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c/o Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work
University of the West Indies
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Subscription rates (postage included)

	INDIVIDUAL	**INSTITUTION**
Annual subscription... Vol 3 Nos 1 & 2 / 2004	US$40 UK£18 J$1200	US$60 UK£34 J$3000
Back issues	US$10 UK£6 J$600	US$15 UK£9 J$1000

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Typesetting and cover design by A.C.L. Art & Desktop Services
Cover photograph courtesy of Annika Lewinson-Morgan

ISSN 0799 1401

ISSN 0799-1401

IDEAZ

Volume 3 Numbers 1-2

2004

Civic Politics in Jamaica: New Populism or Political Breakthrough?

Obika Gray

ABSTRACT

The turn to "civic politics" in Jamaica and efforts to affirm the rights of citizens represent an important departure in national politics.

On the one hand, this development suggests a new, even subversive form of political empowerment and political mobilization beyond the traditional political categories.

On the other hand, however, in the context of Jamaica's class and power inequalities, the summoning of political actors' civic identities by state elites and their detractors may well amount to a new kind of populism.

Now state and non-state elite mobilization of the popular implies delivery of new public goods: effective exercise of state capacity; the practice of a virtuous politics; and even the jettisoning of traditional struggles over political spoils.

This article examines the political and ideological implications of this political turn and assesses its meaning for political change in Jamaica.

Keywords: civic politics, civic society, predation politics, civic populism

Introduction

The turn to governance and to the effective management of public affairs is now a fairly entrenched process in Jamaica and in the wider Caribbean.[1] More specifically, state and non-state actors' recent affirmation of a civic politics in Jamaica, their summoning of civic identities rather than partisan ones, and their efforts to make the Jamaican citizen an empowered political actor, all point to interesting developments in the character and tone of Jamaican politics.[2]

The evidence for this change is apparent from key developments over the last 15 years or so.[3] They include:

- politicians' hasty retreat and repudiation of political gunmen and the state's evasion of greedy, supplicant clients.
- the parties' ideological demobilization of supporters and the parties' return to a centrist, pragmatic politics.
- the shift to a consensus model of policy formulation and decision-making between state and society.

IDEAZ Vol. 3 Nos.1&2 2004 pp. 3-11
ISSN 0799 1401. © University of the West Indies,
Dept of Sociology, Psychology & Social Work

- passage of legislation to restrain state power, make public policy more transparent and public officials more accountable.
- the adoption of Citizen Charters in the Office of the Prime Minister and in a variety of public agencies with the purpose of affirming the public's right to the efficient receipt of state services.
- the signing of memorandums of understanding between the state, the private sector and trade unions.
- retreat from base partisanship in the execution of public decisions and adoption of a techno-managerial style in the making of public policy.
- resort to enunciations that seem to privilege the 'national interest' and the 'public interest' over narrowly partisan and expedient interests, the rights of the citizens against the prerogatives of the state, and the recuperation of civil society and its autonomy from a hitherto debased relationship to Jamaica's parasitic and warlordist state.

These developments represent an important nuance in the etiquette of Jamaican statecraft, and in the opposition to it, and they hint at a potential sea-change not so much in mass political values, as a gradual transformation of elite political culture, especially among defensive but change-oriented elements of the liberal political class.[4]

Why this should be happening is no surprise. Given Jamaica's decades-long crisis that saw the collapse of state authority, the jettisoning of conventional morality and the massive accumulation of an insolent and uncivil social power by a rebellious counter-society, elites' embrace of political reform is quite understandable. In the throes of a great crisis, the political class appears to be moving away from predation to civism as a form of rule.

I have commented elsewhere on the destructive consequences that a noxious statecraft has had on Jamaican politics and society since the 1960s.[5] This form of political rule wedded violent factionalism and destructive clientelism to social mobilization and cultural solicitation of the militant urban poor.

The results were predictable. It produced carnage and death, damaged already weak democratic norms, corrupted the political culture and undermined the legitimacy of public institutions. Indeed, Jamaica's drive for national development, as elsewhere in other parts of the parts of the periphery, produced overpoliticized notions of development and debased forms of popular participation. This error led to the corruption of politics, the formation of a violent and morally flexible state structure, and the political marginalization of citizens.

Political Parasitism: A Noxious Model of Power

In the halcyon years following independence, Jamaican political leaders had evidently subscribed to Kwame Nkrumah's famous maxim: "Seek ye first the political kingdom, and all else shall be added unto you." Decades later by virtue of bitter experience and disappointment those hopes were dashed, as the quest for the promised political kingdom turned to dust. The culprit was not so much political clientelism, as a debased moral culture that informed the search for power in a winner-take-all political culture.

One consequence of this debased politics was that the Jamaican civic public realm, so lively and vigorous as political independence neared, grew more and more stunted in the aftermath of that independence. This was so much the case that since the 1970s this realm was effectively emptied of both civic content and civil politics.

This emptying occurred because a motley crew of criminal gunmen, populist middle-class politicians, greedy supplicants and armed "political contractors" seized this public space for their base designs. The consequence was a debased public realm, a corrupted political culture, and Jamaicans' ever-increasing flight from politics.

These outcomes were not accidental. Rather, they came as a consequence of politicians' inventive construction of a unique repertoire of power in Jamaica that I call political parasitism. The identity of Jamaican political power then is its parasitism.

By that I mean a form of power that exercises its sway not so much by the expulsion of hostile ideologies and contrary socio-political tendencies, but by the harnessing and feeding on the antinomies found in these clashing, contradictory tendencies.

For instance, in the quest for political dominance, Jamaican state actors embraced democratic norms and practices but joined them to their polar opposites. So for example, at one moment politicians developed enunciations that decried criminality, affirmed the rule of law and championed the value of public morality. This rhetoric was backed by legislation and the active interdiction of criminals. This fitted quite nicely with the obligations appropriate to a democratic society governed by the rule of law.

At another moment, however, these same politicians, driven by political necessities, showered politically protected criminals and supplicant clients with warm accolades, handed them favours and supported their claims on the political parties. Where the rebellious poor received no party protection and challenged the state outside the clientelist structure, they were mowed down by police whose extra-judicial murders were abetted by complicit politicians.

This resort to outlawry fitted equally nicely with an aspect of Jamaican political culture that enabled an informal politics which, in the light of weak public opinion and absence of effective countervailing institutions, encouraged not just extra-judicial murder but a range of extra-constitutional practices. This combination of outlawry and constitutionalism led to moral ridge-riding and political border-crossings as political actors joined constitutionalism to the informality of discretionary politics.

This same moral dilation and political border-crossing is also apparent in the state's posture toward settlers' unlawful capturing of land, in the government's response to incidents of police brutality, and in state agents' stance on the appropriation of public funds to satisfy the demands of favoured political clients.

In each case, Jamaican statecraft was capable of condemning the morality associated with these events at one moment in time, while valorizing them at the next.

Witnessing this shifting definition of propriety, morality and law, an unsophisticated political gunman or a ghetto client seeking the spoils of politics, could be forgiven for wondering out loud: "Why the rass dem man deh caan mek up dem mind and stick wid one ting?"

The issue, however, was not the state's political indirection and uncertainty, as it was political dilation and moral border-crossing as statecraft.

As I've observed elsewhere, as the Jamaican state moves back and forth across the border between the legal and the illegal, between the shadow economy and the formal economy, and between reliance on constitutionally mandated security forces and dependence on private party-linked militias, it becomes something new in the process.[6]

This new identity is its parasitism. Yet the exercise of parasitic rule is neither essentially for the benefit of the rich nor unalterably against the poor. Similarly, parasitic rule does not employ state power in favour of order against disorder; it does not emphasize legal-democratic measures over illegal mercenary tactics in political contestations, nor is it reluctant to embrace both the rule of law and the subversion of that law in making public policy.[7]

The point here is that this dilating state power with its flexible morality and shifting definition of the politically permissible is a unique method of political management.

It draws on strong traditions not just of liberal political pluralism and political freedom, but also on a Jamaican culture of political outlawry, informality, guile and base criminality.

The Jamaican state summoned and assimilated these two aspects of Jamaican political culture – the formal constitutional and the informal illegal – the better to exercise its sway over middle-class clients and ghetto supplicants.

This authority, it should be noted, is not wholly tyrannical. On the contrary, it pays substantial respect to constitutional norms, shares power with the poor, and exhibits a communications politics that's redolent with popular values.

Those values with their ambiguous combination of militancy for black freedom, and contingent propensity for social outlawry, piracy and crime, find in the ontological life of Jamaican state power a culturally familiar politics that binds them to it.

Selective violence against rebel cultures of the urban poor and warm solicitation of the antinomy in their cultural values – along with gestures to constitutional norms – have kept the Afro-Jamaican majority in thrall.

Parasitic rule, then, is a means of social cohesion and political control. Moreover, in contexts of economic dependence and because of weak and uneven class formation in Jamaica, both by-the-book constitutionalism and off-the-books official outlawry become repertoires of this culturally familiar power.

Elite Civism: Horizontal Challenge to Power

How then to make sense of the seeming political shift away from this predation politics to civism and away from 'stop-go' policy-making to the existing style of governance which I shall call political managerialism?

Turning first to civism and its recuperation, it is clear that this is less the project of a weakened and embattled political class, than it is the agenda of emboldened civic groups, crusading journalists, notable political figures, and embryonic third party formations. These latter spoke up in defense of human rights, called for public accountability of politicians, and demanded clean government.

What is remarkable about the such groups is not so much the demands made of weakened politicians, as these groups' bid to rescue the idea of the public interest, to restore the category of the citizen, and to promote the norm of civism (autonomous citizen-based activity).

This development and its manifestation in various forms of political activism ranging from media-inspired 'vox pop' call-in radio programmes that allowed citizens to vent their rage against political power, to local human rights groups' summoning of international watch-dog agencies like Amnesty International, testify to the reinvigoration of a previously stunted public opinion, the recuperation of a near-dormant civil society, and the new authority of citizen politics.

The achievements and effectiveness of civic groups such as Citizens Action for Free and Fair Elections (CAFFE), Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ), and Families against State Terrorism (FAST) confirm not just renewed interest in civism, but also non-partisan civic organs' ability to prevail against a reluctant state, particularly when these civic groups focus and sharply define their concerns.

Compared to the collapse of third-party political formations in recent years, these civic groups' entry into the political arena produced modest, but better results. CAFFE, for example, earned public respect for its work in cleaning up electoral practices, while

Jamaicans for Justice effectively denounced police brutality, criticized the law's disregard for the rights of the accused, and successfully pressed for international scrutiny of police killings.

There can be little doubt that these are worthwhile achievements. Still, the modesty of these outcomes, continuing state hostility to human rights claims, as well as the public's ambiguous stance concerning the merits of human rights in a high-crime society with spiraling murder rates, point up difficulties and constraints associated with this form of civism.

Moreover, it's no secret that Jamaicans For Justice – no matter its principled defense of the black poor – is a brown middle-class formation headed by a few notable personalities, without any real social connection to the Afro-Jamaican majority. Thus far, and mostly for the worse, only the two dominant political parties have established these enduring and affectionate ties to the Jamaican people.

The point is not that the JFJ can establish no gainful connection with the poor on issues of importance to them. Rather, it is that JFJ civism is problematic. Confined as it is to mostly brown middle-and-upper middle-class elite circles, and to complex legal disputations and petitioning over the constitutional exercise of power or lack thereof, JFJ civism seems to reflect political relations more akin to a family quarrel over who gets to speak for the poor and decide the terms of their social domination. This middle-class clash has thus far evaded any mobilization of the poor that links their social justice ideologies to either JFJ or state-led civism.

In sum, it appears that this elite form of civism, though well-meaning, is not really transformative of class and social relations in Jamaica, as it is constrained by the impediments of class leadership, the dynamics of its kin politics and the fetters of liberalism.

In these circumstances citizen politics rather than realizing its radical potential of challenging dominant class power in ways that empower the whole subordinate class of Afro-Jamaican poor, merely falls back into the recurring middle class default mode. This is the well-known pattern of seeking reforms on the basis of elite agreements struck from on high and without the people's input and participation.

Rather surprising, therefore, is that while the crisis of predation politics encouraged the formation of new centers of political opposition and power beyond the state, these middle class poles of opposition in summoning the citizen, failed to invest this supra-identity with the subversive content drawn from black popular militancy.

If in the name of reform, social groups like Jamaicans for Justice found in civism a means of challenging power, albeit in limited ways, then given the identity of state power sketched above, it is not surprising that the Jamaican state also found in civism's universalist identity a means for recovering some of its lost legitimacy.

Under pressure from detractors at home and abroad, Jamaican political leaders also embraced this notion of citizen politics. Complementing this shift, these leaders also moved from a 'stop-go' approach to policy-making to more technocratic modes of political management.

With respect to state support for civic politics, it is the incumbent PNP which has moved significantly along this road – certainly much more so than the more conservative and cautious JLP.

Citizen or Loyalist: Jamaican Statecraft in Transition

In the last decade, the PNP has encouraged some forms of citizen participation that do not threaten its power. It has put in place citizen charters, encouraged the development of parish development committees, and backed local government reform. These and the

roster of measures identified above indicate the extent to which the PNP has strengthened society against the historic dominance of the Jamaican state.

What is interesting about state-driven support for civic politics on the one hand is its apparent conformity with known patterns of Jamaican statecraft: resort to symbolic manipulation and cooptation of often antagonistic socio-political tendencies without fulfilling their radical potential.

Hence in the narrative of the Jamaican state, the summoning of civic politics becomes a basis for extending the state's ideological authority. Moving away from predation politics into civism allows the state to associate itself with newer forms of dissent now rooted in claims to political empowerment and mobilization of the citizen rather than the political loyalist.

In an age where both confiscatory socialism and developmental populism are politically discredited, state-driven civic populism may well offer a new basis for political legitimacy beyond the traditional political categories.

After all, in this form of civic populism political actors are recruited not on the basis of class, ethnic, or cultural belonging, but rather on the basis of a common, supra-identity beyond confining political partisanships.

In the hands of anti-system actors that are committed to social transformation, this form of civic mobilization possesses a radical potential because it opens up a new social space that is universalist and transnational. The subversive content of this form of civic mobilization should therefore not be devalued. Again, the radical potential was achieved when a local human rights group challenged a stubborn Jamaican state by successfully inviting international human rights agencies to look into incidents of police brutality.

By internationalizing the issue, and by appealing to the non-partisan supra-identity of Jamaican citizens' human rights, local actors bypassed divisive political relations tied to older forms of partisanship on the local scene.

When taken up by embattled state elites in a neo-liberal world, however, their defense of civism is at best ambiguous. In Jamaica state elites' embrace of civism is contingent and uncertain, and always on the look-out for new ways to recuperate power.

Still, this state's flirtation with civism could threaten and even undermine for good, the old paratisism and its exclusionary politics.

Like the contributions of its civic group counterpart, state-led initiatives that restrain state power and enhance popular needs do make a big difference. When backed by effective implementation and surveillance to entrench citizen-enhancing measures, this endorsement of citizen politics is more than meaningful – it is deeply subversive of older forms of exercising power and can provoke a nasty civil war within the party that champions this initiative. This does not mean of course that the alternative form it adopts is necessarily transformative much less revolutionary. It is merely to say that in moving away from predation politics, this later politics creates a contested space for the realization of radical possibilities.

After all, in state-driven forms of civism, its popular appeal is its claim to empower the citizen and its promise is to deliver public goods in a non-partisan way.

When this happens, as it now does in limited ways in Jamaica, the state gains some legitimacy and wins a modicum of popular support.

That unfolding process of favouring society over the prerogatives of the state, however fragile and uncertain, is now more than a decade old. It is gaining ground in elite political culture, and it seems unstoppable as various formations contest for public influence and political support.

Where a hitherto violently partisan state summons its supporters not on the basis of their partisan ties, but on their presumed rights as citizens, this is not just good news.

It is also disruptive of the conventional wisdom and is subversive of the political status quo.

I do not believe that this particular antinomy in which popular claims anchored in universalist and transnational values that challenge state power, as opposed to securing narrowly partisan causes, can be absorbed without significant ruptures and division with the state and among its personnel.

Unlike earlier third world mobilizing ideologies that invoked "the popular" against some narrow dominant class interest, civism-as-ideology does not easily lend itself to the kind of manipulation, debasement and social polarization associated with quarrels over redistributive populism, revolutionary socialism, or neo-liberal capitalism.

While small civic groups' approach to citizen politics may be compromised by class association and blunted in their political reach, state-driven "citizen politics" that speaks in the name of citizens' presumptive rights against those of the state, is a very destabilizing move indeed.

It is bound to create problems for Jamaica's politically weakened governors who must operate in a society where democratic values are deeply entrenched and a rich associational life beyond the state is jealously guarded.

I think, then, that the Jamaican state's turn to what I shall call "civic populism" can be destabilizing of predation politics. Civic populism, no matter how weak, is likely to create turbulence and ruptures in Jamaican statecraft. And this disturbance can only embolden already alienated constituencies nursing historic grievances rooted in denial of their rights as citizens. It should also encourage social movements to see the radical potential of displacing this liberal civism with something else that links citizen politics to wider issues of class culture and inequality in Jamaica.

Barring this development current PNP enunciation of citizen politics is likely to pit PNP personnel accustomed to doing things in the old ways against their colleagues who are experimenting with new approaches to power. I need only cite recent rumblings inside the PNP that seem to confirm this clash. There, cabinet members prepared to violate civism, war with colleagues who see civism a route to power and popular support.

Thus we recently heard Minister of National Security Peter Phillips utter his mea culpa for having attended a PNP gunman's funeral even as he warned his colleagues against consorting with criminals.

Similarly, Local Government Minister Portia Simpson recently broke party lines and abstained from voting against an Opposition resolution that criticized the PNP's budgetary allocation for the fire department. The harsh manner with which she was denounced by her PNP colleagues, both male and female, signals something of the danger of toying with civism.

Both incidents which found PNP leaders at odds with colleagues accustomed to the old ways of doing things, confirm the ongoing embattled restoration of the public interest and the sharpening of inner party strife as this nettle of the public good pricks the fingers of the PNP brass.

Civism's Dark Side

This paean to the liberating potential of civic politics need not ignore civism's dark side however. It is expressed in a variety of contrary tendencies that take the following form.

- civic groups and notable personalities' insistence on the suspension of Afro-Jamaicans' civil liberties in the interest of recovering a civil, democratic politics.
- the discontinuity between politicians' bracing calls for civic empowerment and their deafening silence and inaction on the dismantling of political garrisons.

- failure to connect the narrative of citizen politics to the ethnic and class-driven narratives of black popular militancy.
- the compromising of commitment to citizen politics by the countervailing shift to technocratic and managerial enunciations and practices that privilege the managerial elite.
- the state elite's refusal to countenance mass involvement in this renewal of citizen politics.

Conclusion

The revival of citizen politics marks the latest phase in the ideological and political evolution of the Jamaican political class.

Civic politics and its celebration is the new project over which different sections of the politicized middle class are contending in the aftermath of the breakdown of predation politics. This contention is apparent from the clashes and flare-ups within the parties and between the state and presumptive middle-class champions of the poor.

Summoning the citizen to exercise presumed rights and politicians' willingness to countenance the trimming of their own prerogatives along with their readiness to clip the wings of state, highlight the new direction of Jamaican statecraft.

I've argued that this modality is ambiguous and problematic. It is entangled in the old politics of predation and cooptation, even as it moves to create new bases of legitimization.

Confined as it is within the framework of liberal dispensation, state encouragement of citizen politics, for all its destabilizing potential, summons a puny subjectivity.

That is, state-sponsored and lobby group civism tend to hail citizens as consumers of public goods in a market economy and as dissatisfied individuals in a politically liberal setting.

Rather than tapping into a subjectivity that connects the call for citizens' rights vis-a-vis the state, to forms of black militancy which are persistently questioning the structure of inequality and the character of power at home and abroad, liberal civism arrests the radical promise of citizen politics.

The development of this latter project, this other citizen politics, in which 'raced' Afro-Jamaican subjects are summoned awaits its inventive social movement.

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Notes

1 For a discussion of governance in the Caribbean, see *Governance in the age of globalization: Caribbean perspectives*, ed., Kenneth O. Hall and Dennis Benn (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2003).

2 For an example of the turn to civic politics even among former detractors of the Jamaican political system, see Trevor Munroe, *For a new beginning* (Kingston: CARICOM Publishers, 1994).

3 The changing face of Jamaican democracy is reviewed in Trevor Munroe's "Transforming Jamaican democracy through transparency: A framework for action", in *Fostering transparency and preventing corruption in Jamaica*, ed. Laura Nelson (Atlanta: The Carter Center, Emory University, 2002).

4 This positive disposition to political change, albeit ambiguous and exercised in a highly circumscribed manner, is much more developed in the PNP than in the JLP.

5 See Obika Gray, *Demeaned but empowered: The social power of the urban poor in Jamaica* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004).

6 Ibid., p.8.

7 Ibid.

The Impact of Failed Privatization on a Developing Country: A Case Study of the Sugar Company of Jamaica

Diaram Ramjeesingh

ABSTRACT

Sugar plays an important role in Jamaica's socio-political economy. For this reason there was a reluctance on the part of government to divest the industry. In 1993, however, the Jamaican government unexpectedly took the decision to privatize the Sugar Company of Jamaica (SCJ). The paper argues that the decision to divest was influenced partly by the indebtedness of the estates and partly by the inability of government to provide the evel of funding needed to recapitalize the company. Partial privatization was used as a means of accessing private sector resources to capitalize the estates. However, after four years of private ownership the SCJ reverted to public ownership. The paper argues that the failure of sugar privatization is linked primarily to the politics of sugar and the failure to fully privatize the industry.

Keywords: privatization, divest, Sugar Company of Jamaica, investors

Introduction

In the early 80s, Jamaica like many Latin American countries began to question the rationale for public ownership because the performance of state-owned enterprises was disappointing and they became a major drain on public resources. During the 1980s and 1990s, successive governments engaged in wide-scale privatization of public-owned enterprises and assets. By the end of the 90s some 238 public-owned enterprises/ assets/ activities were privatized (Ramjeesingh 2001). The sugar industry was among those public owned assets that the government was forced to privatize.

The performance of the Jamaican sugar industry, in the 1960s, could be described as poor. Towards the end of that decade, falling output, increased indebtedness and factory inefficiencies pushed the industry to a point where three of the larger sugar estates, Frome, Monymusk and Bernard Lodge, were on the verge of closing (Brown and McBain 1983). In an effort to save jobs and keep the industry afloat, the Jamaican government took the decision, in 1971, to acquire the estates. The fortunes of the estates, however, did not change under public ownership. They continued to perform poorly over the next four years and in 1975 they were transformed into sugar workers' cooperatives. The expectation was that change in the ownership structure and reorganization of

IDEAZ Vol. 3 Nos. 1-2/ 2004, pp. 12-18
ISSN 0799 1401. © University of the West Indies,
Dept of Sociology, Psychology & Social Work

operations would have boosted sugar output. This goal was never realized as the cooperatives were overwhelmed with problems and by 1980 were on the verge of bankruptcy (Brown and McBain 1983). In 1981 the estates reverted to public ownership (Thomas 1995).

After one failed attempt, the three sugar factories were privatized in 1993 to a consortium of local and foreign private sector investors, with the Jamaican government retaining a 49% minority equity interest.* The sugar company of Jamaica (SCJ) was established as a holding company for the three estates, which accounted for some 70% of the country's sugar output.

Although, in broad terms, the Jamaican privatization programme appeared successful, there were a few instances where privatization had failed to achieve the desired results. One of the most notable cases was that of the Sugar Company of Jamaica. After four years of operation the government of Jamaica was forced to reacquire the SCJ (Hevan 1999; Clarke 2001).

All indicators on performance suggested that the estates were weak candidates for privatization as they were beset with production problems including inefficient factory operations and low productivity. In 1992, the combined losses of the three estates were in the region of J$102.9mn (Ministry Paper 34, 1994). In spite of their unfavourable financial standing the estates were privatized in 1993.

