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Identity, ethnicity, and the Caribbean homeland in an era of globalization

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The paper looks at Caribbean territorial identity at the crossroads of the new forces of globalization. It offers a topology of Caribbean identities along an ethno-cultural axis. It looks at identity as an area of change and contestation. In developing the ideas of Caribbean identity the paper looks at the concept of the Caribbean homeland as a constituent element in defining regional and territorial arena of identity formation. It attempts to show in looking at the ethno-Caribbean homeland the contestations over self-definition that are being engaged and how multiple identities emerge. It argues that it was a fiction that Caribbean peoples were always living in uncontested territory of land and of the mind. The paper points to contestations over residence as the defining denominator of identity both at home and overseas.

Keywords: ethnicity; Caribbean; globalization; diaspora; migration; transnational; de-territorialisation

The Caribbean has been constructed on the crossroads of trade and migration. Small and open, these immigrant isles were always easily pierced and penetrated by external forces. But even on the shifting sands of constant change, Caribbean peoples were able to construct a stable identity around local communities and townships. An 'ethno-local' identity pervaded all parts of the Caribbean conferring not only uniqueness to the region but to separate clusters of settlement, all constructed on a familiar landscape and history of slavery, indenture, and plantations. In the contemporary world where new massive forces of globalization strongly buffet the Caribbean, these ethno-local identities which provide deep anchorage in survival and pride are threatened in unprecedented ways. More Caribbean persons live outside the region than ever before and on the anvil of their ongoing interactions between the insular habitats and the overseas metropolitan Caribbean bridgeheads, new adaptive identity formations are emerging. The ethno-local identity of the local communities is in constant negotiation with the transnational claims on the self. A multiple-headed Caribbean identity has now been forged by both residents in the Caribbean and those overseas attesting to the truism that to survive in the global present requires simultaneity in several spaces. While this schizophrenic split at one time described only a small Caribbean group overseas, today it applies with few exceptions to practically every home, village, and township throughout the Caribbean. The Caribbean is truly wherever Caribbean peoples reside in the insular areas of the Caribbean Sea as well as in metropolitan areas everywhere.

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In a world that literally seems to be on the move, increasingly identity is crafted around selves that dwell in innumerable multi-cultural milieux. While some still seek shelter exclusively under the cultural framework of their old territorial state, more and more persons are delinking their cultural identity from the exclusive claim of their primordial place of residence. As Yasmin Soysal perceptively pointed out, in an increasingly borderless world, national cultural identity and juridical citizenship have been decoupled (Soysal, 1994). Who is a citizen? What is membership? What is my identity? These are questions more loaded than ever before.

In the larger perspective, it may be asked whether the search for security and identity needs to be territorially bound, locked into the definition of the state. It is conceivable that in a post-state scenario for ethno-cultural communities to re-define their identities without attachment to a compact autonomous territorial state so that their internal cohesiveness is functionally maintained via e-mail, Facebook, faxes, the internet, travel etc. The de-territorialization of the state and the reconstruction of identity around functional links may be prompted by the dispersal of an ethnic community through migration for better pastures over a long period of time. This is only one innovative form in the evolution of identity. While we witness the de-territorialization of some groups more than others and a general movement of peoples to other destinations, the opposite trend in reclaiming the state as the site of culturally compact and coherent communities is also at work in ethno-national demands for separation. Multiple forms of identity construction are emerging.

The state system in its history has always been fluid, with some periods more stable than others. The dissolution of the Ottoman, Hapsburg, Russian and post Second World War colonial empires has witnessed the proliferation of new states. To this have been added most recently the collapse of the USSR and Yugoslavia, adding even more states. However, in all these instances, the state system retained its vibrancy and the state its pre-eminent position as the main actor in international organization. However, in the contemporary world in the wake of new forces of globalization, the territorial aspect of citizenship and community is under relentless interrogation and scrutiny. It is not a clear and unambiguous picture with contradictory as well as overlapping currents swirling around the state as a suitable repository of identity and community. It is the case that the same processes are engaged simultaneously by the same community which at once wants its own culturally cohesive state while many of its members construct a new dispersed identity living happily in diaspora in multicultural states elsewhere. This may well describe the Caribbean situation. In effect, in the Caribbean as elsewhere, the contemporary state can now no longer lay on its citizens any sort of exclusive claim to cultural identity or attempts to impose one (C. Young, 1994). The massive movement of Caribbean peoples to metropolitan centers has created another sphere of contestation in the construction of an identity. Caribbean peoples insist that they are 'Caribbean' regardless of where they live, holding on to all their partial alien identities as well. As elsewhere it all points to the re-structuring of the state as an artifact of meaningful human association. The modern person in quest of personal identity finds that the old homeland increasingly assumes the form of a fragmented place of exile challenged at the very center of its gravity in a sea of new global contestations. While from the inside the state is assaulted as a repository of personal meaning, from the outside it is buffeted by globalizing transnational forces that ignore its sphere of governance. The secure self needs new boundaries of belonging.

Caribbean peoples have now been forced to renegotiate their identities creating new mental mixes from their old insular spheres and new metropolitan residences.

This paper looks at Caribbean territorial identity at the crossroads of the new forces of globalization. I shall discuss this identity as ethnic identity which points to the base on which belonging is anchored. I offer a topology of Caribbean identities along the ethnic axis. It looks at identity as an area of change and contestation. In developing the ideas of Caribbean identity the paper looks the concept of the Caribbean homeland as a constituent element in defining the regional and territorial arenas of identity formation. It attempts to show, in looking at the ethno-Caribbean homeland, the contestations over self-definition that are being engaged and how multiple identities emerge. It argues that it was a fiction that Caribbean peoples were always living in uncontested territory of land and of the mind. The Caribbean in particular was always at some crossroads of confluent forces and its peoples always sought to re-negotiate their existence and self-definition. In this sense, even with some strong attachments to localities in the Caribbean, contestation and mobility has been the norm. What is probably different is the nature and magnitude of the contemporary globalizing forces that are engulfing the region. The paper points to contestations over residence as the defining denominator of identity both at home and overseas.

The next section briefly addresses the nature of identity and ethnicity followed by a section delineating the boundaries of the Caribbean. All of this is followed by a longer part which deals with territory and homeland. The paper concludes with a topology of Caribbean identity.

1. Identity

Identity emerges from collective group consciousness that imparts a sense of belonging derived from membership in a community. As a subjective phenomenon, it imparts to the individual, as Isajiw indicated, a sense of belonging and to the community a sense of solidarity (Isajiw, 1990, p. 35) which is a vital need of human existence. Isaiah Berlin pointed to the pivotal part that belonging plays in human life: '... just as people need to eat and drink, to have security and freedom of movement, so too they need to belong to a group. Deprived of this dimension in life, they feel cut off, lonely, diminished, unhappy. To be human means to be able to feel at home somewhere, with one's own kind' (Gardels, 1991, p. 19). Ethnic identity is one type of collective identity and can be acquired through membership in various putative descent communities bound by one or more social attributes such as race, language, religion, culture, region, etc. In each case, the individual perceives subjectively and emphatically, regardless of objective and empirical facts, that his or her relation to a territorial, linguistic, religious, or cultural community is a unique link that confers a special sense of personal value, importance and collective meaning. Often this identity is formed in contradistinction to the claims of other groups to a similar sense of uniqueness so that in a real sense identity formation is a relational and comparative phenomenon locked into 'we-they' antipathies which may be mildly benign or overtly hostile. To belong is simultaneously to include and exclude, to establish a boundary, even though this line of demarcation may be, as Barth noted, fluid and situational social constructs that are 'subjectively held categories of ascription and identity by actors themselves' (Barth, 1969, p. 9). One postulate that

has provided some credible light argues that the human creature is a boundary-bound animal living in society. The boundary may be language, religion, territory, etc and it is often socially constructed.

