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ISSN: 2220-5772

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BAHAMIAN STUDIES

EDITORIAL Volume 24, 2018

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First off, I would like to thank Virginia Ballance, Managing Editor of the *International Journal of Bahamian Studies (IJBS)* from 2007-2017 for her leadership of the journal over the past several years. In this, my first year as Managing Editor, she has provided me with extensive help getting my bearings as editor. As I have told her several times, one of my main goals as Managing Editor is to make sure that *IJBS* continues the tradition of excellence that she has cultivated.

The title *International Journal of Bahamian Studies* is indeed an appropriate name for our journal, as it suggests that the journal is both uniquely Bahamian in its concerns, but it also seeks to build connections between the Bahamian research community and scholars around the globe. However, in the years since the journal was rebranded under its current name the title '*International Journal*' has, unfortunately, been adopted by numerous for-profit 'predatory' or 'junk' journals that submit the articles they feature to minimal to no peer review. However, *IJBS* remains committed to its traditions of peer review by internationally recognized experts.

Articles in previous issues of *IJBS* have been cited in academic journals around the world. Furthermore, a number of the articles in previous issues have been downloaded more than 10,000 times. The authors that have published in *IJBS* over the years include noted scholars such as Dr. Stephanie Hackert, Full Professor and Chair of English Linguistics at the University of Munich, one of Europe's leading universities. (Dr. Hackert also visited Nassau this October as UB's first International Visiting Scholar.)

As in previous years, this year's edition reflects the broad interests of UB faculty and staff. As has been common in previous years, particularly well represented among this year's authors are the faculty of my home academic unit, English Studies. Of particular interest among this year's articles is a piece by Dr. Philip Smith describing his experience, together with Dr. Craig Smith, Chair of English Studies (no relation), developing the first Shakespeare behind Bars programme for inmates of the Department of Correctional Services at Fox Hill. While *IJBS* will undoubtedly continue feature UB faculty prominently in the years to come, I will continue to encourage researchers around the world who study The Bahamas to consider submitting their work to *IJBS* for publication.

In addition to Ms. Ballance, I wish to thank all of the authors, reviewers, and copyeditors for their continued support of the journal. As the University of The Bahamas moves its research agenda forward, *IJBS* will continue to feature the best of scholarship about The Bahamas.

Sincerely,

Dr. Raymond Oenbring

# How to Choose and Work with Lawyers and Clients: A Bahamian & Caribbean Perspective

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## Abstract

Apart from the substance of a transaction or dispute, what factors should inform the decision to choose or work with a particular lawyer or client? This article, born of a series of conferences on the subject, deals with conflicts of interest, lawyer-client communication, attorney-client privilege, retainers, due diligence, engagement letters and whether lawyers can engage in alternative business structures other than partnerships. These are all pressing topics relating to law practice as we approach the end of the first quarter of the 21st century.

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## Introduction

*There could be nothing more important than having high moral and ethical standards as a legal practitioner and judge* (The Right Honourable Sir Dennis Byron, former President of the Caribbean Court of Justice at the Graduation at Hugh Wooding Law School, 2013).

For two consecutive years, 2014 and 2015, conferences were held at the University of The Bahamas under the theme “How to Choose and Work with Lawyers and Clients.” Partners included the Council of Legal Education, Eugene Dupuch Law School, and selected law firms and lawyers. The University of The Bahamas Law Department treated this conference as part of its commitment to look into the present condition and future of the profession. The organizers aspired to shape this event into an opportunity to engage practitioners, students and the public in the region as a whole. After an interlude of a year, the event has rotated to Jamaica in the form of this panel, and hopefully panels or conferences like it

will also regularly emerge in other regional jurisdictions in the years to come.<sup>1</sup> Fundamentally, the objective was to secure great value for lawyers across the wider region by deepening their involvement with other lawyers, institutions and international law organizations. The event was also a celebration of increased globalization and regionalism, and of the tremendous power mobilized by working together. In addition, while ethics are fundamental to the practice of law, they can sometimes be dull and even boring; the event set out to marry ethics with more alluring topics, such as law firm management (and in due course trial advocacy), in order to convey vital, practical information. Therefore, the event is still a work in progress, and the Jamaica session is

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<sup>1</sup> The author expresses warm thanks to Norman Clark and Steven Richman for cooperating on this project as well as Jacqueline Cummings-Gordon, Georgia Gibson-Henlin, Maxine Moore-Thomas, Sasha-Kay Gilzean, Teri-Ann Lawson, Candice Stewart, and Sherry Ann McGregor of the Jamaican Bar Association for incorporating this session into its Weekend Conference, Montego Bay, November 16-19, 2017.

an important stage in its evolution.

This article relates primarily to The Bahamas and the Caribbean but some issues are of general application. This paper aims to give a broad overview of a sample of practice issues, such as (1) conflicts of interest, (2) lawyer-client communication, (3) engagement letters and billing, (4) “clients from hell,” and a day in the life of an associate. The paper also touches on other questions, notably: can lawyers in the region (e.g., Bahamas, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago) organize themselves in limited liability companies, instead of partnerships? Can lawyers in those countries form multi-disciplinary partnerships (MDPs), i.e., go into business with other professionals such as accountants, architects, engineers, and surveyors, as in the United Kingdom and elsewhere? Is it in the cards for any Commonwealth Caribbean law firm to be incorporated and sell shares to the public on the stock exchange or privately? These are all huge topics and just one of them needs more space than can be allocated to this paper. Therefore, this paper is an overview not intended to deal with each topic exhaustively but to spark discussion and debate.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

When taking on a new client and forming an attorney-client relationship, it is key firstly to do a conflict check. One has to be cognizant and forthright about what is a conflict of interest. For example, under the Bahamas code of professional conduct, Rule V states:

Save after adequate disclosure in writing to and with the consent of the client or prospective client concerned, the attorney must not advise or represent more than one interest in a matter nor shall he act or continue to act in a matter when there is or is likely to be a

conflicting interest. A conflicting interest is one which would be likely to affect adversely the judgment of the attorney on behalf of or his loyalty to a client or prospective client or which the attorney might be prompted to prefer to the interest of a client or prospective client (Bahamas Bar (Code of Professional Conduct) Regulations, 1981, p. 15).

Similarly under Canon IV of Jamaica’s Legal Profession (Canons of Professional Ethics) Rules:

An Attorney shall act in the best interest of his client and represent him honestly, competently and zealously within the bounds of the law. He shall preserve the confidence of his client and avoid Conflicts of Interest (1978, p. 285).

The Canon goes further in (m) and states “in all situations where a possible conflict of interest arises, an attorney shall resolve all doubts against the propriety of multiple representation” (Legal Professions (Canons of Professional Ethics) Rules, 1978, p. 286). Conflicts of interest cannot be exhaustively listed. They may include any number of situations, such as: mobility of lawyers within the profession where there is a live issue about the misuse of confidential information (*MacDonald Estate v. Martin*, 1990); a lawyer representing the accused and co-accused on charge of conspiracy (*R. v. Silvini*, 1991); a lawyer for the wife in matrimonial proceedings sharing office space with the lawyer retained by the husband (*Baumgartner v. Baumgartner*, 1994); a member of the plaintiff’s former solicitors joining the defendant’s solicitors (*Alrich Development Pte Ltd v. Rafiq Jumabhoy*, 1995), including merger of firms (*Berg v. Bruton*, 2005); the plaintiff’s lawyer transferring to the defendant’s law firm during the course of litigation (*Bank of*

Montreal v. Dresler, 2002); or an alleged conflict resulting from a lawyer's family relations where he represented a defendant and his father represented a party adverse to interests of the defendant (R. v. Clarke, 2012). In another 2012 example, a Queen's Counsel and his then partner were fined £12,000 and £3,000 respectively by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal because of conflicts of interest in representing parties on both sides of a dispute and divulging documents to them ("Hopper Puts the Case", 2012).

Each situation is determined based on its own facts and may or may not amount to a conflict of interest requiring the lawyer not to act.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, where a conflict arises, clients must be informed. They may mutually consent to the representation by the lawyer. If the lawyer is dismissed by one client during that mutual representation, he or she cannot continue to represent the others; he or she should completely withdraw from representing any of them.

### **Lawyer-Client Communication**

For ethics and disciplinary committees around the world, lack of communication or inadequate communication with clients is a primary complaint. Clear and frequent communication with your client is very important. It is necessary not only to listen to and understand the client's problem and also to communicate to him or her what you intend to do about it, and when, where and at what cost. Legal fees, court fees and any other costs should be fully explained in advance and at each stage to the client. I inform new attorneys that, when they feel that lump in their throats, they should swallow it, and exhale full and frank advice to clients about what financial commitments

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in R. v. Clarke (2012, footnote 15 supra), the son-father adverse representation did not amount to a conflict of interest.

and risks they are undertaking, even at the risk of losing the clients.

Bad communication figures among the top perennial complaints against lawyers. That includes refusal and tardiness in returning phone calls, failure to meet, failure to explain fees, among other things. The relationship should be based on trust. Good communication builds trust. The client also employs the lawyer to communicate with other parties and the court on his or her behalf; so the lawyer should start with and maintain good communication with the client.

### **Attorney-Client Privilege**

With ongoing litigation in Jamaica and stagnant litigation in The Bahamas (e.g. Morris, 2003), this subject is at a critical juncture in the region. Within the Bahamas Bar code of conduct, Rule IV deals with confidentiality and attorney-client privilege. Paragraph 2 of the commentary to that Rule states that:

This ethical rule must be distinguished from the evidentiary rule of lawyer and client privilege with respect to oral or documentary communications passing between the client and his attorney. The ethical rule is wider and applies without regard to the nature or source of the information or the fact that others may share the knowledge (Bahamas Bar (Code of Professional Conduct) Regulations, 1981, p. 14).

Attorney-client privilege is a key feature that distinguishes a lawyer from other professions. Within the attorney-client relationship, the privilege is the client's and attorneys must safeguard it unless it is explicitly waived by the client. That is to say, privilege cannot be maintained by an attorney if it involves the commission or facilitation of a crime. It is to be noted that

attorney-client privilege is not to benefit the attorney but the client.

Jamaica and Canada made remarkable progress on this issue which I believe should be proactively shared with other jurisdictions. In *Jamaica Bar Association v. Attorney General and General Legal Council* (2017), the Bar successfully upheld lawyer-client privilege in relation to the disclosures of client information required under the proceeds of crime legislation. This took place in the aftermath of successful Canadian litigation on this subject (*Federation of Law Societies of Canada v. Canada [Attorney General]*, 2011).

### **Retainer and Engagement Letter**

The engagement letter/retainer is utilized to memorialize the terms of the client-attorney agreement, by clearly expressing the scope of services that the attorney is to provide for the client and the fees. Therefore, once there is no conflict of interest, the attorney or law firm should obtain due diligence information, an engagement letter and the retainer from the client.

### **Due Diligence**

One of the purposes of the due diligence exercise, also known as Know Your Client or KYC, is to ensure that the client is not engaging the firm to facilitate any illegal act and to ensure that the client has not derived monies from illegitimate sources. The due diligence form should verify:

- a. The full and correct name of client;
- b. Permanent Address;
- c. Purpose of Facility;
- d. Potential Activity;
- e. Occupation;
- f. Copy of Identification;
- g. Telephone contacts.

### **Engagement Letter**

The engagement letter should be detailed

and have several different sections to assist in clarity. First, the introduction should thank the client for instructing you and clearly identify the client, whether an individual, or entity. The introduction should also indicate what the attorney is being asked to do to ensure that there is no miscommunication. The engagement letter should acknowledge how payment will be accepted, whether wire, or cheque and the hourly rates. The engagement letter should also discuss termination as a client may terminate a retainer at any time and for any reason. However, the attorney or law firm should encourage the client to resolve their issues with the firm prior to terminating the relationship. The engagement letter should also advise the client that the attorney or law firm is entitled to terminate the attorney-client relationship for several reasons which may include:

- a. if the client does not pay one or more of invoices, or;
- b. if the client does not make an advance payment promptly when required to do so, or;
- c. if the client's instructions are unreasonable or would require a breach of a professional rule or a duty to the court or involve the commission of a criminal offence.

The agreed retainer should be placed in a clients' account and the attorney should bill against the retainer if that is the agreement with the client. The engagement letter should also identify the law and jurisdiction governing the engagement letter. If a client is overseas, the engagement letter should also agree that all signatures evidenced by facsimile transmission or electronic mail will be accepted as original signatures.

### **Clients from Hell**

Not all clients are from heaven. Some do not even seem to be from this earthly plane.

This is the client who would like constantly to look over your shoulder, who is never satisfied with anything you do, and who really deep down thinks he is a better lawyer than you. To give two examples, sometimes a frank talk, referring the client to another lawyer in the firm or a timely bill will solve the problem. Sometimes those measures do not work. After you have applied all of your skills to no avail to arrive at a truce, can you withdraw from working for a client from hell?

Regional codes usually permit you to withdraw. It is probably a good idea to do so rather than compound the problem, or force the issue by continuing to represent a dissatisfied client. For example, (e) of Canon III of Jamaica's Legal Profession (Canons of Professional Ethics) Rules, "An attorney shall not (except for good reasons) refuse his services in Capital offences" (1978, p. 284). In England and Wales, refusal of service is permissible only on reasonable grounds and not on a discriminatory basis; improper refusal may result in a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman (e.g. Solicitors Regulation Authority, 2011).

### **Alternative Business Structures**

Regional lawyers traditionally practice in partnerships. The partners can be held personally liable and do not have the benefit of limited liability. The formation of limited liability companies (LLCs) or professional limited liability companies (PLLCs) for lawyers would be relatively unprecedented in the region. LLCs or PLLCs are common in the United States. In some regional countries, law firms operate companies that provide corporate and financial services, such as company formation, registered office and registered agent. For example, in The Bahamas, lawyers can establish such companies under the Financial and

Corporate Service Providers Act. However, this is a limited exception and does not extend to the entire practice.

What are Alternative Business Structures? An alternative business structure (ABS) is an entity that, while providing regulated reserved legal activities, also allows non-lawyers to own and/or invest in law firms. There are approximately four different ABS models:

1. Legal service entity providing legal services only in which individuals who are not licensed attorneys own a minority interest in the entity;
2. Legal service entity providing legal services only in which there are no restrictions on non-lawyer ownership;
3. Business entity providing legal and non-legal services in which non-lawyers own a minority interest in the entity; and
4. Business entity providing legal and non-legal services in which there are no restrictions on non-lawyer ownership.

What jurisdictions presently allow for an ABS? The Legal Services Act 2007 of England allows non-lawyers to own and invest in law firms. ABSs have been permitted since 2007 although the first licenses were issued in 2012. Barnes Roffe Legal is an ABS in England that is categorized as the first type of ABS. Price Bailey was the United Kingdom's first accounting firm to be officially recognized as an ABS.

In Australia, alterations for attorney regulations began in New South Wales in the 1990s. Attorneys were permitted to form MDPs (also known as ABS) with other professionals, and ultimately allowed to incorporate. Australia's Slater & Gordon became the first publicly-traded law firm in the world in 2007 (Hill, 2014, p. 20). MDPs are also allowed in three provinces in Canada, namely, British Columbia, Ontario,

and Quebec. The Canadian Bar Association, established the International Practice of Law (IPL) Committee in 1997 in order to monitor the development of multi-disciplinary practices (Hill, 2014, p. 22). Pursuant thereto, a 1998 IPL committee report asserted that, “unless [multidisciplinary practice organizations] were controlled by lawyers,” they should not be permitted to provide legal services to clients. Subsequently, the IPL committee revised its view in 1999 and recommended that lawyers be allowed to participate in multidisciplinary practices, even if such practices were not controlled by lawyers and were not limited to those of a “legal nature” (Hill, 2014).

The American Bar Association (ABA) stood firm. In 2000, a recommendation was approved that it is “inconsistent with the profession’s core values for lawyers and non-lawyers to share fees, for non-lawyers to own or control a law firm” (Matheson & Favorite, 2001). However, the ABA position seems to be softening. The first paragraph of a recent recommendation lends itself to the interpretation that law firms may sell their shares to non-lawyers. The recommendation states:

Lawyers should be permitted to share fees and join with non-lawyer professionals in a practice that delivers both legal and non-legal professional services (Multidisciplinary Practice), provided that the lawyers have the control and authority necessary to assure lawyer independence in the rendering of legal services. “Non-lawyer professionals” means members of recognized professions or other disciplines that are governed by ethical standards. (American Bar Association, 2010)

On October 7, 2014, the Ministry of Law of Singapore submitted the Legal Profession

(Amendment) Bill 2014 for its First Reading in Parliament which permits ABSs. The Bill was adopted as law in Parliament on November 4, 2014. ABSs or Legal Disciplinary Practices (LDPs) are permitted, where non-lawyer managers/employees will be allowed to own equity and/or share in the profits of LDPs, and LDPs will only be allowed to provide legal services (e.g. Melnitzer, 2014).

But, how does an ABS affect privilege? Australia’s Legal Profession Act, 2004, section 143(3) expressly provides that the law relating to client legal privilege (or other professional privilege) is not excluded or otherwise affected because an Australian legal practitioner is acting in the capacity of an officer or employee of an incorporated legal practice. In England and Wales, under section 190 of the Legal Services Act 2007, privilege applies to communications made by an ABS, provided that the communications are made through, or under the supervision of, a lawyer.

An ABS or MDP may not measure up to the lawyer’s ethical obligations. There are standards of confidentiality and privilege different from those of other professionals such as accountants. For example, regarding Jamaica, clients have a right to attorney/client privilege<sup>3</sup> as illustrated in Canon IV (t)(i) and (ii) of the Legal Profession (Canons of Professional Ethics) Rules. It states that “an Attorney shall not knowingly reveal a confidence or secret of his client, or use a confidence or secret of his client to the client’s disadvantage or to his own advantage” (1978, p. 287). Also, pursuant to Rule IV of the Bahamas Bar (Code of Professional Conduct) Regulations,

An attorney has a duty to hold in strict

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<sup>3</sup>I am cognizant of ongoing litigation on this subject in Jamaica, and refrain with reluctance from commenting on it, as it is sub judice.



confidence all information received in the course of the professional relationship from or concerning his client or his client's affairs which information should not be divulged by the attorney unless he is expressly or impliedly authorized by his client or required by the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to do so (1981, p. 14).

An accountant/client privilege does not exist and the accountant would be required to disclose any information the client has revealed. This distinction is vital and the assessment should not be taken nonchalantly.