The privatization and subsequent de-privatization of the sugar estates bring into focus several important issues about privatization in a developing country. The purpose of this paper is to identify and examine some of these issues. It explains why the estates had to be privatized and looks at how government was able to induce private investors to acquire majority equity interest in the estates. The paper also explains why change in ownership failed to improve the performance of the estates and concludes by looking at some of the lessons that could be drawn for future privatization.

Why Privatized?

Government in 1992 began negotiations with a consortium of investors consisting of two local companies, J. Wray & Nephew, the Manufacturers Merchant Bank and the renowned supra national corporation, Tate & Lyle, with a view to privatize the sugar estates. After a year of negotiations, sale agreements were concluded in 1993 and ownership of the estates was transferred to the Sugar Company of Jamaica.

This action raises several important questions. One such question is, why were the estates privatized? This decision was influenced by a combination of factors. One such factor had to do with pressure exerted by multilateral agencies. From the early 1980s, institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank had been agitating for the privatization of government owned sugar estates. As indicated by Thomas (1995), the privatization of sugar was a highly contentious issue in several structural adjustment programmes under which the Jamaican economy was managed, both during the 1980s and in the early 1990s. In spite of the relentless pressure from these institutions, the government of the 80s, however, was reluctant to bring the industry under private ownership (Adam et al., 1992).

The government of the 1990s seemed to display the same kind of reluctance as its predecessor. This became evident in 1991 when the World Bank withdrew funding earmarked to rehabilitate the industry. In spite of this action, the estates were not among the set of enterprises approved for privatization (Ministry Paper 34, 1991). The exclusion of the estates was a clear signal that the new administration was unwilling to privatize sugar. Yet, in 1992 a divestment committee was established to begin preparatory work on the privatization of the sugar estates (Ministry Paper 34, 1994).

The sudden decision to privatize the estates clearly suggests that there were other compelling reasons why government had to rethink and change its position. One such factor was the indebtedness of the estates. Between 1985 and 1992, the state owned estates (including Long Pond) accumulated $3,441mn. debt (Ministry Paper 34, 1994). Technically, the estates were insolvent for some time and had become major drains on the fiscal budget. If they were to remain under public ownership, the treasury, at some point, would have to assume these liabilities. Hence, the drain on fiscal resources would have continued. Privatization, therefore, had to be seen as a means of eliminating this drain and reducing short term pressures on the national budget (Adam et al. 1992).

The onerous debt burden amassed by the estates had several causes. The main one was the high levels of inefficiencies that existed in factory and field operations. This problem was so pervasive that in the six years leading up to privatization the estates consistently failed to satisfy the industry efficiency standard (SIA, *Annual Reports*). This was due to years of under capitalization of the industry (Task Force Report 2001) which resulted in the emergence of a technological gap and a general deterioration in the basic infra structure of the estates (Hevan 1999).

To improve efficiency the estates had to be recapitalized. Funding, however, became a major stumbling block. Perhaps one could argue that it was the principal reason why government suddenly had to change its position on privatization. Although there is no published data as to the amount of cash needed to retool the estates, one recent estimate suggested that it would take some $2,934.8mn to bring the industry to a break even position (Clarke 2000). Maitland (2000) argued that this estimate was extremely conservative and that the cash needs could be closer to $5,852mn.Whatever the cash need was, it appeared to be substantial. The issue was whether government had the capacity to provide the funds needed to retool the estates. The answer to this question was clearly articulated in Ministry Paper 34 (1994) which was presented to parliament by Prime Minister Patterson: "It was clear that substantial capital injection would be required once again to retool the estates for efficiency and increased production. These funds could not be provided by the government."

It is quite clear that funding was a major stumbling block as the financial resources needed to recapitalize the estates could not be provided by government. It was against this background that the administration took the decision to privatize the estates. Privatization, therefore, was used as a means of accessing private sector resources to recapitalize the estates. As argued by Ru and Wettenhall (1992), this kind of response is expected whenever the operation of the state is constrained by complex budgetary and administrative constraints.

As compelling as these reasons were, the socio-political influence of sugar on government's decision to privatize the estates could not be ignored. As indicated by Clarke (1999), sugar over the years had emerged as a potent social and political force. Closure of the estates would have increased unemployment and the incidence of poverty in the sugar communities to intolerable levels. In such an event the political costs could have been severe. As Clarke and Cull (1997) argue, politicians choose to privatize only when the political cost of maintaining state ownership exceeds the benefits.

Attracting Investors

Having examined the reasons behind the government's decision to privatize, it is important to examine the next issue, how did government manage to induce private investors to purchase the estates? In other words, what inducements/concessions were granted to the consortium?

The need to provide concessions was influenced by two factors. First, there was the recognition that the market for the estates consisted of a handful of potential buyers only. Among these, there were even fewer players who either had the capacity to finance such an investment or the willingness to commit resources to the industry for the long haul. Secondly, because of the unsatisfactory performance of the estates, government was negotiating from a position of weakness. This did not go unnoticed to potential investors. Without exception they attempted to exploit this condition by submitting very low bids. Although the estates were valued at $3.1b, the highest offer received was $770mn (Ministry Paper 34,1994). Even though the final sale price of $1.36b was a vast improvement over the initial offer, it was still below the market value of the equity sold to the consortium.

Besides selling the estates below their market value, government, also agreed to:

- write off a substantial amount of debt;
- partial deregulation of sugar imports; and
- reduce the work force.

As suggested by Larson and Borrell (1997) debt issues generally tended to be one of the major obstacles to the privatization of state owned enterprises. Because of the high cost of servicing debt accumulated under public ownership, most potential investors tended to shy away from businesses that were normally appealing. It was evident that government understood this problem and decided to write off $2,679mn of the $3,441mn debt owed by the four estates (Ministry Paper 34, 1994). Without a doubt, it was one of the most important concessions made to the consortium. With no heavy debt burden, it was expected that the new owners would find it easier to raise funds in the capital market.

The lifeline of the Jamaican sugar industry has been its access to protected markets. These preferential trading arrangements, over the years, had generated significant welfare gains to the economy through increased stability in export earnings and income transfers (Northover and Thomas 1999). Unfortunately, sugar preferences created negative outcomes, as well. One adverse consequence was the emergence of extensive protectionist policy by the state in the industry (Indalmanie 2002). The intrusive role of government occurred for two reasons. First, there was the desire to ensure that export quotas in the protected markets were satisfied. This was driven by the need to maintain the foreign exchange earnings of the industry which was critical to the economy. Secondly, because much of domestic production is normally diverted to meet export quotas in the protected markets, it was not unusual for sugar shortages to develop in the domestic market. Shortfalls had to be satisfied through imports (Task Force Report 2001). Ostensibly, government assumed control of the commercial functions of imported sugar so as to protect the interest of the consumer.

One year after privatization some of these commercial functions were divested to the private sector. In particular, sugar import (except for brown sugar) was decontrolled and domestic price was allowed to be market driven. With the introduction of a partially liberalized market, steps were taken to protect the industry from cheaper imported sugar. Through an import tax regime a minimum import entry price was established (SIA 1995). As borne out by subsequent events, this safeguard mechanism failed to prevent imported sugar from entering the domestic market below the minimum import price.

The estates were unable to compete in the global sugar market because of high production cost which at times was twice as high as the world market price. Production

cost was determined partly by technical inefficiencies in operations and partly by high employment cost. To reduce cost and make the estates more attractive, government conceded to a restructuring of the workforce. To achieve this objective a generous severance package was provided with a promise that workers would be allowed to own equity in the new company (Ministry Paper 34, 1994). This promise, however, was never realized.

Why was Privatization Unsuccessful?

The failure of sugar privatization can be linked to several causes. We list the following three factors as the leading causes which led to the failure of sugar:

- the politics of sugar
- absence of competition
- adverse effects of macro stabilization policies

Sugar is important to the Jamaican economy because it is a major foreign exchange earner and the largest employer of labour. However, to the politicians sugar is a potent political instrument. Together, the sugar communities represent some 13 to 15 parliamentary seats. Public ownership allows government through political pay-offs to mobilize and maintain political support of the sugar electorate. Full private control would completely remove direct political influence over the parliamentary seats. Partial privatization, however, provided an avenue for government to continue to influence the sugar constituents.

As Shirley and Walsh (2000) argue, motivation for privatization is critical in determining how a firm performs. Although governments usually claim greater efficiency, broadening of ownership, etc., as the official goals of privatization, non economic objective(s) can enter the process and interfere with the operation of the firm. Boycko et al. (1996) suggest that non economic interests may enter the process because not all members of a government support privatization. Those who are against tend to block reform when it is in the interest of their constituents.

The case of sugar was not dissimilar. Private ownership did not lead to the anticipated repositioning of the estates. As suggested by James (2002) the method of restructuring became a major issue of disagreement between the government and the consortium. As a consequence, the planned post privatization restructuring did not materialize, leaving many of the problems that the estates faced prior to privatization virtually intact (Indalmanie 2002).

Although private ownership and competitive markets are expected to go hand in hand, sugar privatization was about changing property rights only, as the market structure in which the SCJ had to operate was completely ignored. Advocates of privatization argue that SOE problems are linked with the form of ownership. Managers controlling these enterprises are said to lack the incentives to run them efficiently because public sector monitoring and evaluating systems are weak or non existent.

It is argued that a change in property rights provides private owners with the incentives to monitor the performance of managers. This articulation suggests that private ownership and control promote managerial efficiency and it is the primary determinant of enterprise performance (Boardman and Vining 1992).

Yarrow (1986) disagrees with this articulation and contends that performance depends more on market structure than on ownership. He concludes that to emphasize ownership over market structure/competition is ill-advised. Caves (1990) put forward a

similar view arguing that private ownership is inefficient without competition and is the source of allocative and productive efficiencies.

The SCJ post privatization performance supports the positions adopted by Yarrow (1986) and Caves (1990). By not opening the industry to competition government created an economic environment that did not encourage nor advance efficiency. Of the eight estates that existed at the time of privatization, six were under public ownership and the remaining two were private companies. The SCJ estates which accounted for 70 per cent of total sugar output became the dominant player in the industry. The formation and privatization of the SCJ, in an already highly concentrated industry, helped to create near monopoly like conditions – which was inimical to competition. Thus, it was easy to predict that the company would not respond to demand conditions within this market environment (Indalmanie 2002).

Implementation of macroeconomic stabilization policies contributed to the demise of sugar privatization as well. One obvious weakness of the privatization process was the absence of a coherent policy framework to provide the industry with some measure of protection from the adverse effects of these stabilization policies. Since government is expected to make major economic policy decisions in the national interest, the effect of certain policies can impose serious financial costs to an industry. Exchange rate policy, for example, has always had serious implications for sugar earnings. Depreciation of the domestic currency increases earnings denominated in local currency while an appreciation reduces it. In attempting to control inflation the Jamaican dollar was allowed to appreciate against the US dollar in 1996, moving from $40 to $35, while remaining at that level for almost a year. This policy action resulted in a substantial loss in sugar earnings to the industry. One recent estimate puts it at $334.97mn (Indalmanie 2002). As indicated by Cameron (1996), the size and timing of the loss served to intensify the financial crisis at the SCJ.

The company's financial performance was also affected by a major shift in macroeconomic policy in 1995. To defend the exchange rate and reduce inflation government moved towards a high interest rate regime which became the main instrument of macroeconomic policy initiatives between 1995 and 2000 (Ministry of Finance, "Budget Memorandum", Annual). Rising interest rates severely diminished the company's capacity to service existing debt stock, while at the same time increased its reliance on borrowings in order to continue operating. Within three years the SCJ had accumulated a $4.9b debt (*Gleaner* 1998). The heavy debt burden exacerbated the company's cash flow problems and eliminated any chance of major capital investments which were urgently needed to improve efficiency.

Lessons to be Drawn

Most of the lessons from sugar privatization are not new. Other privatization studies, including Wint (1992) and Taylor (2000), identify similar problems. It appears, however, that some of the general lessons from these studies were ignored. Several of the mistakes made, then, reappeared in the case of sugar. It is not our intention to revisit these issues here. Instead, our discussion will concentrate on three problems which we think hold important lessons for future privatization of sugar.

We begin by questioning whether the form of privatization was critical to the success of the SCJ. The answer is in the affirmative for two reasons. The first and probably the most important was that partial privatization diluted government control but did not eliminate its political influence. Full privatization would have severely curtailed political influence peddling by the state, thus forcing managers to be more accountable to the new owners.

The second reason was that under public ownership the estates operated under very soft budget constraints as loss making entities repeatedly received financial bailouts without the imposition of sanctions or penalties. This paternalistic behaviour of government did not encourage managers to pursue nor maintain a semblance of efficiency. Whether by design or not, the decision to retain partial ownership sent the wrong signal. By not disengaging from the industry it is reasonable to assume that most managers expected government to continue its paternalistic role if the estates were to encounter difficulties. Full private ownership would have completely transferred control and finance from the public domain to the private sector, thereby, eliminating this kind of expectation. With this new reality managers would be forced to deal with the rigours of a hard budget constraint that other private firms routinely faced.

The second issue relates to the restructuring of the estates. Although it was recognized by all involved that the estates needed to be restructured, it did not happen because of disagreement on the nature and scope of restructuring that was required. It is argued here that for privatization to be successful restructuring had to include changes in top management, changes in the size and skill composition of the work force, and modernization of the physical plants.

To terminate the legacy of public ownership top level managers should have been replaced after privatization so that the new enterprise could refocus on the important goal of profit maximization (Linz 2000). The new managers, however, must be committed to the goal of efficiency and be immune to political influence.

Over-employment is usually a by-product of public ownership because the political goal of public ownership is employment creation and not profit maximization. Privatization may therefore require some reduction in the size of the workforce. To achieve competitiveness however, a reskilling of the work force had to be an indispensable component of restructuring (Chullen 1998). Plant modernization would have facilitated the replacement of obsolete machines and equipment with state of the art technology including automation and computer controlled processes. At this end of the restructuring process however, capital injection would have to be adequate so that the risks of moral hazard and repeated capitalization are eliminated.

The final issue is whether firms like the SCJ can become efficient under private ownership. In the literature, it is suggested that the threat of bankruptcy usually forces managers of private firms to vigorously pursue the goal of efficiency. But as Ramamurti (1992) argues, while this may be the case for some private firms it may not be true for private firms that are either "too big" or "too important" to fail. As a major foreign exchange earner and the largest employer of labour in the economy, the SCJ definitely fits this characterization. But being too important to fail implies that the discipline normally imposed on managers from the threat of bankruptcy was completely removed. Without such a threat managers had very little incentive to improve efficiency. Perhaps it was precisely for this reason that the issue of efficiency was never properly addressed. Managers must have recognized that in the event of a financial melt down it was unlikely that government would allow the company to disappear.

The idea that large and important firms should not disappear needs rethinking. This is particularly so when such firms represent major drains on public resources. Probably, the time has come for government to fully privatize the SCJ and to let the market determine its role and importance to the Jamaican economy.

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Notes

* Government had also leased 35,000 acres of cane lands to the consortium. For this reason we shall, here on, refer to the privatization of the estates which includes the factories.

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Tourism Development, Mayan Cultural Resurgence and Prospects for Indigenous Tourism in Mexico*

Ian Boxill & Johannes Maerk

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examines the relationship between the growth of tourism in Quintana Roo, Mexico and its impact on the culture of the Maya. It is argued that there is a direct relationship between the growth of tourism in the state of Quintana Roo and the resurgence of Maya culture, especially their language. In light of this situation, it is recommended that indigenous tourism may be a suitable and sustainable option that can be pursued by the state. This type of tourism would not only enhance the cultural development of the Mayan people, but would also give them a greater stake in the industry, thereby improving their economic situation and further enhancing their culture.

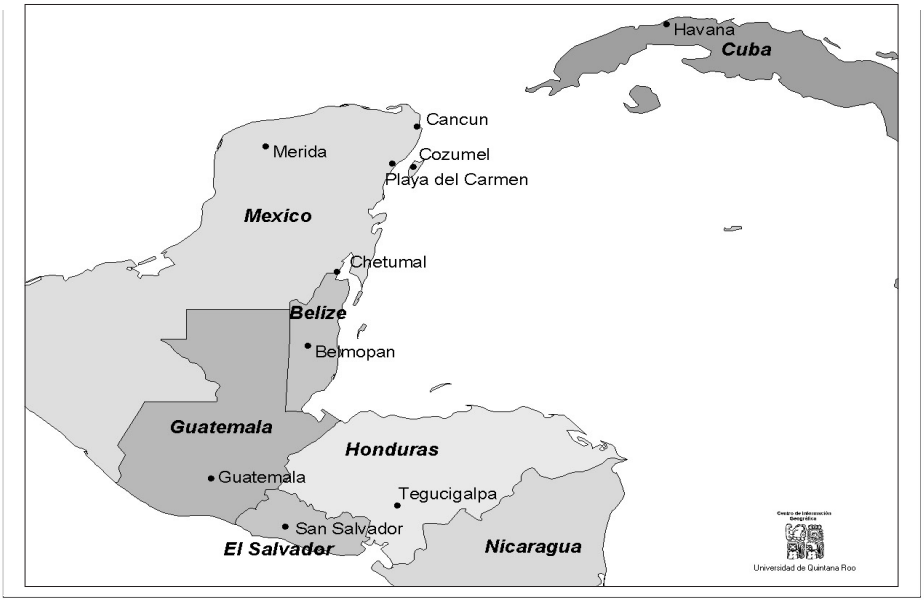
Keywords: Maya culture; indigenous tourism; culture and tourism; Mexico; Mundo Maya; language and tourism; Quintana Roo

Introduction

In 1988 the governments of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras launched the project Mundo Maya (Mayan World) with the aid of international private consultants and the European Union (see map of the area).The project was based on a master plan of intraregional cooperation. This plan includes facilities for the granting of visas and foreign investment coordination in the tourism sector. In 1989 *National Geographic Magazine* started a series of articles on the 'Maya Route' ('Ruta Maya'). This programme spoke to the significance of the Maya civilization to world history, while at the same time providing invaluable publicity about the Mundo Maya project. In 1993, Mundo Maya was recognized as an adjunct programme of the Organization of American States (OAS) and currently the Mundo Maya Organization represents the Mayan World in the World Tourism Organization (WTO).

IDEAZ Vol. 3 No. 1-2/ 2004, pp. 20-29
ISSN 0799 1401.
Dept of Sociology, Psychology & Social Work

Map of the countries involved in the Mundo Maya project (Note that Nicaragua and Cuba are not part of the project)



The Mundo Maya project spans an area of over 500,000 square kilometers, in which there are over 5 million descendants of the Maya. This, the largest contiguous piece of rainforest in the Americas, is flanked by the second largest barrier reef in the world (Adelson 2001; Alisau 1999). According to Denise Brown (1999: 303), there is little or no political representation or participation by Mayan people in the Mundo Maya Organization. Yet the Maya are the indigenous people of this area and have been living there continuously for thousands of years. The colonization of Mexico by the Spanish resulted in the simultaneous marginalization of Mayan communities from the mainstream of this new nation state. Consequently, Mayan communities have remained on the periphery of Mexican economic development. Additionally, Mayan culture, namely language, has been undervalued and on the decline for many centuries. Interestingly, since the commencement of the Mundo Maya project there has been a cultural resurgence among Mayan workers and communities, focused in the language and craft, primarily as commodities for the tourist market.

In this paper we discuss aspects of this 'cultural resurrection'. We argue that this assertion of 'Mayaness' by the Maya themselves and the growing levels of reproduction of material aspects of Mayan culture in tourism areas linked to Mundo Maya are the result of:

– the attempt by Mayan people to survive/adapt to the new global tourism market
– a means of empowerment for Mayan people
– a means of re-affirming Mayan cultural identity

Furthermore, we contend that in view of the impact of tourism on the Mayan language, the development of special interest tourism in the area, in particular indigenous tourism, could lead to a win-win situation for the Mayan people. In other words,

indigenous tourism might not only lead to the further development of the Mayan language, but could also allow Mayan people, most of whom live on the economic periphery, to fully participate as decision makers and income earners from the tourism industry.

Methodology

We have used a mix of research techniques in this study. Apart from the standard review of the literature in this area, we also used field methods (participant and non-participant observation methods) to understand the use of language and cultural practices of workers and inhabitants of the Cancun-Tulum areas. Between the months of January and May 2003 we observed Mayan workers and communities stretching from Chetumal to the outskirts of Playa del Carmen. Both researchers spent extended periods (two to three weeks) in Playa del Carmen and Cancún observing Mayan workers and speaking with them. The discussions focused on issues ranging from the quality of their lives to their use of Maya.

We also conducted in-depth interviews with 30 workers and inhabitants of Tulum, Playa del Carmen and Cancún. Interviews were usually unstructured, mainly in Spanish, and aimed at understanding how Mayan workers and communities interact with tourists along the Caribbean coast in the state of Quintana Roo. Most of the interview responses were recorded on paper, as it was often difficult to get tape recordings of such interviews. In conducting the research, emphasis was placed on the tourism areas of Tulum (a very small community close to Playa del Carmen), Playa del Carmen and Cancún.

It should be noted that one of the authors had been conducting research in the Maya zone/communities from 2000 to 2003, and thus has an insight into the Mayan language and customs. Such insight was very useful in trying to meet and engage the private and socially introverted Mayan people.

Mayas and the Mexican State

In 1517 Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, a Spanish explorer, traveled from Cuba to the east coast of the Yucatán. This was the first contact between Europeans and the native Maya population. Later, the Spaniards conquered the Peninsula of Yucatan leaving the remote areas to the rebellious indigenous people who attacked newly founded Spanish cities several times. At the beginning of the 19th century most of the Central American countries and Mexico became independent from Spain. However, this did not result in any substantial change to the deplorable economic and social conditions of the indigenous people. During the 19th century the Yucatan was the place of the so-called guerra de castas (caste war) – one of the longest indigenous revolts in Latin America. This was essentially an attempt to save Mayan custom and language from extermination. For decades the rebellious Mayas gained partial control over the land of their ancestors. The revolt officially ended at the beginning of the 20th century and many Mayas fled to the neighbouring state of Belize.

The Mexican government gradually expanded its control over the everyday life and economy of the Maya, especially after the construction of paved roads to the villages during the 1960s. In the second half of the 20th century the subsistence economy of the Maya was transformed into a more market-oriented one due to the decline of small scale agriculture (the so-called *milpa*) and the collection of *chicle*, a raw material for the chewing gum industry which was substituted by artificial ingredients. Since the

construction of Cancún in the early 1970s and the Cancún-Tulum corridor in the 1980s, Mayan workers have found employment in the tourism sector (León et al. 1992).

Tourism in Quintana Roo

In Mexico, the Mundo Maya comprises five federal states (Yucatán, Campeche, Tabasco, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo). Historically, tourism in Quintana Roo started with cruise ships on the island of Cozumel. This was followed by the development of mass tourism, primarily along the coast during the 1980s. In the 1990s Quintana Roo started to promote ecotourism in order to attract a different segment of the tourism market (see Table 1). Mexican tourism assistant secretary Sigfrido Paz Paredes declared in the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* (24 April 1995) that "There are places in the country that have not been exploited such as colonial and archaeological zones." Of course, this did not mean the abandonment of mass tourism along the coast of Quintana Roo. Indeed, according to tourism secretary Silvia Hernández, "The tourist beach promotion will stay because it is the principal product of our country that is known abroad" (*La Jornada*, 24 April 1995).Today, the Cancún-Tulum area has been consolidated as perhaps the most popular, unparalleled tourist destination in the entire Caribbean region. In terms of tourist arrivals in the wider Caribbean-America region, it is surpassed only by the urban centers of Florida in the USA.