The bounds of territorially defined ethno-cultural groups is ineluctably cast in 'we-they' separate antipathetic relationships with other groups. To belong at once entails inclusion in one ethnic community and separation and differentiation from another or several. Identity formation and sustenance is relational, often oppositional and conflictual (Premdas, 2010, pp. 306–331). Ethnic group members may visibly display their distinctive boundary markers in symbolic and physical emblems in contact with others. If identity is deemed as a dialectically constitutive dimension of survival, then it is in part constructed by inventing the 'other'. The 'we-they' dynamic, in this view, is deeply embedded in human psychology. While at times it may be benign relative to the 'other', it can easily become conflictual in new circumstances of unusual change and upheaval, even turned into a marauding monster. The 'other' is always needed in identity construction, and over time and space, in new situations, the 'other' is continuously being made and re-made.

Identity designations can be dangerous when ascribed collective identities assume the form of hegemonic cultural claims that omit or marginalise other communities. Identities are potentially dangerous constructs and can be manipulated for oppressive ends. As Edward Said pointed out:

> It should be obvious in all cases that these processes [of identity formation] are not mental exercises but urgent social contests involving such concrete political issues as immigration laws, the legislation of personal conduct, the constitution of orthodoxy, the legitimation of violence, and/or insurrection, the character and content of education, and the direction of foreign policy which very often has to do with the designation of official enemies. (Said, 1995, p. 5)

2. The Caribbean admixture of peoples and identities

The Caribbean, however and wherever we choose to locate its boundaries, is usually visualized as an area populated by a diverse polyglot of peoples. There are whites, blacks, browns, yellows, reds, and an assortment of shades in between. There are Europeans, Africans, Asian Indians, Indonesian Javanese, Chinese, Aboriginal Indians, and many mixes. There are Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Rastafarians, Santeria, Winti, Vudun, etc. They speak in a multitude of tongues – Spanish, English, Dutch, French, English, and a diverse number of Creoles such as Papiamentu, Sranan Tongo, Ndjuka, Saramaccan, Kromanti, Kreyol, as well as Hindustani, Bhojpuri, Urdu, etc. In whatever combinations of race, religion, language, and culture they cohere and co-exist, they dwell on small islands and large, some poorly endowed with natural resources, others abundantly so. Perhaps, no other region of the world is so richly varied. As Caribbean scholar, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, remarked:

> Caribbean societies are inescapably heterogeneous ... the Caribbean has long been an area where some people live next to others who are remarkably distinct. The region – and indeed particular territories within it – has long been multi-racial, multi-lingual, stratified, and some would say, multi-cultural. (Trouillot, 1992, p. 21)

In the contemporary period, the Caribbean states have been carved out of the functional plantation zone and has assumed their regional center of gravity in the insular areas. A few continental coastal countries are usually appended to this Caribbean region, including Belize and the Guianas. The islands include two great chains. The Greater Antilles covers 90% of the land space and peoples of the region and includes Cuba, Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic share this island), Puerto Rico, and Jamaica. The Lesser Antilles incorporates the other smaller islands. The Caribbean region has been truncated into sub-linguistic subsets reflecting the early pattern of colonization by an assortment of European powers. Hence, the Spanish area includes Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico which is part of American territory. Spanish is spoken by about 60% of the 36 million people who inhabit the Caribbean. The French portion includes Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana, which are currently departments of France, and Haiti, which has been independent since 1804. A French-based Creole is spoken in Dominica and St. Lucia. The Dutch parts include Suriname which has been independent since 1975, Aruba which is a separate part (officially the third part of the Dutch Kingdom), and the five-island Netherlands Antilles, constituted of the islands of Curacao, Bonaire, Saba, St. Maarten and St. Eustatius, which are part of the Dutch state (officially the second part of the Dutch Kingdom). The English-speaking areas include an assortment of independent and dependent islands linked to Britain, collectively called the Commonwealth Caribbean (the independent ones include Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, Belize, the Bahamas, Antigua, St. Kitts-Nevis, Grenada, Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent; the dependent ones include the British Virgin Islands, Monseratt, Anguilla, Barbuda, the Cayman Islands, and the Turks and Caicos islands) and linked to the United States, namely the American Virgin Islands. There is one anomalous island, St. Maarten which is a condominium jointly run by the Netherlands and France.

The economies of the Caribbean eventually evolved typically from monocrop plantation production of cotton, coffee, and sugar, foreign-owned and oriented for export. Colonization bequeathed a diversity of races, languages, religions and cultures and an immigrant society with weak social cohesion and community organization. In the late twentieth century, a substantial part of the Caribbean peoples resided in North America, Britain, the Netherlands, and France in what has been referred to as the 'Caribbean diaspora'. It has been argued that this phenomenon, which includes substantial retentions of Caribbean cultural forms in predominantly Caribbean residential areas in the metropolitan countries, has created a new meaning for the Caribbean region to include all areas of the world where Caribbean peoples have migrated and reconstituted themselves as discrete sub-communities. In this sense, the Caribbean is located wherever Caribbean peoples congregate in tropical and temperate parts of the world, in industrial and agrarian regions, among white and black communities anywhere and everywhere.

In all of this diversity, the concept of a Caribbean people and the construction of a Caribbean identity are caught up in many contradictions. It is easy to assert a Caribbean identity if that person does not have to meet his/her compatriots and has no hope of this ever happening. It is because of this fact that we can maintain the fiction of a collection of persons with an all encompassing Caribbean identity for, in enlarging the ambit of one's interaction beyond the village or town, one is quite likely to encounter Caribbean 'brothers' and 'sisters' whom one will instantly disown. It is

in part because of this reason that Benedict Anderson titled his renowned book on ethnicity *Imagined communities*. Argued Anderson, 'It [ethnic or communal identity] is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson, 1991, p. 6). It is easy to understand that persons from an imaginary region designated the Caribbean may want an identity, especially one that is much bigger than a relatively small island. It imparts some sense of security in size and numbers. It bestows belonging and the larger the tribe the greater the warmth imparted.

To understand how peoples in the Caribbean cohere into cultural communities, how they are different and separate, how they act in solidarity and individually, one may look at the diverse bases on which they have tended to define themselves. These bases include such factors as homeland, language, religion, race, customs, etc, or what Clifford Geertz called the 'givens of social existence' (Geertz, 1963, p. 109). These bases have a tendency to organize life into identity and solidarity formations which command the behavior of its members. It is in the analysis of their identities, especially at the level of region and territory constructed from real or imaginary claims, that we shall also be able to evaluate how these identities can be mobilized for intra-regional and extra-regional effects with repercussions on international politics and society.

