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The Caribbean in the Twentieth Century

Editor: Bridget Brereton

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THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE
TWENTIETH-CENTURY CARIBBEAN

Bonham C. Richardson and Joseph L. Scarpaci

Introduction

It is 1950 in Barbados. Visitors arrive at Seawell Airfield (now being extended by a Colonial Development and Welfare Grant) on the propeller airplanes of British West Indian Airways. Most tourists stay at one of the several hotels south-east of Bridgetown in Hastings, among them the Marine Hotel which is up to date and with more than 120 bedrooms.¹ The accommodations there defy comparison with the abject poverty of most black Barbadians. Their tiny wooden houses in the rural tenancies and urban slums often have dirt floors and thoroughly unsanitary conditions; it is therefore little wonder that the 1946 population census of the British Caribbean has shown Barbados's infant mortality rate at 176 per 1,000 live births, by far the highest among the British Caribbean colonies. The journey to and from Bridgetown for rural Blacks is still often accomplished on foot or donkey cart but in recent years by motorbus. British planners attribute Barbados's poverty to its chronic overpopulation (192,800 in the 1946 census) and suggest – as they have for decades – that the 'surplus' people might better be sent to British Honduras or British Guiana. Despite the general impoverishment, all Barbadians revel in the results of the recent test cricket match in London where, for the first time on British soil, the West Indies, powered by the fabled Barbadian batsmen Walcott, Weekes and Worrell, have defeated England.² The few Barbadians who own radio sets have heard the news over Radio Distribution, the island's sole radio station. Others have savoured the headlines of the *Barbados Advocate*, the only newspaper. An extra-mural tutor has just come to Barbados representing the University College of the West Indies in Jamaica, which received its Royal Charter one year ago in 1949.

¹ W. Adolphe Roberts, 1948, p.148.

² S. M. Wilson, 1995.

Fast forward (a term unknown in 1950) to Barbados at the end of the twentieth century. Visitors now arrive, often via non-stop jet aircraft (including Concorde) from London, Toronto or New York. The ultra-modern Granley Adams International Airport (adjacent to old Seawall Field) receives the tourists who next proceed to one of dozens of upscale hotels around the island, in the south but also along the 'Platinum Coast' north of Bridgetown. For over thirty years the island nation of roughly 265,000 people has been politically independent, and it has just hosted its second visit by a United States president since 1982. More than 40,000 private automobiles on the island and over 8,000 trucks and buses are accommodated by new highway construction that has seen a controlled-access high-speed road appear behind Bridgetown to relieve traffic congestion. Barbadians converse with each other, often on one of the country's 111,000 telephones, about friends and relatives not only in Bridgetown but just as often in Brooklyn or Brixton. Barbados's life expectancy and infant mortality are the same as in the United States, and its literacy rate (98 per cent) is higher. Two artificial waterfalls grace the newest indoor shopping mall on Broad Street, projecting an 'oceanic' atmosphere intended to please the many tourists who collectively spend over US\$500 million annually there. Barbadians enjoy seeing (on the country's 70,000 television sets) the documentary/travelogue features about their home island on CNN news from Atlanta, programmes that portray Barbados as fun, sexy, hip and eminently appealing. The island's allure is, however, muted by a growing narcotics traffic which is inevitably accompanied by accelerating local crime rates, prostitution, and a widespread use of firearms – local problems that stem from forces beyond the island, and which were unheard of a few years ago.

The Barbadian transformations in the last half-century are astounding, even in the context of the jaded academic conversations that now deal routinely with 'globalization', and even within the Caribbean itself. In so far as these remarkable Barbadian changes are Caribbean-wide, two points stand out; they are, furthermore, points that have always helped in explaining the region's history and cultures. First, insularity and smallness, the same geographical characteristics that rendered the region so appealing and accessible to earliest European colonists and planters, continue to be crucial. Small islands are easier to transform, whether one is initiating literacy drives, yellow-fever eradication campaigns, road pavement schemes, or drug dealing, than are large places. Smallness also means a connectivity of ideas, trends and material changes so that social scientists' categories of 'culture', 'politics', 'economics', and so forth are even more restrictive in small places than elsewhere.

A second point is that continuous change is the essence of the Caribbean. The region's geographical and economic proximity to Europe and

North America makes individual places within the Caribbean subject to an endless succession of externally instigated (conscious and otherwise) schemes, experiments, plans and projects; so the region's peoples – nearly all of whose ancestors have been exported from elsewhere at one time or another, often as ingredients in these unending transformations – have always had to cope with novelty, difference and reinvention. These key points help to explain why the global change, reconfiguration and hyperactivity that some suggest is without precedent, seem startlingly familiar to Caribbean peoples.³ Put another way, in the traditional categorizing of various world regions as to the degree of 'contact' they have had with modern ways of doing things, 'the Caribbean is nothing but contact'.⁴

This chapter assesses the broad condition of the quality of life in the Caribbean in the latter half of the twentieth century, a fifty-year period in which the region has progressed from a situation mainly consisting of colonies to one where there is mainly political autonomy. The first section assays aspects of landscape and environment, elements that define the physical attributes of the Caribbean but which also, as always, pose challenges. The second deals with tourism, drugs and crime, the most important externally influenced determinants of change and potential harm. Subsequent sections address politics and the media, carnival, music and sport, and human health. Acknowledging the somewhat arbitrary grouping of the elements within these subtopics reinforces the Caribbean's interconnectedness (thus, tourism, very obviously, has much to do with politics and the media within the region.) The final section of the chapter highlights the legendary creativity and adaptability of the peoples of the Caribbean in the face of the region's current constellation of external influences.

Living in the environment

Fiction and reality both shape outsiders' views of the Caribbean. Gabriel García Márquez conjures up a whimsical view of the region's tropical colour and myriad peoples. His 'Macondo', located on Colombia's Caribbean coast, captures the essence of the ruinous history of the region. The power of micro-cosmic Macondo is that its extremes of good and bad, evil and beauty, and real and unreal embody nearly all the possibilities of what the Caribbean might be, both to outsiders and residents alike. To be sure, few geographical

³ Sidney W. Mintz, 1996.

⁴ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, 1992, p. 22.

areas in the world remain as diverse and geographically complex as that between Florida, Central America and northern South America. Its archipelago consists of hundreds of islands, two dozen political entities, and direct cultural influences not just from the Western Hemisphere, but from Europe, Africa and Asia.

About 32 million people now inhabit the islands and rimlands that comprise the Caribbean region.⁵ Differences in populations and land areas continue to produce great disparities; tiny Saba contains just over 1,000 residents on 11 square kilometres while Cuba has more than 11 million on the largest island in the West Indies. Eastern Caribbean islands are mostly micro-states with populations of fewer than 300,000. Trinidad remains far and away the largest island in this eastern region with a population of 1.4 million (including that of its sister island, Tobago). Distances among differing islands vary from short spans of water which can be traversed in rowing boats to vast expanses of ocean. The 3,000-mile distance from French Guiana (Guyane) in the east to Belize in the west is roughly the same as that separating New York from Los Angeles. Long-distance super-jets have bridged these distances since the 1960s, yet conventional modes of travel from most Caribbean locales, as in the past, usually lead to places outside the region rather than to one another.

The ecological incongruity between the Caribbean's local environments and their historically introduced human populations has led to, among many other things, recurring local food deficits as well as environmental stresses and complexities. Too little rain (such as during the 1997-8 El Niño aridity) decreases local agricultural production, and too much creates damaging hillside soil erosion. At the end of the twentieth century, Caribbean peoples continued to maintain uneasy, ambivalent and complex attitudes toward their physical surroundings. This point is not intended to support the facile pronouncements by planners and others that these peoples, owing to a mystically collective memory of slavery, maintain an illogical reluctance to till the soil. An eminently practical explanation for such an attitude is that the people of the region understand – better than most outsiders – that, for example, external marketing constraints or so-called free-trade arrangements often work against full-time commitments to local agricultural activities.

Nor are Caribbean peoples' attitudes about their environments based strictly upon utilitarian motives. By now a body of academic observations reinforces the point that Caribbean peoples often have sentimental feelings about land, feelings based upon a combination of resistance, family identity and economic value.⁶ The idealized character of Caribbean environments as

former homelands is further reinforced by the memories, embellished and otherwise, held by the millions who have emigrated to Europe and North America in recent decades.⁷ A commonly held sentiment among members of the Cuban populations in Miami and the metropolitan New York area, for example, is the idealization of the émigrés' former homeland itself,⁸ an attitude also evident among Caribbean peoples who have left to live elsewhere. Fictional accounts of the Caribbean homeland underscore this idealization, by both natives⁹ and foreigners¹⁰ alike.

Left unprotected, the beauty and allure of Caribbean environments (as appealing to locals as to vacationing Europeans and North Americans) have ways of sowing their own seeds of ecological destruction. Tiny St Martin (Saint-Martin) in the north-eastern Caribbean provides an example. Owing to the near-unbelievable growth in its tourist industry in the latter half of the century, St Martin has undergone a dramatic transformation, mainly on the Dutch half of the island. In 1980, 300,000 tourists arrived in St Martin, a figure which more than tripled by 1990. Rapid (and therefore shoddy) construction of high-rise condominiums to accommodate the visitors attracted thousands of labour migrants, many from both sides of Hispaniola. A lack of planning or control then spawned a depressing landscape of fast-food franchise outlets. St Martin's landscape is now littered with handbills, refuse and the rusting shells of automobiles, and traffic congestion and power-cuts are routine. The resulting social malaise, accentuated by growing crime rates, chain-link fences, and 24-hour security guards, is paralleled by an infrastructural breakdown and an airport with 'toilets that do not flush and badly discoloured water flowing through the taps'.¹¹

Beach damage and associated deterioration almost always follow the shoreline construction inspired by tourism and population increases. The thermal effluent from the Barbados Light and Power Company plant north of Bridgetown, for example, has led to 'a virtually dead reef directly offshore ... near the edge of the thermal plume'.¹² Further activities of the power plant are now being monitored and controlled. Yet rules and regulations intended to protect Caribbean shoreline environments do not themselves guarantee success. Puerto Rican law requires anyone intending to move beach sand to obtain a permit from *Oficinas Públicas* beforehand. But once such a permit is

5 Bonham C. Richardson, 1992.

6 Jean Besson and Janet H. Momsen, 1987; D. Lowenthal, 1961.

7 For example, John Western, 1992.

8 Lisandro Pérez, 1992.

9 G. García Márquez, 1994; Paule Marshall, 1972.

10 J. Sayles, 1991.

11 Klaus de Albuquerque and J. L. McElroy, 1995, p.83.

12 L. A. Nurse *et al.*, 1995, p.33.

granted 'extraction limits are often exceeded or ignored ... and illegal removal of sand for construction aggregate continues'.¹³