Table 1: Historical Development of Tourism in Quintana Roo

Area	Start	Type of tourism
Cozumel	1960s	Cruise ship tourism
Isla Mujeres	1960s	Low impact tourism; backpackers
Cancun	1970s	Grand tour and mass tourism
Playa del Carmen; Riviera Maya (Cancún –Tulum)	Early 1980	Mass tourism
Costa Maya (Tulum-Chetumal)	Mid 1990s	Low impact tourism; ecotourism start of cruise ship tourism
Zona Maya (Maya heartland in the centre of Quintana Roo)	Late 1990s	Ethnic/Ecotourism

About 35 per cent of all international visitors to Mexico enter through the state of Quintana Roo, mainly Cancún. In the year 2000, 36 per cent of all income from tourism in Mexico was generated in the state of Quintana Roo. The state of Quintana Roo is the principal tourism state in Mexico, receiving approximately 24 per cent of all foreign visitors (Arriaga 2000; Sectur 1998). The rapid development of Quintana Roo as the tourism state of Mexico has opened up employment opportunities for workers throughout Mexico. A significant number of these workers are from indigenous groups. Quintana Roo has a relatively high proportion of the indigenous people in Mexico (see Table 2). This number is increasing as a result of the migration of people from Chiapas and Oaxaca in search of work in Cancún and other tourist destinations along the coast of Quintana Roo-Tulum and Playa del Carmen, in particular (Ken 2002).

Table 2: Indigenous populations in Mexico by State in 2000

Name of State	Year 2000 %
Yucatán	37.8
Oaxaca	37.4
Chiapas	26.8
Quintana Roo	*22.9*
Hidalgo	17.9
Guerrero	13.8
Puebla	13.2
San Luis Potosí	10.5
Veracruz	10.1
Mexico City	*2.2*

Source: INEGI, XII Censo General de Población y Vivienda, México 2000.

One critical characteristic of the Mayan workforce in these areas is that it is concentrated in mainly low-paying, low-status jobs. Mayas have been involved in the tourism sector, mainly as construction workers, since the start of the Cancún project in the beginning of the 1970s. Today they are concentrated in many other areas of work in which there is a high degree of occupational sex segregation (see Table 3).

Table 3: Types of occupations engaged by Mayan workers by sex

Men	Women
Construction Workers	Domestic and cooking services
Workers at archaeological sites	Producers and vendors of *huipiles* (traditional women's cloth)
Waiters	
Milperos (fruit and vegetable production for the hotels)	
Guides	
Street vendors	

The growth in tourism has also meant the rise in all types of commercial activity in traditionally isolated parts of the region. This has resulted in the insertion of the Mayan communities into capitalist forms of production, away from the largely subsistence economies which have historically existed on the periphery of the larger Mexican economy. The emergence of capitalism is transforming cultural relations within these communities. This transformation is reflected in the disappearance of extended families, as family members leave the household in search of work (Brown 1999; Boxill 2002; Ken 2002), and changes in other aspects of culture such as language. We now turn to an examination of the impact of tourism on language, based on our research findings.

Findings and Discussion

Cultural symbols as commodities

Essentially, the Mundo Maya project is an economic activity controlled by the regional elites and transnational companies. The signatories to this arrangement see this project as a way of generating income for their respective countries. This project has opened up the region to globalization in a way which is unparalleled in other parts of Mexico. As Brown (1999) put it: "The project builds upon the perceived interests, demands, and market potential of the international tourist to construct, package and sell a product" (p. 299). The most important aspect of the tourism product in the Mundo Maya project is cultural artifacts (Brown 1999). Thus we agree with the observation that the Mundo Maya project is "the production and commoditization of the Maya cultural landscape" (Brown 1999: 299). While the sale of cultural products has historically been an essential part of capitalism, it should assume even greater importance in the future, because of the projected growth in global tourism and the transformation of the global economy from mineral-based to knowledge-based industries. Consequently, Kulchyski (1997) argues:

> In the coming century, cultural products such as images, 'authentic' artifacts, and perhaps even ceremonies and spiritual events, will likely be very widely circulated commodities. So-called 'authentic' cultural products, which may only identify those that stem from a different cultural source than the dominant, established order, will likely be among the most valuable commodities (p. 605).

Mayan communities within the Mundo Maya project have come to realize the importance of their culture in selling the tourist an authentic Mexican experience. As a result, there is a booming trade in Mayan cultural products (e.g. hieroglyphics and Mayan words inscribed on souvenirs). To be sure, most of this trade is done by the non-Mayan community. This is what Kulchyski (1997) calls "cultural appropriation" – that is, transforming popular expression of dominated groups into commodities for the benefit of the dominating group. However, it should be noted that many Mayas are fully involved in this commoditization process. This participation is most visible in the informal or unregulated sector. Indeed, during fieldwork it was not uncommon to see Mayan people from Cancún to Tulum selling a variety of Mayan symbols, including religious ones, to tourists. In some cases, tourists preferred to buy from the Mayan people on the streets or in unregistered stores rather than the official gift shops, because they were thought to provide a more authentic expression of the Mayan material culture than the Mestizo-owned shops.

Language as identity re-affirmation

While we argue that the rise of Mayan cultural symbols is associated with the commoditization process, it is also associated with the attempt by Mayan people themselves to affirm their own identity. In our discussions with Mayan workers it became clear to us that they took great pride in speaking their language, even though they also spoke Spanish. From discussions with Mayan workers and youth, we contend that apparent intense pride in speaking Mayan may be the result of the need to create a space for community identification in an area inhabited primarily by tourists (i.e. foreigners), many of whom had little in common with them. In addition, the Mayas knew that many of the tourists had very positive views of their civilization, thereby enhancing the value of Maya as a spoken language. We observed many Maya people moving between different languages in talking to tourists; however, in the end they always revered to their mother tongue.

The most common examples of this movement between languages were in Cancún and Playa del Carmen, the larger and more diverse tourism destinations.

Language as power

A number of writers have suggested that the rapid transformation of the state of Quintana Roo as a mecca for tourists could further marginalize Mayan people from the economy of that state, even more so than has been the case in the past (Brown 1999; Weinbaum1997). Recall that these are communities which have traditionally existed outside of the mainstream Mexican society. Guillermo Batalla (1989) reminds us that Euro-Mexican or Mestizo culture has been hegemonic in Mexico for hundreds of years. But even in this atmosphere of oppression and repression, indigenous people have constantly fought to retain a space for expression of their worldview, be it from an economic, social or political perspective.

It is our contention that there has been resurgence in speaking Mayan among Mayas in the tourism areas of Quintana Roo, in part because it is also a way for them to acquire power in the market place. By speaking a language which is not understood by the owners of capital and indeed tourists, many Mayan people are able to maintain complete control of an intellectual and cultural space. It is within this space that they are able to carry on discourses with each other without revealing themselves to their bosses or clients. This 'mysterious' language may be used as a negotiating tool with their employers in order to obtain better conditions of work. Employers who do not comprehend the language may be likely to agree to certain requests made by the workers, out of ignorance, fear or respect for a culture they do not understand.

In Tulum we observed the use of the Maya language among the workers of a small hotel owned by a Mestizo (Spanish monolingual). They used the Mayan language as a sort of 'secret' language. We interviewed one of these employees who told us that he used the Mayan language mainly "*para que el patrón no entienda todo y ustedes [los turistas] tampoco. Queremos nuestro propio espacio*". ("in order to prevent the boss and the Spanish-speaking tourists from understanding everything. We want our own space"). We conclude that the increased interest in speaking Maya may be seen as a way to subvert the power structures and also to create an autonomous space for expression.

Hybridization of language

However, it should be noted that much of the Mayan that is spoken is not 'pure'. It may be classified as a hybrid, as it borrows from other languages and integrates them into a coherent form of expression. Hybridization is not a new social phenomenon in this part of Mexico. Mass tourism has lead to hybridization in relation to Spanish in Playa del Carmen (Boxill and Hernández 2002). Boxill and Hernandez (2002) observed that "…the constant contact and mix among different languages has led to a peculiar linguistic phenomenon in the Spanish language: the creation of words or the introduction of neologisms, and the transformation or adaptation of words and phrases which already exist" (p.56). Hybridization was the outcome of the attempt by Mexican entrepreneurs, most of whom have a limited knowledge of the languages of the people who visit their shores, to communicate effectively to the tourists.

It should be pointed out that hybridization does not imply a loss of language. To see hybridization as a loss of language is to enter into the type of essentialist discourse which we do not support in this paper. In our view, cultural identities are never static. Determining authentic identities is a dangerous undertaking as Rebecca Tolen (1998) warns us. In commenting on Mayan ethnicity in the Yucatán she argues:

> In the 1980s, many young women had stopped wearing the *huipil* in favor of polyester dresses; by the 1990s, many had returned to wearing *huipiles*. The successive shifts may have been a result of changing economies of commodity consumption and the changing fortunes of women and their families in relation to subsistence and the market economies. At the same time, changing conceptualizations of the value and content of Maya identity were most certainly involved... Is the display of "indigenousness" part of attracting tourists to buy wares? Has the tourist-oriented promotion of Yucatan as an exotic and ethnically indigenous region had an influence on how people in the Maya communities view themselves?...these shifts need not be seen only as a matter of choice between continuity or abandoning traditional patterns, they may represent a reinterpretation of Mayaness itself (p. 648).

In the case of the Mayan language, hybridization does not necessarily mean the loss of the indigenous language, but a creative use and a free switching between Maya, Spanish and English. Modern languages are really hybrids of many different languages. In the case of Maya, Barbara Pfeiler (1997) argues that a modern mixed form of Maya-Spanish is evolving (the so called xe´ek´ Maya); meanwhile the pure, old form of Maya (la hach Maya) is declining. In order to survive in a rapidly changing world, identities must adapt. Hybridization is change, adaptation and survival. Equally important though is the fact that the hybridization associated with Maya in this part of Mexico is a direct result of the emergence of the tourism industry.

Towards indigenous tourism development in Quintana Roo

We have attempted to show that there is a direct relationship between the growth of tourism in the state of Quintana Roo and the resurgence in the use of Mayan cultural symbols, especially language, among the Mayan people. However, what does this mean for tourism policy in the state of Quintana Roo? Should the government continue to pursue the combination of mass and ecotourism in these areas or should the product take cognizance of the cultural development issues, particularly those of the Mayas? In answering these questions it should be acknowledged that, notwithstanding our argument regarding the positive impact of tourism on the Maya language, a number of writers have contended that the current approach to tourism development in Quintana Roo has had many negative impacts on the Mayan people (Brown 1999; Weinbaum1997; Ken 2002). For us the question is: how do we develop a tourism industry that is economically sound, without compromising the integrity of the culture of the Mayan people? One approach to tourism development which can do this, and is well suited to the Mayan areas in Quintana Roo, is indigenous tourism.

According to Douglas et al. (2001), indigenous tourism "evolves when indigenous people operate tours and cultural centres, provide visitor facilities and control access to cultural events and homelands" (p. 233). In other words indigenous tourism includes "that segment of the visitor industry which directly involves native peoples whose ethnicity is a tourist attraction" (Smith 1996: 283).

Some writers may also refer to indigenous tourism as ethic tourism, tribal tourism, anthropological tourism and even cultural tourism (Douglas et al. 2001). We prefer to use the term indigenous tourism in this case, as it places direct focus on the indigenous people. Indigenous tourism "typically involves the small tourism businesses owned by tribes and families" and is "connected with indigenous culture, values and traditions" (Douglas et al. 2001: 235). If properly managed, indigenous tourism can work for the long-term benefit of the communities on which the industry is based.

The status quo regarding tourism development in the State of Quintana Roo, particularly in relation to the Maya is that while Mayas benefit from the industry working in low skilled occupations and selling cultural artifacts, they do not control the business in any meaningful way. Despite the fact that it is the Mayan culture that drives the attractions in many parts of the state, Mayas are not fully integrated into the sector. Indigenous tourism which promotes Mayan management of the industry in terms of the attractions, tours and accommodation sector, could improve the standard of living of the people and further enhance their culture in the same way that there has been resurgence in the language.

Conclusion

Many writers in the sociology of tourism have pointed to the negative impact of tourism on host communities, in particular economically marginal ethnic communities (Cohen 2001; Karch and Dann 2001; Crick 2001). However, there are instances where tourism development which integrates indigenous communities has had a positive impact on the host communities, as with the case of the Caribs of Dominica (Boxill and Severin 2004). In this paper we have pointed to one positive unanticipated outcome from tourism development on the Mayan people – the resurgence of an indigenous language. With this in mind, we believe that there is a possibility for the policy makers to refashion the tourism product by focusing less on mass tourism and by developing indigenous tourism. Also, the policy makers should consider placing more control of this sector in the hands of the Mayan people as this can further enhance the Mayan society. We do not have the space to delve into the details about how this new type of tourism would work; nonetheless, the guiding principle of indigenous tourism development should be the promotion of a better quality of life for the people, both economically and culturally. If properly conceived and executed, tourism development could lead to greater prosperity and independence of indigenous communities, like the Maya in Quintana Roo – not only by providing economic benefits, but also by enhancing their culture.

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Notes

* The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions.

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Guiding Marginal Tax Policy Changes Using the Extended Gini Index of Consumption Inequality

Dillon Alleyne

ABSTRACT

This study examines the distribution of expenditure, excluding home produced food and gifts for 2002, utilizing the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions. It employs the methodology of Lerman and Yitzhaki to disaggregate consumption expenditure by broad expenditure groups and to estimate the elasticities of expenditure. The results suggest that the elasticities for meals away from home, transportation, education, and recreation, housing and household expenses were elastic. This implies that imposing taxes on such goods would reduce the inequality in expenditure, as such taxes will be progressive. On the other hand, imposing additional taxes on food and beverages, personal care, fuel and household supplies, health care, and clothing and footwear would increase expenditure inequality, since they will be regressive.

Keywords: Gini index, taxation, expenditure, inequality, Lerman and Yitzhaki model

Introduction

This study is an analysis of the inequality in the distribution of household consumption expenditure using the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC) for 2002. It examines the relationship between the elasticites of components of expenditure and overall expenditure with a view to determining how tax rates can impact on such inequality. The methodology employed was developed by Lerman and Yitzhaki (1984,1985; Yitzhaki 1983), and is a covariance method used to study the inequality in income distribution by source. Among the applications of this approach have been the following: Ahearn et al. (1985), Lerman and Yitzhaki (1985), Garner et al. (1998). It has also been used to examine the distributional impact of tax reforms in Israel (Yitzhaki 1990) and Romania (Yitzhaki 1997) and the welfare effects of excise taxation in the Cote d'Ivoire (Yitzhaki and Thirsk 1990).

A number of papers, which have examined income inequality by income source, have estimated the contribution of migrant remittance income to inequality (Stark et al. 1988, 1996; González-König and Wodon 2002). Garner (1993) has used this approach to examine expenditure inequality in the United States and the way in which the elasticities of expenditure provide information about the progressivity or regressivity of small tax changes by broad commodity groups.

IDEAZ Vol. 3 Nos.1&2 2004 pp. 30-37
ISSN 0799 1401.
Dept of Sociology, Psychology & Social Work

There are a number of reasons why this approach is attractive. First, individual data can be employed which, relative to grouped data, will allow for more accurate results. Secondly, the results do not depend on how the composition of each income or expenditure group is measured. Thirdly, the elasticities with respect to consumption are computed using a non-parametric method, that is, the extended Gini coefficient. This approach avoids varying Engel-Curve estimates due to the use of different functional forms in regression methods (Yitzhaki 1990).

A great benefit of the analysis is that in determining the impact of marginal changes in expenditure for specific commodity groups on the inequality of total expenditure, one can gauge the impact of tax policies and subsidies on the spending pattern of consumers (Garner 1993). Since 1991 the government of Jamaica has instituted a broad based General Consumption Tax (GCT) on expenditures, which now has a rate of 16.5 per cent. Besides this general rate, there are a variety of exemptions and zero-rated items depending on distributional and other considerations. In addition, a Special Consumption Tax (SCT) is imposed on some items such as fuel and tobacco. The study offers an analysis of the elasticities of broad commodity groups with a view to understanding which groups should be taxed more or less in order to reduce expenditure inequality. The Gini composition examines the relationship between the elasticities of expenditure among commodity groups and the total expenditure.

Methodology

The paper employs the extended Gini index to compute the elasticities of expenditure between individual commodity groups and overall expenditure and the approach is sketched out below. Let λ be a weighting parameter varying from 1 to infinity, which reflects the relative preference for equity. The extended Gini for a variable C (consumption) is defined as:

$$G_c(\lambda) = -\lambda \mathrm{Cov}(C, [1-F(C)]^{\lambda-1}) / \hat{C} \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots(1)$$

where $\hat{C}$ is simply the mean of C. When $\lambda = 2$, equation (1) reduces to the standard Gini index. Stark et al. (1988) point out that the extended Gini plays the same role as that of ε in the Atkinson Index. In this paper, the sensitivity of λ to changes in expenditure inequality is not explored but it is of interest to note that as $\lambda \to \infty$ the value of $G_c(\lambda)$ reflects a Rawlsian social welfare function. That is, we approach the inequality of C on the assumption that we are interested in maximizing the expenditure of the poorest consumption households. At the other extreme, as $\lambda \to 1$ we would have an index that did not concern itself with inequality.

Equation (1) is the covariance between (C) and $1 - F(C)$ and the mean of C, $(\hat{C})$, where C is the overall expenditure and F(C) is the cumulative distribution of C. The decomposition of the overall Gini is only briefly set out here since it is derived fully by Lerman and Yitzhaki (1985) and Stark et al. (1988). The decomposition of the extended Gini can be written as:

$$G_c(\lambda) = \Sigma_i S_i R(i, \lambda) G(i, \lambda) \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots(2)$$

Note also that $G(i,\lambda) = -\lambda \mathrm{Cov}(C_i, [1-F(C_i)]^{\lambda-1}) / \hat{C}_i$ where $C = \Sigma_i C_i$ and C_i is the component i of household consumption in group i and $S_i = \hat{C}_i / \hat{C}$ is the share of consumption expenditure from group i in total expenditure. The final aspect of the formula, $R(i, \lambda) = \mathrm{Cov}(C_i, [1-F(C)]^{\lambda-1}) / \mathrm{Cov}(C_i, [1-F(C_i)]^{\lambda-1})$, is called the extended Gini correlation coefficient. It is defined as the Gini correlation between component C_i and the rank of total expenditure or the relative Gini of expenditure group i.

The study is also able to show how marginal changes in expenditure for some expenditure groups can affect the overall inequality of expenditure. The formula is derived by Stark et al. (1988) and is follows:

$$M_i = \frac{\partial G_c(\lambda) / \partial e_i}{G_c(\lambda)} = \frac{S_i R(i, \lambda) G(i, \lambda)}{G_c(\lambda)} - S_i \quad \text{.....(3)}$$

Note that e is a percentage change in expenditure for group i and is the same for each household. Thus, a percentage change in the overall Gini caused by a change in expenditure is equal to the inequality contribution of the expenditure minus the contribution to overall expenditure and is referred to as M_i in the Table II. This equation is useful to determine the impact of imposing a percentage commodity tax or tax increase on the assumption that the tax changes the pattern of consumption expenditure. When M_i is positive the implication is that taxing a commodity group would reduce overall expenditure inequality and the impact of the tax would be progressive since high spending expenditure groups are affected more than low spending expenditure groups. On the other hand, when M_i is negative taxing a commodity group increases inequality, as would happen if a tax on consumption was regressive.

A final estimate is the elasticity of aggregate expenditures for expenditure group i with respect to overall expenditure. According to Garner (1993), this is the expenditure elasticity and can be written as:

$$\varepsilon_i = \frac{R(i, \lambda) G(i, \lambda)}{G_c(\lambda)} = b_i \left\{ \frac{\hat{C}}{\hat{C}_i} \right\} \quad \text{..... (4) (Yitzhaki 1990).}$$

Thus the elasticity can be written as a regression coefficient, b_i or a marginal propensity to spend on commodity group i, divided by an average propensity. This is an instrumental variable estimator of the slope parameter in the regression of the component C_i on the overall expenditure, using the cumulative distribution as an instrument. Given that the sum of elasticities weighted by the commodity shares for each group is 1, Engel-aggregation would hold for the given elasticities (Garner 1993).

Essama-Nssah (2002) has referred to this elasticity as the Gini Engel elasticity.

If the elasticity were greater than 1 the good is said to be a luxury, while a commodity group with elasticity between zero and 1 would be termed a necessity. If the elasticity were negative then the good would be an inferior good. The important point is that the elasticities are valid for evaluating the distributional effect of a change in tax rates to overall expenditure inequality. In addition, the results point to goods that could bear higher taxes and so reduce inequality, and those that could bear lower taxes and improve expenditure inequality (Yitzhaki and Selmrod 1991; Garner 1993).

Data Analysis

The data set employed in this study was the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (SLC) for the year 2002. The SLC is a household level survey and there were 6,976 households in this nationally representative sample. The sample is weighted to account for non-responses and Parish differences, and all expenditures are in per capita terms. The survey covers a wide range of areas, including health and education, housing conditions, and an extensive expenditure module. The expenditure module includes food and non-food expenditures, including home produced food and gifts valued at market prices. The annualized expenditure is an average of expenditure over a long and a short period of recall, by respondents (STATIN 2002).

For the purpose of the analysis, total expenditures were disaggregated into eleven expenditure groups. In the category food and beverages, the total values of home produced food and gifts at market values were removed, and in general gifts were not used in any of the other categories. In addition, food and beverages were separated from meals purchased away from home. Most of the categories are self-explanatory but it may be useful to explain the composition of housing and household expenses. Housing and household expenses were made up of rent, utilities, mortgages, property taxes and household operational expenses

Table I: Mean Expenditure, Computed Expenditure Shares and Expenditure Shares by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN)

Expenditure Groups	Mean Expenditure	Computed Expenditure Shares	Shares reported by STATIN
Food and Beverages	24,314.8	*30.6	**40.0
Meals away from Home	7,143.8	9.0	-
Personal Care	1,893.0	2.3	2.3
Fuel and Household Supplies	4,331.6	5.4	5.18
Health Care	2,320.3	2.9	2.7
Clothing and Footwear	3,305.8	4.1	5.11
Transportation	8,880.9	11.2	10.69
Education Expenditures	6,041.7	7.6	7.6
Recreation Expenditures	895.8	1.1	1.11
Housing and Household Expenses	18,348.3	23.1	21.78
Other	1,809.9	2.2	1.81

*The food and beverages share is separated from meals away from home. Home produced food, gifts and durables are included in STATIN's expenditure groups.
**The food and beverages share is not separated from meals away from home. The computed shares do not include home produced food and gifts.

Table I reports the mean expenditures for the broad expenditure groups, the computed expenditure shares, which excluded home produced food and gifts, and the expenditure shares as reported in Table B-1 of the JSLC 2002. The results show clearly that the mean expenditures on food and beverages, meals away from home, and housing and household expenses dominate the composition of expenditure. The three groups together account for 62.7 per cent of overall expenditure. If transportation was added these groups would then account for 73.9 per cent of household expenditure. No other category had a share in excess of 8 per cent.

Estimation Results

The results for the expenditure inequality analysis, by budget shares, are presented in Table II. The overall Gini for all expenditure groups, based on the standard weighting factor $\lambda = 2$, is .395. The first column in this table reports the contribution of the budget expenditure components to total inequality which is given as $G_e(\lambda)$. It is a combination of

three terms as shown in equation (2). As Garner (1993) points out, the higher the value of each factor, the greater the share of that group to total inequality.

Table II: Expenditure Groups and Inequality Effects from the Survey of Living Conditions (SLC) 2002

Expenditure Groups	*Contribution to Inequality*	*Correlation with rank of total expenditure*	*Gini of Each Group*	*% Reporting Expenditure*	*Expenditure Share*	*Share Expenditure Inequality*	*Relative Expenditure Equality*	*Relative Marginal Effect*	*Elasticity*
	$G_c(\lambda)$	$R(i,\lambda)$	$G(i,\lambda)$		S_i	M_i	M_i/S_i	$(M_i - S_i)$	ε_i
Food and Beverages	.083	.796	.340	98.55	.306	.210	.686	-.096	0.68
Meals away from Home	.041	.667	.686	57.84	.090	.104	1.158	.014	1.15
Personal Care	.007	.594	.529	90.81	.023	.019	.795	-.004	0.79
Fuel and Household Supplies	.010	.463	.407	98.31	.054	.026	.478	-.028	0.47
Health care	.010	.511	.710	69.31	.029	.026	.919	-.002	0.91
Clothing and Footwear	.013	.590	.528	80.32	.041	.032	.788	-.008	0.78
Transportation	.057	.780	.675	84.65	.112	.145	.1299	.033	1.29
Education Expenditure	.030	.614	.660	62.94	.076	.078	1.027	.002	1.02
Recreation Expenditure	.007	.739	.947	20.74	.011	.020	1.774	.008	1.77
Housing and Household Expenses	.122	.819	.646	88.85	.231	.310	1.340	.078	1.34
Other	.010	.549	.824	57.65	.022	.026	1.146	.003	1.14
Total	.395	1.00	.395		1.00	1.00	1.00	.00	

Column 2 reports the Gini correlation coefficients for each expenditure group. The relative contribution of each factor to total inequality is defined in equation (3) and reported in column 6 of the table as M_i . Column 7 presents the relative effects, M_i/S_i, while in the last column the expenditure elasticity incorporates both the correlation and the concentration of expenditure. Garner (1993) points out that when zero expenditures are more concentrated among low income rather than high income groups a high correlation tends to result in a high elasticity.