The lack of an accountant/client privilege was illustrated in the American case of *United States v Arthur Young & Co.* (1984). In this case the respondent certified public accountant firm, as an independent auditor for the respondent corporation and was responsible for reviewing the corporation's financial statements. When a routine audit by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issued a criminal investigation of the corporation's tax returns, the IRS summoned the accountant firm to make available all files of the corporation. The accountant firm refused, relying on accountant/client privilege. Nevertheless, the court rejected the accountant/client privilege argument and applied *Couch v. United States* (1973) which held that no confidential accountant-client privilege exists. The lack of confidentiality other professionals may have with regard to a client is a deterrent to operating as an ABS or MDP.

### **What are the benefits of an ABS?**

1. Equity can be raised from a broader base of potential partners, members or directors for example from other professions who are not attorneys.
2. The ability to diversify the range of legal services provided by the practice and becoming a "one stop shop".
3. Equity can be raised from outside the legal sector without the need for non-lawyer involvement at the management level. This has the potential to allow firms to attract new investment from different markets.

Australia became the pioneer as it relates to selling shares in its firms. In 2007, Slater & Gordon became the first law firm in the world to be publicly traded, listing shares on the Australian Stock Exchange. Gately was the second firm in the world to sell shares, and the first in the United Kingdom (Rogerson, 2016). To date there are only a few law firms that have done this, but many countries are following suit. A general concern about selling their shares is that by doing so, and by having non-lawyers hold these shares there may be conflicts of interest and breaches in professional codes of conduct such as concluding matters as quickly as possible regardless of the result in order to satisfy shareholders and to provide higher shareholder value (Rogerson, 2016).

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# Literature inside the Tree: Teaching *The Tempest* in The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services Facility at Fox Hill

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## Abstract

This paper seeks to assess the utility of a Shakespeare Behind Bars programme at The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services Facility at Fox Hill. It argues that, consistent with Kidd and Castano's (2013) findings, students engaged in literary analysis practice "Theory of Mind" and cultivate the means to narrate their own history. Students, we found, refracted their life experience to the play, reading the text in terms of social ostracism, the influences of their life course, imprisonment, and reform. They tended to relate most closely to those characters whom they saw as having learned from incarceration and who were committed to a new life course. Their insights provided a perspective on the play to which we instructors would not otherwise have had access.

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## Introduction

In May 2018, Dr. Craig Smith and I, faculty members at University of The Bahamas, launched the first Shakespeare Behind Bars programme at the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services Facility at Fox Hill (henceforth Fox Hill), formerly known as Her Majesty's Prison. The course ran for six weeks concurrent with the University's summer one session. Each week we made two visits to the prison, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., for a total of 24 contact hours. We also set reading assignments to be completed outside of class. Our class began with 18 students—14 males and four females—aged 23 to 53, all of whom were in medium security serving sentences of one to three years.<sup>1</sup> Class size

tended to fluctuate throughout the course; in the third week, for example, we lost six students as a result of a timetable clash with other educational programmes.

The students had been selected by the prison's education director, Ms. Andrea Sweeting, based on our recommendation that participants possess a reasonable level of literacy. The majority of our students had previously been involved in a film-making course. All students had attended high school although not all had graduated. One had experience of higher education. When we asked students what previous experience they had of Shakespeare, four reported having watched films of Shakespeare's plays, generally *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*, in school. The others reported minimal experience (one wrote: "nothing" and another "he was a famous writer"). Our primary text for the course was the Signet

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<sup>1</sup> The facility has separate blocks for men and women. The educational programmes are one of the rare times when the two prison populations mix.

version of *The Tempest*—an edition which comes with a detailed introduction, a representative sample of critical essays and a brief history of the text in performance. We chose *The Tempest* because, first, it is a play which we felt touches upon themes of incarceration and second, because it has inspired a great deal of postcolonial writing of relevance to The Bahamas. None of the students had studied the play previously.

The course followed a structure similar to one we might teach at the University albeit with greater restrictions on the material we were able to bring to class (for example, we required special permission to bring in a laptop) and the students' access to resources for assignments between sessions. The low number of contact hours as well as various administrative and logistical processes attendant to the launch of a new course, meant that the programme did not carry university credit. We did, however, present students with a certificate at the end of the course for them to use in future parole hearings. We spent the first three weeks reading through the play, pausing for analysis and discussion. During this time we introduced, where appropriate, key concepts in reading Shakespeare, such as the difference between verse and prose and forms of address in Early Modern English. In the final three weeks we discussed the play's production history, watched excerpts from performances, considered critical readings and looked at responses to *The Tempest* by Caribbean writers. The students completed two assignments: a creative writing exercise in week three in which they wrote a pre-history of the play from the perspective of a character of their choice and a final essay at the end of the course in which they responded to their choice of a range of critical readings.

We chose Shakespeare knowing that his presence in curricula may be controversial.

Shakespeare has a long history in The Bahamas which coloured perceptions of the programme in the larger community and informed the ways in which we presented the text to our students. When Dr. Smith and I appeared on The Bahamas' Guardian radio to discuss our work in the prison, for example, one listener sent a text message to the host describing our work as "white propaganda." Another applauded the teaching of literature in prison but asked why we were not teaching Caribbean literature.

In part, these responses were informed by the use of Shakespeare as a propaganda tool throughout the British Caribbean during the 19th and early-to-mid-20th centuries. *The Royal Reader* textbooks, which featured Shakespeare extracts, were used in elite schools and visits from touring companies travelling between America and Europe frequently made stops in The Bahamas and Jamaica. Knowledge of Shakespeare served, as elsewhere in the British Empire, as a signifier of a private education (perhaps even an education abroad) and a privileged status within the colonial hierarchy (Smith, 2017a; Smith, 2017b; Folger Shakespeare Library, 2015).

Shakespeare's works were also used as a means by which the occupiers sought to curb anti-colonial resistance and cement their relationship with their collaborators (Bhatia, 1998). *The Tempest*, and Caliban in particular, has, of course, also been appropriated by Caribbean writers and translated into an anti-colonial text. Examples of such works include Agard's *Prospero Caliban Cricket* (1994), Césaire's *Une Tempête* (1975), Nunez's *Prospero's Daughter* (2006), and Hopkinson's *Shift* (2012). *The Tempest* was also the first play performed at the annual Shakespeare in Paradise Festival in 2009.

When I entered the prison facility I was not sure what to expect. Dr. Smith and I were not sure how much material we could cover in each class or how the students would respond to Shakespeare's language. Would they be frustrated, I wondered? Indifferent? I was also unsure how the students would respond to the readings we planned to present. Various critics and performers have discovered in *The Tempest* themes of incarceration, power, violence and exploitation, all of which (I assumed) would prove eminently relevant to our student's own lives. But would it be, I wondered, presumptuous or even insulting of us to present these themes and expect them to respond? In presenting Shakespeare to these students were we, as the listener to the radio station suggested, forcing a disempowered population to understand their own lives through artifacts from a (neo)colonial culture?

During our visits to Fox Hill, we learned a great deal not only about the experience of incarceration as understood by those who live it, but about the play itself. The students created meanings from the text which neither of us had previously encountered. When the students read and analysed *The Tempest*, they engaged in a process which required them to imagine the motivations and emotions of another, imbuing the characters with fragments of their own life experience in ways we had not anticipated. Students, we found, tended to understand characters' behaviours as a result of circumstances. They were sympathetic to Caliban, whom they read as a victim of a poor upbringing. They saw themselves in Ariel and (to a lesser extent) Prospero—characters whom they read as being capable of emerging from incarceration with more emotional maturity and a clearer sense of purpose than when they arrived. Our experience working with students at Fox

Hill rhymes with earlier studies concerning the positive effects which literary analysis can have on incarcerated populations. It also affirms the oft-made assertion that literature and theatre, and Shakespeare in particular, are capable of producing different meanings from different populations—that whenever a reader and a text meet, a new meaning is born.

### **Shakespeare in Prison: Current Debates**

Our involvement in the prison is the latest fold in an ongoing relationship between the University and The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services. In 2016, researchers from the University surveyed inmates at Fox Hill. The results informed many chapters in the book *Violence in The Bahamas* (2016) and were presented in 2018 at a symposium at University of The Bahamas titled *Our Prisoners* attended by members of the Ministry of National Security and representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank. The proceedings of the symposium are to be published by IDB in 2019.

Many of the findings which emerged from the survey informed our decision to launch the Shakespeare prison programme, most significant among them being the clear relationship which has been established between low educational achievement and criminality. As Symonette (2016), Fielding (2016), and Johnson (2016) have shown, prisoners in The Bahamas tend to have a lower level of educational attainment than the rest of the population. This may be the result of growing up in unstable and, in many cases, violent households—factors which are highly disruptive to learning (Johnson, 2016). As a result of their low level of education, many struggle to achieve an income through legal means which is commensurate with their needs (Dames &

Smith, 2017).

In their introduction to the forthcoming joint-publication with IDB, Sutton, Veyrat-Pontet and Fielding (forthcoming) advocate for sentencing which includes an educational component, arguing that providing inmates with greater access to education may be a key means to raise their earning potential and thus curb recidivism. The purpose of our Shakespeare programme, then, was twofold: in the short term we sought to provide an educational experience to, and to empower, an under-served community by giving incarcerated students an experience of higher education. In the long-term we sought to take a first step towards bringing adult education and/or for-credit university courses into the prison.

In addition to enhancing the educational prospects of prisoners, we also have reason to believe that Shakespeare programmes in prison have more immediate benefits. Anecdotal and empirical evidence from programmes outside of The Bahamas suggests that Shakespeare in prison programmes provide participants with a sense of purpose and accomplishment, lower the frequency of disciplinary instances for participants and the prison population as a whole, and lower the likelihood of recidivism after release.

Shakespeare programmes in prison, either built around performance or literary study, have existed for more than two decades in the United States and Europe. Prison performances have an even longer history, dating to the American Civil War if not earlier (Scott-Douglass, 2007). Shakespeare programmes have generated, most famously, Philomath Film's documentary *Shakespeare Behind Bars* (2005), which follows a performance of *The Tempest* staged by prisoners in Kentucky in 2005, and Bates' memoir, *Shakespeare Saved My Life*

(2013), concerning her work teaching Shakespeare to maximum security prisoners in Indiana State Prison.

There exists a growing body of evidence to suggest that studying Shakespeare benefits incarcerated communities. Shailor (2013) asserts that students enrolled in his programme at Racine Correctional Institution received ten times fewer disciplinary reports than those who were not enrolled. In addition, the introduction of the programme appears to have had a positive impact on the prison population as a whole. The disciplinary report factor for the entire prison population dropped every year the programme was in operation from 2.25 per prisoner in 2004 to 1.54 per prisoner in 2008. In 2009, after the cancellation of the Shakespeare programme, the number of disciplinary reports rose again to 2.85. Wilcox (2012), artistic director of Prison Performing Arts, reports that recidivism rates for those involved in the theatre programme at prisons in Missouri are one third of their peers who did not participate in the programme.

The Shakespeare Behind Bars programme in Luther Lockett Correctional Complex, Kentucky, similarly reports a recidivism rate of just 6.1% for participants—below the state average of 29.5% and far below the national average of 67% (Shakespeare Behind Bars, 2018).

We should, of course, be hesitant to place too much trust in such findings. If participation in Shakespeare or similar programmes is a reward for good behaviour, if participants are self-selecting, or if those enrolled were chosen because they have a higher level of educational attainment than their peers, for example, then the selection of individuals involved may not be representative of the prison population as a whole. It is also difficult to factor for other

events at the prison, independent of the Shakespeare programme, which may impact discipline. Such data are, however, supported by self-reports from participants. One inmate enrolled in Dr. Wall's London Shakespeare Workout programme reports, "you get dumber and dumber by the day [in prison]. This [Shakespeare programme] woke us up—it gave us a reason to wake up as a team. It fills your mind with purpose instead of frustration and dread" (Barber, 2018. para. 25). As Wilcox (2012) asserts:

Many men and women are in prison because they have limited problem-solving skills. Their lives have been chaotic, and they have not been able to create a structure for that chaos. Literature, with its use of language and with its study of character and circumstance, helps them see and articulate the process of cause and effect in human lives, sometimes their own.

One finds similar reports elsewhere. Judge Paul Perachi, whose Shakespeare in the Courts programme requires juvenile offenders to participate in Shakespeare programmes as an alternative to other punitive measures, asserts that there is an "inexplicable magic" to performing Shakespeare (Scott-Douglass, 2007, p. 4).

It is far too soon for us to determine whether our Shakespeare Behind Bars programme has had a positive effect on rates of recidivism, and data on disciplinary actions are, unfortunately, not available. We can, however, document self-reports among prisoners concerning the extent to which studying *The Tempest* facilitated a process of, as Wilcox (2012) argues, recognizing and describing the emotions and motivations of others and arranging one's life-experience into a narrative. The ways in which the students engaged with the text also provides insights into their beliefs and attitudes

concerning incarceration and brings new meanings to the text.

### **Shakespeare at Fox Hill**

Dr. Smith and I both entered the prison with certain expectations as to how our students would respond to *The Tempest*. Neither of us had any previous experience working in prisons or with incarcerated or formerly-incarcerated students. We both knew from the prison study that the typical prisoner at Fox Hill is an unmarried male between 18 and 30 years old who, prior to incarceration, was unemployed or worked in a low-wage job (see Minnis, Symonette, Stevenson, Pintard-Newry, & Gibson, 2016). Our expectations, inevitably, had also been shaped by popular representations of prison life and so we anticipated that prison culture would demand our students perform certain models of hyper-masculine or otherwise "tough" behaviour which might shape their approach to the text. I had expected, for example, for the students to respond positively to more performatively masculine characters such as Caliban and to either resist discussions concerning or be dismissive of subservient or feminine characters such as Ariel or Miranda.

I was not alone in my assumptions. In her novel *Hag Seed* (2016), Margaret Atwood describes a fictional staging of *The Tempest* in a prison in which the characters' responses to the play follow somewhat un-nuanced models of class and masculinity and a refusal to engage with characters whom they perceive as feminine. The programme's director, Felix, sees his students as "various Calibans, scowling muscular: earthy, potentially violent" (2016, p. 85). The prisoners see themselves in much the same way: 15 of Felix's students volunteer for the role of Caliban in their performance, compared to eight for Ferdinand, five for Antonio, two for each of

Stephano and Trinculo, and zero for Alonso or Sebastian (2016, p. 119). Atwood suggests that the prisoners identify with Caliban because they read him as a marginalized figure who resists subjugation. As Vaughan and Vaughan argue, Caliban is often read as an “emblem of oppressed natives. [He] stands for countless victims of European imperialism and colonization” (1991, p. 145). Indeed, the prisoners in Atwood’s novel are all eager to claim Caliban as one of their own:

“Caliban should be First Nations,” says Red Coyote. “It’s obvious. He got his land stole.”

“No way,” says PPod. “He’s African. Where’s Algiers anyway? North Africa, right? That’s where is mother came from. Look on the map pox brain.” (2016, p. 152)

Ariel (who is, of course, also native to the island) finds much less traction than Caliban; the first time Felix mentions that the play contains a fairy the students react with hostility. Once they begin reading they see Ariel as far too servile; he is a “good servant” to Caliban’s “bad servant” (2016, p. 106). During his first meeting with his students, Felix concludes that “no one wants either of these parts: not the Ariel, not the Miranda” (2016, p. 88). The reason is simple: to play “a fairy” is to appear less masculine (2016, p. 88). Felix asserts that “any man playing [a feminine role] would lose status in a disastrous way. He’d become a butt, a target. Playing a girl, he’d risk being treated as one” (2016, p. 88). Felix eventually persuades them to see Ariel as an alien or superhero and to construct the character through stage effects rather than being played by an actor (2016, pp. 105-106). In *Hag Seed*, then, the fictional students’ willingness to engage with the text is limited by the characters with whom they

are prepared to empathize. Their perceived need to adhere to certain models of masculinity prevents them from engaging with the texts in other ways.

Our experience at Fox Hill prison was quite different from both my expectations and the hypermasculine world portrayed by Atwood. Early in the programme, we explained that any role in the play could be read by anyone and that the first Miranda was almost certainly played by a boy actor. Our students, unlike those portrayed by Atwood, were generally happy to have the chance to exercise skills they learned in their film-making class by reading a part aloud regardless of the character they were playing.

The minority who were reluctant to read did not seem to be reticent because they did not want to read a feminine role, so much as embarrassed to read aloud at all. (While we instructors did not correct a student’s pronunciation, other students sometimes did.) There was certainly no sense of status loss when students read for characters of the opposite gender. Even the reading of a male/male Miranda and Ferdinand declaring their love for one another in 3.1 elicited no comment. The one moment of laughter came when the student playing Miranda delivered the line “my husband, then?” (Shakespeare, 2005, 3.1.88, p. 1234) in a tone which suggested disappointment rather than joy. The selection of students, of course, was curated rather than a cross-section of the prison population and their behaviour was no doubt informed by our presence and the circumstances of the course. Nonetheless, we found them to be far more amenable to gender-crossed reading and engagement with feminine characters than Atwood’s novel and our preconceptions might suggest. When, in the second week, we asked the students which character they found most sympathetic the first answer we



received, from a male student, was Miranda because, he argued, she serves as an audience surrogate in the first act—like her, he does not know the circumstances, yet to unfold, which inform the story.

The question of a character's internal state and motivations was at the centre of our first assignment in which students imagined the history of a character of their choice. Nine students participated: four wrote about Caliban, two Antonio, three chose Ariel, and one chose Stephano. One student did express sentiments that resembled those found in *Hag Seed*. He wrote: "I like Antonio because he wants to be the boss and he will do whatever it takes even if he has to kill his own brother and his little girl." For the most part, however, students' reactions were far more empathetic. Those who chose Caliban, for example, did not see him as a model of resistance, but as a figure of pity and a victim of circumstances. One wrote:

I chose [Caliban] because he seems to be the most misunderstood person in the play so far. And I feel his reasons for being bitter toward Prospero and wanting him killed should be revealed. It kind of relates to society's view on angry young people or those who are charged with violent crimes like myself.

The student identifies with Caliban because he experiences social exclusion. She ties this directly to her own experience as an incarcerated individual. As Pintard-Newry and Parker (2017) report, prisoners in The Bahamas are often concerned as to how they will be regarded after release; many cited fear of rejection by family and peers and the fear of being stigmatized for having been in prison as significant concerns. In her accompanying creative piece the student, like many of her classmates, mentions that Caliban's relationship with Prospero changed after Caliban showed sexual

interest in Miranda—that the condition in which we find him at the beginning of the play (as one student phrases it, "reduced to living in a rock") is the result of an informal system of punishment. She felt that Prospero's treatment of Caliban represents a punitive model built upon ostracism and retribution without the possibility of reform or a return to society. Drawing a parallel between Caliban and the post-incarceration experience in The Bahamas, she writes (paraphrasing the motto beneath the prison logo): "the underlying issues should be dealt with in order to begin rehabilitation, reform, and reintegration into the free world."

