY CANDIA MITCHELL HALL

Adisa, Palmer Opal. ed.*100 + Voices for Miss Lou: Poetry, Tributes, Interviews, Essays*. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2021. Pp.XXiii +417. 19 Figs. ISBN 9789766408879 (Print). $US 50.00.

IN ***100 PLUS VOICES FOR MISS LOU: POETRY, TRIBUTES, INTERVIEWS, ESSAYS***, Opal Palmer Adisa, the editor of the text, brings together over one hundred contributors to commemorate the 100th plus birthday anniversary (centenary) of the remarkable Jamaican cultural icon, Louise Bennett Coverley, "Miss Lou". It captures a wide range of "voices" in/as text comprising poems, tributes, interviews, memoirs, and essays from an impressive range of poets, authors, lecturers, professors, playwrights, physicians, judges, comedians, writers, historians, performers, musicians, students, librarians, consultants, researchers, producers and others.

The book makes the central argument that Bennett was a freedom fighter whose cultural work/activism brought respectability to the Jamaican language (comprising English, Spanish, Taino, English Creole and West African expressions) and wrote freedom into the Jamaican cultural identity and repertoire. Bennett's cultural contestation is captured in the symbolic imagery of the book's front cover entitled "Writes of Passage" where she is styled with a "pen" and "sword" as a means of signifying her struggles for freedom for the Jamaican nation language and culture. Bennett's (complex) mode of contesting/opposing British cultural expressions included songs, poems, plays and performances where she would "talk-back" to the colonial ethos and center the cultural Self into the Jamaican cosmology.

The book is divided into four sections and is prefaced by four introductory pieces. The thematic focus of the first section, entitled "One Big Family" centers around the idea of constructing motherhood in its implicit/explicit sense of a mother, Miss Lou, with her flock of children and family. It bookends the voice of Bennett beginning with Bennett's performative poem "Love

Letta" and ending with an interview Palmer-Adisa conducted with Miss Lou entitled "Mi Jus Like People". The contributions are logically arranged. It covers the personal memories shared by Bennett's family, then it frames Bennett's cultural pathways around a mapping of her life with her husband Eric Coverley by the renowned poet Mervyn Morris and finally it makes a case for Bennet's heroization by centering her within the Jamaican pantheon with Nanny of the Maroons as a contemporary political figure who was instrumental in the decolonization movement within the Jamaican and Caribbean histories of cultural resistance and contestation.

Section Two, entitled "Reaffirming Our Culture" raises two streams of concerns that are inter-linked. The first focusses on how culture and (archival) memory are preserved and forgotten and the second covers the ambivalences (indifferences to Jamaican nation languages) in the Jamaican society within the post-Bennett generations. The arc of its discourse is framed around how memory (cultural passages) of Bennet is conveyed to the post-memory generations. The section re-affirms the significance of the culture work of Bennett in cementing the memories and identities of the Jamaican nation through its language. It features the texts of authors whose culture work were strongly influenced by Bennett's "lessons" including Amina Blackwood Meeks, Velma Pollard and Oliver Samuels among others. A salient concern appearing in various texts surrounds the sense of "loss" over the disabling/dismantling of *Ring Ding* (1968–1980), an educational programme for children (and parents) hosted by Bennett which affirmed and heightened the identities and heritage of Jamaicans through Bennett's challenge to colonial education by shaping cultural values and attitudes in the immediate post-Independence Jamaican society.

In section three, "Aunty Roachy Seh", Bennett is commemorated as a revolutionary who writes freedom into the Jamaican cultural repertoire. Through her alter-identity/character/ego *Aunty Roachy*, Bennet would validate the spoken word/speech of the average Afro-Jamaican people (the masses) as a means of gaining respectability from the middle and upper classes. It commences with one of the well-known poems of Miss Lou, "Dutty Tough" which it uses as a starter to position/illuminate the socio-economic and economic struggles and everyday experiences of the working classes (the disenfranchised majority) into the cultural memories of the nation. In this way, texts like "Fowl Prill Bruk Nes", "Tooth ache", "Licky-Licky"

and "Miss Joyce Mongrel Dawg" re-memories the writing/literary/cultural traditions of the Afro-Jamaican peoples through Miss. Lou. The texts draw inspiration from Bennett's life (in writings like "Exilia") and from nostalgia and reminiscences from the childhood of the various writers who grew up during the Bennett Revolution. The section reiterates the persistence of memory and the impact of Bennet's revolution on/in the cultural traditions of Jamaica.

The final section, "Engaging in a Quarrel with history" examines Bennet's cultural politics and "quarrels" with/within the colonial system/structures that deny the significance of the Jamaican cultural expressions. Bennett's quarrel in "Colonization in Reverse" sets the stage for the section's critique of the language-scape/literary landscape of Jamaica across historical time. One central argument it makes is that Bennett contributed to subverting the culture of the elites by quarrelling in *Jamaican* with "English" in every historical juncture she lived (for six decades) from World War 2, the Great Depression, the decolonial struggles, the rise of Marcus Gavey and Rastafari, Women's Movement and Independence via stage performances, television and radio recordings and writings. It also presents the discourses of authors who continue in the Bennett tradition by underscoring the subaltern politics of working-class Jamaicans who confronts the various "crosses" in their lives (including the English Language" and alienation) and asserts their own "passes" by invoking their heart language and agency from below. Its "quarrels" introduces Miss Lou's contribution in archiving working class experiences in WW2, then it underscores the organic nature of Bennett's intellectual work foregrounded in discourses of race, class and gender, important prongs in the matrix of Jamaican identity and Jamaicanness. Later it addresses the language bias/inequality and tensions in the Jamaican society and the ways in which the nation language was being untaught in the schools while outside the classroom, the people dislocated spaces of dislocation by ritualizing, stitching time together and "*labrishing*" in the nation language.

In a society dominated by colonial culture, Miss Lou's culture work countered narratives bastardizing the *Jamaican* language as illegitimate and carved out a space of respectability for working class Jamaicans. The text opens up endless questions of the link between language, identity, freedom making and resistance and hopefully investments Caribbean people

wish to make in heroizing, Miss Lou as one of the movers and shakers of Caribbean identity. *100 Plus Voices for Miss Lou* is an excellent contribution to historiography and will be essential reading for academics, students, practitioners, activists and others who wish to gain insights on how language and performance cultures can confront, dismantle, intersect and decolonize sites of mis/(dis) representation, alienation and devaluation. Ultimately, the text (re) affirms Bennett's place in the heroization discourses and impact on identity construction in the post-colonial society of Jamaica. It goes without saying, but ought to be said all the same; *100 Plus Voices* is *boonoonoonoo*. It should be consulted for generations to come.

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FEATURED ART



Fire and Ice, 2011

About the Artist
Lucien Downes / St Croix

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000046

SPANISH CONTRIBUTION

Colaboraciones del Caribe hispano

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ESTE NÚMERO ESPECIAL CONMEMORA EL 50 ANIVERSARIO DE la *Caribbean Studies Association* con tres colaboraciones del Caribe hispano: dos reseñas de libros y una de la exhibición *Picasso en San Juan: portafolios litográficos* en el Museo de San Juan. Las tres reflexiones resaltan la relevancia crítica de la producción literaria y artística caribeña más allá de sus costas. José Calderón-Rivera reseña *Rigoberta Menchú: testimonio y cuestionamiento de la voz subalterna* de Velia Rodríguez-Fernández, destacando su análisis del testimonio de Menchú como una herramienta de resistencia contra el silencio impuesto a los pueblos indígenas. Lejos de ser una apología, el libro examina su papel político y simbólico, explorando cómo su discurso trasciende la identidad étnica para articular una agenda de reivindicación y visibilización. Beatriz Cruz-Sotomayor reseña *Las mujeres asaltan la historia* de Luz Nereida Lebrón-Delgado, un estudio sobre la novela histórica latinoamericana escrita por mujeres. Lebrón-Delgado analiza cómo estas narradoras retan y subvierten las versiones oficiales del pasado, recuperando voces marginadas y cuestionando discursos hegemónicos, contribuyendo así a la comprensión de la literatura latinoamericana y su papel en la lucha contra las desigualdades. Finalmente, en "El estilo es la firma: Picasso en San Juan", Rafael Jackson-Martín reseña la exhibición sobre los portafolios litográficos de Picasso, abierta en el Museo de San Juan del 17 de octubre de 2024 al 16 de marzo de 2025.

This special issue commemorates the 50th anniversary of the *Caribbean Studies Association* with three contributions from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean: two book reviews and one review of the exhibition *Picasso en San Juan: portafolios litográficos* at the Museo de San Juan. These three reflections highlight the critical relevance of Caribbean literary and artistic production beyond its shores. José Calderón-Rivera reviews *Rigoberta Menchú: testimonio y cuestionamiento de la voz subalterna* by Velia Rodríguez-Fernández, emphasizing her analysis of Menchú's testimony as a tool of resistance against

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000047

the silence imposed on Indigenous peoples. Far from being an apology, the book examines Menchú's political and symbolic role, exploring how her discourse transcends ethnic identity to articulate an agenda of vindication and visibility. Beatriz Cruz-Sotomayor reviews *Las mujeres asaltan la historia* by Luz Nereida Lebrón-Delgado, a study of Latin American historical novels written by women. Lebrón-Delgado analyzes how these authors challenge and subvert official versions of the past, reclaiming marginalized voices and questioning hegemonic discourses, thereby contributing to the understanding of Latin American literature and its role in the fight against inequalities. Finally, in "*El estilo es la firma: Picasso en San Juan*", Rafael Jackson-Martín reviews the exhibition on Picasso's lithographic portfolios, which has been on display at the Museo de San Juan from October 17, 2024, to March 16, 2025.

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El estilo es la firma

Picasso en San Juan

(Style is the Signature

Picasso in San Juan)

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Exposición *Picasso en San Juan: Portafolios litográficos.* Sala Oller, Museo de San Juan, 150 Norzagaray, Viejo San Juan (San Juan, Puerto Rico). Organizada con la colaboración del Departamento de Arte y Cultura del Municipio de San Juan, la Fundación Universitaria Iberoamericana (FUNIBER) y el Consulado General de España en Puerto Rico.

"EN MONTMARTRE, PICASSO SE APARECIÓ UNA NOCHE A las dos de la madrugada y gritó desde el otro lado de mi puerta: '¡¿Qué estás haciendo, Max?!'. 'Depurando mi estilo', le respondí. Picasso replicó: 'No hay estilo'. Y se marchó". El autor de este jugoso recuerdo era Max Jacob, el poeta francés que lo ayudó a sobrevivir cuando Picasso se instaló en París sin dinero en los bolsillos. Quién diría que, unos años más tarde, sería el artista más famoso del siglo XX y uno de los referentes fundamentales para comprender las principales innovaciones del arte moderno.

La cita de Jacob nos sirve para ilustrar la exposición organizada por el Museo de San Juan, donde la variedad estilística de la producción picassiana aborda la mirada del público. Compuesta por varias decenas de litografías a partir de portafolios impresos con la autorización del artista, recoge más de medio siglo de su producción, que se agrupa temáticamente bajo los epígrafes "Los azules de Barcelona", "Geneviève", "Las mujeres de Argel" y "Bailarines".

"Los azules de Barcelona" denotan la fuerte influencia del post-impresionismo y del simbolismo en nuestro autor. La paulatina limitación

Caribbean Conjunctures
DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000048

a una paleta de tonalidades frías anuncia la llegada de la época azul, con temas asociados a la pobreza, la marginalidad social y la bohemia.

Dicha etapa fue sucedida en 1904 por la época rosa (habitada por acróbatas circenses y personajes de la comedia italiana), hasta que en 1907 Picasso dio el gran salto que condujo a la invención del cubismo con la colaboración primordial de Georges Braque. Este episodio marcó un antes y un después tanto en la producción de ambos como en la historia del arte occidental. Su mutuo afán de representar los motivos evadiendo las leyes de la mímesis y de la perspectiva tradicional, los llevó a materializar composiciones que tendían poco a poco hacia la abstracción total. De ahí arrancó la creación del collage en 1912 (del que hay muestras tardías en la serie "Geneviève") y la sustitución de una amalgama de formas descompuestas en múltiples planos pintados con tonalidades apagadas, por otras más planas de colores vivos, acompañadas de fragmentos extraídos de la realidad (periódicos, papeles pintados, ilustraciones, partituras . . .).

La propia derivación de esta fase del cubismo hacia superficies planas escasamente reconocibles obligó a Picasso a centrar su mirada en el arte del pasado, en especial en el arte grecorromano y en algunos maestros franceses. Las obras derivadas de este giro sirvieron para satisfacer la demanda cada vez más ingente de sus obras desde finales de la década de 1910, proporcionándole una posición acomodada que le permitió seguir experimentando diversos lenguajes en formatos variopintos (pintura, escultura, grabado, cerámica . . .).

La serie sobre "Bailarines" debe situarse en la producción de mediados de los años veinte. Resulta interesante porque nos habla de la fértil colaboración de Picasso con el mundo de la danza y, en especial, con los Ballets Rusos dirigidos por Serguéi Diáguilev, para los que realizó varias escenografías y figurines desde 1917 hasta mediados de los años veinte. En esta serie observamos algo propio de su estilo durante aquel periodo. Por una parte, los y las bailarinas están representados con trazos reconocibles mientras realizan sus largos ensayos. Son momentos de intimidad y de inseguridades: se intercambian confidencias, descansan su mano en el hombro de su acompañante para darse apoyo moral y repiten incansablemente los pasos de baile. Por otra parte, algunas de estas estampas presentan un acabado menos definido; Picasso incorpora trazos más gruesos en arabesco que funcionan como un ideograma visual del dinamismo envolvente y se adelantan a sus composiciones próximas al automatismo surrealista.

El apartado de la exposición con el título "Las mujeres de Argel" incide brevemente en una de las facetas más habituales de Picasso desde la década de 1950, esto es, las versiones de obras maestras del arte occidental. En este caso, se inspira en una de las pinturas más célebres del pintor romántico Eugène Delacroix, para someterla a un proceso típico en este tipo de diálogos artísticos: llevar la obra original al terreno de quien la adapta. Picasso realiza una versión ligeramente *cubificada* de las mujeres con tonos vivaces, cercanos a la gama cromática de su colega y rival Henri Matisse. Llama la atención, además, que los rostros de los bocetos expuestos en San Juan evoquen el de su segunda esposa, Jacqueline Roque. Al transformar el estilo y los motivos de Delacroix en otros propiamente picassianos, el artista español penetra en el terreno de la parodia, un proceso eminentemente moderno que, en este caso, se concibe como homenaje peculiar a uno de sus artistas favoritos.

La última sección, "Geneviève", es la más polémica de la exposición si atendemos a la fuente de inspiración y al modo en que Picasso aborda las composiciones. La modelo, Geneviève Laporte, tenía veinticuatro años cuando inició un breve amorío con el artista, que rondaba entonces los setenta. Ello explica la referencia al motivo iconográfico de Venus (diosa romana del amor y de la belleza) mirándose en el espejo y la profusión de su cuerpo desnudo en primer plano, como en un encuadre fotográfico cuyo margen inferior secciona las piernas a la altura de las pantorrillas. La influencia de la fotografía sobre Picasso es un aspecto que ha sido evaluado en las últimas décadas, no solo porque lo fueran artistas cercanos a su círculo más íntimo (como Dora Maar y Man Ray), sino porque él mismo había aprendido a hacer fotografías desde la década de 1910 y las atesoraba en sus archivos personales. De este modo, el encuadre agresivo sobre el cuerpo de Geneviève tiene más que ver con el deseo que con la realidad, subrayando así la plasmación de una mirada heteropatriarcal hacia el desnudo femenino. Por esta razón, quizás sea la sección más retante de toda la muestra. Su contemplación provoca una reflexión sobre el rol de la mujer en el arte occidental, en un péndulo que bascula entre el objeto artístico anhelado y el sujeto artístico tradicionalmente silenciado.

Después de todo lo dicho, es inevitable formular la siguiente pregunta: ¿a qué nos referimos entonces cuando hablamos de *un picasso*? Principalmente, al producto de una identidad multiforme que, expresada en una firma icónica, le brindó a su autor la oportunidad de convertirse en referente esencial del

arte moderno. Esta idea ha sido examinada desde distintos ángulos en tres conferencias del profesorado del Programa de Historia del Arte de la UPR-Recinto de Río Piedras, así como en una serie de videos con análisis de varias obras incluidas en la muestra, realizados por estudiantes de dicho Programa y difundidos en las redes sociales. Todas estas miradas críticas han servido para desvelar facetas relevantes de una subjetividad y de una producción heterogéneas, que alientan la discusión desde perspectivas metodológicas siempre cambiantes.

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A propósito de Rigoberta Menchú y la voz subalterna (On Rigoberta Menchú and the Subaltern Voice)

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Velia Rodríguez Fernández. *Rigoberta Menchú: testimonio y cuestionamiento de la voz subalterna*. San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2024.165 pp. Paperback $20.00; ISBN 978-9945-637-60-1

> Considero este Premio, no como un galardón hacia mí en lo personal, sino como una de las conquistas más grandes de la lucha por la paz, por los derechos humanos y por los derechos de los pueblos indígenas, que a lo largo de estos 500 años han sido divididos y fragmentados y han sufrido el genocidio, la represión y la discriminación.

CON ESTAS EXPRESIONES, ENMARCA RIGOBERTA MENCHÚ SU MENSAJE de aceptación del Premio Nobel de la Paz en 1992. Las mismas recogen muchas de las inquietudes que describen la agenda de lucha asumida por la receptora de este prestigioso premio. A tenor con ese discurso, inspirado en la tarea de asumir la voz de los pueblos indígenas oprimidos, podemos afirmar que el libro que ha escrito la doctora Velia Rodríguez Fernández, titulado *Rigoberta Menchú: testimonio y cuestionamiento de la voz subalterna*, puede considerarse como un atinado intento por deconstruir el entramado reflejado en estas importantes expresiones.

Menchú, al aceptar el Premio Nobel, hace una clara referencia a su rol como representante de la comunidad indígena de su país, Guatemala, y posiblemente también de las comunidades indígenas del mundo. La doctora Rodríguez desarrolla una valiosa interpretación del rol de Menchú en el reclamo internacional por la atención dirigida al atropello que sufrió su pueblo en su carácter de comunidad orpimida.

Rodríguez lleva a cabo un análisis alimentado por los estudios subalternos, especialmente referenciado por la teórica india Gayatri Spivack. Esta es,

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000049

precisamente, una de las mayores aportaciones del libro: la fortaleza teórica que sostienen los argumentos de la autora. Desde un sólido andamiaje teórico, Rodríguez Fernández va detrás del testimonio de Menchú y lo confronta con las voces disidentes que retaron la veracidad de este. Valga recordar que el testimonio de la ganadora del premio Nobel no estuvo exento de críticas por parte de quienes consideraron que esta no reunía las condiciones sociales y formativas propias de las voces que ella pretendía representar.

La autora pone su atención en el libro testimonial publicado por Menchú bajo la pluma de Elizabeth Burgos, titulado *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la consciencia*. Rodríguez realiza una arriesgada, pero frutífera, decodificación del testimonio de Menchú, en el que se advierte un complejo discurso sobre su identidad étnica y cultural junto a sus posibilidades de representación de una comunidad indígena que de manera alguna tenía la facultad de hablar o de dejarse escuchar. Para ilustrar este fenómeno acude al reconocido texto de Spivak, "¿Puede el subalterno hablar?", en el que su autora sostiene que en una sociedad donde un grupo mantiene el poder hegemónico sobre otro grupo, las voces de los sometidos se tienen que confinar en el silencio. Bajo esta condición, la figura de Menchú adquiere relevancia debido a que su testimonio es presentado por Rodríguez como un intento por retar el silencio impuesto por los poderes dominantes.

Por otro lado, el libro, en ocasiones, entra en diálogo con Elizabeth Burgos y sus posibilidades de testimoniar las experiencias de Menchú, las cuales le son completamente ajenas. De igual manera, dedica espacio también a las voces disidentes que cuestionaron las verdaderas intensiones de Menchú en su lucha por las clases indígenas. Desde luego, este texto no es una apología a la figura de Menchú, ni representa una alabanza desmesurada de su obra. Rodríguez Fernández asume la función crítica del investigador que intenta mantener una mirada objetiva sobre el personaje estudiado. No se asumen posturas que puedan deslegitimar la importante figura de Menchú.

No obstante, hay un acercamiento a Menchú que le adjudica unas interesantes posibilidades a su testimonio, las cuales, a juicio de la autora, tienden a pasar desapercibidas por algunos de los estudiosos de su trabajo en favor de la causa indígena. Por ejemplo, Rodríguez plantea la importancia del discurso político asumido por Menchú. Destaca la manera en que indirectamente favorece la lucha armada en favor de la liberación de las clases oprimidas en Guatemala. Desde esta perspectiva, sugiere que la figura

de la ganadora del Premio Nobel sostenía una agenda política que no es fácilmente perceptible en su discurso de apoyo a los derechos civiles de la comunidad a la que repetidamente decía representar. Esta percepción amplía el alcance de su obra.

Bajo esta premisa, la persona que se aparece a las puertas de Burgos con vestimenta indígena y con la intensión de redactar un testimonio de inspiración para esa comunidad, realmente tenía una agenda que superaba su identidad étnica. El libro explora la figura de Menchú como una mucho más profunda de la comúnmente enmarcada en su activismo indígena.

Este aspecto es de suma importancia para entender gran parte de los cuestionamientos que ha recibido el testimonio de Menchú. Por ejemplo, Rodríguez le ofrece una lectura diferente a las ocasiones en las que su testimonio entra en aparentes contradicciones. Críticos como David Stoll, por ejemplo, han puesto en duda la veracidad de muchas de las experiencias narradas por Menchú. Sin embargo, Rodríguez sostiene que estas supuestas contradicciones, como al alegar que presenció el asesinato de su hermano, son realmente alusiones a experiencias que se viven a diario en la comunidad que ella representa y que de alguna manera todos las han vivido; una vez más apunta la autora al fenómeno de la representación de Menchú.

Desde luego, el testimonio de Menchú se presenta en este texto como una oportunidad que asumió la testimoniada para llegar a círculos de poder como la academia y la intelectualidad internacional. Con esta intensión narra su testimonio y cultiva la atención mundial sobre los problemas vividos por la comunidad indígena. Rodríguez Fernández concluye que las aparentes incongruencias o contradicciones en su testimonio resultan insignificantes a la hora de valorizar su obra. Esta manera de interpretar su gesta la resume Rodríguez de la mera siguiente:

> El reconocimiento adjudicado por el Premio Nobel de la Paz representa realmente la efectividad de las posturas que asume como figura representativa de una comunidad silente e incapaz de ser escuchada. Es ahí donde encontramos lo más valioso de su gesta. El análisis de su testimonio y de las diferentes posturas que tanto opositores como defensores han asumido sean estas verídicas o no son evidencia del alcance que logró a favor de su pueblo. (p. 160)

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Cuando las mujeres (a)saltan la historia (When Women Seize History)

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Luz Nereida Lebrón-Delgado. *Las mujeres asaltan la historia.* Santo Domingo: Editorial Santuario, 2024. 247 pp. Paperback $25.00; ISBN 9789945654790.

"ARTICULAR HISTÓRICAMENTE LO PASADO NO SIGNIFICA CONOCERLO 'TAL y como verdaderamente ha sido'. Significa adueñarse de un recuerdo tal y como relumbra en el instante del peligro"; estas palabras del filósofo judío-alemán Walter Benjamin en sus conocidas *Tesis de filosofía de la historia* iluminan nuestra presentación del libro *Las mujeres asaltan la historia*, de Luz Nereida Lebrón Delgado.

Antes de entrar al comentario del texto, quisiera compartir algunos datos sobre la carrera académica de Lebrón Delgado que arrojan luz sobre su especialidad y su relevancia para este, su más reciente libro. Me refiero, sobre todo, a su proyecto para la obtención del grado doctoral del Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe sobre el escritor argentino Abel Posse y la nueva novela histórica; de ahí se gesta su primer libro, titulado *De las crónicas de Indias a la novela posmoderna latinoamericana: la narrativa histórica de Abel Posse* (Luscinia, 2015). Su segundo libro, de 2022, lleva por título *Subalternos y resistencias en la literatura latinoamericana* (Santo Domingo: Santuario), el cual obtuvo mención honorífica en el International Latino Books Awards 2023 y Premio Nacional de Ensayo 2023 otorgado por el Pen International de Puerto Rico. En 2023 publicó su tercer libro *Nueva novela histórica y crónicas de Indias en la narrativa de Abel Posse* (Santo Domingo: Santuario), el cual fue premiado por el International Latino Books Awards 2024 como finalista del Mejor Libro Académico y Mejor Libro de Referencia. Vemos, pues, que la trayectoria de investigación y publicación de Lebrón Delgado ha estado fuertemente mediada por la exploración del género de la nueva novela histórica latinoamericana y los discursos subalternos,

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000050

justamente lo que continúa explorando, como podremos advertir, en *Las mujeres asaltan la historia*.