3. The Caribbean homeland: internal contestations

This essay will not engage a discussion of all the bases of ethnic identity formation but only one, homeland or territory. The idea of homeland assumes a homogenous and uniform territory and an area of common communication and interaction in familiarity (Grosby, 1995, pp. 145–146). But it is more than that in that it suggests a shared consciousness, a spatial structure in temporal depth – historical memory, and the veritable mental and emotional environment of the individual. It is a 'home' with biological connectedness inscribed in images of 'mother-' and 'father-' land. The idea of homeland then is pregnant with powerful symbolism of belonging.

For most Caribbean persons, their images of a separate and unique identity are derived from their association with the shores and scenes, the special sights and sounds, of the Caribbean environment. It is the land which is the physical expression of home that has nurtured their identity and wherever they are found away from home the images of the Caribbean assume the shape of a metaphor for life itself. Many Caribbean peoples who have migrated for decades and not returned home live in a sort of nostalgic dreamland of their ancestral environment that sustains their claim to a separate identity. Many make periodic treks back home as if enacting a life-reinvigorating ritual to an ancient mystic Mecca.

The Caribbean homelands however are not ancient places where Caribbean peoples and their ancestors have always lived. There are no historic religions and sacred sites decorated with folktales and lore commemorating origins lost in time. As Derek Walcott, the Nobel laureate poet from the island of St. Lucia, puts it, 'The sigh of history rises over ruins, not over landscapes, and in the Antilles there are few ruins to sigh over, apart from the ruins of sugar estates and abandoned forts' (Walcott, 1992, p. 5). While there are several interesting pre-Hispanic sites preserved as historical attractions, such as found notably in Puerto Rico and Cuba, and

numerous places throughout the Caribbean bear Amerindian names, there are no surviving indigenous languages and civilizations in the insular Caribbean. Caribbean peoples are new arrivals who have had to reconstruct their identities having lost most of what they had in the transmigration from the Old World. Continues Walcott:

> That is the basis of the Antillean experience, this shipwreck of fragments, these echoes, these shards of a huge tribal vocabulary, these partially remembered customs. They survived the Middle Passage and the Fatel Razack, the ship that carried the first indentured Indians from the port of Madras to the cane fields, that carried the chained Cromwellian convict and the Sephardic Jew, the Chinese grocer and the Lebanese merchants selling clothes samples on his bicycle. (Walcott, 1992, p. 9)

This melody of memory applies to the polyglot descendants of the new Caribbean natives, separated from their Old World roots even though cultural residues persist in one form or the other.

Homeland had to be re-invented. Homeland requires territory to start with before it is transformed into a moral architecture of the mind and memory. The territorial aspect was adopted from the administrative boundaries of the colonial powers. Unlike continental land masses where such colonial boundaries tended to cut across ethnic communities, in the Caribbean the insular structure, coupled with the decimation of the aboriginals, allowed for unambiguous borders enclosing separate human settlements becoming the constitutive units of the new homeland. Following the European pattern, the island colonies would emerge as new states in the territorialization of the Caribbean (Smith, 1990). The colonial administrative boundaries offered the perimeters of the homeland of the Caribbean peoples in a process of 'islandization' of territorial identities. Thus for example Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico would become the homes and sovereign states of the immigrants who came to this part of the Western Hemisphere and over time these identities would in turn become distinctive in their own way. Into these new insular spaces, narratives and myths would be infused with memories constructed out of the recent painful past and attached to the land rendering it sacred and historical. Walcott again:

> This gathering of broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles, and if the pieces are disparate, ill-fitting, they contain more pain than their original sculpture, those icons and sacred vessels taken for granted in their ancestral places. Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary, our archipelago becoming a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent. (Walcott, 1992, p. 9)

It is in this recent reconstruction, the Caribbean homeland states are marked by their modernity.

In the conquest and displacement of the indigenous peoples which occurred at the very outset of alien settlement in the region, the Caribbean as homeland has however been a contested area. European intrusion added in a spectacular way to the traditional forms of raids that the Caribs, Siboneys, Tainos, and Arawaks conducted against each other triggering disruption, displacement and internal migration. Old indigenous settlements seemed to have been relatively fluid residential areas often overlapping with the continental coast, none yielding a stable and imposing permanent civilization such as constructed by the Incas, Aztecs and Mayas. The

entire Caribbean was the locus of a series of shifting small-scale settlements which were therefore easy to dismantle by European intrusion and conquest. By 1650, they were all practically erased by the alien entry. However, the European settlements that were constructed in place of the Amerindian in the Caribbean were themselves not imposing edifices, since the islands served as 'colonies of exploitation'. They were either to be abandoned once the lucre was harvested or remained as a dependent appendage. It was on these makeshift sites of exploitation that the imported laborers constructed their homes not knowing whether they were to be temporary or permanent.

After about four centuries of settlement by a diversity of human types, the Caribbean is now legitimately the home and homeland to its new 'native' descendants. There are no contests of this claim brought by residual indigenous peoples such as often occur in North America for the return of ancestral land. In the insular Caribbean, such echoes of protest have been permanently stilled by extermination. All of this would seem to have left the Caribbean as a place where ownership of the homeland is indisputable and uncontested. Yet this is not the case. In the fact of racial and ethnic diversity and the various times of arrival by the respective immigrant groups, as well as their uneven contributions to the development of the island states, resided the ingredients for divergent claims to equal membership and citizenship.

There is strife in the Caribbean household (Premdas, 1987, 1995). New contests have emerged over power and privileges in claims that have resulted in a differentiated membership. In the willing and unwilling departure of the imperial presence, the opportunity to lay claim to the land availed itself. The most notable case of this transition occurred in 1804 when what C.L.R. James called the 'black Jacobins' won control of Haiti after a prolonged and bitter civil strife (James, 1963). Acquisition of the homeland was achieved through triumph in war. The descendants of the emancipated slaves however advanced a reason for their sole ownership of Haiti in the fact that they were the ones whose labor built the country. It was their sweat and tears in slavery mixed with the soil in the construction of the plantations that conferred entitlement to the land as a whole. The emancipated slaves no longer saw Haiti as a place of exile holding out the hope for freedom in repatriation but as a new cradle of a revitalized existence with roots in the history of slavery and rebellion. It seemed only right that those who labored and built the land should become the new inheritors.

This principle of territorial acquisition and ownership of a homeland was not without controversy after the French were evicted. The mulattos laid claim to the land as their rightful inheritance. In salient ways, the Haitian case stands apart from the rest of the Caribbean in regard to the size of the country, its early independence, and the violent mode of its liberation. It was also the best-articulated case where the white population having been evicted, an intense struggle ensued between the blacks and the mulattos for control of the state. In 1660, France occupied the western half of Hispaniola which was ceded to it in 1697, and by the end of the eighteenth century converted it into a lucrative, plantation-driven colony. From a population mix of 4336 whites and 2012 African slaves in 1681, when the economy was diversified, to 1789 when it was wholly committed to sugar for export, Saint-Dominique [Haiti] had been demographically transformed into 40,000 whites and 455,000 blacks and mulattos (Dupuy, 1989, p. 21). A slave society had been created.

