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Caribbean Migrations, 1838-1985

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Dr. Lloyd Greig, a physician who resides in Beverly Hills, California, visits Jamaica twice each year. His travels to the Caribbean, however, have nothing to do with Jamaica's advertised reputation as a friendly, salubrious tourist spa for vacationing North Americans. Greig is a native of Jamaica who moved away from his home island twenty years ago to receive his medical training at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, and who now practices medicine in the Los Angeles area. Recently he organized a group of West Indian-born physicians, who, like Greig, now reside and practice in the United States, to return to the Caribbean periodically to provide free medical care for island residents.¹

Lloyd Greig is not, in terms of job definition, a typical West Indian migrant. A visible and growing number of West Indian-born professionals indeed live in Montreal, Toronto, New York, Philadelphia, Miami, London, Paris, and Amsterdam. More often, however, the Caribbean peoples who recently migrated—legally and otherwise—to these and many other urban centers in Europe and North America work as skilled and unskilled laborers. Yet Greig and working-class West Indians who live abroad have much in common because very few of them have lost touch with the peoples and places they have left behind. Whereas Greig donates his valuable medical skills to his home island, emigrant West Indian laborers routinely send money home. The taxi driver from Barbados in New York, the laundry worker from Aruba in The Hague, the street vendor from Guadeloupe in Paris—not to mention the cane cutter from Saint Vincent in Trinidad—all contribute materially to their home societies by remitting gifts or money or by paving the way for friends and relatives back home who may decide to migrate themselves in the future.

In many ways, the current generation of West Indian migrants is simply doing what earlier generations have done for one and one-half centuries. Since British slave emancipation in 1834, men and women of the Caribbean islands

and rimlands have ventured abroad in order to compensate for a lack of resources and opportunities at home. They have thus broadened their livelihood possibilities by extending their travel patterns ("migrating") through extraordinary and costly individual efforts. Each successive generation of West Indian peoples has identified and traveled to nearby and distant locales. So a successful migration tradition characterizes much of the Caribbean region in the late twentieth century. In some of the smaller islands of the Caribbean, human migration sustains the local societies which would collapse without it.

Today's news media take little, if any, notice of the historical background of Caribbean migration, adopting instead an ahistorical slant that inevitably obscures understanding. Massive human movements from West Indian locales are, of course, events of contemporary international significance, not simply arcane academic topics, and these migratory movements are duly reported in metropolitan newspapers and on television. Even the most casual TV viewers, for example, are aware of the Mariel boatlift from Cuba to southern Florida, the ongoing "coloured question" in the United Kingdom, and a perceived political shift to the right in France, said to be partly a reaction to the metropolitan presence of immigrant guest workers from the former French Empire. But a thirty-second TV spot on the nightly news describing the close physical proximity of Haitian poverty and Miami's bright lights frames the issue of Caribbean migration entirely in the present; such a perspective ignores the fact that Haitians and other Caribbean peoples have been migrating and returning home for decades. Furthermore, metropolitan perspectives on Caribbean migration often carry with them an obscurantist, condescending, uninformed bias: academic seminars, congressional hearings, or symposia that deal with the "problems" of Caribbean migration thereby hold the assumption that such problems are aberrations. In this case, the norm, of course, is the uniquely bounded, sedentary affluence of Western society.

Migration History

The roots of Caribbean migration go much deeper than the earliest out-migrations from the islands themselves and are far more fundamental than the human movements from and within the West Indies that have been going on longer than most of us realize. Unique among former colonial regions, the Caribbean was transformed from its aboriginal condition and re-created into a remarkably different—yet still "underdeveloped"—region within two centuries after Columbus's arrival. The decline of the Caribs and Arawaks, the modifica-

tion of insular ecosystems, and the substitution of imported plants—predominantly sugarcane—for native food crops and natural biota all accompanied the creation of West Indian plantation societies whose physical environments were eventually geared toward the production of tropical staple crops for an imperial and growing world market.

The key to sustaining an enduring flow of sugar, cotton, and cocoa from the Caribbean plantations to Europe in a preindustrial era, was, of course, the importation of a labor force to replace the decimated aboriginal stock. The solution came in the form of millions of African slaves who survived the Middle Passage and who came to populate the Caribbean region. Perhaps nearly half of the roughly 10 million African slaves imported to the New World from Africa during the slave era went to Spanish, British, French, Dutch, and Danish Caribbean colonies.

This calculated colonial transformation of Caribbean lands and a demographic policy of introduced overpopulation created local conditions with which West Indians have had to cope ever since. Imported food usually was necessary to feed slave populations whose main activities were devoted to producing tropical staples for export, not food for their own consumption. Planters' land-use decisions were responses to European market demands, not to insular environmental characteristics. The results of these early policies have left the Caribbean region a legacy of eroded landscapes exacerbated by continuous human population pressures. A cumulative historical incongruity between people and land in the Caribbean, moreover, has many implications. It is the reason why ecological "man-land" or "carrying capacity" studies by social scientists, presuming essential relationships between "native" peoples and the immediate environments they occupy, never have been widely practiced in the Caribbean as they have, for example, in the Pacific. It also helps explain why human migration has been an enduring livelihood strategy in the Caribbean region ever since its people have been free to leave.

Uncertainty about food rations was one of the many precarious elements of Afro-Caribbean slave life. Overwork, exhaustion, and disease also haunted the generations of men, women, and children held in captivity by European planters. One of the reasons for the surprisingly large numbers of slaves taken to the Caribbean during the slave era was that the tragically high death rate among slaves called for annual replenishment of slave labor forces, especially during the decades of the seventeenth century when slaves removed much of the forest cover of the eastern Caribbean to make way for sugarcane. Jamaican sociologist Orlando Patterson argues that it was during the Caribbean slave era that migration first became a powerful symbolic force among Afro-Caribbean

peoples.² All slaves, or their ancestors, had experienced a forced migration from their West African homelands to the New World. Perhaps more important, migration to clandestine maroon encampments in forested interiors in larger islands and the backlands of the Guianas was one of the few means of escape. Actual migration from the islands themselves, however, with a few isolated exceptions, would have to await freedom.