Su libro es un recorrido provocador a través de las novelas históricas de algunas escritoras caribeñas y latinoamericanas. En 17 ensayos, consigue reseñar críticamente las obras de poco más de 17 escritoras de 9 países de América Latina y el Caribe: Cuba, República Dominicana, Puerto Rico, México, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, y sus diásporas en algunos casos. Esta labor –ya de por sí ambiciosa– se sostiene de una sólida columna vertebral: el género de la nueva novela histórica latinoamericana. Esta se caracteriza, según lo plantea la autora, por su "visión crítica, la reinterpretación del pasado y la inclusión de perspectivas múltiples que desestabilizan la idea de una verdad única" (Lebrón Delgado, 2024, 28). Este género, de puntillas entre la ficción y la historia, adquiere resonancias únicas en voces de mujeres, desde circunstancias políticas, sociales y culturales muy diversas. Así queda, por cierto, definido desde sus palabras introductorias:

> Este libro tiene como objetivo examinar la incursión y evolución de las mujeres escritoras en la novela histórica latinoamericana desde el siglo XIX hasta la actualidad. Mediante un análisis detallado de sus obras y trayectorias, se pretende reconocer y celebrar sus contribuciones al género, al tiempo que se explora cómo han desafiado y redefinido las narrativas históricas tradicionales. Este recorrido nos permitirá no solo apreciar la riqueza literaria de América Latina, sino también comprender mejor las luchas y logros de las mujeres que han dado voz a la historia a través de la ficción. (15–16)

A partir de sus objetivos principales y su estructura, el libro invita a una mirada crítica y nada lineal de la literatura y de la historia, así como también lo hacen las mismas escritoras a las que estudia. Estas irrumpen – o mejor, "asaltan", o "saltan" si seguimos a Benjamin– el recorrido lineal de la historia para devenir en acontecimiento literario revolucionario.

Como he adelantado, Benjamin resulta fundamental para este acercamiento, como también lo señala Lebrón Delgado en algunos de sus ensayos. Las tesis del filósofo apuntan principalmente hacia la mirada crítica o "salto de tigre" al pasado, revelando acontecimientos ocultos. Sostiene que el deber de la historia es redimir las injusticias del pasado, dándoles una oportunidad para ser recordadas y reinterpretadas de una manera que haga justicia a las víctimas de la opresión. La historia, entonces, no debe entenderse como un estudio académico neutral, sino como un compromiso

ético de recordar y redimir lo que el "progreso" ha dejado atrás. Rechaza, por lo tanto, la idea de que la historia sea una sucesión de eventos progresivos que llevan a una mejora constante de la humanidad. Por el contrario, el progreso a menudo beneficia a los vencedores mientras perpetúa el sufrimiento de los vencidos. Desde esta perspectiva, cada hecho histórico de progreso también es una "catástrofe" para otros. La historia, pues, debería rescatar las voces de aquellos que fueron olvidados o silenciados por los relatos oficiales, los "vencidos" de la historia. La nueva novela histórica latinoamericana viene, de alguna manera, a poner en efecto este "salto" crítico al pasado; es, esto, justo lo que hace este género desde el arte de la literatura.

También las teorías feministas, postcoloniales y la semiótica sirven de base para las diversas lecturas que hace Lebrón Delgado a lo largo de su texto. Estas teorías se inclinan con contundencia hacia la interpretación y evaluación problematizadora de las narrativas en cuestión y proveen un marco teórico sólido en diálogo con la contextualización histórica y el análisis del lenguaje literario. Desde una Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda –cubana en España –en el siglo XIX, hasta escritoras caribeñas contemporáneas como Karla Suárez (Cuba), Julia Álvarez y Ángela Hernández (República Dominicana), María Zamparelli, Ada Torres Toro y Mayra Santos Febres (Puerto Rico), por ejemplo, así como aquellas del continente del norte, centro y sur de la América Latina, se cruzan en estas páginas reveladoras. Lebrón Delgado propone una lectura incisiva sobre cómo las autoras abordan la historia desde la ficción. Identifica las particularidades de cada narradora, y también los temas recurrentes que las unen: la reconstrucción de figuras y eventos históricos, la elaboración de personajes femeninos multidimensionales, la resistencia cultural, el poder y la memoria, entre otros.

Las mujeres asaltan la historia se sitúa en la discusión de un corpus que era necesario explorar, abriendo, además, puentes para continuar indagando sobre las confluencias y divergencias en el contexto de la producción literaria de mujeres en Latinoamérica y el género de la novela histórica. Al hacerse, además, desde el Caribe –en particular desde la isla de Puerto Rico–, supone un cambio de paradigma, usualmente marcado por el análisis aislado de la literatura puertorriqueña o desde miradas ancladas en los Estados Unidos o desde referentes europeos. El establecimiento de estas conexiones literarias e históricas con el resto de la América Latina es, de primera mano, un acto decisivo que no debemos dar por sentado; se trata de un contundente

ejercicio académico-cultural que aporta a la crítica literaria de estas autoras latinoamericanas y a su estudio en el contexto del género novelístico histórico.

Es, además, un libro que nos habla también del presente, de unas luchas que continúan –las dictaduras, la violencia, el racismo–, pero también de una literatura latinoamericana efervescente en voces de mujeres que asumen sus posturas críticas sin reparos y con la convicción del poder del arte literario. Como diría Benjamin refiriéndose a la historia, es una tarea ética que consiste en iluminar las experiencias de los oprimidos y en reinterpretar el pasado en el presente para dar voz a quienes fueron silenciados.

Las mujeres asaltan la historia nos invita a mirar la literatura desde la historia, y la historia desde la literatura, para acercarnos a estas escritoras que (a)saltan la historia también como lo hace su autora con esta publicación.

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DUTCH CONTRIBUTION

Introduction to the Dutch Caribbean Submissions

IN THIS ISSUE OF *CARIBBEAN CONJUNCTIONS*, TWO AUTHORS share their research into the work of two literary giants from Suriname: Astrid Roemer and Albert Helman. In their thoughtful reflections, both Welmoed de Boer and Emma van Meyeren contextualize the works they studied in impactful historical eras of the former Dutch colony. These literatures and cultures are understudied in a larger Caribbean frame, which motivated both authors to submit to this journal. The essay on solidarity in the work of Curaçao radical Medardo de Marchena by Margo Groenewoud also falls into that scope. His anticolonial writings – most in Papiamentu – are an integral part of the history of Caribbean radicalism and should be known and further studied in that realm.

De romancyclus als postkoloniaal taalexperiment

Cora en Chora in Astrid H. Roemers *Lijken op liefde* (1997)

The novel cycle as a postcolonial language experiment

Cora and Chora in Astrid H. Roemer's *Semblance of Love* (1997)

EMMA VAN MEYEREN

Abstract

[EN:] *Towards the end of the millennium the Dutch-Surinamese author Astrid H. Roemer published her decolonization trilogy Onmogelijk moederland (Impossible Motherland). This article explores the relationship between language experiments and decolonization in the Neerlandophone literary space. Through Julia Kristeva's concept of the Chora, the birth- and death symbolism in the second part of the trilogy are interpreted as formal language experiments. By analyzing how the symbolic and the semiotic layers of language are highlighted through Roemers experiments with punctuation, repetition, and double meanings, this article offers an interpretation of Roemers poetics as a postcolonial, feminist writing strategy that innovates the relationship between narrative prose and time.*

Keywords: Neerlandophone literature, feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism.

Abstract

[NL:] *Terwijl het millennium op haar einde loopt, publiceert Astrid H. Roemer haar dekolonisatie trilogie Onmogelijk moederland. Dit artikel onderzoekt de relatie tussen taalexperiment en dekolonisatie in het Neerlandophone postkoloniale gebied. Via Julia Kristeva's concept van de Chora worden de geboorte-en doodssymboliek van de tweede roman in de trilogie geïnterpreteerd als formele taalexperimenten. Door te analyseren hoe de symbolische en de semiotische lagen van de taal uitgelicht worden in Roemers experimenten met*

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000051

leestekens, herhaling en dubbele betekenissen, biedt dit artikel een interpretatie van Roemers poëtica als een postkoloniale feministische schrijfstrategie die de relatie tussen narratief proza en tijd innoveert.

Keywords: Neerlandophone literatuur, feminisme, poststructuralisme, postkolonialisme.

De romancyclus *Onmogelijk Moederland* van Astrid Roemer is een bundeling van drie romans: *Gewaagd leven* (1996), *Lijken op liefde* (1997) en *Was getekend* (1998). Op basis van het publicatiejaar hebben de romans een chronologie, maar inhoudelijk volgen ze elkaar niet op. Veeleer zijn ze, in de woorden van Roemer zelf, een 'drieling' (Roemer 2001): ze overlappen in tijd en gebeurtenissen. Het maakt van de romancyclus een uitdijend universum. Deze vertelvorm, waarin tijd en gebeurtenissen elkaar steeds weer overlappen, roept een aantal vragen op. Waar begint dit verhaal precies? En waar eindigt het? Het zijn vragen die niet enkel betrekking hebben op de tijdsopbouw van het verhaal, ze zijn ook van belang voor de manier waarop de cyclus omgang vindt met haar hoofdthema: de Surinaamse dekolonisatiejaren (1950-2000). In dit artikel analyseer ik de rol van taalexperimenten in de totstandkoming van deze thematiek, en daarmee de relatie tussen formele tekstanalyse en Neerlandophone postkoloniale literatuur. Hiervoor leg ik me toe op het tweede boek van de cyclus, *Lijken op liefde*.

Op de vooravond van de overgang van het millennium – in het jaar 1999 – wordt via de moord op An Andijk het recente gewelddadige verleden van Suriname beschreven. De roman staat, in de woorden van *De Groene Amsterdammer*-recensent Yves van Kempen 'bol van de zwaar aangezette geboorte- en doodssymboliek', waarmee een koppeling wordt gemaakt 'tussen macro- en microniveau, familie en land'. Ik volg Van Kempen wanneer hij zegt dat deze symboliek in *Lijken op liefde* tot het uiterste is gedreven. Maar anders dan Van Kempen, zie ik deze symboliek, die tot stand komt via taalexperimenten, niet als 'taalkundige frivoliteiten' (Van Kempen). Integendeel, de geboorte- en doodssymboliek die door de eigenaardige taalkeuze van Roemer wordt opgeroepen is juist essentieel voor de manier waarop de romancyclus omgaat met chronologie in de postkoloniale context, en daarmee met noties zoals de doorwerking van het verleden of de idee van schuld.

Mijn hypothese bouwt verder op eerder onderzoek: reeds in 1998 beschreef Wim Rutgers in *Callaloo* Roemer als een auteur die thema's weergeeft middels 'taalkundig experiment' (553). In 2021 beschreef de jury van de Prijs Der Nederlandse Letteren Roemers werk als 'onconventioneel, poëtisch en experimenteel.' Toch is de enige analyse van Roemers proza waarin deze talige bijzonderheden centraal staan het artikel 'De onuitwisbare kenmerken van de zwarte stem' (1998) van Michiel van Kempen. Zijn analyse van Roemers stijl laat zien dat de stijl bepalend is voor hoe de thema's begrepen worden. In dit artikel zal ik deze relatie verder uitdiepen.

Zoals Celia Britton uiteenzet in haar monografie *Language and Literary Form in French Caribbean Writing* (2014) is er lange tijd weinig aandacht besteed aan formele tekstanalyse in postkoloniale literatuur. Thematische analyse voert de boventoon in de studie van postkoloniale literatuur. Dit wordt regelmatig losgekoppeld van de formele aspecten van de tekst, terwijl (en hierin volgt Britton één van de grondleggers van de postkoloniale theorie, Gayatri Spivak) literaire teksten een unieke functie hebben in het vervreemden en opnieuw verbeelden van de taal die doordrenkt is van eeuwen koloniale overheersing. De geboorte- en doodssymboliek in *Lijken op liefde* staan in dit artikel dus niet enkel centraal als dragers van inhoudelijke betekenissen maar als formele taalexperimenten. Het is daarom juist de overdaad of frivoliteit van de symboliek die gelezen wordt.

Om te verkennen hoe taalexperimenten in *Lijken op liefde* zich verhouden tot koloniale machtsstructuren, focus ik me in dit artikel op de de centrale symboliek van 'een vrouw bij wie de moederbuik werd doorboord' (Roemer 2016, 359). Om te ontdekken hoe taalexperiment deze symboliek mogelijk maakt, maak ik gebruik van Julia Kristeva's theorie over de revolutie van de poëtische taal (1974).

In *Revolution in Poetic Language* introduceert Kristeva de Chora: een pre-talige fase die aantoont dat taal niet alleen uit aangeleerde woorden (met symbolische betekenissen) bestaat, maar dat er ook een niveau in de taal zit dat lichamelijk is, zoals intonatie en gebaren. Met dit onderscheid bewoog Kristeva het post-structuralistische debat over hoe betekenis tot stand komt naar het lichaam en specifiek naar het lichaam van de moeder. De wisselwerking tussen deze twee lagen van betekenis zal leidend zijn in dit artikel. Naast het feit dat Kristeva de Chora als een 'baarmoeder' begrijpt en zodoende in dialoog kan treden met de 'zwaar aangezette geboortesymboliek' uit *Lijken op liefde*, is

er nog een ander opvallende (al dan niet toevallige) overeenkomst: de naam van de hoofdpersoon en verteller uit *Lijken op liefde* is Cora.

Net als Spivak en Britton beschouwt Kristeva formele taalaspecten als unieke middelen om machtsstructuren mee te bestrijden en focust zij zodoende op het proces van betekenisgeving in plaats van op betekenis die zich op symbolische wijze kenbaar zou maken via taal. Hoewel er in eerder onderzoek is gewezen op de mogelijkheid dat formele taalaspecten een functie vervullen in Roemers stijl als 'strategie' (Van Kempen 1998, 31) of manier om 'de Surinaamse geschiedenis toe te eigenen' (Ponte 2009, 53), zijn deze analyses nog niet toegekomen aan een verkenning van de innovatie van Roemers taalgebruik in de Neerlandophone literatuur. Een halve eeuw na de publicatie van haar eerste roman, is het tijd om de analyse van haar poëtica verder uit te breiden, niet alleen voor een beter begrip van de taalexperimenten in Caribische Nederlandstalige literatuur maar ook voor een beter begrip van taalexperimenten in het hele Neerlandophone literaire veld.

Het eerste deel van dit artikel introduceert de hoofdpersoon Cora, en het concept Chora. In het tweede deel worden de taalexperimenten in de roman verder toegelicht en ingekaderd via het gebruik van aanhalingstekens, herhaling en dubbele betekenissen. In het derde gedeelte wordt besproken hoe deze taalexperimenten de postkoloniale context informeren en andersom, door terug te komen bij de niet-chronologische opbouw van deze romancyclus. Op die manier beweegt deze analyse weg van de interpretatie van Roemers taalexperiment als 'taalkundige frivoliteiten' om voor het eerst gedetailleerd te onderzoeken hoe Roemers poëtica ingrijpt in de literaire verbeelding van het postkoloniale Neerlandophone gebied.

1. Cora

Lijken op Liefde is een verhaal verteld in vijf delen. Ieder deel wordt voorafgegaan door een intermezzo getiteld 'vluchtgegevens'. De vluchtgegevens – die een reis uittekenen van Paramaribo naar Amsterdam, Londen, Miami, Curaçao en uiteindelijk weer terug naar Paramaribo – lopen altijd voor op het verhaal dat erna verteld wordt. De indeling is dus chronologisch maar niet synchroon. In vijf verhalen vertelt de hoofdpersoon Cora over haar reis, die duurt van 8 december tot kerst 1999. Op het moment van publicatie, 1997, speelt het zich dus af in de (zeer nabije) toekomst. Het millennium loopt ten

einde en Cora's thuisland wil volgens haar 'verschoond' (Roemer 2016, 225) het nieuwe millennium ingaan. Zo ook Cora zelf. Ze is 65 jaar, gepensioneerd huishoudster en woont met haar man Herman Sewa op plantage Jericho. Cora is de hoofdpersoon van het verhaal en via flashbacks leren we ook over haar jeugd en de ontmoeting met Herman.

Decennia eerder is zij als huishoudster van Cor Crommeling, een hoge bestuursambtenaar, gevraagd om het lichaam van zijn minnares, de vermoorde An Andijk, op te ruimen. In ruil hiervoor heeft zij zwijggeld ontvangen, dat ze nooit heeft aangeraakt. Nu, na haar pensioen, wil ze het geld 'een zinvolle bestemming' (227) geven. Wat die zinvolle bestemming precies is, is aan interpretatie onderhevig, maar aangezien de moordenaar van An Andijk nooit berecht is, lijkt het in ieder geval deels hierom te gaan. En zo gaat Cora op reis.

Op de achtergrond van haar reis vindt in haar geboorteland Suriname het tribunaal plaats voor een gruwelijke staatsmoord die overeenkomt met de non-fictieve Decembermoorden.[1] Dichtbij en veraf zijn de mensen in deze roman dus op zoek naar de verhalen en de schuldigen van moord. Of ten minste, vragen zij zich af wat oorzaak en schuld (kunnen) betekenen. Hoewel het plot zich ontwikkelt als een detective, en Cora zeker ook benieuwd is naar de dader van de moord, lijkt het soms alsof er een andere vraag is die belangrijker is voor haar: waarom juist zij gevraagd werd getuige te worden van deze gruwelijkheid. De drie-eenheid van de detective (slachtoffer, moordenaar en detective) wordt daarmee uitgebreid met een vierde pijler die even belangrijk zo niet belangrijker is: die van de getuige.

Thuis vindt Cora een sleutel en een adres in een kalebas die al jaren aan een roestige spijker op haar slaapkamer hing. Ze reist naar Nederland om de kluis die bij die sleutel hoort te openen en ontmoet hier Onno Mus: de protagonist van het eerste deel van de cyclus, *Gewaagd leven,* en de zoon van Michael Mus. In de kluis zitten brieven van Onno Sewa (de 'bloedbroeder' van Michael Mus waar hij zijn zoon naar vernoemd heeft), Bob Cedar (een man uit Costa Rica) en van een anonieme verzender. Dit roept de vraag op van wie An zwanger was. Naar de tweede locatie, Londen, reist Cora omdat dit is waar de biologische moeder van Onno Sewa vandaan zou komen. In Miami gaat Cora op bezoek bij de Crommelings, die hier gevestigd zijn na de moord. Curaçao lijkt Cora vooral aan te doen ter doorreis. Zij spendeert daar de meeste tijd in een hotel, aangezien er een orkaan voorbijtrekt.

De positie van de voortstuwende vraag van de *whodunnit* (wie is de moordenaar?) verschuift in ieder hoofdstuk. Waar de kluis in Rotterdam en het gesprek met de Crommelings in Miami de belofte van een direct antwoord op de vraag in zich bergen, lijkt die belofte niet op de voorgrond te liggen in Londen of op Curaçao.

Krijgen we ergens een antwoord op wie de dader was? Niet echt.[2] De Crommelings beschuldigen Onno Sewa, maar ontkennen tegelijk dat hij de moord eigenhandig zou hebben uitgevoerd. Aan Onno zelf kan Cora het niet meer vragen, hij is namelijk overleden.

1a. Chora

De Chora is een term die Kristeva leent uit Plato's *Timaeus*. Letterlijk betekent het zoiets als 'ruimte' of 'plaats' van waaruit de materiële werkelijkheid voortkomt (Plato 2000, 52b-c). Kristeva vergelijkt deze term met de 'baarmoeder' als een 'vergaarbak' (Kristeva 1980, 133) van waaruit de wereld ontstaat (McAfee 2004, 19). De term is van belang voor het onderscheid dat Kristeva maakt tussen het symbolische en het semiotische.[3] Dit onderscheid maakt zij om in het proces van betekenisgeving twee lagen van de taal te onderscheiden die ieder op eigen wijze betekenis vormen. Op het symbolische niveau is taal een 'uiting van heldere en geordende betekenissen' en op het semiotische niveau is taal 'een gevoel of ontlading van de energie en drijfveren van het subject' (McAfee 2004, 17). Het symbolische begrijpt zij als het geordende, gestructureerde deel van de taal dat gebonden is aan sociale en culturele conventies. Het semiotische omvat de lichamelijke aspecten van betekenisgeving zoals ritme, klank en intonatie. Denk bijvoorbeeld aan het onderscheid tussen een vragende 'ja' en een bevestigende 'ja'. Het semiotische niveau, de klank, heeft een cruciaal effect op betekenis.

Wat Kristeva verder benadrukt is dat een subject al semiotische taal gebruikt (zoals brabbelen, intonatie en gebaren) voordat zij/hij de symbolische taal aanleert. Dit 'vooraf' noemt Kristeva de Chora, wat naast een temporale ook een ruimtelijke dimensie heeft als een 'baarmoeder'. De temporale dimensie van de Chora beslaat de fase die voorafgaat aan het moment dat het kind haar eigen grenzen leert kennen:

> In deze vroege psychische fase ervaart het kind een overvloed aan drijfveren (gevoelens, instincten, etc.) die extreem desoriënterend en destructief zouden

> kunnen zijn als deze niet zouden plaatsvinden in relatie tot het lichaam van de moeder. De tastbaarheid van het lichaam van de moeder voorziet de oriëntatie van de drijfveren van het kind. (McAfee 2004, 19)

Er zijn zodoende twee aspecten van de Chora die van belang zijn voor het proces van betekenisgeving: de verwantschap die dat proces heeft met het lichaam (dat niet los staat van de taal), en de verwantschap die het proces heeft met de moeder, een figuur die begrepen wordt als vrouwelijk. Zoals ik hieronder zal betogen is het in *Lijken op liefde* niet alleen de al dan niet toevallige overeenkomst tussen de naam van de hoofdpersoon (Cora) en de Chora, maar ook de 'zwaar aangezette geboorte- en doodssymboliek' die geïnterpreteerd kan worden middels het onderscheid tussen het symbolische (i.e. betekenis) en het semiotische (i.e. ritme, intonatie etc.) niveau van de taal.

Kristeva's conceptualisatie van het semiotische in termen van het vrouwelijk lichaam is door feministen bekritiseerd.[4] Omdat een simpele gelijkstelling van het sociaal construct 'vrouw' met lichaamsdelen of -functies inderdaad voor een essentialistische (en trans-exclusieve) lezing zou zorgen, is het belangrijk om deze begrippen niet zomaar aan elkaar gelijk te stellen. Kristeva's onderscheid tussen het symbolische en het semiotische is een reactie op Lacans onderscheid tussen het symbolische en het imaginaire. Voor Lacan lag het onderscheid hiertussen, en daarmee ook de sleutel tot het onderbewuste, in de structuur van taal (Felman 1987, 14). Hiermee koppelt hij het onderbewuste aan een vaderlijke taal (als wet). Kristeva probeert het onderscheid – de wisselwerking – te behouden zonder hierbij enkel uit te gaan van deze wet (Beardsworth 2004, 27). In zoverre vrouwelijkheid en mannelijkheid inderdaad als sociale constructen verschillende aannames genereren in onze cultuur, is de theorie van de Chora dus een zinvolle interventie in deze hiërarchie. De Chora lezen we dan in termen van vrouwelijkheid in plaats van als theorie van de vrouw als essentialistische en exclusieve categorie. Vrouwelijkheid is in principe beschikbaar (en zelfs noodzakelijk) voor iedere gender. Het experiment dat gevoerd wordt met de symboliek in *Lijken op liefde* kan zodoende geplaatst worden in een feministisch kader, dat wil zeggen: een kader waarin gender, in haar intersecties met klasse, ras en seksualiteit, bepalend is voor hoe betekenis tot stand komt.

1b. Chora in Lijken op liefde

'Hoe heeft zo'n groot geheim jarenlang in een kleine kalebas kunnen leven, opgehangen aan een roestige spijker in de lichtste hoek van hun slaapkamer?' (Roemer 2016, 251) vraagt Cora zich af in het eerste verhaal van *Lijken op liefde*. Jarenlang had de kalebas er gehangen, met een sleutel en een adres erin: aanwijzingen voor de moord op An Andijk. Maar Cora had geen idee, ze had de kalebas vlak voor zijn dood van Onno Sewa gekregen en nooit het idee gehad dat ze deze moest openen. We leren al snel dat voor Cora informatie niet iets is dat zomaar afgedwongen kan worden. Antwoorden kun je niet opeisen.

De kalebas is een vrucht en een gebruiksvoorwerp. Het wordt, gedroogd, gebruikt als een houder, een kruik, een drinkbeker, een spatel of een kom. De kalebas wordt in veel culturen gebruikt in rituelen. In de Winti zijn kalebassen ontvangers van de informatie van goden. Ook worden kalebassen gebruikt om instrumenten van te maken, zoals de Kora, een snaarinstrument waarin de kalebas de klankkast vormt. De kalebas resoneert, bewaart sommige geheimen en openbaart andere. Cora vraagt zich af waarom zij 'nooit de behoefte heeft gehad met Herman over de inhoud ervan te praten' (221). Wijst een dergelijke uitspraak op een onderscheid tussen verschillende lagen van betekenisgeving? Zijn er naast inhoud nog andere manieren waarop de kalebas betekenis geeft? Als snaarinstrument Kora komt de dimensie van klank en dus het semiotische niveau van de taal naar voren.

Doordat ik Cora's beschrijving van de kalebas interpreteer via het onderscheid tussen het symbolische en semiotische maak ik een koppeling tussen het semantische vraagstuk (kan het verhaal in taal gevat worden?) en een vraagstuk over driften (wat en wie stuwt het verlangen naar het verhaal voort?). Een aantal aspecten van dit verhaal toont het belang van deze koppeling. Ten eerste hebben we te maken met een detective, een *whodunnit*, een genre dat per definitie voortgedreven wordt door een zoektocht naar een dader. Met deze verwachting wordt gebroken door de belofte uiteindelijk niet in te lossen. Ten tweede is onze detective, Cora, niet de typische witte man van middelbare leeftijd die we meestal leren kennen als detective. Cora's positie is getekend door haar gender, etniciteit en klasse. Dit beïnvloedt zowel de inhoud van het verhaal, als de manier waarop het verteld wordt, en deze twee aspecten zijn bovendien niet los van elkaar te zien. Ten slotte is de Chora/

kalebas, Cora's geheim en sleutel, een object dat naar haar toegebracht is door een man (Onno S.), wat breekt met de idee dat dit maternale niveau van de taal alleen toegankelijk is voor vrouwen. Het laat zien dat juist de relaties tussen mannen en vrouwen van belang zijn in het proces van betekenisgeving. Dit komt vooral naar voren in Cora's relatie tot Herman die 'niet iemand is die in haar gedachten en gevoelens vingert. Hij gunt haar ook "een 'eigen leven' en 'eigen vrouwendinges'" 252). Haar Herman, van wie ze later pas ontdekt dat hij abortussen pleegt (de vrucht/Chora verdrijft), is haar steun en tegelijk ook de persoon van wie ze afstand nodig heeft in haar zoektocht.