It is perhaps important to note that, as critics such as Taylor (1989) maintain, when students read Shakespeare or any other literary work the process in which they engage uses similar mechanisms but is distinct from attempts to understand the interior experience of another human being.<sup>2</sup> This point of clarification is important because there exists a long tradition of reading Shakespeare as able to speak to that which is "essentially human." Such a reading would suggest that Shakespeare's insights into the human condition are so keen that his characters have all of the contradictions, dimensions and complexities of an actual personage rather than a literary construction. This idea proved particularly popular during the 19th century. S. T. Coleridge, for example, claimed in 1836 that he has "a smack of Hamlet" in his personality (as cited in Bate, 1992, p. 161). Such views persist today most famously in

<sup>2</sup> This theory is somewhat contested. Yachnin and Slights (2009), for example, argue that while arguments concerning "character" are often treated with scepticism by literary scholars, they nonetheless constitute an important part of non-specialist responses to texts. By rejecting such responses we risk losing important dialogue with students, theatre professionals, and non-specialist readers.

Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1999) in which Bloom claims that we owe our modern ideas of interiority to Shakespeare. To offer an example closer to our subject, in *Shakespeare Saved My Life*, Bates asserts that she "wanted to learn from these convicted killers whether Shakespeare's representation of murder is accurate" (2013, p. 53). These ideas are problematic because, in treating literary invention as a genuine personage, they obscure more than they reveal. Tennenhouse (2010), for example, argues that we tend to be highly selective in which parts of Shakespeare we read, debate, and perform, creating "a construct who speaks the politics of culture in the tradition of [Matthew] Arnold and [T. S.] Eliot" (2010, p. i). As Gary Taylor writes, Shakespeare "gives us back our own values" (1989, p. 411). Whatever we believe about the world or ourselves we tend to find in Shakespeare, not because Shakespeare somehow anticipated the shape our lives would take, but because we create from his words confirmation of our existing beliefs.

This context is key to our understanding of the students' responses to the text. When we tasked our students with creating a history for particular characters, they did not discover a character created by Shakespeare, but created one from their own experience in dialogue with evidence they found on the page. As we emphasized throughout the course, the brevity of Shakespeare's stage directions and, more importantly, the "gaps" left in the text mean that we can imagine any number of versions of each of the characters, none of which are more "correct" than any other. The implications of this are two-fold. First, this process may make the magic described by Judge Paul Perachi a little more explicable. As Kidd and Castano (2013) demonstrate, reading literary fiction (as distinct from non-fiction and popular

fiction) enhances one's Theory of Mind (ToM)—the ability to understand the emotions of others. They assert:

Our contention is that literary fiction, which we consider to be both writerly and polyphonic, uniquely engages the psychological processes needed to gain access to characters' subjective experiences. Just as in real life, the worlds of literary fiction are replete with complicated individuals whose inner lives are rarely easily discerned but warrant exploration. The worlds of fiction, though, pose fewer risks than the real world, and they present opportunities to consider the experiences of others without facing the potentially threatening consequences of that engagement. More critically, whereas many of our mundane social experiences may be scripted by convention and informed by stereotypes, those presented in literary fiction often disrupt our expectations. Readers of literary fiction must draw on more flexible interpretive resources to infer the feelings and thoughts of characters. That is, they must engage ToM processes (2013, p. 378).

Engaging in literary analysis or preparing for a performance, then, provides a safe opportunity to simulate the process of exploring the inner life of another. Indeed, because the act of interpreting literature occurs at a pace which the reader can control, literary analysis may provide a more effective path to developing ToM than human interactions alone because it simulates the process of engaging with another without the immediacy or pressure of live dialogue. The ability to recognize the logic that informs the behaviour of others may be a particularly useful skill for those with a history of violence as the inability to apply the emotional aspects of ToM has

been linked to antisocial behaviour (Shamay-Tsoory, Aharon-Peretz, & Levkovitz, 2010). The positive effects of reading literature in prison, then, may account for the drop in disciplinary action during incarceration as well as the reduced rates of recidivism after release. The process of interpreting the actions of characters may explain the positive behaviours observed in Shakespeare prison programmes. The act of interpretation—of the reader completing the text as it were—also brings forth themes and observations which might elude another reader. When the student mentioned above describes the relationship between Prospero and Caliban, she constructs a non-functional model of incarceration built from her own experience and anxieties, both engaging her ToM and describing a world to which we on the outside have no access.

This process of interpretation continued into other activities. When we discussed with the students how they would cast the play, for example, all of the groups, independent to one another, chose to cast Caliban as black and Prospero and Miranda as white. In the ensuing discussion we considered the oft-observed analogy of Prospero as colonizer, Caliban as colonized and Ariel as collaborator. Despite their casting choices, the students were reluctant to, as they saw it, reduce these potentially complex characters to historical allegory. One group pointed to the text as justification—Prospero and Miranda are from Milan and Caliban’s mother was from Algiers. All agreed, however, that the term “slave” brought to mind images of the transatlantic slave trade and whenever they pictured Caliban they imagined him as black. It is perhaps also relevant that the perception persists in The Bahamas (not without justification) that white and lighter-skinned Bahamians generally have greater wealth and social

capital than their darker-skinned countrymen (Bethell-Bennett, 2016). When we discussed this, the students agreed that while they could imagine a white Caliban in theory, they would choose a reading of the play which more closely resembled their own experience of racial power dynamics.

Other students read *The Tempest* as a meditation on the ways in which one’s circumstances can affect the course of one’s life. In the first assignment, one writes that she chose Caliban “because I felt as though he was treated poorly because of something his mother did in the past. He was brought up very badly.” Her narrative of Caliban’s history focused on his status as the child of a single parent (Sycorax was put on the island while pregnant and Prospero calls Caliban a “bastard” [Shakespeare, 2005, 5.1.276, p. 1242]). In a creative piece later in the course, another student wrote:

Young, black, like Caliban  
 Came up from da bottoms  
 Sycorax, always absent  
 Like modern age mommas

It is significant that the majority of individuals incarcerated at Fox Hill grew up in single-parent households, with the largest percentage being raised by a single mother (Minnis et al., 2016). The students’ reading of Caliban is consistent with Stevenson’s claim that prisoners at Fox Hill “organize their thinking about crime causality in terms that suggest an acute awareness of economic disparities in society” (2016, p. 227). In other words, they recognize that their own life course is the result of social and economic, rather than personal, factors—that they are born into a country with a high cost of living and a large gap between rich and poor, where some individuals feel that criminality is the only means by which they can achieve their desired level of income. Those households supported by a single

parent, Minnis et al.'s work suggests, are far more likely to grow up in a low-income and potentially unstable environment. Thus, they are at a greater risk of criminal behaviour later in life. The student recognizes in Caliban many of the factors which inform the lives of the incarcerated—he sees his actions as the result of his upbringing. The students' responses, then, seem to support Wilcox's assertion, quoted above, that working with Shakespeare allows students the opportunity to interpret characters' actions as part of a network of cause and effect. This interpretation, one might speculate, can in turn inform their thinking about their own life course.

The student who chose Stephano also offered an extended reading of the ways social influences can lead to criminal behaviour and incarceration. He imagined Stephano as the child of an aristocratic family who did well in school but fell from grace. He writes, as Stephano: "Life was good, but as I became an adult I developed a passion for gambling, booze, and fast women." In his back-story for the character, Stephano gets into debt from gambling and appeals to his family for help. Rather than support, however, he is rejected: "they beat me and knocked me out. When I awoke I was shackled on a slave ship to Italy." While the student is keenly aware of the ease with which an individual can be drawn into criminal activities and experience ostracism as a result, he added in his reflection that he did not model Stephano after himself, but others he has observed in prison, suggesting a movement back and forth between literary analysis and the application of ToM in his interactions with others.

While the fictional students in Atwood's novel were drawn primarily to Caliban, in our class Ariel attracted an equal degree of interest and discussion. While the students tended to identify Caliban as a figure of pity

whose circumstances have informed his life course, few of them saw themselves in the character, preferring to see him as a type they have encountered. This corresponds with Symonette's finding that 79.9% of those incarcerated at Fox Hill did not see themselves as criminals (2016, p. 247). It was Ariel, more than any other character, with whom the students seemed most to identify. Our students were particularly interested in the dialogue between Prospero and Ariel in 1.1 where they discuss the bargain over Ariel's freedom. Whenever we discussed Ariel's role in the play, the fact that Ariel was trapped in a tree and now seeks his liberty was cited frequently as motivation for the character. On more than one occasion students speculated that Ariel may be masking his true emotions for fear that his deal with Prospero might sour. In his reflection one student wrote, "Ariel was desperate to be freed and did whatever was necessary to gain his freedom." Another wrote, "I chose Ariel because of the current situation ... I've been tempted, depressed, and enraged to the point of tears. I can't wait to get out of this tree." For many of the students, then, Ariel represents a model of prison life which resembles their own—a character who is prepared to suffer hardship to achieve freedom. This reading of Ariel resonated so strongly that many students (both male and female) reported that they saw themselves in Ariel. One student wrote that Ariel is

a fighter. She will do anything to gain her liberty back. She reminds me of myself. She's determined to get the job done regardless of what kind and to what extreme. She'll prove herself worthy. But she's smart in her own ways.

We see here a clear example of a student using a literary character to organize her own narrative.

In week five of the course we read scenes from a translation of Césaire's *Une Tempête* (1975) which complicated many students' previous reading of the play. In one scene, Césaire's version of Ariel and Caliban discuss their respective philosophies of resistance: Ariel believes that he can change Prospero and win his freedom, whereas Caliban believes that freedom must be taken by force. The students tended to find Caliban more persuasive than Ariel. However, one student argued that while the violent resistance espoused by Caliban might be appropriate in a total institution of the slave plantation, in prison—another total institution—someone who adopted Ariel's philosophy of cooperation would pass parole whereas Caliban's combative approach would lead to a stay in maximum security. In practice, he asserted, they were all Ariels.

The theme of earning one's freedom and doing one's duty returned repeatedly in our readings of the text. It seemed obvious to many of the students, for example, that Prospero persisted in his exile for the sake of Miranda. As one student asserted, he had to "do right by his little girl." Students related Prospero's experience to the pressures which incarceration places on their relationship with their own children. For many, Prospero's imprisonment on the island was a learning experience from which he might emerge reformed. After we finished reading the play we invited the students to speculate what might come next for the characters. One group imagined that Prospero would be a better ruler than he was previously—that his time imprisoned on the island will have improved his outlook and taught him practices in statesmanship that he had previously seen no need to cultivate. Such readings suggest that our students see their incarceration as unpleasant and painful (akin to being trapped in a tree) but look forward to their release as an opportunity to set out

on a new life course.

## Conclusions

There is far more work to be done concerning the effects of the Shakespeare course on participants. To do so, one would need to measure instances of disciplinary reports before and after participation in the course and track the rates of recidivism of participants after release. At present we do not have data to measure these outcomes. If, however, we understand the development of ToM through literature as, to borrow Kidd and Castano's phrase "fill[ing] in the gaps" (2013, p. 377) by projecting meaning onto a literary construct then we find abundant evidence of, as Wilcox (2012) asserts, students creating narratives of cause and effect in character's lives and, in doing so, reflecting upon and building a narrative of their own experience. Students generally recognized the experiences of others in Caliban; they read Caliban as an economically disadvantaged black man who had grown up in a single-parent home, had been failed by social systems and was suffering from social ostracism and isolation as a result of a single bad decision. Few of them saw Caliban's experience as a direct reflection of their own, however. Instead, they tended to identify with Ariel and Prospero: two characters who have been imprisoned but are striving to earn their freedom and build a better life upon release.

Bringing Shakespeare into prison has potential benefits for both prisoners and for Shakespeare. Evidence suggests that those who enrol in such courses benefit from the development of ToM which results from literary interpretation. This may improve behaviour during incarceration and lower the likelihood of recidivism after release. These courses also open new forms of interpretation. If there has been a theme in Shakespeare during the 20th century, it is

that performance is enriched by a multitude of perspectives. As, to name a few, Kennedy (1993), Brandon (2010), and Loomba (2002) have shown, approaches to Shakespeare around the world have been transformed by performances which have emerged from India, Japan, China and Africa. When incarcerated students at Fox Hill read *The Tempest*, they read it through the lens of both incarceration and the racial and economic divisions still prevalent in The Bahamas. Over the course of six weeks the

students, with our prompting, developed a reading of the play which is unique to their situation and provides an understanding of each of the characters within contemporary social frameworks. Their reading was nuanced, persuasive and eminently relevant to The Bahamas today. In this sense, the benefits of the programme were reciprocal—not only did the students have the opportunity to develop their ToM, but we instructors learned to see *The Tempest* anew.

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# The Sacred Space of Saint Paul the Apostle, Lyford Cay

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## Abstract

Saint Paul the Apostle, Lyford Cay, is the most westerly Catholic parish church on the island of New Providence, The Bahamas. It was established to meet the spiritual needs of Roman Catholics most removed from the island's city, Nassau, when a new community was being developed. The paper will demonstrate how the church building blends the "modern" style of architecture of the mid-20th century as well as Church tradition in its Bahamian architectural context.

## Introduction

The most important gathering for Roman Catholics is that for the Mass. As a result the church, the space where that assembly occurs, should be conducive to the public rite of the Mass and accord with the *General Instructions of the Roman Missal* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011). Notwithstanding the traditions associated with the celebration of the Mass, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Pope Paul VI, 1963) allows for local creativity in church design and art. The focus of this paper is to describe how St. Paul's,<sup>1</sup> built in the mid-20th century, reflects the style of its day while marrying Church form and function (Anson, 1964) and traditional Bahamian architecture.

In brief, the physical structure of St. Paul's, which has remained unchanged since 1968, is built upon a rectangular plan (59 feet long and 39 feet 4 inches wide). The walls are made of concrete and the roof of wood. The original wooden shingled roof has been replaced by a

Bermuda roof (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> Inside, there is a wooden ceiling supported by beams and concrete posts concealed using pilasters. The walls along the nave are dominated by louvered doors and a clear story, which add to a feeling of space arising from the open plan (no side chapels or altars) of the worship space.



Figure 1. St. Paul's circa 2018.

The word church has two distinct meanings as it can refer to a place or a community of worshippers. Church<sup>3</sup> as a community of people who assemble to pray and participate in the Eucharistic meal can be appreciated

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul the Apostle, the church and parish are known locally as St. Paul's and that is the name used here; we refer to the Apostle Paul as Saint Paul.

<sup>2</sup> All pictures belong to the author unless otherwise credited.

<sup>3</sup> "Church" with a capital "C" will be used to denote the Roman Catholic Church.

from the epistles of Saint Paul who wrote to such “churches” (Coriden, 1997). Further, in the context of a parish, the meaning of the word church, *ekklesia* in Greek, can be taken as referring to a small community of believers, such as members of a particular parish church, rather than groups of communities.

The concept of a parish emerges from the third century as missionary activities resulted in Christian communities outside urban areas (Coriden, 1997). Until that time, the Church’s activities had been focused on towns, as can be appreciated through Saint Paul’s letters. The increase in the number of communities and their associated places of assembly meant that bishops could no longer provide for the pastoral needs of those in their care, and hence the requirement for priests and deacons to assist bishops. In the second century, Saint Ignatius of Antioch extols the need for the community to be united with their bishop and deacons. In time, travelling priests provided pastoral care to small outlying communities. This is evident in the rise of mendicant orders who brought the sacraments and preaching to rural communities. Only when a community became sufficiently large, was a priest assigned. Of the reasons for establishing a church, one that is relevant in the context of St. Paul’s is that landowners built churches to provide for the spiritual needs of those living on their land, often their employees or serfs (Coriden, 1997). St. Paul’s mimics this to the extent that it was built at the suggestion of the landowner, not for his employees, but for those buying lots in his development (Eileen Kistler, personal communication, May 12, 2018).

### **Building the Space – the Need**

After World War II, an exclusive enclave was built at Lyford Cay on the western end of New Providence. In 1960, the owner, E. P. Taylor (1901-1989) invited the diocese to build a

church inside the gated community to serve the spiritual needs of its residents. However, Bishop Paul Hagarty (1909-1984) did not want the church built inside the gated community as this would restrict its access (*St. Paul The Apostle Catholic Church Lyford Cay*, undated). Bishop Hagarty’s genius was to build a visible church (dedicated on March 17, 1968) on a hilltop, accessible to everyone, so reflecting the Church’s mission (Mark 16:15). Therefore, the location of St. Paul’s is a key aspect of its theology. The consequence of placing the church in a restricted area, where only wealthier residents live, would have contradicted Christ’s concern for poor and vulnerable members of society and the Church’s social teachings (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2014). Monsignor Preston Moss has described St. Paul’s as “St. Paul’s outside the walls” (Mons. P. Moss, personal communication, January 24, 2018), which appreciates a connection to the Papal basilica of the same name dating back to 324, as well as being a church belonging to a wider community beyond any enclosed enclave.

### **St. Paul’s and the Architectural Tradition of the Universal Church**

In the overall milieu of church architecture, the grand cathedrals which dot Europe, etc. are the best known but they are also the exceptions, inasmuch as most of the faithful worship in parish churches rather than cathedrals or basilicas. As such, it is parish “church buildings [which] tell the stories of the local church and how it is connected to the larger body of history, scripture and tradition” (Vosko, 2006, p. 8). St. Paul’s includes architectural elements which can be seen in medieval churches as well as those situated in “modern” post-World War II trends in household and church design.

A church must be “both the house of God on earth (*domus Dei*) and a house fit for the prayers of the saints (*domus ecclesiae*)”

(Stroik, 2012, p. 15). Therefore, it “must be expressive of the presence of God and suited for the celebration of the sacrifice of Christ, as well as reflective of the community that celebrates there” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000). This observation raises a tension between the church as a space for organised liturgy and a space where the faithful come, either singly or in community, to pray. Both activities, the communal and the individual, are essential parts of a balanced spiritual life—Jesus’ life demonstrates this; he attended synagogues, but also made time for private prayer (Mark 1: 35-39)—and a church needs to accommodate both (Stroik, 2015).

The trend in church design, prior to the Second Vatican Council, led to focussing on the liturgical function. This move was apparently endorsed by the documents from the Council and reinforced by regional bishops. The modernist trend in church design coincided with such statements on church buildings. They combined to reinforce the functional, liturgical use of churches. As such, this move tended to at least sideline the fact that the “*ecclesia* is not just those living on earth; it also includes those who enjoy the rewards of heaven” (Rofe, 2002).