Slave emancipation in the British Caribbean represented perhaps less a sharp break with the past than it did a continuity of oppression. Planters continued to monopolize the best lands. And local legislatures, dominated by planters, enacted a series of harsh, repressive post-emancipation laws designed to immobilize former slaves and to ensure the availability of an abundant, and therefore cheap, local labor pool. Resistance to ongoing post-emancipation plantation repression was notable throughout the Caribbean. Free villages of former slaves developed in the interiors of the larger islands, communities of peoples who had partially removed themselves from the plantations. Anthropologist Sidney Mintz has described this post-slavery era of the Caribbean as one in which "reconstituted peasantries" emerged throughout the region.³

Interisland migration by freedmen at emancipation was most notable on the smaller islands of the British Caribbean. On Barbados, for example, the fertile soil and comparatively level terrain of the entire island remained monopolized by sugarcane planters; black Barbadian freedmen had few local opportunities other than remaining on estates as poorly paid "located laborers." It is therefore not surprising that many Barbadians opted to emigrate, often in a semi-clandestine manner, to neighboring Trinidad and also to British Guiana (now Guyana) where planters offered higher wages than at home. By 1842, Barbadian colonial officials estimated that perhaps 4,000 Barbadians already had traveled away and that probably 10 percent of those had returned to Barbados. But colonial censuses in Barbados and other Caribbean colonies of the nineteenth century were generally unreliable. We know that migration and return from and to several of the islands was extensive before 1850 because planters and colonial officials continuously grumbled about it, but the precise numbers of migrants will probably never be known.

Similar to Barbados, the other small British Caribbean islands were ruled at emancipation by plantocracies determined to limit freedmen's access to local lands. Leeward Islands planters, for example, enacted trespassing and vagrancy laws to keep freedmen rooted to the estates. Within months after emancipation, however, hundreds of free men and women from Saint Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, Antigua, and the Windward Caribbean had sailed south in response to wages offered by Trinidadian planters that were double those paid at

home. By 1845, more than 10,000 migrants from small West Indian islands had traveled to Trinidad; over 8,000 others had gone all the way to British Guiana. The majority accomplished their journeys on the decks of tiny fishing sloops and schooners over hundreds of miles of tropical ocean interrupted by stormy interisland passages and unmarked rocks and shoals.

Perhaps the most remarkable dimension of this early migration adaptation in the small islands of the eastern Caribbean was that many of the emigrants eventually returned. Again, accurate records never were maintained. By 1848, however, Trinidadian officials complained that thousands of the "old islanders" (those from the smaller islands to the north) had gone home. The returnees took money back to friends and kinsmen who had stayed behind. And as early as 1854, colonial officials on Saint Kitts-Nevis reported that travelers had returned from Trinidad arrayed in "gaudy" and distinctive clothing. Successful Caribbean migrants of the mid-nineteenth century, interestingly, seem to have adorned themselves back home in modern, fashionable clothing they had purchased at their destinations. This distinctive clothing signified to those staying behind (just as it does among returned West Indian migrants of the late twentieth century) that the migrants had traveled far and prospered abroad.

The migration and return of freedmen from the small islands of the eastern Caribbean in the 1840s were intertwined, as they always have been, with world and regional economic trends and adjustments. At emancipation, the center of gravity of the British Caribbean sugarcane industry was shifting to the south, away from the eroded soils and antiquated infrastructures of the "old islands" toward the "new" southern colonies. Steam engines already had been used to crush canes in Spanish Cuba by 1796, and the new British colonies of Trinidad (recently Spanish) and British Guiana (recently Dutch) soon followed with the adoption of similar modern production equipment. Producing canes during the new industrial era, however, would, according to Trinidadian and Guianese planters, call for a great deal more labor than resided in their colonies at emancipation.

Migration of another kind, however, eventually "solved" the perceived post-emancipation labor shortages of southern Caribbean planters. At emancipation the British government approved the passage from India of indentured workers under five-year contracts to the Caribbean, the first boatload arriving in British Guiana in early 1838. From that year until the termination of the indenture system in 1917, nearly 240,000 men and women crossed the "black waters" from their native India to British Guiana, 135,000 were sent to Trinidad, and over 33,000 went to Jamaica. Lesser numbers ended up in several of the smaller British Caribbean islands. The use of indentured workers in the British

Caribbean was a single dimension of a worldwide system of exporting Indians to serve tropical labor needs in the British Empire. Before Indians went to the Caribbean, British and French planters had sent them to Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. And later in the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth, thousands more were shipped to the cane fields of South Africa and Fiji.

Indians arriving in the Caribbean were not always greeted warmly by black freedmen, who often saw the new estate residents as rivals for cash wages on the plantations. By flooding the labor market with indentured workers from India, planters were able to drive down labor costs; at the same time, they also ensured the incipient development of ethnic rivalries among different working-class groups in the region, rivalries that persist into the late twentieth century. The first imported Indians were housed in barracks or "ranges" on the Caribbean sugarcane plantations for the duration of their indenture periods. In several cases, their treatment was so harsh as to warrant investigation by the British Anti-Slavery Society, which supplied bitter accusations that slavery had been reinstated in a new form. The Indians brought to the West Indies, moreover, were by no means a homogeneous group. Although the great majority had come from the recruiting terminals at Calcutta and Madras and were lumped together as "coolies" by outside observers, these new immigrants had come from all over India. They were separated in actuality by differences in language, religion, and caste. Even among Hindus, confusion prevailed among these new Asian residents of the Caribbean owing to the vast differences in cultural practices they had brought with them from different parts of India. Trinidadian historian Kusha Haraksingh feels that a good deal of the confusion and intragroup rivalry among Indians brought to the Caribbean was a function of "collapsing space," which saw disparate cultural practices from the whole of India compressed into tiny insular habitats.⁴

The British were not the only Caribbean planters to tap southern Asia for indentured laborers to compensate for the loss of a captive slave labor force. France abolished slavery in 1848, the Netherlands in 1863. Spain ended slavery in Puerto Rico in 1873 and in Cuba in 1886. Indians from French India went to the French West Indies for the first time in 1852. Within the next decade over 10,000 arrived, mainly from the French Indian enclave of Pondicherry. By 1885 another 87,000 Indians were in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana, most of them transported in British ships. The planters of Dutch Surinam imported 35,000 men and women from British India between 1872 and 1917, and by 1924 roughly 22,000 Javanese had also arrived in Surinam. By the turn of the century, the importation of indentured Asians, combined with the (mainly African) inhabitants of the islands, had formed an

ethnic mosaic of peoples and languages stretching from the eastern Caribbean into northern South America, a pattern created by cumulative, planter-sponsored in-migrations of peoples from throughout the world.