Er zijn dus verschillende associaties mogelijk die Kristeva's *Chora* in relatie brengen met het pad van Cora in *Lijken op liefde*. Dergelijke associaties worden mogelijk gemaakt door poëtische taal, taal die speelt met het web van betekenis. Bij Roemer treedt een dergelijk spel expliciet op de voorgrond. Er wordt met taal geëxperimenteerd. Om te verkennen hoe het onderscheid tussen de symbolische en semiotische niveaus van de taal in *Lijken op liefde* het proces van betekenisgeving beïnvloedt zullen de associaties die de *Chora* zichtbaar maken verder geanalyseerd moeten worden door taalexperimenten in de tekst meer in detail te bekijken.

2. Taalexperiment

Zoals eerder is beargumenteerd is door Michiel van Kempen in zijn artikel "De onuitwisbare kenmerken van de zwarte stem" (1998), wordt Roemers proza gekenmerkt door unieke stilistische keuzes. Van Kempen onderscheidt een aantal syntactische en semantische kenmerken zoals zinsopbouw, persoonlijke voornaamwoorden, leestekens, weinig gangbare woorden, metaforen, dialogen, betekenisconnotaties en neologismen. In deze analyse zullen zulke vormaspecten verder onderzocht worden om te verkennen hoe zij ingrijpen op de thematiek van de roman. Centraal hierin staat het onderscheid tussen het symbolische en het semiotische en daarmee de maternale en lichamelijke connecties die het taalexperiment oproept.

2a. Aanhalingstekens

Het eerste taalexperiment dat opvalt in deze roman is het onconventionele gebruik van aanhalingstekens. Turven laat zien dat ongeveer zeventig unieke

woorden of clusters van woorden in de roman tussen aanhalingstekens staan, zonder dat deze traditioneel te verklaren zijn als een citaat of dialoog. De woorden tussen aanhalingstekens verschillen van werkwoorden zoals 'ontvangen' of 'opzetten' tot meer ideologisch geladen woorden zoals 'afwijkenden' of 'bloedschande'. Soms staat een aantal woorden die bij elkaar horen tussen aanhalingstekens, zoals 'heerlijk kamermeisje' of 'vreemd was gegaan'.

Hoewel het dus expliciet niet gaat om directe rede, doen de aanhalingstekens in dit geval toch denken aan een citaat, alsof de woorden van een ander worden geleend. Wanneer het gaat om woorden met ideologische ladingen zoals 'afwijkenden' of 'vreemd was gegaan', dan dringt zich bijvoorbeeld het idee op dat er een soort collectief onderbuikgevoel geciteerd wordt. Hiermee maakt de verteller haar positie expliciet, door zichzelf als het ware buiten de taal te plaatsen: de woorden die worden gebruikt zijn niet van de verteller, maar geleend.[5]

De aanhalingstekens grijpen in op het ritme van de tekst, ze zorgen voor een pauze of een onderbreking. De pauze heeft een effect op de betekenis: er wordt nadrukkelijk gewezen op de manier waarop betekenis tot stand komt. Yra van Dijk bespreekt dit ook in haar lezing van media en materialiteit in deze roman: 'Je wordt gedwongen na te denken over wat de relatie tussen beelden en woorden eigenlijk inhoudt en of die wel zo natuurlijk is' (Van Dijk 2020, 234).

Wat een semiotische lezing van het aanhalingsteken laat zien, i dat het subject een belangrijke rol speelt in die relatie tussen beelden en woorden. Traditioneel wordt het aanhalingsteken immers gebruikt om de relatie tussen een spreker en een uitspraak aan te geven. Wanneer de spreker ontbreekt, wordt de aandacht gevestigd op de relatie tussen de taal en de verteller. Een vraag die dit experiment dan op de voorgrond kan plaatsen is: waar komt taal eigenlijk vandaan?

Een voorbeeld hiervan zijn Cora's herinneringen aan Dora Crommeling, de vrouw van Cor Crommeling. Vanuit haar positie als intieme buitenstaander binnen het gezin vertelt Cora over het seksueel misbruik door Dora van haar zoon. Ook de relatie met haar dochter Delia is slecht, Dora jaagt haar weg van haar geliefde omdat hij een 'arme Moslim-Javaan of erger' is. Tegen Cora stelt zij zich ook racistisch op door haar als 'achterlijk' of 'niet slim genoeg' te bestempelen. Al deze termen worden gepresenteerd tussen aanhalingstekens.

Er is zodoende een afstand tussen het woord en degene die ze herinnert, in dit geval Cora. Het is alsof Dora geciteerd wordt zonder dat ze aan het woord komt.

De nadruk van het onconventioneel gebruik van aanhalingstekens bij uitspraken zoals 'arme Moslim-Javaan of erger' ligt niet enkel op het lichaam dat op racistische wijze wordt beschreven, maar ook op het lichaam dat deze beschrijving kan maken. Dit is een voorbeeld van wat Fred Moten in zijn analyse van de Amerikaanse Avant-Garde het 'positieve overblijfsel van de lyrische surplus' noemt. Onderbrekingen zijn volgens hem 'niet het negatieve effect van grammaticale onbekwaamheid' (Moten 2003, 38), maar een poëtische interventie die een surplus creëert. De interventie van de aanhalingstekens houdt in dat er niet een letterlijke spreker opgeroepen wordt maar dat de spreker afwezig en toch expliciet wordt gemaakt. Als Dora op symbolisch niveau het racisme van witte mensen in Suriname representeert, dan trekt het taalexperiment dit voorbij het personage. Immers: de aanhalingstekens en herhalingen beperken zich niet tot de passages waar Dora bij betrokken is. Het aanhalingsteken koppelt het subject los van de uitspraak en zorgt er zo voor dat een uitspraak niet incidenteel, maar structureel wordt.

2b. Herhaling

Ook uit Roemers gebruik van herhaling blijkt het belang van toon en ritme. Dit zit bijvoorbeeld in kopieën en gelijkenissen zoals de namen Cor, Cora en Dora. Maar ook in zinnen als 'Mensen hebben het vermogen om alles-alles te camoufleren en alle zintuigen te misleiden.' (312). Op het semiotische niveau zorgen herhalingen, net als aanhalingstekens, voor een onderbreking in het ritme. Bovendien zet het de idee van een ritme in de tekst extra kracht bij door het melodieuze effect.

Het onderscheid tussen de semiotische en symbolische niveaus van betekenis in de context van herhaling kan beter worden toegelicht door middel van Derrida's idee van iterabiliteit. Eén van de voorwaarden van communicatie is de herhaalbaarheid van woorden en tekens. En toch, zo beargumenteert Derrida, herbergt iedere herhaling een potentiële verschuiving van betekenis (Derrida 1978, 29). Zowel Kristeva's notie van het semiotische als Derrida's notie van iterabiliteit wijzen op dezelfde belangrijke

ingreep die herhaling maakt: de afwezigheid van een autonoom subject dat een singuliere betekenis aanbrengt in de tekst. Zelfs iemands naam is herhaalbaar en dus niet eigen. Zodoende maken ook de experimenten met herhaling een ingreep op de relaties tussen taal en het subject.

Zoals Derrida benadrukt in zijn theorie over iterabiliteit is het niet zo dat de verschuiving van betekenis ervoor zorgt dat ieder woord alles kan betekenen. De verschuiving is niet willekeurig en niet eindeloos. Door de verschuiving expliciet te maken in de tekst, met opvallende herhalingen zoals Cor/Cora of alles-alles, dwingt dit taalexperiment de lezer om na te denken over de verschillende richtingen van betekenissen. Ook dat is een manier om je te laten afvragen waar taal vandaan komt, of er een beginpunt is.

Het is niet het symbolische gegeven dat Cor en Cora zich tot elkaar verhouden dat in de herhaling centraal staat. Immers: het is logisch dat een huishoudster zich op een bepaalde manier verhoudt tot de persoon die gebruik maakt van haar diensten. Eerder gaat het hier om een tekstuele structuur die deze verhouding onder hoogspanning plaatst door te wijzen op mogelijke verschuivingen in de verhouding. Ook op symbolisch niveau wordt dit onderschreven, door Cora's positie als gepensioneerde (ze is niet langer meer afhankelijk van haar werkgever) en als hoofdpersoon. De potentie van de veranderingen in de verhoudingen tussen haar en haar oud werkgever staan zodoende centraal.

In plaats van een thematische postkoloniale lezing waarin Cora en Cor gezien worden als twee symbolen voor het gekoloniseerde en het koloniserende subject, laat de analyse van het taalexperiment zien dat de aannames die deze categorieën met zich meebrengen op het gebied van macht, subjectiviteit of vrijheid door de herhaling wordt gedestabiliseerd. De herhaling koppelt het subject los van een rol.

2c. Dubbele betekenissen

Herhaling keert ook terug in Roemers taalexperiment wanneer één woord op meerdere manieren gelezen kan worden. Roemer maakt regelmatig gebruik van woorden die meerdere betekenissen hebben. Zo blijkt ook uit de titel van de roman *Lijken op liefde,* waarin lijken zowel kan gaan om gelijkenis als om dode lichamen. Naast de eerdergenoemde voorbeelden van het effect dat ritme en intonatie heeft op de betekenis van herhalingen, komt ook bij

dubbele betekenissen de vraag naar boven: waar komt de taal vandaan? Heeft een woord een beginpunt – één referentiepunt – of is taal eerder iets dat cyclisch (in herhalingen, verdubbelingen) tot betekenis komt? Oorsprong is dus een thema dat op formele wijze centraal staat in Roemers poëtica. Voordat de implicaties hiervan verder uitgewerkt kunnen worden in deel drie van dit artikel, volgt nog een aantal voorbeelden van de werking van dubbele betekenissen.

Het spel met dubbele betekenissen komt voor op cruciale momenten in het verhaal. Denk bijvoorbeeld aan de beschrijving van Onno Sewa als 'vondeling'. Onno S. is dubbel 'vondeling': in eerste instantie als kind dat zonder zijn biologische ouders opgroeit[6] en in tweede instantie als volwassene die op straat gevonden wordt na zijn dood. Onno eindigt zoals het voor hem begon. Dit is van belang omdat zijn dood voorkomt dat het plot van dit boek kan sluiten: Onno kan nooit zelf bevestigen of ontkrachten of hij betrokken is geweest bij de moord op An Andijk.

En toch is Cora op zoek naar de dader van de moord op An, waarmee ze ook opzoek is naar een groter verhaal over de geschiedenis van haar land. De confrontatie met de moord op An komt tot een hoogtepunt in verhaal vier, als Cora bij de Crommelings op bezoek gaat. De verteller trapt die aanvaring af met de woorden: 'De zitting was geopend' (Roemer 2016, 374) In deze zin kan 'zitting', zowel gaan om een zitting in een rechtbank als een minder formele, zittende formatie in een huiskamer. In deze passage gaat het om een samenkomst van oude bekenden die elkaar opnieuw ontmoeten om misstanden uit het verleden te bespreken. In de situatie die op de pagina geschetst wordt is niet aannemelijk dat hier sprake is van een rechterlijke zitting, terwijl op de achtergrond wel continue het 'Het Tribunaal' spookt. Het spel met betekenissen brengt institutionele connotaties in een persoonlijke context en andersom. De rechtszaal komt de woonkamer in, zoals geliefden de rechtszaal ingetrokken worden. Er is sprake van een vervlechting van het institutionele en het persoonlijke niveau. Doris Hambuch verwoordde dit eerder ook al als een 'versmelting tussen het private en het publieke' (41).

Zowel het private als het publieke krijgen vorm via door de geboorte- en doodssymboliek waar deze roman zo bol van staat. Neem de sleutelpassage: 'Niemand had aan de zestien mannen gevraagd om een 'bloedige ingreep' te plegen in de buik van de Surinaamse politiek. De politiek moest maar blijven baren wat haar bevruchtte: groot geld, papieren verdragen, beloften,

dromen, macht en bedrog' (337). Er wordt hier een (over)duidelijke koppeling gemaakt tussen de politieke situatie van het land en het vrouwelijke lichaam. Bevruchting zorgt voor gevaar, de baarmoeder is gevaarlijk: voor An betekende het haar dood, voor Herman[7] de bijna ondraaglijke verantwoordelijkheid om jonge mensen van hun lot te bevrijden, in de politiek zorgt het voor corruptie, bedrog.

Hier zien we wat Kristeva bedoelt met de Chora als een 'vooraf': nog voordat er zoiets ontstaat als een (sluitend) verhaal of plot is er een lichaam, in dit geval de politiek zelf, waarin macht en bedrog al ontsloten ligt voordat ze zelf tot handelen overgaat. Dit is een metafoor waarin het vrouwelijke lichaam en het baren een centrale rol krijgen in wat vaak gezien wordt als een patriarchale aangelegenheid: het besturen van een land.

Het taalspel met het vrouwelijke lichaam maakt de baarmoeder hier aanwezig als letterlijk orgaan (plaats) en als metaforische verwijzing (ruimte) die een materiële realiteit verbindt aan sociale praktijken. 'Roemer verbindt de private en publieke sfeer door het gebruik van lichaamsbeelden, in het bijzonder die van zwangerschap' (Krus 187). Dit gebeurt niet alleen op symbolisch niveau, bijvoorbeeld via symboliek en haar web van betekenissen, maar ook op formeel niveau, door de overdaad en herhaalbaarheid van de symboliek. De koppeling tussen dit symbolische en semiotische niveau onthult dat in Roemers poëtica een politieke moord niet los staat van femicide of de lichamelijke autonomie van vrouwen. En dat het vrouwelijke lichaam dus op de frontlinie staat van zowel het geweld als de dromen die de ontwikkeling van het land voortbrengen. Vrouwelijkheid produceert in *Lijken op liefde* de (post)kolonie.

3. Taalexperiment en (non)lineariteit

De interventie van Kristeva in de psychoanalyse was een noodzakelijke stap om te kunnen spreken van zoiets als vrouwelijke subjectiviteit. Toch staat er voor Roemer ook iets op het spel dat in Kristeva's analyse niet centraal staat: de specifieke context van vrouwelijke subjectiviteit in de (post)kolonie. In het laatste gedeelte van dit artikel, wordt de analyse van de Chora en Cora ingezet om te ontdekken hoe het semiotische het symbolische elkaar informeren in deze roman en daarmee hoe de formele taalexperimenten zoals hierboven besproken zich verhouden tot de thematiek: de dekolonisatiejaren

van Suriname. Hiervoor gaan we terug naar waar deze analyse begon, naar het uitdijende universum van de romancyclus via de aanval op Ans moederbuik.

3a. Onderbreking en oorsprong

Eerder is besproken dat aanhalingstekens een effect hebben op de relatie tussen subjecten en uitspraken, dat herhalingen in de tekst de relatie tussen subjecten en diens rollen bevragen en dat dubbele betekenissen van woorden niet enkel een symbolische overvloed voortbrengen maar ook een effect van het semiotische zijn, en op die manier een koppeling mogelijk maken tussen het private en het publieke. Deze taalexperimenten leggen bovendien telkens dezelfde vraag neer bij de lezer: waar komt taal vandaan? Oorsprong wordt zo een belangrijk thema in/van de tekst, zoals in het geval van Onno S., maar ook voor bijvoorbeeld mevrouw Crommeling. Neem als voorbeeld de herhaling in deze passage: 'Mishandel je jouw eigen moeder, Delia, met dezelfde doeltreffendheid waarmee mijn eigen moeder mij heeft mishandeld, Delia? Het is alsof ik mijn eigen tragiek heb gebaard!' (Roemer 2026, 353). Niet alleen is Dora de dader van geweld, zij is eerder ook al slachtoffer geweest. Er is sprake van geweld in de maternale lijn dat zichzelf herhaalt. De herhaling breekt op deze manier met het idee van één oorsprong. Oorsprong wordt telkens weerlegt, herhaalt, tussen aanhalingstekens geplaatst.

Dit strookt met Fred Motens idee van een 'aanhoudend vooraf dat iedere geboorte ontwijkt' (55). In Motens werk is het ontwijken van de geboorte een manier om over zwarte subjectiviteit te denken. Zo markeert hij het verschil tussen de geboorte van het witte subject, dat wordt gezien als het moment waarin autonomie ontstaat, versus de geboorte van het zwarte subject onder slavernij, dat wordt geboren in gevangenschap. Moten traceert de ontwijking van de geboorte, een beweging die ook begrepen kan worden in de traditie van *Black Fugitivity,* als een essentieel aspect van de Amerikaanse Avant-Garde.

Via de sterk aangezette geboorte- en doodssymboliek in deze roman, is ook in *Lijken op liefde* zo'n ontwijking te herkennen. In eerste instantie in Cora's leven als kinderloze vrouw. Of in Cora's reis/vlucht: zij is ogenschijnlijk op zoek naar de waarheid over de moord op An Andijk, maar tijdens haar reis besteedt zij minstens zoveel tijd aan een vertelling over haar verhouding met Herman. Of Cora uiteindelijk opzoek is naar Ans verhaal, haar eigen verhaal of dat van Herman, valt zodoende niet te zeggen: ze zijn allemaal

afhankelijk van elkaar. Er is geen oorsprong. Zelfs het dode lichaam en haar baarmoeder zijn in deze detective geen beginpunten.

In het plot valt het daardoor op dat er in het laatste verhaal, dat zich afspeelt op Curaçao, avances van een andere man in het spel komen. Spoon Jackson probeert Cora te verleiden in het hotel, en zodra het gevaar van de overtrekkende orkaan is verdwenen neemt hij haar mee om het eiland te laten zien. Ze staan samen op Westpunt, waar de zee tegen de rotsen stoot. Dit is hoe Cora zich dat moment herinnert:

> Kreunend heeft zij zich weerloos laten zuigen naar het gat van Spoon Jackson in haar herinnering, dat in de eilandrots blauwschuimend naar haar had geknipoogd. Daar was geen verleden en geen toekomst. Er móest een opening naar ergens anders zijn. Ze wou schreeuwen. Maar zouden de grond, het water, de lucht voor haar verlangen naar het gat en zijn heling kunnen breken? (428).

Dit is een voorbeeld van hoe Roemers spel met dubbele betekenissen en dus het semiotische de thematiek verrijkt. Ik wil hier specifiek ingaan op de betekenissen van 'het gat'. Het gat is een letterlijk rotsgat dat veroorzaakt is door de golven, een weergaloos aanzicht van de enorme kracht die water heeft. Tegelijk is het gat ook: een herinnering, de aantrekkingskracht van een andere man, een in- of uitgang, een manier om na te denken over wat er voorafgaat en wat erna komt. Zoals de baarmoeder is het gat een liminale ruimte: een overgang tussen aarde en oceaan, tussen leven en dood. Ook het kreunen en het weerloze in deze passage doen denken aan een bevalling, of in combinatie met het zuigen, een omgekeerde geboorte: het terugkeren naar de baarmoeder. Daar is geen verleden en geen toekomst, de baarmoeder valt buiten de tijd.

Het dubbelzinnige gat kan zodoende gelezen worden als een on-oorspronkelijke benadering van de Surinaamse dekolonisatiejaren. Een benadering waarin het geweld én de heling binnen en buiten de samenleving op elkaar ingrijpt zonder dat hierin een begin of een einde aangewezen kan worden. Dit is ook hoe we terugkomen bij het belang van de beschrijving van *Onmogelijk moederland* als drieling: er is geen chronologie, geen begin en geen einde, maar een uitdijend universum waarin steeds meer connecties gelegd kunnen worden.

De dekolonisatiejaren zijn in deze poëtica verankerd in een verleden én in een toekomst, die niet los te weken zijn van elkaar. Taalexperimenten

maken het dus mogelijk om de doorwerking van gebeurtenissen over te brengen en niet langer in dualistische termen van voor en na te spreken. De theoreticus Christina Sharpe verwoordt het belang van een ander tijdsbesef ten opzichte van de Transatlantische slavernij en haar doorwerking in haar boek *In The Wake* (2016) met de vraag 'hoe we een gebeurtenis herinneren die nog steeds bezig is' (20).[8] Roemers taalexperimenten zetten deze vraag eveneens op de voorgrond.

3b. Dubbele betekenissen en schuld

Eerder zei ik dat de ontwijking van de geboorte in eerste instantie te herkennen was in Cora's kinderloze leven. Maar het is uiteraard ook Herman die met haar kinderloos blijft, en die bovendien zijn eigen, grotere rol heeft in de ontwijking van de geboorte als aborteur.

We gaan weer terug in het verhaal: tijdens Cora's verblijf in Londen leren we via een flashback over het moment dat ze ontdekte wat er zich allemaal verschuilt achter Hermans titel 'natuurgenezer'. Yra van Dijk beargumenteerde dat de beschrijving van Herman als 'natuurgenezer' op dubbele wijze te lezen valt: geneest hij de natuur of gebruikt hij de natuur om mensen te genezen? (2022) We leren over Hermans abortuspraktijken via de impact die het heeft op Cora. We staan aan de voornacht van een militaire coupe, Herman is bang voor zijn veiligheid en vindt dat hij zijn vrouw niet op kan zadelen met onwetendheid over de reden dat hij misschien opgepakt zal worden. Hij biecht aan haar op dat hij soms ook bloed aan zijn handen krijgt: hij is een 'aborteur'. Cora kan het amper geloven, 'Ik dacht dat je alleen met planten werkte, vruchtenmoes met kreekwater, maar bloed . . .' (Roemer 2016, 333) waarop Herman antwoordt dat een mens ook bloed is.

Herman staat niet onverdeeld positief tegenover zijn werk als aborteur. Hij bevraagt de grenzen van het 'natuurlijke' in zijn positie als 'natuurgenezer' en is daarbij vooral kritisch op de houding van mannen die 'moeiteloos grof geld neertelden om bij een vrouw hun eigen kind weg te laten halen' (336). Herman ziet zo'n houding als de vervreemding van de natuur die bij stadsmannen heerst, mannen die 'zo'n natuurlijke vergelijking niet begrijpen' (337). Om ze toch te laten voelen wat ze teweegbrengen gaf hij ze een tijd de 'afgedreven vrucht' (337) mee in een doorzichtige plastic zak. Maar zelfs daar waren deze stadsmannen niet mee te vertrouwen, ze gooiden ze zomaar de

berm in, bevuilden de omgeving en zorgden zo voor nog meer problemen. Terwijl Herman voor deze mannen dus geen goed woord over heeft, is hij bijzonder begaan met het lot van de vrouwen en kinderen. De wanhoop van vrouwen die achtergelaten, mishandeld of vernietigd zullen worden door de geboorte van een ongewenst kind gaat hem aan het hart. En de kinderen zelf, die ziet hij als zijn eigen: 'In zijn blote handen kwamen ze ter wereld. Hij hield van hen' (338). De dubbele bekentenissen van natuur en genezing ondersteunen de bevraging van wie er eigenlijk schuldig is voor een abortus.[9]

Kennis is macht, zo weten Cora en Herman maar al te goed. Het is dan ook geen toeval dat op het moment dat 'twee Hollanders' (329) de plantage betreden op zoek naar de methoden van Hermans abortuspraktijken, dat Herman hen zo snel mogelijk de deur wijst. De Hollanders denken vlug informatie te kunnen inwinnen, maar voor Herman is zijn praktijk een eeuwenoude traditie, die met zoveel verantwoordelijkheid komt dat deze niet zomaar over te hevelen valt naar de eerste de beste bezoeker. Hij doet zijn werk 'in naam van de godinnen en goden van hun Afrikaanse afstamming. In dienst van het volk en land waar hun slavenbestaan tot een eind is gekomen' (329). Er is dus een directe lijn te trekken tussen de abortuspraktijk van Herman en de koloniale macht. Toch wordt de analogie die verscholen kan liggen in de abortus, die van het verdrijven van die koloniale macht, ook vertroebeld. In eerste instantie neemt de stadsman de plek in van de schuldige, niet de Hollandse bezoeker. Ten tweede laat Hermans ambivalente houding tegenover zijn kennis over het verdrijven van de vrucht zien dat het hebben van kennis niet altijd een gewenste of bekrachtigende positie behelsd. Er rommelt dus iets in de analogie. Dit is eenzelfde soort vertroebeling als die plaatsvindt op het niveau van de voortstuwende vraag: wie heeft An Andijk vermoord? Doordat de schuldvraag niet ingelost wordt, roept de roman de vraag op of deze beweging in eerste instantie vruchtbaar is geweest: of de vraag 'wie het heeft gedaan' iets kan baren. Het uitblijven van het antwoord ondermijnt geenszins het belang van de vraag, eerder onderschrijft het deze.