If it is accepted that “it is the Church that gives shape to a church” (DeBoer, 2016, p. 101) then St. Paul’s can be seen to reflect its times, both in the prevailing Church guidelines on church design as well as secular architecture. St. Paul’s is an early post-Vatican Council II (1962-1965) church built in accordance with the changes that arose from the Council (Pope Paul VI, 1963), but it also reflects the guidelines of Pope Pius XII’s encyclical *Mediator Dei* of 1947 (Pope Pius XII, 1947), such as its incorporation of “modern” art and the importance of the active participation of all in the Eucharistic celebration.

It is apparent that the church’s simple, unfussy, altar-focused design situates it in the initial response of church design to the Council when the liturgical function of churches was emphasised. The design of the church also arises from the architect’s response to the surrounding environment; an appreciation that extends to the choice of colours used in the stained glass (Schmid, 1969). The stained glass connects the church with the tradition of stained glass windows, notably in the great cathedrals of Europe, and locally in the Catholic cathedral in Nassau.

The assimilation of the environment and the incorporation of local architectural elements reflects the long-standing tradition, endorsed by Pope Gregory the Great, of the Church appropriating local tradition and culture, as exemplified in stave churches (Murphy, 2013). St. Paul’s continues a tradition of churches in post and beam design. In St. Paul’s, purlins running perpendicular to the rafters support the sheathing boards of the roof and the concrete “posts” are concealed within pilasters. Variations of (originally timber framed) post and beam techniques were used in medieval churches, including the Basilica of old Saint Peter’s in Rome according to a reconstruction by Filippo Gagliardi, and the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (Stroik, 2012), and also modern churches such as Saint Peter’s church, Boerne (Vosko, 2006).

Further, what might be regarded as characteristics of St. Paul’s have been used in more recent churches, such as Saint Sebastian, Bryon Center, Michigan (DeBoer, 2016). This suggests that the post-Council views still influence church design and so locates St. Paul’s in the continuing development of church architecture.

### **The Bahamian Architectural Tradition in St. Paul’s**

While St. Paul’s reflects the shape of the first

house churches (rectangular; Anson, 1964), it includes aspects that are traditional of Bahamian architectural design. Bahamian architecture reflects much that is common throughout the wider Caribbean Region (Slesin et al., 1985) and is rooted in its colonial heritage emanating primarily from Great Britain (Mouzon, 2007).

The most well-known Catholic church architect in The Bahamas is Monsignor John Hawes (1876-1956) who built churches and other structures both inside and outside The Bahamas (Anson, 1957). His style of architecture is rooted in traditional European designs, as can be appreciated by the use of domes and towers. Yet despite his fame, his influence has had limited impact on local Catholic church design.

St. Paul's is removed from the "Hawes" style. The pre-Vatican Council II modernist trend in secular architecture is a possible motivation behind the spare design of St. Paul's as much as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of 1963 (Pope Paul VI, 1963), published just three years before work on St. Paul's started. The architect of St. Paul's was Eldredge Snyder (1901-1967) who obtained a Master's degree in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania. He studied at the American Academy in Rome in 1927-28 (Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1981); so we can expect that the churches in the Eternal City and beyond would have impressed him.

In New York, he designed houses in rich communities such as Rhode Island and Nantucket, as well as "contemporary" style dormitories for Oberlin College (Oberlin College Archives, 2015). Snyder was considered a "modernist" (Nelson & Wright, 1945) and contributed to a movement in the 1950s which encouraged people to build simple, open-plan houses, using post and beam design, with extensive windows. These were termed "Eichler" homes after their

leading exponent Joseph Eichler (1900-1974), who in turn had been influenced by the modernist Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959; "The wonderful world of Eichler Homes", 2016). Snyder, too, has been considered a "Wrightian" (Penick, 2007).

Snyder designed at least one church, Saint David's Episcopal Church, Kinnelon, NJ (Read, 2009) which was "modern" yet not dissimilar in style to St. Paul's or Eichler homes. The similarities between the "Eichler house" (Figure 2), St. David's (Figure 3) and St. Paul's cannot be ignored; these include large windows, extended eaves, and post and beam construction giving a spacious, clean, unfussy appearance to the structure. Eichler houses, based upon "post and beam" construction, also had large windows (McLaughlin, 2010) — these features are found in St. Paul's. Therefore, the lines between a House of God, *domus dei*, and House of the Church, *domus ecclesiae* (Stoik, 2012), become blurred as the architectural style of St. Paul's suggests one which has grown out of a house church with similarities with domestic house design.



Figure 2. Snyder's design for a house, 1956 (Harris, 2013).

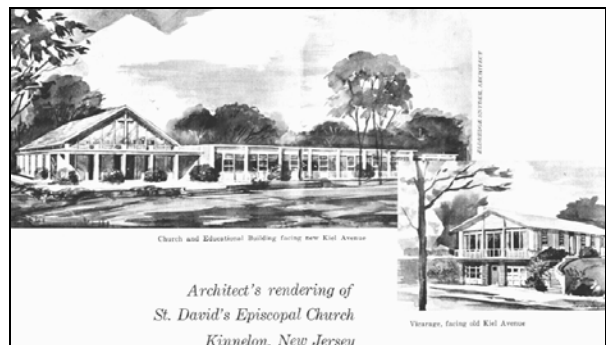


Figure 3. Snyder's design for a church, 1962 (Read, 2009).

In The Bahamas, Snyder designed buildings inside the gated community of Lyford Cay (Lupu, 2012), including the club building by the pool, in a clean modern style (Aarons, 1962). He also reworked the British-American Insurance Office (Phillips, Davidson, & Thurlow, 2014) in sympathy with Bahamian architectural design, exemplified by his extensive use of louvers.

Snyder's ability to marry modern and traditional styles was also illustrated in his design for a Chinese complex at Harvard University (Roskam, 2010). Consequently, it can be appreciated that Eldredge Snyder had experience in designing buildings in modern styles yet he was also sympathetic to tradition, so making him equipped, by training and experience, to design St. Paul's (Figure 4).



Figure 4. St. Paul's circa 1969 (Schmid, 1969).

### St. Paul's: Where Design and Theology Meet

The vision of Bishop Hagarty and the sympathetic marrying of Snyder's "modern" architecture with traditional designs meet at St. Paul's. This can be discerned by the fact that in his homily at the dedication, Bishop Hagarty singled out the contribution of Snyder to the building of St. Paul's ("Bishop Leonard Dedicates Church", 1968).

St. Paul's is situated on a small hilltop and parishioners must approach the church by travelling up the slope. This resonates with passages from Holy Scripture—"Who may go

up the mountain of the Lord?" (Psalm 24:3), the unity of nations (Isaiah 2:2-3), the crowds gathering to hear Christ preach the Sermon on the Mount and with the idea that God's Word is a light to the world, a sign of God's presence.

Wide stairs to the plaza of the church place the church above the level of the car park. This elevated position points to otherworld realities. Plazas are traditional places for gatherings and promote a feeling of community within the worshippers. The plaza links the Christians of St. Paul's with the wider Christian community and with both the Jewish (the Temple precincts) and Islamic (the environs of the Ka'bah in Mecca) traditions (Vosko, 2006).

The plaza (Figure 5) plays an important role during Easter celebrations (the Palm Sunday Procession and the ritual around the fire at the Easter Vigil). It includes a statue of Mary (Figure 6) and benches where people can sit and pray. Marian devotion is consistent with the reforms of the Council of Trent and medieval cathedral tradition (Coriden, 1997), and so is another aspect of St. Paul's expressing continuity with Church teaching and tradition.



Figure 5. The plaza and narthex at St. Paul's.





Figure 6. Our Lady of Prayer in the plaza.

While St. Paul's lacks a grand entrance door, it has double doors that accommodate processions and, combined with the narthex, clearly demonstrate that this is the main entrance. The lack of overt grandeur of the doors might be considered an understated indication that behind the doors is a special space; that the doors are a "holy gate through which the faithful enter into the joy of the Lord" (Rogerson, 1971). Nonetheless, in the Bahamian context, the double door entrance would be considered an "organic" design, one that arises from the vernacular (Mouzon, 2007, p. 11 & p. 88), and its width clearly marks this as the main entrance.

Rather than relying only on a clerestory for light, louvered doors along the nave provide additional light (Figure 7). These also keep out the rain and allow for cross ventilation. Louvers are another traditional feature of Bahamian building design (Mouzon, 2007). The extent of the louvers along the nave almost gives the impression of a "reclaimed

porch" (a porch which is sometimes used as a living space; Mouzon, 2007, p. 132). For a church dedicated to Saint Paul, the open sided feel of the church might be considered appropriate for a tent maker. Galleries on the southerly and northerly sides reduce the amount of sunlight directly entering the church. They contribute to cooling the church interior and allow the louvered doors to remain open even in rain. They also give the space a sense of continuity with the natural environment. This offers a different feel to that of classical churches which shut out their surroundings.



Figure 7. The open southern louvered doors and gallery.

The open-plan nature of St. Paul's is consistent with creating a "sense of communal gathering", a concept which had been used in 1923 by August Perret (Vosko, 2006, p. 34). The aim of engaging the congregation as participants rather than observers of liturgy was an important objective of the liturgical movement leading up to Vatican Council II and had been anticipated in the 1800s (Vosko, 2006). It represented a desire to recreate the experience of the Christian community in house churches and early basilicas. The combination of the traditional, rectangular shape of the church, its feeling of height with the open beam roof, and its feeling of being without walls when the louvered doors are open, results in a synthesis of the horizontal

approach to a church whereby the congregation is an active participant in the liturgy. The size of St. Paul's gives a feeling of immediacy to the liturgical action.<sup>4</sup>

St. Paul's also reflects the theology articulated by Hans Urs Von Balthasar of the vertical in-breaking of God into history (Von Balthasar, 1994). This espouses the vertical approach to a church where the hierarchy of sacrificial victim, priest and congregation is also apparent, reflecting the transcendent nature of the Mass; being both of this world and pointing to something beyond it (Vosko, 2006). The vertical nature of the church is subtly reflected in a trinity of levels: the lowest level where the congregation sits, the second level that of the altar, clergy and ambo, and the third and highest level where the tabernacle is situated. While these levels acknowledge a hierarchy (Pope Pius XII, 1947), within the unity of worship the differences in elevation are slight and so the arrangement reinforces the communal sense. This presents a theology that lifts the eyes upwards towards heaven, the goal of all the faithful. The current placement of the altar and tabernacle locates St. Paul's in the tradition of renaissance and baroque churches of making the tabernacle the centre of the building, rather than the basilica tradition where the presider's seat is central. The window above the tabernacle also acts as a visual sign of transcendence.

An advantage of post and beam designs is that they raise the ceiling and so cool the interior (Mouzon, 2007). The high roof reinforces the feeling of looking up to heaven and allows "the smoke of incense along with the prayers of the holy ones" to rise "up before God" (Revelation 8:4). The use of wood is a

dominant feature of the ceiling. The significance of wood resonates with Noah's Ark and the wood of the cross. Also, wood is a traditional material in colonial structures so it situates the church in an ecclesial and social context (Turner, 2014). While the beams are unadorned, unlike the angel churches of East Anglia (Rimmer, 2014), during the Christmas season they are decorated to raise the eyes to imagine the heavenly host (Luke 2:14). This again helps to focus the believer on the upward, heavenly goal of eternal life, "above" this world. The beams create a simple geometric design (Figure 8) reflecting a modern sensibility but also having universal appeal to the "order and perfection of heaven" (McNamara, 2009). As such, the ceiling could be considered a visual representation of order arising at the creation (Genesis 1:1-2).



Figure 8. Decorated beams, Christmas 2017.

<sup>4</sup> The church measures 59 feet long and 39 feet 4 inches wide. The ratio of these measurements, 1.66, is close to the Golden Mean of 1.62, and so explains the pleasing aspect of the space. (Author's measurements).



## The Altar

The altar is central to the sacrifice of the Mass. In keeping with the tradition of having stone altars in churches (Stroik, 2015), the marble altar is the focus of both the sanctuary and the congregation as the sight lines align with the altar, which sits on a platform above the level of the pews. The simplicity of the altar invites decoration consistent with the liturgical seasons. Altar clothes with varying degrees of ornamentation supply this. For example, during Lent a simple altar cloth is used which emphasizes the austerity of the season (Figure 9).



Figure 9. The altar, Lent, 2017.

## The Tabernacle

For many Catholics, the presence of God in the church is what most clearly distinguishes a Catholic Church from other churches (Stroik, 2015). It is, therefore, central to the individual spiritual life of the faithful, particularly when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed. The tabernacle in St. Paul's was originally located to the right of the altar with the presider's chair centrally behind the altar, as in a basilica (Anson, 1964). This resulted in the attention of the faithful being divided between the altar and the tabernacle. This tension reflects the dual role of a church, a place of sacrifice and a place of private

prayer. To some, this original arrangement might have given the impression that the centre of focus in the church was the altar and presider rather than the presence of God. While this is appropriate for the liturgy of the Mass, it is less appropriate for private prayer. Placing the tabernacle centrally behind the altar brings the Real Presence to the centre of the church, in keeping with Renaissance parish churches (Anson, 1964), although this location can seem less appropriate, given the changes since Vatican Council II, when the priest faces the congregation during mass.

A new tabernacle was dedicated in St. Paul's in 2014. It is adorned with scenes from the life of Christ and crowned with a cross, making it a more traditional vessel than the original. The tabernacle from the 1960s was adorned with coloured images of bread and chalice in a direct simple design consistent with the design of the building. The elevated position on a platform above the level of the sanctuary further increases the visibility of the tabernacle.

The connection between the altar and tabernacle is made through their central location in relation to the apse wall and the similar stone used for the altar and the tabernacle plinths. This makes these two central items a "pair". The use of stone sets them apart from the rest of the wooden furniture in the church. The differing durability of stone and wood also adds to a feeling of the enduring nature of the sacrifice of Christ and contrasts with the passing nature of earthly things.

## The Crucifix

The cross is the altar upon which the Lamb of God was sacrificed and the cross and crucifix soon became symbols associated with Christianity (Marucchi, 1907). St. Paul's once had a cross on the roof (Figure 4).





Figure 10. Crucifix above the tabernacle.

From the medieval period, a centrally located crucifix above the altar has been a feature of churches and is an important visualization of Christ's passion and death (Visel, 2016). The large crucifix in St. Paul's dominates the apse (Figure 10) and nave (Figure 11) in part due to the wood of the cross contrasting with the pale coloured wall. This is appropriate given that Christ crucified was a central message of Saint Paul (1 Corinthians, 1:23). The depiction of Christ on this crucifix makes no attempt at realism. It is a distorted body which appears small compared to the cross and so focuses attention on the cross rather than the figure. This representation of Christ suggests a body poured out for others (Philippians, 2:7) to the extent that only a little flesh is left on the bones. Given that Christ gives his flesh in the Eucharist, this bony Christ has strong theological connotations. This depiction is different to,

say, medieval images which show Christ with arms outstretched to embrace us, or a head leaning down to kiss us (Lipton, 2005). Further, this minimalistic Christ is faceless, lacking detail. This "modern" depiction of Christ suggests a low Christology, that of a man bruised beyond recognition (*Prayer to the Holy Face*, 1906), a man disfigured. Therefore, it can invite worshippers to appreciate Christ's suffering for their sins. The lack of a recognizable face also allows the faithful to see themselves on the cross; they too have a share in Christ's suffering, death and resurrection.



Figure 11. The interior of St. Paul's, 2017.

## Conclusion

Building St. Paul's on a gentle hilltop accessible to all situates the building in the mission of the Church to bring Christ to the nations and to be a visible sign of Christ in the world. St. Paul's was designed in the modern style of architecture of the mid-20th century and is consistent with the contemporary thoughts of church architectural design emanating from Rome. Snyder's design for St. Paul's synthesizes modern and Bahamian traditions in architecture with traditional aspects of church building.

## Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Father Kenny Forbes and parishioners for sharing their documents about St. Paul's, to Virginia Ballance for locating texts on Bahamian architecture and the Catholic Church in The Bahamas, and to Father Harry Hagan OSB of Saint Meinrad Archabbey for his supervision.

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# Historical Continuum in Bahamian Literary Thought

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## Abstract

The works examined in this paper include Patrick Rahming's "Slave Name", written in the Bahamian post-independence era; Obediah Michael Smith's "Wax Paper People" (2003), and Patricia Glington-Meicholas's "No Vacancy in Paradise" (2001). I place these works on a continuum of discursive engagement with weighty questions of ontology, existentiality, and the still profound deliberations on the issue of freedom, arguing that these works reflect an ongoing engagement with how history has shaped, and continues to shape the Bahamian identity, and the Afro-Bahamian identity more specifically.

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This paper examines the work of three Bahamian poets and argues that the respective authors' engagement with history is part of a larger Caribbean literary tradition, which has produced a prodigious body of literary works—in all genres—as well as an impressive output of significant literary and cultural theory. For writers at the vanguard of literary nationalism, history was a highly contested category, given the ontological obscurity of the Afro-Caribbean subject in the Euro-centred history of the day, and constituted a central theme in the literary and theoretical works of such writers as Lamming, Naipaul, Brathwaite, Walcott, and Harris. These writers all engaged what Baugh termed the "quarrel with history," the imperative to determine, locate, and interject the self in the trajectories of colonial historical narrative. Among this group, history has spawned significant and sustained debate. The attempt on the part of these writers to return to the "point of entanglement," the historical juncture of European-African collision in the anguished space of the New World, has yielded a range

of responses.

The emergence of corrective Anglophone Caribbean historiographies and literary and cultural theories, and the materialization of previously unarticulated stories rendered from the perspective of *subjects* rather than *objects* of history, constitutes a significant corpus. While these projects fill the significant lacuna in the indigenization of these disciplines within the region, and provide important revisions of earlier Euro-centred texts, they also open fruitful ground for further interrogation and exploration of the *being*, *existence* and *freedom* of the historical and contemporary Caribbean/Bahamian subject.

The works under examination here include Rahming's "Slave Name," written in the Bahamian post-independence era; Smith's "Wax Paper People" (2003), and Glington-Meicholas's "No Vacancy in Paradise" (2001). I place these works on a continuum of discursive engagement with weighty questions of ontology, existentiality, and the still profound deliberations on the issue of freedom, arguing that these works reflect an

ongoing engagement with the ways in which history has shaped, and continues to shape the Bahamian identity, and the Afro-Bahamian identity more specifically.

