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6TH RP BAFFOUR MEMORIAL LECTURES

AFRICAN FREEDOM IN THE CARIBBEAN DIASPORA

PROFESSOR SIR HILARY BECKLES, KA
Pro Vice-Chancellor & Principle
The University of the West Indies
Cave Hill Campus, Barbados

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DR. R. P. BAFFOUR

PROFILE OF DR. R. P. BAFFOUR

Dr. Robert Patrick Baffour was born on May 14, 1912 at Elmina near Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana. He was educated at Mfantsipim School from 1926 to 1930 and was the first student admitted to the newly established Engineering School at Achimota in August 1931. He obtained the Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical Engineering in June 1935 and entered the Public Service in August 1935, joining the then Gold Coast Railways Corporation as a probation Engineer. He rose through the ranks and became the locomotive Superintendent in 1939. In 1941 he joined the Teaching Staff of the Engineering School at Achimota, on secondment, as a lecturer, and remained in academia until 1946 when he was appointed Assistant Mechanical Engineer at Accra Municipal Council. He served the council for seven years with the last three years as its Chief mechanical Engineer. In May 1953, he was appointed Chief Transport officer in charge of the Government Transport Department, currently the State transport Corporation (STC). He was promoted to the post of Principal Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Communications in 1958. In 1960, he was appointed to the Ghana Supply Commission and later on in the same year he became Principal of Kumasi College of Technology. On October 1, 1961, he became the first Vice-Chancellor when the college was elevated to a university status. Dr. Baffour was first Chairman of the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission (1963-1967); President of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (1963) and, a past President of West African Science Association. He was awarded the O.B.E. in the Coronation Honours in 1953.

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PROFESSOR SIR HILARY BECKLES, KA

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PROFILE OF PROFESSOR SIR HILARY BECKLES, KA

Professor Sir Hilary was born in Barbados in 1955. He attended Secondary School in Barbados and Birmingham in the UK. He received his higher education in the United Kingdom. He graduated with a BA (Hons) degree in Economic history from Hull University in 1976 and a PhD from the same University in 1980. In 2003, he received an Honorary Doctor of letters for outstanding work as a scholar from his alma mater. He joined the History Department at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona Campus in 1979 as a lecturer; in 1984 he transferred to the Cave Hill Campus in Barbados and was promoted to a personal professorship in 1993 at age thirty-seven, the youngest in the history of UWI. Professor Sir Hilary has served the University as Head of the History Department and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. In 1994, he won the first University of the West Indies Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in the field of research. In 1998, he was appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies and returned to the Mona Campus. In August 2002, he returned to Cave Hill as Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal. Professor Sir Hilary Beckles was awarded the Knight of St. Andrew, the highest national in Barbados, for his contribution to "Higher Education, the Arts and Sports" in 2007.

Professor Sir Hilary is an internationally reputed historian and serves on the editorial boards and several academic journals including the Journal of Caribbean History, Sports in Society, William and Mary Quarterly, the Flagship Journal of the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg Virginia, and an international editor for the Journal of American History. He is also the Chair, Board of Directors of the University of West Indies Press. He is Director of Cables and Wireless B'dos Ltd., as well as a Sagicor Financial Inc., the largest Caribbean Financial Conglomerate. He has lectured at

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universities in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. He served for five years as a member of the Cultural Committee of His Royal Highness, Prince Claus of the Netherlands. Professor Sir Hilary has published over ten academic books, including:

- Liberties lost: The Native Caribbean and Slave Societies (Cambridge University Press, 2004);
- White Servitude and black Slavery in Barbados 1627-1715 (Tennessee University Press, 1990);
- Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society; (James Currey Press)
- The History of Barbados (Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- Corporate Power in Barbados: Economic Injustice in a Political democracy, 1990;
- Natural Rebels: A History of Enslaved Black Women in the Caribbean (Rutgers University Press, 1989)
- And more recently, a two-volume work on West Indies Cricket- The Age of nationalism; and Volume Two- The Age of Globalisation, (Pluto Press 1999). The Development of West Indies Cricket was described in Wisden Cricket book ever written.
- His book, "A Nation Imagined: The First West Indies Test Team: The 1928 Tour" (Ian Randle Publishers, June 2003) was commissioned by the West Indies Cricket Board to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of West Indies Cricket.

He is a member of the International Task Force for the UNESCO Slave Route Project and is principal consultant for the resource material in the schools programme. He is also Consultant for the UNESCO Cities for Peace Global Programme. He is an advisor to the UN World Culture Report. In 2002 he led the Barbados national delegation to the UN Conference on Race in Durban, South Africa. In recent years, he has given several lectures on the challenges facing higher education thinking and planning in the Caribbean. He is co-author of a recent book entitled, "The Brain Train: Quality higher Education and Caribbean Development", a monograph published in April 2002. He chaired the UWI Task Force on the Globalisation and Liberalisation of Higher Education. Professor Sir Hilary is a keen cricketer and researcher of cricket history and culture. He is the founder and Director of the CLR James Centre for Cricket research at Cave Hill Campus; and was a Director of Caribbean Cricket World Cup 2007 Inc. Finally, he is overall coordinator of sports for the four campuses at UWI.

AFRICAN FREEDOM IN THE CARIBBEAN DIASPORA

LECTURE ONE

SLAVE WARS: AFRICAN REBELLION IN THE CARIBBEAN DURING SLAVERY

Africans in the Caribbean, whether enslaved or free, resisted the slavery regime with all the political and social tools available to them. Anti-slavery rebellion was therefore endemic, and was frequently of a revolutionary nature. In many publications and speeches, I have argued that persistent rebellions, plots, and the endemic general attitudes of anti-slavery, from the beginning in the 1630 to the end in the1830s should be called the '200 Years' War' — one protracted struggle launched by Africans and their Caribbean progeny against British slave owners. This war for freedom represented, furthermore, the most immediately striking characteristic of the Caribbean colonial world. It was an indigenous African political movement which resides at the core of today's democracy systems now widespread across the region.[1]

The literature on anti-slavery, however, has emphasized above other features, its African philosophical and political roots. All Africans were engaged generically, with varying degrees of intensity, in building and sustaining the opposition to slavery. But the evidence points to specific ethnic identities and interests in the leadership of freedom wars. The Akan as an ethnic collective featured prominently. The Asantes of Ghana, for example, emerged frequently as a dominant political force reflecting their relative political maturity as members of a highly organized nation. The Caribbean world, then, evolved from the mind of the Asante as much as it did from the minds of Europeans.

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The 1763 Berbice revolution speaks to this point forcefully. Led by Kofi, an Asante, revolutionary Africans overthrew the Dutch slave regime and established a Kingdom with Kofi as Asantehene. The enstoolment of Kofi was classically within the Asante political vision of leadership and governance. Slavery was abolished and the philosophy of freedom and notions of rights were embodied in the power of the Asantehene. When King Kofi tried to negotiate a détente with the Dutch, thereby enabling a slave system to coexists with the free society, he was challenged by Atta his military commander. What ensued was an Asante civil war over the concept of freedom and its relations to the world of slavery. As the Asante leadership fractured, the Dutch and English allies defeated the revolutionaries and reestabiished the slave regime. This is as modern an experience as it is possible to imagine.

This perspective has enriched significantly our general understanding of the diverse forces that succeeded ultimately in toppling the region's heterogeneous slave regimes. To some extent, this panoramic vision of the anti-slavery movement results from a more theoretical reading of slave resistance which suggests the need for closer investigation of slaves' political culture. Such an examination African ethnic identities in building the anti-slavery movement is necessary not only for an empirical understanding of resistance, but also for a fuller evaluation of African consciousness and depth of political awareness. Such insights would make it possible for the historian to illustrate more precisely those linkages, real or imaginary, that existed between plantation-based politics and the international anti-slavery ethos.[2]

Many historians have responded to this challenge, and the theme of African resistance or, more appropriately, the blacks' anti-slavery movement, has now become a leading growth area in Caribbean historiography. From the works of leading scholars, particularly Orlando Patterson, Michael Craton, Edward Brathwaite, Barry Gaspar, Mary Turner, Barbara Kopytoff and Monica Schuler, it is possible to

demarcate some structural features in the development of Caribbean anti-slavery. Three basic stages have so far been identified. The first stage relates to early plantation construction, and corresponds approximately with the period 1500 to 1750. The second basic stage is characterised by mature plantation society and declining dependency on slave importation — 1750 to 1800. The third stage relates to the 'general crisis' in plantation slavery; it is linked with the impact of Haitian politics and serious anti-slavery discussions in the metropole — 1804 to 1838.

Within these three general phases, three types/levels of antislavery struggle have been described — though no systematic effort has been made to articulate them within the historical continuum. Firstly, a proliferation of acts of 'day-to-day' resistance are identified; these were generally designed not to overthrow the slave system, but to undermine its efficiency in order to hasten its eventual abandonment. Secondly, evidence is adduced of the large number of unsuccessful plots and revolts which were characterised by collective organisation with reformist and revolutionary objectives. Thirdly, there is the incidence, 'successful' rebellion, from long-term marronage to the St. Domingue revolution.[3]

Highly structured revolts, considered generally as the most advanced rebellious acts, have been given more research attention within the wide range of anti-slavery politics. Unfortunately, no attempt has been made to illustrate how, and under what conditions, non-violent day-to-day anti-slavery protest evolved into violent revolutionary designs.[4]

According to Robert Dirks there are references within the literature to some seventy slave uprisings between 1649 and 1833, including large-scale insurrections that engulfed entire colonies and small- scale

violence limited to single estates. Of this total, Dirks states that some thirty-two revolts did not materialise due to discovery; and some were undoubtedly the invented product of planters' paranoia.

Craton's chronology of resistance between 1638 and 1837, however, lists some seventy-five aborted revolts and actual rebellions; in this computation some of these actions have been grouped together and appear as one event.[5] This record of resistance illustrates that there was hardly a generation of slaves in the English West Indies that did not confront their masters collectively with arms in pursuit of freedom. In this sense, therefore, the relations between slaves and masters in the West Indies can be shown as characterised by ongoing psychological warfare and intermittent bloody battles.

It is now a major concern of scholars interpreting this extensive record of resistance to assess the extent to which slaves' rebellious actions were informed by ideological choices in the context of maturing political consciousness. It has taken scholars many years of revising interpretations to arrive at this position in regard to slave politics, though it remains an influential argument that slaves wanted much less than what some recent historians now suggest. This interpretive inertia reflects, in part, a compulsive assumption within western historical science that the working classes rarely perceived effectively their group interest, an argument Supported by what some refer to as irrationality and inhibiting conservatism in their collective responses to oppression.

Not surprisingly revisionist literature produced by most Caribbean, European and American scholars, has centred upon the need to distinguish as clearly as possible the Caribbean and metropolitan anti-slavery movements, and to assess their relative potency. Technically, this is an important development because slave African had long been conceived of as a lower species of political behaviour, lacking in ideological cohesion, intellectual qualities and a philosophical direction.

Generally considered as marginally more advanced than basic primitive responses to a crude and oppressive material and social world, it was not seen to be possessing any- thing resembling theoretical significance. These perceptions have survived in spite of C.L.R. James' 1938 classic work, *The Black Jacobins*, which sought, perhaps with too much theoretical enthusiasm, to link rebel slaves in colonial St. Domingue with the Philosophically progressive Jacobin equaliterianism of France that ultimately weakened the ideological hegemony of slave holders in that colony. The 'Black Jacobins' seized the colonial state and established an independent republic in 1804, — an achievement that cannot be divorced, according to James, from its European theoretic roots.[6]

At first glance the immediate goals of the Caribbean and European anti-slavery movements seem ideologically polarized and at variance. The metropolitan movement was essentially philosophical and respectably radical in character. It relied initially upon a strong moral perspective, though with an increasing reliance upon economic arguments in latter years. The Caribbean movement, on the other hand, spearheaded by enslaved blacks, with some Amerindian and free coloured support, was also generally non-violent, but occasionally erupted into revolutionary warfare. The metropolitan movement depended upon popular mobilisation and parliamentary lobbying in a legislative approach to emancipation. The slaves' approach, it may be implied, was more complex; they wanted freedom by all means necessary or possible, and engaged in activities which ranged from self-purchase to violent armed struggle for territory and political sovereignty.

There is some evidence, fragmented though it is, to suggest that more informed Africans saw their anti-slavery actions as articulated to those of metropolitan lobbyists, though they were not prepared to lose the initiative in terms of striking for freedom when circumstances, local

or foreign, dictated autonomous actions. Some slaves, whether in revolutionary St. Domingue or rebellious Barbados and Jamaica in 1816 and 1831 respectively, had knowledge, considered crude and inaccurate by most historians, of developments in metropolitan anti-slavery ideas and strategies. This information base, it has been argued, assisted in shaping their costly movement for liberation (measured in human life) and thus illustrating, even if in a tamed manner, the internationalism of their political consciousness.[7]

Evaluating the relative potency of the two segments of the transatlantic anti-slavery movement cannot be an easy task for the historian. Contemporaneous writers on the English Caribbean did not attempt such analyses. Indeed, they generally saw the slaves' movement, most of the time, as having little more than nuisance value, and on those infrequent occasions when they recognised within it revolutionary proportions their analyses degenerated into negrophobic descriptions and com- mentaries.[8] Such outpourings were based, in varying degrees, upon the racist notion of angry and savage blacks in/a vengeful and mindless lust for blood and white women.[9]

The most sophisticated pro-slavery writer, Jamaica's Edward Long, does not best illustrate this particular point, but he does demonstrate in the clearest manner slaveowners' reluctant recognition of Africans' maturing anti-slavery consciousness. Furthermore, he understood fully what it meant for the Caribbean world in particular and the politics of abolitionism in general.

Long was aware of the contradiction inherent in white colonists' claims for 'liberty' within the late eighteenth century Whig ideological framework, while at the same time denying black colonists any legitimate right to their own liberty. He admitted, moreover, that the 'spirit of liberty' was also a deep rooted feature of the black community, though for him this consciousness had its origins in the white community

— the blacks being ideological victims of its 'contagious fever'.[10] The resolution of this contradiction within Long's thought was found in a head-long plunge into racial arguments, the structure of which had long been a feature of colonial elite social consciousness. He argued, for example, that the condition of colonial slavery for blacks was in itself an advancement in their claim to liberty. That is, blacks in general enjoyed more social and material rights on the West Indian plantations than they did in West Africa where their lot was generally one of abject poverty and submission to monarchical tyranny.

Gordon Lewis suggests that social relations within eighteenth century planter ideology were based on the tenet that the Africans required patronage in return for his labour. Long articulates this point by stating that the slave, once settled in his new home, enters into a limited freedom supervised by the master who is his 'friend and father'. This authority, Long adds:

> is like that of an ancient patriarch: conciliating affection by the mildness of its exertion, and claiming respect by the justice and propriety of its decisions and discipline, it attracts the love of the honest and good; while it awes the worthless into reformation.' [11]

This unrealistic view of stability in master-slave relations fell apart precisely at the stage where slaves rejected those reforms which meant the abandonment of their claim to liberty. The extensive record of rebellion and protest provides the empirical and theoretical evidence to support their stance on this question. It points, furthermore, to a refusal within the slave community to accept as legitimate any kind of slave-relation whatsoever, and the search for avenues to freedom was persistent.