In column 2, Gini correlations for food, housing, recreation and transport are highly correlated with the rank of total expenditure, but the Gini for food is lower than that of the others and this has resulted in a lower expenditure elasticity (Garner 1993). Expenditures for health care and fuel and household supplies are the least correlated with total expenditure and they also have relatively low expenditure elasticities.

In the last column, the lowest elasticity is for fuel and household supplies, with a value of 0.47. In addition, expenditure on fuel and household supplies is correlated least with total expenditure. Expenditures on food and beverages, personal care, fuel and household supplies, health care, and clothing and footwear are relatively inelastic. The health care expenditure elasticity is however 0.91, which is much closer to 1 relative to the other inelastic expenditure groups.

All the elasticities are positive – which suggests that all expenditure groups reflect normal goods. It is likely that within each subgroup elasticities may differ for some goods and thus more detailed analysis would be necessary to discover this.

Among the groups with elasticities greater than one were transportation, education, recreation, other goods, and housing and household expenses, which includes utilities. It is clear that imposing higher taxes on such goods would increase expenditure equality and such taxes would be progressive. Of these goods however, education expenditure is the least elastic with a coefficient of 1.02. It is important to note that in small developing countries, with the need to build human capital, taxes on education may not help to improve access for the poor to education. However, a highly subsidized education system tends to benefit the upper and middle classes more than the poor. For this reason, the government has instituted some waivers for cost sharing, in education, among the poor and a subsidized fee structure for students writing the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) examinations.

In general, however, the elasticities seem to suggest a case for removing some of the subsidies to higher education which tend to benefit those who can afford it. The imposition of taxes on services, especially recreation services, would be progressive as it has the highest positive elasticity.

If there are high $G(i, \lambda)$'s, as Garner (1993) points out, this indicates that there are variations among households in terms of expenditure. Column 3 shows a high variation in recreation expenditure (.947), other expenditure (.824), health care (.710) and meals away from home (.686). Part of the reason for this is that in these categories of expenditure, the number of households reporting such expenditures is low. Thus, in column 4, for other expenditure the number reporting was 57.65 per cent and for recreation expenditure and meals away from home, the number of households reporting was 20.74 and 57.84 per cent respectively. There is a strong correlation between the number of zero expenditures and the size of the group's Gini coefficient. In the instances where this coefficient is low, the number of those reporting expenditure is greater. Thus, column 4 shows that for food and beverages, the number of households reporting expenditure was 98.55; for fuels, housing and household expenses, the percentage is 98.31 per cent; and for personal care, 90.81 per cent.

When the expenditure share is greater than the share of expenditure inequality it means that changes in expenditure can lead to a reduction in inequality. Column 8 reveals that this is the case for all the goods that are inelastic. The commodity groups are food and beverages, personal care, fuel and household supplies, health care, clothing and footwear. The implication is that reducing taxes on these goods and services or making them zero-rated would reduce inequality in expenditure. In Jamaica, there has been resistance to increased taxes on fuel given that a broad range of income groups consumes these. Certain kinds of foods have also been zero rated or exempt from taxes on the assumption that the tax burden will be regressive. On the other hand, increasing taxes on goods for which the sign is positive will lead to reduction in expenditure inequality. Among these groups are recreation, housing and household expenses, education, and transportation.

Given the focus of the recent tax reform proposals to broaden the tax base in order to reduce tax evasion and avoidance, the implication of the analysis is to use the expenditure side of the budget for distributional considerations and taxation for efficiency purposes (Tax Review Committee 2004). However, there are varying tax rates on a variety of goods and services and these estimates provide some guidance as to how these rates can be increased or reduced over time to improve the progressivity of taxes.

Conclusion

This study examined the inequality among expenditure groups for 2002 using the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions. The methodology employed was that developed by

Lerman and Yitzhaki, which was a covariance method that disaggregated the Gini index between individual groups of expenditure and overall expenditure. One important aspect of this result was that expenditure elasticities were generated by a non-parametric method which avoids varying parameter estimates, due to different functional forms, in regression methods. The study found that the overall Gini coefficient for all expenditure groups was .395 per cent and that the expenditure elasticities for meals away from home, transportation, education, recreation, and housing and household expenses were elastic. This implies that taxing such goods will increase the inequality in expenditure and such taxes will be progressive. On the other hand, additional taxes on goods such as food and beverages, personal care, fuel and household supplies, health care, and clothing and footwear should not attract higher taxes since they would be regressive. While the commodity groups are broad, a finer disaggregation of expenditure would be necessary to identify taxable goods with respect to more specific items.

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VIEWPOINT

American Fundamentalism: Capitalism, Racism and Islam*

Anton L. Allahar

Introduction

As George W. Bush is sworn in for a second term as president of the "free world", the majority of the world's population is at some pains to explain how it all happened. While the November 2004 election gave him the largest popular vote of any US president in history, there is no other country in the world where his approval rating is anywhere close to fifty per cent. This essay attempts to make sense of the seeming disconnect by exploring some of the ways in which one might understand the behaviour of the Bush regime and the majority of the American public who voted it another four years. I will also explore the means by which the leading actors in that regime are able to commit atrocities on a world scale without generating any significant local or internal opposition. My concern is best summed up in the events surrounding the so-called war on terror and the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, for in a *Time Europe* poll taken before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, when over 700,000 people who were asked what country was the greatest threat to world peace, North Korea received 6.7 per cent of the votes, Iraq 6.3 per cent, and the United States an understandable 86.9 per cent.[1]

One of the truly confusing features of the political mood surrounding the invasion is reflected in the following take that has been repeated by many American journalists and lay commentators: "We did not support the decision to go to war, but now that our troops are there, we must support them and our president." I do not fully understand the logic of the sentiment. If someone does something against another's express wishes, why should the latter feel any need or compulsion to support the former, especially when it involves massive loss of human life? In the American context the answer speaks to a sense of primitive patriotism which says that if the nation is under attack, all loyal citizens must rally around the flag and defend it. And relatedly, regardless of the mistakes made, the nation dares not change presidents while the country is at war. While there is absolutely no evidence that the nation was under attack from Iraq, or under threat of attack from Iraq, the fact remains that the public was convinced that it was. And that conviction, contrary to all logic and evidence, was at the base of Bush's re-election. Much like the so-called 'hard evidence' of the existence of weapons of mass destruction, the threat was manufactured by the regime and disseminated by its erstwhile supporters in the corporately-owned media to a gullible and receptive population.

IDEAZ Vol. 3 Nos. 1-2/ 2004, pp. 38-52
ISSN 0799 1401.
Dept of Sociology, Psychology & Social Work

This is the context in which I see the US as a massive experiment in social control via the medium of thought control. It is straight out of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*,[2] complete with double-speak, double-think, and deliberately engineered, mass public ignorance of politics and history among the 'proles' of America: war is peace; wrong is right; slavery is freedom. Once prepared in this way, the population at large is generally unmindful that it has been recruited to play its part in the larger project of American fundamentalism, whose unintended consequence today is widespread anti-Americanism. But for a population which knows little of the world outside its borders, and cares even less about that world, such anti-Americanism cannot be grasped intellectually; instead it is responded to emotionally.

Feel Good Times

In spite of this, these are feel good times in America; times of distraction and escape into fantasy when Hollywood sets the political agenda for the entire world. Witness the popularity of such cultural fare as Star Trek, Lion King, and Harry Potter, not to mention the immense popularity of Disney World and Disneyland, that inspired one of the most fantasy-prone public figures today to create his own Neverland! But Michael Jackson is a symptom rather than a cause of what George Ritzer in *The Globalization of Nothing*[3] calls 'nothing'. The mass American, public fascination with substance-less, manufactured and packaged entertainment is meant as a substitute for critical, intellectual engagement with the pressing issues of our time: racism, genocide, imperialist aggression, environmental destruction, HIV/AIDS, (child) poverty, famine and starvation of millions. Feel good times are thus manufactured by the authorities and their class allies in the corporately-owned media, and serve, among other purposes, to distract the bulk of the population from focusing on the above-mentioned pressing issues, especially as they touch on the millions of black and Third World peoples, who are their principal victims.

Thus, for those Americans and non-Americans who felt that the excesses of Bush the Elder would militate against the election (not to mention the re-election) of Bush the Lesser, the disappointment and incomprehension are still raw. The mistake made by such political pundits was to think that the bulk of the American voting public look and think like the Americans one sees in Hollywood-created situation comedies (e.g. Seinfeld, Friends) and dramas (e.g. CSI, Hill Street Blues) etc., or like those who populate the Sunday morning political talk shows on TV. The fact is that the majority are neither urban nor urbane; they are an unsophisticated electorate, heavily rural, single-issue voters, who are deeply steeped in conservative Christian myths, values and morals. To mobilize politically such an electorate, the most important issues of the day are entirely ignored: job loss and unemployment, illiteracy and homelessness, unjust wars, illegal detention and torture of political prisoners abroad, creation of, and support for foreign dictators and so on. In their stead one finds concerns with such religiously-clouded issues as same sex marriage, gay adoption rights, abortion, stem cell research and capital punishment, all couched in a language of Christian morality and tailored to provoke the emotions of the politically de-programmed and uninformed voter. This is why a simple appeal to their primitive patriotism led them in massive numbers, over 70 per cent, to endorse the illegal invasion of Iraq in march 2003 on the mere claim that Saddam Hussein was directly involved in the 9/11 attack. In spite of the fact that not a shred of credible evidence has yet been produced in support of the alleged involvement, three years later the voters again went to the polls with the majority still believing in the *clear link* between Saddam and 9/11.

Confusing Times

But these are also confusing times in America. As America's news reporters have become celebrities (Walter Cronkite, Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw) and celebrities have become political leaders (Ronald Reagan, Sonny Bono, Arnold Schwarzenegger), the public has also grown increasingly confused. Yet the American public's confusion is even deeper as political leaders have also become celebrities and news personnel: former president Bill Clinton recently had a weekly slot on CBS News *60 Minutes*, former vice president, Al Gore, is part of a political talk radio show, former presidential candidate, Jesse Jackson, recently hosted a weekly news magazine (*Both Sides*) for CNN, and another former presidential candidate, Bob Dole, does TV commercials for Viagra. Adding to the public's confusion is the fact that television shows such as *Entertainment Tonight*, *Hard Copy* and *Hollywood Confidential* have sets and 'reporters' that are carefully tailored to resemble news desks and news reporters, and they present all the trivia of Hollywood gossip as if it were real news. This is linked to the current craze that features 'reality TV' which sees television producers actually manufacturing unreal situations and encounters that they package and sell to a gullible and unsophisticated viewing audience as 'reality'.

Further, as show business becomes increasingly violent and war-like, it seeks to mirror a violent and war-like reality. In the context of the first Gulf War, it was said that television coverage of the initial bombing of Baghdad, described as the world's biggest fireworks show, appeared like something out of a Star Wars movie, and when looking at the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center towers in New York City, many ordinary Americans confessed that their initial reaction was to think they were watching a movie. So, as the distinction between fantasy and reality becomes blurred in the public mind it is not difficult to mobilize populations by scare tactics that use such gimmicks as a nation-wide, colour-coded warning system that can easily programme the emotional responses of the public to carefully timed and orchestrated 'official' warning releases from the White House or the Pentagon. There is no better way to promote distraction and a sense of national unity than by invoking the idea of a foreign menace and holding the public emotionally hostage to it. The regularly-scheduled, colour-coded, terror alert warnings in the weeks leading up to the 2004 vote are a case in point.

This technique is also used effectively to rally the public behind war efforts by appealing to some sense of primitive patriotism and insecurity triggered by an unspecified threat against the nation. Arundhati Roy says it best when she invokes the powerful American image of jingoistic and patriotic flag waving in support of imperialist wars and the solemn funerals that follow the return home of dead American soldiers: "Flags are bits of colored cloth that governments use first to shrink-wrap people's brains and then as ceremonial shrouds to bury the dead."[4] Some interesting crossovers between the fantasy world of Hollywood and the real world of war can be seen in the following: "The designer who built the $250,000 set in Qatar from which General Tommy Franks stage-managed news coverage of Operation Shock and Awe also built sets for Disney, MGM, and Good Morning America."[5]

Wicked Times

When Bush the Elder ordered the bombing of Iraq in January 1991 much of the Western world was only beginning to become familiar with reality TV. During the first month of the war, however, after saturation bombing of the country and after tens of thousands of deaths, the invading forces halted. Soon, economic sanctions and no-fly zones were imposed on a defeated and humiliated people, but in the years that followed, and amidst criticisms that Bush Sr., Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf had pulled out of Iraq

too early, in 2001 the Lesser Bush was charged with finishing what his father had begun. Along with the obvious designs on controlling Iraqi oil, the former president's son was also determined to go into Iraq because, in his words, Saddam "tried to kill my Daddy". In the 12 years between the wars ordered by Bush the Elder and Bush the Lesser, some tens of thousands of Iraqi children have died. The deaths are a direct consequence of the denial of food, medicines, hospital equipment, ambulances, clean water and other basic necessities of life. And this is in direct violation of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit the use of food and medicine as weapons of war. Once more, according to Arundhati Roy, "In Iraq the sanctions outdid Saddam Hussein's best efforts by claiming more than half a million children's lives",[6] which means that as terrible as Hussein was, the two Bush presidents have killed many more Iraqis than he did, and in a far shorter space of time.

In preparing the public emotionally to go to war against Iraq, the Bush administrations and their class allies in the mass media were able to utilize a familiar ploy. Along with traditional scare tactics and colour-coded warning systems, they employed the strategy of discrediting and delegitimizing the enemy via the process of othering. In the case of the Iraqis this was easy given the long-standing political opposition between Christians and Moslems, and the popular culture in the West (Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Aladdin and the Magic Lamp, the Flying Carpet), which orientalizes and demonizes Islam, Arabs and Moslems in general. Images of the Islamic 'infidel', the Moslem 'fanatic', and the Arab 'terrorist' are standard fare in the daily media and in Hollywood, and these also provided the necessary mindset for going to war with Iraq. As noted earlier, although there is absolutely no evidence tying Saddam Hussein to the attack on the World Trade Center, by the start of the war, over 70 per cent of the American population felt that he and his government were directly involved; and that figure did not change appreciably by the time of the 2004 vote. For owing to popular culture and stereotypes, Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein are very easily interchangeable in the racialized imaginations of the average American, who are made to understand that all that Arabs want is to wage Holy War on America.

Holy War

However, my take on Holy War is not that of the so-called Jihadists of the Moslem world, who have been so vilified and racialized by the Western media. For the devout Moslem a Holy Jihad is actually the practice of personal soul searching and cleansing, a way of coming to terms personally with inner conflict. The racialized version, however, is entirely distorted and gives Westerners to believe that it is an anti-Western movement fuelled by hate. When I speak of holy war, then, I am thinking of the first Holy Wars and Holy Warriors: the Christian Crusades and Crusaders, who took a vow to defend Christianity by attacking and eliminating all opposition to Christianity, and especially by enlisting Christian soldiers in their campaigns against the Saracens or Islamic infidels.[7] Of significance is the fact that the wars were largely economically driven as the Moslem businessmen in those countries known today generally as comprising the Middle East, were proving to be too shrewd and powerful for the Christian businessmen. And as events in the contemporary world reveal, the demonization of the Moslems, the Arabs or the Islamic peoples in general, has not changed much. They are still portrayed as less than caring, less than humane, even less than civilized.[8]

The Western public is never shown images of Moslems loving their babies, appreciating the arts and culture, or engaging in a whole host of other normal, routine, family activities usually associated with ordinary human beings. Thus, in the context of the present-day occupation of Iraq by the so-called 'coalition of the willing' Western

capitalist countries, what is clear is that the fundamental concern is with the control of oil, that one commodity which lubricates the engines of global capitalism, and without which the system cannot survive. It was not by coincidence, therefore, that the war on Iraq was initially dubbed Operation Iraqi Liberation (OIL), but changed after its crassness became too embarrassing even for the Lesser Bush's administration. As Arundhati Roy noted in a speech in 2002: "Oil keeps America's engines purring sweetly. Oil keeps the free market rolling. Whoever controls the world's oil, controls the world's market",[9] and as is well known, Iraq sits on the second largest deposits of the world's oil.

Political Times

Playing on the concept of 'collateral damage', which speaks largely to human casualties in war without mentioning them, John Collins and Ross Glover coined the term 'collateral language' to describe the political masking of the horrors of war and to prevent the public from getting a true sense of those horrors. They write:

> If the state knows how to use the correct language, it can convince its people to commit the most atrocious acts.... The more control the state has over the language a population hears and the images it sees, the easier it is to develop 'democratic' consent.... Terms such as freedom, justice, terrorism, and evil offer excellent examples of how language can be utilized to produce consent.[10]

'Collateral language' concerns the politics of language and the language of politics where, for example, the supporters of the US are cast as 'allies' ('coalition of the willing') while supporters of enemy states are deemed to be 'puppets'. And in collateral language, those pro-American groups who fight against 'axis of evil' governments are referred to as freedom fighters, whereas their adversaries are labeled 'terrorists', 'thugs', 'communist rebels', and so on. Anyone who speaks collateral language also knows that the US might engage in 'intelligence gathering', never in 'spying', and they never kidnap and overthrow foreign leaders, they merely engage in 'regime change'.

The concept of 'collateral language' presumes that philosophically, language is necessary for 'thought' to be possible. Stated differently, in order to be able to think of something, one must first be in a position to name it. This is the idea behind George Orwell's notion of 'Newspeak', a language tailored to the removal of any and all words that expressed opposition to the government of Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* . For it was Orwell's contention that words or language serve to structure the perception of social reality, which in turn would condition both thought and the social behaviour linked to such thought. For this reason words and language are always potentially politically charged. In fact, the so-called war on terror declared by Bush and his willing coalition is a case in point in that it treats as 'willing' those nations that may well have been forced, bribed or cajoled to support the United States military adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq. The use of any such force or bribery, however, is masked by the notions of 'coalition' and 'willing'.

The specific case of masking and distortion is best exemplified by the term 'collateral damage', which refers to innocent casualties of war. As an expression that is widely and uncritically used by the various media, it serves to blunt the public's sense of the bloody aspects of war, of saturation bombing and of the massive destructive powers of the United States war machine. Once more Collins and Glover write:

> The military language that is so widely repeated in the media softens the visceral impact of the violence on ordinary citizens. To speak of 'collateral damage' is a far cry from acknowledging the blown-off limbs, the punctured ear drums, the shrapnel wounds, and the psychological horror that are caused

> by heavy bombardment; even speaking of 'civilian casualties' deflects attention from the real effects of the bombs.[11]

In this context there are those who have used the notion of 'collateral language'[12] to speak to the political use of language to distract the public's attention from the horrors of a war in which their sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, friends and compatriots are actively killing others and being killed. Indeed, the very term 'war' has been greatly desensitized owing to its common or popular use by politicians and its uncritical repetition by media spokespersons. Such terms as a 'war on poverty', 'war on illiteracy', 'war on drugs', 'war on homelessness', and 'war on terror', to mention a few,[13] have rendered the idea of *war* quite routine, if not acceptable, in the public's consciousness. And this is why there seems not to be much outrage at the prospect of the nation going to war or even being at war. In this context too, the term 'terrorism' refers to unprovoked acts of aggression by an enemy; the same acts carried out by the coalition of the willing are called 'pre-emptive strikes'. Even if the latter are undertaken simply on the basis of a suspicion or based on 'evidence' that is totally fabricated, those acts are justified as defensive simply by claiming that they are in the best interest of the public. This use of collateral language serves effectively to mute political opposition just as it did in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Some other examples of collateral language are 'enemy combatants' instead of 'prisoners of war'. Because the latter are protected under the Geneva Conventions, to cast them as 'enemy combatants' removes the protection and opens the way for them to be abused and tortured with impunity. This is the case with the hundreds illegally imprisoned men at Camp Delta in Guantánamo, Cuba, or those at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Then there is the very bland and neutral sounding 'civilian contractors' used in reference to the mercenaries and private soldiers recruited by the 'coalition of the willing' to carry out military actions that would be deemed illegal if undertaken by regular soldiers.

Somewhat more benign are the 'embedded journalists', who are recruited to provide the official, sanitized version of the war as directed by the generals in the field. These are not to be confused with objective reporters, for the very fact of their embeddedness compromises any claim to objectivity on their part. Here too one might mention 'smart bombs' that can detect the difference between a terrorist and an innocent civilian from a height of several miles. And of course, when smart bombs fail and kill coalition partners they produce what in collateral language is referred to 'friendly fire'.

Whereas Stealth Bombers, Tomahawk and Cruise missiles, cluster bombs and so on are known to wreak massive damage on enemy targets, in collateral language it is the enemy who is accused of having 'weapons of mass destruction'. And once more, as the term becomes widely and uncritically accepted by the public at large, the impression is created that mass destruction is something that the enemy calculatingly inflicts on otherwise friendly and innocent civilians. Once captured, then, enemy combatants can be subjected to 'sleep management' and other techniques aimed at 'softening them up'. To call these techniques by their proper name, torture, would likely inflame the public, so collateral language is resorted to as the coalition forces continue to spread freedom and democracy via guns, bombs, missiles, illegal imprisonment and torture.

However, since war and violence are not usually engaged in as ends in themselves, one may wonder how the foregoing may be explained. In the specific context of the invasion of Iraq, although the political and ideological demonization of Arabs and the Islamic peoples are not new to Western thinking, there is also the not-so-secret agenda to the spreading of 'freedom' in the Middle East. As suggested above, it has to do with oil and the huge dependency of the western world on it. And while the control of other countries' resources has always been at the base of imperialist expansion, those countries' markets are also crucial to further capitalist development and expansion. This is at

the heart of globalization and neo-liberalism, two key economic terms in the vocabulary of 'collateral language' and two essential elements in the practice of American fundamentalism.

Double Speak

If collateral language sounds akin to George Orwell's description of 'double speak' that is probably because it is. Consider, for example, the following statement made in 2002 by Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defence, at a news briefing on Iraq and what US intelligence there had revealed:

> As we know, there are known knowns. There are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know.[14]

But it was with specific reference to (a) the location of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and (b) evidence of their existence, that Rumsfeld would be boldest: "We know where [Iraq's WMD] are. They're in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south, and north somewhat",[15] and when weapons inspectors in Iraq failed to turn up any evidence of weapons of mass destruction, he flippantly asserted that: "The absence of evidence is not necessarily the evidence of absence."[16] In January 2005, however, the US government finally admitted publicly that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq – the raison d'etre for the invasion. But the admission was an empty one for they continue unapologetically to defend the invasion on the grounds that the removal of Saddam Hussein was a good thing for the whole world.

The tragedy of this arrogance and double-speak is that the US and British attack, invasion and occupation of Iraq were premised on the supposedly 'clear evidence' that such weapons existed and that they could be deployed against the West in a matter of 45 minutes.[17] In spite of what the public had been saying all along, the existence of the 'clear evidence' only now appears to have been a lie fabricated to justify a much earlier decision to go to war. Still resolute, however, as the facts come to light, the American and British administrations seem bent on playing semantic games by claiming that they had evidence of 'weapons programs' as opposed to 'weapons' per se, that Iraq represented a 'gathering threat' as opposed to a 'threat' per se, and so on.