Wat de nadruk op de dubbele betekenissen en dus de semiotische lagen van betekenisgeving aantonen in de casus van Hermans abortuspraktijken is dat oorzaak en gevolg in deze roman op gespannen voet staan. Er is geen begin (onschuld) en einde (schuld), eerder maakt het taalexperiment een cyclisch mogelijk en sluit op die wijze opnieuw aan bij de baarmoederthematiek die zo hevig wordt opgevoerd: het narratief in deze roman is rond. Op het

gebied van temporaliteit betekent dit dat het niet gaat om een verhaal dat werkt van een begin naar een einde maar dat werkt middels gelijktijdigheid. Naast de narratieve structuur die rond beweegt door de ruimte en de tijd, zijn het formele kenmerken zoals aanhalingstekens, herhaling en dubbele betekenissen die in samenwerking met de geboorte-en doodssymboliek deze gelijktijdigheid mogelijk maken. Roemers taalexperiment staat zodoende in teken van een nieuwe manier van herinnering in de postkoloniale context: één waar doorwerking, herhaling en (ongewenste) implicatie in centraal staan. Zodoende kan haar poëtica begrepen worden als een postkoloniale, feministische schrijf strategie die de relatie tussen narratief proza en tijd innoveert.

Conclusie

Herkennen we vrouwen als Cora in historische narratieven van de Cariben en haar diaspora? Welke condities maken haar perspectief (on)zichtbaar? In het Suriname en Nederland van de 21e eeuw, waarin we nog maar aan het begin staan van het beschrijven van de relaties tussen onze samenlevingen, zijn het meestal niet gepensioneerde Creoolse vrouwen uit de werkende klasse die vooraan staan in het creëren van ons gedeelde narratief. In *Lijken op liefde* is dat wel het geval.

Dit artikel heeft aangetoond dat Roemers formele taalexperimenten noodzakelijk zijn om in dit patriarchale, racistische en eurocentrische landschap met Cora te leren denken, waarmee ik ook bedoel: naar Cora te leren luisteren. Dit maakt Roemers poëtica uniek in de Neerlandophone literatuur.

Toen Kristeva de lichamelijke en maternale lagen van de taal begon te beschrijven in *Revolution of Poetic Language* was het niet vanzelfsprekend dat de interventie van een vrouw in het post-structuralistische debat ertoe zou doen, laat staan dat zij dit zou kunnen doen precies via hetgeen waardoor zij onzichtbaar was gemaakt: haar lichaam. Negen jaar na dit boek schreef Kristeva in *Tales of Love* dat het opvoeren van de moeder als figuur een manier was om van een vrouw te zeggen dat zij bestaat 'zonder het risico te lopen dat haar andersheid wordt ontkent' (234). De moeder is immers de enige functie van de 'andere sekse' waarvan we zeker weten dat die bestaat. Op eenzelfde negatieve manier maakt de lezing van Cora als Chora van haar

subjectiviteit iets substantieels: niet als de enige of als een nieuwe kijk op Surinaamse en Nederlandse samenlevingen, maar als een kijk die het risico ondermijnt dat haar andersheid wordt ontkend. Ofwel, als een autonome kijk.

In deze analyse van het middelste deel van de romancyclus *Onmogelijk moederland* is de rol en functie van taalexperimenten bestudeerd door middel van Kristeva's theorie van de Chora. De Chora, als pre-talig stadium, als vergaarbak, als baarmoeder, maakt een analyse mogelijk van de relaties tussen taal en gender, in haar intersecties met klasse en ras. Deze relaties laten zien hoe formele aspecten van de tekst zich verhouden tot de inhoud en de manier waarop betekenis wordt gecreëerd. In deze analyse zijn taalexperimenten zoals leestekens, herhaling en dubbele betekenissen bestudeerd om te verkennen hoe Roemers poëtica een postkoloniale vertelstructuur mogelijk maakt die verbonden is aan de geschiedenis maar niet gebonden eraan, die de doorwerking (het niet-af) van de geschiedenis benadrukt en zo lineariteit doorbreekt om noties van schuld te bevragen. De vragen uit de introductie: waar begint dit verhaal en waar eindigt het, zijn zodoende elkaars antwoord geworden.

Dit artikel heeft aangetoond dat Cora's getuigenis, haar ervaringen van de dekolonisatiejaren, niet alleen in symbolische taal gevat kunnen worden. Haar verhaal wordt bepaald door de semiotische laag van de taal, en de lichamen waar deze aan verbonden zijn. Dit betekent dat de weerstand die deze romancyclus biedt tegen chronologie een interventie is in de temporele indeling van het koloniale verleden in voor, tijdens en na. In Roemers taalexperiment loopt die indeling door elkaar, en in haar poëtica wordt dit niet enkel op symbolische wijze maar ook op formele wijze mogelijk gemaakt. Hiermee maken haar 'taalkundige frivoliteiten' een unieke ingreep op de literaire verbeelding van het postkoloniale Neerlandophone gebied.

Notes

1. Op het moment dat dit verhaal afspeelt zijn de decembermoorden zeventien jaar geleden, en was er ondanks herhaaldelijk aandringen van nabestaanden geen gerechtelijk proces over gevoerd. In november 2000, 11 maanden nadat het verhaal zich afspeelt en 3 jaar nadat deze roman uitkwam, begint er pas werkelijk een gerechtelijk vooronderzoek. De uiteindelijke uitspraak over deze zaak kwam in december 2023, 26 jaar nadat deze roman uitkwam.

2. Het ware verhaal wordt uit de doeken gedaan in het derde deel van de trilogie, *Was getekend*. Wanneer de moeder van de hoofdpersoon Pedrick op het punt staat naar Nederland te gaan, laat zij het geheim achter bij haar zoon. Andijk is 'per ongeluk' vermoord door Onno Sewa, die eigenlijk Mevrouw Crommeling had willen aanvallen. Na de moord heeft mevrouw Crommeling Andijks buik doorboord met een tuinschaar. In dezelfde passage ontdekken we hoeveel mensen een rol speelden in het verhullen van de dader: Pedricks moeder heeft mevrouw Crommeling bedreigd toen zij Onno wilde aangeven, omdat zij bang was dat haar zoon Pedrick daarin meegesleept zou worden (Roemer 2016, 339).
3. Kristeva onderscheidt haar begrip van het semiotische van dat van de Saussure door de nadruk te leggen op de chaotische, niet-systematische aspecten van de taal. Via het 'psychoanalytische herstel van het subject' Beardsworth 2004, 30) neemt zij afstand van het onderscheid signifier/signified als hoofdzaak in het proces van betekenisgeving, hoewel zij de 'breuk' van dit onderscheid wel begrijpt als een onderdeel van het symbolische (Kristeva 1984, 49).
4. Lynne Segal, *Is the future female* London 1987; Chris Weedon. *Feminist practice & poststructuralist theory* Oxford 1987; Jacqueline Rose, 'Julia Kristeva — take two' 1993; Nancy Fraser & Linda J. Nicholson, 'Social criticism without philosophy: an encounter between feminism and postmodernism' in Linda J. Nicholson (ed.) *Feminism/postmodernism* 1990; Gayatri Spivak, 'In a word' in: *Differences* (1989) jrg. 1 no. 2 p. 147. Als besproken door Nel van den Haak in haar proefschrift 'Metafoor en filosofie: Studie naar de metaforische werking in de filosofie aan de hand van Julia Kristeva en Paul Ricoeur' (1999).
5. Wanneer Fanon in *Zwarte huid, witte maskers* beschrijft met welke termen hij tot zwart object gemaakt wordt, dan plaatst hij racistische uitspraken ook tussen aanhalingstekens, zonder dat het daarbij altijd duidelijk is wie deze uitspraken maakt. Het gaat in zijn analyse niet om het individu dat de uitspraak doet, maar om de alomtegenwoordigheid van racistische directe rede. Hij noemt dit 'het feit van zwartheid' (1986, 109).
6. In Roemers proza vinden we regelmatig personages die zonder biologischeouders opgegroeid zijn en/of niet weten wie hun biologische ouders zijn. In het derde deel van de cyclus is het Ilya die we kennen als 'wees', wat taalspel met de woorden 'wezen/wezenlijk' mogelijk maakt.
7. Ook deze naam heeft een dubbele betekenis als deze in het Engels wordt gelezen: Her-man, haar man.
8. Thalia Ostendorf beschrijft deze werking ook in de experimenten van Edgar Cairo. In haar analyse van het schip in Cairo's *Mi boto doro / Droomboot have(n)loos* (1980) lopen tevens verleden, heden en toekomst door elkaar.
9. Ook relateert de beschrijving van Hermans werk als opruimer van problemen

en letterlijke foetussen die in de berm worden gegooid zijn werk met Cora's werk als huishoudster. Beiden worden ze opgezadeld met de troep van een ander. Herman en Cora zijn 'schoonmakers': werk dat noodzakelijk is om de strenge scheiding tussen privé (thuis) en publiek (werk) mogelijk te maken. Zonder onderhoud zou de omgeving in chaos ontaarden en de personen die het minste onderhoud (hoeven) te doen lijken hier blind voor te zijn. Zoals Silvia Federici dit fenomeen krachtig beschreef in haar *Wages Against Housework*: 'wanneer we het hebben over huishoudelijk werk dan praten we over de meest doordringende manipulatie en het meest subtiele geweld dat het kapitalisme ooit heeft gepleegd tegenover een werkende klasse' (16). De meest klasse-kritische noot van de roman, Cora's implicatie in de moord op de werkvloer, wordt zo verbonden aan Hermans abortuspraktijken en de implicaties van deze rol voor de samenleving.

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De ontvangst van Albert Helmans *Grazige Weiden*

Casestudy van een Surinaams-Nederlandse vertaling in de jaren 50

The reception of Albert Helman's *Grazige Weiden*

Case study of a Surinamese-Dutch translation in the 1950s

WELMOED DE BOER

Abstract

[ENG] *Grazige Weiden (1954) is a Surinamese Dutch adaptation by Albert Helman of Marc Connelly's* The Green Pastures *(1929), in which a black cast performs biblical scenes. The original play and film* The Green Pastures *in the U.S. were a breakthrough in the 1930s. In several countries, including the Netherlands, both the play and the film were banned; however, in Suriname, the film was already a great success. The Surinamese Dutch translation can be interpreted against the background of the cultural emancipation movements in the 1950s. Helman incorporated colonial language relations in his adaptation of the play, putting Standard Dutch in the mouths of high-ranking characters, like 'God' and Noah, while lower-ranking characters spoke non-standard colloquial language. This raises the question of to what extent the adaptation of Grazige Weiden was a language-emancipatory act in the Surinamese context. This article interrogates the Surinamese Dutch translation in its sociohistorical context and explores the reception of the play in Suriname, by highlighting newspaper reports and language excerpts from Grazige Weiden. Contemporary reports show, among other things, that although the Surinamese language was appreciated, the religious content played by Surinamese actors may have weighed even more heavily in its success.*

Keywords: literature, play, Suriname, cultural emancipation, translation

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000052

Abstract

[NL] *Grazige Weiden (1954) is de Surinaams-Nederlandse vertaling door Albert Helman van Marc Connelly's* The Green Pastures *(1929), waarin Bijbelse taferelen worden gespeeld door zwarte acteurs. Het originele theaterstuk en de originele film* The Green Pastures *in de VS vormden een doorbraak in de jaren 30 van de vorige eeuw. In een aantal landen, zoals Nederland, was zowel het theaterstuk als de film verboden, maar in Suriname was de film en later het theaterstuk een groot succes. De Surinaams-Nederlandse vertaling is te plaatsen tegen de achtergrond van de Surinaamse culturele emancipatiebewegingen in de jaren 50 van de vorige eeuw. Maar Helman heeft in zijn bewerking van het stuk ook de koloniale taalverhoudingen verwerkt door de hooggeplaatsten, zoals 'God' en Noach, Standaardnederlands in de mond te leggen, en de lagergeplaatsten de niet-standaardtaal. Een vraag is dan in hoeverre de bewerking Grazige Weiden een taalemancipatorische daad is geweest. Dit artikel plaatst de Surinaams-Nederlandse vertaling in de sociohistorische context en belicht via krantenberichten en taalfragmenten uit Grazige Weiden de ontvangst van het theaterstuk in Suriname. Uit de berichtgeving in die tijd blijkt onder andere dat hoewel het Surinaams taalgebruik gewaardeerd werd, de religieuze inhoud gespeeld door Surinamers mogelijk zelfs zwaarder mee in het succes.*

Trefwoorden: literatuur, toneel, Suriname, culturele emancipatie, vertaling

Grazige Weiden is een Surinaamse theaterbewerking uit 1954 gemaakt door Albert Helman, die in de vergetelheid lijkt te zijn geraakt. De brontaal van het origineel, *The Green Pastures* uit 1929 van Marc Connelly, is *Afro American Vernacular English*. Vooral met het oog op een Surinaams publiek, was Surinaams-Nederlands volgens Helman de geëigende doeltaal voor een vertaling. Bovendien lijkt sociohistorisch bekeken Helmans doeltaalkeuze aan te sluiten bij de tijdgeest van naoorlogse autonomiebewegingen waar de Surinaamse taalemancipatie in paste. Helman was niet alleen een schrijver, maar een cultureel ambassadeur voor Suriname, die korte tijd Onderwijsminister was geweest. Vanuit die positie wist hij de Surinaamse taalverhoudingen treffend neer te zetten in *Grazige Weiden*, dat van historische betekenis zou zijn. De weerspiegeling van de diglossische taalverhoudingen in Suriname in zijn vertaling maakt dat Helmans vertaling niet volledig of zelfs niet als een taalemancipatorische daad kan worden beschouwd. Het

Surinaams taalgebruik was wel een van de ingrediënten die *Grazige Weiden* tot een enorm succes hebben gemaakt, hoewel de Bijbelse inhoud tegen de achtergrond van de cultuuremancipatie in de jaren 50 van de vorige eeuw waarschijnlijk de dominante succesfactor is geweest.

Dit artikel biedt via Surinaamse mediaberichten over de ontvangst van het theaterstuk inzicht in de redenen waarom *Grazige Weiden* zo'n kaskraker was**.** Deze analyse vindt plaats tegen de achtergrond van het sociohistorisch tijdperk van de jaren 50 van de vorige eeuw, waarin de culturele herwaardering van het eigene in Suriname op gang kwam. De omschrijving van de invloed van koloniale taalverhoudingen biedt in dit artikel inzicht in hoe de keuze voor Surinaams-Nederlands als doeltaal een uiting was van waardering van het eigene. Concrete taalanalyses blijven in de recensies en besprekingen over *Grazige Weiden* zo goed als achterwege. Daarom volgt in dit onderzoek een analyse van enkele vertaalde fragmenten en van lokaliseringstechnieken die de tekst moesten Surinamiseren om licht te werpen op de factor taal in het succes van het theaterstuk. Hoewel het taalgebruik in *Grazige Weiden* niet de enige succesmaker was, ondersteunt dit artikel Helmans doeltaalkeuze, die ook in de actualiteit relevant zou zijn om de taalgeschiedenis van het koloniale slavernijverleden recht te doen. Het artikel gaat dan ook in op eerdere beschouwingen van vertalingen van zwarte literatuur.

Voor dit explorerend onderzoek zijn geen interviews met ooggetuigen gehouden, uitgezonderd een gesprek met de zoon van acteur Frits Breeveld. Deze acteur speelde de rol van 'God' in *Grazige Weiden* en zijn zoon was ten tijde van de opvoering van het toneelstuk een tiener; hij heeft de opvoering bijgewoond.

The Green Pastures in de jaren 30

Om inzicht te bieden in de sterke symbolische betekenis van *Grazige Weiden* in 1954 volgt eerst een uiteenzetting over de maatschappelijke betekenis die *The Green Pastures* had in de jaren 30 van de vorige eeuw. De filmversie van *The Green Pastures* is zowel in de Verenigde Staten als Suriname een succes van maatschappelijke betekenis geweest vanwege het Bijbelse thema gespeeld door zwarte acteurs. Bijbelse figuren gespeeld door mensen was namelijk niet iets wat overal ter wereld in goede aarde viel. In 1938 verscheen in *De Surinamer* een commentaar op het Nederlandse verbod op *The Green*

Pastures waarin staat het stuk mogelijk niet alleen verboden was vanwege de menselijke representatie van God die tot ontstemming zou leiden, maar ook vanwege de zwarte acteurs:

> God in menschelijke gedaante kan dus die ernstige ontstemming moeilijk rechtvaardigen. Gaat dan het bezwaar tegen den neger ? Maar men weet, dat de film onder negers speelt en geheel uit de godsdienstige cultuur van christen negers is gegroeid. Men kan toch niet verlangen van deze zwarten, dat zij zich God als een blanke voorstellen? Het zou gelijk zijn met te eischen, dat de Westerlingen zich God voorstellen als een Chinees.[1]

The Green Pastures is oorspronkelijk geschreven in *African American Vernacular English* door de witte auteur Marc Connelly. De titel verwijst naar Psalm 23:3, een Bijbeltekst die ook in Suriname populair is en die verwijst naar spiritueel herstel. *The Green Pastures* vertelt de verhalen uit het boek Genesis met een centrale rol voor Noach, maar dan gesitueerd in het zuiden van de VS en geïnspireerd door zwarte spiritualiteit.[2] Het theaterstuk werd in de VS opgevoerd in de periode 1930–1935, deels op Broadway, met een alleen zwarte acteurs. In 1936 volgde de filmversie, die eveneens met een cast volledig bestaand uit zwarte acteurs, een opmerkelijke doorbraak was.

The Green Pastures is gebaseerd op *Ol' Man Adam and His Chillun*, geschreven door de eveneens witte schrijver Roark Bradford. Deze bundel bestond uit een verzameling verhalen gebaseerd op Bradfords ervaring met de 'zwarte' belevenis van het christendom, waarin de preken en verhalen van de zwarte predikant John Wesley Henning waren opgenomen.[3] Hoewel Connelly de Pulitzer-prijs won met *The Green Pastures* waren er kritische geluiden over de manier waarop zwarte cultuur in het stuk was neergezet.[4] De film is volgens critici een stereotypische karakterisering en kinderlijke voorstelling van zwarte cultuur, met een God die op *Uncle Tom* lijkt.[5]

Mogelijk doordat de film in Suriname de film zo'n succes was geweest, werd de opvoering van *Grazige Weiden* in 1954 groots aangepakt, en gesubsidieerd door de Stichting Culturele Samenwerking Suriname en de Antillen (Sticusa).[6] Albert Helman was zelf nauw betrokken bij Sticusa.[7] In Suriname werd Sticusa en haar werkarm het Cultureel Centrum Suriname door sommigen bekritiseerd, omdat Sticusa vooral Nederlandse cultuur presenteerde en stimuleerde.[8] Ook Albert Helman – in dit verband onder zijn echte naam

Lou Lichtveld – werd bekritiseerd. Zo vonden cultureel-nationalistische organisaties, waaronder Wie Eegie Sanie die voor het Sranantongo opkwam, dat Helman slechts de lichtkleurige creoolse elite vertegenwoordigde en zich alleen als Surinamer opstelde wanneer hem dat goed uitkwam.[9]

Zo'n kleine twee decennia jaar vóór de opvoering van *Grazige Weiden* in Suriname had de houding van Nederland ten aanzien van de film *The Green Pastures* er een tijdje radicaal anders uitgezien. In Nederland was *The Green Pastures* aanvankelijk verboden, omdat God erin werd neergezet als menselijk wezen.[10] Ook in Nederlands-Indië werd de film, die daar aanvankelijk wel vertoond werd, verboden, terwijl de film in Nederland inmiddels al was toegestaan. Een voorwaarde bij het opheffen van het filmverbod in Nederland was dat bij de voorstelling geen acrobaten en humoristische dansnummers mochten worden opgevoerd; het moest "*sober*" blijven.[11]

In 1937 werd de film alsnog in Nederland toegelaten voor openbare vertoning.[12] Toch bleef de film eerst verboden in sommige plaatsen, zoals Alphen aan de Rijn, waar de politie ingreep om de vertoning van de film te staken en proces-verbaal opmaakte tegen de directeur van de bioscoop.[13] Dat veel mensen het niet eens waren met het verbod blijkt uit een kadertje dat in de kranten verscheen waarin de burgermeester van Alphen aan de Rijn werd bespot:

> De volksmond, – gul en grif met zijn critiek als altijd, — heeft ook het burgemeesterlijke verbod van de film „Grazige Weiden" niet zonder commentaar laten voorbijgaan. „Heb je al gehoord", zo vragen de Alphenaren elkaar, „dat het grasveld achter het gemeentehuis binnenkort zal worden omgespit? ?????? „Ja, burgemeester Colijn kan geen „grazigeweiden" meer zien !!" [14]

Overigens, eerder, in 1934 was kennelijk een theateropvoering van het stuk in de stadsschouwburg door Het Utrechts Studententooneel geen probleem, hoewel het ultrakorte krantenbericht hierover niets vermeldt wat betreft de etniciteit van de acteurs.[15] Mogelijk was die opvoering niet openbaar toegankelijk, want het verbod draaide om openbare vertoningen. Ook in een aantal andere landen was de film eerste verboden, zoals in Australië, het Verenigd Koninkrijk, en Singapore.[16] Op 31 oktober 1933 bericht *Het Algemeen Handelsblad* dat *The Green Pastures* als theaterstuk in een Deense versie is opgevoerd in Kopenhagen, zonder problemen, maar dat het in Oslo verboden was. Daar was het wel in besloten kring opgevoerd.[17] Nog in 1956

vond in Israel de filmkeuringscommissie *The Green Pastures* aanstootgevend voor zowel religieuze als niet-religieuze mensen.[18]

In Suriname daarentegen, werd de film groots aangekondigd.[19] Daar werd de film niet afgewezen maar juist gedraaid met een educatieve uitleg vooraf door een dominee.[20]

Surinaams toneel in de jaren 50

Albert Helmans Surinaams-Nederlandse vertaling van *The Green Pastures* en de productie van *Grazige Weiden* zijn van vergelijkbaar historisch belang als het origineel.[21] Alhoewel er ook kritische kanttekeningen te maken zijn, kan de opvoering van een zwarte cast die Bijbelse taferelen speelt als een daad van emancipatie kunnen worden opgevat, net als de keuze voor Surinaams-Nederlands voor een theatervertaling in de jaren 50.

De vertaling naar Surinaams-Nederlands was niet een geïsoleerd gegeven in de Surinaamse geschiedenis. Zo waren er eerdere Surinaams-Nederlandse bewerkingen, van andere beroemde theaterstukken, zoals *Midzomernachtsdroom,* door Paula Velder. Hierbij ging het in de brontekst echter om Shakespeareaanse taal en niet om Afro-Amerikaans Engels. Deze ontwikkeling in taalkeuzes maakte deel uit van de heroriëntatie van Theater Thalia op de West-Indische regio vanaf de beginjaren 50.[22] Het is duidelijk dat deze ontwikkeling in de sociohistorische context van culturele heroriëntatie in Suriname als geheel moet worden geplaatst, waarin taalemancipatie een essentieel element was. In de periode ervoor was er overigens ook weinig volkstoneel in Suriname.[23]

Een andere Surinaams-Nederlandse theatervertaling van Albert Helman werd met gemengde gevoelens ontvangen: *Watramama*, een bewerking van *The Creatures of Cicely* van Waith-Smit over de stedelijke problemen in Trinidad.[24] Dit zou vooral te maken hebben met het thema van het theaterstuk omdat het zou draaien om iemand die zijn tijd verlummelde. Daarnaast waren er Surinaamse opvoeringen van andere theaterschrijvers, zoals het wagenspel *Datra Sjorie* (*Dokter George*) dat een bewerking in het Sranan en Surinaams-Nederlands was van *Le médecin malgré lui* van Molière, gemaakt door Ton Verwey.[25] *Grazige Weiden* zou iets groters voorbereiden: de introductie van een Surinaams passiespel dat een traditie zou kunnen worden, en dat later in 1960 ook groots is opgevoerd.[26]

Dat Surinaams-Nederlands in Suriname een optie was geworden om toneelwerken te Surinamiseren blijkt ook uit de reactie van Noni Lichtveld – Albert Helmans/Lou Lichtvelds dochter – in de jaren 60 op het toneelstuk *De Kankantrie.* Zij analyseerde het stuk, geschreven door Eline Verkade, voor opvoering in Suriname. Het werk had de Nederlandse Maestro-toneelprijsvraag gewonnen, maar Noni Lichtveld vond dat het werk inhoudelijk volledig ongeschikt was voor Suriname. In haar bespreking in *De Nieuwe Gids* nam ze wel mee dat het oer-Hollands taalgebruik weliswaar kon worden omgezet naar Surinaams-Nederlands, evenals dat er wat aan de Surinaamse typen gedaan moest worden.[27]

Koloniale taalverhoudingen

De brontekst van *The Green Pastures* is geschreven in een vorm van *African American Vernacular English,* dat net als Sranantongo voortkomt uit een pidgintaal die is ontstaan in de transatlantische slavernijgeschiedenis, hoewel de discussie over de exacte oorsprong ervan niet is gesloten. *African American Vernacular English* zou net als het Sranantongo gerelateerd zijn aan creooltaalvariatie van het Engels in de Cariben en West-Afrika.[28] Surinaams-Nederlands is op zijn beurt weer sterk beïnvloed door het Sranantongo.[29] Dergelijk niet-standaardtaalgebruik en creooltalen hadden en hebben in (voormalige) koloniale samenlevingen een lage positie op de maatschappelijke taalladder.