The region's traditional soil-erosion problems continue. Jamaican deforestation for new and ongoing cultivation plots in the island's hills and mountains limit agricultural yields, lead to slope deterioration, and foul small river basins.¹⁴ But nothing matches the remarkable soil erosion which continues as Haiti's geographical hallmark and is closely interrelated with the nation's endemic poverty. Haitian agricultural plots are still subdivided into ever-smaller land parcels to accommodate a combination of cash and subsistence cropping. The forest is essentially gone, and trees not cleared for agriculture end up as charcoal in sacks that yield as little as US 60 cents.¹⁵ In south-western Haiti 20 per cent of the 'soil' is down to bedrock, and every year hillside farmers abandon an estimated 15,000 more acres because of soil erosion.¹⁶

In southern Haiti the grim erosion that is part of daily life was magnified when hurricane Gilbert struck on 12 September 1988. Eight years earlier, Allen laid waste to much of St Lucia, ruining the entire standing banana crop by snapping off 90 per cent of the banana trees.¹⁷ The hurricanes that rake the region annually are now tracked with sophisticated satellite imagery and the results instantly relayed so that radio and television warnings can be transmitted throughout communities and islands under threat. Although communication innovations have saved lives and help immeasurably in disaster-preparedness programmes, in themselves they provide no protection from a hurricane's wrath; nor do they grant immunity against other storms following close behind in a steady east-west trajectory. In September 1995, Luis – an unusually large and unconsolidated hurricane – hit Barbuda and northern Antigua, destroying 70 per cent of the dwellings and causing severe beach erosion on the former island. Luis proceeded westward, wreaking havoc in St Barthélemy, St Martin, St Kitts and Nevis, leaving altogether 16 dead and causing an estimated US\$2.5 billion in damage. Ten days later, hurricane Marilyn crossed the same area, wrecking ships and dwellings in the US Virgin Islands. In St Thomas three-fourths of the island's homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed and an estimated 10,000 left homeless.

Montserrat suffered high winds and rains from both 1995 hurricanes when Montserratians had hardly caught their collective breath from Hugo's passage in September 1989. That storm is perhaps better known for having

scored direct hits on St Croix, north-eastern Puerto Rico, and the southern United States. In comparative terms, however, Hugo was most damaging to Montserrat; essentially all of the island's 12,000 people were left homeless by Hugo.¹⁸ But the geo-physical hazard for which tiny Montserrat has become world famous is its volcanic activity. The island's crater vented ash and steam on 18 July 1995, a precursor to a series of subsequent eruptions.

Seismologists noted rumblings on Montserrat as early as 1989, and subterranean 'swarms' were recorded in 1992 and 1994. On 12 May 1996, a Mother's Day outburst saw lava flows reaching the sea for the first time. In mid-September a series of dome collapses was accompanied by a volcanic dust plume rising 40,000 feet and thousands of tons of volcanic ash dropping onto the southern half of the island. Two-thirds of Montserrat's human populace was displaced, some twenty lives were lost, and the capital town of Plymouth was abandoned. As the Montserratians moved away (about 3,000 to Antigua and 1,000 to England as well as to North America and other nearby islands) volcanologists and a few reporters descended on the island. Their scientific curiosity was compounded by the fascination that accompanies imminent danger because Montserrat's internal lava contains a great deal of gas, creating a subterranean build-up or compression that could lead to catastrophe.¹⁹

Whereas outsiders are appropriately fascinated by the igneous events on Montserrat, West Indians who live along the arc of the Lesser Antilles – which marks the intersection of two of the earth's crustal plates – are familiar with the jolts and tremors that are parts of daily life on the seismically active islands. Trinidadians in early 1997 were startled by an offshore earthquake that measured over 6 on the Richter scale. A better-known volcanic eruption in St Vincent in 1979 caused 15,000 people to be evacuated from the danger area, some to nearby islands.²⁰ All residents of the Lesser Antilles are, furthermore, at least vaguely familiar with the volcanic cataclysm of Martinique's Mt Pelée in 1902, and most realize that recurrences are inevitable (although the particular places and times are unknown) given the geological underpinning of the region.

Caribbean peoples' relationships with their immediate environments have weakened since mid-century as improvements in intra-island transportation have facilitated personal travel to capital cities and towns, thereby intensifying urban activities. Varying types of motorized vehicles now convey millions of people daily throughout the region to urban jobs, markets, schools, medical appointments, meetings and sources of entertainment.

13 D. M. Bush *et al.*, 1995, p.52.

14 D. Barker and D. F. M. McGregor, 1988.

15 M. Kurlansky, 1992, pp.167–8.

16 C. J. Paskett and C. E. Philoecete, 1990.

17 M. C. Williams, 1988.

18 J. B. Campbell and Bonham C. Richardson, 1992, p.408.

19 W. Graham, 1997.

20 H. Sigurdsson, 1982.

Animal-powered modes of travel in the islands are far less common – though by no means absent – than they were at mid-century, but walking for an hour or more to reach one's destination is still routine in the poorer and smaller places. Despite modernization elsewhere, the poorest Haitians walk many miles after going 'under the wire' into the Dominican Republic to work as cane cutters there.²¹ Horse-drawn carriages and bicycle-taxis (the former are practically obsolete and the latter never common) now circulate in post-USSR Havana at a time when oil is no longer subsidized. Bicycles in the Cuban capital, estimated at 70,000 in 1990, now exceed 1 million. This Antillean city now has a slightly Asian feel because of this 'new' mode of transport.²² Variations in types and character of motorized conveyances reflect economic and cultural differences from place to place in the region. Where standards of living are high or fuel prices cheap, as in San Juan, Pointe-à-Pitre, or Port of Spain, rush-hour traffic jams rival those in Europe and North America. Throughout the region, crowded minibuses provide alternatives to more conventional, but often less reliable, means of public bus transportation and are testimonies to the adaptability of small-scale entrepreneurs as in Kingston, Jamaica.²³ The ubiquity of taxis in Barbados and Antigua, where tourism dominates local economies, is not found in banana-oriented St Vincent, although highways in the latter island have been improved through agricultural development grants. In British Guiana in the early 1960s, government subsidies for fuel for local rice farmers led to unusually high rates of tractor traffic along the coastal highway. Late in the 1990s in Cuba, the presence of 40-year-old American automobiles is testimony to the long-standing rupture in United States-Cuba ties, and Havana's high bicycle density reflects the impact of the United States economic embargo.

Whereas intra-island travel for individuals has become mainly motorized in the latter half of the twentieth century, movements beyond one's home island are usually by airplane. And although inter-island movements and travels beyond the Caribbean are normally categorized as 'migration' and discussed at length elsewhere in this volume, it is important to note that air travel in some places is an integral part of local cultures. Alberto Sandoval Sánchez asserts, for example, that the '... essentialist Puerto Rican identity ... (is) ... guaranteed in a round-trip ticket'²⁴ And air travel of course brings Caribbean peoples into daily contact with tourists, whose ephemeral contacts with the region invariably include ship or air travel.

Tourism, drugs and crime

St Martin is only one among many Caribbean locales utterly transformed by jet-age tourism in the past generation. That industry stands far and away as the region's 'engine of growth', carrying with it images of acceleration, movement and prosperity, along with (often illusory) promises to lift Caribbean peoples out of their poverty.²⁵ From the tourist's point of view, travel to the Caribbean has changed greatly since mid-twentieth century, from extended tours to overnight getaways. During the 1950s, except for the locational proximity that brought thousands of Americans to Cuba, tourism elsewhere in the region was usually characterized by travellers from Britain, France and the Netherlands heading for holidays in family-owned hotels in their particular Caribbean colonies. By the end of the century, however, Americans had come to dominate Caribbean tourism.²⁶ These sojourners have left their mark everywhere, from the reefs and cays of Belize, where eco-tourism is all the rage, to the time-share condominiums of Anuba, the Grand Caymans and St Martin that accommodate tourists who can afford to pay the US\$300 per night (meals extra) for lodging.

Americanization also has meant homogenization, as shown by the Caribbean's mass-market cruise industry. If 'globalization' has a region-wide symbol in the Caribbean, it is the behemoth mega-ship that travels from Miami to one small Caribbean port after another. Each ship carries over 3,000 passengers, heading out each week with the same number. After these 'floating cities' (which pay wharfage charges of up to US\$25,000 for a call to a single place) arrive in cash-hungry islands and disgorge their visitors, each passenger spends on average \$124 per call, according to a 1995 survey by the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association.²⁷ Caribbean cruise ships carried an estimated 300,000 passengers in 1970, a figure that climbed to just under 2.5 million in 1996. This eight-fold increase helps explain why islands and ports are under severe environmental and social pressures. Witness, for instance, the 600-foot climb up Dunn's River Falls near Ocho Rios, Jamaica. This premier destination has been transformed from a quiet nature walk to a busy thoroughfare traversed by some 300,000 cruise ship passengers a year. Souvenir shops, paved walkways, and street vendors now cater to this traffic, detracting from whatever natural amenities the falls might have once had.

The thousands of middle-class American families seeking foreign experiences also shape shipboard and port entertainment, as if passengers never left home. Carnival Cruise Line's *Destiny* calls at Cozumel, Grand Cayman and

21 Samuel Martinez, 1995, p.8.

22 R. Segre *et al.*, 1997.

23 Patricia Anderson, 1987.

24 Alberto S. Sandoval Sánchez, 1997, p.192.

25 Polly Paullo, 1996.

26 C. Y. Thomas, 1988, p.151.

27 Laura Bly, 1996a.

Jamaica. Billed as the world's largest cruise ship, the 100,000-ton vessel carries 4,400 passengers and crew. This mega-ship naturally demands familiar mega-experiences to accompany it. Locally owned shops cannot possibly accommodate the surge in passenger traffic. In the words of a Norwegian Cruise Line executive, 'You can't take 3,000 people (to an island) and put them into a little bistro ... You need something like a Planet Hollywood.'²⁸ The replication of chainstore operations featuring North American brand names and advertising logos in one port after another follows these trends. Local handicrafts – if they even are available – are no match for Chicago Bulls T-shirts that become 'foreign' purchases because they were bought in St Thomas or Cozumel. The technology that facilitates tourist traffic to remote corners of the Caribbean, in turn, imposes uniformity on the cultural, built and even physical environments.

It is no secret that the fickle and seasonal tourist trade in the Caribbean galls many local observers. It despoils and cheapens insular landscapes, disrupts local wage scales, emphasizes subservience, and perhaps represents the worst in North American hedonism and vapidify, values that are in turn emulated or encouraged by (especially) young people in the Caribbean. But there are few viable economic alternatives to tourism that earn hard currency, even for some of the larger places in the region. Even Cuba, incredibly, now courts tourism. Although Fidel Castro has fought hard to prevent his island from becoming another Caribbean nation of waiters and room attendants, what was once discouraged is now a growth industry. In 1996 about one million tourists descended on Cuba. At the end of the century, Cuba's gradually opened economy means more tourists and an attendant increase in, among other negative consequences, prostitution. Parts of Havana and Varadero (90 minutes east of Havana) as well as some of the nearby beaches cater mainly to tourists, in some cases even denying access to Cubans. The Cuban leadership begrudgingly accepts this as a trade-off with guarded market liberalization.²⁹

The Caribbean's turn-of-the-century version of the naughty weekend escape to Havana of forty years ago often involves young North Americans (and Europeans) being offered, and sometimes sampling, illegal narcotics during their stays in the Caribbean. Police in Jamaica and elsewhere are suspected of turning a blind eye to vacationing (and free-spending) university students from North America who purchase and use marijuana and other drugs during their stays in the islands. But drug use in Jamaica and elsewhere in the Caribbean can be ultimately harmful to the local tourist trade as well as to human health; in the first three months of 1994, 13 tourist visitors to Jamaica died there of cocaine overdoses.³⁰ Their deaths, tragic as they were

to friends, families and the Jamaican tourist industry, are only a small piece of the most pressing socio-economic issue facing the Caribbean region at the end of the twentieth century.