Scary Times for the 'Free Press'

But these are not just feel good, confusing, wicked and political times as I have said. These are also very scary times when Americans (and others) turn to such anti-intellectual minds as Bill O'Reilly, Rush Limbaugh, Oprah Winfrey, Jay Leno, and David Letterman for analysis and understanding of major political events, or when people all over the world are glued to the hugely unobjective and unprofessional FOX News [sic] and Cable News [sic] Network (CNN) for 'news' and information. After the events of September 11, 2001, it was clear to all who cared to pay attention, that the so-called free press was anything but free, as journalists and reporters of similarly unprofessional mindsets hurriedly abandoned any pretext of objectivity, and unabashedly employed the personal pronouns 'we', 'us' and 'our' to describe the American response to the attacks. Thus, Gabriela Paz Miño asserts: "I also see journalists not making enough effort to separate the governments interests from the need of the public to be informed. I have watched flags, logos and patriotic songs framing TV reports. I listen to journalists talking about 'us' when referring to this country in war."[18]

In an atmosphere of national panic and insecurity, the government of the United States dictated what programmes could be aired on television and radio, and what movies should be made and released. This was all with a view to fostering patriotic correctness and making sure the public understood what was expected of a loyal American. In the words of Philip M. Strub, special assistant for Entertainment Media at the US Defence Department:

> While it seems that entertainment and the Pentagon make for strange bedfellows – even in a hopping town like Hollywood – the public has linked the two for more than 50 years. Before Congress created the Defense Department in 1949, the US War Department and Department of the Navy had their own film review offices. And during World War II... the Office of War Information's function was to "work with Hollywood to try to foster patriotic messages and prevent unpatriotic messages from creeping in".[19]

In similar vein the government also dictates which journalists are permitted to be embedded and to cover the war, what stories they could report, what photographs of the war they could show, and what democratic freedoms could be violated in defence of democracy and the free press. In various parts of the United States and Canada representatives of a group called 'campus watch' took it upon themselves to investigate professors and to publicly expose as traitors those whose patriotic correctness is called into question if they express any opposition to the growing invasions of privacy, to the violations of individual freedoms in the name of security, or to the illegal war being planned against Iraq.

A climate of fear has taken hold as figures, whether public or private, have grave reservations about expressing their views openly. This was especially acute in Canada, a country that has traditionally followed the US lead on foreign policy matters, but which this time sided with France and Germany, and was severely chastised by the US for its "treachery" and daring to "oppose a friend in time of need". Thus, Françoise Ducros, the ex-communications director of then Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, was forced to quit her job when she was overheard to have referred to George Bush as a moron;[20] Herb Dhaliwal, Canada's Natural Resources Minister was threatened with dismissal for saying that George Bush was "not being a statesman" in his approach to the Iraq war;[21] and Carolyn Parrish, a former Canadian Member of Parliament, who showed her frustration by proclaiming: "Damn Americans, I hate those bastards..." was forced to apologize publicly for her off-the-record comments.[22] As is known, a similar fate met a TV talk show host, Bill Maher of ABC's *Politically Incorrect,* who dared to question whether the ones who flew the planes into the twin towers could really be considered cowards. After this, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer cautioned journalists to "watch what they say and watch what they do", while Bush's National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, "urged networks to exercise judgement".[23]

Yet, what are the official explanations given for the September 11 attacks to date? Bush and others have offered two: (a) the perpetrators are evil and (b) they are jealous of the freedoms that Americans enjoy![24] The state department has offered no other explanation, has not talked about America's Middle East policies, about the provocations of Israel and its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands, or about what goes through the mind of a sixteen-year-old girl who consciously decides to strap on a belt of explosives and kill herself for a cause.

Scary times indeed, when a once highly respected journalist like Dan Rather of CBS News (who is seen strangely as being on the left), in referring to those who oppose American foreign policy in the Middle East (and elsewhere), posed the question: "Why

do they hate us [Americans]?" and answered it flippantly and in customary ahistorical style as follows: "These people are losers, Americans are winners, and they are jealous of our success!"[25] It was clear that 'these people' referred to those old enemies of Western capitalism in its Christian guise: Moslems, Arabs and Islamics. Finally, these are scary times when George Bush the Elder and the Lesser, and Tony Blair, can emerge as mighty leaders of shallow people in a savage age. In her address to the Riverside Church, Arundati Roy again captures the mood when she reminded the audience that Bush the Elder was unequivocal when he affirmed that: "I will never apologize for the United States. I don't care what the facts are."[26] What this meant was that the Americans are so powerful that the facts can be whatever they want them to be. Surely there will be dissenting voices, but they matter little, for the military might of the United States guarantees that opposition can be ignored with impunity. Mao Tse Tung's notion that power comes from the barrel of a gun springs to mind: those with the biggest guns have most power.

Thus, when some 90 per cent of the Turkish people opposed going to war against Iraq or giving the Americans the right to use their territory for their war operations, they were accused of lacking 'democratic principles'. In Europe, however, it was a different story, for in no European country did support for the War exceed 11 per cent, yet still "the governments of England, Italy, Spain, Hungary, and other countries of Eastern Europe were praised for disregarding the views of the majority of their people and supporting the illegal invasion."[27] As oxymoronic and indefensible as it sounds, 'bombing for democracy' causes the architects in the US and British war departments no discomfort. For in the war against terrorism, they feel confident that they have God and good intentions on their side, as was confessed by one high-ranking US soldier in Iraq:

> Lt. General William Boykin, a deputy undersecretary of defense, and an evangelical, made headlines when he publicly described the war on terror as a religious mission. Of one Muslim warlord he said, "My God is bigger than his. My God is a real God."[28]

In other words, if circumstances dictate that they must take harsh measures in the short-run, these only serve to guarantee the greater good for humanity in the long-run; much like the reasoning that informed the decision to kill some 2 million Japanese at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Capitalist Fundamentalism

The foregoing serves to present a context for the discussion of September 11th, the War on Terrorism, Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, weapons of mass destruction, Moslems and Islamic fundamentalism. I want, however, to clarify the use of the term 'fundamentalist', and to broaden its cast, for there are many different types of fundamentalists. As we know, fundamentalists are narrow minded, fanatical, ideologically driven, and bent on the destruction of all who oppose them. Fundamentalists of every kind admit no other version or interpretation of reality but their own, whether religious, political or economic, and they permit no dissenting voice to be heard. For fundamentalists the world is either black or white, good or evil. Thus, presuming that America's morality trumps all others, Condoleezza Rice could claim that one's 'moral compass' is the key to making the right decisions about where one stands on the question of terrorism. In an address to the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) on April 29, 2002, she spoke of the need for action (as opposed to sterile academic debate) that is morally guided. She also confessed that she was once a professor, and after

apologizing for the fact, went on to dismiss academic debates as merely enlivening academic conferences and classrooms, but not really accomplishing much else. In her words:

> We can never let the intricacies of cloistered debate obscure the need to speak and act with moral clarity.... Nations must decide which side they are on in the fault line that divides civilization from terror... what moral clarity gives you is a compass against which to measure everything else... if you ever lose sight of what you think is wrong and what is right, then you have nothing to guide you.[29]

To continue, fundamentalists of all kinds live in a world of belief as opposed to one of ideas, for while ideas might be proven wrong, beliefs are far more difficult to access scientifically and far more resistant to empirical proof. As we know, for true believers in anything, no amount of proof or evidence is necessary, and for non-believers, no amount of proof or evidence is sufficient. My aim, however, is not to speak about all fundamentalists or fundamentalisms. Rather, I want specifically to focus on a category of these that is not traditionally viewed as fundamentalist(s): economic fundamentalism and economic fundamentalists. For while we have heard a great deal in recent times about Islamic fundamentalism, we have heard nothing of capitalist fundamentalism.

Of course there are Islamic fundamentalists just as there are Christian and Jewish fundamentalists. But they do not define the majority of Moslems, Christians or Jews. Christian fundamentalists like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson do not speak for all Christians, and this fact is clearly recognized to the point that Christians do not ever have to defend themselves or their beliefs in light of the formers' extreme stands. Similarly, while Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein do not speak for all Muslims, in the racialized Western public consciousness they are seen to do so. That is why nervous passengers on an air plane can have a 'Moslem-looking' passenger searched and removed for no reason other than that "he looks like one of them". Timothy McVeigh (Oklahoma City bomber) and Adolf Hitler were Christians, but their terrible deeds did not cast all Christians in bad light, nor do young, white, red haired, freckled-faced males (like McVeigh) strike terror into the hearts of airline passengers.

There is a not-too-subtle element of racism or cultural chauvinism at play here, for while it permits white people to retain their individuality, it denies the same courtesy to Moslems and others who are not perceived as 'white'. The charge, then, is that all Muslims should not be stained by Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein any more than all Israelis should suffer the taint of Ariel Sharon, or all Americans the ignominy of the two Bush presidents and their advisors. This notwithstanding, one must not forget who made Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, and how easy it was to racialize them after they had outlived their usefulness to the US. To return to fundamentalism, however, in the same way that the religious, Islamic fundamentalist would say it is Islam or nothing, for the capitalist fundamentalist, it is capitalism or nothing! This is the thinking embodied in the philosophy of either being "with us or against us". Thus, in declaring total war against terrorism, the Lesser Bush called on all nations of the world to get on side, for "if you are not with us, you are with the terrorists". The direct implication is that there is no room for neutrality, no middle ground, and definitely no room for voicing opposition, even for debate and dialogue.

Caribbean Echo

Those states that reject the US call to arms and the states that are said to sponsor terrorism, have no political or moral ground on which to stand. And in the Caribbean

specifically, where US sponsored terrorism, invasions, puppet dictators, and crippling economic sanctions are well known, choosing to be with 'us' is no guarantee of safety, for the US, which is said to have *interests* as opposed to friends, is well known for discarding even their best allies as the situation demands. Thus, along with Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, Ferdinand Marcos, Augusto Pinochet, and the Shah of Iran, among many other US-created-then-abandoned dictators, Caribbean people are aware of Cuba's Flugencio Batista, Panamá's Manuel Noriega, Haïti's François and Jean-Claude Duvalier, and Grenada's Eric Gairy. For Caribbean leaders, then, the Lesser Bush's challenge is one that magnifies in the public Caribbean mind the historic bullying tactics of the United States.

By characterizing world conflicts and divisions as a simple either-or, or 'us' versus 'them' binary opposition, US foreign policy runs the risk of undermining itself. For while on the contemporary, international scene US political leaders and media outlets have sought to demonize the Arab, Moslem and Islamic 'other', locally in the Caribbean the matter is likely to be consumed quite differently. Faced with the unavailability of neutral ground, I argue that Caribbean populations are no longer likely automatically or in knee-jerk fashion to opt for supporting American fundamentalism (e.g., Barbados and Dominica during the US invasion of Grenada in 1983). This is because of (a) the very publicly exposed, heavy-handed tactics of various United States administrations in the region historically, and (b) the fact that the ravages of globalization (poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, economic displacement, malnutrition, loss of control over local resources, support for tyrannical and corrupt governments), are now perceived by the ordinary Caribbean citizen as the doing of the United States. For it is that country which orders the three most powerful, undemocratic organizations in the world: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Within the Caribbean region it is traditionally the case that those states and social movements that have attempted autonomously to pursue a politics of national liberation have run afoul of American fundamentalism. And whereas the denouncing of 'communist' and 'socialist' groups was once sufficient to give legitimacy to US interference in the internal affairs of the region, this is less likely today. Indeed, the once demonized Cuba has emerged recently as a respected member of the Caribbean family of nations, owing to its achievements in the areas of health care, education and sports, and today plays a leadership role in the Association of Caribbean States. In the process of 'othering', therefore, because the Moslem and Islamic infidels, and the socialists and communists have been equally demonized in virtually identical terms, and given the growing anti-American sentiment engineered by the Lesser Bush and his advisors, I maintain that the culturally chauvinistic and racist content of their politics of fundamentalism are likely to backfire on the Americans. The current wave of world anti-Americanism is the unintended consequence of American fundamentalism.

Conclusion

According to the terms of American fundamentalism no rival economic or political system must be permitted to survive. And should any dare, its leaders are delegitimized, harassed, hounded, kidnapped, imprisoned and killed. But in the process, so too are hundreds of thousands of the innocent, especially the defenceless children. This is why the WTO, which claims to be pursuing policies to alleviate the suffering of the world's poor and destitute, is increasingly being viewed by ordinary people all over the world as nothing but a bullying and economic fundamentalist organization that practices economic terrorism and guarantees the free reign of capital that Noam Chomsky referred to

as the fifth freedom:[30] the freedom of US owned and controlled multinational corporations to rob and exploit whenever and wherever capital sees fit. In this context it is not difficult to see the events of September 11th as a symbolic attack on the centres of American fundamentalism: economically, the World Trade Center, and militarily and politically, the Pentagon.

That the United States today is acting as a rogue state is beyond question. For if such rogue states are the ones that a) have massive stockpiles of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons; b) ignore due process at the United Nations; c) refuse to sign and honour international treaties; and d) have come to power through illegitimate means (all the still unanswered irregularities about the 2000 election), the Unites States' rogue status is clear. As ideological cover, however, the leading spokespersons in government and in the media are keen to distract public attention from this fact by pointing the finger at others and invoking the notion of human rights violations and the confinement of political prisoners as reasons for attacking them militarily and blockading them economically. To this end their 'proxy' organization Amnesty International has been a 'staunch' ally. Political prisoners, however, are hardly ever to be found in the countries of the NATO alliance, and when they are (illegal detention without due process and torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo), the perpetrators are publicly treated as "individuals gone bad", not as a manifestation of a systemic pattern of abuse and a fundamental flaw in policy thinking. In non-allied countries, however, reports of human rights abuses are always treated as state sanctioned and cited as evidence of the corruption of the entire system. So when those US foreign-based and foreign-trained terrorists, who explode bombs in an attempt to destabilize the government of Cuba, are tried and jailed for sedition, they are politically cast as prisoners of conscience; and in the international media it is common to see them portrayed as freedom fighters who are wrongfully imprisoned.

The ideological nuance is best captured by Fidel Castro's response to a charge of harbouring political prisoners in Cuba: "In Cuba we do not have political prisoners; we have imprisoned counter-revolutionaries." Clearly reflecting an opposed political approach, Castro defines political prisoners as those who are punished for activities that impede the progress of humanity and for activities that favour social revolution: "Those who fight against such progress, and who fight for imperialism and for the ideas of imperialism are not political prisoners." So, after the 1976 terrorist bombing of a Cuban airline that killed 73 Cubans, and after the Miami-based terrorist group known as Brothers to the Rescue embarked on a spate of bombings of Cuban hotels and places of business in 1997, the media treated these largely as non-events. But when the US embassies in Kenya and Somalia were bombed in 1998, the US retaliated by indiscriminate bombing of so-called terrorist sites in Afghanistan and Sudan. The killing and maiming of hundreds of innocent civilians in those countries (so-called collateral damage), and the destruction of property, are never viewed as murder or even human rights abuses perpetrated by the US and those who support their right to act in this way.

Before taking their precipitous actions, the US government did not even see fit to communicate with the governments of Afghanistan and Sudan. One is only left to imagine the shoe on the other foot! What would have happened, for example, if the Cuban government retaliated by bombing suspected terrorist sites in Miami as reprisal for the terrorist bombings carried out by US citizens at Cuban hotels and other public places? To broaden the point from simply the question of internal subversion and political prisoners, one may ask why is there no such human rights term as *economic prisoners*? Economic prisoners are the poor of the system, but for political and ideological reasons, since poverty is a necessary and systemic part of the economic system of

capitalism, one will never hear complaints concerning the poor, the homeless, and the destitute as 'economic prisoners'.

In the liberal-individualist defense of the capitalist system, the poor are blamed for their laziness and lack of initiative, which conduce to their poverty. On the other hand, poverty under socialism is directly traced to more systemic and structural explanations such as government corruption, flawed policy, and lack of individual freedom. The political and ideological implications are clear. On my list of human rights abuses, then, the question of political prisoners, though very serious when properly defined, does not even make the top five. Instead, I include such abuses as homelessness and abject poverty, widespread illiteracy, denial of access to decent health care for lack of money, indiscriminate bombing of civilian populations, and the deliberate starvation of human populations that results from embargoes on food and medicines to countries that challenge the West's right to dictate political morality for all.

If rights are indeed to be accompanied by responsibilities, what are America's responsibilities to the political prisoners they imprison abroad and their economic prisoners at home? The idea therefore is not to abandon the notion of human rights, but rather to define these rights more precisely, and not to enforce their observation ideologically and selectively. But in a world where 'might makes right', and where 'power comes from the barrel of a gun' and the US has the biggest guns, they are able to arrogate unto themselves the right to go into a sovereign country such as Iraq and establish 'no fly zones' there, and into a sovereign country such as Cuba and maintain a military base there (Guantánamo), against the protests of the Iraqi and Cuban people and governments. They can denounce nuclear proliferation in other countries but no one can question their 'right' to amass all manner of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. This is the essence of American fundamentalism, where the contradictions of double-think and double-speak *à la* Orwell are so routine that they are not even recognized as hypocrisy.

In sum, I am in full agreement with Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, when she says that "we must stand up to the bullies". For until the main contributors to human rights abuses the world over are brought into line the problem will persist. But I am not too sure that Ms Robinson and I will agree on just who makes the list of bullies! Nor am I sure that, following the preceding, she will agree with my judgement that the United States is today the world's No.1 rogue nation, and that American fundamentalism is far more dangerous than any of the other fundamentalisms of which we have been made aware! The world of 2005 is therefore a lot less safe, and as the above-cited *Time Europe* poll reported, this is due overwhelmingly to American fundamentalism, and its politics of 'our way or the high way'.

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Notes

* First presented as a public lecture at the "Distinguished Lecture Series", Centre for Caribbean Thought, University of the West Indies, Mona, April 7, 2004.

1. http://www.time.com/time/europe/gdml/peace2003.html.
2. George Orwell, *Nineteen eighty-four* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1949).
3. George Ritzer, *The globalization of nothing* (California: Pine Forge Press, 2003).
4. Arundhati Roy, Globalization and terrorism. Speech given in Santa Fé, New Mexico, 18 September, 2002 (http://www.alternativeradio.org/programs/speakers/ROYA.html).
5. Arundhati Roy, Instant mix imperial democracy. Speech given to the Riverside Church, New York, New York, May 13, 2003 (http://www.cesr.org/Roy/royspeech.htm).
6. Arundhati Roy, The new imperialism and our war: Do turkeys enjoy thanksgiving, *The Hindu* (January 18, 2004).
7. The term 'Crusades' is traceable to the word 'cross' and refers to a solemn vow taken to deliver Holy Places from Mohammedan or Moslem rule or domination. These Holy Wars spanned the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries and Crusaders were identifiable by a cross made of cloth and worn on the outside of one's upper garment. Crusaders were clearly political activists who took vows to protect Christendom and often had the direct blessing of the pope of the day.
8. Even if credited with 'civilization' it is a perverse one, in the words of the celebrated conservative writer Samuel Huntington, that is on a collision course with modern, Western civilization. See Huntington, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of the world order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
9. Arundhati Roy, Globalization and terrorism, op. cit.
10. John Collins and Ross Glover (eds), *Collateral language: A user's guide to America's new war* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), pp.3-4. See also David Barsamian, "Collateral language: An interview with Noam Chomsky" (2003) (http://www.zmag.org/ZMagsite/Aug2003/barsamian0803.htm).
11. Collins and Glover, *Collateral language,* op. cit., p.8.
12. Ibid.
13. In similar vein, the Ontario government (in Canada) recently declared a 'war on bad drivers'.
14. Donald Rumsfeld, Department of Defence news briefing, February 12, 2002 (http://www.disinfopedia.org/wiki.phtml?title=Donald_Rumsfeld).
15. Donald Rumsfeld, "Statement to the Press, March 30, 2003" (http://www.disinfopedia.org/wiki.phtml?title=Donald_Rumsfeld).
16. Donald Rumsfeld, 2003 (http://www.americas.org/Clippings/2003-10-15-Counterpunch).
17. Vikram Dodd, "45-minute claim on Iraq was hearsay", *The Guardian*, Saturday, August 16, 2003 (http://politics.guardian.co.uk/iraq/story/0,12956,1020033,00.html).
18. Gabriela Paz Miño, Fight for free press is waged on large and small battlefields, 2005 (http://www.google.ca/search?=cache:yr64dj01j9kj:www.commondreams.org/views01/1.1/20/2005), para.14.
19. Philip M. Strub, Art imitates life for Pentagon liaison, *Boeing Frontiers Online* 1, no.10 (March 2003) (http://www.boeing.com/news/frontiers/archive/2003/march/mainfeature2.html).
20. Terry Glavin, 2002 (http://winnipegfreepress/.com/westview/story/762799p-903680c.html)
21. http://www.petroleumnews.com/pnarch/030330-05.html.
22. http://cbc.ca/stories/2003/02/26/bastards030226. Parrish has since been forced out of office for her continued criticism of the war and those who launched it.
23. Gabriela Paz Miño, Fight for free press, op. cit.
24. Condoleezza Rice, "Remarks by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice on terrorism and Foreign Policy", 2002 (http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/04/20020429-9.html), para.15.

25. James Sandrolini (http://www.chicagomediawatch.org/01_4_hate.shtml#top).
26. Arundhati Roy, "Instant mix imperial democracy", op. cit.
27. Ibid.
28. http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/02/05/60minutes/main598218.shtml.
29. Condoleezza Rice, Remarks, op cit., para. 22.
30. Noam Chomsky, *On power and ideology* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987), p.7. The first four freedoms as defined by American fundamentalism are freedom of speech and freedom of association, along with freedom from fear and freedom from want.

INTERVIEW

The Ironies of History: An Interview with Stuart Hall

Annie Paul

In June 2004 the Centre for Caribbean Thought at the University of the West Indies held a conference called "Culture, Politics, Race & Diaspora: The Thought of Stuart Hall". This interview was conducted (29/6/04) in the aftermath of that conference at Silver Sands in Duncans, Trelawny, where Hall vacationed with his family. For those unfamiliar with the name of Stuart Hall he has been one of the most influential thinkers in the latter quarter of the twentieth century. According to Professor Grant Farred of Duke University:

> Such was Hall's impact on the US, British, European and Australian academy via cultural studies, mainly through a range of essays he published during the 1980s, that by the 1990s he became one of the preeminent intellectuals in the world. In truth, because of the international rise of cultural studies, Hall came to be regarded as an academic star, an intellectual celebrity, and a philosophical guru: he became the incarnation of cultural studies, first in Britain and then in the United States, widely anointed as the spokesman for the politics – and the endemic politicization – of the popular, the theorist in the forefront of politicizing (all) identity.

Stuart Hall was born in Jamaica in 1932 and left Kingston for Oxford in 1951 as a Rhodes Scholar.

The Interview

AP: Stuart, I remember someone joking that they read in the papers that Her Majesty's government had made a bulk booking on the flight you arrived on, to send back some deportees… Yes, so you literally arrive back for this conference in your honour on board an Air Jamaica flight full of deportees from the UK.

SH: Yes, you know Annie, it was very strange because when I went to England in 1951 I thought I was escaping Jamaica and then within two years all of Jamaica (laughs) arrived in London (more laughter) so that no escape was possible and then now I come back and bring 72 deported members of the Jamaican fraternity back with me. And you know the plane was delayed for two hours but they never announced the delay which is funny 'cause it was plainly delayed. It was only when Catherine (Professor Catherine Hall, historian and wife of Stuart Hall) started talking to somebody

IDEAZ Vol. 3 Nos. 1-2/ 2004, pp. 53-80
ISSN 0799 1401. © University of the West Indies,
Dept of Sociology, Psychology & Social Work

who turned out to be someone who advises the Jamaican govt on migration – a Jamaican woman – and *she* said well, I can tell you why its delayed, we're waiting for the prisoners and then when we looked out on the runway we saw the police buses arriving. So they never even came through the exit lounge or anything like that… it was straight onto the tarmac, loaded onto the plane and they were curtained off at the back of the plane so you couldn't see anybody. But on the other hand there were also security officers traveling with them, some sitting with them but there were some security officers in first class who as soon as we landed became very active and so on. Then we had to wait until they were taken off and when we were collecting our luggage their luggage came through first. And this was a very sad sight because first of all they had very little luggage, you know very poor – boxes, baskets, things like that – but they were also, I suppose, half of them had big plastic bags with HM Prison on it. In other words they were coming from prison to prison, you know deported from Her Majesty's prison and the prison officers obviously pack their belongings and send them back – so it was a very sad sight. Of course I've since discovered that many of them have been deported from England having never lived in Jamaica or not lived in Jamaica for many years so there's nothing to come back to; many of them don't have any connections or active relatives in Jamaica, they don't know Jamaica or know enough to find a job or make a living here. One of the things I've been told is that a lot of them very quickly fall back into the prey of the drug traffickers because they've done it once and those are the connections that they have.