As some small colonial territories of the southern and eastern Caribbean attempted to resuscitate their sugarcane industry with massive infusions of migrant Asian labor, the Greater Antilles were beginning to dominate the production of Caribbean sugarcane. By 1860, Cuba, many times larger than any of the British, French, or Dutch islands, but which had not undergone the earlier plantation transformations as the others, was the world's largest producer of cane sugar. Cuba had continued to import large numbers of African slaves into the 1850s, but external economic and political pressures essentially blocked the trade thereafter. Cuban planters also had introduced tens of thousands of Chinese laborers beginning in the 1840s, a number that may have reached 100,000 in the next few decades. The Chinese brought across the Pacific to work in Cuban sugarcane fields and Peruvian guano beds were, formally, "indentured" laborers, although their living and working conditions differed little from those of slaves. And the transportation of these Chinese into the Caribbean, interrelated as it was with so-called "blackbirding" in the Pacific, marks a period in Caribbean migration history nearly as unsavory as that of slavery.

The accelerating importance of the sugarcane industries of the Greater Antilles during the latter half of the nineteenth century was due to technical changes, intensified internal capital investments, and, perhaps most of all, the presence of the U.S. sugar market. And just as the political and economic presence of the United States came to overshadow and direct activities on the plantations of Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Puerto Rico as the nineteenth century was drawing to a close, the dawn of a new century saw U.S. economic domination of the entire circum-Caribbean. Accordingly, the movement of tens of thousands of labor migrants throughout the Caribbean region early in the twentieth century was almost exclusively associated with—in some cases nearly mandated by—U.S. labor needs.

* Construction of the Panama Canal (1904-14) by the United States uprooted and displaced tens of thousands of West Indian men and women who traveled to Panama for jobs. The failed French attempt two decades earlier also had attracted perhaps 50,000 West Indians, mainly from Jamaica. Jamaicans had traveled to Panama even before that, many working on the isthmian railroad in the 1850s. So when officials of the Isthmian Canal Commission (the U.S. governmental agency responsible for canal construction) sought labor for the blasting and earth-moving, it is not surprising that they turned to Jamaica. To

their disappointment, however, Jamaica denied the commission a labor recruiting terminal in Kingston, claiming that too many Jamaicans already had died and suffered working for the French.

The Americans eventually established their principal labor-recruiting station for canal workers in Barbados. From 1905 to 1913, U.S. officials shipped 20,000 Barbadian male contract laborers—as well as hundreds of others from nearby islands—from Bridgetown to Panama. But men and women traveling informally from their home islands to the Canal Zone far outnumbered contract workers during the construction decade. Barbadian historian Velma Newton estimates that as many as 40,000 Barbadians (besides the 20,000 contract workers) traveled informally to the Panamanian isthmus before the canal was completed, and that between 80,000 and 90,000 Jamaicans did so as well.⁵ British West Indians were not the only Caribbean peoples traveling to the Canal Zone. Men and women from Danish, Dutch, and French islands went too. Between 1905 and 1907 U.S. labor recruiters shipped 7,600 contract laborers from Guadeloupe and Martinique to Panama before the continental French government ended the recruiting.

Whatever the total number (insular demographic data were still notoriously vague and unreliable), the West Indians who traveled from their home islands to Panama—and often back again—set in motion demographic trends that reverberated throughout the region. Thousands of West Indians perished on the isthmus from exhaustion, disease, and landslides; nearly 6,000 Barbadians alone died of all causes from 1906 to 1920 in Panama. Probably over 15,000 British West Indians altogether died in Panama before 1920. Others never returned home but drifted west to new destinations such as the new American banana plantations in Honduras and the Limón district of eastern Costa Rica. Hundreds joined the British West Indies regiment of World War I and fought against the Turks in Palestine. Thousands stayed in Panama and became the black "Zonians" whose presence would become a treaty issue between the United States and Panama decades later.

The flow of British West Indian laborers to the Panama Canal Zone in the first two decades of the twentieth century was paralleled by a countercurrent of money that workers sent home to their families and friends. The "Panama money" softened the effects of a severe economic depression in the British Caribbean that could be traced to competition with European beet sugar for the London market.⁶ Wives and mothers on the home islands used the wages sent from Panama to purchase foodstuffs, clothing, and membership in local burial societies. In thousands of cases, money from Panama also purchased land plots, fishing sloops, and shops throughout the islands, thereby affording

working-class blacks a measure of independence from local plantocracies. This was not the first time small-island West Indians had prospered from money sent and brought home from a wage destination, but Panama money intensified the search for wages abroad by migrants from small Caribbean islands because it represented a volume and continuity of remittances that had never been known before.

When it became obvious to American officials that the canal project would soon be finished, they began to repatriate many of the West Indians to their home islands. Thousands of the labor migrants, now accustomed to receiving American wages, traveled on to Cuba and the Dominican Republic where U.S. capital had helped expand sugarcane acreage in both countries after the beginning of the century. The further "development" of the sugarcane industries of the Greater Antilles represented, in a broad sense, the same sort of challenge to American engineers that the Panamanian isthmus had; any economic problem, it was thought, could be solved with a lavish application of modern North American technology. Cuban sugar-processing techniques and field methods were thereby modernized by the turn of the century. Similarly, the "idle" lands of the southeastern quadrant of Hispaniola were rapidly converted from tropical forests and scrublands into enormous fields of sugarcane intersected by cog rails and commanded by the towering smokestacks of newly constructed grinding factories, built mainly with U.S. money.

The attraction of wage jobs in modernizing and constructing new agricultural facilities, and eventually harvesting the sugarcane, in Cuba and the Dominican Republic drew thousands of migrating black "Antillanos." Some were veterans from Panama. Many came directly from the English-speaking islands. Thousands of Haitians came too, mainly as seasonal cane cutters. Sailing schooners, and later steamers, had taken men from the English-speaking islands of the Leeward Caribbean to San Pedro de Macoris—in the heart of the Dominican Republic's sugarcane belt—since before the turn of the century. And Jamaican workers traveled to Cuba, mainly on steamships, in ever larger numbers as the Panama Canal construction wound down. In 1919 and 1920, the peak years for Jamaican migration to Cuba, nearly 50,000 Jamaicans sought work on the larger island. As a linguistically alien, dark-skinned, Protestant, and mostly male labor force, black West Indians were not always welcome in the large Roman Catholic, Spanish-speaking island. In Santo Domingo they were derided as *cocolos* by native Dominicans. Authorities in both countries insisted that these migrants—many of whom arrived for the annual cane harvest in January and departed after the crop was in in July—were holding jobs that should be performed by locals.