Illegal narcotics trafficking involves similarly illegal transfers of enormous sums of money within the territories of tiny, politically autonomous states, an imbalance posing direct threats to many of the latter. And the frank opinions of nearly all political leaders of the region – that its drug problem is ultimately one of United States market demand for illegal narcotics – do nothing to discourage American officials from placing collective blame on Caribbean politicians and law-enforcement officials. Certainly, bribes and payoffs from the agents of South American drug lords are difficult to resist, and Caribbean officials have been so accused for at least 15 years, the case of the Bahamas being probably the best known.³¹ But the transformations generated by the drug traffic affect everyone else in the region as well. As recently as the mid-1970s, the smuggling of free-port whisky throughout the Lesser Antilles involved informal and somewhat romantic sailing voyages on rickety vessels accomplished by local sailors.³² Late in the 1990s the illicit traffic in narcotics in high-speed motorboats manned by crews armed with machine guns had all but ended the smuggling that was so much a part of life in the smallest islands of the region. Drugs and increasing crime rates throughout the region, moreover, are intimately linked. Puerto Rico Governor Pedro Rossello estimated in 1997 that eight of ten murders there were related to drugs and the drug trade.³³

The (illegal) cultivation of marijuana in parts of the Caribbean represents responses to market opportunity as well as to a combination of external constraints against conventional agriculture. Despite government campaigns against the growing of marijuana in Jamaica, the major island zones where the crop is grown are so well-known as to be portrayed in published maps!³⁴ And the 'free trade' sanctions against a protected British market on behalf of Windward banana producers have led to a shift toward narcotics. Late in 1997 it was openly estimated that St Vincent, which has been forced by these sanctions into virtually abandoning bananas, 'can now count marijuana as its principal export crop.'³⁵

Yet the Caribbean is far more important as a trans-shipment zone than as a source of illegal drugs. These shipments' trajectories and volumes,

31 P. Eddy *et al.*, 1988.

32 H. Beck, 1976.

33 Enemy proves elusive in Caribbean drug war. Tightly organized drug rings and the myriad governments in the islands hamper US efforts against smugglers'. Reuters, *Orlando Sentinel*, 2 February 1997.

34 For example, Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith, 1997, p.35.

35 Expelled from Eden', *Economist*, 30 December 1997, n.37; see also I. Wilkie, 1997.

28 *Ibid.*

29 R. Segre *et al.*, 1997.

30 Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith, 1997, p.51.

furthermore, vary. When United States authorities impose tight security along its border with Mexico, shipments increase through the Caribbean. In any given month perhaps 40 per cent 'of the cocaine and heroin sold in America comes through the Caribbean'.³⁶ The region also has convenient air connections for drug exports to Europe. In attempting to curb this traffic, Washington pushes for 'hot pursuit' or 'Shiprider' Agreements that call for United States Coast Guard vessels to enter Caribbean territorial waters in order to intercept contraband drugs bound for American territory. Trinidad & Tobago allows United States aircraft to fly over its territory and intercept aircraft.³⁷ In Nassau, United States Customs officials have established a pre-clearance facility for all United States-bound planes. Although some nations have agreed to this policy, others are uncertain. Mostly because of concerns about sovereignty, France (in the shape of Martinique and Guadeloupe), Haiti, Jamaica and Barbados have resisted such agreements. The 1989 execution of General Ochoa in Cuba raised the spectre of the Castro government's complicity in using the island as a transfer zone for northern-bound shipments of Colombian narcotics.

Islands whose physical characteristics provide myriad trans-shipment points to the North American mainland host a network of international banks that have proliferated in the Caribbean in the past half-century. In many cases these financial institutions represent global financial restructuring rather than local business outlets.³⁸ The notoriety of the Caribbean as a zone of 'off-shore banking', furthermore, is closely interrelated with money laundering for the region's narcotics traffic. The 1989 overthrow of Manuel Noriega, as an example, is said to have shifted many millions in Colombian drug money from Panama to Aruba, underscoring the isthmus's century-long history of facilitating more than ships through its territory.³⁹ The latter island (which has fewer than 70,000 residents) had US\$1.4 billion pass through its financial institutions between 1991 and 1995. United States officials, in attempting to expose the sources of these funds, encountered a bewildering web of banking jurisdiction and family businesses cloaked by Dutch banking secrecy.⁴⁰ Even the Russians were rumoured to have questionable funds among the 'sixty off-shore banks...said to be operating in Antigua-Barbuda at the end of 1996'.⁴¹

The inundation of the Caribbean by tourists, money and international brand names always has influenced local tastes and behaviour. Late in the 1990s

a universal lament in the region was of young persons' preferences for clothing of foreign manufacture and American fast food, trends inspiring parental scolding and a backlash of cultural events celebrating 'traditional' foods and dress as is held in Nevis each August.⁴² Modes and types of personal appearances and attire – from dreadlocks to bank uniforms – send many signals about social status, sexual availability and political stances. One's clothing also often betrays nationality; British Virgin Islanders claim that the 'look' of one's apparel indicates whether or not someone is foreign or a (dowdy, behind-the-times) local.⁴³

Caribbean landscapes also reflect – not always for the better – changes in shopping behaviour and increased consumerism. The franchise signs of the tourist trade are only the most obvious indicators. Refuse from supermarket packaging litters alleyways of Caribbean cities and, increasingly, rusted hulls of old automobiles and discarded farm machinery are scattered through the countryside. The ubiquity of store-bought foods throughout the region is obvious from the omnipresent plastic shopping bags strewn across fields which are particularly unsightly after sugar-cane harvests.

It would be a mistake to dismiss an increase in Caribbean consumerism as simply one more instance of cultural homogeneity dictated by metropolitan forces. Arlene Dávila points out that North American beer and cigarette advertisements in Puerto Rico tap into both conservative and changing attitudes toward cultural trends in the island.⁴⁴ Somewhat similarly, British anthropologist Daniel Miller explains that the marketing and consumption of Coca-Cola in Trinidad simply cannot be understood without an appreciation of local identities and rivalries which help to make a coke 'an intensely local nationalist drink'.⁴⁵

The far-flung, scattered reality of consumer locations throughout the region means that shopping-mall-oriented marketing techniques are rarely applicable in the Caribbean. The traditional higglers, or market women, of Haiti, Jamaica, and other islands have responded in remarkable, yet – to those who have witnessed their adaptability – unsurprising, ways to recent market forces. Whereas in earlier days they may have sold a variety of vegetables and other local food items from stationary retailing locations, some have extended their marketing expertise in extraordinary, transnational efforts. Some higglers now include New York and Miami within their commercial circuits while continuing to extend themselves into village-level retailing niches within the Caribbean itself.⁴⁶

36 'Expelled from Eden', *op. cit.*, p.37.

37 'Pact opens foreign waters to US drug enforcement', *New York Times*, 20 July 1996.

38 C. Y. Thomas, 1988, p.169.

39 Bonham C. Richardson, 1985.

40 L. Komisar, 1997.

41 Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith, 1997, p.99.

42 Karen Fog Olwig, 1993a, pp.188-9.

43 B. Maurer, 1997b, p.129.

44 Arlene Dávila, 1997.

45 Daniel Miller, 1998a, p.172.

46 M. Kuriansky 1992, pp.137-42.

Drugs and a growing commercialism, combined with a paucity of local conventional economic opportunities, help to explain a depressing climb in crime statistics⁴⁷ throughout the Caribbean in the last two decades of the twentieth century. As these statistics have increased, so have night watchmen, guard dogs, burglar alarms, iron grills, and chain-link fences. There is overwhelming evidence that narcotics are much of the reason. Some Caribbean leaders, while acknowledging the primacy of the illicit drug traffic, blame outside forces. Charges that the developed northern Atlantic countries corrupt local mores are not new. Puerto Rico, for instance, has long been plagued by the cultural quandary imposed by frequent travel to and from the United States mainland. But 'Nuyorican' now carries with it a much more negative connotation than it once did, since it often identifies those responsible for a disproportionate number of crimes on the island.

Statistics on criminals deported to the Caribbean may eventually support these analyses. In 1995, just 1,225 criminals were deported from the United States to the Caribbean, while in 1996 the figure quadrupled to 5,000. Most deportees were serving out drug-related sentences. From Guyana to the Bahamas, local security officials consider the deportees (also from Canada and Europe) a major source of the increase in sophisticated crime in the region. Caribbean officials recognize the right of these nations to deport criminals, yet they are concerned when they receive little or no warning of the returns or the deportees' backgrounds. One scholar at Florida International University, a native Guyanese, has remarked: 'These guys don't go back and plant tomatoes or oranges. They go back and reinvest in what they know best.'⁴⁸ These 'reinvestments' in time and equipment have led to alarming increases in the possession of submachine guns, armed robberies, bank heists of unusual sophistication, and even drug-gang slayings. As a merchant from Santo Domingo recently told one of us: 'finding "gainful employment" in the United States carries a high price that no one wants to talk about.'

Politics and the media

The remarkable social and economic changes in the Caribbean region as a whole since mid-century have been paralleled by regionally unprecedented political change. In 1950, only Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti were

independent Caribbean states. Now there are 12 more politically independent countries (Suriname and most of the former British colonies.) And those places still politically affiliated with metropolitan rulers – a few remaining British dependencies, the Netherlands Antilles, Aruba, the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and the three French *départements* of Guyane, Martinique and Guadeloupe plus its outliers – all exercise considerable internal political autonomy.

Even though political sovereignty in the region now is widespread, Caribbean locales remain tightly linked to the outside. Puerto Rico, of course, has long been a stepping stone to the United States. Dominicans have been known to cross the 100-mile stretch of the Mona Passage to gain access to points north. Since 1994, would-be illegal immigrants from the Dominican Republic have replaced Haitians and Cubans as the chief concern of the United States Coast Guard. The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service believes that about 20,000 Dominicans a year reach Puerto Rico illegally, all too many crammed into small boats.⁴⁹

Geo-politically speaking, the Caribbean in the latter decades of the twentieth century has been dominated by the rise and longevity of revolutionary Cuba and the growing regional domination of the United States. These interrelated polarities and developments, in turn, spill over into trends and changes that indirectly help to explain much about daily life in the region. Fidel Castro has ruled Cuba since 1959, holding power during the terms of nine of the 42 United States presidents. His presence has helped to inspire direct United States military intervention in the region, not only at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, but also in the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989) and Haiti (1995). A genuine fear of the 'threat of Cuban encroachment by some of the English-speaking states of the region probably pushed them closer to the United States.⁵⁰ Similarly, the brief war between Argentina and Britain over the Falkland Islands in 1982 reminded the mini-states of the Caribbean of their potential vulnerability to the historically inspired designs of their larger neighbours, causing a reawakened wariness toward overtures from places like Venezuela and Guatemala (toward Guyana and Belize). The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the well-publicized preoccupation of Cuba with its internal economic problems have diminished the perceived regional Cuban threat in the last decade of the century.