The Haitian Revolution was prolonged and violent, resulting in the loss of some 150,000 lives including about 20,000 French who were sent by Napoleon to re-impose slavery. Among the distinctive features of the Haitian Revolution were the massacre in 1804 of the French who had remained in the country,and the declaration in the Haitian constitution that 'all Haitians would henceforth be known under the generic denomination of black' (Dupuy, 1989, p. 21). In this regard the Haitian revolution came to have immense symbolic significance for all blacks in the Caribbean. What followed after the Haitian Revolution was not an order based on equality free from racism, but one in which the mulattos asserted their right to rule by virtue of their pigmentation and greater socialization in French ways. Thus another struggle ensued between mulattos and blacks which became an underlying theme in the upheavals of Haitian history, marked by 24 changes of government in 111 years by military coups (Nicholls, 1988). While it could be argued that often the intrigues that led to the rise and fall of governments tended to implicate both black and mulatto elites in the same alliance, there can be no doubt that these acts of collaboration often concealed the contest between mulattos and blacks for political ascendancy. Rival ideologies of color were developed: one mulatriste [mulatto] and the other noiriste [black]. Mulattos regarded themselves as the natural heir to the French and held strong racist views against blacks and felt that they should rule Haiti (Dupuy, 1989, p. 123). Black noiriste ideology argued that the selfishness of the mulattos was the source of Haiti's difficulties (p. 146) and therefore they should be eliminated from all positions of power and the authentic voice of the people represented by the majority blacks should rule. The rival political parties that were organized to compete for power encapsulated this ethnic division, making the color issue central to Haiti's politics.

The mulatriste-noiriste antagonism has persisted into the twentieth century. During the American occupations of Haiti in the early part of the twentieth century, the mulattos were favored in open contempt for blacks. During the Lescot government sponsored by the US occupation forces:

> color discrimination was practiced in all aspects of social life. Color became the sole criterion of appointments to all important positions in all branches and agencies of government and the military and even in the hiring of lower level administrative and secretarial positions. Widespread exclusionary practices were followed in the social clubs of the mulatto elite and in most other secondary forms of social interaction; the color line was rigidly drawn in the choice of marriage partners from the mulatto bourgeoisie. (Dupuy, 1989, p. 146)

When, in 1946, Dumarsais Estime became President, his victory was claimed by the noiriste forces against the mulattos. The color question led in the 1930s to the founding of the Indigeniste group which was linked more broadly to the international Negritude movement. Indigeniste adherents depreciated European values, calling for a return to African roots in Haitian culture. Within the Indigeniste movement arose the 'Griots Group' which extolled the alleged peculiar personality and psychology of the African, deeming it the most appropriate for leadership in Haiti.

The larger point in belaboring the Haitian case consists of the argument that the homeland is not an innocent repository of uncontested claims to identity despite myths of harmony to the contrary. Inter-ethnic struggles are even more pronounced in other island states especially those which had a multi-racial and multi-ethnic

population but certainly not restricted to them. It would emerge as a source of immense conflict especially in contexts of rivalry over power and pre-eminence by the ethno-cultural communities. It has occurred in Belize, Curacao, the American Virgin Islands and Bermuda, but assumes acuity in the multi-racial and multi-ethnic states of Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname in the latter part of the twentieth century. Because of the failure of assimilation in the creation of a single integrated society, and the corresponding persistence of cultural pluralism, the problem of inheritance and the corresponding right to rule has become an intensely contested issue (Premdas, 2007). In these states where African-Indian ratios are close, the competition for power by the main ethnic communities is not simply a matter to be decided by the electoral marketplace but by a moral claim based on historical precedence and, ironically, by the degree of assimilation of the cultural values of the departed and depreciated colonial power. One observer underscored this point in regard to Trinidad and Tobago:

> The Afro-Trinidadian is demonstrably unwilling to share public resources and symbolic space with other ethnic groups not only because they regarded these as scarce, but because they deemed these to be their legitimate and prescriptive right by reason of their earlier historical presence in the territory and the greater proximity of their culture and patterns of behavior to the superordinate colonial culture by which public norms are referenced. (Ryan, 1990, p. 2)

In Suriname's multi-ethnic society, Ed Dew pointed to the occurrence of the same phenomenon wherein 'Creoles successfully conveyed the idea that they were the original Surinamers' and therefore best able to 'serve the national interest' (Dew, 1994, p. 2). Similar events have also occurred in French Guiana, where Creoles share sentiments which claim legitimacy to the entitlement of the land on par with Amerindians.

The right to rule has become ethnicized; claims to the homeland have become ethnicized; and access to the distribution of privileges and resources has accordingly been ethnicized. In the multi-racial southern Caribbean states of Trinidad, Suriname, and Guyana, Africans fear that (Asian) Indian numbers and superior fertility will displace them from positions of power and pre-eminence. They anchor their claim on being in the Caribbean prior to the arrival of the East Indians. Frequently in counter argument to affirm their equality, the East Indians underscore their claim to superior economic contribution in the building of the homeland, even suggesting that this is a more substantial and important basis for defining the rights of full membership and citizenship. In this discourse, the relative degrees of suffering and victimization in slavery and indenture are catalogued and entered in the ledger of claims and counter-claims.

Part of the debate has degenerated into assertions of loyalty to the homeland reminiscent of the American pre-occupation with the authenticity of a citizen's Americanness or un-Americanness. Here the discourse turns on the issue of 'creolization' or cultural adaptation of the descendants to the local milieux. Creolization as a cultural mode of indigenisation is often rendered as essentially a single Afro- or Euro-centric standard, and for some the acquisition of this pattern of adaptation should serve as the litmus test of loyalty and entitlement to the patrimony of the land. Applied in this way, for those whose peculiar cultural adaptations are

different, especially among East Indians in Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname, creolization is a hegemonic concept that elevates the cultural practices of one community, the African-descended, as the measure of membership and entitlement. It is clear that there are many types of creole adaptations. Whites who were born in the Americas have been called 'Creoles' separate from the 'peninsulares' who were born in Spain. All Caribbean persons become indigenised in the process of creolization but in the contest over entitlement by the rival communities in different regional locations, one variant of 'creolization' has tended to be appropriated by one or another ethnic section as the 'authentic form' to legitimate its claims. This contest for power and resources is not confined to Trinidad, Suriname, and Guyana, but is also found in many other parts of the Caribbean such as Curacao, the Dominican Republic, the American Virgin Islands, and Bermuda, where an older stock of settlers make claim to superiority over relatively recent arrivals. Even where the same racial community is involved, many 'ethnicized' differences are invented and upheld as legitimate grounds for the allocation of recognition and respect. Professor Gert Oostindie noted this practice in Curacao:

> ... the local population tended to distance itself from 'newcomers'. Those groups that came to this island in the wake of its industrial modernization, i.e., after 1915, were generally not taken to be *Yu di Korsow* (Children of Curacao). Race as such was no major criterion in this categorization: Afro-Suriname immigrants were considered outsiders just as much Lebanese, Dutch, or Poles. (Oostindie, 1996)

Clearly, the jockeying for cultural authenticity is locked into issues of social recognition as well as power acquisition but it has developed a more sinister aspect about it in Guyana, Trinidad, and Suriname. This refers to the mutual distrust that separates the major communities resulting in their relations always being cast in terms of domination and superordination. Africans fear 're-enslavement' and 'internal colonialism' in a new form of servitude in an Indian-run government; Indians similarly charge domination, discrimination and repression in Guyana, Trinidad, and Suriname when these were under African-led regimes. Contests with this sort of allegation are present in other parts of the Caribbean between other ethno-cultural communities but expressed in more nuanced ways some of them reminiscent of the old color-class divisions.