The application and withdrawal of U.S. capital at various locations throughout the circum-Caribbean region thus pulled and pushed labor migrants here and there. Accordingly, insular demographic patterns continued to reflect the familiar characteristics that migration societies have been known for before and since: Females, children, and old people had tended to predominate in the small Caribbean islands ever since principally male laborers had traveled away after slavery. But by the early twentieth century insular populations had become even more mobile and fluid from season to season and from year to year as external job opportunities appeared, disappeared, and reappeared. For instance, the massive exodus of men from Saint Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla, and Antigua to Santo Domingo at the beginning of each year in the first decades of the twentieth century began a six-month period in which mothers, wives, and children back home waited, hoping for remittances through the mail. Colonial officials in the same islands dreaded the men's return in the late summer because, for the next few months, unemployment always became a problem on the local sugarcane plantations, incipient labor protests and disturbances surfaced, and burglary rates rose. The population characteristics, economic opportunities, and even cultural attributes of these small Leeward Islands in the early twentieth century were influenced not so much by local events as by the rhythms of the sugarcane harvests in the Greater Antilles.

Although migration-induced demographic patterns had become intensified, Caribbean migration in the early twentieth century had changed in at least two ways from what it had been like in the decades immediately following emancipation. First, the number of people moving about became much larger as U.S. capital investment was concentrated in selected places, creating thousands of ephemeral work opportunities for multi-skilled laborers and their families. Second, migration was no longer simply a matter of traveling from one neighboring island to the next. Rather, it often involved journeys to the far edges of the circum-Caribbean zone.

It is therefore not surprising that more and more West Indians traveling farther and farther from home discovered the eastern United States, mainly the New York City area, as a migration destination. Some already had taken up residence in New York and Boston in the late nineteenth century as steamer lines expanded individual travel possibilities. But from 1901, when 520 "Negro Immigrant Aliens" were admitted from the West Indies, until 1924 when 10,630 arrived, 102,000 black West Indians entered the United States. Data were not maintained as to island of origin; some came from French, Dutch, and Danish Caribbean islands, but the great majority were British West Indians.

What were the general characteristics of these new black residents of the

eastern United States? British West Indian newspaper reports of the time suggested that this migration had taken away disproportionately high numbers of brown-skinned, middle-class islanders. However, a large number of black Panama Canal veterans had also traveled to New York. These crucial color distinctions that immigrant West Indians noted among themselves and among American blacks went largely unnoticed by white American employers, who saw the West Indian migrants as an undifferentiated, dark-skinned group. Some immigrant West Indians who had regarded themselves as middle class at home were therefore often forced to accept menial, working-class positions in the United States.

But West Indian immigrants were by no means homogenized into U.S. culture. They maintained their insular identities in new surroundings, distinguishing themselves from American blacks as well as from each other in a number of ways. Many, for example, were Anglicans, not the Methodists, Baptists, and Fundamentalists usually predominating among black American churchgoers. West Indians also maintained their own cricket clubs and reading societies, behavior regarded as "aloof" by blacks who recently had come north from the southern United States. Many of the West Indian arrivals—perhaps as many as one-third—eventually returned to their home islands. Those who remained in the United States mailed increasing sums of money back to those who stayed behind, continuing a tradition of remittance payments that their fathers and grandfathers had begun in the nineteenth century.

The influences of West Indian migrants in the New York area went far beyond the establishment of cultural enclaves in a new environment. Jervis Anderson has pointed out that Caribbean migrants to New York were particularly vocal and assertive in the early twentieth century, often paving the way for new black professional opportunities that had previously been open only to whites. Influential West Indians, moreover, demanded greater personal respect and established new standards of black self-identity.⁹ Jamaican Marcus Garvey arrived in Harlem in 1916 and transferred the headquarters of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) the following year. The UNIA's newspaper, *Negro World*, indeed had an international circulation; among other things, this weekly stressed black pride and the importance of Africa as the original black homeland. Garvey's influence therefore extended well beyond the Caribbean. For a brief time, he played an extremely important role in the evolution of black consciousness in the United States.

Other West Indians had contributed significantly to the black community in the United States by the 1930s. They included writers Claude McKay (Jamaica) and Eric Walford (British Guiana); Richard B. Moore (Barbados) and W. A.

Domingo (Jamaica), as leaders of black nationalist movements; and laborer organizers Ashley Fotten and Frank Crosswaith (both of the Virgin Islands). W. E. B. Du Bois, historian, sociologist, and black American advocate of Pan-Africanism, also claimed West Indian parentage. The stream of West Indian migrants to the United States was abruptly curtailed on July 1, 1924, when the U.S. national origins immigrant quota law went into effect. In part a reaction to the massive influx of eastern Europeans and Chinese, the new law essentially closed the United States as a viable migration destination for men and women from the Caribbean region. During the first half of 1924, over 10,000 black West Indians had come to the United States. In the following year, only 308 arrived. The external sanctions against West Indian migration were thus similar to those that had occurred elsewhere in the past and would recur. Individual migration was by no means simply locating a suitable travel destination; the reception at the other end was likely to vary as a function of changing social and economic circumstances. Potential Caribbean migrants of the 1920s, however, were not soothed by noting that discrimination against Caribbean migrants was a recurring fact of life. Caribbean blacks in both the United States and the Caribbean spoke out against the recent ruling, arguing that intergovernmental conspiracy might be to blame.

In the Caribbean itself, destinations for migrating men and women were also changing, as macroeconomic controls over local events created boom-and-bust labor markets, sending workers home from some islands and attracting them to others. The high world sugar prices, buoyed by shortages created during World War I, plummeted in the early 1920s. Accordingly, the volume of seasonal labor migration to the Greater Antilles by cane cutters from smaller islands was sharply reduced. At almost the same time, the construction of oil refineries elsewhere attracted some former cane cutters who now became carpenters and masons. The Royal Dutch Shell refinery on the Dutch island of Curaçao began refining petroleum from Lake Maracaibo in 1918. The Standard Oil of New Jersey refinery on nearby Dutch Aruba began to process Maracaibo oil in 1929. Thousands of laborers from the British and Dutch Caribbean went to Curaçao and Aruba to build factories, warehouses, roads, piers, and barracks. The construction of the Lake Maracaibo derricks by American engineers had earlier attracted hundreds of workers from Trinidad, Grenada, and Saint Vincent—English-speaking labor migrants who had experience working in and around the water—to the large estuarine lake of northern Venezuela. Some of these same workers manned shallow-draft oil barges between Maracaibo and the small Dutch islands where the petroleum was refined.

Except in Curaçao and Aruba, however, bust replaced boom throughout the Caribbean region during the depression decade of the 1930s. A dearth of migration possibilities was not limited simply to one economic sector; migrant workers were laid off everywhere, and thousands were sent home. On the smallest islands, where jobs were scarce in the first place, returning migrants overhauled local labor supplies, creating underemployment that was no longer compensated for by remittances from abroad. Despair inevitably led to violence: An estate workers' dispute on Saint Kitts in January 1935 flared into riot and bloodshed; local police quelled the disturbance after shooting three rioters dead and wounding others. Official investigations attributed the riots to economic frustrations felt by a pent-up work force with few migration outlets. The Saint Kitts riot detonated an uneven chain reaction of similar disturbances throughout the eastern Caribbean. The urban poor in Barbados and Jamaica, coal carriers in Saint Lucia, oil field workers in Trinidad, and others rioted for higher wages. The disturbances of the 1930s led to economic and political reforms in several of the islands. And migration—or, more specifically, the lack of migration possibilities for what were, by this time, veteran migrant work forces—underpinned the rioting in each case.