Ideally, it could be said that rebel slaves and metropolitan anti-slavery lobbyists shared the same goals, and hence their respective movements ought to be considered as different levels of a general process. The attractiveness of this position is partly betrayed by its simplicity, and is easily abandoned when tested under the weight of empirical evidence. It may very well be suggested that slaves wanted more than legal freedom on many occasions; that they also wanted political power and economic autonomy.

These were certainly objectives that most 'humanitarians' preferred blacks not to have. The records of African rebellion also show, is it true that in some instances slaves might well have wanted only the right to reasonable wages and conditions of work under their old masters. The 1831 Sam Sharpe rebellion of Jamaica has recently been so interpreted.[12] But rebellions in St. Domingue, 1791 — 1804, and Barbados in 1816 also suggest that blacks understood that meaningful freedom could be guaranteed only by means of seizing the organs of law and government and by imposing a revolutionary constitutionalism thereafter in order to enforce the reality of freedom.

Wilberforce, for instance, had no time for Africans' revolutionary approach to emancipation in the English colonies, and considered such actions, in spite of his friendship with King Henry of Haiti, as detrimental to the survival of English authority in America — not only in terms of economic and political leverage, but also in terms of the hegemony of western civilisation. The scenario of black revolution and the formation of Afro-Caribbean republics or monarchies, in addition to the subsequent freezing of 'things European', did not excite English anti-slavery lobbyists.[13] From this point of view, then, it may be suggested that the two segments of the transatlantic anti-slavery movement were heading in different directions most of the time. It was not simply a matter of the divergence of strategies and radically

different levels of procedure, but also a matter of the kind of worlds that were to be created in the aftermath.

A simple statistical analysis might show that given some 400,000 blacks who gained revolutionary freedom in St. Domingue, together with the large numbers who freed themselves by means of marronage and otherwise, no concrete basis exists for the claim that European legislative emancipation should be given an obvious right to first consideration. Though the numbers analysis is not necessarily the best way to proceed on this question, it would perhaps impose some demographic constraints upon the ideological charge involved in the argument that, by and large, freedom was brought to the blacks, and that self- -attained freedom was of marginal significance.

In addition, it would illustrate more clearly the impressive record of achievement of African communities as sponsors of the libertarian ideology. Such an analysis is particularly relevant at this stage partly because one of the most striking features of the recent historiography has been the establishment of a dichotomous core/periphery structure within the transatlantic anti-slavery movement. Eric Williams was perhaps first to pose this dichotomous paradigm when he argued that, while metropolitan anti-slavery lobbyists intensified their campaign, during the early nineteenth century, the slaves had done likewise.

By 1833, he said, 'the alternatives were clear', 'emancipation from above or emancipation from below, but Emancipation'.[14]Not surprisingly, only radical scholars seem perturbed by the assignment of the peripheral status to the slaves' movement and the core status to the metropolitan lobbyists. This has been the case in spite of a revisionist attempt to give greater value within the emancipation process to the autonomous antislavery actions of blacks. That is, whereas the

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traditional interpretations crudely negated the slaves' role, the modernist of subordination, the slaves' struggle within international abolitionism. The hands-on political movement of slaves, then, is yet to free itself conceptually of the hegemonic constraints imposed by a revised anti-slavery interpretation. Symbolically, the images of Wilberforce, Schoelcher, et al. still stalk the literature, transcending those of slave leaders such as Bussa, Kofi and Sam Sharpe.

It is not clear, however, why the Africans' struggle for freedom should be considered secondary or peripheral to the activities of European emancipationists. No coherent arguments have been given for this outside of the general statement that ultimately it was imperial law rather than colonial war which terminated the 'not very peculiar' institution of slavery. Michael Craton, for example, after evaluating the record of African resistance in the English colonies, though in a rather technical and "eventist" manner, considered it necessary to add, by way of not distancing himself from what he perceived to be substantial empirical evidence, that white abolitionists won the day though black abolitionists helped in no small way. He has also treated us to other variations on this theme.

There is the view, for example, that Africans created in part the ideological context for parliamentary legislation by rendering their societies irretrievably unstable. In this way they assisted in forcing the Imperial legislature into action in order to protect colonial life (white) and property (black and non-human). In addition, there is the argument that African rebels had illustrated by 1832 that the colonial elite could rule in the long term only by means of extreme repression, and that Parliament was not prepared to pay the economic nor political cost implied, and acted to defuse an increasingly explosive situation.[15]

The evidence showing that rebellious Africans were featured in all sides of the abolitionist debates cannot be ignored. Abolitionist knew

that the slave system was in political crisis as a result of the rising tide of black revolution. If these arguments have any weight then it becomes less clear what precisely was the overwhelming and more critical role of the 'humanitarians'. Unfortunately, analyses of these and related matters are hampered by insufficient data on specific ways in which the imperial government perceived the political action of Africans in relation to that of its own anti-slavery members.

The assignment of a peripheral status within anti-slavery thought to Africans is also to be found in the 'intellectual' work of David Brion Davis and more so in Roger Anstey's several accounts of British abolitionism. Following Davis, it could be argued that while the conceptual separation of Caribbean and European processes are perhaps inevitable, owing to different historiographic and philosophical traditions, the projection of an hierarchical order in the emergence of democratic ideology, and in the partial and full attainment of freedom, constitutes a major problem of anti-slavery in western culture.[16]

Two works on anti-slavery, the first by a longstanding anti-Marxist American scholar of British abolitionism, and the other by an English Marxist political historian, best illustrate this historiographical condition. First, in Seymour Drescher's 1986 work, *Capitalism and Anti-Slavery*, which represents a mild revision of Anstey's thesis, there are no references to Caribbean anti-slavery activities in the opening chapter entitled the 'Foundations of anti-slavery', Drescher, however, offered what can be interpreted as a dismissive aside in his summary where it is stated that 'the expansion of freedom was the central problem of abolitionists (including the slaves),...'[17]

Second, Robin Blackburn in his recent impressively comprehensive study, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, argues in the opening chapter on the 'orgins of anti-slavery' that since the publication of Thomas Clarkson's seminal work on British slave trade abolition (1808), 'it

has been common to identify the origins of anti-slavery within the works of the learned men who first published critiques of slavery or the slave trade.[18]

Recognising the persistence of this perspective in the study of anti-slavery, Marxist historians such as C.L.R. James, Richard Hart and Gordon Lewis, among others, have been suggesting for some time that African politics be conceived of as the 'on the ground' (core) dimension of a general struggle to remove slavery from Caribbean and European political culture. James has long been concerned with illustrating how revolutionary ideology transcended the political barriers implicit in colonial slavery and racism. He insists that there should be no surprise in the fact that Caribbean Africans hammered out a political reality of anti-slavery with the assistance of European thought.

The equally vintage work of Hart on Jamaican resistance and rebellion now represents an historiographic core that illustrates as well as any other source the evolution of a hardened antislavery consciousness among blacks in that country. For him, the core of the anti-slavery movement resided undoubtedly within the Caribbean, and his personal political feel for con- temporary consciousness gives a strong sense of continuity in his analysis.[19] Lewis, in addition, in his well known style, attempted to flesh out the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of international anti-slavery ideology, and gave full credit to the intellectual contribution of enslaved Africans. He is not the kind of scholar who is limited by what has been said already.

Furthermore, he had the courage to travel along unchartered areas in search of the 'hidden' ideological elements of the past world. What he found were the outer limits of a grand Caribbean anti-slavery tradition, whose actors were not only black and coloured, but also Amerindian and creole white. Conceptually, he does not detract from the achievements of Wilberforce, Clarkson, Buxton and Schoelcher, but

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he does suggest that the world created, even if temporarily, by the anti-slavery energies of Toussaint and Dessalines, Sam Sharpe, Tackey and other enslaved leaders, seemed comparatively more 'hell-bent' on destroying Caribbean slavery.[20]

English abolitionist leaders, of course, perceived themselves as constituting the vanguard of anti-slavery thought and practice, a vision which historians have continued to perpetuate. This perception, not surprisingly, has managed to survive long after the 1790s when blacks in St. Domingue overthrew the slavery regime and established in 1804 the state of Haiti which boasted an aggressive anti-slavery constitution and foreign policy[21]

Haiti had emerged regionally and internationally as the real symbol and manifestation of anti-slavery, Toussaint having beforehand eclipsed Wilberforce in the watchful eyes of the western world as the prime anti-slavery leader. For the hardworking and determined English abolitionists, however, the presence of Haiti was, in general, more of a hindrance to their crusade than an asset, and they continued to see anti-slavery as being endangered by Africans' impatient tendency to resort to arms. Eltis suggests that this is why abolitionists, in general, were in favour of the establishment of a strong police force, an independent magistracy, draconian vagrancy laws, and increased missionary activity.[22]

Historians have had little difficulty in endorsing the humanitarians' claim to possession of the philosophic 'mind' — and hence the core — of anti-slavery, and by extension in suggesting that Africans lived out at best the cruder socio-material aspects of the movement. According to David Geggus, no major figure appears to have openly approved of violent self-liberation by blacks. Wilberforce thought them

submissive role in the expansion of Eurocentric culture via the white controlled plantation economic regime.[28]

The racism implied within this perception of African liberation was an entrenched feature of abolitionists' thought. Emancipation was not conceived in terms of liberation from Europeans' power, values, and domination. From this point of view, then, it was only when Toussaint showed himself, like King Christophe did at a later date, to be receptive of the European educational and religious mission and its cultural-language baggage, that he received some measure of ideological acceptance by English statesmen and humanitarians.

Furthermore, the abolitionists' tendency to conceive of Africans as unfortunate children to be liberated from tyrannical parents, with the moral outrage which that implied for the reasonable mind, served to deepen the racist perception of their audience and enhance a fear among them that blacks seeking independence, economic autonomy, and political power, were irresponsible, rash, ungrateful, in addition to being naive.

With these ideological tenets so deeply embedded in abolitionist perceptions of blacks in struggle, it would have been a formidable, but necessary task for historians to transcend or penetrate them in order to observe as objectively as possible the intellectual features of the political culture of blacks. This remains a most necessary precondition for a proper evaluation of the Caribbean anti-slavery tradition as well as for an understanding of how it is related to the European movement.

Logically, then, a feature of anti-slavery that should have been addressed at the outset is the history of blacks' political consciousness in the general evolution of their conceptual understanding of their wants, needs and means. To do this, it would have been necessary to say something meaningful about the 'slave mind' — hence ideology.

Gordon Lewis quite perceptively punctuated his fascinating treatment of Caribbean anti-slavery with this reference to the state of the African mind within the historiography:

> If, then, there was a planter mind, there was also a slave mind. This has not always been fully appreciated, even by authors sympathetic to the slave cause. [29]

Refusal to recognise black rebels at this level of consciousness, more than any other factor, has held back the advance of the kind of conceptual analysis which is necessary for an incisive understanding of African resistance, and the subject remains today a soft spot within the modern anti-slavery literature.

To conceive rebellious Africans as intelligent political activists (in spite of their material and socio-legal oppression), who were capable of evaluating pro-slavery strengths and weaknesses, has not been an easy task for most historians. Occasionally, references are made to this inhibition in terms of it being rooted within a racist perception of blacks which, in part, relates to the abolitionist view of Africans as primitive, anti-intellectual beings in need simply of paternalistic and moral care.

Take Michael Craton's conceptual development, for example. For many years he worked diligently on African resistance in the English Caribbean. In 1974 he presented what he described as a typology, morphology and etiology of resistance — neatly packaged in what he also termed 'a sequential model.' Since then he has published several works on African resistance, illustrating a praiseworthy need to revise and fine-tune his analysis. Indeed, he is generally considered to be a leading authority within this aspect of Caribbean historiography.

It is interesting to note, however, what happened when he encountered the need to comment on the 'slave mind' — an encounter which resulted

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from a general recognition that structuralist models based squarely on demographic, topographic and economic forces were insufficient in explaining why the Africans rebelled and what their motivating ideas were. He ran into the minefield of his own [unconscious] race attitude and attempted to deal with it as follows:

> Because of my seduction by the neat model and simple causes, I went so far as to dismiss the influence upon the British West Indies slaves of all the ideology of the Age of Revolution (1775—1815), even of the slave rebellion in Haiti between 1791 and 1804.,.' finally, it seems to me now that to deprive the slaves of an ideology such as that normally ascribed to the rebellious Americans, the French Revolutionaries.. .is to be guilty once more of a racist denigration.[30]

Having cleared this hurdle, a major achievement within Euro American historiography of black struggle, Craton goes on to assert what for him was the ideology of the rebellious Africans through- out Caribbean history; it 'was that of all unfree men — that is the vast majority throughout history — freedom to make, or create, life of their own'.[31]

Craton's admission and subsequent assertion came some thirty years after C.L.R. James had illustrated quite remarkably in The Black Jacobins that a proliferation of conflicting ideas and socio-political visions existed within the Haitian revolutionary ranks on the issues of foreign policy, economic strategy, race relations, education and government. Indeed one could argue that, like Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky, the Haitian leaders, Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe differed fundamentally from each other on ideology, and thus the revolution was characterised by deep-rooted conceptual heterogeneity.[32] The real tribute to Africans in Craton's point, then, is perhaps to be found more

succinctly stated in Gordon Lewis' political theorem — 'without intelligence there can be no ideology.'[33]

Leading on from these conceptual developments, though not in a logical manner, is the belief, now generally associated with the work of Sidney Mintz and Douglas Hall, that rebellious Africans wanted a limited measure of economic and social autonomy as represented by a peasant culture rather than formal political power.[34] It is not clearly stated whether this objective was that of rebel leaders or the generally non-violent majority of Africans.

Neither is it clearly stated whether this 'peasanthood' was considered the end product of their politics — that is, after they had defeated their masters — or merely a base for a future revolutionary onslaught upon planter power. For Craton, "the black majority' wanted to be "free to work for planters or themselves as and when they wished', ambitions he considered to be 'comparatively moderate', but in 'consonance with what seems to have been the wishes of the mass following'.[35]

It is not difficult to recognise that these projections of African objectives represent the most conservative and restricted interpretation of their ascribed ideology — 'freedom to make a life of their own'. Is it not a little odd to state that rebellious Africans would have used whatever means possible to win their freedom and then to suggest that this end could be realised by a 'moderate' peasanthood cocooned within a plantation/planter dominated world? Would slaves not have realised that this idea as an end itself was unattainable under plantation hegemony?

If we look solely at the British West Indies where Africans failed, after 200 years, to wrestle political power from masters by means of arms,

we also see that, in the period 1838 to 1870, landownership was used as a political tool with far-reaching constitutional implications, especially for Jamaica where the peasantry was numerically most advanced.

Where Africans succeeded in freeing themselves, whether in Haiti, and in long lasting maroon communities, the value of political power to their sense of freedom was considered critical. The labourers' and peasants' riots and voting practices in the mid-nineteenth century British West Indies clearly illustrate that blacks were aware that without political power their 'reconstituted' peasant culture could not de- liver the quality of freedom envisaged. Historians, then, seemed to have taken one step forward in the recognition of an African ideology of struggle, but have taken two backwards in implying that it was a depoliticised peasant world, dialectically opposed to plantation hegemony, which rebellious Africans pursued.