The unrivalled presence of the United States as the Caribbean's sole geo-political power also has followed naturally from the relative withdrawal,

47 For example, Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith, 1997, pp.120–1.

48 'Deportees spur Caribbean crime' (an Associated Press report), 3 May 1997, *Trenton Times-Herald*.

49 'US push curbs Dominican flow to Puerto Rico', Reuters, *Florida Sun-Sentinel*, 31 January 1997.

50 Anthony P. Mainwaring 1989 nn.279–82.

formal and otherwise, of the European countries as important political players in the region, despite its enduring economic, cultural and family ties with Europe. According to the late Gordon K. Lewis, the defining moment signalling the shift toward the United States for the anglophone Caribbean was the Grenada invasion in October 1983, in which United States troops were accompanied by soldiers of several former British colonies: 'For the previous West Indian generation the final accolade of recognition was an invitation to a Buckingham Palace garden party; for the post-Grenada generation it will be an invitation to a social event at the White House.'⁵¹ European countries have by no means withdrawn from the Caribbean altogether; the Dutch, French and British, and the European Union in general maintain development aid programmes for the region, and all collaborate in some ways with United States authorities to try to help curb the narcotics traffic.

The regional trend toward political independence, along with an economic shift away from a reliance on plantation staple crops, has created internal political changes, eliminating the basis for the adversarial stances maintained by the region's traditional political parties. The labour union parties of the British Caribbean that brought the islands to political independence, starting with the short-lived West Indies Federation (1958-62) and into the 1980s, no longer have a well-defined planter class or cadre of European colonial officials as targets. Caribbean political success is now more a matter of demonstrating skill in negotiating favourable arrangements with multinational corporations or helping in other ways to create local economic opportunity. The passage of time, furthermore, inevitably marks the passing of earlier political leaders along with the zeal and fire that they personified. On 6 March 1997, the deaths of both Michael Manley of Jamaica and Cheddi Jagan of Guyana demarcated a dramatic finish to a turbulent era in West Indian politics. Both were fierce and articulate leaders of their countries' working peoples, taking stances and voicing opinions that extended well beyond the Caribbean.⁵²

American political domination of the Caribbean has not, however, reduced the region's impoverishment, complexity or capacity to change. About one-quarter of French Caribbean adults remain unemployed, although they are not poor by regional standards. Guyane experienced riots, looting and arson in 1996 over educational policies. Some residents of French St Martin dislike Guadeloupe's administrative rule over them (and the large island-small island rivalries within multi-island states continue elsewhere). Although Puerto Rico, with its status as a Free Associated State (*Estado Libre Asociado*), has under-

gone profound economic improvement and social change since the 1940s, Puerto Ricans voted again in 1998 as to whether they wished to remain a commonwealth, opt for statehood, or seek political independence (although the latter option never garners more than about 5 per cent of the vote). Their two-day general strike in July 1998, provoked by the privatization of a public utility, rekindled independence sentiment throughout the island.

The coupling of United States political-economic hegemony with the onslaught of American-dominated television perhaps presents the severest challenge yet to the survival of local culture. During the 1980s most of the region went from limited television exposure – local programming combined with (often-dated) American offerings – to a full-colour, 24-hour, multi-channel cacophony late in the 1990s. Caribbean church leaders lament that lifestyles portrayed on television screens bear little resemblance to those in the Caribbean, raising false expectations, glorifying hedonism, and influencing everything from outlandish dress to poor school performances. Jamaica's Rex Nettleford, in castigating the omnipresence of American television, objects strongly to the hijacking of the region's media, the invasion of the Caribbean people's intellectual space and the cultural bombardment of the entire region by every means possible.⁵³ Even the region's ultimate social critics, the Trinidadian calypsonians, have weighed in to remark on the influence of American TV; the singer Commentator points out that Trinidad & Tobago has been formally independent 'since '62', but, speaking on behalf of the American 'cultural robber', Commentator continues that 'it is I who control you'.⁵⁴

American TV's impact is of course strongest in the English-speaking areas and Puerto Rico. Its influence has led, naturally enough, to academic studies about its nature and extent. One study of the image of Puerto Rico as portrayed in major United States newspapers during the 1970s found that attitudes on terrorism and natural disasters far exceeded accounts on cultural events, economic analyses or sports.⁵⁵ In surveying the preferences of Jamaican schoolchildren, Hilary Brown learned that, despite the high cost in developing local programmes, there is widespread local popularity for some of the regional productions, such as Jamaica's *Oliver at Large* and Trinidad's *No Boundaries*.⁵⁶ Cheryl Renee Gooch, in assessing possible neo-colonial attitudes in Barbadian television programming, suggests that the scrutiny of locally produced shows might be more intense than for those imported.⁵⁷

51 Gordon K. Lewis, 1987, p.145.

52 'Michael Manley' *Frommiste* 15 March 1997.

53 Rex Nettleford, 1993, p.29.

54 M. Kurlansky, 1992, pp.104-5.

55 Joseph L. Scarpaci, 1991.

56 Hilary Brown, 1995, p.78.

57 Cheryl Renee Gooch, 1995, p.115.

Lynette Lashley surveyed a geographical cross-section of television-viewing habits and preferences among youth in Trinidad & Tobago and discovered a clear preference for American television programmes.⁵⁸

Those concerned with the preservation of a distinct French Antillean cultural identity in Guyane, Guadeloupe and Martinique express similar concerns about the domination by metropolitan French television. Local TV features French (not Créole) outlets of the French state-financed stations referred to as RFO (Société Nationale de Radio-télévision Française d'Outre-mer). The (minimal) RFO programming that deals with the Caribbean emphasizes the French territories' relative affluence (by dwelling often on Haiti's poverty, for example), but the French Antillean stations' main emphases are on metropolitan France and its internal concerns and events. These offerings are interspersed with dubbed American programmes and local news segments to fill in around the main programmes. RFO commercials have a more local flavour because they employ Antillean actors and actresses.⁵⁹

The television era in the Caribbean, as in other places, has meant more staying in at night, as even the poorest usually have TV at home. All around the region (except in Cuba where American movies are shown, but rarely does the state-run network show sitcoms), families and friends stay at home to watch the latest instalment of 'The Bold and the Beautiful' or 'Dynasty'. Television has also led to different social groupings or configurations for commonly-observed media events. Test cricket in the English-speaking islands was a public, pedestrian affair in the recent days of transistor radios, island residents going about their business with radios pressed to their ears and commenting, cheering or gasping – sometimes in consort with total strangers – at particularly crucial moments. Televised cricket continues to be a public event, but now with knots of stationary onlookers crowded into the doorways of restaurants or in front of the windows of retail outlets. The televised cricket image has also reduced the game to a human scale, different from the radio broadcasts that invited imagination and doubtless helped in the building of legendary cricket personalities. American baseball is not shown on Cuban television, although the medium has nonetheless profoundly influenced the country. Cubans were so enamoured with one Brazilian *telenovela* that they decided to name one of the fastest growing private enterprises since 1993 – the home restaurant or *paladar* – after a similar operation portrayed in the Brazilian show.⁶⁰

It would be wrong to suggest that television has extinguished radio in the Caribbean. The latter continues its important regional role, in part because

of the Caribbean's fragmented physical geography. Radio was introduced to Cuba in 1922, to Hispaniola in 1926, and to the rest of the region generally during the 1920s or 1930s. Generations of West Indians in the latter half of the twentieth century have subsequently grown accustomed to their daily routines being punctuated by the radio signals preceding the BBC news, hurricane warnings, or the musical jingles of bank advertisements. And no one in the Lesser Antilles has missed the booming signal from Radio Antilles in Montserrat (now extinguished by the volcano), American pop music from the US Virgin Islands, or the distinctive radio exhortations by American evangelical broadcasters.

Radio Rebelde contributed in no small way to the overthrow of the Batista regime in the late 1950s. Begun by Ernesto 'Che' Guevara in the Sierra Maestra in February 1958, Rebelde was at first only faintly audible because of its weak transmitter, yet its messages were monitored by the United States government as well as the Cuban citizenry. Rebelde soon became the symbolic rival of the official Cuban government news, carrying rebel slogans, manifestos, and some of Castro's earliest lengthy oratories. It also fulfilled a utilitarian need, appealing to doctors to deliver medical aid to the mountains. During battles, Rebelde employed loudspeakers intended to demoralize Batista's troops.⁶¹ The station also sent personal messages to families and friends from individual rebel soldiers. Cuban radio today broadcasts news, government ideology, and the educational programmes which were especially important in rural areas during the literacy campaigns of the 1960s. In the 1990s the United States-financed Radio Martí presents counter-viewpoints. Radio's role in disseminating information among families and friends remains important in the smaller islands. Throughout the Eastern Caribbean and in the Bahamas, broadcast death announcements are a principal means of informing family members strung out across far-flung archipelagos – which defy easy or cheap means of daily communication – of the deaths of mothers, fathers and grandparents.⁶² Immigrants to the US Virgin Islands from St Kitts and Nevis routinely monitor the (faintly audible) death announcements emanating from Radio ZIZ in Basseterre, St Kitts, and then inform their fellow migrants on either St Thomas or St Croix by telephone if one of their family members has passed away.⁶³

Radio's versatility is exemplified no better than in Guadeloupe. The island has a number of different stations which broadcast for different periods each day, in both French and Créole, and toward different audiences. The RFO

58 Lynette Lashley, 1995, pp.93–4.

59 J. A. Lent, 1990b, p.178.

60 Joseph L. Scarnaci, 1995.

61 J. A. Lent, 1990b, pp.123–5.

62 *Ibid.*, pp.263–4.

63 Bonham C. Richardson, 1983, n.52.

station broadcasts news from France (to include French weather and even traffic reports) as well as from the Caribbean region. Radio Tanbou, one among several small-budget, public service stations on Guadeloupe, operates with limited personnel and some volunteer help and specializes in local culture, Guadeloupean music, and news analysis. The island also has religious (Catholic as well as fundamentalist Protestant) stations and also several small unauthorized stations that are almost village-level media outlets. The exclusive use of Créole (as on Radio Tanbou) underscores a post-colonial and anti-French sentiment. Curaçao also has a proliferation of media outlets for such a small place. With scarcely 150,000 people, the island has nine radio stations, one television station, and nine daily newspapers (six in Papiamentu, three in Dutch).⁶⁴

The widespread use of radio combined with the omnipresence of television has by no means eclipsed local newspapers, especially in the several places where literacy is essentially universal. Originally intended for the region's élite and middle class, newspapers with working-class or progressive middle-class views emerged even before the early and mid-twentieth century to provide articulate, published challenges to continued colonialism. In this way they acted as both mirror and mould of the region's steady progress toward political independence. Caribbean peoples continue to depend on their newspapers – which they tend to view as more 'theirs' than they do the exotic outpourings of metropolitan news broadcasts – to provide intensely local, opinionated, and colourful coverage of islandwide events.