AP: Do we know anything about these people who were deported? Are they actually criminals? Or are they just illegal immigrants?

SH: They are of three kinds. One, they are mules – drug mules – who've been detected passing through customs –

AP: Swallowers?

SH: Swallowers, right, so they've been put in prison there as part of a drug bust and are now being deported back. Secondly there are criminals, probably belonging to posses who might also be involved in the drug trade but they're not swallowers. They're the people who are benefiting from the swallowing but they move between the drug trade in London and elsewhere in England and the drug connections here and in Colombia and so on. They are illegal transit organizers and they are part of the black posses that have been very highly publicized in Britain and they've been probably picked up there in connection with swallowers. They're the organizers of swallowers or people involved in the drug trade or people involved in crime, violent crime, or people picked up with illegal weapons – they're part of the Jamaican criminal fraternity – we can talk about that.

Then there are people simply who are immigration breakers, you know they're working, paying their taxes etc but they never had any permission to come in the first place and they've been picked up. Every now and again the police combs the construction industry or the catering industry or the farming industry, you know trying to pick up illegal immigrants. They've been picked up in a swoop, their papers are not in order, they don't have permission to stay and they have a right to deport them out. So they're a mixed bunch.

AP: Another issue that's been in the news here is the fact that gay groups in the UK have organized against Jamaican so-called entertainers many of whom have repertoires of anti-homosexual lyrics. The latest on that front is that Beenie Man just had a big

show in London cancelled and his promoters lost a lot of money… it's a very vexed issue isn't it, what do you think, I mean how can we start to make sense of all this?

SH: Well, I think the difficulty is trying to decide what stance to take because on the one hand one knows that respectable Jamaican society whether here or living in England is not at all enthused by urban popular culture; you know they think its slack, too raucous, too oversexualized, too not respectable, you know etc. so they're down on this popular culture I mean they were down on the music to begin with you know, roots music they didn't like… I'm talking about Jamaican immigrants in Britain now –

AP: You mean even the original music, what is thought of as classical reggae today, was disapproved of?

SH: Yeah, oh yeah, first of all it was in patois when they were trying to hide their patois, then it was about the lower classes, it was about Trenchtown etc. Popular culture expressed things that they wanted not to be reminded of. I mean I think this is part of a very long story told in Jamaica and by the nice respectable immigrants in Britain and dancehall is only the last wave. Now of course people are very ambivalent about that. On the one hand younger Jamaicans are very into it, massively into it, and it has been a source of their – how can I put it – cultural capital because it's popular among young people and they are the people who embody it so –

AP: You mean dancehall?

SH: Yeah dancehall and the music associated with it, like a series of black music, also jungle and rap and all of those musics. Black music has played a central role in British urban popular culture for many years so of course young black people get a lot of kudos out of being black. And then you have to bring in the generational factor… you know their parents might have been against it if they were arriving in the fifties, but by now you have a generation whose parents were all brought up on Bob Marley – you know reggae – so it's the reggae generation being outraged by the dancehall generation. It's a complicated generational picture! Each generation regards the next generation as too slack and too rude, too noisy and so on but gradually they themselves grow up to be adults and look back on this music with pleasure and nostalgia while their children run away to some other music. You can see a cycle going on. It's very complicated what people feel about it but undoubtedly there is among the most respectable residents, whether first or second generation, a feeling that this music doesn't do the cause of respectable Jamaicans living abroad any good. They think its all about drugs and crime because Jamaicans are often associated with the gun culture, you know a lot of shootings in parts of London are attributed to Jamaicans, sometimes Jamaicans shooting Jamaicans, sometimes warfare between one band and another, between one record company and another, or one area and another or between one organized group and another. But Jamaicans have been very prominent in the gun culture and very prominent in the drug culture because you know its known that dope is common in Jamaica and they're seen as being linked to the Colombia trade… So all of these involvements of Jamaican people of one generation or another in the illegal cultures, illegal or non-respectable cultures, awakens ambivalence amongst respectable black people both in Jamaica and elsewhere.

Ok, so that's one background about attitudes to the music and so on. Well, now one of the things that is said is of course homophobia… but this seems a bit ambivalent to me because a lot of respectable, Christian, adult Jamaicans are pretty

homophobic, you know they don't have any sympathy at all with gay people or with gay rights, gay liberation movements etc. So they're not in any position to make a very serious case of pointing the finger. A lot of feminists are; this is a more serious case because feminists and gay people have fought for gay rights and women's rights etc. They've been very much into this over the years and they say – Well, the trouble is this catches us on the hop because you ask us to identify with black people, with black music, with 'their' culture and we do, as an act of solidarity, but we *can't* excuse attitudes which are degrading to women, and homophobic, just because its black. And this is another very complicated and interesting question. Social movements that arose in the 60s were attached to a single issue and a single constituency, you know women's rights for women, gay rights for gay people, anti-racism for black people, but these sometimes conflict because people are gay, black women. One person can embody more than one contradiction. When the different strands of these identities don't add up, they conflict with one another, what are you supposed to do? Are you supposed to say black men are right to treat black women as their possessions even though it runs counter to feminism? So what is the position of a black feminist who's required to be solidary with postcolonial struggles but refuses to subordinate herself to black men just because they're black. But these are – in contemporary politics which is of course more fragmented around single issue campaigns you don't have one party that embodies a position on blacks and women and gays and class and poverty – you have these different social movements. Now when you have politics more organized like that it presents real contradictory pulls on individuals and on groups.

Then behind that there's another complicated question and that is about masculinity, about black masculinity. What is this thing that – you know – that black men are not just black men but in order to be black men they have to be *super* black men exaggerating the qualities of masculinity – violence, hardness, etc – and they themselves having been subordinated by whites then repeat the subordination in relation to their own women (laughs). You know instead of learning the lesson of subordination and saying we will not do unto others as was done unto us, unthinkingly they reproduce the form of masculinity which mimics these inferior relationships that white men had to black men. Now this is not only in Jamaica; this is true of course of hiphop which is also homophobic and therefore it's something that has happened in plantation society in the Western world. You know – a grown up black man addressed as a boy by a Southern land owner or a Jamaican plantation owner thinks that the only way in which he can become a man is to boss around somebody else! It is – you know – it's a fantastic irony, this repetition , this blind kind of repeating itself – and this is the attachment to violence which is again a kind of exercise of brutal power, you know mimicking the brutality of the plantation regime itself, and of slavery and of the middle passage . It's like the Jews beating up the Palestinians because the Germans were wicked to the Jews. Instead of the Jews saying we will never ever treat any other people like the Germans treated us they're doing exactly the same thing …

AP: … to the Palestinians. But that's the irony –

SH: It's a deeply ironic problem, er question, about black masculinity. And this evinces itself in popular music. I mean now, of course one has to say interesting things about that too, which is that it's in popular music, it's in the popular culture that these attitudes get worked through, you know, including worked through in their dangerous forms, because further up they're suppressed first of all by Christianity...you know there's a very Christian thing which keeps a certain lid on such

things although of course in the black churches female subordination, black leadership, black masculinity is repeated there too but not in such an overt mode. So its partly because Christianity keeps a lid on it and then middle class respectability and wealth allows it another form of expression –

AP: When you talk about "keeping a lid on it" are you referring to homosexuality or – ?

SH: No, I'm talking about all the things that gained repetitive expression whether violence, masculine sexuality, forms of masculine power –all of these things which I call plantation society repeating itself in the psyche of the poor and oppressed peoples of now post-plantation society continuing to be operative in pathological form. But what I'm pointing out to you is that popular culture has – you might say the good or the bad, I don't care what it is – but it has the capacity to give expression to this in its violent and dangerous forms as well as in its attractive forms, its liberating forms and so on. So you know I mean we could talk about homophobia though I'm not really comfortable … .we could talk about homophobia in relation to dancehall but we could also talk about women in relation to dancehall you know? Because subordinate as the dancehall queens are to the men it is obvious that –it is clear that – a form of female or feminine independence has found expression here, a kind of reclaiming of sexuality, a reclaiming of the body, a turning over of respectable restraints and taboos on the pleasure of sexuality – -

AP: I'm glad that you brought that up because this is something Carolyn Cooper from UWI has often talked about but she's vilified for expressing these views – you know?

SH: I know… she would be vilified because of what we talked about before –the taboo on all these things yes?

AP: She's ridiculed and –

SH: Yes, but this is the taboo on the repressed part of blackness. And the history of blackness is a tortured history of blackness and its repression in this society and where it finds expression often in distorted, even reactionary , violent, explosive, dangerous ways – it's what happens to culture in any society – it *will* out, and it will out in these forms. What I'm pointing out is that this expressiveness has its terrific side too although I know it's ambivalent because you know the women *are* subordinated in the dancehall to the men, there's no question about that and they perform dancehall in a sense *to* the men. You can see it in the stance and the stances; I mean to whom is this display directed? To the men, I mean to one another, but also to the men. But it is also a reclaiming. Let's just make a general point here because culture is never straightforward, it is never positively positive or wholly negative. It's always indirect, always contradictory, the positive and the negative side have to be taken together. Ok so let us come to homophobia.

Given the forms which black masculinity has been obliged to take – the kind of imitative forms of black masculinity – of course homosexuality is an affront to everything about it. It's all about conquering women so what do you do about women who say well, I'm not particularly attracted to black men… its all about having twenty five children with twenty five baby mothers as a sign, a symbol, of your virility. Why? Because the white man took your virility away, he didn't even allow you to recognize your own children in slavery, your children didn't belong to you, you couldn't form a family around your own children. You were always a boy you were never a father. In the eyes of the white plantation owners a black man could not be a father. So when free he has twenty five children with as many women. What is he to

do with a homosexual man who says I'm terribly happy not to have a child or I wouldn't mind adopting a child later on if I have a settled partner, can you imagine three males constituting one household? It violates every idea of the family, and the woman who looks after the family – I mean how could any serious male Jamaican be satisfied with being looked after by another man, who plays the role of a woman – plays a feminine role? So you know homophobia is inscribed in the history of Jamaica. This is not to say we need to be tolerant of it. I'm absolutely intolerant of it. I would not say that because it exists and because I understand why – to understand is not to forgive – unfortunately we have to say that just as we have an anti-racist movement to stop people from discriminating against black people you have an anti-homophobia campaign to stop black men abusing gay men… because they have rights too, they're human beings etc. the argument that human rights doesn't stop at some frontier. So it's the same complicated move I was describing before where you have to have knowledge, the power, the expressiveness, the vitality of the new culture and recognize that it is a distortion of deep factors in the culture and the society which gained this distorted expression, which have very unfortunate negative consequences, one of which is homophobia. Somehow we have to foster the creativity, and the expressiveness and the dynamism and wean it away from its own negativity.

I mean its bad enough for the people who get shot and murdered and sworn at and beaten up because they're gay but it's worse for the people who're doing it because it just confirms *that* version of masculinity. i.e. this is what maleness really is and I can demonstrate it by beating the shit out of them. And by repeating it of course you deepen it, any trend you repeat and repeat and repeat, becomes a habit.

AP: And that may be what's happening here?

SH: Exactly. And not only that but it then becomes part of the culture. So a new boy who wants to become a DJ or a singer, what is he going to talk about? He's going to talk about 'them', about bossing the women, he's going to talk about women as whores and degrade women like his father and grandfather were degraded. He's going to talk about 'batty man' etc.

AP: You know the interesting thing is that when it becomes part of the culture – take the defence of homophobia for instance – you know part of the hypocrisy here is that while everyone focuses on dancehall lyrics as being homophobic, in fact there are many many churches on the island expressing these same sentiments, telling people that its fine to be homophobic, in fact one ought to be homophobic if one is a self-respecting Christian etc. There are people at the highest levels of society even in academia who are extremely homophobic –these are the people with power yet we constantly point our fingers at dancehall DJs – I mean that's a very limited way to approach this problem because its so widespread.

SH: No, that is a way of projecting it onto the underclass, It's in every society. Quashee or whatever is the current phrase for him has always been responsible. The uncivilized label that the whites project onto blacks, the blacks have managed by dividing between 'us' and 'them'. Projecting the negative bits onto them and becoming respectable themelves, ascribing the values to themselves while the underpart is projected out somewhere else. That's the basic mechanism of racism. You're looking at internal racism. But going back to what we said in relation to masculinity , I mean, how could we expect that black and brown pastors of churches or that the black and the brown middle classes had escaped these processes we're talking about. Why should they have escaped them, they come from the same place, they were looked

down on in the same way. Not half as much as if they were black and poor but it doesn't matter. By now they have inherited the same negative position so of course they have many of these fears, and some of the respectability is reinforced by evangelical Christianity in which it's not just disrespectable, it's sinful.

AP: The thing is I think that if we were serious about combating homophobia we should be addressing ourselves to these pastors who are disseminating this hatred for homosexuals as well and I don't see that being talked about.

SH: No, of course, and then the difficulty is that dancehall condenses everything – homophobia; masculinity; fear of sexuality; respectability; everything is in the dancehall and what is more it's very popular. So you know the masses are once again escaping from the restraints of respectability etc. Once again they've found their own forms of expression and aren't subordinating themselves to respectable forms of expression. Once again, of course Jamaicans are ambiguous about this – they loved reggae when it became a world music, they didn't like it when it was down in Trenchtown. Once it became respectable they thought it was great; no doubt dancehall is on its way to this respectable state – I mean some respect and acceptance will one day come and something else will have to replace it from underneath but meanwhile its there and what's more its in your face, it's not hidden away – those things used to be hidden away in the ghettoes, in the deep countryside but its not hidden away any longer, its everywhere, everybody's talking about it, the music is blaring out, the girls can be seen going to the dances, you know where the dances are because they're beginning to advertise, they're beginning to want to fraternize the edges of it in Passa Passa and so on… so *of course* people are going to focus on the dancehall.

AP: You know one of the funny things about homophobia being a so-called integral part of Jamaican culture, because this is how it's often put – we don't tolerate homosexuality here because it isn't part of our culture – but its almost, in a way, as if just like the deportees whom we started out talking about, this *identity* is deported from Jamaica, they would like to deport it from Jamaican culture, you know its not welcome here, you're foreign, you're alien. Very often the discourse around homosexuality is couched in such terms.

SH: Yes, there's three strategies there. One is to deport it to say that it doesn't really belong here, it belongs somewhere else – you know even somebody as wonderful as Frantz Fanon – he wrote the unforgettable sentence that there's no homosexuality in Martinique. It's in *Black Skins, White Masks*. I mean it's not that he was homophobic, he just said Martiniquans don't have it, you know black people are not subject to that etc.

AP: But another irony locally, in Jamaica, is that there are many people who are quite visible in society who are gay, I mean they can never say they are, but we all know that they are. So in a funny way there's a tolerance of homosexuality at very high levels at the same time that you have all this rhetoric –

SH: But it probably cloaks itself with discreet behaviour… , you can't flaunt it too much; it's known but never spoken about , it's private but part of the open secret of middle class – you know this is not unknown elsewhere – the upper classes in England partly because they all went to public school – I mean they don't even know when they're doing it that it's sex at all, they just think it's how you behave when you're 14 or 15 and they all grow up and have big families etc. They all have had passions and crushes at their public schools, I mean you know its absolutely common knowledge,

it's a common, common occurrence. And some people in the upper classes you know remain homosexual… and they were never outed.

On the other hand there's always been the other section who've hunted it down, tried –

AP: Because you have that in England too, right?

SH: Oh yes, remember Oscar Wilde being dragged through the courts. Between Oscar Wilde and the consenting legislation of the 60s when finally, finally, Britain agreed that homosexual practices, consensual homosexual practices in private, above the age of 21, was not illegal.

AP: But isn't that ironic again? Because our laws here are based on English law. That's the law that is upheld here – the law against buggery which you're saying was repealed or altered in the 1960s in England.

SH: Yes, and there couldn't have been a gay rights, gay liberation movement in Britain without that. Of course this doesn't mean it (homophobia) goes away. It still exists and the people who object police each boundary, as each boundary is passed they police it. So first the age limit was 21 then it was 18, so anyone having consensual sex with boys of 17 1/2 would be found guilty of buggery and probably child abuse as well. This is in the teeth of the fact that the girls are having babies at 14 and boys are having sex at 13 in England. But still you're not supposed to be able to know whether you're gay or not until you're 18.

So don't imagine that because the laws are slightly more liberal and because there is a gay movement and there are now gay MPs, openly gay, I mean there are many more still in the closet, but there are many more MPs that are openly gay. The former Minister of Culture, Arts and Sports Chris Smith had a long term partner and there are several. There are a number of people in public life who are gay, the head of the National Theatre, for instance. But there was still a tremendous row in the Anglican Church about allowing gay men to become bishops –

AP: Oh yes, it made big waves here as well –

SH: It made big waves throughout the Anglican Church… and the opposition is the American church which has enthroned as bishop certain gay people. The one who was about to be enthroned by the Archbishop of Canterbury – they made such a fuss that he gave it up, resigned it – but here is another interesting thing, even in this sector, the leading force against this move in the Anglican Church is the African Church.

AP: And the Caribbean branch would have aligned themselves with the African Church…

SH: So this contradiction cuts through the Anglican church where the socially liberal are required to say, "Well, if necessary we will have a break with the Black Church." Repeating the point I made earlier on... where these things crosscut one another?

AP: Make the point again…

SH: Where because the liberals who would be liberal on race and sexuality now find themselves opposed by black men who are both anti-homosexual and black. And they're saying oh, are you going to oppose the Black church when you've just given the black church a voice in Anglican circles? (Laughing…) So the world I'm

afraid… contradiction, contradiction, contradiction. Ambivalence is the name of the game where culture and politics is concerned.

AP: One of the interesting things about the conference that just took place at UWI was that there was a whole panel on visual art. Many people may not realize that you have a central involvement with art, you're associated with the Institute of International Visual Art – inIVA for short – can you talk about that a bit, what is inIVA's mandate?

SH: Well, inIVA and the other organization, namely the Association of Black Photographers, which is Autograph – I'm chairman of the board of both these organizations – they are the product of a big wave in the late 70s and 80s among second generation black migrants, namely mainly in that period, people from the Caribbean and people from the Asian subcontinent. It was the product of an explosion of creative work in the visual arts in that generation. Now this is interesting because of course there was a generation before that, painters and artists who went from the Caribbean and from India and what is now Pakistan – India in those days – or from Sri Lanka. They went to London, part of the independence movement, almost all of them anti-imperialists. Went as practicing artists to be part of modern art which they saw not as white but as part of a modern attitude to life yeah? In modern art you were going to find the forms of expression of modern life and since as anti-colonialists they were looking forward to getting rid of colonial feudalism which had held everybody back and entering – becoming modern subjects themselves as artists – they went to where it was happening, in Paris, in London, and for a period they were part of the British avant-garde. So by the 60s – these are people like Aubrey Williams, Frank Bowling –

AP: Rasheed Araeen?

SH: Rasheed Araeen and a whole series of South Asian artists, wonderful persons and artists… Now this generation in the 60s – the story of British modern art moved on without them . Their place in the early British avant-garde got written out… some stopped painting. One Indian painter destroyed *all* his paintings, *all* his work –

AP: Who was it? Was it Souza?

SH: No, it wasn't him, it was… I'll look it up and tell you. So this man destroyed all his paintings. Frank Bowling moved to New York. It dissipated, that first wave dissipated ok? The second wave is the second generation – now these are not people coming as adult artists to England to join the movement. These are people born and bred in Britain experiencing themselves as black in the way that that first generation didn't; in contrast with Americans that first generation was preoccupied not by race but by colonialism. They were anti-colonials and they didn't feel themselves black; black was not a term that they would've used themselves. At that time *nobody* in the Caribbean would have – but the second generation that I'm talking about are the product of indigenous anti-racism, went to British schools, went to British art schools, found their work not being recognized, no recognition of themselves, no place for themselves in the arts etc.

AP: And these are people like Keith Piper, Chambers…

SH: Keith Piper, Eddie Chambers, Sonia Boyce, Donald Rodney – . And where they found a voice was in the black arts movement in America associated with civil rights. And this generation produced a very highly politicized art , Eddie Chambers' *Black People and the British Flag*, Keith Piper's work, they're all political protest

movement art – you know, they look like early African-American art – very political. But now by the end of the '70s and '80s we're into Thatcherism and although there are big black riots in '80, '81, '85 after that the political tempo among black organizations tapers off and so the '80s generation is much more preoccupied with questions of black identity and these are – they're all the people that are in my book, in *Different*? All those artists – Sudipto Biswas, Roshini Kempadoo, Rotimi Fani-Kayode and on and on and on. Sunil Gupta – you know, there was a huge creative wave – in 82 there were 90 black shows of work, photographic or visual arts work. There are more galleries; many black art galleries started in that period, in community centres, little places in Brixton etc. The artists are themselves acting as curators, people like Eddie Chambers organized the first show. Then the black women, Sonia Boyce, Mona Hatoum, Lubina Hamid – they organized the first black women's show and on and on and on. An *explosion* of creativity, all about Who Am I? What is Blackness? What is it to be Black in Britain etc? And they – contrary to the realist, militant work of the second generation – use what I call the constructed image; they stage themselves. Even photographers. They're not shooting documentary work – there is a group of documentary photographers which shoots – documents – the 60s, Horace Ove's in that group. But the next generation sees the photograph as a work of art and the main thing is staging yourself, using yourself, the black body, the black face, black beauty, black physique, black longing, black desire as their subject matter, a kind of self-exploration through the visual arts. And this explosion of black creative work puts pressure on the mainstream arts organizations – asking why isn't this work being shown? Why doesn't the Photographers' Gallery have any of these photographers who are producing work like crazy? Why is there never in the Tate Gallery any exhibition either of the older generation , you know Frank Bowling has never had a London retrospective even though he has these incredible canvases, I can't describe how beautiful they are; the map paintings of Guyana, reconceiving the cosmos from the point of view of a base in Latin America, in these exquisite abstract colours, *never* shown in England. But these are the people Rasheed Araeen showed in what he called The Other Story –

AP: Yes, that's a famous exhibition.

SH: The famous exhibition. Then there's a second generation who can't get into these institutions and because a lot of those for art are publicly funded, supported by the Arts Council especially, a lot of pressure was put on the arts institutions and because of the success of anti-racist movements etc this had sensitized the society to the marginality of blacks in general in society and of black artists from the art institutions. So gradually they begin to fund some of these institutions – so they fund Autograph in 1988. It was launched by Rotimi Fani Kayode who was one of the photographers, son of a West African Yoruba chief, educated in art school in New York, living in London – he was also gay. Displaced from Africa, displaced from conventional sexuality, making art out of the black body, you know, incredibly edgy marginal work – he was the first chair of Autograph and I spoke at the opening. And then a bit later than that, 1992 I think, no '94 because this is the tenth anniversary of inIVA, but in 1992 they attempted to form the Black Arts Centre in the old Roundhouse in London. It didn't come off, I think some people ran away with the money.

Ok, so these organizations begin. They both function as agencies, what I mean by that is that neither of them wanted a full-time gallery because they were the generation that did not want to be ghettoized, they didn't want to have to go to the black arts gallery to show black work. They wanted to be part of Britain –

AP: Part of the mainstream…

SH: Yeah, part of the mainstream or to challenge the mainstream to show more work so they didn't want to operate as galleries themselves. What they did was to put on work *in* the mainstream, put their artists in the mainstream, to produce exhibitions of work in the existing galleries around the country. And to supplement that by producing books, producing catalogues, by organizing talks, lectures, workshops, by reviewing the work of young artists and encouraging them; by doing small monographs which made their work more accessible; by producing the catalogues of shows so that after the show was finished there was something remaining behind that students could learn from. That's what I mean –they act as multi-purpose agencies rather than…

AP: … taking a traditional gallery approach.