More recently, this regressive trend within the historiography has received a significant boost from Dirks in what he describes as an analysis of 'conflict and its ritual expression' on British West Indian slave plantations. Dirks' thesis is that slaves possessed a 'proclivity to turn the holidays [especially Christmas] into a bloodbath and to try to topple their masters' regime'.[36] He computes that of the seventy African revolts reported, aborted, imagined and actual, some thirty-seven occurred in the month of December, producing what he terms the 'dark side of Christmas'.[37] Dirks' analysis of this time-based phenomenon falls within the category identified by Craton as racist denigration — dark for whom! For him, the Africans were not driven by a political and military understanding, sophisticated or otherwise, of the impact of the Christmas festivities within the white community, but by forces of the belly rather than the brain. The month of December, he claims, without the presentation of adequate supportive data, was associated

with a rather sudden increase in slave nutrition — preceding months being characterised by extensive hunger:

> The onset of dry weather in December brought immediate and dramatic relief. The energy-rich fields of cane started to ripen. At the same time yams, sweet potatoes, maize, plantains, and bananas, as well as a great number of other fruits and vegetables, began to mature. Field- work slackened off for a brief interlude before the cane harvest. And the end of the hurricane season brought hundreds of vessels laden with provisions, much of it for holiday distribution. Together these events broke the pattern of hunger and lethargy and disease of the previous months and gave way to vigor and better health all around.

'This upsurge in available food energy', Dirks argues, 'is also related to tumultous celebrations' and aggressiveness among the enslaved in general. He asserts that 'the effect of this nutritional boost and the availability of other fresh sources of nourishment was nothing short of explosive'. Typically, some of this excessive energy went into 'jolly sport', but most went into 'extraordinary aggressiveness'.[38]

One of Dirks' achievements is that he has managed to turn upside down the traditional analysis without attempting to remove it from nutritional or biological levels of conception. In 1974, for example, Richard Sheridan had argued that Africans 'tended to revolt when they were underfed, overworked, and maltreated'.[39] We are now told by Dirks that, on the contrary, they tended to revolt when overfed, under worked and well treated. The assumption underlying both arguments is that it was possible to produce in a general way an anti-rebellious consciousness by a sensitive, well planned manipulation of labour and nutritional factors. This suggests an objection to the notion that Africans practised 'politics' on a sophisticated and intellectually conscious level.

Yet, the evidence illustrates fully that Africans made definite political analyses of the power structures they encountered, and used almost every force — natural and ~human — in their struggle. They rebelled when they could, and accommodated when they had to. The ebb and flow of rebellion and accommodation suggest that they understood 'time', including Christmas time, as a political factor in struggle. As a result, some planters were forced to appreciate the political skills and conscious determination of rebellious Africans, in spite of the negrophobic nature of their social commentaries.

It can no longer be generally accepted, then, that Africans existed in an a theoretical world which was devoid of ideas, political concepts and an alternative socio-political vision. Their tradition of anti-slavery activity impacted upon the social culture and polity of the Caribbean world in more fundamental ways than anti-slavery lobbyists ever did in metropolitan societies. Indeed, the entire Caribbean reality was shaped and informed by the persistent forces of slavery and anti-slavery as long as the slave regimes lasted.

From a Caribbean perspective, Africans struggle for freedom should not be diminished when placed alongside the legislative interventions of European Parliaments. These metropolitan actions were part of the final episode in an epic struggle — initiated and propelled by its greatest sufferers — the enslaved African population. Only in Haiti were blacks able to over- throw the slave regime and achieve their freedom. Yet, Africans throughout the region consistently rebelled in order to gain freedom, employing over time a wide range of political tools and methods in their struggle.

In terms of the Caribbean anti-slavery movement, no iron laws of anti-slavery resistance exist, and consequently most scholars have tended to emphasise the uniqueness of each colony's case. While recognising, at least philosophically, the temporal and spatial uniqueness of each

historical moment, one can still illustrate that the fundamental ideological core of anti-slavery was almost identical: the enslaved were saying to their masters, 'we want to be free, and we will pursue that freedom by all means necessary.' This was the essential stream of thought that ran through the region, from colony to colony, from plantation to plantation. Indeed, it was anti-slavery rather than sugar production which stamped the most prominent unifying marks upon the region. In this sense, then, black-led anti-slavery resided at the root of the Caribbean experience, and represented a critical element of the core of what was perhaps the first international political movement of the modern era — transatlantic abolitionism.

Notes

1. Hilary Beckles, 'The 200 Years War: Slave Resistance in the British West Indies: An Overview of the Historiography', *The Jamaican Historical Review*,13, 1982, 1-10: also, 'Slave Ideology and Self-Emancipation in the British West Indies', *Bulletin of Eastern Caribbean Affairs*, 10:4, 1-8. See also Michael Craton, 'The Passion to Exist: Slave Rebellion in the British West Indies, 1650-1832', *Journal of Caribbean History*, 13, 1; Edward Long, The History of Jamaica. London, 1774. 1970 reprint, 348-355, 465-469; Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, London, 1794, I, 60-65.

2. See, for example, the following revisionist analyses of slave resistance: Barry Gaspar, *Bondsmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua (with Implications for colonial British America)*. Baltimore, 1985 xiv-20. Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies*. London, 1982, 19-51. Hilary Beckles, *Black*

Rebellion in Barbados: The Struggle Against Slavery, 1627-1838. Bridgetown, 1984. 1-8.

3. See Orlando Patterson, "Slavery and Slave Revolts: A Socio-historical Analysis of the First Maroon War, Jamaica 1655-1740" *Social and Economic Studies*, 19:3, 1970, 289-325. Michael Craton, *Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery*. New York, 1974, 289-325. Edward Brathwaite, *Wars of Respect: Nanny, Sam Sharpe and the Straggle*. Kingston, 1977; also 'Caliban, Ariel and Unprospero in the Conflict of Creolisation: A Study of the Slave Revolt of Jamaica, 1831-32' in V. Rubin and A. Tuden (eds) *Comparative Perspectives on Slavery in New World Plantation Societies*. New York, 1977, 44T-62. Barbara Kopytoff, 'The Early Political Development of Jamaican Maroon Societies', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 35:2, 1978, 287-307; The Development of Jamaican Maroon Ethnicity', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 22, 1976, 35-50. Monica Schuler, "Akan Slave Rebellion in the British Caribbean', *Savacou*, 1:1, 1970. also, 'Ethnic Slave Rebellions in the Caribbean and the Guiana?, *Journal of Social History*, 3, 1970, 374-355. Barry Gaspar, 'The Antigua Slave Conspiracy of 1736: A Case Study of the Origins of Collective Resistance'. *William and Mary Quarterly*, 35:2, 1978, 308-324; Mary Reckord-Tumer, 'The Jamaican Slave Rebellion of 1831', *Past and Present*, July, 1968, No. 40, 108-125.

4. See M. Schuler, 'Day-to-Day Resistance to Slavery in the Caribbean during the eighteenth Century', *African Studies Association of the West Indies*, Bulletin 6, Dec. 1973, 57-77. Also, Richard Sheridan, 'The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776 and the American Revolution', Journal of Negro History, 61:3, 1976, 290-308.

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5. Robert Dirks, *The Black Saturnalia: Conflict and its ritual expression on British West Indian Slave Plantations* Gainesville, 1987, 167; M. Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 335339.

6. C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L 'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. Reprint 1963. See also Gordon K. Lewis, *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in its Ideological Aspects1492-1900*. Baltimore, 1983, 171-239.

7. For example, the Report of the House of Assembly's Select Committee which investigated the causes of the 1816 rebellion in Barbados concluded that the rebellion originated 'solely and entirely in consequence of the intelligence imparted to the slaves, which intelligence was obtained from the English newspapers, that their freedom had been granted them in England'; and that, their hopes for emancipation were 'kept alive' by the information that 'party in England and particularly in Wilberforce . . . were exerting themselves to ameliorate their condition, and ultimately effect their emancipation'. *(Report from a Select Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Origins, Causes, and Progress of the Late Insurrection - April 1816*. Barbados, 1818.)

8. For example, J. Oldmixon (*The British Empire in America*, London 1708) wrote of the rebels involved in the 1692 slave conspiracy in Barbados: 'Did they imagine that Christians would have suffered them to set up a Negro Monarchy, or Republick, in the midst of their Governments? .. The English Dutch and French... would rather have leagued than suffer this unnatural and dangerous independence... They would have been looked upon as common enemies by all nations...' (p. 53). See Beckles, *Black Rebellion*, 48.

9. See Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 109; Beckles, *Black Rebellion*, 110.

10. Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*. London, 1774, 1970. reprint, 1, 25.

11. Lewis, *Main Currents*, 111; Long, 11,270-271.

12. See Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society*, 1787-1834. Chicago, 1982, 153-154, 158; Craton, *Testing The Chains*, 301.

13. See David Geggus, 'British Opinion and the Emergence of Haiti, 1791-1805' in James Walvin (ad.) *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846*. London, 1982, 123-150; Michael Craton, 'Slave Culture, Resistance and the Achievement of Emancipation in the British West Indies, 1783-1838', 100-123. See also, Hilary Beckles, 'Emancipation by War or Law? Wilberforce and the 1816 Barbados Slave Rebellion', in David Richardson, (ed.), *Abolition and its Aftermath: The Historical Context; 1790-1916*. London, 1985, 80-105.

14. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*. (London, 1944) reprint 1964, 208.

15. Craton, 'Slave Culture', 122; also, 'Proto-Peasant Revolts? The late Slave Rebellions in the British West Indies, 1816-1832', Past and Present, No. 85, 99-126; 'What and Who to Whom and What: The Significance of Slave Resistance', in Barbara Solow and Stanley Engerman, (ads) *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams*. New York, 1987, 259-282.

16. Davis, in *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, 1975), marginalised the philosophical impact which persistent Slave rebellions in the Caribbean had upon English (European) anti-slavery thought, though conceptually this matter would have been critical to the thought of Locke and Hegel, both of whom he dealt with extensively. He attempted to address the matter in a rather peripheral manner by means of an epilogue entitled 'Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Phenomenology of mind', which does no justice to the historical and philosophical vision of either Toussaint or Hegel See Roger Anstey's two most impressive works: *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition*, 1769-1810. London, 1975; 'Parliamentary Reform, Methodism, and Anti-Slavery Politics, 1 829-I 833', *Slavery and Abolition*, 2:3, 1981, 209-26.

17. Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Anti-Slavery: British Mobilisation in Comparative Perspective*. London, 1986, 162.

18. Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*. London, 1988. 35.

19. Richard Hart, 'The Formation of a Caribbean Working Class' *The Black Liberator*, 2:2, 1973/74, 131-148; *Slaves who Abolished Slavery: Vol. 1 Blacks in Bondage*: Kingston, 1980; *Blacks in Rebellion*. Kingston, 1985; *Black Jamaicans' Struggle Against Slavery*. London, 1977; 'Cudjoe and the First Maroon War in Jamaica', *Caribbean Historical Review*, 1, 1950, 46-79.

20. See G. Lewis, *Main Currents*, Chapter four, for an exciting analysis of Caribbean anti-slavery thought and actions.

21. For an interesting case of Haiti's anti-slavery foreign policy in action, see Richard Sheridan, 'From Jamaican Slavery to Haitian Freedom: The Case of the Black Crew of the Pilot Boat, Deep Nine', *Journal of Negro History*, 67:4, 1982, 328-339. See also David Geggus, 'The Enigma of Jamaica in the 1790s: New Light on the Causes of Slave Rebellions', *William and Mary Quarterly*. 44:2. 1987, 274-229.

22. D. Eltis, 'Abolitionist Perceptions of Society after Slavery? in James Walvin (ed), *Slavery and British Society*, 202-203.

23. Geggus, 'British Opinion', 127.

24. *Annual Register*, 1802, 210-20.

25. Published in the *Morning Post*, 9 November 1802.

26. Geggus, 'British Opinion', 149.

27. Eric Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies*. Trinidad, 1964, 1-13.

28. For an excellent analysis of this theme, see David Eltis, "Abolitionist Perceptions of Society after Slavery", 195-214. See also W.A. Green, Was British Emancipation a Success? The Abolitionist Perspective', in Richardson (ed.)Abolition, 183 -203.

29. Lewis, Main Currents, 182.

30. Craton, 'The Passion to Exist', 2.

31. Ibid, p.18.

32. See Beckles, Black Rebellion, 4.

33. Lewis, Main Currents, 180.

34. See Sidney Mintz and Douglas Hall, 'The Origins of the Jamaican Internal Marketing System', *Yale University Publications in Anthropology* 57 (1960), 1- 26.

35. Craton, 'Slave Culture', 118. He further states: 'The chief of these aspirations was, naturally, to be free. Yet the form of that freedom seems to have become visualised as that of an independent peasantry, about which the slaves had quite clear notions and of which, in most cases, they already, had considerable experience.'

36. Dirks, *Black Saturnali*, xvi-xvii.

37. *ibid.* 167

38. *ibid*, 171.

39. Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1625-1775*. Bridgetown, 1974. 254.

LECTURE TWO

AFRICAN WOMEN AND ANTI–SLAVERY REBELLION IN THE CARIBBEAN

Enchained African women were thrown into the deepest end of the chattel slavery, the criminal system of human bondage built by Europeans in the Caribbean. From this location they experienced the most extreme brutalization imaginable that constituted then and now a crime against humanity. Their labour power violently exploited in the physically debilitating work regime of the plantations, and their sexuality and fertility commodified and commercialized as part of their owners' property right in human. Driven by the whip to work in fields and trenches, raped and physically abused daily, and forced to suffer the sale of their children as a social norm, enslaved African women carried on their backs and in their bellies the keys to the survival of the slave system.

Aware of the precise nature of this reality, African women rise to occupy the leadership vanguard of the revolutionary and reformist movements that sought to end and mediated the inhumanity of the world built by slave owners. Against slavery they went to war; they negotiated; they ran away; and they sought to survive with dignity. They built, led, fostered, and sustained a [political culture of opposition that constituted the grand refusal to accept the legitimacy of slavery. They were the natural rebels of the Caribbean.

The stories of freedom wars and reason within relationships are told in the biographical narratives of thousands of enslaved African women. 'My honoured master, I hope you will pardon the liberty your slave has taken in addressing you on a subject which I hope may not give you the least displeasure or offense': thus began a letter dated Barbados 1804 from Jenny Lane, an enslaved black woman, addressed to Thomas

Lane, her owner. The text of Jenny's letter contains a detailed proposal for the negotiation of her freedom.