In Rahming's poem "Slave Name," the poet asserts his indisputable right to his name, his heritage, his lineage, his ancestry, all of which are elemental to the formation of a wholesome Afro-Bahamian identity. Rahming implicitly critiques the systematic displacement of the Afro-Bahamian subject who, in consequence of the brutal legacy of slavery, and later, of colonial education, has internalized the colonizer's history, customs, traditions, and mores at the erasure of his own:

I know great-great grumpa was slave  
I ain' like it but is so  
But even slave gat hist'ry too  
An' I gat a aright to know  
What tribe I come from  
Where they live  
What was my famb'ly name  
I know dat 'bout the master  
The slave deserve the same

Rahming's project involves the creation of an ontology of time that can redress the abbreviated and truncated history of the African diasporic subject. He writes:

Our hist'ry ain' jest start here late  
We wasn't always slave  
An what I wouldn't give ta know  
How my folks uset'a live  
B'fore the trip from Africa  
B'fore the drumbeat change  
B'fore old man cry fuh loss  
B'fore the trees was strange

In a sense, Rahming attempts to dislocate Western conceptions of time structured and defined by conquest. He seeks to know a history which, while profoundly *affected* by the fact of conquest, is not *defined* by it. Rahming is concerned with presenting an

alternative to received colonial history and subverting the temporality marked with the designations "pre-colonial," "colonial," and "postcolonial." The poem continues:

I know all 'bout the King and Queen  
And who succeed the throne  
I study English Civil War  
Jest like it was my own  
And I could trace some English name  
Back ta the Norman War  
  
Yet still ain' no-one wan me ax  
What was my name b'fore  
The chasin' and the catchin'  
The sellin' without shame  
That ain' too much ta ax for, suh  
I just wan' know my name

Rahming's acknowledgement of the rupture occasioned by the transatlantic slave trade is not the terminus of his discourse. Indeed, his poem is not a lament; Rahming, like Harris, rather than indulging in the recriminations that memory elicits, refigures loss and destruction wrought by history and uses the inventiveness of the imagination to enable the re-charting and recovery of history, thus providing the means to bridge the discontinuity induced by historical trauma. The poet asserts his right to his history, and to locating himself as subject, not object of that history. This uncompromising self-assertion, magnified within the collective Bahamian social and political milieu, reached its apex in the country's attainment of Black majority rule and later, independence. It represented an invigorated consciousness, more specifically, an Afro-Bahamian consciousness that appeared to engender a deep sense of pride in the country's historically maligned or occluded African heritage. Yet, ironically, this pride in one's Black heritage is later stretched to tenuousness at the very least, or is transmuted into a complex and paradoxical

figuration revealing a deep ambivalence, as Bahamians contend with a tourist economy that encourages self-erasure.

This ambivalence, or more specifically, this paradox of self-assertion/self-negation, is exemplified in Smith's poem "Wax Paper People," which speaks to the exigencies of contemporary Bahamian life in a tourism-driven economy and responds to psychic consequences wrought by an industry whose capitalist imperative often exacts from its workers the price of virtual invisibility. Nixon (2015) observes that "tourism is one of the largest sites of neo-colonialism, shaping economic realities and national culture" (p. 3), and that, as such, writers and artists "grapple with the continued exploitation of colonialism found in the industry" (p. 4). Smith's poem harks back to this 500 year history of colonialism and to what Ian Strachan identifies as "the imperialist-colonial economy of wealth extraction and exploitation and an often anti-imperialist counter-economy, one that concerns self-worth" (Strachan, 2002, p. 4). Smith thematises the deleterious effect of this mega-industry that exalts the Bahamas as paradise, and simultaneously destabilizes or negates the identity of its Afro-Bahamian inhabitants. Smith writes:

Shut y'ur mou,  
 Der touris' comin'!  
 What ya talkin' bout  
 Bein' Black for?  
 'bout strikin' back for?  
 You 'een wan' der man  
 An 'e wife spen' dey  
 Dollar, ah?  
 Ya wan' run um away, ah?  
 What ya wan' be Black  
 For anyway?  
 Hard hair so bad  
 Ya better straighten um

The bold assertion of Black Bahamian identity seen in Rahming's poem "Slave Name," seemingly recoils in this poem under the weight of the economic imperatives of tourism. Smith critiques the commodification of the country for tourist consumption; he critiques also the expected conformity of tourism service workers to the dictates of the industry, echoing Derek Walcott's observation that "the islands [of the Caribbean] sell themselves" at the price of "the seasonal erosion of their identity" (pp. 31-32). Pride in one's identity, in one's physiognomy, becomes superseded by acquiescence to the tenets of the industry and the containment of the Black self. Smith writes:

Won' be ya se'f –  
 Can' be ya se'f  
 When disguise ga put  
 Money in der treasury...  
 disguise so deep, so good,  
 so long/ Bahamian man nor woman  
 remember dey actual look  
 dey natural se'f.

Smith thus highlights, through his use of irony, the struggle of the tourist worker to retain the integrity of racial, national and personal identity while contending with the neo-colonial exploitation of the tourism industry. The foregoing stanzas impel contemplation of the ways in which racial formation as a sociohistorical and trans-historical process occurred during the colonial era, and how these colonial vestiges have affected the formation of personal and national consciousness within the contemporary moment. For while in the national rhetoric of earlier years Black identity was loudly and unapologetically proclaimed, this voice has become somewhat muted and, in fact, the dualistic self-assertion/self-negation paradigm has continued to operate, lamentably, to the

point of normalizing the self-negating practice of modifying appearance to suppress or ‘tame’ visible blackness, so that, as Smith asserts, we do not “fri’ten der touris’/der bread & butter/off der table.”

In the penultimate stanza, Smith presents an existential dilemma: the disavowal or containment of Black identity that may secure the tourist dollar or the assertion of the Black self that may chase the frightened tourist away. He concludes ironically with the poignant question,

You choose!  
In’ it better ta be transparent,  
So people could walk  
Right tru ya  
Don’ even see ya?

The poet invokes the dilemma of choice—to negate self, to be rendered invisible, in the interest of economic gain. Invisibility here resonates with Ralph Ellison’s novel *Invisible Man*, which, arguably, teeters discursively between a rhetoric of despair and anatomizing Black existentiality in ways that potentiate liberation. I would argue that Smith’s rhetoric, rather than suggesting resignation as a choice, asserts the imperative of recovering one’s identity, one’s self. I read his poetics as engaging a philosophical gaze, insisting upon the validation of the Black Bahamian subject’s humanity, on the reclamation of Black ontology.

This concept of reclaiming Black ontology loudly resonates in the work of Glinton-Meicholas, whose poem, “No Vacancy in Paradise” exists on the continuum of the two previously discussed works. The poem reflects the author’s awareness of history as the centrally creative force in forging Bahamian selfhood. Like Nettleford, Glinton-Meicholas also recognizes that “neither artist nor academic can function adequately without a sense of history or the

importance of that history to the existential realities of contemporary Caribbean life” (Nettleford, 2013, p. 282), and her poetry reflects this awareness. Glinton-Meicholas interlaces articulations and understandings of history into her poetics. For example, her tropology, which draws upon historical elements, plantation images, and brochuristic images of paradise, demonstrates how tourism discourse, as Ian Strachan has argued, can be seen as an extension and reflection of plantation discourse.

Glinton-Meicholas begins:

We accept  
For now  
We must  
Pick up cotton towels and  
Plough corn rows  
Into silk cotton hair.

The clever punning, and word play present the compressed image of plantation labour and present-day tourism labour as one and the same enterprise. Glinton-Meicholas sees equivalencies in cotton plantation labour and hotel domestic labour, weaving them into a single image. Similarly, ploughing corn and braiding tourists’ hair are conveyed as comparable labour. If there is a sense of worker resignation to this neo-plantation system in the opening stanza, it is provisional, since the operative phrase, “for now” implies the biding of time, waiting for the right moment, for a revised consciousness.

The poem speaks to the experiences of the socially and discursively marginalized, the tourist workers, who hang on the lower rungs of the tourism industry that, according to Strachan, propagates and exploits the paradise myth (2003, p. 3). Glinton-Meicholas gives representation to those who labour in this modern day plantation. She writes:



Forgive us, though  
If our humanity  
Intrudes  
Spoiling  
The fantasies  
Packaged for you  
By a dream merchant  
Into fournightsthreedays  
Of tropical delights  
John B. Sailing  
Swaying palms  
Wailing guitars  
Picturesque pickaninnies  
Posing for alms  
Beaches by the mile  
Sparkling white  
Cheshire cat smiles  
Devoid of thought  
And embarrassing flesh  
Save for arms bought  
To spin trays under the limbo stick  
Or place umbrellas  
To shade skin that wilts  
Under the tropic sun

The poet presents a series of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic images—attractive land and seascapes; sailboats gliding on the water; musicians plucking and strumming favourite guitar riffs; hotel workers charged with serving, entertaining, and waiting on tourists, delivering the paradise fantasies. Counterpoised with these images are those of “picturesque pickaninnies” begging for alms, whose ornamental presence obfuscates the reality of poverty not intended for visitors to see. There, too, are the workers whose humanity threatens to “intrude” upon the scene, challenging the image of the smiling, acquiescent Black native whose *raison d’être* is to fulfil the fantasy

propagated by the dream merchant.

The final stanza of the poem reads:

No, there’s no vacancy in paradise  
We are claiming all the rooms  
Willing only to lend space  
To those who take with due respect  
The role of gracious guest.

Angelique Nixon’s theoretical concept of resistance to paradise is exemplified in Glinton-Meicholas’ work, which offers an alternative model of tourism that is “less exploitative and rooted in African diasporic identity and cultural practices” (Nixon, 2015, p. 4). This resistance to the dehumanizing practices of the present tourism model thus mobilizes a discourse of being and ontology, bringing into focus the need, as Bogues (2010) has expressed it, to “work through the politics of the wound of racial slavery and racial domination, not as historical memory, but as present past” (p. 65).

The works of the writers examined here make important contributions to the ongoing national, regional, and global discussion around the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and the myriad ways that this legacy continues to impact the contemporary moment. These writers explore Bahamian existential reality and speak to the need for a clearer articulation of Bahamian *identities*, and the need for cultural enunciations that are sensitive to the ways in which history shapes our sense of identity and belonging. These works therefore collectively inform the national ethos, and contribute to the discourse not only of what it means to be Bahamian, but, more deeply, what it means to be human.

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# The Bahamas in International Intrigue: Lighthouses and Cay Sal Bank

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## Abstract

In the early 19th century the expansion of the United States of America westward required increased trade from the ports on the Eastern Seaboard to their new ports in the Gulf of Mexico. The journey of the sailing ship through the dangerous and poorly charted channels of the islands of The Bahamas and down the Gulf of Florida into the Gulf of Mexico resulted in many wrecks and financial loss. The United States Congress requested the government of Great Britain to cede land in The Bahamas to them to build lighthouses to aid navigation through the channels. Britain, wary of allowing her recent enemy to occupy strategic positions within The Bahamas, refused and decided to erect lighthouses by British companies. A further complication was that one of the locations, the Cay Sal Bank, was at that time under dispute of ownership between the Spanish Colony of Cuba and the British colony of The Bahamas.

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## Introduction

By the early 19th century after a series of wars with France, Spain and the United States of America, Britain jealously guarded every inch of her West Indian colonies. The United States of America's request for cession of strategic plots of land in The Bahamas for lighthouses was considered by Britain with mistrust. Relations between Britain and its former colony had been strained since the War of Independence and the War of 1812. The ideology of the Monroe Doctrine sought to expand United States territory and economic power but Britain did not want that expansion to be into her sovereign territory.

Of further concern to Britain was that one of the areas requested, the Cay Sal Bank, of strategic importance to the United States of America, was at the time contentiously claimed by both the British colony of The Bahamas and the Spanish colony of Cuba.

This article describes the dangerous routes to be taken by sailing ships, the necessity of lighthouses and the international intrigue between Britain and America as to which country should erect the lighthouses in The Bahamas. Further it reveals the intrigue between Spain and Britain as to the whether the Cay Sal Bank belonged to Cuba or The Bahamas and the position the lighthouse should be erected.

The lack of accurate charts and navigational aids made conditions difficult for captains sailing new trade routes. Birse Shepard in *Lore of the Wreckers* (1961) describes how the captains of sailing ships found their way:

Sea-borne commerce was the lifeblood of the early Colonies - windjammers were sailing up and down the coast through the Bahama passage and Florida straits with scant knowledge of where they were going or how they would get there. Their skippers kept their

reckoning with chalk on a shingle...and by way of observation they held up a hand to the sun. When they got him over 4 fingers they knew they were straight for Hole-in-the-Wall; 3 fingers gave them their course to Double Headed Shot cays and 2 fingers carried them down to Barbados (p. 54).

Shepard further details the difficulties of navigation in those early days:

Trained navigators were rare and Captains used a magnetic compass and inaccurate charts. They figured latitude with a cross staff by angular distance from the celestial equator. Ships ran aground innocently on hidden rocks and shoals, turned turtle because of clumsy or careless loading, sunk down in gales, were lost through ignorant or faulty handling, casualties were due to ignorance, incapacity or carelessness of crews and masters. Sound vessels were overwhelmed by sudden squalls, ran aground because the compass was disturbed by a difference between magnetic and true north. There were many fraudulent disasters when owners or masters wished to exchange worthless worn-out vessels for financial gain (p. 4).

The British government was the first to recognize the need for lighthouses to assist captains to navigate the most treacherous areas of Bahamian Seas. The first lighthouse in The Bahamas was the 69 foot tall Hog Island lighthouse (now Paradise Island), which could be seen from a distance of 13 nautical miles, was commissioned in September 1817. Lord Dunmore may have thought of a lighthouse there when he reserved the western point of Hog Island as Crown Land. From 1794 a lantern had been affixed to the northern angle of Fort Fincastle but the light was a mile away from

the entrance to the harbour and of low intensity. In May 1816, plans and specifications for a lighthouse were prepared by Alexander McBride and James Wood won the bid for tender. The limestone tower took nearly a year to build and an octagon lantern imported from England. On the evening of September 1, 1817 the light shone out for the first time (Albury, 1984). It is interesting to note that a phial containing coins, medals and a legend recording the date and important incidents of the commencement of the structure were placed in a cavity under the corner stone (Albury, 1984).

After the Spanish ceded Florida to the United States of America in 1819, the United States built a naval settlement at Key West with a view to securing safe passage of their trading vessels through the Gulf Stream into the Gulf of Mexico. Further, due to the increasing number of wrecks on the treacherous shoals throughout The Bahamas, the United States government sought to establish lighthouses at strategic points in the channels (Figure 1). On December 24, 1824, United States President James Monroe communicated the following message to the House of Representatives:

In compliance with a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 23rd December 1823, requesting that a negotiation should be opened with the British Government “for the cession of so much land on the island of Abaco at or near Hole-in-the-Wall, and on such other places within the acknowledged dominions of that power on the islands, keys or shoals of the Bahamas Banks as may be necessary for the erection and support of lighthouses, beacons, buoys, or floating lights for the security of navigation over or near the said banks and used solely for that purpose,” directions were given to the Minister of

the United States at London on the 1st January 1824, to communicate the purport of that resolution to the Government of Great Britain with a view to their acceding to the wish of this; and I transmit to the House copies of Mr. Rush's correspondence upon this subject, communicating the result of his application to the British Government (Richardson, 1897, p. 845).

The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the acquisition of Florida fueled American industrial expansion. The newly acquired ports in the Gulf of Mexico could only be accessed by sailing ships before the time of inter-connecting roads and railways. Farm produce, lumber and livestock from inland states were loaded on flatboats and carried down the rivers and streams to the Mississippi and then south to New Orleans. At that port everything was transferred to coastal sailing vessels, which carried cargoes across the Gulf of Mexico, around Florida and up the coast to the eastern seaboard cities – or even to Europe. On the return voyage large ships sailed east of Abaco, through the Hole-in-the-Wall channel, continued on to Sturrup's Cay then entered the Gulf by the North West Providence Channel around the Great Isaac's Rock. Smaller ships to Sturrup's Cay could pass over the Great Bahama Bank until they got south of Cat Cays and sometimes Orange Cays, when they entered the Gulf (CO23/77/5, 1827, October 15). Some brave or fool-hardy American captains, in the interest of time, took the more dangerous route around the north of Walker's Cay, North Abaco and into the Gulf, sometimes stopping for a pilot at Green Turtle Cay. This new growth in commerce across the Bahamian waters led to an increase in wrecks at the notably dangerous spots: the wind-ward coasts of North Eleuthera, Harbour Island and Abaco, Great Sturrup's

Cay, the Gingerbread Grounds, the Bimini Cays and the west end of Grand Bahama (Lawlor & Lawlor, 2008). Hence the demand for lighthouses in these key areas.

In March 1824, Bahamian Governor Grant asked the British Government to protect against any attempts of the American government to control the passage between Abaco and Eleuthera and the entrance to the Gulf Stream. The British Naval Commander, Captain Porter questioned whether Britain would be prepared to erect lighthouses and suggested locations at Hole-in-the-Wall, Bimini, Double Headed Shot Cays and Buoys from Sturrup's Cay to Orange Keys. He reported the claim by Cuba that the Cay Sal Bank was a possession of Spain. But Grant asserted that there was a compromise in 1802 between Governor John Halkett and the Cuban Governor that Bahamians could wreck and turtle on the Cay Sal Bank and Cubans could rake salt (CO23/73/23, 1824, March 4). Grant further observed that Key West (Thompson's Island) was directly opposite Havana and was a naval depot and a rendezvous for the American Squadron, and he believed the American bid to possess the Cay Sal Bank to be a trick (CO23/73/104, 1824, March 4).

Governor Grant after consultation with Admiral Fleming recommended that the American proposition should on no account be considered as Key West, due north of Havana contained a naval base and a Vice Admiralty Court. It was the principal rendezvous of the American Squadron on the West Indian and Mexican stations. In addition, the Americans were contemplating a naval station at Pensacola. In case of war, Key West and Cay Sal would have advantages for protection, would be a rendezvous for steam war vessels and an ideal location for launching an attack of Jamaican convoys to and from Britain.

Grant recommended that Britain should declare the right to Cay Sal Bank against the pretensions set forth by the Governor of Cuba (in a letter to Admiral Fleming), who had also been approached by the American government for a footing on Cay Sal. The Keys on the Bank were, from a production point of view, good for nothing, with the exception of Cay Sal which was capable of conversion into a large salt establishment with an excellent anchorage. Also it was important for all trade passing through the Gulf of Florida from Jamaica, Honduras, Mexico, West Florida and Havana (CO23/76/411, 1827, December 22).

After the 1812 War with the United States, Britain sought to safeguard her possessions in the West Indies and sent out naval teams to survey and fortify them. Realizing that the positions for the lighthouses were in key areas to assist trading vessels in peacetime and naval vessels in time of war, the recommendation of British Naval Commander Anthony de Mayne to the Admiralty was:

I beg leave respectfully to address you for the information of His Royal Highness the Lord High Admiral on the subject of erecting Lighthouses that is now in contemplation to be placed in the North West Bahama Channel as well as on the different Keys on the Bahama side of the Gulph of Florida, and wish respectfully to state my reasons in pointing out to his Royal Highness the most eligible situation they should be erected, so as to be the most beneficial to the Navigation in general, also to point out every other information respecting the Building as far as the local knowledge & experience I have gained on being employed upwards of 12 years in surveying the Bahama Islands.