SH: However, in the last two years they decided that they were losing out in this game now –

AP: Because you didn't make much headway?

SH: Well, we made quite a bit of headway, because we held lots of exhibitions and they were not all in our space, but not enough, and not fast enough. Big mainstream galleries like the Serpentine and the Whitechapel and the Tate Modern and Tate Britain, they're not going to show edgy unknown black artists. They show Chris Ofili because he's established himself over a long period of time; similarly with Steve McQueen. But they're going to show those artists who have established themselves, who have a market, who have arrived. So they're not going to pick up your new 25-year old and say we'll give you a show – What's more when these organizations finally put on shows in the mainstream places, everybody forgot that it was us who did it. So we fought for years to put on an Aubrey Williams retrospective, *finally* we persuaded the Whitechapel Gallery and it's now known as *Whitechapel's* Aubrey Williams exhibition. No one remembers inIVA! Who's inIVA, they say. We did the research for the Aubrey Williams show, we located the paintings, we sold Aubrey Williams to the Whitechapel Gallery, we produced the catalogue (laughs), so we're losing out in this as far as visibility is concerned. So we do want a space. We want a space where – we're not going to stop knocking on the doors of the mainstream institutions – but we want a space where we *can* show young artists. If they refuse we can say ok you can see a bit of their work here. What's more we've made – the two organizations have made – enormous global international contact and we want to show young artists from Angola, young artists from Senegal, major art work is produced in West Africa, massive work from South Africa, from Johannesburg. Wonderful work from Indian artists you've never seen, Latin American artists… so the whole South, we have connections with them, we've shown people's work.

AP: What about the Caribbean?

SH: Of *course* the Caribbean. So we want a window in Britain for work from outside of Britain and we want a showcase in Britain for work produced in Britain, which doesn't get seen. So that's a project which I'm involved in now, which is Autograph and inIVA coming together, to launch the building. They've been given a Lottery grant of five million to build a new black and–you can't just say Black and Asian any longer because there are so many other migrant groups – but *culturally diverse* visual arts.

Now of course all this doesn't tell you about *my* involvement with art – I don't

know anything about visual art really – I've never been trained in the visual arts, I don't know art history etc. I've done a lot of work in the media and my work in the media has always been interested in the image so I wrote about news photographs at a very early stage, I wrote about the photographic image, I wrote about the television image, I'm interested in images –

AP: You've written about representation…

SH: I've written about representation generally. So of course I'm interested in various questions but I'm not a trained art historian of the old school. Of course, I don't know whether you know, but this is changing now and a new branch of visual arts study has arisen called visual culture – and visual culture is cultural studies in visual arts and this is beginning to replace the traditional history of art, you know, connoisseurship etc, of the old art history type. There's a bit of a struggle going on between art history and visual culture. I can say then I've found myself, appropriately, in the new visual culture. But then I've been interested of course in migration, interested in the fate of migrants in Britain; this work is expressive of the condition and experience of migration, you know I don't mean just documentary work, its of the *inner* experience of the hearts and souls and minds of migrant people, the migrant experience. So of course I've gravitated towards this work and when I retired I was already chairman of the boards of these two organizations, enjoying working with the younger artists and the constituencies around these organizations. When I retired in 1997 I thought, *don't* go on doing what you did before, get more involved in this stuff, which is what has happened. So since 1997 I've been giving more and more time to these two organizations and now to this project of building the arts centre –

AP: … Which has been designed by a very interesting architect –

SH: It's been designed by David Adjaye who is a 40-year old Nigerian architect , who spent a long time in Kenya, educated in London, he's an up and coming architect. He works very closely with artists; he designed The Upper Room which was the Chris Ofili exhibit at the Victoria Miro Gallery. He designed the whole setting in which The Upper Room – which is Chris Ofili's work on the Last Supper…

AP: The monkeys –

SH: The monkeys in the Last Supper. He designed a room, beautifully lit, lit like a chapel, you know in which the light reflected off the paintings onto the walls so you thought you were looking at stained glass windows? It was exquisite.

AP: It's 13 panels is it?

SH: 13 panels. Yes, 12 apostles and Jesus. He's a gold monkey(laughs). They're all *beautiful* monkeys…

AP: Wasn't there any outrage about this?

SH: I'm sure there was. I think people didn't like it in New York when they heard about it. Anyhow David Adjaye then designed – redesigned – the British pavilion at the Venice Biennale because Chris Ofili was chosen as the British artist for the Biennale and he redesigned the British pavilion for Chris's show in the Marcus Garvey colours, in Pan African colours. The whole pavilion was red, gold, black and green.

AP: That must've been quite a startling sight –

SH: It was astonishing, absolutely astonishing. And as you know Chris Ofili's paintings only use the Pan African colours.

AP: Oh, I didn't know that.

SH: Oh yes, the new series is done entirely in pan African colours.

AP: When did he start this series? I know Ofili's been spending a lot of time in Trinidad, did he start it before that or –

SH: The present series *is* influenced by Trinidad because they're about two figures which constantly recur in the paintings which are opera figures. I mean they're a man and a woman, they're lovers, then there's a devil, a devil who tempts them, he's not entirely a bad figure, he's a kind of Anancy figure, but he's the wicked one. And these are on a journey through the forest, they're in the pan-African colours, including gold, there's gold suns and gold moons etc. Though of course the surface of the painting is encrusted in glass beads and glitter –

AP: Oh, the carnival effect!

SH: *Won*derful effect. I think they're just staggering. They're completely staggering.

AP: And you said he got that couple from an ad?

SH: Well, the couple are taken from two cartoon figures on a launderette ad in Trinidad. His clothes came back from the laundry with these two figures and he's been drawing them ever since. I mean this is how Chris works you know. His earlier things, Captain Shit etc, were all drawn from African American figures. Before that they were all like Michael Jackson, they were all figures with Afros, girls with Afros, millions of them, reproduced sometimes a thousand of them on the same thing. So in each stage it's one set.

AP: Has he stopped using elephant dung?

SH: No, using the elephant dung – the elephant dung is now worked into the painting, it might be covered by glass beads right, different colours, or gold, it's not going to be a lump on the canvas, he isn't insisting on it any longer. But elephant dung was a result of a previous voyage to Africa. Because Chris of course is of African parentage but he was born in England, in Manchester – he had never been to Africa! So the Arts Council said you know we must send this promising artist to his homeland in Africa (laughing) so you send him to Africa and he says well I'll bring back something really African for you – elephant dung! Dried elephant shit and I'll put it on all my paintings to show I've been to Africa. He's a real joker.

So going back to David Adjaye, he's also built houses, he's built Chris Ofili's house and studio, he's built about four artists' houses including one which is called The Dirty House which is a *really beautiful* house. It's like a mud hut and its chocolate-coloured and it looks as if it has no windows. It's like a black square except that at the top is a raised roof so the roof seems to float, letting in the light, but actually when you go inside you realize that there are black glass windows. From inside you can see out, but from outside you can't see in. And this is David Adjaye's work.

AP: Is it in London?

SH: Yes, they're all in London.

AP: Ok so now he's designed this building for inIVA and Autograph –

SH: Well, I'll just tell you… this is what the excitement is about. Combining inspiration from African forms, third world forms with contemporary material and modern architectural ideas. So it's a kind of hybrid architecture. Ideal for us. And he's designed a building that is to go on the piece of land that we've bought in Shoreditch.

AP: You mentioned the Venice Biennale earlier and I know you were involved with the – was it the British Pavilion you were involved with – ?

SH: Well, I wrote a piece for Chris Ofili's catalogue. And inIVA's director, Gilane Tawadros, was the curator of the pavilion for the African Art Forum. She did the Faultlines show in this pavilion and I had a piece in the Faultlines catalogue so, you know, between Chris Ofili one day, Faultlines exhibition the next day, one or two other things – that was it so I didn't see very much. I didn't see for instance the German pavilion although the curator had a long interview with me in an interview of artists and curators which she's done. A huge compendium, a 100 interviews, and I have a long interview in there about the visual arts but I didn't even see that exhibition.

AP: I think it was the previous Venice Biennale that Jamaica took part in. Did you know that Jamaica was in it a couple of years ago?

SH: No, I didn't but I hope very much that the Caribbean is going. I mean its mainly European so the African Arts Forum is on the sidelines, its not one of the main pavilions. It's in a decent building now but it is somewhat on the sidelines so I can see that it would be difficult for Jamaica or the Caribbean to have a pavilion of its own. But you know I think its time…

AP: Now, I wanted to come back to talk about the UWI conference a bit. Gilane Tawadros, the director of inIVA, actually gave a paper and Mark Sealy, the director of Autograph. This must have been a wonderful experience for you coming back to a conference held in your honour, at UWI, and so on. You did enjoy it didn't you?

SH: Oh yes, I enjoyed it, of course I was thrilled to be asked, to be invited, very grateful for the enormous work it takes to mount these conferences, having seen at close hand – I mean they started talking to me a year before, even before the last one had taken place. And they had to organize dialysis for me here; they had to arrange to bring me by business class 'cause I can't travel easily any more, so I'm just very grateful for the care… I mean it's a complicated question. I left in 1951 at the age of 18; I've never lived in Jamaica since then. I haven't written a lot about Jamaica, I've written a bit about the Caribbean but mainly in the context of my work on the black diaspora. I've written a lot about the black diaspora and I've been preoccupied with the black diaspora throughout my life there, in fact not only is my work on the black diaspora but all of my work in cultural studies is done through the prism of the Caribbean, you know… .my writing on diaspora, my thinking about culture is shaped by what I know culture is in the Caribbean. Cultural Studies was provoked for me by trying to think about Caribbean culture. What is it? What is Caribbean culture? I mean I went to England, discovered I couldn't escape and that black people from Jamaica and the Caribbean were coming to live in England; I said to myself, well, what is the culture from which we folks are coming? Here's something, it's very distinctive, I'm part of that, what *is* this culture? And the second question: What is it going to be in the diaspora? Is it going to stay the same, is it going to evolve, is it going to be destroyed by racism – ? And one of the things that I discovered about that is that we are ourselves the diaspora, the *Caribbean* is a diaspora. The peoples in the Caribbean are all from somewhere else, the people who belonged here were

stamped out by the Spanish conquistadores within a 100 years. Everybody else comes from somewhere else: the French, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the English, the Africans, the Lebanese, the Indians – you know, they're all from some other place so this is first a diaspora. Although there is a black diaspora in Britain, that is the diaspora of a diaspora, so I've been obliged to think about the culture of the black diaspora in Britain and the diasporized culture that has settled down and grown up in the Caribbean in diasporic terms. So it shaped my understanding of what culture *is* and how it works, yeah? The reason why I say culture is always a translation – there's no pure culture, its always a translation – is because Jamaican culture is a translation of European and African and Indian cultures (laughing). And Jamaican culture in England is a translation of that translation composed out of African, European and Indian cultures in the Caribbean now further translated in relation to twenty first century Britain and Europe. That is what culture is; it's not something which stands still, which never moves, which is intrinsic – born inside each of us which will never change, you know, we can never be something else etc. Culture is produced with each generation, we reproduce our own identities in the future rather than simply inherit them from the past. Of course we make them in the future, out of the past. So it's not that I want people to forget the past – not at all, I want them to really remember it. For many years I lived in the Caribbean as a colonial subject in a society which did not remember Africa! So I don't want people to forget Africa but I don't want them to mistake the Africa that is alive and well in the diaspora, for the Africa that is suffering the consequences of neo-liberal development in Africa where they're *not* waiting for us to go back there; they're suffering their own fate *there*.

AP: That's one of the things you mentioned in your closing address at the conference.

SH: Absolutely! So you know, return, always return, if you think of culture always as a return to roots – R-O-O-T-S – of course I love roots music but that's not the point; I think of culture as routes – R-O-U-T-E-S – the various routes by which people travel, culture travels, culture moves, culture develops, culture changes, cultures migrate etc, the ROUTES rather than the ROOTS.

So – I tell you all this because I've never written about the Caribbean, I was never part of the project of writing the national Jamaican/Caribbean story. What's more, more to my regret, I wasn't part of the political events of the last 50 years that shaped Jamaican independence. I know about them, I knew all the people involved, I went to school with half of them, you know, I've come back every two or three years, I've followed the story from the inside but I have *not been* part of it so when asked if I wanted to think about being a Caribbean intellectual or coming to Caribbean intellectual thought, well, this is an ambiguous thing you know. What entered my mind was – these people've never really been interested in your work, y'know – its from over there, it's from somewhere else, you're not part of us, you know, and a certain resentment. Why didn't you come back? Why *aren't* you part of us? And a certain – dare I – dare I call it provincialism? You know – what we're preoccupied with is *Jamaican* things, because we're affirming that against the time when we couldn't –we don't have *time* to think about what is happening in England, you know, we're too occupied… so while that national moment – the moment of national independence was supreme – governing people's lives, ambitions, taking up their energies etc, *why* should people be interested in my work?

AP: Well, only because your work… people from all over the world are interested in your work –

SH: Yeah, ok – I don't deny that –but I've explained to you why I was sanguine about the fact – when I got an honorary degree finally – which was only four or five years ago at the University of the West Indies, they said Stuart Hall has been a well-kept secret –

AP: Over here.

SH: Over here, and I felt this is quite true. But *this* invitation seemed to me timely because my suspicion is that that national moment is over. I don't mean that what happens in Jamaica is not important. That's not what I'm saying. But the moment when everything can be defined in terms of the territorially bounded Jamaica is finished – globalization has finished it. The fate here is being decided elsewhere; it's being decided in Washington, and it's going to be decided in Baghdad, decided in the World Trade Organization etc. What's more, migration, which is the underside of globalization, is happening everywhere – everywhere – people are landing up displaced by poverty, underdevelopment, civil war, ethnic cleansing, ecological devastation, environmental disaster, HIV – You know millions of people are on the move inside Africa itself. Millions of people are living in transit camps, not to speak of the millions of Palestinians, millions of people on the borders between India and Pakistan that are displaced. The world is defined by displaced people, migration and domination of global capital. So the idea of the nation state, which is going to winnow out this little window for its people, and the world's going to leave it alone to prosper in its little backyard is finished. This is a moment when this might be beginning to be understood in Jamaica and if that is so it's a moment when I can be recognized.

AP: You're absolutely right. In fact do you remember that at the same time that the conference in your honour was taking place there was a massive conference on the diaspora? Because this is the moment when the Jamaican government is beginning to woo the diaspora, I mean they've realized for some years now that –

SH: But not only that, look at the negative side as it relates to what we talked about earlier on. They realize that the reputation of Jamaica, including the tourist industry, is being forged by the Jamaican posses in Harlesden. The picture of Jamaica is being formed by what Jamaicans abroad are doing and the reputations they have. Their music, of course Bob Marley, that does Jamaica good; Jamaican posses and deportees, that does Jamaica bad; but in any case its being forged four thousand miles away. So – astonishing to me – this is the first conference organized by the Jamaican government on the diaspora in all these years! Nearly 60 years after the HMS Windrush, which is the first boat to take Jamaican migrants to England, landed. It landed in 1948. I've described to you the art of three generations! Three generations of black people living in London. We're not just speaking of people who went much earlier on. Three generations of substantial numbers of black and African people living in London alongside other migrants and this is the first time the Jamaican government thinks it might hear a bit from the diaspora – so I thought this *is* the right moment when I heard that.

AP: But it's such a coincidence because here it is they're finally recognizing the diaspora by having a huge conference about it at the same time the University of the West Indies is celebrating one of the greatest theorists of the diaspora who happens to be a local son! At the same time there was absolutely no overlap between the two conferences.

SH: No, there was no overlap, which was interesting.

AP: Ok so in your wrap-up talk you were given a window, an opportunity, to respond to the papers that had been given in the course of the conference and you touched on a number of things – there are some phrases that lingered in my mind – which I think I'd like you to elaborate on. You talked about several things – you mentioned lazy scholarship I believe? And you talked about theory being a toolbox – what did you mean?

SH: Well, I mentioned lazy scholarship in the context of Marxism. But lazy scholarship you could say in the context of any 'ism' – nationalism has its lazy scholarship for instance. What I mean by that is the notion that what you want to know is given by the interest you hope the knowledge will serve. So because you hope the knowledge will help to advance the cause of black people and their liberation and their prospering in the world, you know the answers before, because of course you must tell the story now so that all black people are heroic. And all black people have been badly done by and all white people are bad, y'know, it becomes a kind of black and white, simplified story. The phrase 'lazy scholarship' was derived from a comment by Jean Paul Sartre. In The Question of Method Jean Paul Sartre says the great French poet, Valery, was a thorough bourgeois, born into a bourgeois family, remained a bourgeois all his life. What does the critic say? Should he say Valery is a bourgeois poet? Where's the point of that? We knew that before we started, you don't need to do any research, you haven't found out anything new! That is knowledge as circular, that knowledge has brought you back to the beginning, that knowledge is ideology, because what it produces is not knowledge but recognition. Oh we are just what we thought we were! Good old black people. Aha! Matter settled. Whereas Gramsci says the people who are the subordinate class, the people who are the subaltern class need to be cleverer than the rest and they need to have associated with them what are called organic intellectuals. There's a difference between organic intellectuals and traditional intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals reproduce the existing structure of knowledge. They're clever at doing that, but they are working within the framework. But the organic intellectuals who ally themselves with the emerging forces in history, the ones which are going to disrupt the present and create the future, have to be cleverer because they're trying to get hold of the existing order and reshape it. It's no point their conducting an exercise in lazy scholarship. They have to know more than the traditional intellectuals, they have to be cleverer, *more* farsighted, *more* theoretically clued in, *more* cognitively complicated, *more* sophisticated y' know. They just have to produce real knowledge. Knowledge is what you *didn't* know when you started out your investigation. This is not to deny that knowledge is produced in a cause, I'm not advocating knowledge for knowledge's sake. Knowledge in a cause – but not the content of the knowledge. The content of the knowledge has to be freewheeling. That's why Gramsci's phrase was 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will'.

AP: What did he mean by that?

SH: Optimism about the future. We can manage to create a more decent, more just, more equal, more racially just society. Enter the struggle with optimism but armed with the most pessimistic knowledge – things are bad, they really are bad, they're worse than you think and they're going to get worse still. And there isn't some subject of history, the proletariat, the black masses, waiting to rise up and rescue you from the difficult business of shaping a politics which changes things slowly and generating new knowledge over time and battling, having reversals etc. That's pessimism of the intellect. Pessimism of the intellect produces really useful knowledge which you

can associate with the optimism of the political will to create a movement to put these things into effect. So that is my stance towards knowledge production. So I would say to my students, don't think that just by reproducing the best that has been thought and said by traditional intellectuals is good enough. You don't have to subvert them, you don't have to contest them, but you *have* to question the underlying assumptions which make explicit what they won't make explicit. So that's the sort of thing I meant when I used the phrase 'lazy scholarship' and I meant, in the context of saying it here, I did have in mind, you know, nationalism. Because nationalism also has its closures and writing a national history is not only to tell yourselves the stories that flatter you; it's to tell yourself some difficult stories. For instance to go back to a previous conversation, it is to tell yourself the story about black masculinity, which is not a good story at all, it's not a wonderful story. The story of repeating what has been done to you to others, you know, of living out through repetition, through mere repetition, rather than in self-consciousness and change, of mimicking it further down the line. This should have been tackled at the root. Before you think about building a new nation, think about building some new men to build the new nation y'know? And it hasn't been done. Why not? Well, nationalism closes it up. These are now our people. We must celebrate them, what they do, how they treat their women, this is Jamaican masculinity, Jamaican virility, Jamaican homophobia… but nationalism also – it doesn't mean I'm not in favour of Jamaican nationalism y'know, I'm a passionate nationalist, I want Jamaica to prosper and be as good as it can be for its people – but the knowledge that organic intellectuals aligning themselves with those emergent forces, the knowledge they have to produce cannot be a self-complacent, self-congratulatory kind of knowledge. It can't be just a recognition of what we already know.

AP: One of the reasons I'm asking again what you said about theory being a toolbox is because there is a certain local antipathy to things theoretical and there's a suspicion of theory as being some kind of *uber* language which local people don't understand or have any use for – can we talk about that a bit?

SH: Yes. The phrase 'theory is a toolbox' is Michel Foucault's. Foucault talked about theory as a toolbox by which he meant to emphasize that the purpose of theory is not to produce theory but to produce useful concepts ok? Why do we need concepts? We need concepts because the world presents itself to us in a series of appearances. Appearances do not explain how things work. They just show you the tropical landscape but this will not tell you the tropical landscape is as it is because it is where it is in the geography, because it is where people came and planted these trees, because its where they brought the breadfruit to feed the slaves all the way from the South Seas to leaven the saltfish they were importing from Canada to feed the slaves… y'know it won't tell you all that, its just a landscape. You have to have concepts to break the apparent seamlessness of the world of appearances. As Marx said you have to desert the world of appearances to discover the explanatory concepts. But then you come back and say *now* I can see, *now* I can interpret what I'm looking at, using these concepts, so these concepts become your tools.

Alright let's talk about what you talked about, namely the suspicion of and antipathy toward theory and I want to say two rather contradictory things about that. I want to say on the one hand *I* also have a suspicion of theory; I'm suspicious of anyone who says I want to be a theorist, you know this is like saying I want to be a thinker, well everybody's a thinker, what do you mean you want to be a thinker, you can't *be* a theorist – you can *do* theory; It's an activity, it's a practice. What being a theorist means is that you want people to worship you for being excessively clever so

I'm not in favour of theory in that way. I'll explain to you why I think we need theory ok? And I'm talking really about the period of my own work, which has been shaped by really two major forces: One is structuralist-Marxism, and though it was Marxism, it was not economistic Marxism. It is only the Marxism of Althusser and Gramsci which is structuralist-Marxism – which is not reductionist and not economistic – and only in that moment could I have become really close to Marxism. And then post-structuralism, that's the French thinkers, Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari –

AP: But Stuart this is precisely what I'm talking about because those very French thinkers that you mention are associated with very difficult language –

SH: What I'm telling you is – it's hard to get the balance right – they too have led to theoretical excess, they have been taken up in theoreticist ways, in ways which privilege them as theorists and which privilege their work as doing theory and which tries to do theory in the most obscure way. I've heard a very leading postcolonial theorist say, well, I don't mind if only three people understand it… but that should worry any serious intellectual. So there has been a kind of theoreticism. When I was teaching at the Centre for Cultural Studies I had a very very bright student who was into all the French theory and he could not write a word, he could not write a sentence. He wrote himself out of being able to write because he wrote: Really – *really*? But what is reality? I can't use the word 'really' because we don't know – what is the real? Well Lacan says the real is this and… .y'know, he *literally* could not utter a word. So I know theoreticism, I really do, and I know theoretical jargon and I know people who are not saying anything that they couldn't have said in perfectly ordinary ways, but use the jargon to obfuscate their texts; and I know people who have the theory at the beginning so that you can't read the first two pages at all, then they go and do a perfectly ordinary, empirical study which they could have done without the benefit of the toolbox, I know all the excesses of theory. Nevertheless I'm committed to thinking theoretically because I don't think you can understand the world without it.

So now you come to something else. An excessive response to theoreticism itself which is a sign of provincialism. Y'know – I don't want to bother with these funny ideas that come from somewhere else – Gramsci reminded us that common sense is the residue of yesterday's theory. People who have forgotten empiricism is a theory just think empirically; they think the world is just as it is. They don't realize that they are the inheritors already of a fully elaborated theory. When they say so and so is a good man, so and so is a bad man, they don't know that they're thinking in the discourse of Christianity and Christian morals, ok? Common sense is sort of what's left over of the grand theories of the past ok? So, without recognizing that they themselves are using concepts, a lot of them are old Marxists – Marx, can you imagine! This great European thinker seems to them like common sense (laughing) but French theory seems to them like theory! So there are plenty of confusions and there is a certain provincialism, there is also a certain anti-intellectualism –

AP: Yes! A very distressing anti-intellectualism –

SH: A very distressing anti-intellectualism which really –

AP: Which says that everything should be couched in "accessible" language and somehow unless masses of people can appreciate what you're saying then you're being obfuscatory.