From Newton Plantation in the southern parish of the island colony, this correspondence, constructed in a language of submission, but bearing the ideology of self- liberation, reached its destination in the City of London through much the same channels as monthly reports from the estate manager concerning the governance of slaves. It was ironical, Thomas Lane thought, that Jenny's letter arrived at the same time as a routine correspondence from Mr. Wood, his estate manager, indicating that ill-discipline and turbulence among the slaves necessitated the strict application of laws designed for their suppression. [1]

While such letters are rare, the abundance of evidence that documents women's efforts at negotiating terms of personal freedom stands in contrast to the paucity that details their direct engagement in the bloody warfare that typified the relations between enslaved blacks and whites in the Caribbean. The archives yield this much about sex, race and anti-slavery politics. Reflecting notions derived from this reading of the evidence, Morrissey asserts: 'women seldom exercised active leadership in Caribbean slave revolts. We have tended lately, therefore, to focus on their participation in indirect forms of protest. [2] In developing this argument, she concluded:

> *Women slaves did not generally fulfill prominent leadership roles in traditionally understood vehicles for revolt, that is, Maroon Communities and rebel movements. They did, however, fill subsidiary positions and give many kinds of support to male rebels. Female insurgency may have sometimes been expressed in malingering and in the refusal to conceive and bear children. But evidence of these practices is limited, and their incidence is at odds with other more fully documented*

tendencies, including physiologically based female subfecundity and high levels of work productivity. [3]

The questions that follow from this statement are many. What is the political significance of an argument which says that physical combat in war should be privileged above broad-based ideological preparation? Why should the male warriors be centred and the non-violent protests of women that harnessed and directed anti-slavery politics be marginalised? What is the influence of gender representation on anti-slavery historiography?

The search for answers to these questions should begin by recognising that during slavery the right to life and social liberty was denied Africans, not on the basis of gender, but by the race inequities of colonial culture. Differences in life experiences among males and females, however, served to demonstrate how gender constructions assisted in the promotion and maintenance of social and material inequalities. White males, who considered the project of colonialism their conquistadorial creation, believed that the system of slavery devised by them was in part the legitimate outcome of their military conquest of black males in Africa. While the initial labour preference at the frontier was for males, small numbers of African women entered the colonies in the formative stage. It was immediately recognised, however, that under favourable conditions the natural reproduction of slavery was an alternative to slave trading; also, that by securing females on a systematic basis, slave managers could meet social demands of favoured African male.

At two levels, then, African women were targeted by the socio-economic logic of the plantation enterprise. Their integration into this patriarchal agrarian world - of white and black-males - was an entry into a gender-order that represented them as social objects of competing masculinities. On encountering the shared design of hegemonic (white)

and marginalised (black) masculinities to secure their subordination within the gender-order, enslaved black women sought to develop autonomous identities by resisting oppressive ideological and institutional sources of power. But as the slave system expanded and matured, the black woman occupied positions at its centre that were of critical social and economic importance. Its survival depended upon her enslavement; as a result her survival struggle assumed more complex dimensions than that of her male counterpart whose gender ideologies she also contested.

Gender, slavery and the battle over babies

The gender conception of the enslaved black woman as the seed of unfreedom resided at the core of the meaning and social reality of slavery. Her position was ideologically constructed and socially enforced by the power of a white, male slave-owning patriarchy that understood a great deal about ideological representation, social authority and economic accumulation.

Slavery was designed as a system of social relations and economic accumulation that could be self-sustained through inheritance. In order to offer the white community full immunity from the process of enslavement, patriarchy alienated the white female from the capability of producing offspring who could inherit the status of slavery. The white women were not, and indeed could not be, constructed in this way. The first generations of white women (mostly indentured servants) were imported to the colonies to perform manual labour.

There was an agreement on both sides to the contract that servitude was temporary and certainly not hereditary. Slavery meant enforced labour for life and control over the physical self of the African during non-labouring periods; it was as much about the African's total accountability for 'self' as it was about the slave owner's legal right to

demand labour. This, in part, is why Mary Prince, the freed African, wrote that her resistance to slavery had much to do with the denial of a right to time for 'herself'. [4]

For many Africans the unacceptability of slavery as a violently enforced pattern of relations was most acutely felt when 'free' time was rejected and their total time subjected to the authority and interest of enslavers. This is why the role of gender in an understanding of individuals' relationship to their 'body' is critical in the study of slavery. With the enslaved woman the matter of 'the body' created a special set of circumstances that centred her sex within the slave owner's gender constructions of slavery.

The notion of slavery as the 'using up' of the body — day and night — had clearly differentiated sex and gender implications. The exploration of this issue should speak directly to an analysis of female slavery. It draws attention to the specific ways in which the experiences of enslaved women differed from those of men, how gender was constructed and reproduced, and how it ultimately determined the peculiar patterns and forms of anti-slavery responses.

Chattel slavery, the dominant social institution, was thoroughly gendered in its designs and functions. Throughout the Americas, European enslavers decreed that the status of an infant be derived from that of the mother. Black children were born into a social relation that was predetermined by the status of their mothers. It had absolutely nothing to do with the status of the father. Children fathered by white men and freed black men were born into slavery if their mothers were enslaved. White men sought to protect their property from any inheritance claim made by their enslaved children when made free. This inheritance sensibility suggests, therefore, a complex set of relations between resistance to the labour regime and labour reproduction.

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It makes no sense to negate the anti-slavery importance of refusal in the area of fecundity, fertility and reproduction. Throughout the slavery period evidence indicates that enslaved women had extended their resistance network into bio-social zones associated with maternity. Child-bearing became politicised in ways that tore and tortured enslaved women to a degree that historians may never comprehend. An examination of the changing background to slave owners' natal policy, and the diverse responses of enslaved women, is therefore necessary in order to understand the battle over babies that informed women's anti-slavery.

From the mid eighteenth century, when slave prices in the British West Indies started a steady upward climb, the matter of slave 'treatment' assumed enlarged proportions among slave owners. Reacting partly to increasingly effective anti-slave-trade politics, managerial emphasis shifted slowly from 'buying' to 'breeding' as a labour supply strategy. West Indian societies entered, after .the 1770s, a phase of social reform that has been described as the 'age of amelioration'.

In economic terms, amelioration was no more than a policy which suggested that marginal benefits could be derived from investing the money that would have been spent on buying new slaves in a maintenance programme for existing slaves. An objective of amelioration was to create for women a pro-natalist environment in order to stimulate procreation. It entailed less work and better nutrition for pregnant and lactating women, as well as the availability of childcare facilities. In addition, money was offered to women for delivering healthy children; slave midwives were offered more money than mothers, an indication of slave owners' perception of their prime responsibility for high infant mortality rates on estates. [7]

Natural reproduction, rather than importation, suggested the targeting of slave women's fertility. The systematic offering of natal incentive to women meant that slave owners considered it possible to influence the socio-sexual behaviour of enslaved women. Throughout the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, plantation managers reported their inability to explain satisfactorily low birth rates and high infant mortality rates. Most were suspicious that slave women were applying 'unnatural' brakes upon the reproductive process. They did not know how it was done, and they speculated. The widespread belief, however, was that it was part of an anti-slavery strategy that had become endemic. By declaring gynaecological warfare upon slavery, enslaved women were accused of engaging in a most effective form of resistance.

The tragic demographic performance of slave populations up to the end of the eighteenth century in Jamaica, Barbados and the Leeward Islands cannot be explained without some understanding of these matters. By the 1780s, Barbadian slave owners, taking the lead in an effort to break this resistance, and win the baby war, had put in place the most comprehensive and far-reaching package for the encouragement of pregnant and lactating mothers.

In addition to offering financial and material incentives to slave women to produce healthy children, they invested in the promotion of institutional contexts, such as access to family life, Christian marriage and labour reduction. By 1800, Barbados, unlike its neighbours, was experiencing sustained natural growth among slaves. Slave owners got their babies, and boasted in 1807 when slave trading was illegalised, that they feared having too many. Slave women also got, finally, part of what they wanted: a social and material environment which seemed less hostile to child-bearing, parenting, family and domesticity. [8]

Specific patterns of anti-slavery politics emanated from these changing forms of engagement with the slave system. Undoubtedly, some women appeared broken psychologically by the overwhelming power of slave owners. [9] Such women expressed patterns of behaviour that have been described as psychotic on account of an overt display of seemingly mindless subservience. Referred to as 'Quasheba', the female version of 'Quashee' (or Sambo), this gendered personality type could be transformed suddenly into an agent bearing unexpected social rage.

Such cases can be found in abundance throughout plantation documents. In many instances slave owners would make reference to the general kindness shown the female and her positive response, before describing their shock and dismay at the violent action taken.[10] A common conclusion drawn by slave owners in these circumstances was that the loyalty and subservience projected by gender representation of slave women did not-conform to social reality, which made for considerable insecurity in everyday life. [11]

Quasheba, then, who wet-nursed and raised her owner's children, was never fully trusted. She was unpredictable, however, not only in relations with her owners, but also with the black community. We see evidence of this in the judicial records when slaves appear before the criminal (in) justice system. The records of the 1736 Antigua slave plot speak to this issue. Philida, the sister of Tomboy, the alleged leader of the conspiracy, was arrested and charged with being a leading provocateur. She was accused of publicly making 'some virulent expressions upon her brother's account', an action which ran counter to her owner's perception of her character.

It was also Philida, however, who allegedly provided the intelligence to her master that led to the disclosure of the rebel leadership. Her testimony indicates that she was present at the meeting when plans were designed and discussed, and that other women, most notably

Obbah and 'Old Queen', also participated in leadership activity. Obbah, it was intimated, performed traditional Akan ritual functions designed to enhance secrecy and solidarity among the rebels. But it was Philida, the rebel, who was accused of divulging the information leading to the discovery of leaders. [12]

From 'rebel women' to 'natural rebels': interpreting women's resistance

Much has been said about the supportive roles that were assigned to women in the mobilisation of culture as a force in resistance politics. Bush maintains that 'women were in the vanguard of the cultural resistance to slavery which helped individuals survive the slave experience'. For her, it 'was this cultural strength, however, which helped women resist the system in their more "public" lives as workers'. In the case of the 1736 Antigua plot, the evidence indicates that 'OldQueen' may have assumed the role of a traditional Akan queen mother who held tremendous political influence in the slave yard.

Certainly, this was the case with the Jamaica conspiracy of 1760 in which rebels declared their intention to appoint Abena, the Akan slave, as 'Queen of Kingston'. The relation between the ritual politics of queen mothers and the more precise roles of magico-religious leaders, the voodoo priestess in particular, is not always clear. But the quest for loyalty, as an enhancer of discipline and secrecy, was often said to be a role assigned to 'spirit mothers' whose claim to direct access to ancestral worlds was recognised and respected within slave communities. Gautier has shown, for example, that their knowledge and practice of 'le Vaudou' fortified slave troops in the successful Saint Dominique revolution. [13]

The economic culture retained by Africans in the Caribbean was also used for resistance strategies in which women gained considerable social visibility and provided consistent leadership. In West African

societies women were dominant in the small-scale internal marketing of foodstuffs. Despite enslavement in the New World, this culture persisted. Huckstering of foodstuffs on street corners, in markets, and from house to house, engaged the energies of slave women in spite of hostile legislative opposition.

Slave hucksters grew crops, bought and sold foodstuffs, appropriated goods from plantation stores for resale, bartered their food allowances for other goods and services, in the promotion of commercial activities. The attempted abolition of the slave huckster's market in Antigua in 1831 sparked riotous behaviour by women slaves. Earlier, the Barbadian slave owners, recognising the folly of police and legislative action in the face of such determination, had resorted to the issuing of licences as the principal method of control and regulation. [14]

Often, this rebellious commercial culture was linked to a complex network of social relationships on the estates. A case illustration of women slaves' determination to reject and restructure the pattern of distribution of estate wealth can be extracted from events on the Newton Plantation in Barbados between 1795 and 1797. [15] During this time the manager, Mr. Wood, made several references to slaves' claim to a more equitable share of plantation produce.

Like his predecessor, Mr. Yard, Wood documents the aggressive and rebellious attitudes of slave women who appropriated 'rum, sugar, corn, and everything else which lay at their mercy'. Betsy, her sister Dolly, and their mother, Old Doll, considered the seizure of goods as just reward for the family's performance of special social services to estate management. Dolly had been Yard's mistress for many years before he was dismissed by the estate attorney. So successful were these women in their appropriations that Betsy's husband, a free black huckster, 'through these connections', was 'supplied plentifully with everything', and Old Doll's home, according to Wood, was a 'perfect out-shop for dry goods, rum, sugar, and other commodities'. [16]

Such issues raise the question of women's invisibility within historical records, a matter that has been considerably overstated. Describing the enslaved woman as essentially a 'submerged mother', Brathwaite locates her 'invisibility' within the 'archival material' and suggests that it is but an 'aspect of that general invisibility which haunts [black history]'. [17] For him, the slave woman, being black and female, suffered a 'double invisibility' which in turn promoted a historiography of neglect. There is, however, a significant conceptual and empirical problem to be tackled with respect to the 'invisibility thesis'. It has to do with the fact that the evidence historians have (over!) used as base lines for social history narratives - deeds, wills, manumission lists, diaries, plantation accounts, managers' reports, etc. - says considerably more about enslaved women than it does about enslaved men.

This characteristic of the evidence has to do with the female-centred nature of the slave system, particularly its concern with their maternity and fertility, the management of white households, and the socio-sexual expression of patriarchal power and ideology. More is recorded about slave mothers than slave fathers; more was said about female slave lovers of white males than about male slave lovers of white women. Certainly, in this last regard, enslaved men have been rendered fully invisible, though partly, it should be said, for their own safety. The general intimacy of slave women with the empowered agents of the colonial world — white male and female — placed them at the top of the documentary queue. In these records women appear in diverse social actions other than those related to labour and crime. On the whole the records yield a relatively greater visibility for enslaved women.

During the 1970s, Lucille Mair, working with Jamaican records, initiated a research project that asked some of these questions about the condition and nature of West Indian historiography and archives.

On reflection, it now seems clear that the manner in which she asked these questions was an indication of the issues facing professional historians at that time in the West Indies. The anti-colonial movement had called upon historians to document and interpret the traditions of struggle against colonial domination, particularly with respect to the relatively longer and more determining period of slavery. Male historians had played prominent leadership roles in the anti-colonial labour movement, and as politicians they presented interpretations of their own actions that were rooted conceptually within the traditions of anti-slavery struggles. Newly recreated heroes of anti-colonialism were those who had led slave revolts and organised anti-slavery maroon communities.

A principal task of Lucille Mair's was to add women to the historical narrative, and to locate their anti-slavery contributions firmly within the vanguard of the political project of nation-building. Another was to challenge academics to question disciplinary and gender biases, and to approach archives with greater ideological sensitivity. The first aspect of Mair's concerns produced a body of literature on women's anti-slavery actions that resulted in a political promotion of the notion of the 'rebel woman'. [18] This figure was the quintessential anti-slavery matriarch who organised slave communities and directed their political postures with respect to survival options. Nanny, leader of an early-eighteenth-century Jamaican maroon band, took pride of place in this discourse, and now enjoys the constitutional status in Jamaica of a national heroine.

In Barbados, Nanny Grigg, a principal conceptualiser and ideologue of the 1816 slave rebellion, gained historiographical prominence. The records never hid the fact that Grigg was a central figure in the rebellion. They presented her as the person who conveyed news of developments in the Haitian revolution to other slaves, and successfully propagandised a cadre of enslaved males around its ideas and actions. Both Nanny of

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the Maroons and Nanny Grigg constituted matriarchal leadership within the revolutionary tradition of anti-slavery. They organised men and minds for violent anti-slavery warfare.