Contest over claims to the homeland in the Caribbean is also engaged openly in Belize. There the change in the demographic mix stemming from a steady cross-border flow of Spanish and Maya groups has raised similar issues regarding power and privileges. The 'Spanish' component of the Belizean population has surpassed in numbers the traditional core of anglicized Afro-Creole persons who have exercised pre-eminent influence in the past. Since the Second World War, much of the center of political power resided in the domain of this anglophone Creole community which, even though constituting less than a majority of the population, about 42%, had come to see itself as the rightful inheritors to the mantle of power since self-government was conceded by the British colonial authorities. As more and more of the mestizos and 'Spanish' gained access to privileges and power, Professor Alma Young reported that 'many Creoles argued that blacks are being robbed of their political power in Belize' (A. Young, 1994, p. 117). This is odd, in part because many are of African or mixed African ancestry, rendering the conflict culturalized around

language and customs. A rearguard attack is being made to diminish the value of the migrants' membership claims in Belize charging them with drug usage and crime, but as Young pointed out: 'This perceived threat to the Belizean heritage has less to do with the official allegation that the Central American refugees are responsible for an escalating crime rate and more to do with changes to the ethnic composition of the country' (A. Young, 1994, p. 117).

As in Trinidad and Guyana, the claims to membership rights, access to resources, and political control are made in relation to the history of residence and levels of acculturation to English norms and language. In the Dominican Republic, Haitians who are second and even third generation citizens are racially stigmatized and discriminated against by Dominicans who regard them as inferior and unworthy of equal access to status and benefits. Commented Martin Murphy:

> Assimilation of all immigrant groups in Dominican society has been quite rapid and complete, with the notable exception of the Haitians. Spaniards, Syrians, Lebanese, Germans, French, other Caribbeans regardless of appearance, North Americans, Chinese and others have assimilated into Dominican society and its socio-racial categories, usually after one generation. However, Haitians and their Haitian-Dominican descendants are excluded from Dominican society. In only the most exceptional cases may one of recognized Haitian ancestry fully participate in Dominican society as an equal ... (Murphy, 1991, p. 141)

While most Dominicans are seemingly white, most who engage in this anti-Haitian racism are of undisputed African or part African ancestry.

In the French Antilles of Martinique and Guadeloupe, the contest over the homeland has assumed a different form with the charge by famed poet-politician, Aime Cesaire, of 'genocide by substitution' (Hintjens, 1991, p. 44). The French policy of 'departmentalization' has permitted the persistence of French domination. In turn this has triggered a movement of 'negritude' led by Cesaire to claim the islands for the descendants of the slaves. About three fifths of Martiniqueans and a third of Guadeloupeans have emigrated to France and there has been a reverse flow of French Europeans into the islands occupying positions of official authority. The charge of 'genocide by substitution' suggests an imperial policy of re-colonization by European population infusion followed by a pattern of dispossession of land from the descendants of the emancipated slaves. This has prompted a demand for independence and the eviction of the French population. In Guadeloupe, a small minority of the inhabitants, probably numbering only about 5% of the population, has also called for the re-possession of the land in complete independence from France. All of this clearly depicts the homeland as a place of severe contest especially in a context where the metropolitan power has permanently incorporated the colonies into its national territory.

Another type of ethnic strife had evolved in Suriname as mentioned earlier. In the mid-1980s, a particular group of Surinamees had come in for discriminatory treatment bordering on genocide. This was 'the bush negroes' as they were called, who were the descendants of the escaped slaves from colonial plantations. These Maroons constituting about 10% of the population were the largest group of escaped slaves anywhere in the Caribbean and had evolved distinctive ways of life separate from the rest of the Surinamese population (Herskovits & Herskovits, 1934). The Maroon communities of Ndujka and Saramacca had signed treaties in 1760 and

1762 with the Dutch state in the establishment of autonomous homelands for themselves (Price, 1979). After Suriname obtained its independence from the Netherlands in 1975, the status of these groups as autonomous governing units had been obliterated, leaving the Maroons at the mercy of the successor central government of Suriname. The civil war which occurred between 1986 and 1992, although officially ended, did not resolve the issue of Maroon territorial autonomy and legal identity, leaving open the possibility of renewed armed struggle. This is especially the case as multinational corporations gain state concessions without the consent of the Maroon communities to exploit the lumber and mineral resources in these areas (Price, 1995, pp. 437–472).

The Maroon communities had incurred the wrath of Suriname's military rulers who proceeded on a systematic campaign to destroy their way of life, relocate them from their traditional interior hinterland homelands, and even exterminate them. The assault on them had drawn condemnation from Amnesty International. Major displacements in the creation of refugee camps of Suriname refugee communities in neighboring French Guiana and as far away as the Netherlands. The intriguing aspect about this particular ethnic conflict consists of the fact that the Maroons are of African descent and their main adversary in the military government of Suriname at the time of the conflict was also of African descent. The former are looked upon by the latter as dehumanized savages, even as biologically degraded types.

There are other places in the Caribbean where the homeland is contested but by more penetrative and possibly permanent forces, in tourism and television. It is in this area of contestation over the homeland that the forces of globalization are most marked and threatening. Some islands are practically overrun by tourists especially in the winter. Among these are the Bahamas, Bermuda, Barbados, Antigua, St. Lucia, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Aruba, etc. With sugar and bananas incapable of commanding adequate prices and generating enough employment, tourism has emerged as the new life-giving force of deliverance. However, with the tourist package comes cultural pollution and a veritable loss of the homeland in the threat to a way of life. The tourist industry re-casts the social and economic landscape as did the plantation, prompting protests of a new servitude to foreign forces. But this is not entirely an accurate picture. The fact is that Caribbean citizens actively participate in cultivating this industry. While the homeland is shared, it is being transformed radically. The physical land is placed in different use; the occupational structure and industrial endeavors are altered; social patterns are modified in countless ways to accommodate the tourist. To have a home is to control it. In many parts of the Caribbean, citizens surrender public spaces for exclusive tourist use and pleasures.

Accompanying the tourist influx is perhaps an even more sinister force in television. Part of a general globalization process, the Caribbean has now been linked to a battery of television channels which not only impact on tastes but travel. Caribbean peoples now share 'virtual' space in the same digital reality with their compatriots overseas. They often travel back and forth as if borders do not matter. They hungrily indulge in cable television, abandoning old customary evening associations for their digitalised living rooms. They have become Americanized and love it. They display the latest sartorial fashions which are paraded in the Caribbean paradise as new status symbols of the West. This has entailed a significant shift in attitudes and patterns of behavior among the young. It makes the idea of homeland bound by geography irrelevant if not obsolete.