The economic depression of the 1930s also intensified rivalries between host peoples of some Caribbean states and those who had come from neighboring islands to work. For years, for example, Dominicans had complained bitterly that migrant workers had taken jobs that locals should perform. In 1929, rioting partly to economic depression, the Dominican Republic severely restricted seasonal immigration into the country, a law aimed in part at the sugar estate laborers who arrived every January from the eastern Caribbean. Tragedy in the Dominican Republic was also related to curbing immigration; it came in 1937 with the slaughter of between 15,000 and 20,000 Haitians who lived and worked in the western and central part of the country. The so-called "Trujillo massacre" was directed by the Dominican dictator and accomplished by those who resented the presence of Haitian migrants who had traditionally crossed over the border to work on Dominican sugar estates.

World War II provided short-lived relief for labor migrants in the West Indies. In 1940 the United States took control of military bases on several British Caribbean islands in exchange for fifty American naval destroyers sent to Britain. Jobs in Trinidad, Antigua, British Guiana, and also on Saint Thomas suddenly became available on the U.S. bases. Tens of thousands of West Indians—many sailing from nearby islands aboard schooners—extended airplane runways, fortified harbors, constructed military barracks, and worked as

messengers, cooks, and maids. But, according to older West Indians who recall working for the Americans during the war, these jobs, as so many other jobs had been for Caribbean migrants in the past, seem to have been over nearly as quickly as they appeared. To make matters worse, economic conditions on some of the smaller islands after World War II had deteriorated even from where they stood during the depression. On the British islands, the sudden devaluation of the British pound in 1949 had the immediate effect of increasing prices for items imported from outside the British realm.

A momentous consequence of the aftermath of World War II in Britain—the need for unskilled labor to repair and rebuild the country after a war that had reduced British manpower—led to the massive migration of British West Indians to the United Kingdom in the 1950s. Caribbean blacks traveled to England on British passports so that reliable data were never available as to how many had gone to Britain or had left a particular island; estimates of total Caribbean migration to Britain between 1951 and 1961 vary from 230,000 to 280,000. The corresponding loss of people from some of the smaller islands during the decade was astonishing. The tiny British island of Montserrat in the northeastern Caribbean, for example, is said to have lost over 30 percent of its people to Britain during the 1950s. The travel itself was accomplished on steamers and charter flights. Husbands and fathers often went alone and established an economic foothold in England before sending for the rest of their families. A disproportionately large number of skilled workers—carpenters, masons, plumbers, electricians—left the islands for higher-paying British jobs, thereby depleting insular work forces and, according to some spokesmen, draining away the most capable and productive local inhabitants.

The Caribbean immigrants to Britain concentrated themselves heavily in some parts of the country where jobs were available—in the London area and in the industrial towns and cities of the British midlands. Far from being greeted warmly in the "mother country," however, British West Indians often were subjected to racial slurs and insults on the job and relegated to the worst housing conditions in the unfamiliar British cities. Coal dust, snow, and cold-water flats provided an inhospitable environment for Britain's newest residents, but these conditions were tolerable if the jobs held out.

In the early 1960s, amid widespread white British suspicion and resentment toward an accelerating volume of immigration from the former British Empire, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was passed. The law, approved after acrimonious parliamentary debate in April 1962, took effect three months later: it specified that those West Indians already residing in the United Kingdom on July 1, 1962, could thereafter bring only wives, husbands, or children under

sixteen from abroad to live with them. All others were essentially barred from living in Britain. The British government pointed to a saturated labor market, claiming that unrestricted immigration would create severe unemployment (long a problem in the British Caribbean islands) in the home country. Many West Indians condemned the British action as hypocrisy. And the new British law represented yet another external sanction against Caribbean migrants.

Britain in the mid-1980s had roughly 650,000 black citizens who continued to be concentrated in the nation's industrial slums. Most black Britons are those who immigrated from the Caribbean three decades ago plus an increasingly resive younger generation born in the United Kingdom. British blacks never have been truly assimilated into white Britain and a stagnant British economy has sent unemployment rates soaring among its black populace. The general economic disenchantment of Britain's blacks was mirrored in the Brixton riots in south London in April 1981: a large black mob rioted, looted, and confronted local police in disturbances said to be provoked by police harassment. An official report issued in late 1981 outlined the economic and social malaise of Britain's blacks and vowed improvement. But the white British population has not expressed unanimity in seeking a compassionate solution for former West Indians and their children who now reside in the United Kingdom. After the Brixton disturbances, a handful of British members of Parliament called for a "vigorous policy" of subsidized repatriation of nonwhite immigrants from the United Kingdom to their former colonial homelands.

Unlike the rush to the United Kingdom in the 1950s, the movement of French Antilleans to France was one of modest proportions after World War II. In 1954, those born in Guadeloupe and Martinique residing in France numbered only 15,620, a combined total increasing to 38,740 by 1962. Travel to metropolitan France by citizens of the country's overseas departments (Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, and the island of Reunion in the Indian Ocean) is currently facilitated by a quasi-governmental travel agency that also attempts to place new arrivals from the overseas departments in working-class jobs. During the 1970s and 1980s, an increasing number of French West Indians went to the metropole via similar travel arrangements. The 1982 census shows that over 190,000 French citizens residing in metropolitan France were born in the overseas departments of the Caribbean: 9,180 from French Guiana, 87,320 from Guadeloupe, and 94,940 from Martinique. Occasionally, French West Indians in France traditionally have held low-level positions in industry and the civil service. They live mainly in Paris but an equal number are scattered throughout other cities.

West Indians from the French Caribbean have sometimes experienced dis-

crimination—similar to that leveled at their British West Indian counterparts—on arrival in Paris and other French cities. In his *Black Skin, White Masks*, Martinican Frantz Fanon points out that those French West Indians who consider themselves French (as, indeed, they legally are) have often been shocked and disappointed by the treatment they have received in France, although such discrimination is illegal there.⁷ Yet despite the general similarities in the abusive treatment experienced in both England and France by West Indian immigrants going “home,” West Indians in the latter country probably have fared better. This relatively better treatment is perhaps because the West Indian (and African and Haitian) black presence in metropolitan France is overshadowed by the hundreds of thousands of North Africans—Algerians, Tunisians, Moroccans—who have migrated to France since World War II. Guest workers from Portugal, Italy, and Turkey also have gone to France. The North Africans—who inhabit run-down sections of nearly every large French city—have been special targets of French working-class frustrations during the recent economic recession.