Nanny of the Maroons led an army of enslaved men and women against British imperial soldiers and planter militia forces. Robert, a slave giving evidence before the committee established by the Barbados government to investigate the causes and nature of the rebellion, stated that Nanny Grigg told slaves on the estate that 'they were all damned fools to work, for that she would not, as freedom they were sure to get', and that the way to get it was 'to set fire, as that was the way they did it in St. Domingo'. [19] After four days of widespread arson and bloody rebellion the slaves were defeated. Nanny Grigg and 'near a thousand' slaves lost their lives in the military contest and subsequent executions carried out by imperial soldiers and planter militias.

During the 1980s the concept of the 'rebel woman' was placed within a wider context that recognised rebelliousness in different forms and shapes, ranging from collective non-violent protest to individual negotiation and compromise. In an assessment of the 'organs of discontent' on West Indian slave plantations, Dirks argued that 'when discontent arose, it was usually the female gang members who complained the loudest because everyone knew that they were less likely to be flogged than men. It earned women the reputation for being the instruments of instability and the "more unmanageable element of the work force".'

While the evidence does not come down in favour of women's inequality under the whip, it does indicate a prominence for women in the creation of turmoil and the articulation of protest on plantations. Jacob Belgrave, for example, the mulatto owner of a large Barbados sugar plantation, told the authorities that shortly before the April 1816 slave revolt, he was verbally abused by a gang of slave women who

alleged that he was opposed to the British parliament taking steps towards the abolition of slavery. During the revolt his estate was singled out for special treatment. He claimed property destruction of £6,720, the third highest in the island, from a total of 184 damaged estates. [20]

In this regard, Bush's work has done much to extend the parameters of the historiographic framework. In a series of essays, the themes of which occupy the empirical core of a subsequent monograph on enslaved women in the Caribbean, she demonstrated the fluidity in forms of women's struggles, and the diversity of actions and attitudes that constituted anti-slavery. Enslaved women, Bush showed, promoted a culture of intransigence in relation to work, ran away from owners, terrorised white households with chemical concoctions, refused to procreate at levels expected, insisted upon participation in the market economy as hucksters, slept with white men in order to better their material and social condition, and did whatever else was necessary in order to minimise the degree of their unfreedom. Through such channels', Bush states, 'women helped to generate and sustain the general spirit of resistance'. [21]

A common reaction to Bush's notion that the diversity of women's reactions to enslavement constitutes 'channels' through which a 'spirit of resistance' was fostered, is that her definition of resistance is weakened by excessive elasticity, and has lost sight of what constitutes 'political' action. Much can be said about the question of elasticity in the conception of women's anti-slavery action, especially in reaction to a feminist and post-modern context in which the 'personal' is considered the core of the 'political'.

Africans daily negotiation for betterment, which often involved sexual submission and refusal, as well as verbal protest, has had to struggle to find a place within the pantheon of anti-slavery activity traditionally occupied by acts of violent rebellion and marronage. The implications

of this process of redefinition for an interpretation of women's social history are obviously important. In a seminal essay published in 1973 on day-to-day resistance, Monica Schuler effectively destabilised traditional definitions and perceptions of resistance. Her intentions were not guided by considerations of writing feminist or gender history, but were narrowly empirical in that she sought to list and legitimise nonviolent protest actions, and a wide range of personal refusals, as acts that undermined and weakened the slave system. [22]

Schuler provided a methodological opening for a more sophisticated assessment of the range and specificity of women's reaction to enslavement. It became possible, as a result, for Bush to argue that the slave family was the crucible for resistance. Bush was keen to demonstrate that the African family was more than a locus of conspiracy, but by virtue of its overwhelming matrifocal nature, constituted a social agency that was propelled and directed by a distinct female consciousness. Families, then, and by extension, communities, expected women to lead as ideoiogues — whether in the forms of 'spirit mothers', through whom ancestors speak, or queen mothers, as organisers of more secular action. The suppression of fertility by the use of abortifacients and infanticide, and the search for freedom by manumission through social and sexual intimacy with whites, all speak to the same point that actions designed to prevent the perpetuation of slavery should be considered as anti-slavery.

The concern remains that such a redefinition is tantamount to an unnecessary kicking open of the barn door. It is assumed that the specifics of women's resistance can be identified without stretching the understanding of anti-slavery to include social behaviours that were not overtly 'political' in terms of direct challenges to power and authority. Morrissey, for example, has called for a 'more critical perspective', but accepts as common sense that African women's commitment to kith and kin 'in specific ways contributed to tensions

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and contradictions in slavery' that oftentimes drove women to kill, burn and plunder.[23] The other side of this commitment and contradiction, she acknowledges, drove many women to use sexuality in the pursuit of freedom by manumission.

Among enslaved women, brown-skinned black women and mixed-race (or coloured) women were more successful in extracting socio-economic benefits — and legal freedom — from propertied white males and females. Some African women gained legal freedom through the route of the overlapping roles of prostitution and concubinage. In these ways, they earned the necessary money to effect their manumission, or came in contact with clients who were prepared to assist them in doing so. Legal freedom, however, did not always result in a distancing from these roles. It was, therefore, very common to find freed women continuing as prostitutes and mistresses. In 1811, the Rector of the St Michael Parish Church in Barbados, commenting on the 'very rapid' increase in the number of slaves freed by whites since 1802, suggested that 'out of every four at least three' were 'females who obtained that privilege by becoming favorites of white men'. He was supported by Joseph Husbands, an abolitionist campaigner, who claimed that in 1831: 'By far the greater number of free colored persons in Barbados have either obtained their freedom by their own prostitution, or claimed it under some of their female ancestors who in like manner obtained it and have transmitted it to the descendants. [24]

Since the mid eighteenth century, West Indian legislators seemed determined to restrain white males from manumitting their black and coloured 'favorites'. In 1739, the manumission fee in Barbados had been legally set at £50 plus an annuity of £4 local currency; the annuity was insisted upon by poor law officials as one way to prevent slave owners from freeing old and infirm persons who could not reasonably be expected to earn their subsistence. In 1774, a bill was introduced into the Assembly aimed at curtailing the number of females being

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manumitted. It was designed to raise the manumission fee to £100, but was rejected on the grounds that slave owners should not be deprived of the right to assist the 'most deserving part' of their slaves; the females who have generally recommended themselves to our "kindest notice". [25]

The bill was defeated by a vote of eleven to five; opposition was led by Sir John Gay Alleyne, who argued that females who gave their loyalty, love and service to masters should not be denied the opportunity to gain freedom. Barbadians debated the subject again in 1801, following Governor Seaforth's proposed bill to limit female manumission, and to ensure that proper provisions were made by slave owners for their manumitted Africans. The bill became law and raised the manumission fee to £300 for females and £200 for males. African women continued to be freed in significantly larger numbers than men for the rest of the slavery period.

The socio-economic integration of enslaved women into the plantation system, therefore, allowed for their use at various points along the circuit of capital accumulation. Their contribution to the overall wealth creation process of slave owners involved not only their roles as labourers, and reproducers of labour, but also as suppliers of socio-sexual services. The sex industry was an important part of the urban economy, and the relations of slavery, protected by slave codes, created societal conditions under which the maximum benefits offered by property ownership in humans accrued to slave owners. The use of African women as prostitutes, therefore, was another way in which slave owners extracted surplus value and emphasised their status as colonial masters.

The notion of a 'rebel woman', then, seems to narrow the conceptual possibilities with respect to the understanding of African women's anti-slavery activities. It speaks directly to categories of formal political

struggles, rather than seeking to disclose insights into the processes through which individual women made social space in order to enjoy and endure the results of the liberties they took. Analytically, it is static and conceals the importance of diverse social experience and personal reactions in the shaping of heterogeneous anti-slavery mentalities.

Brathwaite took the first step towards a critique of the concept of the 'rebel woman' as an organising category in anti-slavery discourse when he stated with respect to the multi-layered interface of slave women with the slave system: 'The whole fact of slavery affected the woman in such ways that she began to conceive of the notion of liberation naturally (liberation for the slave first of all, and secondly, at the same time, liberation of herself).[26]Brathwaite's argument, furthermore, is that since slavery penetrated, and integrated into production, the 'inner worlds' of the woman — commodifying her maternity and sexuality - she resisted enslavement instinctively or 'naturally'.

Recognising the one-dimensionality and framed image derived from the 'rebel woman' concept, this author proceeded to confer on his book on female slavery in Barbados the title Natural Rebels. [27] In this text it is argued that the heterogeneity of women's actions was probably the most outstanding characteristic of their anti-slavery resistance. This position emerged from the general observation that women's vision of survival and protection of a sense of self-worth defined and shaped their resistance to everyday life which was problematised by the demands of slavery upon all spheres of existence — work, sexual relations, leisure activity and family life.

The 'natural rebel' may not have been a public heroine or martyr in the way that the 'rebel woman' gained recognition. Like Jenny, who wrote letters pleading for freedom, she could have been protecting her sexuality from a rapist overseer; she could have been Quashebah, the woman at Codrington estate in Barbados, who ran away in August,

September and December 1775, August 1776, January 1777 and September 1784, before she was finally confined to the stocks. [28] She could also have been Nanny of the Maroons, whose preference for death over slavery impressed followers and foes alike.

The difficulty, however, with the concept of the 'natural rebel' is that perceptions of human behaviour as 'natural' are problematic in so far as they negate the potency of cultural and environmental forces. Women's behaviour is particularly vulnerable to the ideological charge that actions emanate from some place other than the cerebral — an assertion identified with a well-known representation of women by a hostile patriarchy. The term is used in this context, however, not with any specific reference to biological determination, but in relation to a cultural proclivity by enslaved women to consciously reject and resist enforced access by slave owners to their sexuality.

Neglected aspects of African women's resistance: relations with black men and white women

It follows, then, that an important but grossly neglected aspect of women's resistance had to do with their unequal and often unjust relation to enslaved men within their own communities. This point should be understood and given weight within women's anti-slavery experiences. The white male bought, sold and degraded the black woman. In the process he placed her in a social position to be further degraded and exploited by the black male, who frequently targeted her as an object with which to act out a strategy for the restoration of his crippled and dysfunctional masculinity. The 'natural rebel', on occasions, had to resist the tyranny of enslaved black men with the same degree of tenacity and may have experienced the struggle against slavery as an expedition against tyrannical male power. Such struggles were not confined to issues of sexuality, but concerned access to material resources, career opportunities and domestic arrangements.

Males who were assigned privileged occupations within the production system, such as drivers, overseers and artisans, were likely to use their authority against enslaved women. Stedman gave an example from eighteenth-century Surinam in which a young enslaved girl was severely punished by a black overseer for resisting his sexual advances. Thomas Thistlewood's eighteenth-century Jamaican Diary contains references to spousal abuse by enslaved men and other acts of male aggression against women. 'Courrir les filles' (girl-hunting) was a pastime among enslaved males in Saint Dominique, which sometimes resulted in the rape and kidnapping of women on neighbouring and distant estates. In addition, the kidnapping of women by maroon men in order to find wives and labourers figured prominently in the social history of all colonies that harboured maroon communities. [29]

Little is known of the life-experiences of enslaved women who were integrated into the polygynous households of elite enslaved males. In maroon communities especially, women, particularly those kidnapped from the estates, performed the arduous agricultural duties. The internal relations of maroon communities have not been adequately studied for the slavery period, and it remains difficult to speak of the perceptions of these women about their social conditions. It is entirely possible, however, that some maroon women experienced at the hands of black men a continuation of the kinds of occupational and resource discrimination that typified enslavement on the plantations.

It should be emphasised, argues Moitt, 'that the structure of plantation society was sexist and that sexism was reflected in the organisation of labour'. The Africa woman's plight, he suggests, 'resulted largely from patriarchy and the sexist orientation of Caribbean slave plantation society which put them into structural slots that had no bearing on their abilities. This meant', he concludes, 'that women were not permitted to move into roles traditionally ascribed to [black] males.' Slave owners consistently discriminated against enslaved women in

the allocation of access to skilled professions, and they were never allowed to hold the principal offices of head driver and overseer. [30] Victor Schoelcher, the French anti-slavery campaigner of the early nineteenth century, explained the entrapment of most women slaves in the field gangs of Martinique as follows:

> *It is often the case in the field gangs that there are more women than men. This is how it can be explained. A plantation is, in itself, a small village. As it is usually established a considerable distance from major centres, it must provide of all its needs ... masons and blacksmiths as well as animal watchmen. All the apprentices who are destined to replace them are now in the field gangs the slave driver included), and this diminishes the male population available for field work.* [31]

In the sugar factories women were not trained as boilers and distillers — prestigious, high technology tasks. Enslaved women, then, experienced male labour elitism as representing another level of male authority which was not necessarily supportive of their own sense of freedom and betterment.

Another neglected area has been the anti-slavery culture of black women as it relates specifically to slave-owning white females. White women, we now know, may have owned and managed as many as 25 per cent of the Caribbean enslaved, with a greater concentration of ownership in towns. We know from the slave registration records for the British colonies that during the last decades of slavery white women owned more female than male enslaved Africans. The extensive female ownership of enslaved persons in towns was reflected in the unusually high proportion of females in the urban enslaved population. These records show that in Bridgetown in 1817 the sex ratio (males per 100 females) of the enslaved belonging to males was more than double that for female slave owners. The sex ratio of the enslaved belonging to

males was 111, and for the enslaved belonging to females 49. For Berbice, in the Guianas, the enslaved owned by males had a sex ratio of 132, while those owned by females had a ratio of only 81. [32]

From these data the image that emerges of the white female slave owner is that she was generally urban, in possession of less than ten enslaved persons, the majority of whom were female. It is reasonable, then, to argue that any conceptualisation of female slavery, particularly as it relates to black women's anti-slavery activities, should proceed with a discussion of white women as principal slave owners. The perception of black women resisting their enslavement by white women poses a number of interesting questions for the discourse on the relations between race, sex, class and gender. It also highlights another set of special and unique aspects to women's resistance that has eluded scholars of anti-slavery.

Brathwaite suggests that we should begin by recognising how and why the attitudes and activities of propertied white women appeared to be mainly in the, service of the establishment. How else to begin an explanation of their inability or unwillingness to offer a public political critique of slavery? Mair tells us that the white woman was socialised as the 'second sex', with the whole thrust of her upbringing designed to make her 'pretty polly, pretty parrot'. Unlike her British counterpart, she launched no missiles on behalf of anti-slavery as she was conditioned 'to rock the cradle, not the boat'. [33]Enslaved women, therefore, had no reason to see in their white mistress a source of amelioration or freedom. The available manumission records for colonies show that white males were by far the most frequent liberators of Africans. Male visitors to the colonies were consistent in reporting what Frederick Bayley did in 1833: 'female owners are more cruel than male; their revenge is more durable and their methods of punishment more refined, particularly towards slaves of their own sex.'[34] Turnbull's account of the ideas of a Cuban enslaved mistress

supports this stereotyped opinion. With respect to her attitudes to domestic slaves he states:

> *The mistress of many a great family in Havana will not scruple to tell you that such is the proneness of her people [domestics] to vice and idleness, she finds it necessary to send one or more of them once a month to the whipping post, not so much on account of any positive delinquency, as because without these periodical advertisements the whole family would become unmanageable, and the master and mistress would lose their authority.* [35]

The daily resistance of Elizabeth Fenwick's Africans to her authority may be indicative of the contest of race, sex, class and gender. Her letters from Barbados to Mary Hays in Britain between 1814 and 1822 detail this resistance. As a recently arrived British immigrant, she recognised the need to own slaves in order to achieve accumulation objectives, but her principal problem with respect to comfortable adjustment to colonial society sprang from the anti-slavery attitude of her domestics. They refused to work, lied, stole, ignored instructions and showed contempt for her authority. While she did not report being in fear for her life, her letters indicate the extent to which her enslaved females sought to destroy whatever ambition she may have had about being an effective slave manager. They caused her 'endless trouble and vexation', refused to respond to any 'gentle and kindly impulses', and undermined any notion she cherished about Barbados as a 'paradise'. Her solution was to sell the females and purchase males. [36]

Gender and anti-slavery

Jenny's letter, then, when placed within the dominant historiographic tradition, symbolised a rather complex pattern of representations. Some of these were constructed before and during her own lifetime and persist

beyond the parameters of the slavery epoch. Concepts of gender are buried but skin-deep within her words, which were arranged in patterns of meaning indicative of a particular representation of the feminine experience, though concerning matters that had nothing whatsoever to do with sex or gender. It may seem altogether female, for example, within the dominant system of gender representation, for an enslaved person to enquire about the health and well-being of a master and mistress — and their 'good' children — just to complete the enquiry with a request for freedom from their benevolence. There was no cutlass, musket or bloodshed; only determination in the sound of gentle words that managed, in this case, to throw Mr. Lane, her owner, into a rage which he knew, ultimately, was of no value in the stern face of a well-reasoned claim to freedom.