4. Contested identities overseas

Outside the Caribbean, the question of a homeland has asserted itself with curious vigor. In an earlier part of this essay I argued that the Caribbean must be conceived to exist wherever Caribbean peoples reside and seek to preserve and reproduce their patterns of life style. Perhaps as much as a third of all Caribbean peoples now reside overseas, concentrated especially in New York, New Jersey, Toronto, Montreal, and Florida. The homeland is as much within the insular Caribbean as outside the region, with comprehensive networks of kinship linking the areas into an integrated grid of self-perpetuating relations. In the overseas Caribbean areas, the replication of the Caribbean is very detailed so that even the most exotic ingredients and spices can be procured. Besides, relatives and friends continue to go back and forth with finished products brought in without hindrance. To the old landscape of coconut trees and the tropical scenery has been added the new architecture of concrete and steel in the industrial cities as part of the Caribbean consciousness and, indeed, homeland.

The significance of this extension of the geography of the homeland is that unlike the Caribbean proper, the diaspora residents are for the most part relatively recent residents whose identity can still be questioned. The new extra-Caribbean diasporic regions in the developed countries are places of contestation among Caribbean peoples themselves. It will be useful to look at the experiences of the Puerto Rican, Haitian and Jamaican communities in North America to illustrate the nature of these contestations in the effort to forge a Caribbean identity abroad. These cases also illustrate the problems of sustaining a single trans-Caribbean identity outside the Caribbean. To a substantial extent, the capability of a migrant community to separate itself from other groupings derives from numbers as well as their 'institutional completeness'. Comments one observer of this phenomenon, 'The study of ethnic integration and/or assimilation has been strengthened by theoretical formulations dealing with institutional completeness and the idea of "ethnic community closure"' (Henry, 1994, p. 234). In both theoretical constructs, it is postulated that the more institutionally complete an ethnic group is, the more members of that group will tend to contain their interpersonal, informal relations within the group. Consequently, their need to develop personal contacts with members of society at large will be reduced' (Henry, 1994, p. 234). Apart from the phenomenon of institutional completeness, other forces are usually at work in the differentiating process such as status rivalry as well a sense of superiority. The Haitian, Puerto Rican, and Jamaican cases are only taken as illustrative of these processes at work militating against the construction of a trans-Caribbean identity.

Haitian immigrants to North America, both legal and illegal, number about one million, of which some 400,000 alone reside in New York City and some 60,000 in Montreal. They tend to live a life apart from other Caribbean persons. In part, this derives from language differences, except in Montreal. However the language barrier is only one in a cultural configuration of factors that confines Haitians within their own community. As in the Caribbean, where language divides the entirety of the region into its own solitudes, the language and cultural heritage of Haitians reinforce the preference for their own kin. Comments one observer:

> Apart from family and kinship ties, Haitians often socialize with and live among people from the same village or general region of Haiti. Indeed, one finds many pockets of residents from the same Haitian town, such as Hinche or Jacmel, in the same neighborhood. These immigrants also belong to village associations which provide the basis for social occasions and for sending aid back to fellow villagers who remain in Haiti. Within apartment buildings, networks of economic exchange often arise, particularly if people can trace some kinship tie, lived in the same quartier (section) of a town or village in Haiti, or attended the same school on the island. Even if people from the same community or family do not live near each other, the *telejol* or gossip network quickly disseminates information, rumors, and scandals among them. (Stafford, 1987, p. 153)

Apart from these networks which hem in the Haitian community, there are other forces at work consolidating this process, such as the role of Haitian news media, voluntary associations, and religious institutions and practices. Where the state administers services in French so as to satisfy its multi-cultural policy, this in turn adds to cohesion of the community.

But above such comprehensive kinship and community networking, Haitians tend to assert a sense of superiority in part inspired from the fact of their being first to attain independence through struggle (1804) among Caribbean peoples and in part because of cultural claims. Comments one scholar who studied the Haitian community in New York City:

> Haitians take pride in their French cultural and linguistic heritage which in the words of one Haitian makes them 'kroue yo gro pi pase tout neg' ('believe that they are better than other blacks'). English-speaking West Indians resent this implied superiority and point out the underdeveloped and preindustrial condition of Haitian society in comparison to their own more developed nations. English-speaking West Indians claim that Haitians are clannish and snobbish and do not wish to socialize or mingle with them. Haitians make similar accusations about English-speaking West Indians and thus they blame each other for their lack of interaction. (Stafford, 1987, p. 145)

The particularism of Haitian ethnicity is maintained oppositionally not only in relation to English-speaking Caribbean residents and African-Americans, but also in a more oblique way in relation to persons from the Spanish-speaking parts of the Caribbean. Observes one scholar:

> Haitians generally classify Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Cubans under the category pagnol (Spanish). In racial terms, Haitians characterize themselves as 'black people' in relation to Hispanic immigrants who, as Haitians note, tend to be physically lighter and closer to whites in appearance than most Haitians. In terms of their culture, however, Haitians often emphasize their superiority. While Haitians express grudging admiration for Cubans because Cuba is an advanced island nation, they tend to stereotype Dominicans and Puerto Ricans as lackadaisical, unambitious, and content to live on welfare. In general, Haitians often stress their 'French heritage' which they feel white Americans rank higher than Hispanic society. (Stafford, 1987, p. 145)

Clearly, the various factors and forces at play together maintain fairly durable boundaries that would seem to isolate Haitians into urban islands of their own. This is however only partly true, for Haitians find camaraderie among other blacks of all origins in combating racism, claiming jobs and resources, and expressing general solidarity for black interests. Commented one Haitian, '*Nou tout noua isi*' (We are all

black here). As in so many other cases of intra-Caribbean relations in the diaspora communities, island differentiation breaks down on the crucible of a common oppression.

Puerto Ricans, of whom there were about four million in Puerto Rico itself, stand out as an anomaly in the Caribbean from the standpoint of their being an integral part (a 'commonwealth' but not a state) of US territory acquired by conquest. This relationship has fundamentally shaped and defined the identity of Puerto Ricans who over time since 1898 came to identify with the destiny of Americans and not Caribbean residents. Laments one commentator about Puerto Rican elites whose behavior structures mass opinion: '. . . in Puerto Rico, the elite has lived for centuries under the delusion that it belongs to the "European" or white world preferring to identify with the Spanish royalty rather than with Puerto Rico's African-American roots' (Garcia-Passalacqua, 1993, p. 174). Intellectual debate over Puerto Rican identity has swung ambivalently from an American identity to a Caribbean. The call for the Caribbeanization of Puerto Rican identity stems from frustrations with discrimination on the mainland as well as with the lack of representation in the Congress of the US. The Caribbeanization call seeks to locate Puerto Ricans within the wider ambit of the themes of slavery, colonialism, and plantations in Caribbean history. Although constituted of a majority of whites, some quizzically call for a return to African roots: 'One crucial element would be the acceptance by Puerto Ricans themselves of the common trait of negritude' (p. 174). To some Puerto Ricans this is not practicable for, as one commentator argued, it is 'too late to redirect the island's world view towards its neighboring geographical region since islanders had already opted for the American way of life and had no real kinship for the sister islands' (Garcia-Passalacqua, 1993, p. 174). Among the nearly three million Puerto Ricans who live in the continental US, the idea of a Caribbean identity is as remote as it is unrealistic. Puerto Ricans tend to live separately and many see themselves as superior to other Caribbean residents. By distancing themselves from their Caribbean island compatriots, they expect to increase their chances of being integrated and assimilated into the American mainstream.