A tiny number of Haitians also reside in France. The great majority of them are from the urban area in and around Port-au-Prince, and they are principally students, professionals, and members of the diplomatic corps. Middle- and upper-class Haitians, a number of whom are political refugees, still consider France the ultimate source of their cultural heritage. The impoverished tide of Haitian political and economic refugees, on the other hand, cannot afford the luxury of even considering France as a migration destination and have turned instead to North America—especially French-speaking Quebec and nearby Caribbean states, principally the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic.

The most numerous influx of Caribbean peoples to Western Europe in recent years has been to the Netherlands from the Dutch West Indies, mainly from Suriname which is culturally Caribbean although located in northeastern South America. Smaller numbers have come from the Dutch affiliated islands, principally Curacao and Aruba. Although earlier migrations from the Dutch Caribbean to the metropole were for traditional reasons such as the desire for education, job opportunities, or chances for upward mobility, the huge number of Surinamese immigrating to Europe in the past decade has been principally because of political push factors. Fearing ethnic rivalry and worse when the South American country gained political independence in November 1975, tens of thousands of Surinamese of Indian and Javanese descent rushed to Holland in the preceding months. A total of 40,000—10 percent of Suriname's populace—emigrated to the Netherlands in 1975 alone. More have left Suriname since the military coup there in 1980. In that year the population of

Suriname was estimated as roughly 350,000, with another 250,000 living abroad, including 180,000 in the Netherlands. Perhaps 30,000 Dutch Antilleans now live in the Netherlands.

As in Britain and France, the principal Dutch urban areas have been the destinations of the vast majority of Dutch West Indians, the Surinamese residing mainly in Amsterdam and many Antilleans in The Hague. And similar problems of discrimination and lack of assimilation have been reported by recent West Indian arrivals in the Netherlands, especially as their numbers have increased. In recent years events in both the Netherlands and the Dutch West Indies have also been influenced by the intimate interrelationships between the mother country and its former colonial possessions; interrelationships created by back-and-forth movements of Caribbean migrants. Antilleans in The Hague, for example, demonstrated against the use of Dutch marines to help quell the riots in Willemstad, Curacao, in 1969, and several West Indian protesters in the Dutch city were arrested and jailed. Moreover, the “sergeants’ coup” in Paramaribo, Suriname, in 1980 is suggested to have been indirectly related to the dissatisfaction of some noncommissioned officers in the Suriname army in contrast to the egalitarian treatment they had received during their earlier military training in the Netherlands.

Whereas hundreds of thousands of Caribbean migrants and those whose parents are West Indians live in Western Europe, Caribbean peoples now residing in North America (mainly the United States) can be counted in the millions. In the past twenty years, ever since the U.S. Immigration Act of 1965 modified the “national origins” system that favored Europeans, Caribbean migrants and others have poured into the United States. These voluminous movements of people are only partly because of changed immigration laws in the United States. Stories from returned friends and relatives, combined with extraordinary advances in communications and transportation technology, have made migration seem altogether less risky than staying home to face relative poverty on a West Indian island.

The effects of the recent Caribbean migration on the United States have been profound, creating irrevocable changes in the American landscape and in American culture. The most obvious effects, perhaps, are the visible results of so many peoples who recently have come north from the islands and rimlands of the Caribbean; such manifestations are Miami's “Little Havana,” the Caribbean ethnic enclaves in the New York City area, and Brooklyn's Labor Day parade which has become an annual West Indian carnival. But Caribbean influences are not confined to exotic phenomena grafted onto, but really apart, from the American mainstream. The recent rush by Caribbean peoples and

others to the United States has also helped to create a fortress mentality among some Americans, inspiring congressional debate about immigration reform. In the mid-1980s these debates aroused much interest although there was little agreement as to whether more immigration would produce positive or negative effects, and whether stringent new laws could work even if they were passed.

Debate, not to mention suggested legislation, concerning American immigration policy has been confounded by varying and contradictory immigration data. The United States admits over 600,000 persons from abroad per year, of whom roughly 15 percent are West Indians. But these data do not include, for example, the estimated 2 million Puerto Ricans who now reside in the continental United States but who leave no trace in immigration statistics. The U.S. citizenship granted Puerto Ricans in 1917 does not change how many other Americans perceive Puerto Rican "immigrants." Often they are lumped together with "Hispanics" and treated by employers in the same rough way as, say, undocumented workers from Central America. Puerto Rico itself is a society of return immigrants. The commonwealth government estimates that one-fifth of Puerto Rico's people have resided in the continental United States at one time or another. The ambivalent character of the Puerto Rican situation (are they or are they not "migrants"?) helps explain the relatively disappointing and impoverished conditions that many of them experience in the United States. With one foot on the mainland and another at "home," Puerto Ricans coming north have sometimes not carried with them the commitment found among would-be permanent immigrants.

If 600,000 come annually to the United States legally from all other countries, how many enter illegally? The estimated numbers vary from as low as 100,000 to 500,000 each year. Estimates of the total number of illegals, most of whom are acknowledged to be from Latin America and the Caribbean, presently in the United States range from 2 to 6 million. There is perhaps no better (or worse) example available to illustrate the vexing lack of hard data concerning U.S. immigration than that of trying to enumerate Haitians now resident in the United States. Michel Laguerre estimates that the number is perhaps 800,000: 150,000 American citizens, 50,000 students, 400,000 "undocumented entrants," and the remaining 200,000 children of both legals and illegals.⁸ Other estimates are higher and many lower. Moreover, to group "Haitians" in the United States into a single category is deceiving at best. Early Haitian migration to the New York City area, a movement that began to increase in the 1950s, was noticeably of upper-class and middle-class professionals fleeing the Duvalier regime. Since 1972, however, the large numbers of black Haitians coming to the United States have been the impoverished boat

people escaping political and economic desperation at home, whose sailing odysseys have brought them to Florida. Perhaps half of the estimated 70,000 Haitians now living in southern Florida resided at one time or another in the Bahamas, and the latter country's recent crackdown on its own "Haitian problem" sent many Haitians on to the United States. The great majority of New York City's estimated 300,000 Haitians are working-class blacks, many of whom are there illegally.