De herkenbare maatschappelijke verhouding van gesproken taalvariatie van een officiële standaardtaal in beide taalgebieden maakt Surinaams-Nederlands qua equivalentie de meest logische doeltaal voor een vertaling uit *African American Vernacular English*. Helmans keuze voor Surinaams-Nederlands was volgens Van Kempen juist deels ingegeven door zijn scepsis over de mogelijkheden van de andere volkstalen, met name het Sranantongo, waarmee men wel ver maar niet ver genoeg zou kunnen komen.[30] De vertaling toont de doelbewust keuze voor een Surinaams-Nederlands dat in het stadsmilieu door iedereen verstaan zou worden.[31]

Als Helman met 'niet ver genoeg' bedoelt 'over de Surinaamse grenzen', dan zou de keuze voor *Grazige Weiden* ook twijfelachtig zijn, gezien de vele typisch Surinaamse elementen. Maar hij schreef de bewerking dan ook voor een Surinaams publiek. Een Europees publiek zou een deel van de betekenis

vermoedelijk ontgaan, vooral de humoristische elementen die Helman in zijn theaterbewerking heeft neergezet. Het verhaal op zich zou, te oordelen naar de geschreven tekst van *Grazige Weiden*, wel gemakkelijk te volgen zijn voor Nederlandstaligen uit de Europese cultuur.[32]

Helman wilde met *Grazige Weiden* een deel van de Surinaamse samenleving bereiken, in dit geval de Afro-Surinaamse bevolking in de stad Paramaribo. Helman vertaalde met de stedelingen in Paramaribo als doelpubliek voor ogen.[33] Een vraag kan zijn – hoewel Helman een dergelijke overweging niet noemt – of mensen in dat stadspubliek een theaterstuk in het Sranantongo misschien wel minder zouden waarderen in die tijd. Diezelfde vraag kon echter ook gesteld worden bij de keuze voor Surinaams-Nederlands, dat door velen toen beschouwd werd – en nog wordt – als een Nederlands vol typisch Surinaamse taalfouten.

In zijn eigen reflectie op zijn vertaling van *The Green Pastures* die hij in 1954 publiceerde in *Vox Guyanae* staat Helman stil bij zijn overwegingen bij de doeltaalkeuze. Hij gebruikte het Standaardnederlands of Surinaams-Nederlands in een vorm die door Surinamers in Paramaribo zou worden begrepen. Sranantongo zou volgens hem niet worden verstaan door het grotere publiek. Helman wilde een zoveel mogelijk vergelijkbare situatie creëren in de doeltaal, waarbij hij zelf een representatie creëerde in het vertaalde stuk.[34]

Helmans benadering van het doeltaalpubliek komt overeen met formuleringen van de bekende Bijbelvertaler Eugene Nida over vertalingen, met name literaire vertalingen, die volgens Nida hetzelfde effect moeten hebben op het doeltaalpubliek als de brontekst op het brontaalpubliek.[35] Dat houdt in dat eenzelfde tekst verschillende vertalingen kan hebben, afhankelijk van uit wat voor mensen het doelpubliek bestaat.

Hoewel Helman een Afro-Surinaams doelpubliek voor ogen had dat de Surinaamse bewoordingen zou begrijpen, zijn de Europese normen die in de kolonie golden wel aanwezig in *Grazige Weiden*: in de vorm van de taalverhoudingen met het Standaardnederlands in een superieure positie. Maar ook die verhoudingen zijn een typisch gegeven in de Surinaamse taalsituatie. In dat opzicht is de bewerking niet waterdicht te plaatsen als taalemancipatorische theaterbewerking, hoewel het twijfelachtig is of het publiek een mondeling Surinaams-Nederlands sprekende 'God' of profeet gewaardeerd zou hebben. Mogelijk was Helman zich ook daar bewust van, naast zijn keuze om een zo realistisch mogelijke taalsituatie neer te zetten.

Daarnaast heeft Helman het – overigens pas medio jaren 60 door Nida geformuleerde – principe gevolgd dat vertaling tussen sociolecten een vorm is van communicatie gebaseerd op sociolingüistische verhoudingen.[36] Volgens Nida is het vertalen van niet-standaardtaalvariatie zoals dialecten, etnolecten en sociolecten in beginsel mogelijk, maar omdat een exact equivalent in een doeltaalvariant niet bestaat, "extreem moeilijk" voor de vertaler.[37] Of dit ook zo was voor Albert Helman is moeilijk te zeggen; aan de vertaling is de moeite die de vertaler moest doen om tot zijn product te komen niet altijd af te lezen.

De taalverhoudingen moeten wel vergelijkbaar aanwezig zijn in de doeltaal, zoals bij *Grazige Weiden*. De diglossie tussen Surinaams-Nederlands en het Standaardnederlands die tot vandaag in Suriname bestaat is terug te vinden in dit theaterstuk. Daarmee weerspiegelt het indirect ook de diglossie tussen het – toen zeker nog – als onbeschaafd beschouwde Sranantongo en het 'superieure' Nederlands. *Grazige Weiden* reflecteert juist die verhoudingen, omdat in het stuk Standaardnederlands gesproken wordt in de situaties waarin dat ook in Suriname de norm zou zijn.

Hiermee is deze vertaling een interessante creatieve voorstelling van de Surinaamse taalsituatie in de jaren 50 van de vorige eeuw, doorspekt van diglossie, die getuigt van taalattitudes en de daaruit voortvloeiende frustraties ontstaan in een koloniaal verleden. Overigens, niet alleen Albert Helmans werk weerspiegelt dit bewustzijn van diglossie: de regisseur Wil Texeira legde in hetzelfde tijdperk in zijn hoorspelen zijn personages verschillende talen en taalvariatie in de mond: de grootmoeder die Surinaams-Nederlands spreekt, de kleindochter die ABN spreekt en de tuinman en chauffeur die Sranantongo spreken.[38]

In de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw leidden taalwetenschappelijke ontwikkelingen tot de conclusie dat talen principieel gelijkwaardig zijn. Dit was een cruciaal principe ter ondersteuning van de taalemancipatorische bewegingen die in Suriname streden om de volkstalen een betere positie te geven. In de beginjaren 50 van de vorige eeuw, nog vóór de vertaling van *Grazige Weiden* het licht zag, was er een aanzienlijk taalwetenschappelijk onderzoek gestart naar Surinaams-Nederlands als tweede taal, onder leiding van de neerlandicus professor Wytze Hellinga,[39] die eveneens nauw betrokken was bij Sticusa.[40] Zo voelden Surinaamse taalemancipatoren zich gesteund door het taalwetenschappelijk onderzoek van Hellinga.[41] Maar

taalwetenschappelijke inzichten worden wat betreft taalvariatie beperkt aanvaard; overtuigingen die in de Surinaamse samenleving over taal heersen luiden veelal dat mondelinge taalvariatie ongeschikt is voor een formele positie in het onderwijs en bestuur van het land. In zijn kortstondige werk als minister van Onderwijs in 1949/50 en zijn werk als ontwikkelaar van taalmateriaal voor scholen richtte ook Albert Helman zich op het Standaardnederlands als officiële taal. Hij was als minister van Onderwijs eind jaren 40 vorige eeuw bekend met het beleid dat het ABN wilde propageren.[42]

Surinaams-Nederlandse als doeltaal in vertalingen

Dat het Surinaams-Nederlands erkenning nodig heeft, blijkt onder meer uit het feit dat Nederlandse vertalers van Afro-Amerikaanse literatuur uit de VS deze taalvariant kennelijk niet als een optie beschouwen. De mogelijkheden ervan hebben meer onderzoek nodig, dat ook in the picture gebracht moet worden in de vertalerswereld. Wekker & Wekker en Fernald & Wekker bekritiseren in de jaren 90 bijvoorbeeld de Nederlandse vertaling van *The Color Purple* als ver verwijderd van realistisch taalgebruik. Volgens deze wetenschappers is die vertaling ontdaan van essentiële zwart-culturele kenmerken en bevat een kromme vorm van niet-realistisch Nederlands, mogelijk zo opgevoerd om aan te geven dat het hoofdpersonage een ongeschoold meisje was. Fernald & Wekker en Wekker & Wekker onderbouwen met vertaalsamples uit *The Color Purple/De kleur paars* dat literaire werken vanuit *African American Vernacular English* naar Surinaams-Nederlands vertaald kunnen worden. Hun vertaalanalyse is echter gericht op vertalingen voor een groter publiek, en verwijst niet naar bestaande vertalingen in de Surinaamse taalcontext zoals *Grazige Weiden*.[43]

Nog een illustratief voorbeeld dat het Surinaams-Nederlands niet de juiste aandacht krijgt, is dat van de vertaalwetenschapper Langeveld, die de vertaling van *Huckle Berry Finn* door Westendijk gebruikt ter illustratie van de opties om een etnolect te vertalen. Hoewel goed bedoeld, gaat Langeveld voorbij aan bestaand onderzoek naar het Surinaams-Nederlands. Deze auteur wijst erop dat Surinaams-Nederlands als taalvariant niet een grote bekendheid geniet bij een groter publiek. Deze vertaler van *Huckleberry Finn* zou geprobeerd hebben om het als doeltaal neer te zetten, althans een vorm die geïnspireerd is door Surinaams-Nederlands. Toen Langeveld dit

naar voren bracht bestond er al een reeks proefschriften over het Surinaams-Nederlands en andere Surinaamse taalvariatie. Langeveld gebruikt in zijn korte uiteenzetting van een paragraaf lang ongelukkigerwijs – weliswaar tussen aanhalingstekens – de term 'Negernederlands' als tegenhanger van *Negro English*.[44] Een dergelijke, bovendien terloopse bespreking, die positief bedoeld is, werkt eerder averechts als er geen onderzoek aan ten grondslag ligt.

Dat Surinaams-Nederlands niet wordt gebruikt als doeltaal voor vertalingen van zwarte literatuur of literatuur met zwarte aspecten zoals *Huckle Berry Finn*, maakt duidelijk dat er een stuk geschiedenis niet aan bod komt in de literaire vertalingen. Creooltalen en taalvariatie die is ontstaan in het koloniale verleden kunnen een rol spelen in vertalingen om de geschiedenis recht te doen. Surinaams-Nederlands kwam na 1876, toen de leerplicht werd ingevoerd en het Nederlands de enige onderwijstaal taal werd, volgens Gobardhan in een stroomversnelling.[45] Voorheen was het in Suriname voor tot slaaf gemaakten verboden om Nederlands te leren, en nu, na de afschaffing van de slavernij, was dat juist verplicht. De Nederlandse taal werd nu gedoceerd aan aanvankelijk vooral leerlingen die thuis Sranantongo spraken. Hierdoor stond Surinaams-Nederlands in het begin sterk onder invloed van het Sranantongo. Als bij een zwart literair werk voorbijgegaan wordt aan de mogelijkheid om een zwarte taalvariant als doeltaal te nemen voor een vertaling, is dat een negeren, zo niet ontkenning van dit stuk geschiedenis.

Echter, er zijn ook enkele, meer praktische factoren inherent aan de positie van deze taalvariant als minderheidstaal die kunnen worden belicht bij Surinaams-Nederlands als doeltaal. Ook deze factoren zijn een voortvloeisel van de ongelijke waardering van de talen.

Ten eerste zijn de beschrijvingen van Surinaams-Nederlandse taalvariatie schaars. De vertaler kan nauwelijks terugvallen op (erkende) taalbeschrijvingen. Door deze omstandigheid moet een vertaler Surinaams-Nederlands idealiter *native* of *near native speaker* zijn, of op zijn minst een zeer doorleefde kennis van de variant hebben en elke culturele gevoeligheid begrijpen. Maar dat is altijd wel het geval. Albert Helman heeft doelbewust voor de Afro-Surinaamse variant van Surinaams-Nederlands gekozen, en zijn vertaling *Grazige Weiden* toont zijn kennis van de culturele aspecten.

Gecreoliseerde culturen zijn deels vertaalde culturen. De bijzonderheid in het vertaalproces tussen zwarte taalvariatie in de context van transatlantische

slavernijgeschiedenis is dat er altijd een creooltaalvariant van is of heeft bestaan. In het geval van Suriname bestaat er een levendig uitwisselingsproces tussen de lingua franca Sranantongo en Surinaams-Nederlands. Veel van de Sranantongowoordenschat figureert al dan niet volgens een vast patroon in het Nederlands taalgebruik van Surinamers. Een deel van deze woorden is opgenomen in de officiële naslagwerken van de Nederlandse taal. Een uitgebreider deel is opgenomen in het Woordenboek van de Surinaamse Bijdrage aan het Nederlands van De Bies[46] en in het Surinaams-Nederlands woordenboek van Donsselaar.[47] Vooral de laatste twee werken zouden op het bureau van de vertaler moeten liggen als de doeltaal het Surinaams-Nederlands is, maar dat is lang niet voldoende, zoals ook bij uitgebreid beschreven talen het geval is voor de vertaler. Bovendien telt het Surinaams-Nederlands meerdere invloeden dan alleen de Afro-Surinaamse, een aspect dat in de taalwetenschappelijke literatuur ook nog niet heel zichtbaar is. Ten tweede zouden in het geval van een Europees doelpubliek bij een consequent doorgevoerde equivalentie veel uitdrukkingen niet of onvoldoende worden begrepen, of zelfs verkeerd worden begrepen vanwege de associatie met Surinaamse woorden in straattaal in Nederland. Deze associaties kunnen essentieel zijn in de manier waarop de vertaling wordt ontvangen door het publiek in Nederland.

Ten derde is Surinaams-Nederlands niet de enige vorm van Nederlands die door afstammelingen van Afrikanen wordt gesproken, waardoor de vraag zou kunnen rijzen of er gekozen moet worden voor het taalgebruik van bijvoorbeeld de Nederlandse Cariben. Het is echter niet duidelijk of er een stabiele variant is ontstaan zoals in Suriname. Ook Fernald & Wekker[48] wijzen om die reden Caribisch Nederlands als doeltaal af als optie, hoewel inmiddels mogelijk wel zo'n variant is ontstaan, al dan niet stabiel. Overigens, de krant *Amigoe di Curaçao* plaatste op 13 april 1955 een berichtje over de verkoop van Helmans vertaling van *The Green Pastures* in boekvorm.[49] Op dezelfde pagina staat een artikel over de samenwerking in Sticusaverband tussen de Nederlandse Antillen, Suriname en Nederland: "*Initiatief inzake samenwerking moet in eerste instantie van de Nederlandse Antillen en Suriname komen*". Al in 1954 berichtte *Amigo di Curaçao* eveneens op de voorpagina dat Helman *The Green Pastures* zou vertalen.[50]

Ten vierde beschouwen grote delen van de Surinaamse samenleving, zowel in Suriname als het buitenland, Surinaams-Nederlands als incorrect

en inferieur taalgebruik. Mensen die er zo over denken, kunnen zich beledigd voelen door te worden voorgesteld als sprekers van een onderontwikkeld *bakba Hollans* of *broko broko tongo* – 'bananen-Nederlands' of ′gebroken taal′. Deze vierde overweging levert de meeste gevoeligheden, want creooltaalvariatie is meer dan eens gebruikt als 'grappig taalgebruik' om de sprekers ervan voor te stellen als minder intelligent. Ook *African American Vernacular English* is in het verleden in de VS veelvuldig gebruikt om zwarte mensen belachelijk te maken.[51] Dat geldt overigens ook voor andere creooltaalvariatie van het Nederlands, zoals het Nederlands-Indische Pecoh ('gedeukt' of 'verfrommeld').[52] In de voormalige Deense Antillen werd de dominante taal onder de bevolking het 'Neger-Holllands' genoemd, een term vergelijkbaar met *Negro English* in de VS of 'Neger-Engels' voor Surinames lingua franca Sranantongo. De bewoordingen 'neger' en 'gebroken' typeren dit soort benamingen, die suggereren dat de sprekers ervan inferieur en onderontwikkeld zijn.

Deze vier factoren hebben Albert Helman niet gehinderd in zijn vertaling, die er uitziet alsof hij ze onbewust of doelbewust heeft overwogen. Allereerst was het ontbreken van taalbeschrijvingen van het Surinaams-Nederlands voor hem als Surinamer vermoedelijk nauwelijks een probleem. De tweede factor telde niet mee, want hij vertaalde voor een Surinaams publiek. De derde, de overweging van Nederlands-Antilliaans taalgebruik, was ook onnodig, maar hij heeft wel een Antilliaans personage opgevoerd dat zijn taalgebruik doorspekte met woorden uit het Papiamentu. De vierde factor, van beledigend taalgebruik, daar is hij kennelijk goed mee omgegaan, want het krantenonderzoek leverde nagenoeg geen negatieve ontvangst van het taalgebruik.

De ontvangst van *Grazige Weiden*

Helman was niet de enige die het theaterstuk tot een succes maakte. In tegendeel, de meest gewaardeerde betrokkene lijkt juist de regisseur van *Grazige Weiden,* die er vol passie tegenaan ging met zijn toneelspelers. Gedurende negen maanden oefenden tussen de 60 tot 84 acteurs in ruim 135 repetities onder leiding van Edwin Thomas, de in Nederlands-Indië geboren en getogen regisseur die hiervoor naar Suriname was gehaald. De assistent-regisseur was Frits Pengel, die aan de toneelacademie van

Amsterdam studeerde. Vier van de acteurs hadden acteerervaring. De vooraankondigingen die verschenen in zowel de kranten van Suriname als die van Curaçao en zelfs Nederland, belichtten de voorbereidingen en gaven blijk van hoge verwachtingen.

Uiteindelijk is *Grazige Weiden* op 26 november 1954 in première gegaan in Theater Thalia; de laatste opvoering was op 4 januari 1955.[53] De recensies verschenen de dag erop: in *De Surinamer* op de voorpagina, met de enige foto van de Surinaamse voorstelling die in het onderzoek voor dit artikel is aangetroffen.[54] In *Het Nieuws* kwam de recensie op een binnenpagina te staan, maar in de editie van 30 november volgde op de voorpagina van dat dagblad een deel 2 over de opvoering.[55]

Edwin Thomas was onder Surinamers al bekend van het theaterstuk *De geboorte van Boni* van Eddy Bruma, over de geboorte van deze marronleider en held. Bij het regisseren hiervan had hij de Surinaamse Frits Pengel leren kennen, die meeging naar Suriname en het regisseren zou leren van Thomas.[56] De kranten besteedden in hun berichtgeving over *Grazige Weiden* zowel in Nederland als Suriname relatief veel aandacht aan regisseur Edwin Thomas, vaak wel in één adem genoemd met Albert Helman, maar in *Het Vrije Volk* van 30 oktober 1953 ook in een artikel met de naam Eddy Bruma, die *De geboorte van Boni* had geschreven.[57] Eddy Bruma was een van de prominenten win de beweging Wie Eegie Sanie. Edwin Thomas zegt in die editie van *Het Vrije Volk* ook dat hij op zoek was naar een eerdere Nederlandse vertaling van *The Green Pastures*. Mogelijk heeft de eerder in dit artikel vermelde Utrechtsche Tooneelvereniging die gemaakt of gebruikt voor haar opvoering, hoewel Thomas in een interview met *De Surinamer* lijkt te hebben gezegd dat er geen Nederlandse vertaling van bestond. In dat interview zegt hij ook dat Helman het stuk spontaan voor hem heeft vertaal, in een periode van enkele weken.[58]

Het is overigens opmerkelijk dat de Surinaams-Nederlandse opvoering zowel in de berichten, advertenties als besprekingen met name in de Surinaamse kranten steevast wordt aangeduid als *The Green Pasture*s. Zelfs de titel op de kaft van het boekje met de Surinaams-Nederlandse tekst van Helman toont deze titel in het Engels.[59] Mogelijk was deze naam bekender doordat de film in de jaren 30 ook een enorm succes was geweest in Suriname, en was dat de overweging om de Engelstalige titel te gebruiken.

De vertaling van de titel naar *Grazige Weiden* heeft Helman mogelijk

rechtstreeks overgenomen van een Nederlandse vertaling van de filmversie. Deze vertaling van de titel werd in een *Vertalen. Het kritisch orgaan van de vereeniging Nederlandsche vertalingen* bekritiseerd als "veel te letterlijk en daardoor nietszeggend".[60] Volgens de schrijver van het artikel, J.G. Schoup, zou *green* verwijzen naar de:

> groenheid van negerkinderen in geestelijke dingen, zoodat zij bijbelsche verhalen in hun geest voorstellen als gebeurtenissen in eigen milieu, waar personen van eigen ras handelend bij optreden.[61]

In feite illustreert Schoups beschouwing en voorstel voor een andere titel die volgens de schrijver een betere weergave zou zijn precies de kritiek die op de film naar voren komt over de manier waarop de zwarte spiritualiteit daarin is neergezet door Connelly:

> Waarom niet "Eenvoudige Zielen"? "Pastures" wordt hier gebruikt in den zin van den bodem, waarop het verhaal door de naïve gesteldheid van de negerkinderziel – tot eenvoudige, voor ons kinderachtige voorstellingen die de film dan ook geeft kan gedijen en er zich in concretiseert . . .[62]

De titel die Schoup voorstelde zou vermoedelijk de discussies in Nederland hoger hebben doen oplaaien en voor een opvoering in Suriname zou deze titel al helemaal uit den boze zijn. Ongetwijfeld heeft Albert Helman met de letterlijke titelvertaling *Grazige Weiden* in de roos geschoten, zeker voor het Surinaams doelpubliek waarvan hij wist dat die de psalm waardeert.

Zowel de Surinaams-Nederlandse vertaling als de opvoering werd beschouwd als mogelijk grensverleggend, gezien de bewoordingen. Helmans vertaling werd geroemd als een moedig stuk vertaalwerk, door Van de Walle van de Wereldomroep:

> Suriname, geconfronteerd met een geweldig religieus probleem, herkende zich in dit stuk zelf. Waarschijnlijk mede dank zij de kloeke poging van Lichtveld, nu werkelijk de taal te gebruiken, die men in Suriname spreekt.[63]

Regisseur Thomas had gewaagde scènes neergezet, schreef *Het Nieuws* op 30 november 1954:

> ls in de 15e scène, de nacht kroeg van Babylon, de orgie haar hoogtepunt lijkt te hebben bereikt, komt de vorst van Babylon binnen en zweept de nachtbrakers op. En dan staat hij ineens overeind met de armen uitgebreid, de rode koningsmantel

> achter hem wegvloeiend, om de cadans te intoneren voor wat moet volgen: Ba-ba-ba-ba-Babylon-Babylon-Babylon. Van zijn wiegend lijf vloeit de hysterie naar de nachtbrakers, raakt hun voeten die in tap-tap-tap het rythme overnemen, aarzelend eerst, dan nadrukkelijk, tot het omhoog kruipt langs de heupen die aan het wiegen gaan, naar de tors die zich zwelgend uitzet. En dan is er nog maar een enkele deerne nodig die met een zwaai van de schouders en het hoofd in de nek als een laaiende vlam tussen de anderen doorschiet met 'opwaaierende' rok – en alles staat in een oogwenk in lichterlaaie [. . .]. [64]

Het Nieuws schreef in een vervolgverslag op 30 november 1954 zelfs dat Thomas zich aan het stuk had gewaagd "*op de rand van roekeloosheid*".[65]

Volgens de heer W. Breeveld, zoon van Frits Breeveld die de rol van God vertolkte, was het drummen en dansen in die tijd inderdaad opmerkelijk in zo'n religieus theaterstuk, omdat in die tijd kawinamuziek als onbeschaafd werd beschouwd; de radiozenders speelden dit soort muziek niet af. Ook vermeldde hij dat het theaterstuk mede zijn populariteit te danken had aan de vele spirituals die erin gezongen werden.

In *Grazige Weiden* heeft Helman ook sommige andere Afro-Surinaamse cultuurelementen gebruikt om de zonde te illustreren. Bijvoorbeeld via de woorden van Noach, die klaagt over vrouwen die zich toeleggen op het maken van liefdespoeders, *wisi* en *troelala*. Het gaat weliswaar om vertalingen op basis van de brontekst, die hiervoor geen Afrikaanse termen bevat (*lovepowders*). Het maken van dergelijke liefdesmiddeltjes is natuurlijk niet voorbehouden aan Afrikaanse of Afrikaans beïnvloedde culturen; ook in Europese en andere culturen is deze liefdesmagie bekend, en ook in het Suriname van nu worden de bewoordingen hiervoor doorgaans niet vernederlandst.

De dag na de opvoering van *Grazige Weiden* verschenen er lovende recensies in *Het Nieuws* en *De Surinamer*. *Het Nieuws* benadrukte hoe de mens na de zondeval niet veel schijnt te willen leren, ook niet na duizenden jaren dezelfde preken gehoord te hebben. Blijkbaar moest de Bijbelse leer nu via entertainment aan de man gebracht worden, vond de schrijver:

> Zo gezien, heeft Green Pastures een boodschap voor de hedendaagse mens die het in theaters bijeen haalt, om hem daar in massa voor te houden wat hij eigenlijk in zijn kerk in ontvangst, behoorde te nemen.[66]

In dit opzicht heeft Albert Helman dan tevreden mogen zijn, gezien zijn oordeel dat van de opvoering "*een grote opvoedende kracht zal uitgaan*".[67]

Grazige Weiden is in totaal elf keren opgevoerd. Volgens Edwin Thomas heeft zeventig procent van het publiek de opvoering tienmaal bijgewoond en heeft de opvoering in Zuid-Amerikaanse kranten gestaan, terwijl Thomas door Trinidad zou zijn uitgenodigd om een dergelijke opvoering te houden in het Engels.[68] Dat deze mensen die steeds weer kwamen opdagen de elfde keer niet kwamen, zou komen doordat er één opvoering was gereserveerd voor armen. Zowel *Het Nieuws* als *De Surinamer* bericht op 29 november dat voor 30 november 1954, vier dagen na de première, de eerste "*wederopvoering*" is gepland tegen een prijs "*zodanig gesteld, dat een ieder in de gelegenheid, gesteld wordt om dit machtig toneelspel te zien*". Hetzelfde bericht vermeldt echter dat er meerdere opvoeringen tegen een gereduceerde entree zullen plaatsvinden. De gratis opvoering voor de armen is op 28 december 1954 gegeven, waarbij de toegangskaarten werden verloot aan de armen.[69]

Toeschouwers gaven de regisseur en Frits Breeveld cadeaus, en de Nederlandse krant *Algemeen Handelsblad* (1954) prees de acteurskwaliteiten van Frits Breeveld als "*subliem*". Een deel van het succes schreef Edwin Thomas toe aan de beleving van de slavernijscènes in Egypte. Edwin Thomas vertelde in *Het Parool* (1955) dat een van de acteurs dit benoemde toen ze de scène gingen spelen van Mozes in Egypte die de farao smeekt om de Joden hun vrijheid te geven: "*Wie kan deze scène beter aanvoelen dan wij? Mijn grootvader is nog in slavernij geboren.*"[70]

Toen Edwin Thomas uit Suriname vertrok, stonden er tweehonderdvijftig mensen bij de haven psalmen te zingen ter afscheid; hij nam veertig cadeaus in ontvangst, waaronder een gouden ring. Bij die ring zag een briefje waarop stond "*U heeft ons iets voor ons hele leven gegeven, wij willen u ook iets voor uw leven schenken*". Thomas zei de schenkers van de ring niet te kennen.[71] Hoe zo'n afscheid eruit zou kunnen hebben gezien voor Albert Helman blijft onbekend, want *Het Nieuws* bericht op 3 november 1954 onder de kop "*Lou Lichtveld naar Europa*" dat het hem speet dat hij de opvoering van *Grazige Weiden* niet kon bijwonen.