These few years past almost all the trade from the North part of America as well as all Europe trading to the Island of Cuba or the Ports in the Gulf of Mexico have passed through the North East Bahama Channel which is formed by the Southwest point of the island of Abaco called the Hole in the Rock and Egg Island on the opposite side the distance across being a little more than twenty one miles.

They then sail over the Bahama Bank or through the North West Bahama Channel as occasion may require & by sailing along the Bahama side of the Gulf of Florida, they are enabled to avoid the Gulph Stream and thereby make a shorter route, and very quick returns. My reasons for pointing out the south west point of Abaco as a most desirable place for the erection of a Lighthouse is that in a political point of view that in the event of carrying on offensive operation; on the southern coast of America it will be forced to be one of the most important passes amongst the Bahama Islands to prevent all intercourse with the Gulf of Mexico through this quarter.

The Land about the extreme point of Abaco or Hole in the Rock forms a high commanding situation for a Lighthouse compared with the rest of the Bahama Islands. The highest part or Hill is about sixty feet above the level of the Horizon and the surrounding land is so formed by nature that it may be easily fortified if required. There is good anchorage under the point for ships of any class about three quarters of a Mile from the shore where they lay sheltered from the North to the Southeast winds which are the prevailing winds on this Coast.

From the nature of the Bahama Islands affording no universal substance the erecting of Lighthouses would be expensive as the rock is calcareous and the soft for building in consequence of which all the materials for the purpose must be sent from England except wood and lime. I should think to the best of my judgment that it would cost Five Thousand Pounds to erect a Lighthouse on this point and this estimate may in some measure be a guide for the rest, without they are built of the stone of Islands.

The second position to erect a Lighthouse is on the West end of the Grand Bahama in Latitude 26 degrees 42 minutes North as this part of the island is inhabited and plenty of wood and fresh water to be procured a Lighthouse may be built at a much less expense than that on the south west point of Abaco. It would enable HM's Cruisers to keep their stations & be great acquisition to our homeward bound trade.

The third position for a Lighthouse is on a small high Key called Gun Key, situated on the Gulf of Florida East side in Latitude 25 degrees 25 minutes North it affords no fresh water but has a good harbour to land the necessary stores. This point would also be a great acquisition to HM's Cruisers as well as the mercantile trade by giving them a good departure soon after which they would be through the Gulf of Florida.

The fourth situation for a Lighthouse is on one of the Elbow Keys called the Double Head Shot Keys which forms the south western boundary of the Key Sal Bank. This Key is situated in Latitude 23 Degrees 56 minutes North and Longitude 80 degrees 24 minutes west - it is a large half mile in length & about

six hundred yards in breadth at the broadest part. It affords no wood or fresh water & it exposes a sharp rocky surface towards the Sea, particularly on the Gulph side. About the middle of the Key, which is the widest part, it forms a high hill about thirty feet above the level of the Sea with a sufficient base to erect a Lighthouse & other buildings for its support.

A Lighthouse on this position would also enable HM's Ships to prevent all intercourse through the old Bahama Channel, and it would also in my opinion, be a great check to the Slave Ships which generally pass through these rocks on their way to the Havana & the adjacent ports. The Merchant Ships are very often imperceptibly drawn down on the Florida Keys and reef when passing through the Gulf, by not taking their departure from these Rocks & a number of Wrecks is the consequence.

I beg humbly to state that the before mentioned Lighthouses would be fully sufficient in my opinion to answer every purpose for navigating through the Gulf of Florida (CO23/77/5, 1827, October 15).

The Americans took good care of their side of the Gulf; by 1826, the first three lighthouses were completed: one at Key West, another at Sand Cay marking the main ship channel around Key West and into the Gulf of Mexico, and a third at Cape Florida, near present day Miami. A single lightship, the *Florida* was built at the same time to warn shipping off the Carysfort Reef, the most dangerous spot on the coast (Shepard, 1961).

In September 1827, Sir George Murray of the Vice Admiralty reported that:

an American Schooner *Grampus* has lately been cruising off the west end of Abaco upon the pretext of looking for a rock on which an American ship struck. I believe the real reason was to look for a place for a lighthouse on a cay, which was not occupied (CO23/78/193, 1827, September 3).

A letter from Admiral Fleming added:

I likewise know that a Sloop of War of that Nation (United States of America) was for many days on the Key Sal Bank, sounding & making observations; and the officers made no secret at the Havana of the intention of their Government to occupy one of the Keys, for the purpose they said of erecting a light house (CO23/76/421, 1827, September 6).

In October 1827, Governor Grant reported to England that the trade of The Bahamas colony was diminishing and, in consequence, urged Britain to place the port of Nassau on the same footing as Halifax and Saint John, New Brunswick and, like them, be made a port of deposit. He reminded them that Nassau lay in the direct route between all the old States of America on the one hand, and Cuba, Louisiana, and Mexico, on the other. It also was conveniently located between Jamaica and America. Therefore, the dangers of the Bahama Banks would induce the American Vessels to deposit produce in Nassau rather than proceed to Havana (CO23/76/303, 1827, August 12).

Grant also observed that the locality of The Bahamas had become much more important and interesting in consequence of changes in the hemisphere. Columbia, Mexico, Louisiana, Cuba and Florida used to belong to Spain but the case was now different. Along with Jamaica and Honduras they were now trading with Europe and the old States of America and obliged to pass through the

passage of the Gulf of Florida which washed the Bahama Bank (CO23/76/303, 1827, August 12).

Grant referred to Correspondence which implied:

an understanding between the Governors of Cuba and the Bahamas which permitted the Inhabitants of the Island of Cuba to visit Key Sal in the Salt Season and to rake salt, on condition that the fishers &c of the Bahamas should not be [stopped from] fishing and turtling on the Coast of Cuba That such an understanding had been expressly made is the universal belief of the inhabitants of the Bahamas, and so generally have I been told it that I cannot doubt it, although I can find no record to this effect. It is said to have taken place in Gov. Halkett's time (1802-1806) and as W. Halkett is now in one of the public offices in London, I have every reason to think he can give some explanation of the matter.

At all events Governor Vives' assumption that Key Sal Bank is the property of Spain is but a very recent occurrence, if it has arisen, as it would appear to have done, in the application made to him by the Government of the US for information if there was any objection to Lighthouses being placed on one of the Keys in the Bank, and even if such application did amount to anything, it is counterbalanced by a like application having come to me at some time and through the same Channel (CO23/76/411, 1827, December 22).

Governor Halkett had no record of such an agreement on the Cay Sal Bank nor could records be found in London. So Governor Grant had Justice John C. Lees take sworn statements from seven of the old inhabitants.



John Bunch of New Providence, 80 years old, to his recollection, the Key Sal Bank was always deemed and considered part of the Bahamas. To his best of belief about the year 1761 when William Shirley was Governor, 3 turtling vessels belonging to the inhabitants of the Bahamas, one or two of them belonging being the property of Thomas Bunch, his uncle now deceased were seized by the Spanish Guarda Costa, and arrived in the Port of Havana, that from the fact being made to Governor Shirley, he requested James Wallace esq the commander of one of the Sloops of War to the said Port of Havana, for the purpose of procuring of the said turtling vessels. That they swear positively as to the Sloop of war was called the *Bonita*, Mr. Wallace did proceed to the said Port of Havana and that the said turtling vessels were given up and restored. The deponent understood in consequence of the agreement or understanding, which had been entered into or existed between the Captain General of Cuba and the Governor of the Bahama Islands that in the privilege given by the Governors to Spanish vessels are permitted to rake and carry salt from Key Sal, in consequence of the British having permission to wreck and turtle on the said Islands of Cuba (CO23/83/13, 1829, July 30).

Joseph Thrift, aged, 60, William Moody Pinder, aged, 76, Joseph Thompson, aged, 57, Benjamin Griffin, aged, 67, Nathaniel Sweeting, aged, 53, and Robert Price, aged, 76, a free man of colour, all mariners of New Providence:

Being severally sworn – all remembered vessels belonging to the inhabitants of the said Bahama Islands permitted to wreck and turtle off the East Coast of Florida until the cession of that province by His Catholic Majesty to the United

States of America and to turtle on the Coast of Cuba. They always understood and believed the agreement and that the Key Sal Bank belonged to the Bahamas' Government (CO23/83/15, 1829, September 10).

Governor Grant conceived that if the Cay Sal Bank was important to the British government, they should build a battery or lookout house on Cay Sal. The building would declare the British right and oppose the possible residence of Americans there. He mentioned the case of a shipwreck on the Cay Sal Bank at Dog Keys. An American brig took the most valuable part of the cargo to Key West. The crew of the American brig prevented the Bahamian sloop *Enterprise* from working on the wreck and drove them away with force. Grant further thought that although this incident was the act of individuals, it might in the future be looked upon as a precedent to prove that the Bank and Keys were common property. Grant stated: "What I chiefly wish to impress is, that America wishes in some way, or other, to obtain a footing on Key Sal Bank and that my opinion is, that we should decidedly, forever, put her views and expectations at rest" (CO23/76/419, 1827, June 29).

Admiral Fleming agreed with Governor Grant,

The Establishment proposed by the Major General on the Key Sal Bank would be most highly advantageous in the suppression of piracy and the slave trade, as well as useful in affording protection for the Crews of any vessels, which may be wrecked there, which very frequently happens, and it might be made as a temporary Depot for part of the Cargoes saved which are now often plundered or lost (CO23/76/422, 1827, September 3).

Furthermore, Admiral Fleming believed that despite the claim to the Cay Sal Bank of Cuban Governor Vives, the King of Spain had ceded it to His Majesty. And because the possession of Cay Sal was important to the trade of the Bahamas he would provide a Naval Force to protect it (CO23/76/423, 1827, December 1).

In February 1828, Acting Governor William Vesey Munnings informed Sir George Murray that, "His Majesty's Government has undertaken to erect Lighthouses on Double Headed Shot Cays, which is now more important because of American possession of Florida" (CO23/81/224, 1828, February 18). In December 1833, John Kitson of the Royal Engineers' Office received instructions to proceed to Havana and explain to the Governor of Cuba that the purpose of his visit was to prepare plans for lighthouses to be erected along the Gulf of Florida including the Double Headed Shot Cay (CO23/91/14, 1833, December 27).

In June 1834, British Consul, George Villiers in Madrid wrote to the Spanish Prime Minister Don Francisco Martinez de la Rosa to explain that preliminary steps for erecting lighthouses had begun but the lighthouse at the Double Headed Shot Cay had been suspended due to Cuba's claim to that Cay (CO23/92/266, 1834, June 26). Villiers transmitted to Lord Viscount Palmerston, the reply of Don Francisco Martinez de la Rosa, who stated that:

orders have been issued to the captain General of Cuba for the erection of the lighthouse not only on the spot mentioned but on any other where it may be considered necessary for the safety of navigation; the expenses which are borne by the Royal Treasury of Havana as the Spanish Government confirm the claim set up by the Captain General of Cuba to Cay Sal Bank as a dependency of that

Island (CO23/92/263, 1834, November 8).

Villiers begged Martinez de la Rosa to:

understand the ultimate decision of the point was to be in no way prejudiced by the lighthouse being established there at the expense of Spain, but that the matter should stand as it would have done if the lighthouse had been built at the expense of Great Britain, and assurance offered in my note of 3rd inst. been given by His Majesty's Government. Don Francisco Martinez de la Rosa said he considered this perfectly fair and that he was quite content to leave the question as I proposed (CO23/92/263, 1834, November 8).

The *Bahama Argus* of November 15, 1836, in a Notice to Mariners, announced the completion of the lighthouses at Hole-in-the-Wall, Abaco and Gun Cay on the Western edge of Grand Bahama Bank (CO23/102/25, 1836, November 15). Both were built by Great Britain.

The situation concerning the lighthouse at Cay Sal Bank was completely different.

In November 1835, Lt. Commander Hornby of the British navy reported to Governor Colebrooke that while approaching Cay Sal he saw Spanish colour hoisted and met a garrison of Spanish Navy consisting of a Commander, a Lieutenant and 22 soldiers with a Guardhouse and 27 thatch huts. They had immense quantities of salt for shipping and were growing cotton, corn and vegetables. "There was not a symptom of preparation for the building of a lighthouse" (CO23/94/233, 1835, November 13).

Hornby's report brought about a flurry of concerned letters to and fro between the two nations. The British Consul in Madrid, George Villiers, writes to Spanish Minister, in strong words:

The Spanish Authorities, when the Rights of humanity were concerned have been disobedient or indifferent to the orders which the Spanish Minister solemnly assured me, had been sent out, but in a case which involved Rights of Property, they have shown no activity but negligence or violating them.

With regard to the first point, the erection of the lighthouse, I have to express the just concern of my Government.

The confidant expectation of his Majesty's Government that orders will be given immediately to the Captain General of Cuba to withdraw Spanish settlers and soldiers, and to leave the bank exactly in the same state as heretofore (CO23/95/72, 1835, November 24).

When British naval Captain J. L. Willis anchored at Cay Sal Bank in April 1836, the garrison had been withdrawn, four men were raking salt, there was no preparation for a lighthouse but a Spanish merchant flag was hoisted on Cay Sal (CO23/96/427, 1836, April 28).

When the Captain General of Cuba did make a contract with an American construction company to construct the lighthouse, British navy surveyor and Captain Richard Owen found it to be in the wrong location.

The position selected for the erecting of a lighthouse on Cay Sal Bank, viz the South extreme of Cay Sal is so highly objectionable as connected with the navigation of the Gulf of Florida that I feel assured that it only requires me to point out to Your Excellency to induce you to shift the position originally fixed by the British Government for the site of the proposed lighthouse viz on the Elbow Cay of the Double Headed Shot

Cays about 14 miles to the NW of Cay Sal (CO23/96/538, 1836, May 17).

In reply, Don Miguel Tacón, the Captain General of Cuba said that he was following the orders of the Spanish Queen and had taken the necessary steps and since the works had started it was too late to stop them (CO23/96/540, 1836, May 18).

The British Admiralty ventured to speculate the reason why Cuba elected to erect the lighthouse on Cay Sal and not Elbow Cay. Lord Minto writes:

The Spanish Authorities persist in the formal occupation of Cay Sal, in which place they are building a lighthouse, where it will be of no use to the general track though extremely convenient to vessels of the Slave Trade.

I would venture to suggest that Vice Admiral, Sir Charles Paget should be instructed to require the immediate removal of the Spaniards from Cay Sal and the entire demolition of the works constructed there (CO23/101/41, 1837, April 12).

Finally, by October 1837, the British Government realized that if a lighthouse was to be built on Elbow Cay they would have to build it themselves. The Lord of the Treasury has Secretary Baring write:

on the subject of a lighthouse which it is proposed to erect on Cay Sal Bank, I am requested that you will state to Viscount Lord Palmerstone that His Lordship is of the opinion that the fact that the English Government building the lighthouse on Elbow Cay will constitute such practical occupation of the Bank as will carry with it the power of protecting the persons and property that may be placed there, the object that communicating appears to have been sufficiently attained; and the lords have already taken the preliminary

steps with a view to the commencement of the works without any avoidable delay (CO23/101/67, 1837, October 26).

So in the end all three lighthouses were built by Britain. The lighthouse at Hole-in-the-Wall, Abaco was built in 1836, the lighthouse at Gun Cay, Bimini in 1836 and the Cay Sal lighthouse was built at Elbow Cay in 1839. The next set of lighthouses were built at Great Isaac Cay, Bimini in 1859, Great Sturup Cay, Berry Islands in 1863, Elbow Cay, Abaco in 1864, Castle Island, Acklins in 1868, Cay Lobos, Jumentos Cays in 1869, Great Inagua in 1870, Bird Rock, Crooked Island in 1876, and Egg Island, Eleuthera in 1891. Seven beacons were also strategically placed in that period and many more lighthouses were built in the 1900s.

The lighthouses were not the only reason for the decline in wrecked ships. During the American Civil War, the blockade of the southern ports by the north disrupted trade. Furthermore, the expansion of the roads, canals and railways from the eastern seaboard ports west provided an alternative means of transportation by land, which was faster and safer. Fewer trading vessels meant fewer wrecks.

The mid-19th century was an era of great technological advancement, which revolutionized navigation in a number of ways. The steam ship supplanted the sailing vessel and no longer was the mariner at the

mercy of the elements. Not only were the captains of vessels better trained and the reefs and shoals better charted but also a number of navigational aids made travel by steamer more precise. With the advent of the electric telegraph, the captain and crew were better informed about adverse weather conditions. In addition, the steamships from the eastern seaboard could take a more direct route south. They no longer travelled through the Northeast Providence Channel to get to Nassau or the Gulf but went directly south, hugging the eastern United States coast (Lawlor & Lawlor, 2008).

It is uncertain when the Cay Sal Bank was formally recognized as a possession of The Bahamas. An 1866 report of the British Government noted that Cay Sal had been “claimed until a few years past, jointly by England and Spain. It has been several times settled by Spanish Colonists. The last of these settlers were driven off by the English twenty-five years ago, and the Island is now recognized by them as English property” (*Island of Cay Sal*, p. 5). And in 1959 the Cay Sal Bank was recognized by Cuba as belonging to The Bahamas when Fidel Castro suggested that the Cay Sal Banks should be ceded to Cuba as they were underdeveloped and isolated from The Bahamas. Castro felt they would be more useful to Cuba for fishing and tourism (Perez, 2002).