The first newspaper published in Papiamentu in the Netherlands Antilles was in 1973, an innovation possibly linked with the civil disturbances in Curaçao in May 1969.⁶⁴ Papiamentu suffers – even more than Créole – from its small constituency and the associated expensive translation costs for radio and print media. The language is nonetheless spoken by all social classes and in all branches of government in the ABC (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao) islands. In 1997 Papiamentu was declared an official language of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao and English an official language of St Martin, Saba and St Eustatius (along with Dutch). The lengthy battle against European linguistic domination in the ABC islands is by no means over as Dutch was the only official language there until very recently, and televised English and Spanish soap operas are extremely popular, the latter because three Venezuelan TV stations are in reach of the islands.

Despotic Caribbean political regimes, including earlier colonial governments, have recognized the power of local newspapers and other media outlets. During the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, newspaper, radio and television commentaries were uniformly sycophantic and fawning

about the island's political leadership so as to defy credibility.⁶⁵ The Burnham government in Guyana from the late 1960s into the 1980s focused less on personality and more on the pre-eminence of 'the (Peoples' National Congress) party' and the country's socialist co-operative imperatives in attempting to thwart published and broadcast dissent from both internal and external sources. The government monopolized and taxed newsprint, declared the (neo-colonial) BBC news irrelevant to the Guyanese experience, and tyrannized those speaking out in opposition. A low watermark in Guyanese political repression was reached in 1979 when a Catholic priest was stabbed to death in Georgetown, probably for his part in supplying photographs to an opposition newspaper, or because he was mistaken for the editor of the anti-government *Catholic Standard*.⁶⁶

In Cuba, official government interpretations of the news as well as government positions on national and international events appear in the daily *Granma*. Human interest and workplace features are carried by *Bohemia* and *Trabajador*, respectively. Cuba's 'Special Period in a Time of Peace' (Cuba's term for domestic austerity measures triggered by the collapse of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe and the former USSR) reduced the number of newspapers circulating. Havana (2.2 million population) received only 7,000 daily copies of *Granma* in the mid-1990s. And although electronic dissemination of news via facsimile and the World Wide Web is tightly controlled, Pope John Paul II's visit to the island in January 1998 allowed hundreds of journalists unprecedented access to Cuba and rare live broadcasts on the state television networks. However, shortly after the Pope's visit all foreigners were forbidden from taking photographs in the nation's public schools unless special permission was given ahead of time.

Late in the 1990s the nearly universal availability of modern telephone service in the region provides easy (though expensive) direct-dial access overseas, very different from the faintly audible operator-assisted calls that once involved one- or two-hour waits. The first direct telephone circuits between New York and Puerto Rico in 1943 were improved by the laying of the first submarine cable between Puerto Rico and the North American mainland in 1959. Then the establishment of the Gayey satellite earth station ten years later has been followed by continuous telephone improvements in all areas of the region. Even cellular phones are now common throughout the Caribbean; local cell antennas were built there during the 1990s, modifying even further the regional landscape.

The global communication revolution also allows displaced West Indians to stay in touch with their home islands in other ways. Digitized

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.160.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, n.87.

versions of local newspapers from Guyana, Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad & Tobago are available on international computer web networks. The tens of thousands of West Indian migrants from those and nearby places (the Trinidad papers also carry regional news, mainly from the Windwards) now living in North America and England routinely read articles and editorials and see pictorial news from their homelands. International communication networks, although containing the potential to obliterate regional distinctions in favour of a metropole-dominated homogenization, have, in these cases, helped individuals to maintain their cultural identities, even though they are far from home.⁶⁷

Despite the enormous potential that communications innovations have for increasing the world's knowledge about the Caribbean, metropolitan self-absorption persists. The Pope's 1998 visit to Cuba, advertised by some as one of the most important media events of the year, was completely upstaged on American television by the allegations of President Clinton's sexual improprieties. The adage that Americans will do anything but read about Latin America and the Caribbean might now be modified as 'anything but watch TV about Latin America and the Caribbean'. The reverse is not true because new communications and media possibilities are avidly used throughout the Caribbean to learn about events elsewhere in the world.

Carnival, music and sport

While the atomizing social tendencies engendered by modernization and mass-media technologies move onward, the Caribbean continues as a region of public gatherings and group participation. In the 1950s, public meetings and rallies were the region's cultural hallmarks in its final push toward political autonomy; the massive protests and stadium rallies in Havana before and after the revolution also were conducted on a smaller scale in the British colonies, notably in Grenada and St Kitts, over local political issues. Public protests, buttressed by the power and collective emotion that moving crowds generate, have played formative roles in the region's political past.⁶⁸ Furthermore, insularity, especially in the smallest islands where everyone knows everyone else and all of the faces in a given crowd are familiar, doubtless helps explain the ongoing importance of public gatherings. Yet civic outpourings, marches and social coalescence, such as the massive funeral

procession in Guyana that followed Walter Rodney's murder in 1980,⁶⁹ remain recognizable elements in Caribbean cultures, regardless of the particular society's scale.

The Caribbean carnival exemplifies the region's tendency toward public gatherings and cultural displays. Carnival varies from place to place as to season, size and lavishness, but it occurs in essentially all Caribbean (and some important non-Caribbean) locales as a street celebration in honour of particular holidays. The result on each island is 'a folk drama in which performers and audience are one and the same'.⁷⁰ Caribbean carnivals occur at Christmas, Mardi Gras, the end of the sugar-cane harvest, or at other times depending upon the particular locale. And while costumes, singing and instrumentation vary widely throughout the region, carnivals all rely on a blend of elements from local and external sources and are thereby recognizably Caribbean.

The best known is Trinidad's unrivalled pre-Lenten celebration, a colossal regional and international event that has attracted much academic attention.⁷¹ Carnival in Trinidad is rooted in the island's past in which European and African elements have been forged – often in a crucible of resistance and social inequity accented by drumming, steelbands and ritual stickfighting – into a distinctive contemporary celebration. The Trinidad Carnival is famous for its calypso tents, costumes and the annual climactic road march. So many tourists now descend each year on Port of Spain for Carnival that the celebration's essential attraction, derived from local colour and flair, has become truly international and commercially crucial for Trinidad & Tobago. Grass-roots activities of the 1950s that were performed for fun have therefore become lavish displays with sizeable budgets and ever-larger economic pay-offs. Accordingly, Trinidad Carnival's tone has changed, in the eyes of some, to an erotic display exemplified by, among other things, the changes in women participants' costumes: 'Voluminous skirts that once offered the illusion of subterfuge have been shed and have been replaced by high cut bikinis, a triangular flap and some feathers'⁷²

No other Caribbean carnival has the discernible and well-documented historic roots that go back as far as Trinidad's, and some can hardly be called 'historic'. The summer carnival in Antigua, for example, was begun in 1957. The St Thomas Carnival, with origins in the early twentieth century, was revived in 1952 as a Labor Day celebration. The recent and increasing

⁶⁷ Daniel Miller and Don Slater, 2000.

⁶⁸ O. Nicol Roiland, 1995.

⁶⁹ George Lamming, 1981.

⁷⁰ Kenneth M. Bilby, 1995, p. 197.

⁷¹ For example, Enrol Hill, 1972 (1997); Donald R. Hill, 1993.

⁷² Molly Ahwe, 1991, p. 410.

commercialization and garishness of these now-annual celebrations in the small islands have inspired sour analyses that they are 'mostly tourist gimmickry'.⁷³ Yet a closer look suggests that, in important ways, they have evolved differently from the directions that would please local tourist boards. Black Power slogans and motifs – perhaps inspired by publicity from the United States, but given local meanings – are commonly evident in Caribbean carnivals.⁷⁴ And racial violence at the 1986 carnival in St Thomas was apparently a reaction to the local (white) commercial control of the celebrations, a situation countered by the slogan of black Thonians, 'Is we carnival!'⁷⁵

Late in the 1990s, many North American and British observers were aware of Caribbean carnivals not because of events in the islands but because these celebrations have been imported into major metropolitan locales. Since 1969 the hundreds of thousands of Caribbean peoples residing in New York have celebrated Labor Day with music, floats and steelbands in the city's now-annual parade which winds along Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn.⁷⁶ The late summer Notting Hill Caribbean Carnival in west London annually pits transplanted West Indian exuberance versus the sober control tactics of the London police force, yet it is now sufficiently established that leading British politicians appear for photo opportunities. Toronto's Caribbean carnival, begun in 1967 and featuring distinctive masquerade bands, is not tucked away in one of the city's residential neighbourhoods as in London or New York; rather, it proceeds through the economic and political heart of the city and 'receives massive coverage in the mainstream press.'⁷⁷ Peter Minshall, Trinidad's premier carnival-band designer, helped produce the opening ceremonies for both the 1992 and 1996 Olympic Games, and he has also helped to orchestrate France's Bastille Day celebrations. Yet students of cultural globalization would be mistaken to interpret the North Atlantic presence of Caribbean carnivals and their leaders as evidence that these cultural activities had somehow been co-opted by metropolitan powers. Owing to the frequency of travel and the reliability and speed of international communications, the exchanges of ideas in costuming, sound projection and choreography in both the Caribbean and the newly-adopted residential areas for Caribbean migrants now blur the differences between these innovations' sending and receiving areas.