Grazige Weiden was zo'n succes, dat enkele scenes van het stuk weer werden opgevoerd tijdens het officiële bezoek van koningin Juliana en prins Bernhard aan Suriname. Koningin Juliana zei meer onder indruk te zijn van de fragmenten die de Surinamers hadden opgevoerd dan van de film, vermeldt *Amigoe di Curaçao*.[72] *De Maasbode* bericht over het optreden van het Marantha-koort dat *negro spirituals* ten gehore bracht, tien dagen na het

bezoek van de konining aan Suriname, en dat Edwin Thomas uit de tekst taferelen had voorgedragen.[73]

De taal van *Grazige Weiden*

De kranten die zijn onderzocht voor dit artikel waren zonder uitzondering lovend over *Grazige Weiden,* hoewel het taalgebruik nauwelijks wordt belicht in de recensies. De krantenartikelen die benoemen dat *Grazige Weiden* is vertaald naar het Surinaams-Nederlands, weiden daar verder niet echt over uit, hoewel de toon over deze vertaalkeuze positief is. *Het Nieuws* citeert het verslag van J. van de Walle, Nederlander in dienst van de Wereldomroep, die de vertaalkeuze voor *Grazige Weiden* enthousiast belicht als een realistische weergave van eigen Surinaamse bodem. Volgens Van de Walle gaat het om taalvariatie die door de meeste Afro-Surinamers wordt begrepen.[74]

In één krant, *De Surinamer*, plaatst de recensent de dag na de première, enkele kritische kanttekeningen bij het Surinaams taalgebruik, hoewel het artikel ook vermeldt "*het is de taal die een lust is om te lezen*".[75] 'Te lezen' moet verwijzen naar het tekstboekje van *Grazige Weiden*, hoewel de kritische noot gaat over de opvoering. In de serieuze scènes zouden de bewoordingen soms "*profanerend*" zijn:

> [. . .] dat op zeer plechtige momenten om de taal (hoe mooi in zich) gelachen is. De verontwaardiging b.v. God over de moord van de profeet is onder gelach bij het publiek ontvangen.

Ook de bewoordingen van Gods toorn vallen bij de recensent niet helemaal in goede aarde:

> Uitdrukking als: De godo is gebroken, nou vliegen de pitten naar alle kanten; Kras' taja is gegroeid, waar ik cassave geplant heb. Veel erger, dan toen jullie nog je pindasoep in Egypte vraten enz., is gespierde taal, doch ontneemt aan Gods mond toorn die toch ook in de toorn moet spreken.[76]

Maar deze Surinaamse vertolking van Gods toorn toont juist een code-switch – een switch van Standaardtaal naar Surinaams-Nederlands – waarmee Helman samen met acteur Breeveld de diglossie van Suriname fenomenaal op het toneel heeft gezet. In de toneeltekst van Helman spreekt God Standaardnederlands, zoals het in Suriname de norm was – grotendeels

nog is – in formele situaties en door hoge formele personen. Ook de dominee in *Grazige Weiden* spreekt 'netjes' Nederlands, evenals de farao. Tot de dag van vandaag zal iemand die in een formele situatie Standaardnederlands bezigt en uit de emotionele slof schiet, overgaan op met name het Sranantongo, of een mondeling Surinaams-Nederlands met informele woorden, vaak afkomstig uit het Sranantongo.

De *godo* (kalebas) heeft Helman er mogelijk in betrokken vanwege de spirituele waarde ervan in West-Afrika waar de kalebas een culturele constante is. Behalve een materiële waarde, om voedsel en andere dingen in op te bergen of als eetgerei, heeft de kalebas in Afrika een spirituele waarde.[77] Ook in Suriname lijkt deze waarde te leven.[78]

De zin over het eten in het fragment is eenvoudig te verklaren: Cassave is een zeer eetbare wortel, terwijl het bereiden van deze tayer, *kras'taya*, jeuk (*krasi*) levert. Pindasoep is een geliefd gerecht uit de Surinaamse keuken, dat in dit geval nogal ondubbelzinnig naar de vleespotten van Egypte verwijst, uit Exodus 16:3–4, waarin het volk van Mozes klaagt dat het honger heeft en in slavernij bij de Egyptenaren tenminste nog uit de vleespotten at.

De Surinaams-Nederlandse bewerking van Helman waar dit fragment in staat is uitgebreider van dat in de brontekst. Het fragment in de brontest van *The Green Pastures* van Connelly bevat niet de West-Afrikaanse oriëntatie die Helman eraan heeft toegevoegd:

> That's about enough. I's stood all I kin for you. I tried to make dis a good earth. I helped Adam, I helped Noah, I helped Moses, an' I helped David. What's the grain that grew out of the seed? Sin! Nothing but sin throughout the world![79]

Helmans vertaling van het brontekstfragment hierboven toont dat hij het heeft uitgebreid:

> Dit is meer dan genoeg geweest. De godo is gebroken, nou vliegen de pitten naar alle kanten. Ik heb het geprobeerd met jullie, om een behoorlijke wereld te maken. Ik heb Adam geholpen, ik heb Noah geholpen, ik heb Mozes geholpen, en ik heb David geholpen. Maar kras'taja is gegroeid waar ik cassave geplant heb. Niets dan zonde! Zonde, overal waar ik kijk.

Volgens de zoon van (God-)acteur Frits Breeveld vertegenwoordigde het taalgebruik van 'God' en de dominee vermoedelijk de typische manier van (s)preken van de dominees van de Evangelische Broedergemeenschap-

kerken in het Suriname van toen. Opgemerkt mag worden, in dit verband, dat Edwin Thomas er aanvankelijk in 1953 van overtuigd was dat de enige die de rol van God in *Grazige Weiden* kon vervullen dominee Polanen zou zijn.[80]

Breeveld jr. vertelde overigens dat er niet alleen gelachen werd door het publiek tijdens de opvoering; vooral diepreligieuze vrouwen huilden op bepaalde momenten. Het publiek bestond volgens hem vermoedelijk nagenoeg volledig uit Afro-Surinamers, omdat de andere etnische groepen, zoals de Hindostanen en Javanen andere religies aanhingen.

In dezelfde recensie van *De Surinamer* op 27 november 1954 staat ook dat het taalgebruik tijdens Gods ontmoeting met Zeba te ver gaat en dat in de scènes van Noach die de ark bouwt te veel termen uit de "*onderwereld*" voorkomen. De recensent bedoelt met het vergaande taalgebruik in de ontmoeting van God met Zeba waarschijnlijk dit stuk van de dialoog van het Zevende tafereel:[81]

> "Zeba: Wat heb je schat-van-me-hart. Trek je broek op.
>
> God: Schei uit!
>
> Zeba: Zeg hoor eens even meneer met je awarra-ogen. Wat voor recht heb je om een dame te beletten dat ik me amuseer?
>
> God: Weet je niet dat dit de Sabbath is? Dit soort liedjes zingt men niet op de dag des Heren.
>
> Zeba: Wat kan me schelen met de dag des Heren? Niemand weet meer wat dat is. Zondag is alleen maar om een eind te maken aan Zaterdagavond.
>
> God: Je bent een vreselijk astrantig [brutaal] nest, meisje.
>
> Zeba: 't Is dat mijn hele familie zo is; wat nô? We spreken zelfs kwaad van de doden.
>
> God: Hoe heet je?
>
> Zeba: "Hoe heet je, hè?" Ben jij niet die meisjesgek van mijn grootmoeders tijd? (tjoeri.) "Hoe heet je?" En wat ga je me vragen als je me wil zoenen, hè? Jullie dominees zijn djoembie's!" [dwaalgeesten[82]]

Mogelijk gaat het in de scènes rond Noach om pagina 28 van *Grazige Weiden*, waarin wordt gesproken over een revolver, en in een dialoog een vrouw klaagt dat *Natsjoe* haar al een jaar moet betalen en niet alleen voor wasgoed. Een derde vrouw antwoordt op die klacht:

> Omdat je hem zelf gewassen hebt zeker. Maar hij smokkelde sigaretten. Je hebt genoeg aan hem verdiend.[83]

Tafereel 5 van Deel 1, waarin Kain in zijn vlucht voor de wraak van God de Braziliaanse grens bereikt, belicht Helman in zijn eigen analyse. Kain ontmoet daar een meisje:[84]

> Nou kan ik een vrouw nemen en kinderen kweken" Nou kan ik met een vrouw trouwen en kinderen krijgen (Standaardnederlands)

Interessant in deze Surinaams-Nederlandse dialoog is het woord *dâda*, volgens Helman een vorm om oudere vrouwen aan te spreken. Het meisje noemt hem "*Mooi-boy van Dâda*", een mooie jongen van zijn moeder. Bij *kom-loop* (volgens Helman: *loop heen/loop rond*) lijkt hij de tekst op dit moment te hebben gekuist, want hier staat in het origineel *The Green Pastures* 'doggon', een woord dat mogelijk als 'verdomme!' vertaald had kunnen worden. *Kom-loop* vertoont etymologisch de seriële werkwoordconstructie die in West-Afrikaanse talen en het Sranantongo voorkomt.[85]

Over het taalgebruik dat Helman de lagere hemelwezens en de schoonmaaksters in de mond heeft gelegd, heeft de recensent geen opmerkingen. Die spreken een mondeling Surinaams-Nederlands met kenmerken die nog steeds of zelfs wel meer aanwezig zijn in het Surinaams-Nederlands, zoals het weglaten van 'er' en het voegwoord 'dat', en niet-standaard woordvolgorde en een ander gebruik van werkwoordtijden:[86]

- *Hij ziet niet zo goed uit*
- In Standaarnederlands: *Hij ziet er niet zo goed uit*;
- *Ik wist niet zeker* (Helman 1954b: p.32), in Standaardnederlands: *Ik wist het niet zeker*;
- *(. . .), maar ik heb gedacht: misschien is de Heer een paar nieuwe sterren aan het maken.*
- In het Standaardnederlands: *maar ik dacht dat de Heer misschien een paar nieuwe sterren aan het maken was.*

Verder is het taalgebruik bij deze personages, te zien op pagina 32 van *Grazige Weiden*, doorspekt van Surinaamse interjecties die ook in het Surinaams-Nederlands nog vaste apporten zijn uit het Sranantongo:

- *Hoei* (een uitroep van opwinding);
- *Mijn gunst* (Mijn God!); *We-nô* (*Well now*);

- *Ba-ja* (interjectie ter afkeuring);
- *Mi goedoe* (Mijn lieveling);
- *Nene* (aanspreekvorm uit het West-Afrikaanse Twi voor oudere vrouwen (De Bies, 2008))
- *Nô* (partikel waarmee in Surinaams-Nederlands veel zinnen worden afgerond.

Albert Helman heeft ook Afrikaanse invloeden die in Suriname voorkomen toegevoegd, naast de genoemde aanspreekvormen. Zo voegt hij behalve de genoemde interjecties, de *tyuri* (*tjoeri*) toe, die in de Engelstalige versie op schrift niet te vinden is.[87] Helman dient gerechten van West-Afrikaanse origine op, zoals *dokoen* (van cassave of mais) en *akansa* (gemaakt van geraspte mais), die eveneens in de brontekst niet worden gegeten. Helmans tekst bevat Surinaamse onomatopeeën zoals *Brap!*, de medelijdende interjectie *Tjê ba,* en de ontkenning *n-n*[88] is de vertaling van de ontkenning die in de brontekst luidt *huh-uh*. Deze laatste twee interjecties lijken wat op elkaar. Verder gebruikt Helman reduplicaties als *gauw-gauw* (in Sranantongo: *esi-esi*), die ook vandaag in het Surinaams-Nederlands figureren en *vrijpostig* voor 'brutaal'. Ook heeft hij het stuk geografisch in Suriname geplaatst, bijvoorbeeld door plaatsen te noemen als *Albina* en *Kofiedjompo*,[89] en in de arkscènes Surinaamse slangen te noemen: *maka-slang, kapasie-slang, ôroekoekoe*, en voor de bouw *bruinhartlatten* te laten halen.[90] Behalve de Surinaamse plaatsnamen figureren de in de bijbel genoemde landen Kanaän en Egypte in de tekst van Helman.[91] Helman heeft ook de (toenmalige) Nederlandse Antillen in zijn bewerking betrokken door de Curaçaose zwarte marinier *Natsjoe* op te voeren, die een Papiamentu getint Nederlands spreekt.

In deel 2, over Mozes in Egypte, gebruikt Helman West-Afrikaanse woorden uit de winti: *obia* (in de brontekst *magician*) en *tappoe* (in de brontekst *talisman*). In de brontekst van Connelly is het enige woord van Afrikaanse oorsprong *gri-gri* (amulet) (Connelly 1929). Ook de eerder in dit artikel genoemde woorden *wisi* en *troelala* heeft Helman in de doeltekst in deze context gebruikt. *Obia, wisi* en *winti* zijn elementen die in *Grazige Weiden* aan de Egyptenaren worden toegeschreven, zoals in de scènes over de farao en de plagen in de Bijbel.[92]

De Surinaams-Nederlandse bewerking lijkt dus Afrikaanser te zijn dan de brontekst van *The Green Pastures*. Mogelijk was de auteur van het origineel niet zo ver ingewijd in de Afro-Amerikaanse cultuur om dit element uit te

werken of was dat verder niet zijn bedoeling, of waren deze elementen qua taalmiddelen niet voorhanden. Het onderzoek hiernaar ligt buiten de scope van dit artikel, maar het lijkt misschien aannemelijk dat in de Surinaamse taal en cultuur Afrikaanse woorden meer voorkomen.

Ingrediënten van succes *Grazige Weiden*

Albert Helman was een cultuurman van zijn tijd, en het enorme succes van *Grazige Weiden* is een samenspel van factoren geweest, die niet los te zien zijn van de tijdsgeest in de jaren 50 van de twintigste eeuw. Autonomiebewegingen zagen het licht en cultuurorganisaties streden voor de herwaardering van het Sranantongo, en later de andere Surinaamse talen. Echter, het was niet Helman die de show stal, maar Edwin Thomas, hoewel het succes van de regisseur zonder de treffende vertaling en bewerking van Helman vermoedelijk niet mogelijk was geweest.

Bij het vertalen van *The Green Pastures* heeft Helman geprobeerd de Surinaams-Nederlandse taalsituatie te weerspiegelen. Dit is te merken aan de lokale couleur die hij heeft toegevoegd aan het taalgebruik, en de diglossische verhoudingen waarbij in Surinaamse situaties waar standaardtaal verwacht wordt, deze ook toe te passen. De hooggeplaatste figuren spreken Standaardnederlands; lagere hemelwezens en gewone mensen spreken mondeling Surinaams-Nederlands in *Grazige Weiden*. De code-switch van 'God' die in zijn toorn een paar Afro-Surinaamse uitdrukkingen en Sranantongo-vocabulaire eruit smijt, zou ook nu denkbaar zijn bij een hooggeplaatst iemand die woestkwaad wordt en zijn beheersing verliest.

Dat Helman met deze gewaagde code-switch in de roos schoot, blijkt ook uit het commentaar erop in de recensie van de première die in *De Surinamer* verscheen. Deze verbale uitspatting was volgens de recensent niet plechtig genoeg voor de situatie. Blijkbaar had Helman 'God' voor sommigen te menselijke kwaliteiten toebedeeld. Zo menselijk dat het voor de recensent God-onwaardig was. Die menselijke kwaliteit is dan wel goed neergezet, dat ook de recensent kunnen beamen. Dat het publiek erom lachte, toont dat in ieder geval (lachende) delen van het publiek deze humor konden waarderen.

Surinaamse woorden uit het Sranantongo staan nadrukkelijk in de dialogen van de gewone mensen, hoewel het taalgebruik voor een Europeaan verder wel te volgen zal zijn. Een deel van de humor en smaak zal de

Europese toeschouwer misschien ontgaan bij deze opvoering. Helman heeft het theaterstuk niet alleen Surinaamser gemaakt, maar daarmee in feite ook Afrikaanser. Zo is het Sranantongo een creooltaal die relatief veel Afrikaanse invloed behouden heeft, zowel in de grammaticale structuren als de woordenschat, die in het Surinaams-Nederlands zijn terechtgekomen, al dan niet als gebruikelijke code-switch. De talen lopen zo door elkaar in het dagelijks leven, dat het onderscheid vaak niet te maken valt en er eerder sprake is van codemixing.

De Afrikaanse termen die verwijzen naar de *winti*cultuur worden op enkele momenten in verband gebracht met negatieve elementen die de *winti* een slechte naam geven, zoals liefdespoeders en de Egyptenaren die de Joden in slavernij hielden.

De opvoering van *Grazige Weiden* was bedoeld voor het gewone volk, althans het deel dat geïnteresseerd zou zijn in deze vorm van 'bijbels vermaak'. *Grazige Weiden* was een stuk dat de introductie van een Surinaams passiespel zou inluiden. Ook dat is een bewerking van Helman die grootscheeps is aangepakt en de Surinaamse geschiedenisboeken heeft gehaald. De Surinaams-Nederlandse vertaling van het *The Creatures*, over het stadsleven van Trinidad leverde een stuk minder applaus. Het hoofdbestanddeel dat *Grazige Weiden* zo populair maakte was de religieuze inhoud en vermoedelijk de vele spirituals. De Surinaams-Nederlandse vertaling door Helman, met het af en toe gepeperde taalgebruik, was de onmisbare smaakmaker.

Maar zonder de acteurs, die trouw 153 repetities lang oefenden, en, zo te lezen, zonder het talent van 'God' Frits Breeveld en de toewijding van regisseur Edwin Thomas, was *Grazige Weiden* nooit zo geweldig op de planken gebracht.

Notes

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FRENCH CONTRIBUTION

Cultures immergées

survie ou déclin des traditions à l'aune du changement climatique

Immersed Cultures

Survival or Decline of Traditions Facing Climate Change)

STEPHIE GUMBS

Abstract

[FR] *Les dernières années ont été le théâtre d'ouragans plus destructeurs les uns que les autres, à l'instar d' Irma et Maria en 2017 ou encore Beryl en 2024. Or, les climatologues indiquent que dans la zone Caraïbe, le changement climatique induit par l'être humain causera non seulement une augmentation des phénomènes météorologiques extrêmes mais aussi la montée des eaux et la hausse des températures. Ces bouleversements impacteront notamment les zones côtières et par conséquent, exposent les populations insulaires à des transformations de leurs lieux et modes de vie. Or certaines pratiques culturelles s'articulent précisément autour des caractéristiques du lieu qu'elles habitent.*

Alors que les prévisions annoncées par le GIEC (Groupe d'Experts Intergouvernemental sur l'Evolution du Climat) semblent inéluctables, nous pouvons nous interroger sur la capacité des pratiques culturelles à survivre aux mutations provoquées par le changement climatique.

Dans cette perspective, nous prendrons comme objet d'étude le cas de St-Martin, île-monde aux influences diverses. Nous verrons dans quelle mesure la culture st-martinoise s'est montrée capable de s'adapter pour faire face et survivre aux divers changements qui ont affecté et continuent d'affecter l'île.

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000053

[ENG] *In the last few years, the Caribbean has suffered from strong hurricanes, each one more violent than the next, like Irma and Maria in 2017 or Beryl in 2024. However, climate experts indicate that in the Caribbean, human induced climate change will not only cause a rise in extreme weather events but also sea level rise and increasing temperatures. These upheavals will notably impact coastal zones and thus, island populations, to transformations of their lifestyles and living areas while some cultural practices rely on the characteristics of the place where they are from.*

While the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) foresees inescapable changes for small islands landscapes, we can interrogate the viability of cultural practices faced with the challenges of climatic change.

We will therefore take St Martin, microcosm with diverse influences, as a case study. We will analyze to what extent StMartin's culture has proved itself to be capable of adapting to face and survive the various changes that have affected and continue to affect the island.

Key words: culture; climate change; St Martin; tourism; cultural preservation; coastal areas; Caribbean culture; rising sea levels

La culture à l'épreuve du changement climatique

Les sciences sociales définissent la culture comme l'ensemble des éléments et pratiques communes à un groupe de personnes comme la langue, les danses, la cuisine, l'artisanat, les mythes, croyances et bien d'autres. Les cultures caribéennes ont certaines caractéristiques communes, comme leur naissance à la rencontre douloureuse de plusieurs peuples (natifs, européens, africains, asiatiques), ou encore leur conquête de légitimité face à l'ordre colonial. Ces cultures se sont bâties en résistant à la domination culturelle occidentale[1]. La globalisation expose également les populations caribéennes à l'influence d'autres cultures auxquelles elles empruntent certains éléments. Dans ce contexte, le droit de définir ses propres traditions est donc clairement réclamé, dans une forme d'autodétermination et une démarche d'affirmation identitaire.

En réalité, toute culture connaît des évolutions, dues à des facteurs externes ou internes, et plus ou moins extrêmes. Nos réflexions ici visent à mettre les pratiques culturelles caribéennes face à un type de bouleversement externe

relativement nouveau: le changement climatique induit par l'homme. En effet, le consensus scientifique[2] indique que les gaz à effet de serre émis par les activités humaines affectent les conditions de vie sur Terre avec des phénomènes tels que : la hausse du climat mondial, une vulnérabilité accrue des écosystèmes, la sévérité des sécheresses, d'intenses précipitations, la fonte des glaciers, la montée du niveau de la mer, la perte de la biodiversité et autres[3]. L'Unesco indique d'ailleurs qu'un tiers des villes classées au patrimoine mondial sont côtières et sont ainsi menacées par l'érosion littorale. Dès lors, les populations doivent mettre en œuvre des mécanismes d'adaptation au changement climatique pour limiter ses impacts inévitables sur leurs modes de vie. En guise d'exemple, sur les îles Pele (Vanuatu) dans le Pacifique, les habitants ont vu leur cimetière disparaître du fait de l'érosion côtière causée par la montée des eaux. Pourtant, ils avaient renforcé les littoraux pour retarder l'érosion mais ils ont dû se résigner à désigner un autre lieu comme dernière demeure de leurs ancêtres. Quant à l'archipel de Tuvalu, son jumeau virtuel[4] est en cours de création pour que même en cas de disparition des terres émergées, les habitants déplacés puissent exercer leur citoyenneté et que la souveraineté de l'Etat se poursuive sur les ressources sous-marines[5].

Dès les années 1990, plusieurs initiatives dans la Caraïbe ont abordé la question de l'adaptation à de nouvelles conditions climatiques : le *Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change* (CPACC) en 1997 financé à hauteur de 6,6 millions de dollars par le GIEC ou encore le projet *Adaptation to Climate Change in the Caribbean* (ACCC) en 2001 financé par l'Agence canadienne de développement international à hauteur de 3,5 millions de dollars canadiens. Mais malgré ces programmes, les capacités d'adaptation de la Caraïbe semblent limitées et l'existence de cette zone reste menacée[6]. Par conséquent, la question de la survie des pratiques culturelles des îles caribéennes face aux effets du changement climatique reste entière. Mais nous pouvons étudier d'autres perturbations de ces pratiques pour tenter de comprendre ce qui participe à leur survie, à leur mutation ou à leur disparition.

La culture st-martinoise face aux épreuves de son histoire

L'histoire de St-Martin[7] est faite de grands mouvements d'émigration et d'immigration mais aussi de transformations économiques brutales qui

ont marqué durablement les pratiques culturelles de ses habitants. Nous étudierons ici les effets produits par ces trois types d'évènements sur la culture st-martinoise.

A la suite des abolitions de l'esclavage, le déclin de l'industrie sucrière cause d'importantes vagues d'émigration de la population anciennement esclavisée et de ses descendants. Malgré l'activité saisonnière de récolte du sel dans les salines, la classe des travailleurs n'est pas en mesure de prospérer sur cette île à l'économie agricole mourante et à l'industrialisation limitée. Ainsi, de nombreux jeunes hommes vont émigrer à la recherche de travail dans toutes les Amériques: au Panama, à la République dominicaine, à Cuba, en Guadeloupe et jusqu'aux Etats-Unis. Au début du XXème siècle, les St-Martinois migrent également vers Aruba et Curaçao pour travailler dans les raffineries de pétrole vénézuélien. L'une des principales conséquences de l'émigration sur les pratiques culturelles st-martinoises a été leur implantation sur ces territoires étrangers. Prenons l'exemple du «*journey cake*», petit pain frit ou cuit au four apprécié des travailleurs st-martinois: on le retrouve sous le nom de « *yaniqueque* » à la République dominicaine, plus précisément à San Pedro de Macoris où de nombreux travailleurs de la Caraïbe anglophone se trouvaient. D'ailleurs, l'anglophonie est aussi un élément culturel fort que les St-Martinois gardent à l'étranger. Ainsi, à Aruba, les St-Martinois installés dans la ville pétrolière de San Nicolas continuent à communiquer en anglais, de sorte que même les enfants nés à Aruba maîtrisent la langue de leurs parents. Les St-Martinois expatriés cultivent le sentiment d'appartenance à St-Martin en dehors de l'île, lequel devient un véritable trait culturel: nombre d'entre eux nourrissent le souhait de retourner vivre sur leur île d'origine et envoient de l'argent à leurs familles restées à St-Martin.