Jenny's history is offered as a window through which to view the diverse experiences of different types of enslaved black women, and it is presented in order to illustrate how gender operated through the specific institutional forms of West Indian slave society. The objective of this approach is to demonstrate that while women's and gender history were divergent methodologically, they share and embrace a common end — how to document and offer historical explanation for the dynamic interactivity between lived experiences and ideological representations at specified moments.

How gender worked to construct black and white masculinities and the experiences of males in slavery are necessary prerequisites for an understanding of the experiences of enslaved women. One does not have to travel very far into the literature to encounter signposts which indicate, with respect to antislavery, activity, that different vehicles were often used by enslaved men and women. If female slaves expressed a more complex and contradictory set of responses to their enslavement than men, it had to do with the more diverse and dynamic

patterns of female gender representations and the multi-layered challenges of black women in their private and public lives.

If many women acquiesce in the face of slave- owner power, producing the smiling, subservient but unstable, Quasheba personality type, and her male counterparts have been historiographically indicted for the capitulation that produced the stereo- typed Quashee, only a merging of gender and women's history can give us the insights needed to write the social history of slavery.

Methodological connectivity can be discerned, it seems, when the enslaved are allowed to speak for themselves. Chains apart, the voices of Africans were often made vague by the very writers who committed their thoughts to print. It is necessary, however, even in such difficult circumstances, to 'feel' the texture, and hear the tone, of their indirect or engineered voices. Much can be made, for example, of the autobiographical record of Mary Prince as an instrument of literary representation. She 'cared' for the children of a mistress and valued her own 'womanness' in the process. The force of herself-understanding as a woman ran contrary to that of her mistress, who had her 'horsewhipped' for marrying without permission.

Mary Prince did much to be a loyal and 'good' African while at the same time confronting her mistress with the idea that 'to be free is very sweet'. White people, she wrote, all had their 'liberty', and 'that's just what we want'. 'Freedom' and 'liberty' are words that appear like monuments on the pages of her text. [37] It is necessary, then, to excavate the foundations of these 'structures' for the full context of social attitudes and behaviour. In the case of enslaved women it is critical to begin the dig at the centre and work outwards. The centre of which I speak deals with the commodification of their 'inner world' and natural resistance to it, a dynamic that is only now coming in clear focus for historians of anti-slavery ideology and action.

Notes

1. Jenny Lane to Thomas Lane, 9 August, 1804, Newton Papers M.523/579, Senate House Library, London University. Jenny obtained her freedom, and in 1813 petitioned Thomas Lane for the emancipation of her sons, Robert, 26, a joiner, and Henry, 24, a tailor; Jenny Lane to Thomas Lane, 4 March, 1813, M.523/690.

2. Marrietta Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean* (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 1989), p. 153.

3. Ibid., p. 156.

4. Moira Ferguson (ed.) *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself, 1831* (London, Pandora Press, 1987), p. 84.

5. See for a discussion of these themes, Hilary Beckles, '*Sex and gender in the historiography of Caribbean slavery*', in Verene Shepherd et al. (eds), *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (Kingston, Ian Randle Publishers, 1995), pp. 125-40. Also in this volume, Bernard Moitt, *'Women, work and resistance in the French Caribbean during slavery, 1700-1848'*, pp. 155-76.

6. Isaac Dookhan, *A History of the British Virgin Islands, 1672-1970* (Epping, Caribbean Universities Press, 1975), p. 83, also cited in Morrissey, Slave Women, pp. 155-6.

7. For a detailed discussion of ameliorative reforms to the British West Indian slave system at the end of the eighteenth century, see J. R. Ward, British West Indian Slavery, 1750-1834: The

nature of slaves' responses to plantation life in 18th century Barbados', Slavery and Abolition, 8 (1987), pp. 272 -93.

15. Sampson Wood to Thomas Lane, 1796, Newton Papers, M.523/288.

16. Ibid.

17. Brathwaite, 'Caribbean women', pp. 16-17.

18. Lucille Mathurin-Mair, *The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery* (Kingston, Department of History, UWI, 1975); 'The arrival of black woman', Jamaica Journal, 9:2-3 (1975), pp. 1-10. See also Brathwaite, 'Caribbean women'.

19. Hilary Beckles, *Black Rebellion in Barbados: The Struggle Against Slavery, 162 7-1838* (Bridgetown, Carib Research and Publications, 1987), pp. 86-106; 'The slave drivers' war: Bussa and the 1816 Barbados Slave Uprising', Boletin de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe, 39 (1986), pp. 85-111.

20. Robert Dirks, *The Black Saturnalia: Conflict and its Ritual Expression on British West Indian Slave Plantations* (Gainesville, University Presses of Florida, 1987), pp. 160 - 1. Beckles, Black Rebellion, p. 111.

21. Bush, 'Towards emancipation', p. 239; 'White "ladies", coloured "favourites" and black "wenches": some considerations on sex, race and class factors in social relations in white creole society in the British Caribbean', Slavery and Abolition, 2 (1981), pp. 253—4; "The family tree is not cut": women and cultural resistance in slave family life in the British Caribbean', in G. Y. Okihoro led.), *In Resistance :Studies in African, Caribbean and Afro-American History* (Amherst,

University of Massachusetts Press, 1986); Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990).

22. Monica Schuler, 'Day to day resistance to slavery in the Caribbean in the 18th century', *Association for the Study of Africa and the West Indies, Bulletin*, 6 (1973).

23. Morrissey, *Slave Women*, p. 98.

24. Parliamentary Paper, Garnette to Beckwith, December, 1811, Vol. 7(1814-15), p.3; Joseph Husbands, *An Answer to the Charge of Immorality Against Inhabitants of Barbados* (New York, n.p., 1831), p. 19.

25. Minutes of the Assembly of Barbados, 15 March, 1774, Barbados Department of Archives, Black Rock, Barbados.

26. Brathwaite, 'Caribbean women'.

27. Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (London, Zed Books, 1989); see Graham Hodges, 'Reconstructing black women's history in the Caribbean: Review Essay', Journal of American Ethnic History, Fall 1992, pp. 101—7.

28. See Beckles, *Black Rebellion*, p. 76.

29. J. G. Stedman, Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, 1806 (Amherst, University of Mass. Press, 1971), pp. 177-8; the Jamaica Diaries of Thomas Thistlewood, 1751-1768, Lincolnshire Records Office, England; Leslie Manigat, 'The relationship between marronage and slave revolts and revolution in St. Dominique

- Haiti', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 292 (1977), pp. 420-38.

30. Moitt, 'Women, work and resistance', p. 162.

31. Victor Schoelcher, *Des colonies francaises: abolition immediate de l'esclavage (Societed'Histoire de la Guadeloupe, Basse-Terre, 1976),* pp. 23-4.

32. Hilary Beckles, 'White women and slavery in the Caribbean', *History Workshop Journal,* 36 (1993), pp. 66-82.

33. Brathwaite, 'Caribbean women', p. 17.

34. See Beckles, '*White women and slavery*', p. 76.

35. Ibid., pp. 76-7.

36. See A. F. Fenwick (ed.), *The Fate of the Fenwicks: Letters to Mary Hays, 1798-1828* (London, Methuen, 1927), pp. 163-75.

37. Ferguson, The History of Mary Prince, p. 84.

LECTURE THREE

REPARATIONS FOR AFRICAN ENSLAVEMENT:

THE CARIBBEAN CASE AGAINST BRITAIN

"I am happy that we are having this debate; we must not forget that the British economy was built on the backs of those who suffered in slavery…".

Dawn Butler, MP. [Debate on the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade; House of Commons. 20/3/2007]

The Caribbean Reparations Movement (CRM) is a moral and political response to the crimes against humanity committed during the European imperial project – specifically the genocide against the native population, and the trading and enslavement of enchained bodies of Africans.

In the Caribbean context the British were the quintessential enslaver. During the bicentennial debate in the House of Commons in 2007 one Member of Parliament told the Speaker the poignant truth: "The slave trade was…at the centre, not at the periphery of the British economy. It was something in which all parts of British society were implicated…and it was the basis of the prosperity of the Church and, and one should add, of the Royal Family".[1]

Both the indigenous community of the Caribbean, and the enslaved Africans, understood the genocidal and enslaving actions of the British- and other Europeans to be immoral and criminal. They resented and resisted their captivity and enslavement, demanded the restoration of

their lands and human liberty, and insisted on social justice. It is against this historical background and within this political context that the CRM has been conceived and its praxis promoted.

The British colonizing enterprise in the Caribbean was predicated on the racial profiling and specific targeting of Caribbean natives and enslaved Africans. The former were earmarked for genocide, the latter for chattel enslavement. Both were subject to specific race-based, social, legal and military actions. As socially targeted and militarily defeated ethnic groups, they were stripped of their right to freedom and of recognition of their humanity, and given an enslaved role to play in exchange for their lives. An overpowering mercantile and military force descended upon them for four hundred years.

British and European modernity first implemented a political governance of fascism within the Caribbean colonial context. Natives and Africans were deemed disposable social beings. Blood flowed freely within the new slavery construct. Enslaved labour and black racial suppression were the two sides of the imperial coin. Slavery was big business. It was the basis of Britain's success in reaping the biggest bonanza from the European imperial agenda.

Enslaving Africans became a kind of popular way of life for the British from the 17th century. It was the dominant way of life in the Caribbean. It was practiced on plantations, taken to towns, and visited upon villages. The institutionalization of this criminal culture was based on the social conception that Africans were beasts rather than humans. This value system led inexorably to an emancipation program in 1833 in which slave owners received a £20M compensation package from the State for the lost of their property rights in blacks. The enslaved blacks received no compensation for the lost of their property rights in their own labour. They were legally freed and sent back to work without reparations and respect.

The racist underpinning of emancipation legislation served to promote the political and ethical principles that reside at the core of the CRM. Malcolm Moss, a Member of the British Parliament, reminded the House of Commons on the 20 March, 2007, that Thomas Clarkson had asked in 1785 the critical question: "Is it lawful to make slaves of others against their will?" He knew the answer, as did his colleague William Wilberforce, who, according to Martin Linton, MP for Battersea, had recorded "his disgust at the fact that £20 million ... were paid in compensation to slave-owners". [2]

At the centre of the CRM resides this extraordinary human injustice. From the moment of emancipation a momentum began in the Caribbean for the correction of this outrage that followed upon the crime of enslavement. Slave owners were compensated, and the enslaved further exploited; this engendered a campaign in the heart of every black person for the atonement of reparations.

Caribbean hearts and minds were never far apart on this injustice imposed by British economic power and political might. They knew the parliamentary emancipation processed to be framed as a furtherance of racist economic action cloaked in the politics of social compassion. As a result, wherever the injustice of a racist emancipation was perpetrated within European colonial empires, the spirit and politics of reparation have galvanized generations to this day. Only the form and functions of the movement have changed since 1838. The feelings have intensified.

At the centre of the crime of enslavement and the injustice of non-repaired emancipation was the terrorizing of Haiti. While Thomas Buxton had rejected in 1825 the idea of reparations for British slave-owners, and suggested compensation of the enslaved, the French government had set out to bring the fledgling Haitian state to its knees. While the Haitians were celebrating their freedom from slavery on the

21st anniversary of nationhood, France and Britain were demanding reparations for former slave owners in exchange for the official recognition of the state. Haiti was brought to its knees by crippling trade embargoes and threats of military invasion until it agreed to pay reparations. In 1825 the Haitian government agreed to pay the French 90 million gold francs in reparations. It was a massive amount of money the country could ill afford; it descended into a national debt crisis that continues today to ruin prospects for sustainable national development.

The self-liberated community of Haiti paid for the international recognition of its government. They signed the treaty to pay while French gun boats patrolled their harbours. In both the British and Haitian cases, the enslaved Africans were defeated on the reparations issue by the slave owners and their supportive governments. The slave owners who held considerable political power in the British Parliament, and the French military complex, still smarting over their defeat in the revolutionary war for freedom, were only too keen to ensure that blacks did not consider their freedom a victory. They received financial reparations while the blacks were told to get back to work.

The United Nations Conference on Race and Xenophobia held in Durban, South Africa, 2001, provided a challenging context within which the CRM gained momentum and conceptual focus. While the majority of Caribbean citizens were supportive of the need for reparations, however defined and imagined, active support for the movement had remained with the radical left. The European rejection of the reparation discourse in Durban enabled the CRM to move centre stage in Caribbean politics, creating a bridge between left and right in the party political spectrum. The gathering of support within mainstream politics was possible because the manner of British hostility to reparations advocates deeply disturbed the majority public opinion and engendered a new level of determination.

Durban was the moment that moved the reparations discourse from rhetoric to political movement. The cards were now on the table; players adopted positions, and ground tactics posed. But Durban was more. It was the great decider; the place where the Caribbean and African-America diaspora found itself sandwiched between colluding Europe and Africa governments. This geo-politics of reparations strengthened diasporic unity and exposed the treachery of some African States.

The intensity of British and American state opposition to reparations infiltrated official thinking in parts of the Caribbean. The context was created within which the first formal request to a European government for reparations was treated and trampled upon. It was the case placed before the French government by President Bertrand Aristide of Haiti. France, unlike Britain, had made a formal apology for its criminal engagement in slave trading and slavery. The request came as a logical legal response to an apology that seemingly opened the door for reparatory dialogue.

The Haitian government called for a repayment of the 90mill franc forcefully extracted from its economy as reparations. At Durban there was a universal Caribbean call for the repayment of these extorted sums, estimated at US$21,685,135,571.48 in present value. It was a central theme in caucus deliberations.

The Caribbean group insisted that the repayment of this sum was consistent with the French claim to global diplomatic leadership. The casting of Haiti as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere is understood as a consequence of this financial strangulation. The global publication of these hitherto buried historical facts had an immediate impact on world opinion. There was enormous global support for Haiti's cause.