'Global' is indeed an appropriate term to describe the late-twentieth century impact of Caribbean music. Most important on a world scale is the

Jamaican sound generally known as 'reggae', whose universal appeal transcends continents and cultures. Emerging from the Jamaican 'rock steady' and 'ska' style, which itself was influenced by North American soul music, reggae may be dated to the late 1960s. In the following decade, reggae became identified with the Kingston slums and the Rastafarian movement there, and it owed much of its appeal to the sound-track accompanying the internationally popular Jimmy Cliff film, *The Harder They Come*. But reggae soon catapulted the far more famous Bob Marley and the Wailers to international stardom and became closely associated with such names as Burning Spear, Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer. Reggae in Jamaica has evolved into so-called dance-hall music late in the 1980s and subsequently into 'ragga' (short for 'raggamuffin') music that confirms its roots in the culture of the island's urban poor while drawing on traditional African-based Jamaican music. The astoundingly popular Jamaican reggae music sound has been adopted not only by university students world wide but by groups as disparate as Arizona Indians, urban youth of sub-Saharan Africa, and aboriginal peoples in New Zealand and Australia.⁷⁸

Claims are also made that the extraordinarily popular 'zouk' music originating in the French Antilles in the early 1980s has had a worldwide impact.⁷⁹ Zouk's engaging dance rhythms are, like all new Caribbean sounds, based on traditional Antillean roots. And although this new music is recorded and packaged in studios in Guadeloupe and Martinique, zouk has broadly regional origins. It owes much of its rhythm to the popular 'biguine' music played by dance orchestras in the French Antilles in the early twentieth century, but its antecedents may also be traced to the United States, Haiti and the local dance music from Dominica known as 'cadence'.⁸⁰ Probably more than reggae, zouk has a growing number of female performers. In comparing zouk and reggae as to their relative popularity world wide, it appears that the former has been limited so far to a francophone base. Zouk music is exceptionally popular in France, in large part because of the European performances of the Antillean band Kassav, although its appeal is confined in North America to Haitian and French Antillean ethnic enclaves. Zouk is also widely popular among young people in the French-speaking areas of Africa.⁸¹

Cuba's musical imprint internationally has met with commercial and political success. The lyrics of the 'troubadours' Pablo Milanés and Silvio Rodríguez frequently laud the accomplishments of the revolution. Cuban singer Albita Rodríguez, well known in Cuba as a singer of the folkloric

73 Gordon K. Lewis, 1968, p.30.

74 F. E. Manning, 1978, pp.198–99.

75 Klaus de Albuquerqure, 1990.

76 Donald R. Hill and R. Abramson, 1979.

77 F. F. Manning, 1990, p.26.

78 Kenneth M. Bilby, 1995.

79 J. Guilbaut *et al.*, 1993.

80 M. Largey, 1995, pp.140–1.

81 Kenneth M. Bilby 1997 p.71

guajira songs until she defected to Miami, where she has become a successful Sony recording artist, has brought a dimension of Cuban *son* to a larger North American and European audience. Perhaps the best-known and most commercially successful crossover Latin-to-Pop artist is Cuban-born Gloria Estéfani and the Miami Sound Machine.

The Caribbean's interrelated oral and musical traditions – marked by keen observation, inspired social commentary, and biting satire – converge in the region's calypso music.⁸² Centred in Trinidad & Tobago and the adjacent Windwards, calypso in the 1990s has transcended insularity and is immensely popular in the entire region and among the transplanted West Indian communities in North America and the United Kingdom. Early in the century, live Trinidadian calypso could be roughly divided between the 'tents' and the music of the streets, each with distinctive sounds and characteristics.⁸³ In the years before political independence Trinidadian radiowaves were filled with the music from such luminaries as Kirchener, Spoiler, and the Mighty Sparrow. In all these cases, past and present, 'Calypso lyrics are a bible of Creole thought'.⁸⁴ But calypso lyrics are no longer a Trinidadian monopoly.⁸⁵ In the 1980s the Barbadian calypsonian Gabby mocked political opportunists and local social proprieties to the point that his music was banned locally, the most sensational event in the Bajan calypso boom (that) is the most exciting development in Caribbean popular culture.⁸⁶ Whereas calypso usually is associated with the English-speaking islands of the Eastern Caribbean, song as social commentary is so widespread in the region as a whole that 'one must consider this a pan-Caribbean phenomenon'.⁸⁷

Taken altogether, Caribbean music reflects the essence of the region as well or better than any other element of culture. Its inspiration comes from the traditional sounds and rhythms of the region's ubiquitous village bands and, more and more, from the desperation of the Caribbean's urban slums. Its syncretic character, based heavily on an African base, is identified by musicologists whether one is describing Puerto Rican or Cuban *salsa*, Dominican *merengue*, the *rara* processional bands of Haitian Easter carnivals, the steel band and *soca* music of Trinidad, or the percussion-heavy *tambu* music of the Dutch ABC islands. Even some of the Asian music imported by indentured Indians and Javanese into the southern Caribbean shows signs of blending or creolization; the best example is *chunney* in Trinidad, a kind of calypso sung

to Indian musical accompaniment and partly in Hindi. Adapted locally from imported musical traditions both now and in the past, relying heavily on improvisation and change, and capable of appealing in a timely fashion to a broad range of listeners, Caribbean music at the turn of the century is one of the region's most distinctive cultural achievements.⁸⁸

Musical events and other cultural activities are combined uniquely within each island culture. In Puerto Rico, as in other places, religious holidays and national political anniversaries converge and are blended into local cultural activities. Although Puerto Rico observes most United States holidays, it too has a host of events unique to the island. These include the Festival Casals, a classical-music concert held in mid-June, as well as year-round performances by the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra at the Music Conservatory. Other sources of national heritage are available year-round, such as displays at the Botanical Garden and Museum of Anthropology, Art, and History at the University of Puerto Rico. In San Juan, programmes at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and the Dominican Convent complement the many popular festivals held throughout the island. In many ways these activities and institutions serve as a cultural backstop against increasing Americanization, a defensive posture arising from Puerto Rico's political association with the United States as well as a reaction to rampant consumerism.

If music represents the leading edge of the region's cultural achievements in the latter half of the twentieth century, sport cannot be far behind. Even the most casual visitors to the Caribbean notice the ubiquity of baseball diamonds in the San Juan area on an evening flight to Puerto Rico or the impromptu cricket matches in every Barbadian schoolyard on a drive around the island. But the nature of organized sport – while still carrying with it its elementary competitive character and test of physical skills – is ever changing in the Caribbean region. Furthermore, the interrelationships between group passion and metaphorical significance for sport among Caribbean peoples are the subjects of a growing literature produced by popular writers and academics.

Cuban sport is of national significance and along with health care and education is a badge of honour for the nation. The island's commitment to the 1991 Pan American Games, at once a symbol of pride and a national showcase, was made well before the onset of the Special Period. Millions of dollars in infrastructure helped to make Havana a sporting centre with modern stadiums, swimming pools, gymnasiums and living quarters for visiting athletes. Cuban *microbrigades* built the 'Pan American Village' (Villa Panamericana) at the eastern edge of metropolitan Havana. The very costly

82 Gordon Rohlehr, 1990.

83 John Cowley, 1996.

84 Donald R. Hill, 1993, p. 1.

85 F. E. Manning, 1985.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

87 Kenneth M. Rihiv, 1985, n. 201.

88 P. Manuel *et al.*, 1995.

project has not attracted many subsequent sporting events, although it produced – in Cuban terms – fine housing.⁸⁹ The government nonetheless remains committed to sport as a key component of the socialist movement. And Cuban teams continue to travel widely, even when they risk embarrassing the government with high-profile defections as in 1997 when the baseball-playing Hernández brothers left for the United States, one starting for the Florida Marlins in their 1997 championship season.⁹⁰

Cubans and other Caribbean peoples have won a disproportionately high number of Olympic Games medals relative to the region's total population in the second half of the twentieth century. At mid-century, all followers of world athletics (track and field) knew of Jamaican sprinting prowess. In more recent decades, Cuba's remarkable Olympic successes – co-ordinated by the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation – have included world-dominating performances in boxing and women's volleyball. A stunning Caribbean Olympic moment came in the 1976 games in Montreal where Hasely Crawford of Trinidad & Tobago won the men's 100-metre sprint, Donald Quarrie of Jamaica captured the gold medal in the 200-metre sprint, and Alberto Juantorena of Cuba (the country's top sports official late in the 1990s) won the men's 400- and 800-metre events. Cuban officials have interpreted their Olympic successes in political-revolutionary terms, and their teams' boycotts of the 1984 (Los Angeles) and 1988 (Seoul) games undoubtedly detracted from the overall quality of the events. West Indian migrants and their descendants in Canada and Great Britain, not incidentally, have won a number of Olympic medals for their adopted homelands, and these athletes' Caribbean origins are widely recognized and publicized.

The acknowledged pre-eminence of West Indian cricket in the British Commonwealth in the last third of the century parallels Cuban Olympic prowess. Some have likened this success to an exotic plant (introduced from England) that has flowered and matured in the personages of the Eastern Caribbean's feared batsmen and fast bowlers who have, in turn, come to dominate international test cricket. West Indian cricket achievements also have been interpreted as individual and team triumph in a fair competitive arena devoid of institutional inequalities. These interpretations have emerged through serious studies by, among others, some of the leading scholars/statesmen in the English-speaking Caribbean. C. L. R. James⁹¹ saw West Indian cricket victories over erstwhile colonial rulers as fostering unity and political dignity. Michael Manley

stressed the collaborative character of Caribbean cricket victories and found in them one of the few concrete examples of genuine regional co-operation.⁹²

Although Cuba's athletic triumphs are well-known internationally, its self-acknowledged national sport (and national passion) is baseball. In the late 1990s telephone callers to evening baseball talk shows on Havana's Radio Rebelde went so far as to criticize the Cuban government for allowing the departure of Cuban baseball stars to other Latin American countries and even to Japan. (The defection of Cuban players to the United States, although well-known, is taboo on Rebelde.) Cuban baseball has produced some of the finest active players, such as Omar Linares, in the game today, and the national team – unbeaten since 1991 – won in the Olympics in both Barcelona (1992) and Atlanta (1996). The possibility of an eventual Cuban-United States contest, involving America's best professional players, is a source of endless speculation and conversation on Havana street corners and park benches.⁹³ From a United States perspective, Cuban baseball is a novel curiosity. More important to most Americans is that, since the early 1980s, the Dominican Republic has supplied dozens of (United States) major-league baseball stars each year. Every American schoolboy knows San Pedro de Macoris as the 'home of shortstops' and several books analyse, among other dimensions of the Dominican-United States baseball connection, the chasm between Dominican poverty and the astounding salaries paid to its players who have become successes in North America.⁹⁴

Baseball's and cricket's immense popularity in the Caribbean notwithstanding, basketball has made phenomenal inroads throughout the region since the 1980s, becoming even more popular than baseball in some parts of the Greater Antilles.⁹⁵ Puerto Rico's national basketball team played the so-called 'dream team' from the United States in the 1980s; although they were beaten soundly, Puerto Ricans cherished the confrontation for months. Basketball's popularity in Puerto Rico, given the close connections with New York, is easy to explain. Yet the game has made equally strong progress in the English-speaking islands. Much of basketball's regional appeal may be traced to television and the obvious African-American domination of the game that is watched in Caribbean households during North America's winter basketball season. Mounted basketball hoops are now as common as cricket pitches in Trinidad and in some of the small islands of the Eastern Caribbean where inter-island, island-wide, and local village games played by

89 R. Segre *et al.*, 1997.

90 Louis A. Pérez, 1998b.

91 C. L. R. James, 1963.

92 Michael Manley, 1996; see also Hilary Beckles, 1998.

93 T. Wendel and M. Jamail, 1997.

94 For example, A. M. Klein, 1991.

95 Rob Ruck, 1993, pp. 187–8.

both men and women 'basketballers' provide opportunities for social gatherings, much as village markets or election days have in earlier decades.⁹⁶

Human health

The remarkable social and economic changes in the Caribbean in the latter half of the twentieth century have their parallels in an overall regional improvement in health and longevity. With the notable exception of Haiti, the region's human population may be said to have passed through what public health officials commonly refer to as the 'epidemiological transition', a level of human health in which death is brought on less frequently by infectious diseases than by degenerative ones.⁹⁷ Fifty years ago, outbreaks of schistosomiasis, Chagas' disease, and even leprosy in particular islands were reasonably common causes of death. Today, at the turn of the century, these diseases, although not yet eradicated altogether, have usually given way to cardiovascular, pulmonary and cancer-related diseases as leading causes of Caribbean mortality, as is common in the rest of the developed world.