A la même époque, à St-Martin, se développe un mode de vie marqué par de la solidarité et une ingéniosité nécessaires face au désengagement des gouvernements nationaux dans les affaires locales. Quelques décennies plus tard, cette époque sera qualifiée par Lasana Sekou, inspiré par les travaux de Daniella Jeffry de « période traditionnelle » (1848–1963), succédant à la « période de survie » (1648–1848) et précédant la « période moderne » (post 1963)[8]. La solidarité et la débrouillardise développées pendant la période traditionnelle seront alors considérées comme des valeurs du peuple st-martinois se manifestant par des pratiques élevées au rang de tradition : les « *jollifications* » – moments d'entraide d'un voisinage permettant de

réaliser des travaux agricoles ou de construction –, le «*Ponum*» – danse de matrice africaine célébrant la liberté –, l'agriculture de subsistance à travers la culture notamment de légumes-racines, la cueillette de fruits de saison, la pêche dans les étangs et ruisseaux et bien d'autres pratiques.

Le deuxième phénomène ayant eu un impact sur les pratiques culturelles st-martinoises est l'arrivée du tourisme dans la deuxième moitié du 20ème siècle, transformant cette économie de subsistance en une économie tertiaire. Les grands projets hôteliers des années 1970 offrent des opportunités professionnelles à de nombreux St-martinois qui vivaient jusqu'alors avec de très faibles moyens financiers. Travailler dans l'hôtellerie-restauration constitue dès lors, une opportunité d'enrichissement pour de nombreuses personnes. Toute une génération se rappelle des bus-navettes du Mullet Bay Resort faisant le tour des différents quartiers de l'île afin de récupérer les travailleurs qui y passeraient toute la journée jusqu'au soir. Cela signifie que les quartiers se vident la journée pour déverser leurs habitants dans les hôtels et que les activités qui avaient autrefois lieu pendant les heures de travail se trouvent ainsi délaissées faute de temps.

On peut donc dire que l'arrivée de l'économie touristique provoque une discontinuité des modes de vie des St-Martinois et une rupture dans l'exercice d'activités culturelles. De plus, des terres précédemment inhabitées sont privatisées et "bétonisées", privant ainsi les habitants d'accès aux arbres qui s'y trouvaient. C'est le cas notamment de la zone des Terres basses, connue pour ses nombreux anacardiers dont les noix de cajou intégraient plusieurs desserts locaux. Cependant, d'autres pratiques comme l'anglophonie des habitants ou la cuisine locale parviennent à se maintenir dans la mesure où elles trouvent leur place dans cette nouvelle économie.

Un troisième phénomène majeur marque les pratiques culturelles st-martinoises : l'immigration. Elle provient notamment des territoires voisins dans la Caraïbe mais également d'Europe. Les premiers influencent la culture par leur nombre et les seconds par leur pouvoir économique. Entre 1982 et 1990, la population de l'île passe de 22 344 habitants à plus de 60 000 habitants[9]. Le boom touristique, permis par des incitations à l'investissement, a provoqué un besoin en main d'œuvre que la population présente avant les vagues migratoires ne peut satisfaire à elle seule. Elle se retrouve donc minoritaire sur l'île en moins d'une décennie. De même, la disponibilité des ressources naturelles diminue alors que certaines zones boisées deviennent

des zones d'habitation et les étangs et ruisseaux de l'île, auparavant sources d'alimentation, se transforment en réceptacles à eaux usées.

La discontinuité des pratiques culturelles causée par la mobilisation des St-Martinois dans l'industrie touristique, suivie de l'arrivée importante de nouvelles populations conduit à une idéalisation de l'époque précédente, où l'île apparaît tel un paradis perdu où prospérait l'identité st-martinoise. Comme évoqué plus haut, c'est à ce moment que cette période est qualifiée de « traditionnelle ». Dès lors,le mode de vie de cette époque se trouve figé, codifié et archivé dans des livres (et par des méthodes) pour devenir la culture st-martinoise.

Au cours du 20ème siècle, les pratiques culturelles st-martinoises ont donc évolué du fait de mutations économiques et des transformations des modes de vie de leurs pratiquants: l'implantation sur de nouveaux territoires, le déclin et l'adaptation à une nouvelle économie et une codification visant leur préservation. Certaines activités dépendant des ressources naturelles ont disparu, comme la pêche dans les étangs et les ruisseaux ou la cueillette de fruits divers selon les saisons. Sans préservation des milieux naturels, certaines pratiques culturelles semblent donc condamnées à disparaître.

Pour conclure, à l'instar de St-Martin, notre objet d'étude, les cultures caribéennes ont été traversées par des bouleversements depuis leur commencement. Elles ont évolué et se sont adaptées pour survivre et semblent être caractérisées par une qualité souvent attribuée aux populations caribéennes : la résilience. Mais si les épreuves qui nécessitent de la résilience résultent d'actions humaines, n'est-il pas préférable de s'attaquer à la cause du problème plutôt que de se féliciter de l'avoir résolu ? Tout en continuant à adapter nos pratiques pour qu'elles survivent aux changements, il est aussi essentiel d'investir le terrain de la justice climatique pour offrir toutes les chances de survie aux modes de vie caribéens.

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4. Tuvalu prévoit notamment de transférer dans le cloud ses services gouvernementaux et consulaires pour continuer à servir la population même si l'ensemble des terres sont submergées.
5. Tuvalu prévoit notamment de transférer dans le cloud ses services gouvernementaux et consulaires pour continuer à servir la population même si l'ensemble des terres sont submergées.
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Entre Marronnage Et Irresilience

Un Chemin De Vie

Between Maroonage and Resilience

A Path of life

NICOLE CAGE

Nou maché nou maché, nou maché nou tonbé, nou tonbé nou rilévé, pou nou rivé an chimen-nou.
Tjè-nou blendé
La kalilenndé
Ilitindé ilitindé anhan
Nou ka maché anlè santiman nou
(***Tjè-nou blendé***, Tanbou Bòkannal)

AVAN, LÈ AN MOUN TÉ KA BA LARI chenn san sispann, yo té ka di: "Yo ba'y an lamach". Kivédi yo té ba'y an malédiksion pou'y té maché tout lasent-jounen.

Cheminement identitaire . . . Lè man ka tann «cheminement», man ka tann chimen, lè man ka tann "chimen", man ka tann "maché".

Lè man ka tann «maché», man ka sonjé adan kont-nou, toujou té ni an moman oti kontè-a ka di: *I maché, i maché, i maché, i chéma*.

Pour le Larousse, le cheminement, c'est:

1. action de cheminer, progression lente et régulière
2. lente progression, évolution
3. en chimie, c'est l'ensemble des étapes d'une réaction chimique séparant l'état initial de l'état final
4. pour ce qui est des probabilités, on parle de «cheminement aléatoire», c'est-à-dire une courbe dans laquelle, à chaque instant, la distance parcourue et la direction sont déterminées par le hasard.

Texte présenté dans le cadre de Croisée *Cheminement identitaire*

5. Au niveau militaire, c'est un itinéraire protégé des vues et du tir adverse par les accidents naturels du terrain ou des ouvrages qu'emprunte une troupe pour progresser vers les positions ennemies.

L'on parle aussi de cheminement spirituel, expression employée dans différentes religions, pour désigner la progression naturelle d'une personne qui apprend à connaître Dieu, ou les divinités, le monde et elle-même, une personne qui cherche à découvrir le sens profond de la vie.

Pour moi le cheminement, c'est le fait de marcher nos vies, quitte, parfois, à trébucher ou à nous égarer . . .

Marcher ma vie, ça a signifié, parfois, marcher à contre-courant. Sortir des chemins tracés pour emprunter des chemins de traverse, **marronner**, c'est-à-dire me rendre invisible là où l'on m'attendait et porter ma présence, mon existence dans un ailleurs inconnu de et supposé inaccessible par mes geôliers ou mes ennemis, fussent-ils symboliques. Enfant, quand l'on me punissait, quand je trouvais les grands injustes ou les camarades de classe ou de catéchisme trop méchants, je marronnais par l'imagination, craignant trop mes parents pour envisager les conséquences d'une fugue. Je m'imaginais disparaissant de leur vue et marchant, marchant, marchant, chant-mar pendant des jours et des nuits dans les bois du pays ou embarquant incognito sur un bateau pour n'importe où ailleurs.

J'ai marronné en démissionnant de l'Éducation nationale en créant, Cimarrón EdiProd, *les éditions rebelles et plurielles*.

J'ai marronné en de nombreuses autres occasions.

Marronner pour moi, cela a toujours été m'extraire d'une réalité insoutenable, non pour la fuir, mais pour mieux la combattre depuis l'extérieur, ou/et pour créer, à partir de rien, la nouvelle réalité que j'appelais de mes vœux, une réalité aux couleurs de mon utopie.

Cependant, je n'ai jamais cessé d'appeler de mes vœux ce temps où mon peuple et moi n'aurions plus à marronner.

Marronne jusques à quand?

> Oui il faudra bien un jour cesser de marronner de résister de se fondre dans lanba-bwa de se dissoudre an fétay-mònn
>
> Un jour il faudra bien prendre le cri à bras le corps et décider de ce que nous en faisons

> Un jour il faudra bien prendre notre amour au creux des mains et lui demander pardon d'avoir si bien failli à nous aimer nous-mêmes, d'avoir si bien échoué à respecter et honorer qui nous sommes, d'avoir si bien appris l'art de la *désaimance* de nous-mêmes (. . .)
>
> Un jour il faudra bien se mettre debout sous l'ardent soleil de la liberté!
>
> (In *Marronne jusques à quand,* ***Splash, LP5 Editora***)

Je rends hommage, grâce et honneur à tous les marrons et toutes les marronnes qu'a porté(e)s notre Caraïbe. Mais j'aspire à ne plus avoir besoin de l'être. Comme je choisis *l'irrésilience*, l'insolence fondamentale par laquelle je repousse pour mon peuple le hochet de **leur** résilience. Cette résilience en vertu de laquelle l'on a tenté de nous imposer une « paix sociale » à bons comptes.

Mais rassurez-vous, je ne compte pas vous infliger un pavé sur ce qu'est ou n'est pas le marronnage ou sur ce que j'entends par *irrésilience*. Je vous parle simplement de moi . . . Et j'en reviens à l'intitulé de cette Croisée, «Cheminement identitaire», car, comment prétendre à un chemin d'identité pour mon peuple si je demeure étrangère à ce que peut être ma propre identité?

J'en reviens donc à assumer la part de narcissisme qu'il faut pour oser ainsi parler de mon chemin d'identité . . . Avec l'illusion que mon «Je» envoyé en éclaireur ne manquera pas de rencontrer votre «Je» afin de fomenter de concert un «Nous» créatif et puissant.

Et j'ai envie de prendre force en ces citations de deux femmes essentielles dans l'appréhension de mon parcours intérieur, Clarissa Pinkola Estès qui dit:

> Une des actions les plus puissantes que vous puissiez accomplir pour intervenir dans ce monde tourmenté est de vous lever et révéler votre âme.

. . . et Christiane Singer quand elle dit que: *Seul celui qui a vu le prix inestimable de sa propre vie est capabledes'incliner devant celle de son frère et de déceler en elle la même haute énigme.*

Je ne considère point mon chemin de vie comme si exceptionnel qu'il ait à servir d'exemple. Je ressens simplement qu'à travers les parcours individuels d'un peuple miraculeusement vivant, se dessinent des cartes, des tracés qui, s'ils sont déchiffrés et compris, peuvent être modélisés pour la compréhension et la guérison de tout un peuple.

Mais pour guérir, encore faut-il savoir de quel mal l'on souffre afin d'appliquer au mal le protocole thérapeutique adapté. Encore faut-il nommer

ce mal. De même que pour exister, nous avons besoin d'être nommé. Décliner notre identité, c'est commencer par dire notre nom, notre lieu et date de naissance, d'où nous venons, etc.

Quand l'on sait le sort réservé aux noms de nos ancêtres et de quelle façon leurs nouveaux noms, leur nouvelle identité leur étaient attribués, l'on comprend aisément l'une des sources de notre «mal-à-être».

Et Olympe Bhêly-Quenum, ne clame-t-il pas, dans *Une grande amitié*, cité dans *Poétique baroque dans les littératures africaines francophones, Tome 1,* Mahougnon Kakpo:

> N'oublie jamais la forêt ni la clairière / Ni les noms premiers noms forts / Qui arrachent le mort à la mort . . .

Chez nous, quand quelqu'un résiste de toutes ses forces à la mort qui l'attend ou qu'il est simplement extrêmement tenace, dur à cuire, on dit: «Fout y soufwan!» Fout nou soufwan an vérité! Nous avons résisté à l'arrachement primordial, à la traversée, à la mise en esclavage, à l'amnésie provoquée et entretenue, à la déshumanisation, à la privation du soutien de nos dieux et de nos Ancêtres, nous avons résisté à l'effacement de nos noms et au fait de nous voir affublés de noms grotesques, nous avons tenu bon face à la répression de nos velléités de révolte, nous continuons de résister à l'empoisonnement de nos terres et de nos eaux, à l'envahissement des sargasses, à la suffocation de la brume de sable, à l'exil de nos enfants . . . Nou la toujou! Mais dans quel état!

Nous sommes là, jouant les fiers à bras, prétendant nous en sortir sans avoir à nous «prendre la tête» avec ces histoires d'identité, de mémoire et blablabla! Nous sommes là, à côté de nous-mêmes, arc-boutés sur nos partis-pris, nos certitudes, à considérer que l'histoire de notre peuple commence – ou pas ! - dans la cale de leurs bateaux ou qu'elle commence – ou pas – en Afrique . . . à nous revendiquer descendants d'amérindiens point-trait, martiniquais point-trait, caribéens point-trait, africains point-trait, kamites point-trait, afrocaribéens point trait, européens point-trait, indiens point-trait, ou tout cela à la fois, candidats volontaires à la schizophrénie! Et aujourd'hui, comme jamais auparavant dans notre histoire, nous n'avons pas besoin de l'autre pour nous faire du mal, nous humilier ou décider de notre vie et de notre mort. Aujourd'hui nous sommes les proies et les chasseurs de nous-mêmes. Dans le bocal de notre île, nous tournons sur nous-mêmes et si l'autre a le malheur de «buter» sur nous, nous pouvons décider, dans un accès de folie

de le «buter». Ce que la violence de notre histoire n'a pas réussi à nous faire, allons-nous nous l'infliger à nous-mêmes?

Sinon, le reste du temps, nous vivons, que diantre, nous «profitons», jwi lavi, nou ka jwi lavi!

Notre identité? Elle est à définir encore, jusqu'à l'ultime souffle. Autrefois, j'avais du mal à avouer que je ne sais pas complètement ou pas encore quelle est mon identité et celle de mon peuple. Jusqu'à ce que j'entende Césaire avouer la vulnérabilité qu'il y a à ne pas pouvoir se définir complètement. Et puis la promesse est belle, celle de chercher et surtout de créer son identité chemin faisant, cheminement œuvrant!

En 1994, lors d'un entretien avec Jacqueline Leiner (in *Aimé Césaire, le terreau primordial*) cité dans le texte de Dominique Combe: *Aimé Césaire et la quête dramatique de l'identité,* à la question: «Qui êtes-vous?» Césaire répond qu'il ne sait pas et que c'est pour ça qu'il est poète. «J'entreprends de le savoir par l'écrit, par le texte, par le mot, je tâche d'accéder à mon moi le plus profond.»

Et pour ce qui est de son peuple:

> «Qui et quels nous sommes? Admirable question!
> Haïsseurs. Bâtisseurs. Traîtres. Hougans. Hougans surtout.
> Car nous voulons tous les démons
> Ceux d'hier, ceux d'aujourd'hui
> Ceux du carcan ceux de la houe
> Ceux de l'interdiction, de la prohibition, du marronnage
>
> et nous n'avons garde d'oublier ceux du négrier . . .
> Donc nous chantons.» (In *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal)*

Du cheminement intime au chemin collectif, à la guérison collective, du «Je» assumé au «Nous» reconquis . . .

Cheminement . . . Marcher ma vie, c'est aussi, en de rares et précieux moments, accoster à un espace non point de certitude mais de relative paix. Quand, lors de mon récent séjour au Bénin des hommes et des femmes m'ont dit, à l'écoute d'extraits de mon texte *Plus fort que l'oubli,* avec la voix tremblante d'émotion: «merci de re-venir nous parler de nous-mêmes, merci de nous rappeler cette part de nous-mêmes que nous avions oubliée ou occultée», j'ai ressenti que mon cheminement identitaire individuel et même intime, non seulement se justifiait mais permettait également à mes

pas de se mêler à ceux d'autres pèlerins d'ici, d'Afrique et d'ailleurs marchant leur vie, en quête de sens, de signifiance et d'un tant soit peu d'allégresse et de quiétude.

Nos vies se marchent à la première personne. Et elles se marchent ensemble, dans l'importance que celles et ceux qui nous dirigent et que nous-mêmes accordons à la définition et à l'expression de notre identité et cela passe, évidemment, en partie en tout cas, par la culture et l'éducation.

Césaire en son temps a été un éclaireur, un artisan opiniâtre de l'émancipation de son peuple, avec notamment cet outil révolutionnaire que fut le Sermac, (un outil aujourd'hui réduit à peau de chagrin) et les centres culturels des quartiers, comme autant de poches d'éducation, de résistance, d'élévation.

Face à la carence de l'État, au désarroi de nos élus, une résistance – pas nécessairement spectaculaire – s'organise et par-delà la résistance, une autre manière d'être et d'œuvrer pour le pays, qui permet d'espérer et de nuancer le sombre tableau décrit plus haut. Qu'il s'agisse du nombre croissant de jardins partagés qui voient le jour, de la poignée de jeunes qui choisissent, après leurs études, de revenir entreprendre au pays, de la volonté croissante de consommer et de se nourrir en conscience, des cercles de discussions informels ou structurés qui éclosent un peu partout sur l'île, ça bouge, ça chemine . . .

«Je hélais le monde et le monde m'amputait de mon enthousiasme.» se lamntait Fanon. A nous de reconvoquer l'enthousiasme sans lequel tous les combats, tous les projets sont voués à l'échec!

A nous de cueillir cette unique goutte d'eau du désert pour irriguer le désert de notre destin et en faire un jardin fécond, joyeux et sauvage!

> N'y eût-il dans le désert
> qu'une seule goutte d'eau qui rêve tout bas,
> dans le désert n'y eût-il
> qu'une graine volante qui rêve tout haut,
> c'est assez (. . .)
> (Aimé Césaire, In *Ferrements: Blanc à remplir sur la carte voyageuse du pollen)*

NICOLE CAGE was born in the town of Le François, Martinique. She is a novelist, poet, playwright, she writes for young people and adults. His works are translated into many languages (English, Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic, Romanian, Albanian, Portuguese, etc.). In 1996 she was awarded the prestigious literary prize, Casa de las Americas (Cuba); In 2002 the Oeneumi Prize (Macedonia); in 2004 the Naaman Creativity Prize (Lebanon); In 2006 the Prix Gros Sel du public (Bruxelles); in 2019: The Presidents Award, Saint-Martin.

BI-LINGUAL ABSTRACTS

ENGLISH TO DUTCH

Poverty and Development in the Caribbean Through the Eyes of Distinguished Professor Clive Thomas

DIANNA DASILVA-GLASGOW AND **DIONNE FRANK**

Abstract

In this qualitative research essay, we take a look at the views of economist Clive Y. Thomas on poverty and development in the Caribbean. While Clive Y. Thomas has written on a range of economic and social issues, poverty and underdevelopment was an era of immense concern for him given the development challenges that the region confronted during the 1970s and the pervasive impacts on social welfare in decades that followed. In this paper, we seek to (1) reflect on his views regarding the core underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment in the Caribbean; (2) identify the key policy prescriptions that were outlined in his writings; and (3) ascertain the continued relevance of some of his policy prescriptions in an evolving Caribbean.

Key words: Clive Y. Thomas, Poverty, Development, Economic, Social, Caribbean

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000055

IN DUTCH

Armoede en ontwikkeling in het Caribisch gebied door de ogen van professor Clive Thomas

DOOR DIANNA DASILVA-GLASGOW EN **DIONNE FRANK**

Samenvatting

Dit kwalitatieve onderzoeksessay geeft een beschouwing op de opvattingen van econoom Clive Y. Thomas over armoede en ontwikkeling in het Caribisch gebied. Hoewel Clive Y. Thomas heeft geschreven over een reeks economische en sociale kwesties, waren armoede en onderontwikkeling een tijdperk van enorme zorg voor hem, gezien de uitdagingen waarmee de regio in de jaren 1970 werd geconfronteerd en de alomtegenwoordige gevolgen voor het sociale welzijn in de decennia die volgden. In dit artikel zullen wij (1) reflecteren op zijn opvattingen over de belangrijkste onderliggende oorzaken van armoede en onderontwikkeling in het Caribisch gebied; (2) de belangrijkste beleidsaanbevelingen presenteren uit zijn publicaties; en (3) onderbouwen welke van deze beleidsaanbevelingen blijvende relevantie hebben voor een evoluerend Caribisch gebied.

Trefwoorden: Clive Y. Thomas, Armoede, Ontwikkeling, Economisch, Sociaal, Caribisch gebied

(On)Winin Colonial Cartographies

Inscribing Caribbean Selfhood through Erotic Performance Praxis

CAMILLE QUAMINA

Abstract

This paper examines the work of Tracey Sankar-Charleau, a Trinidadian traditional mas practitioner whose contemporary performances challenge the rigid constructions of Caribbean identity as solely Black, white, or creole. Her work delves into gendered narratives of violence, tracing the past's impact on the present. Through her performances, Caribbean selfhood emerges as a dynamic, contested space, framed by the trans-Atlantic enterprise and the plantation as central sites of historical entanglement.

Tracey's mas reveals the complexity of everyday Caribbean realities, offering a critical lens on imperialism and its often-overlooked intersections with gender, race, and sexuality. Her performances engage Caribbean folklore, popular culture, and sacred mythologies, transforming them into embodied archives of violence, misogyny, trauma, and resistance. These works invoke longstanding genealogies of Caribbean poetics and diaspora histories, threading through dominant ontologies of pain, fragmentation, and dislocation rooted in the plantation experience. Consequently, Tracey's work unsettles conventional Caribbean historiographies, using mas to exemplify the regenerative power of Caribbean eroticism. This challenges singular narratives of oppression and rigid tropes of whiteness, mixedness, and Blackness.

As a female researcher and teaching artist, I shift the gaze toward new configurations of Caribbean queer, feminist, and erotic selfhoods – emerging through transgression, resistance, resilience, joy, and the pursuit of pleasure in art-making. This paper asks: How is Caribbean selfhood redefined through the performance of the erotic in aesthetic praxis? The theoretical framework incorporates queer discourse, postcolonial and poststructural feminisms, and the erotic as a form of resistance and healing.

Keywords: Caribbean, Intersectionality, Feminism, Queer Performance, Gender, Carnival, Cultural Studies, Embodiment, Resistance, Identity

IN DUTCH

‘(On)Winin Colonial Cartographies’

het inscriberen van Caribische zelfheid door middel van erotische performance-praxis

DOOR CAMILLE QUAMINA

Samenvatting

Dit artikel onderzoekt het werk van Tracey Sankar-Charleau, een Trinidadiaanse traditionele mas-beoefenaar wiens hedendaagse performances de rigide constructies van de Caribische identiteit als uitsluitend zwart, wit of creools uitdagen. Haar werk duikt in genderverhalen over geweld en traceert de impact van het verleden op het heden. Door haar performances komt het Caribische zelf naar voren als een dynamische, omstreden ruimte, omlijst door de trans-Atlantische onderneming en de plantage als centrale plaatsen van historische verstrengeling.

Tracey’s mas onthult de complexiteit van de alledaagse Caribische realiteit en biedt een kritische lens op imperialisme en de vaak over het hoofd geziene intersecties van gender, ras en seksualiteit. Haar voorstellingen gaan over Caribische folklore, populaire cultuur en heilige mythologieën en transformeren ze in belichaamde archieven van geweld, vrouwenhaat, trauma en verzet. Deze werken roepen langdurige genealogieën op van Caribische poëtica en diasporageschiedenissen, en lopen door dominante ontologieën van pijn, fragmentatie en ontwrichting die geworteld zijn in de plantage-ervaring. Hiermee verstoort Tracey’s werk de conventionele Caribische geschiedschrijving, waarbij mas wordt gebruikt om de regeneratieve kracht van Caribische erotiek te illustreren. Dit daagt enkelvoudige verhalen van onderdrukking en rigide stijlfiguren van witheid, gemengdheid en zwartheid uit.