President Aristide acted immediately after Durban in order to facilitate the dialogue. As the 2004 bicentenary of independence approached, he made the formal request to the French government for the repatriation of US$21 billion. "We are asking", he said, "for the money that belongs to us". This was the first time that a post-colonial Caribbean government had made an official request for reparations to a European government. Strictly speaking it was not a request for reparations for slavery as a crime against humanity, but a demand for public funds extracted by criminal means by one state from another. [3]

The Haitian declaration of independence on 1 January, 1804 had formally ended French rule in the country. It also represented a blistering blow to all the remaining slave-based colonies in the Caribbean and wider Americas. The United States, fearful of black liberation spreading from the Caribbean moved to join France in isolating the Haitian state politically. The US Congress banned trade relations with the regime. Spain and Britain were keen to show solidarity with France, and joined the anti-Haitian alliance. In 1806 the US had imposed trade embargos which were renewed in 1807 and 1809. Trade prohibition was bolstered with frequent aggressive threats of military invasion and re-enslavement of Haitians if they did not pay compensation to France.

The amount imposed upon Haiti by France, and backed by Britain, was "twice the value of the entire country's net worth". In calling for the repayment of this sum, Aristide said that France should "hand over the dollars so the country can celebrate its 200th Independence". In a special commemoration of the Battle of Vertieres, where enslaved blacks defeated French imperial troops to complete the revolutionary war for freedom in 1803, Aristide told citizens that "Today, tomorrow, we will win the battle of restitution". In the months building up to the bicentennial celebrations Aristide repeated his call throughout the country, and finally made the formal request to the

French government for the repayment of the US$21 billion "ransom".

French political reactions were swift and predictable. First, there was a blunt refusal to contemplate seriously an official dialogue. This was followed by a diplomatic initiative to remove the item from the agenda, which was followed by veiled threats and subversion. Regis Debray, respected socialist French intellectual, was dispatched to Port-au-Prince to discuss the matter with the government. The prime minister established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a "Committee on Reflection of Haiti" that would deliberate on the Debray reports. Meanwhile, French foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin was outlining to the media a proposal he intended to submit to the United Nations on 26 February, 2004, calling for the removal of Aristide from office and the sending of an international security force to Haiti. The minister unleashed his hostility to Aristide within the context of growing civil unrest in the country.

It was expected that the response from France, Britain, and the United States, would be hostile. Once again the "West", the former slave owning nations, politically surrounded the Haitian state and demanded a policy reversal. This had been the nature of the historic relations between the United States and Europe on anti-slavery politics in Haiti from the outset. Two hundred years later these nations remained locked into the same frozen postures on the question of the legacies of enslavement.

News of the destabilization of Aristide's regime dominated the media waves. Reports of anti-government NGO's being funded by France and the United States in order to create civil unrest were rampant. An article was circulated in the regional media in which Cikiah Thomas, interim chairman of Global Afrikan Congress, stated: "We do have information from our intelligence that once the demand was put on the

table to the government of France, they in collaboration with the United States financed a non-governmental organisation which articulated the legitimate grievances of students and sections when they stated that the president "bears heavy responsibility for the current situation". "A new page must be opened in Haiti's history", stated French foreign minister de Villèpin. [5]

His comments had already been echoed by the French President, Jacques Chirac. When asked by the press to comment on Aristide's remarks, Chirac said that France had already done much to support Haiti with millions of francs in aid. He went on to warn the Haitian government to be very reflective "before bringing up claims of this nature". He further threatened: "I cannot stress enough to the authorities in Haiti the need to be very vigilant about, how should I say, the nature of their actions and their regime". [6]

Late in the evening on 28 February, 2004, two days after French Minister de Villepin spoke about the need for a "new page in Haiti's history", a joint French-US military force invaded Haiti and removed Aristide from office. He found himself in the Central African Republic, a dictatorship government backed by France, after a 20-hour flight in American custody ignorant of where he was heading. Regis Debray had done his deed for his government. He reported to France that Aristide's reparations claim had "no legal basis" and that there was no popular support in the government and country for the claim.[7]

Aristide's departure was reported as a "resignation". He said, however, that USA officials and military forces in Haiti had made it clear that he should leave in order to save his life and that of his family. He described the American action as a betrayal of trust to accommodate the French.

The removal of Aristide was the final stage in a long drawn out drama. One scholar noted that efforts were being made since the beginning of 2003 to drive a wedge between his government and the international community. Grants, loans, and aid were indeed suspended by the USA, the EU, Canada and others, he said, to the tune of $1 billion. Planning the fall of Aristide, he said, was on the agenda the moment he turned his attention to the US$21 billion owed his country by France, and if Aristide had stayed and refrained from making a demand for reparations nothing would have happened". [8]

Aristide stated that his "kidnapping" was violent in that he was apprehended and flown to unknown destinations. Disoriented in space, his fate was uncertain, though it was made clear to him that his days in office as president of Haiti were over, and he would never return. The kidnapping of the first Caribbean head of government, Toussaint L'ouverture, by the French government two hundred years earlier, and who later died in a French dungeon, echoed through the Aristide affair. France has never been anything other than violently aggressive to liberation movements in its colonies. Aristide attracted the military and political wrath of Paris, and was removed from office. He was fortunate to have remained alive.

The Haitian reparation experience served as an intimidating action by the "West" to other Caribbean governments. Haiti is a member of CARICOM, the regional political grouping which at the time of Aristide's removal was headed by P.J. Patterson, prime minister of Jamaica. Powerless to act, CARICOM called an emergency meeting of regional heads of government in Montego Bay in order to discuss Aristide's overthrow.

The media reported different accounts of the circumstances of Aristide's arrest. Prime Minister Keith Mitchell of Grenada stated that there was "an unsettling feeling among leaders as to what "really

occurred". He called upon the United States and "some of the bigger countries whose names have been called in this matter" to clear the air and tell the world what really happened in Haiti. The press also reported CARICOM's desire to make a formal request to the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan to "launch a probe into the circumstances of the dramatic loss of power" by Aristide. [9]

Prime Minister Patterson, in his role as chairman of CARICOM, told the press that "he could not properly discuss at this time the strategy of this initiative to involve the UN", but indicated that "regional foreign and legal affairs officials were advising on the matter" which he stressed remained of "grave importance" to the community. Within a short time, this matter was purged from the Caribbean press; and it has subsequently remained peripheral. [10]

Within a few hours of Aristide's kidnapping and exile, over 1,000 US troops landed in Haiti. On March 5, CARICOM officials asked the George Bush government for an explanation of events. The reply could be no clearer: "There was nothing to investigate or discuss". Feeling "deceived by the US", CARICOM countries were receiving a lesson in big power politics in Caribbean history. The message was unequivocal. Any Caribbean government that makes an official request for reparations would be deemed a "hostile" nation, and treated accordingly. Caribbean governments understood the message, and appropriately chastised, recoiled and made only rhetorical statements on the subject henceforth.

The final irony was Aristide's arrival in Jamaica on 14March, 2004, where he would begin the second phase of his exile. Just a slither of sea away from his homeland, Aristide held audience with regional and international visitors in his secured hide-out. It was in Montego Bay that he had first declared his intention to seek repayment from France.

Randall Robinson, founder of TransAfrica and author of "The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks"- a seminal work in the American reparations discourse—reported that he had heard from a "White House source" that Condoleezza Rice, in her role as presidential advisor to George W. Bush, had "threatened the Jamaican government, telling it to expel President Aristide or face the consequences". [11]

Aristide entered the third phase of his exile in South Africa. African governments had been more vocal in responses to his overthrow than his fellow Caribbean heads of state. The African Union, a group of fifty countries formed in 2002, described his removal from office as "unconstitutional". It stated further that his overthrow "set a dangerous precedent for a duly elected person". The Union called for the non-recognition of the French backed rebel forces that had destabilized his regime. The French Deputy Foreign Minister, Guy Moskit, responded that "constitutional legality was respected" since Aristide had signed a letter of resignation before his departure from Haiti.[12]

Myrtha Desulme, chairman of the Haiti-Jamaica Exchange Committee, told the Inter Press Service News Agency (IPS) that the call for reparations had deeply disturbed French politics, and that many hostile official comments were still coming out of Paris. However, Dr J. Michael Dash of New York University, a highly-respected expert on Haitian society, noted that the US-French alliance which toppled the Caribbean president was connected to the forging of a renewed friendship between the two nations that had soured after disagreements over the invasion of Iraq. "The French", he said, "do not like to face up to their slave-owning colonial past". But we live in an age, he said, when reparations of all kinds are being asked for "and this one is a documented sum of money paid to a colonial power to compensate for loss of property, and which plunged Haiti into decades of debt". [13]

The plot unfolded predictably. France and the United States selected a leader in Haiti who was willing to carry out their bidding. On 16 March, 2004, Gérard Latortue, hand-picked and repackaged, was installed as "interim Prime Minister". He was described as titular leader of "a unity government" that had no role or place for any member of Aristide's party, the Fanmi Lavalas.

James Foley, Ambassador to Haiti, stated to the press that Latortue was well chosen, and that he would help the situation in the country to stabilize, and that "significant US and international aid" could be expected. The same day, the Jamaican government announced that it did not recognize the interim government, and would not do so until the CARICOM Summit ruled on the matter on 25 March. [14]

The final twist in the tale of the plot was also predictable. It could be seen on its way from Paris and Washington. The first significant public declaration made by Latortue was to officially withdraw the reparations request made to France by Aristide. He did so aggressively, to orchestrated French fanfare. "This claim was illegal", he said, "ridiculous", in fact, and "was made only for political reasons". Haiti wanted to have good relations with France, he added, and as far as my government is concerned "the matter is closed". He went on to add that what "we need now is increased cooperation with France that could help us build roads, hospitals, schools, and other infrastructure". [15]

Latortue might have forgotten that he had told the *Miami Herald* from his home in Boca Raton, Florida, in December of the previous year that while he did not believe France was legally obligated to repay the debt, "it's the moral and politically responsible thing to do". Times had changed, and so had Latortue.[16]

Meanwhile, the French Defence Minister, Michele Alliot-Marie, on a tour of Haiti, denied that any of these developments were connected to the restitution demand, and insisted that France was motivated solely by a desire to assist the Haitian people.

At the same time, Barbados was leveraging its leadership at Durban to host a follow-up conference in October, 2002. Billed as the reconvening of the Durban dialogue by its organizers, the Pan-African Commission- a government institution- stated that the objective was to re-assemble global reparations groups, particularly from the NGO community. The conference was officially titled "African and African Descendants World Conference against Racism". It was held at the Sherbourne Conference Centre, 1 – 5, October, 2003. [17]

Headed by David Commissiong, the prominent lawyer and Pan Africanist who had been a leading voice in the Durban conference, this conference was rocked to its core on day one. A motion from members of the fifty strong British delegations proposed and received majority support for the removal of all "white people" from the plenary. Suggesting that the conference was billed as a meeting of "Africans and African descendants only", Kwaku Bonsu, a black London activist, stated "We told the (organizers) emphatically that we don't want to be sitting down with no Europeans or Asians…", "and they assured us that is an African and African only event and that is why we came here".

The motion passed by majority vote, "All non-Africans were asked to leave quietly". "White" journalists, translators, and civil rights leaders from Cuba, the United Kingdom and the United States, removed themselves. Tears were shed by some expelled delegates, and all expressed sadness and frustration at the development. A tearful white mother, Martine Pilé, who was born in Luxembourg, and her mixed race daughter, Shamkoe Pilé, born in Barbados to a black father,

remarked that their expulsion meant for them that "apartheid was reborn in Barbados". Her daughter was invited to stay; she was not. "It hurts so much", she said:

> "I am married to a black Barbadian, and have been told on other occasions that I am a no-good white woman because I am married to a black man. I was proud to be a part of young country, and proud to have my children here because I thought I could hope for a better world. Now I find what happened to me today very hard to swallow". [18]

Other persons, such as Dr. Lily Golden, a white Russian civil rights scholar, spoke of the shock of expulsion and the role of her country in assisting the black liberation struggles in Africa when the "West" was opposed to their independence and decolonization. [19]

For many in the reparations movement, the Sherborne summit was a decisive set-back. Doudou Diene, who attended as a UN special rapporteur against racism and xenophobia, railed against the resolution as a "move to derail Durban gains". He told the press:

> "There is a strong, organized and deliberate campaign to weaken the final document of Durban. The campaign is really powerful, not only to wipe out the memory of Durban, but also to stop any kind of follow-up, so that the best thing for us to do in trying to give ammunition to the campaign to weaken Durban is to approve this matter". [20]

Diene seemed unaware that for many persons within the conference the Durban Declaration, as far as it relates to reparations, was a betrayal of the diaspora movement, and a triumph for African leaders who had rallied with the "West" and "European Union" to smash the reparations agenda.

It was against the backdrop of the Durban dismissal of the African diaspora that tempers were raised around the emotions of "distrust". Commission called for calm and understanding. He was not at the conference when the motion was passed, and on his return described the action as "regrettable" though understandable. He used his office, furthermore, to assure the wider community that the re-integration of the delegation would occur. He also distanced the Pan African Commission from the resolution noting that he could "speak for at least one of the Caucasian persons that were there, whom I know was a very strong supporter of the Pan African movement and black issues". [21]

It was not surprising that the lead group behind the motion heralded out of Britain. Blacks there have had a horrid experience with white supremacy racism at all levels of society, and had reacted very emotionally at their country's opposition to the reparations discourse at Durban. Scarred by decades of institutional racism, black Britons have developed a cerebral distrust of official British society. Barbados was the site of this ventilation, and fittingly so, since this is the place where Britain had built its first slave society.

The government of Barbados moved swiftly to express its disapproval of these developments, and to condemn all forms of racial profiling while declaring continued support for the reparation movement and the overall agenda of black empowerment as a philosophy of post-colonial governance. Attorney General, Mia Mottley, who had assembled the Barbados delegation to Durban in her then role of Culture Minister, issued a statement:

> "We are compelled to make it absolutely clear that this government does not support segregation in any form or racism in any guise. We are unequivocally opposed to any resolution

seeking to separate persons on the basis of race or ethnic origins. We have fought too long as a nation against this type of injustice". [22]

In the end, arrangements were made for "white" delegates to continue their scheduled participation.

Prime Minister Blair's response to the Caribbean leadership at Durban was a highly organized, well-dressed public-relations drive designed to show that Britain cared about post-colonial Africa while rejecting the Caribbean's need for an apology for slavery. On 4 May, 2004, he announced an intention to forge a new global consensus to tackle "Africa's woes". The Commission for Africa, he said, would be a powerful agitator for change in a continent plagued by poverty, conflict and HIV/AIDS. Its purpose, furthermore, he said at the Downing Street launch, would be to get an agenda of change that is internationally agreed upon. [23]

Blair launched the Commission on Africa in February, 2004, to honour the British deal struck with those African governments at Durban who had rejected the reparations agenda. He described Africa during the launch as "the scar on the conscience of the world". He pledged as a counter-point to reparations that Britain would make African issues the focal point of the country's presidency of the Group of Eight the following year. [24]

The commission included African politicians and civil society leaders in its membership of 14, and it was mandated to present its report to the G-8 Summit in July, 2005. Once again, Blair's Britain had window dressed the issue. African members of the commission were left to explain why it had been a dismal failure. [25]

Meanwhile, however, another commission had been hard at work. The National Commission on Law and Order was established by the government of Barbados to research and report on matters pertaining to public governance, particularly in reference to the marginalization of working class black communities that saw their alienation in terms of the legacies of slavery and apartheid.