A key reason for these changes is an overall improvement in human nutrition.⁹⁸ Along with modernization, higher average incomes and side effects from increasing tourism, more food is imported to the Caribbean than ever before. But dietary and health improvements do not invariably come about because more calories per person are now consumed than in the past. In St Vincent, for example, traditional food crops grown in village gardens are now augmented with imported flour, vegetable oils and animal protein so that, ironically on an island where people have traditionally been woefully malnourished, a common nutritional problem is that people eat too much.⁹⁹ A somewhat similar situation exists for Puerto Rico where a nutritional combination of old and new has both its positive and negative consequences. 'Within the new epidemiological profile, acute infectious tropical diseases coexist alongside chronic degenerative diseases ... Alcohol abuse and smoking are common, the population is sedentary, the diet contains too much fat and protein, and drug consumption is on the increase.'¹⁰⁰

Alcohol consumption in the Caribbean continues as an integral element in local cultures, ranging from imported whisky as status symbol for the

prosperous down to 'bush rum' in the poorer communities. But greater prosperity has also led to an increase in cigarette smoking, the marketing and sale of cigarettes in the region being one of the more dubious benefits of globalization. A recent report by the United States Surgeon General, in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization, found that in some Caribbean cities more than half of the young people now smoke. Smoking, furthermore, appears to increase as a function of increasing local prosperity. The economic downturn in the Caribbean in the 1980s (referred to by some as the 'lost decade' because of the erosion of standards of living) saw a decline in tobacco consumption,¹⁰¹ then economic recovery a decade later saw an increase in tobacco consumption. The smoking prevalence in the Caribbean as a whole in the early 1990s was 37 per cent for men and 20 per cent for women.¹⁰² And although Caribbean health authorities at both a local and regional level publish health warnings against smoking as a serious health risk,¹⁰³ smoking's attractiveness, especially among the young, is its association with prosperity and the good life exemplified by both media representations and the omnipresent tourists.

Despite the double-edged character of economic improvement and associated nutritional change, increased longevity in most of the Caribbean region (again, with the painful exception of Haiti) marks a dramatic shift for the better from conditions that existed in the 1950s. The vast majority of Caribbean people can now expect to live into their seventies. Even in places as small as Montserrat which have a very limited number of trained medical personnel, the average age of death for men in the (pre-eruption) early 1990s was 73 and for women 80, mortality statistics comparable to life expectancies in France.

Another fundamental measure of human well-being, that of infant mortality, is arrayed for selected Caribbean countries in Figure 18.1. The means by which the statistic is derived (the number of deaths of infants of less than one year divided by total births and the result multiplied by a constant) is less important than noting that infant mortality is a conventional surrogate measure of general human well-being. Those emphasizing the importance of the infant mortality index point out that infants' health often depends upon, among other factors, nutrition of both infants and mothers, family and community literacy, and family income. Infant mortality rates also indicate the quality of medical care, to include prenatal intervention and post-delivery

96 Jay R. Mandile and J. D. Mandile, 1994.

97 D. P. Sinha, 1995, pp. 7–13.

98 *Ibid.*

99 L. S. Grossman, 1998.

100 Pan American Health Organization, 1998.

101 C. Well and Joseph L. Scarpaci, 1992.

102 'Public Health Programs and Practices. Surgeon General's Report Focuses on Smoking in Latin America', 1993.

103 For example, D. P. Sinha, 1995, pp. 26–7.

check-ups. In Cuba, with one of the lowest infant mortality rates, an estimated 97 per cent of all births are attended by a physician, and a doctor's presence allows not only for high survival rates but also assumes postnatal care should the need arise. Haiti's very high infant mortality figure throws light on the country's poor nutrition, inadequate medical care and general impoverishment; 10 per cent of Haitian babies never reach their first birthday.

Whereas comparative health or quality-of-life data are useful in highlighting similarities and differences among contemporary Caribbean societies, it still is inappropriate to discuss national 'health care systems' in the smallest places. As in the past, doctors are few and specialists rare on islands with less than 100,000 residents. Anguilla, as one example, has only ten physicians, a number that probably would be even lower except for the island's remunerative tourist industry whose very high prices are affordable only by (usually ageing) North Americans and Europeans. In the smaller islands much of the primary health care is still carried out by parents and relatives, and a doctor is sought only under extreme, even near-death, circumstances. In the larger places such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and Barbados, there are well-developed health-care systems composed of a combination of public and private physicians and nurses. Another reason that 'national' health care is a somewhat misleading comparative term for the region as a whole is that specialty health care is often sought away from one's island of residence, in larger neighbouring islands or – if families can afford the travel and medical expenses – in North America or Europe.

Data representing human health and well-being also represent indirectly living conditions and sanitation. Despite the general improvements in Caribbean housing in the past fifty years, shanty towns and slums – some of quite long standing – remain in the larger urban areas as unsightly testaments to post-agricultural societies where no real labour-absorbing industries have replaced fading plantation regimes. One of the most celebrated literary achievements by a Caribbean writer in recent years, Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco*,¹⁰⁴ is the saga of a squatter settlement in Fort-de-France. The Martinican author contrasts the geometric, ordered, white, staid character of most of the colonial city with the ill-defined, unplanned, black exuberance of 'Texaco' as a metaphor for his home island in general.

Chamoiseau's theme could be extended across much of the rest of the Caribbean in order to portray urban housing conditions that local governments attempt to improve. Sub-standard housing in the capital towns of the Windwards, for example, often consists of aggregates of small, movable, frame dwellings whose (changing) locations follow paths of least resistance

¹⁰⁴ Patrick Chamoiseau, 1997.

to uncontested urban zones. The British geographer Robert Potter has assessed the varied quality of dwellings in this region as well as recent planning and financial initiatives pursued by local governments in attempting to improve urban living conditions, to include the construction of multi-family 'apartment' housing units.¹⁰⁵

General improvements in housing conditions in the Caribbean may be attributed to a variety of reasons. In the French islands, *départementalisation* (since 1946) was followed by substantial improvements in housing quality in terms of living space, improved sanitation, durability of construction material, and a general use of air-conditioning.¹⁰⁶ The oil boom of the late 1970s in Trinidad & Tobago led to the development of 'residential areas' that were distinctly middle class or to the replacement of older wooden frame houses with substantial brick or concrete two-storey houses, often with terrazzo floors and a front yard enclosed by large iron gates. The new houses were replete with electrical appliances and a high standard of plumbing.¹⁰⁷ Similar upscale housing improvements elsewhere in the region can be traced, more often than not, to money earned abroad as well as to the long-standing practice of self-help housing.¹⁰⁸

Cuba's socialist government began an aggressive campaign with a series of housing and urban reform laws and policies from the late 1950s designed to help the poor and to phase out free-market prices for housing and land. Castro's well-known anti-urban policies, furthermore, gave preference to rural areas of the country. Havana's grand houses and mansions, left by a fleeing bourgeoisie, housed students and workers travelling to the city for schooling, job training, and political activities in the first decades of the revolution.¹⁰⁹ Although problems of food supply in Cuba probably are more acute than are those of housing at the turn of the century, the latter are nonetheless serious.¹¹⁰ An ignored and now decrepit housing stock in Havana is both costly and impractical to rehabilitate. The black market is often the only source for tiles, wiring, concrete blocks and other building materials, and an estimated 50 per cent of the city's piped water is lost in old water mains or building cisterns. Most new Cuban construction is now dedicated to earning hard currency, either to attract tourists or a growing foreign business community seeking to establish headquarters in the once 'posh' neighbourhood of Miramar in Havana's western suburbs.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Robert B. Potter, 1994.

¹⁰⁶ S. A. Condon and P. E. Ogden, 1997.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Miller, 1994, p. 32.

¹⁰⁸ Robert B. Potter and D. Conway, 1997.

¹⁰⁹ R. Segre *et al.*, 1997.

¹¹⁰ Joseph L. Scarpaci, 1995.

¹¹¹ Joseph L. Scarpaci, 1996.

Pockets of traditional water and waste removal still dot the Caribbean region. In Antigua & Barbuda, there is no sewerage system to speak of; 60 per cent of the dwellings in the two islands use septic tanks and soak-aways, and 30 per cent continue to rely on pit latrines. Disease incidence data also throw light on national problems and issues such as food distribution systems and malnutrition. An outbreak of epidemic optic neuropathy appeared in Cuba's western province of Pinar del Río in mid-1992, and it appeared elsewhere in Cuba the following year. The problem, attributable to deteriorating diet, was arrested in some cases with vitamin supplements.

Cuba's similarly direct way of dealing with victims of the AIDS virus has drawn criticism from human-rights groups outside the island. When the first cases of HIV-AIDS infection appeared in Cuba in the early 1980s, it was traced to returning veterans who had fought in Angola and Mozambique. AIDS has since spread throughout the island, helped along, not incidentally, by the acceleration in tourism in the 1990s. In any case, when local public-health officials identify HIV-positive Cubans, they often are relegated to quarantine compounds where they receive direct medical attention and diets superior to those of the average Cuban. Despite external protests against these seemingly radical disease-containment measures, such aggressive tactics seem successful because Cuba has one of the lowest HIV rates in the Western Hemisphere.¹¹² Curiously, near by, the Bahamas had one of the highest rates of infection in the early 1990s.¹¹³ National policies, therefore, lead to markedly different outcomes.

The recent impact of AIDS throughout the Caribbean has directly affected families and villages because individual victims usually are without the urban anonymity that cloaks so many of the AIDS-sufferers in North America and Europe. Antigua & Barbuda now screens all blood donors for AIDS. In the Bahamas, the leading health problem among pre-school children is AIDS and its related diseases that, tragically, are transmitted to infants during pregnancy and birth. The rate of AIDS infection in Haiti is estimated to be an astounding 10 per cent of sexually active people in Port-au-Prince and 5 per cent in the countryside. Under-reporting and the indifference of Haiti's former military government toward gathering disease statistics may have led, however, to a serious understating of the problem of AIDS there. On top of the other woes Haiti faces, conventional wisdom includes the country within the much-repeated but hardly accurate phrase: 'The four H's of HIV infection: hemophilia, homosexuals, heroin and Haitians.' Yet the association between high incidences of AIDS and Haitians is not simply another misperception

¹¹² C. Burr, 1997.