SH: And this is a particular danger in the humanities and the social sciences because their materials are either a literary work or philosophical work or music or in the social sciences its about human life. Nobody would tell you that you don't need

concepts in mathematics or in physics. Nobody would tell you that. And speaking of jargon, mathematical jargon, mathematical symbols – you need to understand them to follow – in the sciences everybody accepts that you have to learn the language in order to understand what is being said. But in the humanities and social sciences they somehow think it's just ordinary life, common sense will take you through it and so this leads to a kind of provincialism, everything must be accessible. It's also a kind of populism. Do it this way then the masses will come to us. A misplaced populism. *Of course* one should respect the people and one should conduct the translation of serious intellectual work into terms that ordinary people can understand – o*f course* – that is what teaching is about, that's what pedagogy is about. Gramsci says pedagogy is intrinsic to the duty of the intellectual, to make themselves understood to the widest possible audience but only when they themselves understand something.

AP: It's also the task of informed journalists, their task is to make these ideas accessible, but its not the task of the intellectual necessarily… .

SH: Of course it isn't , of course not, it's not the job of intellectuals and then they're often not very good at making it widely understood so I do recognize that there is a trap of theoreticism to be avoided but I think that work cannot be seriously done without the benefit of theory and concepts. And therefore walking that line between the Scylla of theoreticism and the Charybdis of overpopulism, anti-intellectualism and so on is a difficult road. But I think that's what being an organic intellectual as Gramsci described it is; I think that's what is required.

AP: Locally there's a great suspicion of what people refer to as postmodernism and postmodernist ideas, cultural relativism etc. But again I think that very often people – because they haven't taken the trouble to find out what exactly these ideas are – they tend to mislabel things. So would you call yourself a postmodernist?

SH: I would *not* call myself a postmodernist.

AP: But then many people seem to think you are. Why is that?

SH: Yes, that's because I don't believe in first principles. I don't derive everything from foundational philosophy. I'm not a foundationalist. I think there are no origins for thought. There are not any first principles. You're always in the midst of thought, you're already in thought by the time you're thinking about thought. You can't go back to before thought to find truth. There's thought and then there's good thought and good thought is sort of truth and next year this thought won't be good enough because the truth will have moved on you so it's no longer true and therefore, one is bound to be, in the modern world, a certain kind of relativist. You recognize that ideas are relative to their time, relative to their place, that thinkers are defined by their location in their societies, there's a politics of location etc. We are not subjects outside of thinking, subjects outside of place, subjects outside of time etc. So in that sense I suppose people may think I'm a postmodernist, though it's really what I think of as post-structuralism, I think of that as post-structuralism. Now why do I say I'm not a postmodernist? Well, I'm a postmodernist descriptively, that is to say, I recognize that a lot of modern art and architecture belongs to a period called postmodernism just like a lot of art and architecture before that belonged to modernism. I think we are beyond modernism, so we are postmodernists in that sense, descriptively. This doesn't mean that I subscribe to the particular characteristics and values ascribed to postmodernism. I'm not a campaigning postmodernist but I will say that's a postmodernist piece of work. Take postmodernist architecture. I know

postmodernist architecture. Postmodernist architecture, because it's relativist, borrows from all the styles; it has a piece of classical architecture, and a piece of modern architecture and a piece of … renaissance architecture, so it's a hopeless mess. But it is postmodernism, a bric-a-brac of bits and pieces, raiding all the past – that's a postmodernist thing to do. So I recognize that there are artists who are postmodernist, that there is work that you can call postmodernist –

AP: Like that wonderful building in Port Antonio –

SH: Absolutely! I mean that building is a completely postmodernist building. You don't know how to get into it, you don't know whether it has any insides, or only outsides; you don't know whether it's meant to be a public building or a building where any and everybody has sort of raided it and set up shop inside it. Architecturally we don't know what period it belongs to: is it colonial, postcolonial, you don't know. That hodgepodge is a certain kind of postmodernism. The reason why I'm not a postmodernist is because you know, one of the central tenets of postmodernism is that you can raid the past because history is at an end, y'know we've come to the end of history –

AP: Now see a sentence like that is confusing – what do you mean when you say we're at the end of history?

SH: Well, I don't know. That's why I'm not a postmodernist, *postmodernists* say that.

AP: Like Fukuyama…

SH: yeah, like Fukuyama. Y'know – we've arrived, liberal democracy is the last ideology there will be on earth etc. It's the finale of history, all of history has been leading up to this. When Hegel talked about the moment when the real and the rational would come together, when truth and knowledge and the state would be one – It's now, ok? And its name is the United States (laughs). Its name is US global imperialism. I mean that is what Fukuyama is saying. Well, how can I be a postmodernist in that sense? I mean half the world hasn't started its history. Jamaica only began its history 10, 50 years ago. Africa is waiting to begin history. History hasn't come to it in a proper sense yet. So what does it mean when theorists of the left bank, yknow world weary, or architects in New York or Las Vegas or Los Angeles, with a big yawn, a world weary yawn announce that we're at the end of history? I don't believe we're at the end of history at all. I believe that we've gone into a new phase, I do believe that. I think globalization is a new phase, I think it started in the 70s, you could talk about globalization in a very distinctive way. It's not the first globalization that the formation of the Caribbean was a product of, and there've been about ten globalizations since then ok? The globalization of high imperialism, the globalization of mercantile trade, y'know on and on. But we're into a new phase of globalization now that I don't believe is the end of history. I don't believe this is the last globalization there will be, there's a globalization beyond this… so I'm not a postmodernist in that sense. I don't subscribe to the values intrinsic in postmodernism as an epoch but I recognize there's a kind of epoch called postmodernism just like there was modernism and the reason it's called postmodernism is because the real break was in modernism; that was the real break. And postmodernism is modernism in the streets, that's what I call it. It's what the modernist artists were trying to do taken out of the museum and made into malls yeah? (laughing) It's what happens when the modernist impulse becomes popular culture. When *everybody* is sitting on a Duchamps-designed toilet bowl. That is postmodernism! See – modernism makes the break, it makes the break with representation. We've been in the epoch of

representation since the Rennaissance. Since 3-dimensional work in the visual arts we've had a form of representation which tried to mirror the real but once you get to modernism the photograph has imaged the real. So what's the point of artists going on drawing a tree like a tree? A photograph can tell you what this tree likely looks like. So I'll draw a tree that is like the poem of a tree, so I'll draw an abstract impression of the tree. The idea is a *fundamental* break and it's a break not only in the visual arts, it's a break with Newtonian physics, it's the break of relativity in mathematics, it's the break of quantum physics –

AP: Which many of – which we all accept!

SH: We all live in a post-Einsteinian world which is a relative world. It's all about relativism, it's all about y'know, you can't step outside the universe, you have to mention the universe while you're moving around in it. Relative to a moving universe there are no absolutes. That is the essence of relativism – relativity is what it's called.

AP: But scientific relativity is ok, cultural relativism isn't.

SH: Exactly. So the break which modernism makes with representation etc is so fundamental that I view postmodernism as the next turn in the cycle of modernism. It's what happens in the aftermath of modernism, the afterwash of modernism. It still has a lot of modernism secreted in it but it's come out of the museum, it's come out of fine arts, it's come out –

AP: But modernism is… when you say modernism you're talking about being individuals, about rationality etc?

SH: No, no, I'm not talking about that. By modernism I meant specifically the visual arts, I mean post-Picasso. Between Renoir – between the late impressionists and Picasso. I mean the move into abstraction in visual arts. No, modernity is different from modernism and has a much longer history. Modernity dates from the enlightenment and that is where we begin with rationality and enlightenment, secular thought, you know the break with religious ideas. Science – the idea of science – everything being a science, the idea of individuality –

AP: And universality –

SH: Yes, so all the laws are universal laws y'know, the universal brotherhood of man, the universal rights of man, the constitution, the Lockean Constitution, the French Revolution – they're all enlightenment thinkers first shaped by Locke – he's a wonderful enlightenment thinker; the second shaped by the French Revolution, by Rousseau etc. This is the enlightenment. This is the birth of modern social science, the birth of the scientific attitude, the birth of secularism; with Descartes, the birth of the modern individual; it's the birth of notions of self, yes? Renaissance man was preoccupied with the individual also, Shakespeare was for example, but not with a self in the way in which Descartes thinks it. That is modern – the modern; that's modernity – living in the world of modernity. Modernism is a specific aesthetic, philosophical, and cognitive movement that comes late in modernity. Really at the turn of the century. Between the 1890s and 1910. And you know modernism in that sense is an attitude of mind which is not confined to Europe although we think of them together. First of all Picasso and Braque were profoundly influenced by –

AP: Africa.

SH: By Africa. Feeling that the art of the European was running out of steam and had to be refreshed by the creativity of the world outside of Europe. So modernism already has its roots in – and outside – of Europe. But in addition to that the modern attitude to art is everywhere – its in the Latin American modernists – and it is why Ronald Moodie and Aubrey Williams and Frank Bowling go to England. Because they were already modernists!

AP: So they were going to the Mecca of modernism…

SH: They were going to the Mecca of modernism but this is because they were modern artists, they were already working in abstraction. Indian artists were already working in abstraction before they got to London. They only got to go to London, as the writers y'know black American writers like Richard Wright and James Baldwin went to Paris, because it was where things were being done…

AP: But isn't it ironic – I've been overusing this word 'ironic' but –

SH: No, these are the ironies of history.

AP: What I find ironic in this whole discourse about art and so on here is that – or what we were just talking about, that prevalence of a certain anti-intellectual attitude – but you have people here, highly educated people who appreciate abstraction in art, who don't have a problem with it. But those same people will turn around and say that theoretical abstraction is a problem.

SH: Well, frankly, I think that's not ironic, I think that's bad faith.

AP: What do you mean?

SH: I think they won't own up to what they themselves unconsciously know; I think it's what's called an act of disavowal.

AP: Because how can you accept abstraction in art but not in intellectual work, that's kind of contradictory.

SH: Abstraction is precisely the movement *away* from the appearance of things. We see the form which is a kind of concept – the idea of the real thing – so for them to be anti-theoretical, what they mean of course… this is a product of modernity. What they think is, well this idea about abstraction, it's just common sense now. What they mean is I don't like the new ideas, I don't like the ones which are coming along; I'm the product of the ones that came along last time but I don't want any more new ones to come along and disturb the ones I already have. So they're talking about a very particular challenge or set of ideas that challenge and lead one to question the assumptions on which they've been working. Although to be fair one has to say this is a difficult process. If you're a practicing artist you work within a set of assumptions, you work within a form and you try to refine it. To be shaken at the roots in your fifties and to say, I'm sorry I'll think again y'know… to be a late impressionist and to say well, I'll try to draw like Picasso in my fifties, is a hard thing to ask. One has to appreciate how hard it is what one is asking them to do. But of course one may not be asking them to do that. One is asking them to appreciate that what happened to them in their youth when they were first fired by the ideas of modernism and abstraction is still happening in another way to another generation and they should be as tolerant of them as they would have liked –

AP: Or at least to be open-minded and not so closed.

SH: Yes, of course, that is a perfectly reasonable thing to ask.

AP: David Scott opened up the conference by giving a paper called Stuart Hall's Voice and in your closing remarks you said something to the effect that once we had heard that paper we could all go home. What did you mean by that?

SH: Well, the conference was subtitled 'The Thought of Stuart Hall'… which given what I've said about theorists is a bit ironic. But nevertheless I can't quarrel with that. Fine. Ok. David gave a wonderful paper. What I meant by going home was not that we could have done without the many other interesting papers that were given but insofar as the subject was the thought of Stuart Hall I thought he'd pretty much got it right at the beginning.

AP: You mean he summarized you?

SH: Yes, he summarized me as I understand myself with great eloquence, great penetration and understanding. So I thought it laid to rest the question of the thought of Stuart Hall; if you want to know about the thought of Stuart Hall read David's paper. And so let us go on to talk about something else, let us talk about the thought of Jamaica, contemporary Jamaica or the thought of dancehall etc. Now, I suppose you're going to ask me what is it about David's paper…

AP: Yes, of course…

SH: A number of things that he said. First of all he said he read me less because of my position as a cultural theorist and more because of my interventions. I was an interventionist, my writing is interventionist ok? That is to say I write in order to intervene in a situation, to shift the terms in which it's understood, to introduce a new angle, to contest how it has been understood before; it's an embattled form of writing. I don't just write a piece. So that's why I don't write books because I can't just sit down in my study and think 'I'm going to write a book about X' y'know, it doesn't sort of interest me but if somebody says 'This is like this' and I think 'No, no, no it's not like that at all, it's like this' well, I've written a piece in a flash ok? And probably published it in some obscure journal 'cause that's where the original piece that I'm contesting or wanting to argue with or shift the position of, appeared. So it's a kind of intellectual interventionism. This is a kind of politics in theory, because it's interested in struggling thought – struggling in thought. Not interested in the production of pure truth, absolute truth, universal truth. It's interested in the production of better ideas than the ones we used to have. So it's a kind of struggle in thought, a struggle with thought and a struggle inside thought, struggle inside thinking to change the terms of reference with which we're thinking. There's also a politics of thought in the sense that it wants to make the ideas useful for some purpose; it wants to help people think more clearly about their situation or to help to advance nationalism in a more progressive direction or to help the world become a more equal and just place. Or be less racist, less homophobic etc. It's tied to a long-term political project, not as I've said before, that the project defines the content of the thinking but the thinking is not happening in some absolute outer space. It's located in a space and time and responding to a set of conjectures, a set of conditions.

The second thing that is said is that therefore I'm not a philosopher. And what is meant by that is that I'm not in search of absolute truth and I don't derive things from first principles so if I'm a theorist I don't begin with the first principles and deduce everything from it in a Platonic way yeah? Y'know – the ideal of justice and then these are the actual systems of justice derived from the ideal of justice. I really don't go back to the ideal of justice at all. What I would say is the ideal of justice

exists in all the systems of justice there ever have been. You add them all up, you get the ideal of justice. It's only justice insofar as it's a system of judging people and trying to be just towards them. And the ideas which guide that system are the ideas of justice for that moment. Next week we might have the French Revolution and the ideas of justice will be different. They'll chop off every counter-revolutionary's head. That's another system of justice, you've to choose between them. But you don't go back and say 'That is not justice but this is justice' because there's some ideal abstract Platonic universal conception of justice which everybody should share from the beginning of time to the end of time, from one society to every other society ok? So I don't derive things from first principles. I don't think he means I'm not philosophical because y'know I'm interested in general ideas, I *am* interested in theory as you know. Now behind this I think, as far as David is concerned, is another kind of argument going on. First of all it's an argument derived from Foucault who engaged in an argument always with philosophers, but never called himself a philosopher. There's no Foucauldian philosophy. There's Foucauldian method, there's Foucauldian history, Foucauldian accounts of institutions, there are Foucauldian theories about practice but there's no Foucauldian philosophy. There's an engagement with Nietszche, there's an engagement with Descartes, there's an engagement with Rousseau, there's an engagement with Sartre, there's an engagement with the existentialists.

There's a second contestation involving David's – I'm talking about David now y'know, I'm not talking about me. I'm talking about why David *himself* is an interventionist or why he responds to the interventionism in my work. He's not so much an interventionist, but he is *not* a philosopher like he says *I'm* not a philosopher. And that is one of the things we share. Now there's another way in which he is not a philosopher and neither am I but he really is the key leading figure here and why this was what he was talking about. He does not subscribe to the new attempt to found an African philosophy. Paget Henry, Lewis Gordon, that school of thought – y'know – there must be distinctively African ways of thinking and that must add up to a general philosophy with the same kinds of universality as Western philosophy. And I think that David is not in favour of that project; it's not that Paget Henry's book is not a serious book or that he isn't a serious scholar. No, he's a very serious – I like him very much, he's a very nice person, he's a very serious thinker. But the project of founding an African philosophy and of Jamaican thought as an outpost of African philosophy is – I'm critical of that because it's a kind of essentialism and David is critical of that because it goes back to first principles. It tries to erect *African* first principles and he's not in favour of erecting *any* first principles. We both – me more than David – are sort of Derridean, we're in the era of deconstruction ok? Now, I'm a Derridean in this sense that Derrida says I'm trained in Western European philosophy ok? I cannot reason philosophically without the benefit of Western philosophical ideas and concepts, however, I can no longer think with them because the circumstances in which they arose have changed. So all I can do is to deconstruct it. So I think with the concepts but I know they can't take me very far and I know I can't assume what they assume so I think with the concept under erasure. This is the concept with the mark through it – so I'm not yet founding a new philosophy, I'm still in the ground of the old philosophy but I'm thinking the 'after', the 'post-'

AP: I think Appadurai or someone talks about ideas whose shelf life is over, whose expiry date has passed.

SH: Yes, exactly! Y'know the important thing is you're still thinking with the old ideas but no longer as they were used. They were valorized positively in the past; you are using them in their deconstructed state. So when people in the past said 'identity' they meant the inner core of the being which is unchanged through life. I also talk about identity but I mean the opposite of that – I mean that self which is being produced from time to time. I'm thinking identity under erasure. I'm thinking identity in its deconstructed form. So I cannot be a philosopher of a first principle because that would be to found a new Hallian philosophy and go about making converts to Hallian philosophy but I don't have a philosophy like that. I have a method – you can be associated with the method by practicing the method yourself. But you can't become a convert to my philosophy because I don't have one like that. Incidentally this is why almost all the movements of any value now are called 'post' – because they're post- the moment when the ideas were in their positive form. Modernism is its positive form, what is left over of that – postmodernism. Colonialism is its positive form, what is left over from that – postcolonialism. Structuralism in its Althusserian form – deconstructed – what is left over from that – post-structuralism. Feminism in its first pristine form, then people began to say well, are you a black woman or a white woman, you can't be feminist in that universalist way, you can't talk about universal womanhood any longer 'cause the category of women is itself divided between upper class women and lower class women, black women and white women, so your feminism is deconstructed – post-feminism. I'm not a Marxist in that old classical Marxist sense but I use Marxist ideas in their erased form; I'm a post-Marxist. We live in a post-period. This is why I can describe postmodernism and understand what I mean by that though I don't particularly subscribe to those values ok? So in that sense I'm not a philosopher and David makes this very lucidly clear.

Ok that's the second thing. He says a third thing. Incidentally David himself is thinking, is developing this idea of thinking within a problematic – in a very wonderful way so his new book on tragedy which is about CLR James is about why the questions that guided James to write the Black Jacobins cannot be the questions that we pose now. We can understand James's achievement by understanding the problematic in which he was working but we are working in a different problematic. That's kind of the relativization of philosophy. Ok now the third thing that David said is about ethics. He said that I'm concerned with ethics, questions of ethics. This is also in Foucault incidentally, Foucault talks about ethics a great deal. So does Baumann, so do a number of contemporary philosophers. But the question about ethics is this – If you don't derive everything from first principles – God or materialism or the demiurge or nature, something like that – what guides your life? What guides how you intervene in situations? What shapes your values? In a relativist world you have to make up your ethics everytime you take a decision, because there's no first principles you can invoke. You can't say, Why do I think – oh God told me that – it's written in the book. Ok, fine, but I don't have a book, I don't have a God, I don't have a first principle so I have to decide what am I going to do about the homophobia in dancehall which is a very dynamic form of contemporary urban culture that repeats an ancient form of masculinity and black nationalism? What am I going to think about that ? I have to develop an ethical form of conduct, conduct has to be shaped by ethical considerations towards this complex, contradictory phenomenon; I've got finally to say I take up a position here, I see all the way around it, I think it's going to get me into trouble, it's going to get me into trouble with all the wrong people and even some of the right ones, but I have to state my position – *that* is to live the ethical life

AP: Is that what you meant by speaking the truth to power?

SH: That's a slightly different thing. I'll come to that if you want me to… But this is to live the ethical life; a life in which morality is not abandoned but morality isn't derived from some prior universal system or philosophy, religion or first principles. Speaking truth to power is something different, speaking truth to power is about being an intellectual and its really a phrase which has been used many times but which Edward Said has made most his own in recent times. And what he means is that the true intellectual is always at odds with the reigning, prevailing system of power. He is what Gramsci called an organic intellectual; he aligned himself with the emerging forces, with the resistance, with the forces that are not yet encapsulated in the given structure of power.

AP: Not part of the status quo…

SH: Not part of the status quo or the given system and so for that reason it is his or her duty to speak what truth he has been able to discover by the application of his conceptual, theoretical toolbox, his analysis of the conjuncture – to speak that truth to power at the risk of being locked up, as intellectuals who speak truth to power have been locked up, as Gramsci was locked up, as Copernicus was locked up, as Galileo was locked up for telling the Church that the earth is not flat, it is round and it is one of many other round planets in the universe many of which are bigger than earth! And they locked him up, of *course* they locked him up, God created it flat and if you walk to the edge you'll fall off – you know, into his arms! And on and on and on and on, including what you might think of as progressive regimes. Much as I was in favour of the Cuban revolution especially in its early days, not so much in its Leninist days, but in its early days when they emerged in the Sierra Maestre when they weren't communist at all, in its pre-communist days – the Castro regime has been awful to dissident intellectuals. Of course it's driven out people who never believed in it but it's driven out people who believed in it as well. People who were saying things like "You shouldn't lock up the homosexuals, you shouldn't lock up the prostitutes, Fidel! You of all people should know – you were in prison yourself for speaking truth to power. Battista put you in jail, put you in the Moncada prison so how come you don't know that to speak truth to power is a dangerous thing and you've got to tolerate it even if you don't like it because otherwise you're unconsciously repeating the pattern of doing to somebody else what was done to you!"

So even in good regimes, intellectuals have to speak truth to power. Edward Said you know has been passionately in favour of the Palestinian cause but he is not afraid of saying Arafat is a lousy leader, he's very corrupt, extremely corrupt. He has not encouraged the democratization of the Palestinian cause. He's played a sort of double role etc, he's not a good thing. Of course he's in favour of Arafat winning, he *is* in favour of the Palestinians winning but he became a member of Arafat's movement and left! He said – I cannot *stand* the corruption in there – so he was willing to speak truth to power including the power of his own side.

AP: Did you know Edward Said?

SH: Yes, I knew Edward well and I got to know him very very well just before his death – in the years before his death. He was a very wonderful man, very inspiring, he inspired my life really in many important respects in the period of postcolonial thinking. I miss him very much. His death is a great loss, a profound loss I think, and one of the most wonderful things that Edward did at the end was to write his book on Freud and the Jewish people . He asks – In what way was Freud Jewish? And he

rereads Moses and Monotheism, which is a Freud text, in order to remind people that monotheism did not begin in the tribes of Palestine. It was a shared cause with Egypt. Moses, of course, comes out of Egypt – though he is a great Jewish leader who leads the Jews out of captivity – but he is formed, born, as an Egyptian. He's a parable of how in the ultimate cause the Israelis and Palestinians are one people, one Semitic people, all derived from the same effing book if you'll excuse my language, the same Bible that the Jews read the first part of, which is the history of their people; the Christians read that part plus the other part while the Jews are waiting for the other part to happen. They're waiting for their Messiah etc. y'know, these are part and parcel of the idea that Jews and Palestinians cannot live in the same country; but they've lived together since the Bible was written! It's just a monstrosity. So Said is passionately against Sharon and his Zionism and the Israeli treatment of the Palestinian people but he's not against Jews, he's not an anti-Semite! So in that way he speaks a kind of truth to the Muslim brotherhood; so to speak truth to power is to always maintain a certain distance between yourself and the powers that be, including progressive powers, progressive governments and people who are doing the best for the people and are going to do the best for you – they're going to lock up somebody and somebody is going to have to say: Don't lock them up, tolerate them, *more* tolerance please, *more* justice here, *more* equality here… and that is the function of the intellectual. The privilege of being slightly removed from the everyday thrust of making a living in the marketplace, the great advantage and privilege that intellectuals have, of writing, thinking, teaching at one step removed from the immediate sources and play of power, is their freedom to speak truth back to power. Not to live in the ivory tower but to speak truth back to power.

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