According to Jamaican anthropologist Charles Carmegie, the rules distinguishing "legal" and "illegal" migration, categories unquestioned by most Americans, are seen by migrants from the Commonwealth Caribbean as hurdles to cross in their quest to obtain a living.⁹ Contemporary migration rules are therefore considered ephemeral obstacles that must be overcome, whether by "legal" means or otherwise. Migrants from the Commonwealth Caribbean have indeed been intimately involved in the U.S. economy for years. British West Indians were leaders in Harlem early in the century, and thousands more have worked in the United States as seasonal farm laborers in intervening decades. Thus, the migration to the United States from the states of the Commonwealth Caribbean since 1965 has represented a recent surge to some Americans but continuity to many West Indians. The great majority of the estimated 600,000 British West Indians now in the United States reside in the New York City area. Their desire to locate on arrival near kinsmen and friends of the same islands results, moreover, in some unlikely residential concentrations within the New York conurbation: the highest concentrations of New-Italians in the United States are probably in New Haven, Connecticut; Perth Amboy, New Jersey, is the home of many Anguillians. The largest numbers of English-speaking West Indians in New York are the roughly 275,000 Jamaicans there. Aggressive, hardworking, and increasingly prosperous, most of the recent immigrants from the Commonwealth Caribbean are referred to collectively as "Jamaicans" by many Americans, whether or not they are from Jamaica.

The same lack of distinction is applied to recent Cuban and Dominican arrivals, who, together with Puerto Ricans, are often considered simply "Hispanics." Furthermore, many Americans associate Cuban immigrants exclusively with those roughly 125,000 Cubans who came to Florida via the Mariel flotilla in 1980. Among the approximately 1 million Cubans (750,000 in southern Florida) who now live in the United States, many are those who left in response to Fidel Castro's takeover of the island a generation ago. The pejorative term "Marielito" is considered an insult in Cuban-American circles, especially among those people who left everything they had in Cuba two decades

ago and have regained a measure of prosperity in the United States only after starting all over again. The estimated 350,000 persons from the Dominican Republic now residing in the United States have settled chiefly in the New York metropolitan area. By now a traditional ploy by "undocumented" Dominicans coming to the United States is to travel by boat to nearby Puerto Rico and then to fly directly to the United States where they are virtually indistinguishable from Puerto Ricans as far as U.S. immigration authorities are concerned.

The United States is not the only contemporary North American destination for Caribbean migrants. The 1981 Canadian census enumerated 172,245 immigrants whose previous habitat was "Caribbean Islands," which, in this case, usually meant the Commonwealth Caribbean. Canadian immigration policies, based on a "point" system stressing education and skills, is said to have drained off many of the more capable and energetic residents from the islands to Canada's benefit. But, according to Canadian anthropologist Frances Henry, black West Indians, regardless of their educational backgrounds, face a rising tide of racism in the cities of eastern Canada where most of them reside.¹⁰ The overall number of black West Indians living in Canada in the mid-1980s is probably twice the number given in census reports because thousands of black Britons with Caribbean backgrounds recently have immigrated to Canada and are officially reported as "British" owing to their most recent country of residence. Among the roughly 350,000 peoples of Caribbean birth and descent now living in Canada are an estimated 40,000 Haitians, most in the greater Montreal area.

Despite the massive outflow of Caribbean peoples to metropolitan areas in Western Europe and North America during the latter half of the twentieth century, an even larger number continues weekly, monthly, and annually to travel from place to place within the Caribbean region. The great variety of reasons for these intraregional movements—to obtain part-time work, to seek medical attention, to shop, to sell, to return home, to escape authorities in either one's home or an adopted place of residence, and so forth—makes it extraordinarily difficult to classify these movements in any meaningful way. Yet enclaves of recent immigrants inhabit every West Indian state of any size or prosperity; examples include the Haitians in the Dominican Republic and the Bahamians, "down islanders" from the Leeward Caribbean in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Dominicans (from Dominica) in Guadeloupe, and Windward islanders and Guyanese in Trinidad. The contemporary movements of these peoples and hundreds of thousands of others around the Caribbean every year remind us that similar migrations have been occurring there for one and one-half centuries.

Migration's Effects in the Caribbean Region

Caribbean migration is usually discussed from the point of view of the metropolitan destinations to which Caribbean peoples have traveled. For this reason questions of migration "policy" debated by U.S. authorities give little, if any, thought to impacts in the Caribbean region itself. In the instances when migration's effects on Caribbean homelands are considered, however, the inter-related complexities of different time scales must be acknowledged because Caribbean migration is at once a traditional means of getting by and an irresistible contemporary fad. The giant Coca-Cola sign, for example, between Santo Domingo and the city's international airport featuring Pedro Guerrero (fellow countryman and St. Louis Cardinal baseball sensation) is particularly appealing to young Dominicans because tens of thousands from the Dominican Republic have rushed to the United States in recent years. And the advertisement is doubly effective because many Dominicans have sought money and success in the United States since early in this century. The billboard also suggests that the movement—one way and back and forth—of Caribbean peoples affects and alters both migration origins and destinations at the same time.

Demographically, the most popular explanation for Caribbean migration is that the migrants are fleeing the local effects of overpopulation at home, an "explanation" that is oversimplified at best. Indeed, the historically imposed overpopulation in some islands has led to some of the highest human densities in the world. The 1,500 Barbadians per square mile, for example, gives Barbados an island-wide human population density comparable to that of many U.S. suburbs. The fact that nearly all of Barbados's 166 square miles are cultivated in sugarcane gives some idea of how crowded the island's villages, towns, and cities are. And Barbados's relative prosperity is, in part, evidence of how effective migration and return has been as a traditional livelihood strategy there. External migration, however, has actually led to dramatic declines during Barbados's recent demographic history, specifically in the Panama Canal decade and during the exodus to Britain at mid-century. Small island size, therefore, influences population volatility. Overpopulation suddenly can become underpopulation given attractive migration possibilities elsewhere. In some of the islands that are smaller than Barbados, a sudden exodus of so many young and middle-aged island residents is said to have created a malaise among those remaining behind, mostly old people who lament the loss of better times in the past when the home island bustled with people and activity. Skewed demographic patterns with a preponderance of the very old and

very young (Because the people of working age have left) have characterized the region for decades. School administrators throughout the Caribbean invariably complain that rowdy children cannot be controlled by grandparents who are attempting to raise them in the absence of distant parents. In the late twentieth century both Caribbean men and women emigrate in roughly equal numbers. In times past, men were the more likely migrants, helping to create the mother-centered family of the region of which so much has been written. Yet emigrant fathers have served as role models for children who themselves leave home when they reach adulthood.

The volatile insular populations and ever-changing demographic patterns in the Caribbean mirror the external conditions that affect human populations of potential migrants. Geographer Bernard Nietschmann, who has worked among the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua on the rim of the far western Caribbean, explains the fluidity of Miskito demography as a function of traveling away during some periods and returning home in others in order to adapt to altered local economic conditions which are, in turn, affected by external economic cycles.¹¹ The conditions that affect the Miskito also hold true for most of the Caribbean region.