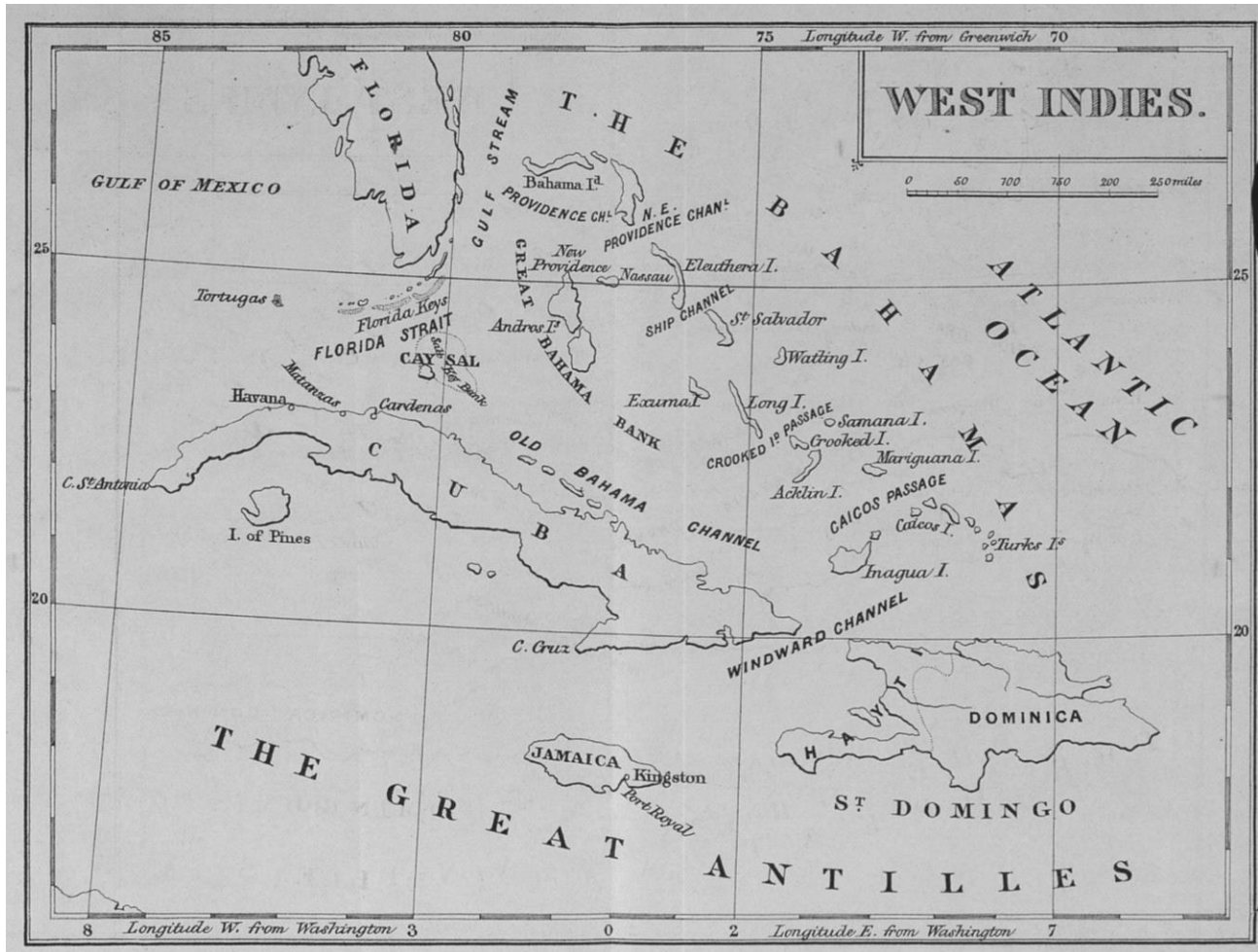


Figure 1. Map showing shipping channels in the Bahamas archipelago. From: *Island of Cay Sal, Bahamas, and its commercial importance as a salt depot*, 1866, London: John King, p. 5..

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# The Politics of Space: A Reflection on Remapping

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## Epigraph

*Sea bathing shall be permitted at or from the public property between the western boundary of the British Colonial Hotel and Nassau Street between the hours of 9 a.m. and 12 noon and 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. only* (“Sea Bathing Rules,” 1938).

*Finally we’re inside*

*The gated community*

*Finally with Massa inside*

*The gated community*

*Savages singing the blues*

*Safe within the pink wall* (Manoo-Rahming, 2010, p. 79).

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## Abstract

Place and space are vital ingredients to Caribbean success in tourism. Space and how we live in it is historically and politically or geopolitically determined beyond our lives. The Bahamas and Puerto Rico share a particular resonance as their spaces are being repacked and re-commercialized as parts of an elite geographical zone where the rich come to play and stay but avoid the crowds. So, public spaces, the coast and beaches, are being taken as privately owned and rezoned spaces for high-end enjoyment. In the last two decades, this privatization of space has taken over in Puerto Rico and The Bahamas in disturbing and interesting ways. Many locals buy into the offer of jobs in exchange for international development or Foreign Direct Investment as government eases its way out of governance in the wake of climate-change-powered super hurricanes and the resultant green gentrification. So, while small coastal communities succumb to the dream of progress couched in land sales and increased land prices, local access to regular lives disappears under high-end gated communities and private islands.

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## Introduction

The very space we take for granted as open, accessible and un-barriered—the beach, the coast, public squares and esplanades—have become mined with meaning and limitation. One would think that one could walk onto and enjoy a public beach and its water at any time. However, the Sea Bathing Rules of

1938 speak to a reality that is often overlooked in this former colony. Although the Sea Bathing Rules and a number of these regulations have been reformulated, they speak to a control on space that continues through majority rule and independence. These regulations lay the foundation for our continued practice of limiting locals’ access

to beaches and public spaces in general. If the public beach is only accessible at certain times and based on certain stipulations: “All bathers shall be properly attired to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Police,” then space is hardly public or free.

In many colonies, space was first seen as blank or open until Spain or Britain, for example, arrived. (This idea usually meant that the land was seen as theirs for the taking; they could own it simply by imposing their rule of law over it). The land was dominated first by the crown and then by ruling parties. In many places this changed from the 19th century when more Blacks and browns owned land, say for example Trinidad or Jamaica, and the early and mid-20th century when the land had been reclaimed by colonials.

I chose the two epigraphs because they contextualise today’s spatial struggle. Historically, many gated or middle-class and elite communities were not open to Black ownership, but since emancipation and later legal changes, these racial stipulations were eased though the financial and class requirements were not. The fact that Blacks are now behind the walls, though in limited numbers and often disempowering others outside those walls, suggests that Blacks serve as the new colonial masters. This depoliticises the stigma of racial segregation and assumes that the former colonial place was emptied of colonial laws, regulations and spatial politics upon achieving majority representation and so-called universal suffrage.

This reflection explores Puerto Rico, a non-independent commonwealth of the United States, and compares it with an independent, sovereign state, The Bahamas. It focuses on the ways in which native Puerto Ricans and Bahamians—particularly those of African descent—are spatially disenfranchised by

development. This reflection understands that the complexities around land and space existed prior to tourism, but that tourism has further complicated an already obfuscated and challenging situation. As Smith (2007) points out, this relationship that predates postcolonialism is deeply troubled by a late capitalist expansionist move to acquire more land in the tropics. This trend is visible in The Bahamas and Puerto Rico. The processes for doing so may be distinct, as one is offshore but not international—notwithstanding that many United States institutions treat Puerto Rico as international—and the other is international and offshore.

Smith’s work provides an interesting and important entry point into the discussion, but my point is far more common than hers. Yes, it must be taken as given that most local communities in The Bahamas cannot afford to compete with Foreign Direct Investment and the prices they create, but the disaffection or fracturing is deeper and far more nuanced than that. It is the passive and unobtrusive possibility of gentrification and the gentle claw back of advances made during the heyday of so-called Black Power during the 1960-70s that is deeply troubling. A part of this is the discussion to provide initiatives for poor, Black Over-the-Hill communities to benefit from economic policies often extended only to foreign direct investment businesses. When one grows up in a space defined as ghetto and lacking in basic services, one begins to see oneself as embodying such promise.

In this study, I explore how dispossession occurs and how discourse around belonging and un-belonging that serve particular agendas and indeed normalise removing public land from the commons and gating it off—as can be clearly evidenced in the discussion in the Save Guana Cay Reef case—are developed and deployed. This



study does not pose academic questions about space, but rather attempts to discuss it through lived experience and reflecting on the shifts that have occurred. This is really a narrative of trying to understand how indigenous cultures can be dispossessed, disaffected and disenfranchised without them really understanding this is on the agenda until it is almost too late. This study arises from my experience living and working in both spaces and grappling with understandings of spatial and place dynamics that are complex and almost incomprehensible on some levels, but simplistic and mundane on others. In The Bahamas, on New Providence, a relatively small Bahamian island for example, people can argue that they do not know or care about what happens outside of their immediate spatial zone. So the promise of a New Riviera (a slogan used by the original Izmirilian Baha Mar) on Cable Beach is alluring, and a gated community that hopes to expand to absorb a great deal of the southwestern quadrant of the island is beguiling.

### **Puerto Rico as baseline study**

In Puerto Rico, meanwhile, people care about the politics of space, but often do not know what is afoot until it becomes common knowledge. For example, in the cases of Paseo del Caribe and then Nuevo Riviera del Caribe, both of these developments occurred on federal land owned by the United States armed forces and later returned to Puerto Rico. But, they never became public or were truly returned to the commons. A similar statement could be made of The Bahamas, but this work examines more closely the de facto fallout from and impact of the privatisation of space and the spatial dynamics this enacts.

As swaths of land are sold to international companies to create all-inclusive

communities and resorts, these spaces become out of reach to local communities, even when they may encroach on traditional lands and access to ocean and farming land. There seems to be an operating metaphor and ethos which argues that if you can't join in, then don't criticize—just accept the reality of the world. But space and spatial justice are more significant and salient than that as the spatial reorganizing of place means the separation of parts from the whole (Harvey, 2002; Soja, 2010; Low & Smith, 2006). The relationship allows certain ideas to be galvanized in terms of minorities not needing access to sporting facilities and open spaces, while others, given their reduced access to education, have increasingly reduced or declining access to success because race is undertoned by failure and limited access: working class Negroes don't play golf or tennis.

The Puerto Rican case of resistance to San Jeronimo being taken from the commons demonstrated more political activism and public awareness than most of the land grab cases in The Bahamas, except the early Clifton Cay and Bimini Bay projects (Dames, 2002; Robinson-Blair, 2005). Puerto Rico provides a very interesting and instructive comparison point for what is afoot in The Bahamas.

We imbue space with value and meaning, and the coloniality of space is very much a consideration in former colonised places when it comes to value. In colonial times, Negroes were allotted the least valuable land for their dwelling places, while settler colonies and plantations received the best land. The value of land was also relative: marshy coastal land was seen as undesirable and a space that could be allotted to Negro settlements, in part because of mosquito-borne diseases prevalent there. Similarly, beachfront on almost every island was considered worthless land (except for

cemeteries) until after the mid-20th century. The exact dates differ for every island. The value accorded to coastal/beachfront land was determined by the external or foreign gaze rather than internal use or requirement. As the coast became more valuable, many communities then inhabiting coastal areas were under threat of erasure through development schemes that valued closing off the coast through marina, resort and golf, tennis and country-club gated community zoning. This exercise has been particularly aggressive in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The fight over Fort San Jeronimo, between San Juan and Condado, is one example of this. Rather than it returning to the commons after the United States Marines left their base that had included said Fort, it was turned over to a private company that then gentrified it with high-rise buildings, high-end condominiums and exclusive restaurants and shops catering to a top five percent, while the Fort was kept locked. The legal battles were fierce and the occupation of that space by Puerto Ricans trying to keep open spaces and public patrimony public was equally fierce. Sadly, those battles were lost as the space was closed off to all but those who could afford to pay to play and those who could pass through but not stay. It became Paseo Caribe. The Fort itself remained locked off from most locals, a space for cocktail parties and weddings. The attitude spoke to what would later develop into the debate about “such is life,” uttered by Puerto Rican developer Jaime González.

As place and space become commodified, so does the very culture of Puerto Rico. Visitors are encouraged to consume Puerto Rico in interesting ways. Meanwhile, areas like Condado and Old San Juan are cleared of their poor and Section 8 residents and North Americans buy up land and restore

old colonial buildings. This moves all aspects of Puerto Rican culture out of these spaces and further into the interior. The entire notion of *Pan, Tierra y Libertad* used to promote Puerto Rican independence was co-opted into a drive towards commonwealth status. So, for example, as working-class Puerto Ricans move into the cities, the rural paradigm shifts. Industrialisation, through Operation Bootstrap or *Manos a la Obra*, changes the entire relationship with land and home. This is further developed under the neoliberal policies of San Juan Mayor Jorge Santini and Governor Luis Fortuño when the land grab/gentrification really gathered force and took over spaces exponentially.

My experiences in Puerto Rico made me aware of the shifting spatial class relations that had not been so evident in The Bahamas; though the latter had more tourism development and far more exclusive clubs and resorts, they were usually on different islands and on a much smaller scale. Once I had to grapple with being charged for beach access and with realising that if I lived in an area like the coastal town of Fajardo, where the suitably-named El Conquistador Hotel dominates the cliff, water would be used by the resort leaving the surrounding community without service for weekends and holidays, periods when the resort was full, the awareness was more acute. These communities slowly became too expensive for locals. This opened my eyes to similar trends in The Bahamas, especially on New Providence and islands like Harbour Island.

Puerto Rico then becomes a jumping off point from where I can study spatial relations in The Bahamas. Bethel (2000) does a great deal of this in Chapter 4 of *Navigations*. In The Bahamas, similar fights have been had, yet the great majority of the population live in ignorance of the struggles:

from the fight to overturn the proposed Clifton Cay development, a victory for the people at the end of the 20th century, to the silent passage of Albany after developers learned lessons from the former debacle. On Bimini, Abaco and other islands from Mayaguana to Ragged Island, different types of spatial reconquering have been engineered by a distancing of the commons from the populous and legitimising discourse. The discourse of empowering Foreign Direct Investment through land grants and concessions has been normalised and modernised so that the hook is jobs, yet more of the workers to build the projects are imported on temporary work permits. This has slowly eroded spatial relations. Bimini Bay was a most notable site of such controversy as mostly foreign workers were brought to the island as Bahamian labour was scarce.

While we think of the beach as public space, the increasingly privatized nature of much of the coast signifies that this thought is already undermined by a divergent reality. Space and its use bifurcate because it is one thing to be able to walk across land to the beach, but another to have to circumvent private property in order to attempt to access a swimming spot. Of course, these are all questions that cannot be answered completely here, but they evoke thoughts and challenges to presumed normalcy of the idea of spatial (in)justice and what I want to call social (in)justice that intersect here. The manner in which one inhabits space, the space one is allowed to inhabit and the colonial legacies of that space, the hostility to blackness within that space, are all matters that really show themselves in the way we traverse space in the postcolonial world. Perhaps a salient example of this is when Albany began its development in the early 2000s and suddenly an entire roadway was cut off from local access and the road

moved from close to the coast to what is now the Frank Watson highway (see Figure 1). Many Nassauvians living in the middle and eastern parts of the island, for one reason or the other, had not noticed this shift. They had not noticed space being policed away from them.



Figure 1: The fences of Albany.

The control of space and policing of access to public spaces is seen in Section 4 of the Sea Bathing Rules that all bathers be properly attired and the politics of respectability remain steadfastly entrenched in the postcolonial place. In fact, many public spaces are almost completely closed off from them and offices that serve the public, though peopled by them, argue that appropriate dress will determine access, but any attire appropriate to the tropics will render one inadmissible. Space, over place, is controlled by strict adherence to appropriateness of attire and behaviour. This way of excluding is class- and race-based and often used to keep people in their place. Bethel alludes to this in her *Navigations* (2000) as does Saunders in *Race and Class in the Colonial Bahamas* (2016)—though they do not challenge the concept of exclusion through appropriateness directly, they do demonstrate how narrow the structures of acceptable comportment are. This carries over into the ways in which Bahamians are

allowed to use public spaces and the ways in which common space is constructed. If one dresses a certain way that may be in keeping with the climate, one should not be granted access to spaces. This approach was clearly evident during the late 1970s and 1980s in Nassau, in particular, as Rastafarians were often barred from public spaces or entertainment venues. Even after Majority Rule and Independence there remains a stark barrier of acceptability and respectability around race and gender identities that see certain spaces as closed off to people of a darker hue. Further, women's dress is always informally policed by groups such as security guards and receptionists. This is also seen in the way, as Strachan (2002) demonstrates, private resort and tourist spaces are policed against darker-skinned people.

The Bahamas Ministry of Education continues to police people's appropriate colonially-approved attire, notwithstanding independence. That is further complicated by laws and initiatives that empower offshore investment in paradise more than onshore investment. Even though the guard has changed, spatial politics and beliefs remain in play. There was arguably a period when the laws seemed to have been relaxed so that all Bahamians and Puerto Ricans could have aspired to greater spatial justice, empowerment and individual/community success, but that was quickly eroded by a new kind of colonial spatial relation that redeploys those old colonial ideals and practices in new ways. So, for example, in The Bahamas, while space was certainly segregated during colonial and United Bahamian Party rule, efforts and advances made by Blacks and through White paternalism to allow the creation of open spaces and allow Blacks entry into public spaces such as golf courses and tennis courts, shifted the paradigm and relations.

After Majority Rule in 1967 and especially into the 21st century, those spaces were repackaged as exclusive sites for tourist enjoyment and the spatial divide was gently reestablished. This is similar to the Santini Fortuño combination that galvanized energies behind gentrification and selling this to local Puerto Ricans as the normative way to live, the energies had been building during the early 2000s. Development began to be focused on gated communities, the tourist coast that has been almost entirely removed from easy sight from the road, as Bethel discusses of Bay Street which she argues was originally built along the coast. Much of Over-the-Hill has been left to its own devices as the focus remained on Paradise Island, Cable Beach, Lyford Cay and Old Fort Bay. The old hotels that once stood on the Nassau side of the Paradise Island Bridge have mostly since closed, leaving only a few guest houses and many derelict buildings. Hotels such as the Glen Eagles, Pilot House, Montague Beach, Royal Victoria have all disappeared and the land redeveloped with few visible signs of Bahamian history.

The Blue Hills Sporting Complex, developed for Blacks during the heyday of the international Black Power movement, was effectively abandoned by majority rule government shortly after independence. Golf has become too expensive for most Bahamians though there are some groups who work to provide access to golf camps and clinics for working-class Bahamians. Many courses are either within gated communities, resort properties or require membership. This has led to the re-exclusivising of the sport, notwithstanding that the young Black and brown Bahamians who pushed for majority rule and independence benefited from access to these "elite" sports.

The spatial dynamics, I think, and, this is a

point my work around space makes, have been overlooked by many because of a lack of historical knowledge of spatial relations; the wide generational gap between those who struggled and did not talk about it and their children or grandchildren means the latter are no longer aware of the challenges faced, gains made, and losses encountered. Hardships and gains were muted by discontinuity through no community dialogue or story.

The spatial relations after majority rule in The Bahamas and what I witnessed in Puerto Rico since the 1990s was a slow creep of privatising public space/the commons. In Puerto Rico, though arguably public, beaches became sites people had to pay to access or they could access only at particular times. New Providence had not created gated public beaches *per se*, though access to the coast was made even harder as spaces like Old Fort closed off what was Lightbourn Creek. This is different once one crosses the Paradise Island Bridge.