Als vrouwelijk onderzoeker en docent-kunstenaar verschuif ik de blik naar nieuwe configuraties van Caribische queer, feministische en erotische persoonlijkheden – ontstaan door grensoverschrijdingen, verzet, veerkracht, vreugde en het nastreven van plezier in het maken van kunst. Dit artikel stelt

de vraag: hoe wordt het Caribische zelf geherdefinieerd door de uitvoering van het erotische in de esthetische praktijk? Het theoretisch kader omvat queer discours, postkoloniaal en poststructureel feminisme, en het erotische als een vorm van verzet en genezing.

Trefwoorden: Caraïben, intersectionaliteit, feminisme, queer performance, gender, carnaval, culturele studies, belichaming, verzet, identiteit

ENGLISH TO FRENCH

Has COVID-19 Transformed *thinking* and *doing* in Local Government? Lessons from Jamaica

Le COVID-19 a-t-il transformé la pensée et les actions au sein du gouvernement local? Leçons de la Jamaïque

Abstract

[ENG] *The paper examines the nature and scope of local government involvement in the management of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Jamaica, to determine critical capacity endowments necessary for supporting local government as a 'first responder' and for increasing its risk tolerance profile. The aim is to generate prescriptive and generalizable information in support of continuous organisational change in Caribbean local governments. A qualitative research design was adopted. The main findings are that the local authority in Jamaica is endowed with significant levels of knowledge capital generally, and specifically with respect to its role and functions in emergency responses. However, capacity gaps were revealed in the nature of the interactions between central and local government, in key features that benchmark the local authority's risk-readiness profile, and in the execution of its role as coordinator.*

Résumé

[FRENCH] *L'article examine la nature et la portée de l'implication des gouvernements locaux dans la gestion de la maladie à coronavirus (COVID-19) en Jamaïque, afin de déterminer les capacités essentielles nécessaires pour soutenir les gouvernements locaux en tant que 'premier intervenant' et pour accroître leur profil de tolérance au risque. L'objectif est de générer des informations prescriptives et généralisables en soutien à un changement organisationnel continu dans les gouvernements locaux des Caraïbes. Un*

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000056

modèle de recherche qualitative a été adopté. Les principales conclusions sont que l'autorité locale jamaïcaine est dotée d'un niveau de capital de connaissances conséquent en général, et en particulier en ce qui concerne son rôle et ses fonctions dans les interventions d'urgence. Toutefois, des lacunes en matière de capacités ont été révélées dans la nature des interactions entre le gouvernement central et les collectivités locales, dans les caractéristiques clés qui évaluent le profil de préparation aux risques de l'autorité locale et dans l'exécution de son rôle de coordinateur.

Keywords: Local government, COVID-19, Jamaica, emergency management, capacity building, risk tolerance.

Mots-clés: Gouvernement local, COVID-19, Jamaïque, gestion des urgences, renforcement des capacités, tolérance au risque.

The Mischief of "Race"[1]

Practical Truths and Some Philosophical Reflections

ANTON L. ALLAHAR

Les méfaits de la "Race"

vérités pratiques et quelques réflexions philosophiques

PAR ANTON L. ALLAHAR

Abstract

This essay challenges what I call "race" thinking and explores the fascination with human physical differences that has fueled the persistent myth of "race." Often driven by fear of "the other," those who engage in "race" thinking classify and separate human beings based on physical characteristics, treating these non-scientific criteria as meaningful. As W.I. Thomas and Dorothy Thomas observed nearly a century ago, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (1928:572). In other words, irrespective of scientific validity, perception shapes behavior, often with serious consequences. While I acknowledge that many will disagree with my assertions, the essence of scholarship is to think abstractly, philosophize, and imagine alternative perspectives. Readers are thus encouraged to consider the arguments presented while setting aside personal emotions.

Résumé

Cet essai remet en question ce que j'appelle la pensée « raciale » et explore la fascination pour les différences physiques humaines qui a alimenté le mythe persistant de la « race » Souvent poussés par la peur de « l'autre », ceux qui s'engagent dans une pensée « raciale » classent et séparent les êtres humains en fonction de leurs caractéristiques physiques, traitant ces critères non scientifiques comme pertinents. Comme l'ont constaté WI Thomas et Dorothy

Thomas il y a près d'un siècle : « Si les hommes définissent les situations comme réelles, elles sont réelles dans leurs conséquences » (1928: 572). En d'autres termes, indépendamment de la validité scientifique, la perception façonne le comportement, souvent avec de graves conséquences. Même si je reconnais que beaucoup ne seront pas d'accord avec mes affirmations, l'essence de l'érudition est de penser de manière abstraite, de philosopher et d'imaginer des perspectives alternatives. Les lecteurs sont ainsi encouragés à considérer les arguments présentés en mettant de côté leurs émotions personnelles.

Keywords: "race," racism, ethnicity, color, shade, identity, belonging, biology, culture

Mots-clés : « race », racisme, ethnie, couleur, ombre, identité, appartenance, biologie, culture

Note

1. In this essay I use the term "race" in inverted commas to highlight my conviction that it is an illegitimate term for, in the biological sense, "races" do not exist. Yet *race thinking* is widespread and takes on coded meaning or form. For example, the word 'immigrant' is used to mean a person of colour, who, in Donald Trump's white supremacist thinking, comes from a *shit hole* country and poisons the supposedly 'pure blood' (white) of those in the host country.

   Dans cet essai, j'utilise le terme "race" entre guillemets pour souligner ma conviction qu'il s'agit d'un terme illégitime car, au sens biologique, les "races" n'existent pas. Pourtant, la pensée raciale est répandue et prend une signification ou une forme codée. Par exemple, le mot 'immigrant' est utilisé pour désigner une personne de couleur qui, selon la pensée suprémaciste blanche de Donald Trump, vient d'un pays de merde et empoisonne le soi-disant 'sang pur' (blanc) de ceux qui se trouvent dans le pays d'accueil.

The Repair We Want vs What We Have So Far

SONJAH STANLEY NIAAH AND MIA McMORRIS

Abstract

"The CARICOM 10-Point Plan" on reparatory justice (2013) has played a pivotal role in shaping the Caribbean reparations movement. It addresses critical issues stemming from colonialism and the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans while posing fundamental questions: "What do we want?" and "What constitutes success in the reparations movement?" As the call for reparatory justice gains mainstream traction, these questions become even more urgent. What defines victory, and how much further must we go? This paper provides a historical overview of the Caribbean reparatory justice agenda in relation to the UN-declared International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024), which emphasized 'Recognition, Justice, and Development' and invigorated the movement. While challenges remain, progress is evident in the growing support from both public and private sectors, despite the simultaneous rise of denialism, colonial apologists, racism, and neocolonialism. The CARICOM 10-Point Plan (currently under revision) serves as a crucial anchor, positioning reparations as a cause for every Caribbean citizen and advocating for a new definition of negotiating structures and stakeholder engagement within the region. Furthermore, this paper underscores the importance of interdisciplinary research in expanding the movement's scope, countering increasing dissent from Europe through a robust educational campaign.

Key Words: Reparation; Reparatory Justice; Transatlantic Trafficking; Africans; African Diaspora; CARICOM 10-Point Plan

Resumen

"El Plan de 10 Puntos" de CARICOM sobre justicia reparadora (2013) ha desempeñado un papel fundamental en la configuración del movimiento de reparaciones en el Caribe. Este plan aborda cuestiones críticas derivadas del colonialismo y la trata transatlántica de africanos esclavizados, al tiempo que plantea preguntas fundamentales: "¿Qué queremos?" y "¿Qué constituye el éxito en el movimiento de reparaciones?". A medida que la demanda de justicia reparadora gana reconocimiento en el discurso público, estas preguntas se vuelven aún más urgentes. ¿Qué define la victoria y cuánto más debemos avanzar? Este artículo ofrece una visión histórica de la agenda de justicia reparadora en el Caribe en relación con la Década Internacional de los Afrodescendientes declarada por la ONU (2015–2024), que enfatizó los principios de "Reconocimiento, Justicia y Desarrollo" e impulsó el movimiento. Si bien persisten desafíos, el progreso es evidente en el creciente apoyo de los sectores público y privado, a pesar del auge simultáneo del negacionismo, la defensa del colonialismo, el racismo y el neocolonialismo. "El Plan de 10 Puntos" de CARICOM (actualmente en proceso de revisión) sigue siendo un pilar clave, posicionando las reparaciones como una causa de relevancia para todos los ciudadanos del Caribe y abogando por una nueva definición de las estructuras de negociación y la participación de los actores dentro de la región. Además, este artículo destaca la importancia de la investigación interdisciplinaria para ampliar el alcance del movimiento y contrarrestar la creciente oposición desde Europa mediante una sólida campaña educativa.

Palabras clave: reparación; justicia reparadora; trata transatlántica; africanos; diáspora africana; Plan de 10 Puntos de CARICOM

The Caribbean Sporting Journey

Development, Branding and Technology

ORVILLE BYFIELD AND **MELISSA SANDERSON**

Abstract

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) Journal, this article examines the performance of Caribbean athletes at the Paris 2024 Olympics, the current state of sports in the region, and future prospects. Caribbean athletes have once again demonstrated excellence on the global stage, further solidifying the region's reputation as a powerhouse in athletics. From legendary figures like Usain Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce to rising stars such as Julien Alfred and Thea Lafond, Caribbean sports continue to thrive.

This article explores sports development in the region, highlighting existing programs that fund and support emerging talent. It also assesses the state of sports infrastructure, ongoing partnerships aimed at increasing accessibility, and the persistent challenges related to funding and resources. Additionally, it discusses the branding of Caribbean sports, showcasing how nations leverage their athletic success to promote sports tourism and strengthen national identity.

Furthermore, the article examines the training and coaching programs necessary to sustain athletic excellence and integrate sports into the region's broader development agenda. Looking ahead, it explores emerging disciplines, technological advancements, and the Caribbean's potential for greater global impact. Offering a holistic perspective, this article reflects on the past, assesses the present, and envisions the future of Caribbean sports over the next 50 years.

Keywords: Caribbean athletes; sports development; youth sports programs, training methodologies, coaching programs; economic development agenda; Caribbean sports

Resumen

En celebración del 50º aniversario de la revista de la Caribbean Studies Association (CSA), este artículo examina el desempeño de los atletas caribeños en los Juegos Olímpicos de París 2024, el estado actual del deporte en la región y sus perspectivas futuras. Los atletas caribeños han vuelto a demostrar su excelencia en el escenario global, consolidando aún más la reputación de la región como una potencia en el atletismo. Desde figuras legendarias como Usain Bolt y Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce hasta estrellas emergentes como Julien Alfred y Thea Lafond, el deporte caribeño sigue prosperando.

Este artículo explora el desarrollo deportivo en la región, destacando programas existentes que financian y apoyan a los nuevos talentos. También evalúa el estado de la infraestructura deportiva, las asociaciones en curso destinadas a aumentar la accesibilidad y los desafíos persistentes relacionados con la financiación y los recursos. Además, analiza la marca del deporte caribeño, mostrando cómo las naciones aprovechan su éxito atlético para promover el turismo deportivo y fortalecer la identidad nacional.

Asimismo, el artículo examina los programas de entrenamiento y formación necesarios para mantener la excelencia atlética e integrar el deporte en la agenda de desarrollo más amplia de la región. De cara al futuro, explora las disciplinas emergentes, los avances tecnológicos y el potencial del Caribe para lograr un mayor impacto global. Ofreciendo una perspectiva holística, este artículo reflexiona sobre el pasado, evalúa el presente y proyecta el futuro del deporte caribeño en los próximos 50 años.

Palabras clave: atletas caribeños; desarrollo deportivo; programas deportivos para jóvenes; metodologías de entrenamiento; programas de formación de entrenadores; agenda de desarrollo económico; deportes caribeños

AWARDS

The Gordon K. and Sybil Lewis Book Award

TAVIS JULES

THE GORDON K. AND SYBIL LEWIS BOOK AWARD recognizes outstanding contributions to Caribbean Humanities or Social Sciences scholarly discourse. The panel of judges evaluates submissions based on several key criteria, including the work's theoretical contribution to advancing our understanding of historical and/or contemporary issues within a specific discipline or the broader field of Caribbean Studies. Additional considerations include the work's innovation, creativity, and methodological rigor – such as the use of primary sources or archival/historical data – along with its potential to inspire new avenues of research and perspectives on the Caribbean.

Committee members are:

- tavis d. jules is a Full Professor Cultural and Educational Policy & International Higher Education, Loyola University Chicago
- Aliyah Khan, Associate Professor of English, and Afroamerican and African Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- Jocelyn Stitt, Associate Director of the Center for Feminist Futures, Faculty Feminist Studies Department, University of California, Santa Barbara
- Molly Hamm-Rodríguez, Assistant Professor, Social Foundations of Education, University of South Florida

Winners of the 2024 award

Offshore Attachments: Oil and Intimacy in the Caribbean by Chelsea Schields
Price: $29.95 / £25.00 • Pages: 304 • ISBN: 9780520390812 • University of California
Link to purchase: https://www.ucpress.edu/books/offshore-attachments/paper

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000058

Synopsis of book and remarks

Offshore Attachments reveals how the contested management of sex and race transformed the Caribbean into a pivotal site in the global oil economy. By the mid-twentieth century, Curaçao and Aruba, under Dutch control, housed the world's largest oil refineries. To sustain this industrial experiment, oil companies and colonial authorities redefined laws around sex, reproduction, and family life to maximize profits and discipline labor. The book uncovers how Caribbean people navigated these changes, sometimes resisting and other times embracing them. Spanning Caribbean oil towns and European metropolises, the book explores sex work, contraception, kinship, and desire, demonstrating how racialized concerns with intimacy shaped the hydrocarbon industry as the age of oil met the end of empire. It highlights the essential but often overlooked role of the so-called "Dutch" Caribbean – a term that obscures the islands' cultural and linguistic richness – in the creation of a global energy system. By engaging Papiamentu- and Dutch-language sources, *Offshore Attachments* offers new insights into how Caribbean people contested and shaped empire, energy, and decolonization.

Winning the Gordon K. and Sybil Lewis Award from the Caribbean Studies Association is a profound honor. Caribbean scholars have been the most astute theorists of the region's indispensable and variegated ties to global power. My analysis is deeply informed by and indebted to this body of knowledge. To be recognized by a scholarly community defined by its intellectual rigor and political urgency is therefore extremely meaningful.

Runnerup

- *The Cyborg Caribbean – Techno-Dominance in Twenty-First-Century Cuban, Dominican, and Puerto Rican Science Fiction* by Samuel Ginsburg

Honorable Mention

- *Turn the World Upside Down: Empire and Unruly Forms of Black Folk Culture in the U.S.* by Imani D. Owens
- *Caribbean and Patriots and Traitors in Revolutionary Cuba, 1961–1981* by Lillian Guerra

Caribbean Scholarship in the Spotlight

CSA's Legacy of Book Launches and Author Celebrations

KAREN FLYNN

ABOUT TWO DECADES AGO, CSA MEMBERS CAME TOGETHER to establish the Caribbean Studies Association Book Launch. As the organization's membership grew, the Book Launch became a platform for highlighting new scholarship on the Caribbean and its diaspora. Until 2013, the format involved authors requesting a colleague to present their books. Presenters had the freedom to focus on various aspects, such as the book's significance, whether the author introduced new research, theories, or ideas, and how the work contributed to the field of Caribbean Studies.

In addition to introducing their books to CSA members, authors could offer copies for purchase – either for personal use or for teaching. The Book Launch typically featured between 10 and 20 books annually, drawing packed audiences. Authors were also invited by the Book Launch Chair to donate a copy to a local library in the host Caribbean country. Over time, the Book Launch became a signature event, often followed by a reception.

Among the many memorable book launches, one of the most unforgettable took place in 2012 in Guadeloupe, with Carolle Charles serving as CSA president. Unlike the typical hotel auditorium setting, this launch was held at the renowned Schwartz-Bart residence in La Souvenance. Simone Schwartz-Bart, a French novelist and playwright of Guadeloupean descent, graciously hosted the event. The conference program's blurb captured the spirit of the occasion:

> CSA is always proud of the productivity of its members, and this year we are pleased to launch a number of books written in the last two years. These works range from contemporary literature to studies exploring questions of citizenship, disaster, diaspora, migration, and religion.

That year, fourteen books were presented, including my own: *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the*

DOI: 10.37234/CSAJ.2025.u1000059

Diaspora (University of Toronto Press, 2011). The broad geographical scope of the Caribbean and its diaspora was well represented in the following titles:

- Anja Bandau's *El Caribe y sus diásporas. Cartografía de saberes y prácticas culturales* (Verbum)
- Nadève Ménard›s *Écrits d'Haïti: Perspectives sur la littérature haïtienne contemporaine (1986–2006)*
- Schuller and Morales' edited volume *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti since the Earthquake* (Kumarian Press, 2011)
- Deborah Thomas' *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transitional Jamaica* (Duke University Press, 2011)

The book launch was followed by the Gordon K. and Sybil Lewis and Dissertation Awards presentation and a lively cultural celebration. The evening was filled with music and delicious Guadeloupean cuisine. Despite hundreds of CSA members in attendance – many staying until the early hours of the morning – Simone Schwartz-Bart remained the epitome of graciousness, making us all feel welcome.

Following the CSA conference in Guadeloupe, Keisha-Khan Perry and I reflected on the Book Launch format. While we appreciated its structure, the event was often too long, lasting two to three hours. We reimagined a new format that decentered the presenters and placed greater emphasis on the authors.

In 2014, the **Author Celebration** was born, with its inaugural event held in Mérida, Mexico, during Dwaine Plaza's tenure as CSA President. That year, we hosted two Author Celebrations, featuring four to five book presentations, followed by a reception. The organizing committee included myself, my graduate student at the time, Sheri Lewis, and Kamille Peart-Gentiles.

While we retained the principle that authors could not introduce their own books, we streamlined the presenters' time and created space for authors to engage directly with the audience. This allowed them to address questions not covered in their colleagues' presentations and to discuss their books, the writing process, and publishing experiences.

With the rise of social media, we occasionally highlight the Author Celebration online, featuring the books presented. Authors are still encouraged to bring a copy for the local library, as well as copies for sale or flyers with author discounts offered by the presses.

Since its inception, the Author Celebration – formerly the Book Launch – has provided a valuable platform for authors to share their scholarship with CSA members. Over the years, it has evolved into a space that not only showcases academic contributions but also fosters engagement between authors and their audience.

As we reflect on the Book Launch/Author Celebration, it is only fitting to hear from a few authors about what this event has meant to them:

> I was delighted to be honored at CSA 2024 as part of the Author Celebration. It was great to celebrate my achievement alongside other brilliant scholars who have expanded the repertoire of work that defines Caribbean Studies as a robust field of academic inquiry.
> **—Nikoli Attai,** *Defiant Bodies: Making Queer Community in the Anglophone Caribbean* (Rutgers University Press, 2023).

> *Having A2: A Scholarly Poetical Science Discourse* featured in the CSA celebration was a deeply affirming moment. It highlighted the power of blending poetry and political science as a means of resistance, reflection, and intellectual liberation. Seeing my work recognized in a space that values critical scholarship and transformative narratives was both humbling and inspiring.
> **—Ayo Sekai, PhD**, CEO, Universal Write Publications, LLC

> Being part of the CSA Author Celebration was a wonderfully supportive opportunity to see how my work connects with other Caribbeanists. It was eye-opening and insightful – I learned a lot! Thank you to the CSA Author Celebration Team!
> **—Mark Schuller**, Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken, Kaiama Glover, Jhon Picard Byron

> *The Haiti Exception: Anthropology and the Predicament of Narrative* (Liverpool University Press, 2016).

> It brought me great joy to be honored at CSA 2024 in St Lucia as part of the Author Celebration and to reflect on past and present pioneers of Caribbean Studies. Over the past 50 years, creative enlightenment and academic research have continued to shape the world we live in today. Being part of this talented and diverse community of literary greats and scholars from around the world during such a transformative time in the 21st century was truly spec*ial*.
> **—Dr Raona Williams,** *Caribbean Poetry and Paradisiacal Places* (Refitt, 2024).

The CSA author's celebration was a highlight of my book tour for *Global Guyana: Shaping Race, Gender, and Environment in the Caribbean and Beyond*, which has been shortlisted for the 2025 OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature (nonfiction). Dr Tivia Collins's generous introduction meant the world to me, and I'm deeply grateful to the organizers of this event for fostering a generative dialogue while allowing each of the featured works to shine. Thank you!
—**Oneka LaBennett**, Professor, American Studies and Ethnicity, and Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Southern California

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KAREN FLYNN is the Terrance & Karyn Holm Endowed Professor in the Department of Population Health Nursing Science at the University of Illinois, Chicago, College of Nursing and director of the Midwest Nursing History Research Center. She is the author of the award-winning book *Moving Beyond Borders: Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the African Canadian Diaspora* (University of Toronto, 2011).

FEATURED ARTIST

Contemporary Perspectives of Cultural Significance:

Lucien Downes

LUCIEN DOWNES IS A CARIBBEAN-BORN ARTIST AND CURATOR whose work embodies freedom of thought and expression through mixed media. His art reflects a culturally rich consciousness, deeply rooted in his Trinidadian, Bajan, and Crucian ancestry.

From an early age, Downes displayed a passion for art and photography, which flourished during his time as general manager of Pearl Arts and Crafts in Atlanta, GA. There, access to product samples, books, and workshops enabled him to develop six distinctive styles that define his work.

Since selling his first painting just six months into his self-taught journey, Downes' career has continued to thrive. He incorporates resin, acrylic, fibers, raw pigments, plexiglass, inks, dyes, and found objects to create depth and dimension in his culturally themed pieces. His work blends spiritual and worldly elements, sometimes existing separately and at other times merging into a unified whole.

Drawing inspiration from daily life, spirituality, objects, moods, and movement, Downes' art evokes thought and emotion while bringing a contemporary perspective to culturally significant subjects. His work has been featured in numerous publications, galleries, murals, and community projects. It also adorns the walls of prominent figures, including the Honorable Governor Albert Bryan Jr., Maya Angelou, Teddy Riley, Jeff Johnson, and other private collectors worldwide.

Downes views his artistic ability as a gift from the Creator and is committed to using it to uplift his culture and its people.

Curation

- Top Hat Gallery, St Croix: "Late and the Great St Croix" (USVI 2015), "Art St Croix" (2015), "Art St Croix 1 & 2" (2016, 2017), "Crucian Contemporary" (USVI 2017)
- Aqua Sounds Studio: "Musical Canvas" (St Croix, USVI 2017)
- Caribbean Museum Center: "New Blood" (1, 2, 3, 4) (St Croix, USVI 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021)
- The Coconut Fine Arts Exhibit: (St Croix, USVI 2021, 2022, 2023)
- "Virgin Islands Contemporary": St Thomas, USVI (2022)
- Caribbean Museum Center: "Spring Equinox" (St Croix, USVI)

Exhibits

- *"Visions"* – Sam Flax Art and Design (Atlanta, GA 2010)
- *"Ascension"* – Georgia Perimeter College (Atlanta, GA 2011)
- *"Fazes"* – Atlanta Foundation for Public Space (Atlanta, GA 2012)
- The Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport (Atlanta, GA 2012)
- The Alliance Theater for the Arts (Atlanta, GA 2011)
- Top Hat Gallery (St Croix, USVI 2013)
- The Caribbean Fine Arts Exhibit (St Croix, USVI 2009–2014)
- The Caribbean Colour Exhibit (St Thomas, USVI 2013–2016)
- Walsh Metal Works *"Elements of Culture"* (St Croix, USVI 2015)
- Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts *"New Blood 1, 2, 3, 4"* (St Croix, USVI 2017–2021)
- 81C *"Virgin Islands Contemporary"* (St Thomas, USVI 2021)
- Bajo El Sol (St John, USVI 2021)
- *"The Coconut Fine Arts Exhibit"* (St Croix, USVI 2021)
- Cane Roots Gallery *"Virgin Islands Contemporary"* (St Croix, USVI 2022)
- Fort Christian *"Virgin Islands Contemporary"* (St Thomas, USVI 2022)

Public Projects

- The Atlanta BeltLine Project (Atlanta, GA)
- Frederiksted Mural Project (Frederiksted, St Croix, USVI)
- Frederiksted Health Care Inc./AIDS Billboard Project (St Croix, USVI)
- The Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights Cultural Mural (Christiansted, St Croix, USVI)
- *I Love St Croix* Sign Project (Frederiksted, St Croix, USVI)

Downes' painting *Phoenix Rising* was selected by the Textile Museum of Canada to represent the United States Virgin Islands in the *WATERCOLOUR* project. This initiative featured artists from Pan-American countries, creating a flotilla of customized sails that navigated Lake Ontario's shoreline from Oshawa to Welland as part of the *TORONTO 2015 Pan American Games*.

SPECIAL THANKS

Special Thanks to Our Reviewers:

- **English:** Antonia MacDonald, PhD., Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies, St George's University, True Blue, St George's
- **Dutch:** Margo Groenewoud, PhD.
- **Spanish:** Beatriz Cruz Sotomayor, PhD., Associate Professor, Universidad Ana G. Méndez, Gurabo; Doctorate in Hispanic Studies, University of Puerto Rico

Other External Reviewers:

- Halimah DeShong, PhD., University Director, Institute for Gender & Development Studies, The University of the West Indies, Mona
- Dalea Bean, PhD., Senior Lecturer and Head, Institute for Gender & Development Studies, The University of the West Indies, Mona
- Angelique V. Nixon, PhD., Senior Lecturer and Graduate Coordinator, Institute for Gender and Development Studies, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine
- The Right Honorable Vernie Clarice Barnes PhD., Educator/ Social and Gender Specialist
- Leighton Williams, Adjunct Lecturer, BCAT, University of Technology, Jamaica

Acknowledgment for Support:

- Dr Tavis Jules and Rebecca
- Maegean Sylvester and Jewel Nicome
- Phillip Clarke