The commission submitted its report in August 2004. It declared outright the need for the government and society to "resolve the issue of reparations" by deepening the dialogue with "the European powers which benefited from the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery". The report stated, furthermore, that at emancipation blacks in Barbados did not enter a new era on "a level playing field, and that the descendants of slave owners inherited a system of privileges, which they have been tenacious in protecting: property, wealth, access to education, to health care, to social standing, to credit, and to opportunity and advancement". [26]

The establishment of post-slavery apartheid, the report noted, preserved white minority economic and social domination into the twentieth century. This legacy of slavery was considered to be the primary source of national social and economic conflict. The commission called for "the government of Barbados to take an active interest in the campaign to put the issue of reparations on the international agenda in the interest of the people". [27]

In the months ahead the Caribbean reparations movement shifted its focus to Suriname where delegates at a conference on racism resolved on 6 October, 2004, to unite efforts across the world to seek reparations from corporations and countries that were involved in and enriched by slavery.

The six day "Global African Conference" adopted a constitution that called for the creation of a committee to oversee various lawsuits demanding reparations for the descendants of enslaved Africans. "Never before have Africans been so united on one issue", said Ray Winbush, a psychologist from Morgan State University in Baltimore, and author of the text "*Should America Pay? Slavery and the Raging Debate on Reparations*" More than 200 delegates were gathered in Paramaribo for the 2nd Global African Conference which was also billed as a follow-up to the 2001 Durban conference.

The Bicentenary

As 2007 approached, the bicentennial year of the abolition of the British transatlantic slave trade, the global reparations movement gained intensity in terms of recognition ceremonies, public education media programmes, and statements from political leaders. Within the NGO community, the reparations movement focused more on legal and political procedures to advance the cause. In some respects, the idealism of a moral crusade for justice had been shattered at Durban, leaving the movement to inhabit a real political environment typified by combative and acrimonious relations.

Caribbean governments were taken unawares by the aggressiveness of the Durban anti-reparations agenda. They used the bicentennial build-up to make public declarations, some sincere, others to placate the growing public support for the reparations movement. Most governments set out national agendas to mark the moment; some linked these formal programs to calls for reparations, others took more serious steps and moved to establish initiatives to strengthen the movement. Collectively, the Caribbean in 2007 was informed by the politics of reparations, though the massive impact of hosting the Cricket

World Cup transcended all other considerations in the public imagination.

The government of Trinidad and Tobago announced a six-month bicentenary calendar of events with a budget of $3.6 million. It entailed a national public education campaign about slavery and slave trading, but was not accompanied by a commitment to reparations from the British state. The Barbados government moved a step further. Dame Billie Miller, Minister of Foreign Affairs, gave addresses in Barbados and at the UN in which she linked the atrocities of slavery to ongoing Caribbean problems, and asked for a formal reparations discourse that would merge the two in a constructive fashion. [28]

In delivering the 2007 Wilberforce Lecture in Hull, Prime Minister Owen Arthur of Barbados, also called for a sincere reparations dialogue. He stated:

> "I am aware that the issue of reparations, at least for the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and their descendants, has been a controversial one and it need not be so. It is not a matter of retribution, but one of morality. We need to bring equity to the emancipation process and closure to the criminal activity that was racial chattel slavery". [29]

The reparations cause being fought for, he said, was not a mission of mendicancy. He described it as a dialogue of understanding, reconciliation, healing and social justice. There is a need for several reparations projects, he said, to assist in clearing away the debris of slavery and colonialism. One practical step, he said, in the area of education, could be the setting up of a Wilberforce Education Fund to achieve the following:

(1) finance, by means of scholarships, and concessionary conditions, the education of hundreds of students from CARICOM at British universities on an annual basis

(2) finance dozens of visiting British lectureships at the campuses of the University of the West Indies (UWI) in areas to be agreed on to finance student and teacher exchanges between African universities and UWI

(3) fund the establishment for decades of a joint British-Caribbean Centre for Multi-racial Studies and Policy Development at UWI. [30]

Such a fund, Arthur said:

> "would become the centre piece of a new program for British-Caribbean cooperation that would go beyond economic and financial issues, that goes beyond security issues, that speaks to a social development that places a supreme value on cultural diversity and harmonious relations between people of different ethnic origins."

Many of these initiatives had been presented to the Durban conference by the Barbados delegation both in plenary and in bilateral discussion with the British. They would therefore not have surprised the Hull gathering which was represented heavily by government officials.

On 27 March, 2007, the Caribbean region observed a moment of silence at 12.00 p.m. which was followed by a series of activities. Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, speaking at a rally in Dominica, reiterated that slavery was a "criminal

activity" and should not go without redress. Other speakers called for CARICOM's support for reparations. Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerritt, the host, supported the reparations call, and reminded the rally that "we are in a world where the developed countries are enriching themselves with the toil of people in developing countries". [31]

Kingston Harbour, Jamaica, was the site of a major ceremony that symbolically reenacted the trauma of the "arrival" and "sale" of enslaved Africans. The programme of activities, organized by Professor Verene Shepherd, historian at the University of the West Indies, was initially sponsored in 2005 by the government of PJ Patterson. Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller, who had succeeded Patterson, gave the feature address and joined with the Rastafarian representatives who had advocated for reparations for many years.

The strongest statement made by a Caribbean Head of State came from President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana. He called on European nations to make atonement for the horrors of the slave trade. He denounced as lip service the statements of regret coming out of Blair's British government. Addressing a commemorative ceremony in his country he stated that "now some members of the international community have recognised their active role in this despicable system, they need to go one step further and support reparations". [32]

Speaking to an audience that included diplomatic envoys from Britain, the European Union, and the United States, Jagdeo stressed that "the international community was quick to recognize the Jewish holocaust and rightly so. They must also now recognize that there was an African holocaust". The President added that failure to act would reveal that statements of regret coming out of European governments were "meaningless and platitudinous". He was clear that the ceremony was not a celebration of Britain's anti-slave trade legislation, but a memorial to the enslaved who had fought to end slavery, and their allies in British politics. [33]

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Dr Frank Anthony, intensified his President's position. Speaking in Parliament, he stated: "We are saying that slavery was a crime against humanity and we want that to be acknowledged". Parliament passed a motion to this effect, and reiterated that reparatory action is required to redeem the crime. "It is very difficult to get retributive justice", Minister Anthony said, "and therefore, we are asking for reparation justice". The government, he confirmed "has been making this call for the [European] governments which have benefited from slavery to pay reparation. They should make an apology". [34]

While Caribbean governments acted out their divisions, the Deputy Prime Minister of Britain, John Prescott, was making a tour of the region. Prescott's agenda was to affirm Blair's strategy of "no apology". Read as blasphemy in some quarters, the Blair tirade generated considerable turmoil within circles supportive of reparations. Prescott arrived in Jamaica where the government had already declared its intention to establish a Reparation Commission to research the issues and make recommendations for consideration by parliament.

An open forum was held at the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies on the 22May, 2007, which Minister Prescott addressed. There had already been rumblings in the country about statements made by Prescott on behalf of his government, and the environment was already charged. As the meeting Mike Henry, a Jamaican Labour Party member of Parliament, erupted and stormed out stating that Prescott's refusal to entertain an apology from the British government for the crime of slavery "was disrespectful of the feelings of the descendants of slaves in the Caribbean". [35]

Henry considered Prescott's approach to Jamaican people "patronizing,", and stated that his unwillingness to make a "courtesy call on the House of Representatives where the issue was being debated"

was offensive. The meeting at the university was described by the media as "stormy". "How is it", Henry asked Prescott, "that you are prepared to pay the slave owners but not willing to compensate the slaves?" [36]

Later in the summer these sentiments were echoed by Prime Minister Gonsalves who made the case for reparations while addressing the "African Union Bicentennial Global Dialogue" in Barbados. He described the brutality of the British transatlantic slave trade and the enslavement of Africans as "the most monumental crime ever for a free people to have endured". Yet, he said, "no person, no company, no nation which operated and profited handsomely from the slave trade and slavery has ever paid any reparation or any proper recompense". [37]

"The case for reparations is unanswerably strong", Gonsalves told the gathering, which he then urged to realize how it is being "sharply resisted by European nations". Indeed, he said, "Europe's resistance is bolstered by the arrogance, folly, and ignorance of fifth columnists in Africa and its diaspora, including the Caribbean, who insist on trotting out the absurd position that the trade in African slaves was facilitated by some African collaborators, and thus African countries should pay reparations."

The UN special sitting on the bicentenary in March also presented Caribbean heads of governments with a global opportunity to declare official support for the reparations movement. Prime Minister Denzil Douglas of St. Kitts and Nevis, addressing the special session of the General Assembly on 26 March, insisted that the European countries that enriched themselves from the crimes of slave trading and slavery must apologize formally and prepare to pay reparations. "It is undisputed", he said, "that such nations were developed on the blood, sweat and tears of our enslaved forefathers, and it is only right, and the decent thing to do, to make amends and extend their apologies into the realm of atonement for the legal and economic support and for

the activities that were the norm of the slave trade and slavery". Reparations, he said, "is the only circumstance that will allow for true forgiveness and forward movement in the world". [38]

These ideas were reinforced by Dame Billie Miller, Barbados's Senior Minister of Foreign Trade, when she addressed the General Debate of the sixty-second session of the UN General Assembly on 3 October, 2007. Describing the slave trade as "one of the earliest crimes against humanity", Dame Billie noted that European slave owners had made effective use of reparations as a legal instrument in the nineteenth century emancipation process, and that it was consistent for descendants of the enslaved to do likewise in this time in the search for "equity in the emancipation process". [39]

Jamaica established a Reparations Commission on 14 May, 2009. Chaired by Prof. Barry Chevannes, noted Jamaican sociologist, it held its first meeting on 15 October, that year. Its remit was to: receive submissions, hear testimonies, evaluate research and studies, engage in dialogue with relevant interest groups in the society – its greatest proponents being the Rastafarian community that has consistently promoted and brought the issue to the forefront of their arguments. Given 18 months to submit its deliberations and recommendations, the commission is one of a kind in the Caribbean. Established by the Jamaica Labour Party, its agenda picked up from the work done earlier by the Peoples' National Party, whose reparations thrust was driven by Professor Verene Shepherd, a respected Jamaican historian.

While Prime Minister Bruce Golding of Jamaica has not affirmed his support for the reparations movement, powerful elements within his government and party took strong and consistent leadership roles within the movement. In general, however, the core of the movement in Jamaica, as elsewhere within the Caribbean, is to be

found within civil society organizations and the consciousness of the social majority. The relationship between society and state on the issue remains cautious, though it is evident that it is only a matter of time before an active official agenda takes shape.

The masses of people are in support of a constructive strategy to move forward with the reparations issues, but to date opposition forces have been effective in confusing and fragmenting the critical arguments endemic to the discourse. The Rastafarians of the region have been consistent in their leadership with respect to raising consciousness about the historical crimes of slavery and colonialism. Over time, they have increased their effectiveness in promoting their views across a wider spectrum of society, especially among the youth. They represent a significant pillar in the movement, and have used the creative and performing arts as a primary vehicle of communication and advocacy with considerable effect.

Caribbean states and citizens, then, are gradually working their way to a general consensus on how best to proceed with the legal and political steps which must be taken in order to place an official reparations claim before the British and European governments. The focus has been on building community support on which government can take the necessary action – thereby converting well-reasoned rhetoric into a digestible programme of action.

Notes:

1. Dr. Vincent Cable, M.P. speaking in Parliament, 20 March, 2007. Cited in House of Commons Official Report, *Parliamentary Debates, Hansard,* Tuesday, 20 March, 2007. vol. 458, no. 64. All references cited in this chapter to the House of Commons debate are from this volume.

2. *Debates*, op. cit., pp. 738, 770.

3. President Aristide, Press briefing, Montego Bay, 24th Caricom Summit, Jamaica, 2004. See also "Crisis linked to Reparations", *Sunday Sun*, Barbados, 7 March, 2004.

4. *See Miami Herald*, 18 December, 2003; 26 February, 2004, *New York Times*, 26 February, 2004.

5. *London Review of Books*, 15 April, 2004.

6. "Aristide pushes for restitution from France" *Miami Herald*, 18 December, 2003.

7. Letter by Peter Hallward, *London Review of Books*, vol. 2 no. 9, 2004.

8. *London Review of Books*, vol. 26, no. 11, 3 June, 2004.

9. "Mitchell: Haiti needs international intervention" *Sunday Sun*, Barbados, 7/March, 2004; "Caricom calls for UN probe", ibid.

10. "Caricom calls for UN Probe", ibid.

11. "Haiti's 33rd Coup?", International Politics in Haiti in 2004", www.sourcewatch.org.

12. "Aristide's 'removal' from Haiti unconstitutional: African Union", Common Dreams. org. 9 March, 2004.

13. Dione Miller, "Aristide's call for Reparations from France unlikely to die", I.P.S. www.1psnews.net, 12 March, 2004.

14. "Haiti's 33rd Coup?", op. cit.

15. "Haiti Coup", Reuters, 18 April, 2004.

16. *The Miami Herald*, 18 December, 2003.

17. "British Delegates: We were misled", *Daily Nation, Barbados*,3 October, 2002.

18. ibid.

19. ibid.

20. "Move to derail Durban gains", *Daily Nation, Barbados, 4 October, 2002.*

21. "Commissiong: Issue should not have arisen", *Daily Nation, Barbados, 3 October,* 2002. "Commissiong not involved in passing resolution", *Advocate News, Barbados, 3 October,* 2002.

22. "Mottley knocks 'banning' resolution", *Daily Nation*, Barbados, 4 October, 2002; also, *Advocate News*, Barbados, 2002.

23. See Commission for Africa, Wikipedia; http://www.commissionforafrica.org.english/about/objectives.html.

24. http://www.oxfam.org.uk/press/releases/blair_cafl10305.htm .

25. "Commission for Africa holds 1st Meeting", *Advocate News, Barbados, 5 May, 2004.*

26 "Focus on Reparations", Barbados *Advocate News, 18 August, 2004.*

27 ibid.

28 *Daily Nation, Barbados, 26 March*, 2007.

29 "Arthur: Give back to Slave Children", *Daily Nation, Barbados, 27* March, 2007.

30 ibid.

31 "Caribbean marks 200th anniversary of end of Britain's transatlantic slave trade", *Advocate News,* Barbados, 27 March, 2007.

32 "Guyana calls for Reparations", BBC Caribbean.com, 27 March, 2007.

33 ibid.

34 "Guyana's government calls for reparatory justice for African slavery", Advocate News, Barbados 8 February, 2007.

35 "MP walks out on Blair's No. 2", *Sun on Saturday*, Barbados, 26 May, 2007.

36 ibid.

37 "Gonsalves puts case for reparations", *Daily Nation, Barbados 30 August, 2007.*

38 "Apology for Slavery not enough", *Daily Nation, Barbados, 27*March, 2007.

39 Statement by Dame Billie Miller, UN. General Assembly, 3 October, 2007.

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY KUMASI-GHANA