The debate around Paradise Island beaches in The Bahamas is unique and problematic given that there is a complex relationship between public and private space as public access to the beach has been cut off by privately-owned land. Other beaches and fishing areas were gated off though officially still allowing passage over private land through public access points. These have become increasingly polemical as they are poorly maintained or the rights or easements have been extinguished. (Figure 2). Beach and coastal access in these places were and are important because many communities are seafaring communities that depend on coastal access. As these spaces become smaller and less easily accessible, these communities change and/or die.



Figure 2. Private island sign.

### Theorizing space

Perhaps space in the colonial context must be first contextualized by Fanon's distinction between the settler space and the native quarter.

The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall apartheid in South Africa. Yet, if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies. This approach to the colonial world, its ordering and its geographical layout will allow us to mark out the lines on which a decolonized society will be reorganized (Fanon, 1963, p. 37).

This organization, during colonialism, was clear and so could be resisted. This resistance to spatial delimitation and racism was obviated by the struggle for suffrage and to own land, to change the rule from voting that hinged on a man owning land and one man having the opportunity to vote in as many places as he owned land, as was the case in colonial Bahamas.

Spatial organization then is determined by class and race before independence and is later deconstructed by the removal of the

obvious difference between races/colours, which was in itself a class marker (Saunders, 2016). Fanon continues:

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs (1963, p. 39).

Fanon's observations can be read in tandem with more recent critics who challenge the way space is organized and how social justice is determined by spatial organization. Fanon establishes that:

The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners (1963, p. 39).

This paradigm has been bifurcated in the 21st century, as argued above, by the clear distinction between local and tourist areas. On New Providence, new developments like

the promised boardwalk from Western Esplanade to Bay Street (that has been sold to Chinese investors) boast high-rise buildings and footpaths that access restaurants and bars compared to the Over-the-Hill communities where rubbish collection is minimal and many homes still do not have indoor plumbing. Public space has been diminishing as can be witnessed by discussions around the right to the city and social justice in the city. Harvey and Soja, along with Low and Smith among others, work with making the city more spatially just where people have access to the city and access to social justice, public transportation, education, open spaces, for example.

Conversely, when people do not have access to public space or to spatial justice, we find that they have limited social justice. As Soja underscores:

Thinking about space has changed significantly in recent years, from emphasizing flat cartographic notions of space as container or stage of human activity or merely the physical dimensions of fixed form, to an active force shaping human life. A new emphasis on specifically urban spatial causality has emerged to explore the generative effects of urban agglomerations not just on everyday behavior but on such processes as technological innovation, artistic creativity, economic development, social change as well as environmental degradation, social polarization, widening income gaps, international politics, and, more specifically, the production of justice and injustice (Soja, 2009, p. 2).

Perhaps these concepts are best combined with Galtung's theories of structural and cultural violence, because structural violence

is often used to limit or deny one access to spatial and social justice. In Over-the-Hill communities, the linkages between this and spatial or social injustice seem clear. Soja argues,

In the broadest sense, spatial (in)justice refers to an intentional and focused emphasis on the spatial or geographical aspects of justice and injustice. As a starting point, this involves the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them (2009, p. 2).

This is also compounded by the closure of public spaces, or Fanon's settler zones, mostly occupied by hotels, high-end condominiums and gated communities.

Further, the reframing of space into more respectable areas of glitz and glamour results in areas being abandoned and others being defined as ghettos. Fanon, Said, Harvey, Soja and Low and Smith all explore the ways spatial relations determine how successful people can be. Further, Galtung's theories of cultural and structural violence (Galtung, 1969) argues that people are kept from living up to their potential by inequality. It is most telling, though, when the study of space reveals that simple public transport can resolve many problems of access, as Soja (2010) and Harvey (2002) both indicate the need for spatial justice and the impact this has on individual success.

So, remapping, re-scaping, as has been discussed in my other work, examines the physical re-scaping of the space so that it resembles another exotic place (Bethell-Bennett, 2010-11). The local space is changed and rezoned so that international businesses can come in and set up shop moving local cultural markers, trees and historical sites, as can be seen from Nassau's Colonial Hotel and the site of Fort Nassau, now owned by Chinese interests. This

discussion of rezoning is also dangerous as can now be seen with the Over-the-Hill rezoning and economic zone initiative that could result in gentrification by pushing out the poor people who have inhabited these spaces in favour of business expansion. The old businesses and services that once inhabited Over-the-Hill have been erased through various shifts in power, especially as the Black middle class left this racially determined spatial zone for the prospects of success in an expanding urbanized island.

This development has been experienced differently on Guana Cay, for example, where many of the original families have been encouraged off the island through the aggressive expansion of the high-end gated community and resort. The commons, where traditionally these people fished, crabbed and farmed, now lay behind fences. Similarly, on New Providence, much of the coast has been made private through spatial reclassification or closure by resorts, gated communities and condo complexes that result in temporary unrest, but people return to their daily routines because they are hard-pressed to survive.

### **Thinking history**

As a child, I assumed that everyone had access to space and could enjoy open spaces and the beach. I learnt that this was false. Many people remained locked in historical boundaries that saw certain areas as out of bounds to them. The colour bar remained unbroken in their minds. I have found this particularly so on New Providence with a younger generation of students who, for example, do not think of spaces "out west" as being accessible to them because they are too far. Moreover, these students were mostly born in the last decade of the 20th century and so much of the sectoring off of access to areas such as Albany would have been well under way (Figure 3). It is



significant that many young Bahamians, unlike in Puerto Rico, seem to not understand their right to access public space and the historical fights for the same. However, what I find most challenging in today's information age with the compression of time and space, is the lack of knowledge of rights and access and the shrinking space open to public use and enjoyment. I see this access being effectively and progressively eroded where there is little awareness of the claw back to private ownership and a new discourse around gated communities that is no longer racially charged, but couched in terms of international elitist ownership. I have taken much of this from discussions with students and others in the general community as well as my own experience as an active participant in outdoor activities that have allowed me to run, cycle, or swim around places that have historically been out of bounds to many or have become off limits through more recent privatization.



Figure 3: The gatehouse of Albany development.

The discussion as couched by Fanon and other theorists has been missed in many of our small island communities. That is to say, the debate about Blacks not being allowed in settler communities has now shifted. Space is often overlooked for other important considerations like place or perceived power. The way people are

encouraged or allowed to inhabit space is not really explored in much of Caribbean studies. In fact, the way Caribbean space has developed of late has been largely overlooked except by those investigating from outside. Freitag (1994) discusses this shift of spatial justice in the Dominican Republic as tourism development displaces local landowners. His work can be seen as a precursor to Bethel's thesis on the importance of land to identity formation and to the work of Momsen (2005) and Baldwin (2005). Many of these show how fraught spatial relationships are in the Caribbean as old colonial legacies of race and class stratification and demarcations continue to work.

The recent debacles around depopulation and land value increase that disallows local ownership has not received much attention except, perhaps, by local community groups. However, the re-scaping that Thompson (2006) explores, though very timely, also needs to be widened, which is where I see my examination fitting in. While my spatial explorations take Thompson's work as a point of departure, they also extend the conversation beyond the image of the region to how space is conceptualised in terms of how people who live there value it and how they are encouraged to see their relationship with it. So, for example, there are discourses of spatial identification that circulate an image of darker-skinned Black people in The Bahamas, particularly on New Providence, inhabiting what has come to be termed *the ghetto*, the traditionally Black, middle-class neighbourhood Over-the-Hill. People who come from this space, though most of the very successful Black families hailed from there, are referred to by those same people now in political power as thugs and threats to national security (Bennett, 2014). So, place and how people are seen in that place are important to the discussion as



well as to new discourses and imaginings often informed by colonial ideals/ideas which define that place as exotic, offshore and empty of other bodies except those who come to occupy it temporarily.

The colonial relationship with space has been entrenched by the late capitalist, neoliberal, postmodernist, post-majority rule globalised ethos of life in the Anglophone Caribbean. Césaire (2000) explores some relationships with space as he once again does in *poetics of relation*. Glissant (1989) discusses the connectivity, the rootedness and the rhizome of Caribbean relatedness, but this, I think, can be used in conjunction with other more geography-based understandings and conjourings of space and spatial justice as elaborated by Soja and Said—the latter of which argues that space is already imaged into being by the colonial power or the West, though not always the same, often elided (Said, 1978). However, in this case, this bloc comes to determine how the Caribbean, for example, mapped or imaged into being, especially since the crash of 2008. These theorists, along with Fanon, articulate the power of dominant/colonial discourse and mapping to define place and space and those native people who inhabit it. They are rendered inferior through art and literature and the concept that they should be grateful for gated communities that pop up on their (I)lands.

This power to inscribe, describe, map and image, though apparently overthrown at the end of colonialism, as the above mentioned have intimated, remains oddly intact. This power is an important concept as it undergirds any discussion around access and spatial justice. So the concept of spatial justice means that there is power to use space and this power is open to all people. Moreover, the idea of social power, or one's ability to empower oneself notwithstanding where one lives, goes to school, plays and

dreams, is equitable and just for all. These concepts, however, are undermined by the spatial power of the former empire and the continued control through indirect colonialism. Those who inhabit the former colonies are no longer able to see the obvious spatial differences between settler and native quarters because those in political power look like the people who inhabit the native quarters, often referred to as such even by this political elite. The real economic power to map, image and define, though facilitated by the local elite, resides offshore (Bethell-Bennett, 2016).

I understand—given the historical and geographical redetermination of spatial relations—that spatial justice as a concept and then as a lived reality is complex and complicated in the Caribbean context, but also in any first people's spaces. Firstly, because the land was already colonised by the time the new settlers arrived—and secondly, many Caribbean territories or countries even after colonialism ended—it passed into a new phase of management that was outside of their sovereignty. This is even more complicated in the case of Puerto Rico: a territory/commonwealth of the United States that passed from Spanish to American hands in 1898, even as it was 'winning' some degree of autonomy from Spain. Some of the more revelatory discussions about policy and spatial (in)justice are perhaps had in works on tourism as Cocks' *Tropical Whites* (2013) and Skwiot's *The Purposes of Paradise* (2010). These works explore the intricacies of policy and planning as they relate to the "destination" we now refer to as the Caribbean. They demonstrate clearly how fully space was taken out of the commons and created to be inhabited by visitors (Low & Smith, 2006).

Space is extremely important, if not pivotal, to one's concept of self. If one feels at home

in one's space, one tends to do better than if one does not. By disconnecting, either intentionally or through happenstance, a population from its home, one can arbitrarily or intentionally cause absolute or partial disassociation from the land/space. When resorts move in, they go further to enclose and lock off from the land many of the local communities. The Bahamas has become a space rife with examples of this. Guana Cay and Baker's Bay is one example. The shift on New Providence from Black empowerment to tourism and international land-ownership is another point. In Puerto Rico, there are many other cases, but there are two obvious points of entry, Old San Juan and Roosevelt Roads.

### **Returning to the base: Moving through Puerto Rico as it gentrifies**

Of course, the situation has allowed government to impose on the citizenry dire and almost impossible restrictions and demands that are not shared with foreign concerns. In San Juan, El Caño Martín Peña has been the subject of discussion for years. It is a wetland area that exists as a low-income settlement. For years this area has been governed by a trust, a *fideicomiso*, in an effort to provide residents with access to and rights over land. Jorge Santini, Major of San Juan between 2001 and 2013, along with Luis Fortuño, sought to remove the poor from San Juan and demolish old or rundown buildings that were not protected by el Instituto de Cultura which governs the colonial city and its immediate surroundings. One of the spaces on Santini's radar was the community in and around el Caño Martín Peña which did not own the land they resided on but, as stated above, had created a community land trust organization to protect their interests. This area, like much of San Juan, had been left to its own devices for a long time, but as the gentrification process took root and gathered

steam, their claims were being challenged. Santini's answer was to separate and so undermine the efforts of the trust. He did this through providing some individuals with titles to their land which allowed them to commodify their dwelling spot. His intention was to allow these people to understand the value of their land by offering them money for what had always been touted as worthless. He could then convince them to sell and they would be able to "move up"—this would, in turn, pressure others to realize they had less support and so acquiesce to government's demands.

The project had taken slow start in Old San Juan and around what was earlier known as *La Base* on Isla Grande, which some part of was taken over as the Distrito de Convenciones in the first part of the 21st century. It had also been taken over before that by the Instituto de Cultura which passed it on to Public Works, which is how it was when I first encountered it in my 20s. This space had tennis courts, pools and wide spaces with old derelict hangers from when it was a base and other ruins, including the Miraflores Powder Magazine. What astonished me was how completely the space was transformed while I lived there, first as a student and then as a professor. In many ways it was like a slow creep that really was not that slow and not really a creep. The area between Old San Juan and Miramar/Condado had been totally altered with most of the low-cost housing projects removed and more up-market housing erected in their place. Shops like Gucci, Coach and others populate the new landscape. While the allure is obvious, the cash-rich reality for such places when one is deeply in debt or unemployed, as can be seen from the economic status of Puerto Rico, presents a huge disconnect.

Old San Juan similarly developed from being a community that had once been

thriving and well appointed to a run-down community with all the local services and small restaurants a local living community used. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, many of the low-cost buildings in Section 8, as well as small mom and pop eateries and shops, had been transformed into rental condominiums. As a result, all of the workers who once resided there, many of the elderly and indeed local fixtures, were no longer seen. The community had been gentrified. Artists had moved into some of the sprawling old buildings and began to improve them. Then came mainland money and local and national developers and business people who invested in buying and updating buildings that were mere shells, though still protected by El Instituto de Cultura.

Gone were the old businesses and local shops; these were replaced by United States franchises and department stores such as Marshalls and tourist attractions. The flavour of the city changed; the life left, except for where those old-diehards had managed to stay in their space. This is not to romanticize the space as it was previously—indeed, there were massive and complex problems from water, electricity, crumbling buildings and traffic congestion.

But the space was alive in a way that shifted after it became more expensive and touristy or boutique, pimped out. Meanwhile, as the cruise industry developed, the port took over much of the docks in front of Old San Juan while, on the other side of the once disconnected islet from the rest of the Puerto Rican mainland, stands La Perla, yet another space of resistance to gentrification. Old San Juan and La Perla had a relationship that allowed both spaces to thrive, one being famous for bars and clubs and the day-to-day of life as well as offices and the seat of government, the other being famous for lawlessness, drug dealing and shootouts, but

family life and spatial power.

From time to time, the police would go in and occupy la Perla which would lead to an incredibly uncomfortable disharmony because everyone was suspect and the balance of no violence, mutual respect and symbiotic relations almost disappeared. Similar kinds of communities can be seen along the north coast of Puerto Rico, from San Juan through Piñones and Loíza to el Yunque and Fajardo. Many of these communities were or are poorer and reside almost precariously in what was seen as unfavourable land which later became extremely valuable, especially as tourism developed.

Efforts were made to encourage people to sell their land or it would be expropriated from families through such instruments as the Law of Imminent Domain. The recession which started early in Puerto Rico that saw government shutdown in 2006 began a process that undermined much of the fragile yet resistant development and land ownership without title. Sojourns along the coast would provide endless local colour and much of the Puerto Rican culinary classics, especially what is referred to as *fritanga*, *alcapurrias*, etc. These communities may remain, but their space has been reduced because the land has become ‘too expensive’ and progress development has taken over. Loiza and the surrounding area was mostly Afro-Puerto Rican, as el Caño was mostly poor.

Ultimately, these communities are under threat because their land is ‘too valuable’ for the residents; there is/was little governmental support for their continued existence. The idea is this space needs to be cleared, or the swamp needs to be drained, with no compassion for or understanding of community and land-based identity or even social justice. As Soja argues in *Seeking*

*Spatial Justice* (2010), bus routes do not connect the poor in the city with the city. So, I could move more or less smoothly between Old San Juan and Rio Piedras along the tourist route in the more expensive Metrobus, but I could barely move around and through these other communities in the cheaper and less reliable AMA, which was usually packed with the poor and working-class people who struggled around.

Since hurricanes Maria and Irma, of course, this situation has worsened, but the purpose of this essay is not to focus on the worsening impact of climate change that leads to disaster capitalism, but rather to explore the complexities and politics of the places we inhabit and how space determines how we live. Further, attitudes to that space and about the people linked to that space also determine how successful people can be or are. On New Providence the fight for space, the spatial demarcations though removed from the earlier period of segregation, remain steadfastly entrenched. The vocabulary of the vernacular also remains oddly similar to the olden days of racially divided spaces.

### **Green gentrification or the post natural disaster land grab**

In the wake of the many hurricanes over the last few years, disaster capitalism and green gentrification have become almost commonplace. The language of dispossession is interesting as it is couched in a subtle, deracialised, though very racially charged argument that the people who inhabit these spaces are lazy and so did nothing to improve their lot. This discourse was seen in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina. It was also seen in 2005 in post-tsunami Indian Ocean territories. Closer to home, it has been witnessed in post-Maria Puerto Rico and Barbuda as governments change laws that have allowed people to

keep communal land ever since emancipation, in the latter case. To prevent the return of residents, the government of Antigua and Barbuda has argued that the island should be given over to an entity that is better able to manage natural disaster clean-up. *The Guardian* points out, “the government claims its aim is to speed recovery on the hurricane-devastated smaller island but Barbudans accuse it of a ‘land grab’” (Handy, 2018).

Meanwhile, at home, as government puts in place the Over-the-Hill revitalization plan, the discussion has also focused on depopulating Ragged Island. As *The Nassau Guardian* headline offers “Bannister: No money for Ragged Island restoration this budget cycle” (Cartwright-Carroll, 2018), which hints at a serious shift in the way redevelopment will occur. Little, though, has been said of the Chinese deconstruction and rezoning of the coast and Fort Nassau, which brings us back squarely to the debate around San Jeronimo in Puerto Rico. The Chinese construction company has locked Fort Nassau away from most Bahamians and the discussion around national patrimony has been silent. The promised boardwalk, the strength on which the Pointe project was arguably sold to the Chinese, will no longer happen, but the national historical patrimonial space has been consumed by a private owner, in fact by another state. (This matter requires its own lengthy discussion). Meanwhile, the greening of space is seen and sold as an international affair, not something to be managed or owned by Bahamians, as Gould & Lewis (2018) point out:

the hurricane and subsequent disaster capitalism has shifted the locus of control over development projects from Barbudans to global elites. In the current global political-economy, climate change fuels greater inequality and a power shift

from vulnerable locals to globally-mobile elites (p. 7).

This seems to be the way the Bahamian and Puerto Rican governments see the future of their islands: gated Foreign Direct Investment communities, resorts, high-end

shops and airports and marinas that can accommodate private jets and yachts. How do regular, working locals fit in this space? Where is the spatial justice in this rezoning, remapping, re-scaping so reminiscent of colonial desires.

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