¹¹³ Marvin Leiner, 1994.

about the country provided by outsiders. Haitian *houngans* or 'push doctors' have become involved in attempting to combat AIDS both by prescribing particular remedies and also by advising against sexual promiscuity.¹¹⁴

The frightening prevalence of AIDS in the region naturally leads to a necessary if uncomfortable reassessment of sexual promiscuity throughout the Caribbean at the end of the twentieth century. The region has long been known by outsiders for its free-and-easy attitude toward sex, from Havana's reputation as a naughty, mid-century playground for visiting American sailors to the bawdy lyrics of so many calypsos in the English-speaking islands. In a far less abstract way, the Caribbean's sexual attractiveness is intimately bound up with the region's tourist industry – a fact whose unpleasantness makes it no less real. The marvels of the computer age provide lurid, online details of sex tours to the Dominican Republic and its famous 'dusky beauties', for example, not only for middle-aged men in Europe and North America but also for schoolchildren everywhere innocently seeking term-paper information about the Caribbean in general. Indeed, prostitution (even among children) in the resort areas along the north coast of the Dominican Republic is well known and, it is claimed by some, even encouraged by a local government hungry for hard currency. Nor does the region's sexual glamour appeal only to visiting men; the number of so-called 'beach boys' of Montego Bay, the Barbadian beaches, and other tourist zones of the English-speaking islands would be far fewer if it were not for the business they conduct with single tourist women.¹¹⁵

The obvious dilemma for Caribbean peoples and their governments is how to eliminate the unsavoury and demeaning character of the sex trade, now even more threatening because of the widespread incidence of AIDS, without damaging one of the region's economic staples. The problem is acute in Cuba, whose resurgent tourism is noted for the ubiquity of the teen-age *jineteras* in Havana hotel lobbies and other tourist haunts (although these young women are said to have temporarily halted their trade out of respect for the papal visit of John Paul II in January 1998). The Cuban government seeks to control this traffic by confining prostitutes to certain hotels, and by periodically arresting them in large round-ups. The government also attempts to reduce the spread of AIDS by testing regularly those in contact with foreigners (the obvious source of the infection according to Cuban officials) such as hotel waiters and taxi drivers.¹¹⁶

Other data dealing with human health from the region reflect economic and social changes consistent with modernization and urbanization. In

Barbados, two-thirds of all deaths in the 15–44 year age group are from accidents and homicides. A similar 60 per cent of deaths of Bahamian men between 15 and 44 are from accidents and violence. Some of the human costs in providing cheap labour, especially by women in the finishing industries and light-manufacturing enclaves throughout the region, are coming to light in regional health figures. Recent surveys among women working in some of the free-trade districts of the Dominican Republic show a disturbing increase in reproductive problems. And a five-year survey among a sample of Dominican women in some of these 'maquiladora' areas showed alarmingly high incidences of poisoning by heavy metals, lumbago caused by exertion, dermatoses, respiratory problems and hypertension.¹¹⁷

The Caribbean and the millennium

At the turn of the century the Caribbean's global role and overall regional identity are usually discussed, labelled and determined – as in the past – more by outsiders than by those in the Caribbean itself. Anthony Mainot expands on this idea with his term 'the Offshore Caribbean'.¹¹⁸ Noting the similarities between the activities that occur in Britain's Channel Islands and the Caribbean, Mainot points out the truism that 'being offshore is not the same as being onshore'.¹¹⁹ In its broadest sense, 'offshore' connotes an easy atmosphere and an absence of convention encompassing a range of activities, not all of them financial and not all necessarily bad. Yet 'offshore' is an outsider's term; 'getting away from it all' can be accomplished in the relaxed offshore Caribbean by a middle-class European or North American, not by a Guyanese ditchdigger or a Dominican factory seamstress.

A relaxed regulatory environment can in fact mean quite the opposite for those who supply the labour for new 'offshore' manufacturing operations which mark globalization in the region. Sociologists Alejandro Portes and José Itzigsohn note important responses to these activities that are beginning to take hold in the Caribbean. In the political realm, their survey data in several of the region's cities show that the number of community organizations that respond either favourably or negatively towards this type of production has been relatively few. Although many non-profit and grass-roots organizations oppose offshore production, when the moment comes to convert those feelings

¹¹⁴ M. Kurlansky, 1992, pp.193–4.

¹¹⁵ Polly Partullo, 1996, pp.86–91.

¹¹⁶ M. Kurlansky, 1992, pp.196–7.

¹¹⁷ Pan American Health Organization, 1998.

¹¹⁸ Anthony P. Mainot, 1993, *idem*, 1994a, pp.163–82.

¹¹⁹ Anthony P. Mainot, 1993, p.274.

into actions, it is the traditional political parties' that have spoken out.¹²⁰ In this regard, globalization evokes modest local opposition, but the 'new social movements' have not spearheaded this change.

In its narrower meaning, 'offshore' is of course routinely associated with financial activities that prosper in more relaxed regulatory environments than 'onshore', where those same dealings are subject to burdensome legal constraints and official scrutiny. Much is made of the Caribbean's international importance as an offshore banking area, a zone offering a spectrum of financial services that are comprehensible, not necessarily in a Caribbean context, but 'only...as adjuncts to the North American bloc and to the financial centers of the United States and Canada'¹²¹ The region's financial role is often portrayed as flexible and accommodating, providing a place – at least in the accounting ledgers of cyberspace – where business can be conducted readily and discreetly outside the strictures imposed by onshore proprieties. Journalists have pointed out the historical similarities between these current regional activities and piracy or smuggling, describing Caribbean quasi-legal financial practices with such colourful passages as 'buccaneer forays into banking'.¹²² Yet these whimsical descriptions should not mislead as to the genuine global impact of Caribbean banking. In the 'real' and 'shadow' economies of international finance, the Caribbean has been anything but marginal.¹²³

Just as mid-winter television advertisements beamed into North American households portray the Caribbean as sunny, safe and populated by smiling and relatively light-skinned peoples, so the region's offshore banks emphasize a conservative, colonial heritage. Brochures distributed by banks in the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands, for example, underline political stability, racial harmony and law and order.¹²⁴ But the happy combination of conservative European colonial heritages and the absence of intrusive banking regulations imposed by Britain could possibly change, if projected policy changes to establish 'overseas territories' (with associated bank regulation stringencies) in lieu of colonies come about.¹²⁵

Regardless of the particular outcome of British (or Dutch) Caribbean financial developments, the arm's-length 'offshore' attractiveness of the region has a familiar ring to historically oriented scholars of the Caribbean: that is because the region's accessibility, places and resources – rather than its peoples – always have been valued by outsiders. Ever since West African

slaves were imported to produce tropical staple crops for metropolitan markets, the socio-historical development of the Caribbean might be interpreted as one long attempt by outside powerholders to bring the region's lands, but not its peoples, into the modern world. And the ingenuity and drive of Western entrepreneurs in developing the region's lands have of course been paralleled by the resistance displayed by the region's working peoples who have pushed as hard as possible in an opposite direction, in attempting to establish physical refuges and personal identity on lands that others have viewed in different, more calculating ways.

The struggle continues. The legacy of this curious historical incongruity between Caribbean lands and the region's peoples – an incongruity produced by outsiders' demands that have in turn been met by internal resistance – is noted by many. Perhaps the most elegant term describing how this regional characteristic has affected its human populace is Orlando Patterson's 'creative nonadaptation'.¹²⁶ And it may not be inappropriate to suggest that the profusion of writers, poets, scholars and artists from the region is somehow related to this incongruity. In any case, 'offshore' perceptions of and designs on Caribbean lands are lamented throughout the islands, a collective concern echoed in St Lucian Derek Walcott's 1992 Nobel lecture:

The Caribbean is not an idyll, not to its natives. They draw their working strength from it organically, like trees, like the sea almond or the spice laurel of the heights. Its peasantry and its fishermen are not there to be loved or even photographed; they are trees who sweat, and whose bark is filmed with salt, but every day on some island, rootless trees in suits are signing favourable tax breaks with entrepreneurs, poisoning the sea almond and the spice laurel of the mountains to their roots. A morning could come in which governments might ask what happened not merely to the forests and the bays but to a whole people.¹²⁷

We are standing today on Varadero Beach, east of Havana. A strolling Canadian couple hears live music coming from the new Jamaican-run Super Club hotel and resort. As they approach the back gate from the beach, a guard intercedes and denies them access as they are not registered guests. The Canadians explain that they wish only to buy a few drinks, hear the music, and spend a few dollars. Underterred, the guard insists that they not enter the premises. Frustrated, the Canadians stroll elsewhere along the increasingly crowded ocean-front properties at Varadero.

120 A. Portes and J. Izigisoim, 1996, p.258.

121 S. M. Roberts, 1995, p.252.

122 Anthony P. Maingot, 1993, p.269.

123 B. Maurer, 1997a, p.254.

124 B. Maurer 1997a; S. M. Roberts, 1995.

125 'Goodbye', *Economist*, 7 February 1998, p.38.

126 Orlando Patterson, 1978, p.139.

127 Derek Walcott, 1993, pp.34–5.

Fast rewind back four decades to 1958. A local couple from nearby Manzanás is walking along Varadero Beach. The peninsula has few hotels and is anchored at the end by the well-known Dupont mansion, owned by the family of the United States petrochemical empire. The Manzanás couple hears music and sees a pig-roast on the beach. They walk towards the festivities for a closer look. A guard intercedes and tells them that they cannot trespass. The couple argues in vain that they will simply walk past the house, staying close to the water. Alas, the property is private and Cubans – especially uninvited ones – are not permitted along this section of the waterfront.

In the latter scenario, all began to change within one year. Private property was gradually phased out under the Castro revolution. Cubans of all classes and colours were granted access to many hotels previously reserved for foreigners. The Havana Hilton would be renamed the Havana Libre. Now, as the new century and millennium dawn, foreigners are once again mounting a presence in socialist Cuba. Accordingly, new forms of segregation are appearing in Havana and elsewhere on the island. Dollars, not doctrine, again determine access.

This fictitious episode – based upon real events which are occurring at the beginning of the twenty-first century – portrays a place and a region that have in many ways come full circle despite remarkable change. The Caribbean's diminutive and open characteristics invite, as always, the decisions and whims of outsiders. Those who inhabit the region resist, accommodate and cope as best they can. At the turn of the century, external initiatives directed toward the region are lamented, analysed and discussed in terms of 'globalization'.¹²⁸ Having suffered 'discovery', colonization and gunboat diplomacy during the past half millennium, Caribbean peoples can be forgiven if they find the term and the scenario somehow familiar.

Poised at the start of a new millennium, the Caribbean continues to resist the homogenization of its cultures while striving to enhance its quality of life. And, as always, any attempt in considering the region's future must inevitably contemplate its past. In dealing with unpredictable changes introduced or mandated from afar, Caribbean peoples have developed (from their 'creative nonadaptation') remarkable coping skills. As the twenty-first century begins, in the Caribbean and elsewhere, 'global' is now the term universally applied in hopes of capturing the new and unprecedented changes and geographical dislocations that seem to be occurring everywhere. In light of their past, the message that new and unpredictable changes are headed their way is hardly news to the peoples of the Caribbean.

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