Jamaicans are among a group of over one million Caribbean residents from the former British colonies living in North America. Some 400,000 alone live in New York City, a fact that caused New Yorkers to collectively call all these English speakers from the Caribbean 'Jamaicans'. As a separate group however, they represent a community that has also sought to define themselves from others by asserting their distinctiveness in comparison with other blacks and Caribbean residents. They are clannish in familiar ways as Nancy Foner describes: 'Jamaicans' sense of ethnic distinctiveness is expressed and reinforced, outside of work, in a Jamaican social world. They settle near kin and friends in neighborhoods that offer such "trappings of home" as West Indian food stores, bakeries, record shops, barber shops, travel agents, and restaurants. And they maintain their closest contacts with other Jamaicans' (Foner, 1987a, p. 204). However this sense of separateness that confers a distinctive identity is asserted in postures of superiority to others, especially African-Americans. Continues Foner, 'Emphasizing their distinct Jamaican or West Indian character is also a matter of ethnic pride. All the respondents felt that Jamaicans were different from black Americans. By different what most meant was superior' (p. 204). In particular, a trait that Jamaicans have assigned to themselves relates to 'discipline, drive, and dedication' as part of their desire to be achievement

oriented and successful. Nevertheless, their boundaries of differentiation notwith-standing, they are not entirely isolated but seek solidarity with other blacks in matters that relate to racism and equal opportunity.

The pattern of residence and self-differentiating identity that Haitians, Puerto Ricans, and Jamaicans evince are typical of the other Caribbean communities, and the larger they are the more likely they are to replicate these patterns. Although Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans tend to be called collectively 'Spanish', they are also self-differentiating in their respective identities. There are over one million Cubans in the United States of whom about 850,000 live in South Florida. Miami is the home of 'Little Havana'. There are over 500,000 persons from the Dominican Republic. Looking at the Caribbean communities generally in relation to the challenge of constructing a trans-Caribbean identity, the new homeland has turned out especially among first generation migrants to be a place of island and linguistic exclusivism. The language of the colonial Caribbean spheres had literally established islands within the islands and this impacted on relations among Caribbean residents living overseas. As one observer summed it up:

> Mobilizing Pan-Caribbean action is more problematic. Despite the historical and cultural similarities of all West Indians, there is a strong island identity and parochialism. In addition to geographic distances between islands, the Caribbean variant of colonialism stressed metropolitan connections to the exclusion of intra-Caribbean relationships and made 'mixing' between residents of different islands, other than university or in migration situations, nearly impossible. (Basch, 1987, p. 10)

Political cooperation among all Caribbean residents over issues of racism is often tempered by the fact that Caribbean peoples often compete for the same jobs and jockey for favor among whites at the expense of playing down the value of each other. The relations between Caribbean residents and indigenous black Americans tends to be strained. Observes Nancy Foner, 'Tensions between new immigrants and Afro-Americans are a dominant issue for West Indians. In an attempt to distinguish themselves from native blacks and win preferential treatment from whites, West Indians often stress cultural, behavioral, and linguistic features thought to be superior to those of black Americans. They tend to have disdain for black Americans, stereotyping them for being spendthrifts and irresponsible' (Foner, 1987b, p. 20). All of this would paradoxically not inhibit political cooperation and mobilization among the two groups on issues of race.

5. A topology of Caribbean identities

As set forth earlier, one can conceptually conceive a Caribbean identity as constituted around many levels of expression. In this part, I set forth in greater detail and complexity these levels as they have emerged operationally in handling the empirical data. A level may in some circumstances overlap with another and in other instances be exclusive. Each has its own base and behavioral structure and in its own way fulfills some particular need, symbolic and instrumental. Each identity establishes a boundary and asserts a claim. In this regard, it is potentially a source of strife. Claims are made against other claims. Identities are functional constructs that are apprehended in relation to some goal or project. They are sources of contest

literally for the loyalty of the mind. They are as much assertions that aggrandize some and marginalize others.

Type I: the ethno-national or ethno-local identity

The ethno-national or ethno-local identity occurs in sub-state localities which constitute the territorial site of their self-definition. The characteristic cluster of attachments tends to be partly territorial but includes patterns of values and practices which impart a special and unique quality to life. This sort of localism is often associated with closely-knit social systems that have mechanisms of closure to outsiders. Often, this parochial identity is asserted antagonistically against a central governmental authority. The locality is seen as sacred and pure, a place of freedom and morality, to be protected from the corrupting influence of unwelcome outsiders. There are numerous places in the Caribbean with ethno-national or ethno-local identities. The self in this context, as George H. Mead explained, is endowed with social meanings which concretely evoke similar responses in the experiences of other local citizens. As Mead argued, in such a situation 'the meaning of any one individual's act or gestures ... would be the same for any other individual ... who responded to them' (Mead, 1934, p. 310). Essentially, the local identity is caught in a network of interpersonal primary and secondary face-to-face relations in the family, neighborhood, and community that comprehend and promote the totality of a unified consciousness that is relatively free from internal challenges and dissonance.

An example is Tobago which, as a separate administrative unit in Trinidad and Tobago, regards itself as very different from Trinidad society. Tobago is suspicious of Trinidad and has demanded and obtained a separate local government status with considerable autonomy. Tobagonians regard their way of life as superior to that of Trinidad which is marked by violence and drugs. Many Tobagonians have expressed an interest in a separate destiny in self-determination and are willing to challenge the center for such an autonomous status. Another example refers to the Asian Indian communities in Trinidad, Suriname, and Guyana. They assert their Indian identity foremost and this is associated with their rural areas where they have lived since coming to the Caribbean as indentured immigrants. Places like Caroni in Trinidad and Corentyne in Guyana have become idioms of Indian identity. In these cases, local identity is forged along a racio-cultural axis which is expressed antagonistically against outsiders who are seen as inimical to their interests.

Generally, the ethno-national or ethno-local identity and self tends to emerge in contexts of a large territory, a separate island, remote areas, and among populations that are articulated around racial, geographical, and cultural differences. No one knows for sure how many such localities exist in the Caribbean, but researchers continue to be amazed by discovering the extent of the prevalence and persistence of such groups. There are persons who have preponderantly this type of identity in the Caribbean. For them, this is the extent of their community horizon. To be sure, they are challenged by competing external forces that impinge on them, making claims on their loyalty and local attachments. Even when they migrate to urban areas or overseas, they see this movement as a temporary sojourn and live among their kin until they can return home, which may never happen. In the diasporic communities, they embellish and romanticize their home locations. Their attachment is fiercely tied

to their locality and community; they can easily be mobilized politically to defend interests associated with such sites.