As it has so often in the past, money sent home by migrants helps sustain insular West Indian societies. Whereas a "brain drain" may siphon off many of the best educated of the region, a money flow heading back in the other direction helps cushion the loss. Scholars who study Caribbean migration patterns have devoted a good deal of time and energy to accumulating remittance data because these numbers are tangible, quantifiable representations of one of migration's most important effects. In the past, much of the money sent home was mailed by postal money order and therefore recorded in official government data sources. But in more recent decades, Caribbean migrants abroad have sent the majority of their remittances through private banks. In 1973 in the tiny island of Carriacou (resident population 6,000) in the Grenadines I learned that over \$500,000 in U.S. currency was sent home the year before both by postal order and through the island's single bank. Most bankers are reluctant to divulge these data, although it is certain that remittances to the larger Caribbean islands run into the tens of millions of U.S. dollars annually per island.

Goods and commodities from metropolitan migration destinations also pour into the Caribbean region every day. Material goods from abroad sent and brought back by migrating men and women help to reduce spot shortages of staple items: at home but, more often, represent a quality and diversity of commodities otherwise unavailable or prohibitively expensive in the islands.

The carry-on luggage on commercial airline flights alone hauled by West Indian returnees to their homelands reveals a wondrous array of goods: blaster radios, toaster ovens, spark plugs, television sets, potato chips, clothing, groceries, razor blades, and nearly every other item imaginable. The use and display of these goods back home—either by the returnees or their families—signify migration's success, thereby reinforcing its importance in local Caribbean cultures.

The faithful sending home of money and gifts from Caribbean peoples abroad is neither an irrational fetish nor indicative of a preoccupation with the commercial gin-crackery available in North American department stores. Remittances of money and gifts play a functional role for the migrants themselves, especially if external circumstances force them to return. Young men or women who have regularly remitted money in their absence invariably receive warmer homecomings than those who have not. The legendary faithfulness of migrants is, moreover, spread by stories circulated at home, stories that reinforce such faithfulness. Every small Caribbean island has similar anecdotal "treasure tales," which often tell of loyal returning migrants sewing money into their clothing to avoid currency regulations or smuggling expensive goods home to benefit their families.

It is not surprising that local prestige often is accorded those who have migrated successfully and returned. In the small British Caribbean islands nearly every shop, taxi, or house of any substance may be traced to the owner or family members having traveled away earlier to a destination where wages were higher and more reliable than at home. Old men who traveled to the Netherlands Antilles from the Grenadines in the 1940s and 1950s returned home to construct elaborate concrete "Aruba houses" with money earned abroad. "Curacao houses," named for similar reasons but a different migration destination, are found on Montserrat. Often, rum shops and fishing boats also bear names related to their owners' migration experiences. Many political and business leaders of the Commonwealth Caribbean have resided abroad for extended periods of time.

But support and enthusiasm for those going away is not always unequivocal. The popularity of goods and ideas brought home from abroad, according to some disgruntled observers, can be detrimental to local Caribbean societies, invariably causing young persons to look elsewhere for success and prestige. And a backlash of sorts against those who have emigrated and returned is not unknown. Some of the residents of Suriname have observed with disdain returnees parading through tropical Paramaribo sporting winter European clothing so that no one can mistake that they recently have returned from

Even if those who already have traveled away from the Caribbean prosper in a relative sense and are somehow taken in elsewhere, local West Indian conditions and tradition will continue to send migrants away from the region in the future. And although predictions about the disastrous circumstances that lie ahead for Caribbean migrants have been fashionable for years, the future for these peoples is perhaps not as gloomy as one might think. Most Caribbean peoples are flexible, innovative, and responsive to immediate change. These characteristics—learned through their many travels and the travels of their parents and grandparents—provide insurance against the unknown though certainly precarious events that lie ahead. A combination of local and external factors, of course, will continue to influence Caribbean migration. It is also certain that Caribbean migration trajectories will be influenced by a blend of cumulative historical experiences and the immediate urgency of contemporary events. A quotation attributed to Jack Kerouac might well be part of a conversation overheard between two Caribbean migrants and at the same time a prediction for the future of migration from and within the Caribbean region: "Where are we going, man? I don't know, but we gotta go."

Notes

1. Edward J. Boyer, "Caribbean's Driven Immigrants," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1985.
2. Patterson, "Migration in Caribbean Societies."
3. Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (Chicago: Aldine, 1974), pp. 146–56.
4. Haraksingh, "Culture, Religion, and Resistance," pp. 223–37.
5. Newton, *The Silver Men*.
6. Anderson, *This Was Harlem*.
7. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp. 9–40.
8. Laguerre, *American Odyssey*, pp. 24–25.
9. Carnegie, "If You Lose the Dog, Grab the Cat."
10. Frances Henry, "West Indians in Canada: The 'Victims' of Racism?" Paper presented at a conference on "Caribbean Migration and the Black Diaspora," University of London, June 17–19, 1987.
11. Nietschmann, "Ecological Change, Inflation, and Migration."
12. Beck, "The Bubble Trade," p. 41.
13. Wilson, *Crab Antics*, p. 155.

British Caribbean Economic History

Interpretation

The process of economic development centers on the application of scientific, engineering, and technical knowledge to production. Simon Kuznets writes that the "mass application of technical innovations constitutes much of the distinctive substance of that process." When this occurs, new sectors of economic activity appear and overall levels of productivity increase. As a result per capita output rises. But Kuznets also emphasizes that the process of technical change is itself socially determined. He writes that for new technology "to be employed efficiently and widely, and indeed, for its own progress to be stimulated, institutional and technological adjustments must be made."¹ Seen in this way, advances in production methods and the establishment of new sectors of economic activity represent only the proximate sources of growth. The fundamental sources of development are to be found in society's institutions and the role they play in either facilitating or limiting technical innovation.

The same approach is fruitful in the study of underdevelopment. A nation's underdevelopment exists because it has not experienced wide or substantial innovation in production. The focus of analysis in accounting for its poverty, therefore, should be on how society's institutions acted to limit technological change. Such institutions might have acted to constrain either the capacity or the incentive to be innovative or both. But whatever the explanation appropriate to a specific country, the analysis of underdevelopment, like the study of development, should center on the impact of social institutions on the pace of change in production methods and the introduction of new products.

This study of the historical origins of Caribbean underdevelopment thus emphasizes how the region's institutions constrained its economic development. In this way it adopts a method in examining West Indian economic