Type II: the ethno-national universal identity

This category may seem to be diametrically contradictory in including both ends of a continuum ranging from the local to the universal. When an ethno-national identity becomes linked to similar communities in other parts of the world, it can be designated 'ethno-national universal'. One defining feature of this ethno-national universal identity is that its loyalty and attachment are not to the state where its members reside and maintain their formal citizenship but to a larger extra-state universal community. As such it displays marks of a belief community bounded by certain distinctive practices. They are as much earthly in their activities as they are transcendental in their ultimate goals. They may even regard their lifestyles as 'pure' and an act of defiance even contempt for the 'corruption' around them. The nature of the link between the local community and its overseas counterparts is however not routine and mechanical but organic and integral. Exchanges are many, frequent, and significant and often involve flows of people, literature, music, and cultural and political programs. Some of the ideas of this type of identity in relation to the emergent global society at the end of the late twentieth century underscoring the links between the local communities across the world construct global villages.

For instance, certain Islamic communities in Trinidad, which maintain separate places of residence in both urban and rural areas, also have established close fraternal links with similar groups in the USA and the Middle East. Another example is the Rastafarians who, apart from occupying special urban and rural residential areas on islands throughout the Caribbean, also maintain ongoing links with similar communities in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Amsterdam, Paris, Auckland (New Zealand), Zimbabwe, New York, Toronto, Miami, and elsewhere (Savishinsky, 1994, pp. 259–281). Similarly, certain Asian Indian groups in Trinidad, Guyana and Suriname not only maintain links among themselves but also with similar groups in North America and Asia. In the past decade, local Amerindian communities in Guyana have established close fraternal almost organic links with other First World groups in North and South America and elsewhere. They have met frequently, formally and informally, and developed joint agendas for action and concerted programs for educational and cultural exchanges.

Ethno-national universal communities are becoming more significant in the Caribbean in the wake of the end of the Cold War, the contemporary erosion of state boundaries, the growth of large trading blocs, the intensification of digital and visual communications, and the uprooting and mass migration of people all over the world. All of these changes, which seemed to come together in full force at the end of the twentieth century, have triggered a new quest for community. The ethno-national universal communities are, however, not the same as functional communities such as international trade unions, business associations, environmental groups and feminist organizations. They tend to engage a wider ambit of interests beyond instrumental needs, embracing the totality of a community's life. They maintain their links around primordial myths of descent, shared cultural symbols and rituals, and political programs. They will challenge the state that seeks to infringe on their rights as a community in the practice of their beliefs and rituals. As indicated earlier, recently an

instance of this occurred when certain schools in Trinidad attempted to prohibit the wearing of the hijab by Muslim students. Rastafarians and other ethno-national universal groups have mobilized extra-state international solidarity to their cause whenever and wherever they faced oppression.

Type III: a national identity

A national identity or self is born in the congruence between the beliefs of a community and those of the state. This is supremely a nationalist identity and where the Caribbean country is an island, it can also be called an insular identity. The national identity, where it exists, constitutes the highest attachment of group loyalty superseding rival claims of locality and/or overseas community. 'I am a Jamaican, Cuban, or Martiniquean first and foremost' is the clarion call of nationalists. It is important to underscore the point that a national identity is not constituted of persons who are related on the basis of face-to face inter-personal familiarity. As Benedict Anderson pointed out, the emergence of a collective national sentiment owes its existence on available means of mass communications that made it possible to craft a myth of common descent and community. The fact that such a sentiment is a creature of a contingent modern event does not in any way diminish the potency of the beliefs of the nationalist.

There are places in the Caribbean where this type of identity flourishes, overriding claims issuing from racial, cultural, language, locational or religious divisions. This is usually, however, not a fact of life underlaid and reinforced by empirically verifiable objective bases of solidarity, but an ideal program for action and realization. The internal pluralism of most Caribbean states militates against the forging of a single uncontested nationalist identity. For some communities, the strident ring of the nationalist is a source of anxiety and a summons to defense. It is the threat of homogenization by a hegemonic community to impose its cultural writ on the lives of others. In Trinidad, for instance, the nationalist is often a person who belongs to the ruling party and ethno-cultural community that proclaims superior virtues of 'creolization'. The word 'creolization,' while in another context may be regarded as indigenous adaptation to local circumstances, in Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, and even in Belize, is viewed as an embodiment of the values of the politically dominant community and a threat to the way of life of other communities. The claim of a national identity is a major source of strife in the plural societies of the Caribbean.

Type IV: the trans-Caribbean identity

The trans-Caribbean identity occurs outside the Caribbean in all those places where peoples of Caribbean origin reside. It is constructed from memories of assigned Caribbean values, ecology, and history. Persons who argue for a trans-Caribbean identity often can recite a litany of historical facts on slavery, plantations, colonialism, and sugar and supply a catalogue of unique beliefs and customs that define and distinguish this type of identity. But is it important to the retention process that Old World cognitive familiarity be substantially preserved, especially since soon over half of the Caribbean diaspora will be born in a non-Caribbean country? Professor Isajiw sheds some light on this issue: 'Some components may be retained more than others; some may not be retained at all' (Isajiw, 1990, p. 37). Over

the years, an immigrant 'may subjectively identify with his/her ethnic group without having knowledge of the ethnic language or without practicing ethnic traditions or participating in ethnic organizations. Or, inversely, he or she may practice some ethnic traditions without having strong attachment to the group' (p. 37).

As I have tried to show in this paper, this reconstruction through increasingly attenuated retention borders on fantasy, was bred of an imagination bereaved of its natural Caribbean sights and sounds, flourishing abundantly in the freedom of the imagination. Put differently, it is argued that while the Caribbean identity is maintained in the peculiar circumstance of the overseas environment, it is likely to be deficient in information with each succeeding generation. What is crucial to the fact of retention of a Caribbean identity in this situation is that it constitutes a new identity which combines myths of the Caribbean region with the new facts and experiences of the Caribbean diaspora. It is in the diaspora that a trans-Caribbean identity is invented, increasingly forgetful of the original environment and forging into being a new collectivity that embraces the entire region. The Caribbean region, however, is too fragmented and fractured at all levels of its existence to be cozily enclosed in an all-embracing homogenous category. In fact, the region is the site of ongoing contests and conflicts by rival claimants which seek an autonomous space of their own.

It is outside of the Caribbean that the trans-Caribbean identity is most vocally espoused and most convincingly contradicted. In getting off their islands and migrating to and congregating in new diasporic destinations in New York, Toronto, London, Miami etc., they discover their immense diversity. To be sure, certain groups, such as from the Commonwealth Caribbean, may discover commonalties about themselves or invent them for purposes of solidarity, but by and large the separate Caribbean communities go their separate ways even as they talk about their Caribbean identity. The peoples of the Caribbean are openly divided and in a number of cases declare themselves as distinctively Haitian-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean, for instance, with the first half of their hyphen the more important, the other half a public relations ruse.

The trans-Caribbean identity is the highest form of nationalist fantasy. To some it is an aspiration while to others it is a useful badge to register complaints and make claims in a foreign land. It is as much an excuse for collecting grievances as to provoke counter-claims of cultural hegemony practiced by some Caribbean groups. This identity exists everywhere in the hearts of individuals in the divided diaspora and nowhere in reality. It is invoked and used to justify rival claims and to stake out new territory for exploitation, but is diluted and compromised by the claims of new identities emanating from their new home environment in the industrial countries. It is in this respect a divided if not schizophrenic identity dwelling in several locations simultaneously. In a global perspective of mass migration, it is not an unusual identity. It is a quest for community in a fragmented and fractured world in which the Caribbean is a mirror.

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