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**TEXTS, CULTURE AND ANTI-COLONIAL EDUCATION: EMERGING JAMAICAN
IDENTITY IN THE PERIOD OF INDEPENDENCE
1962-1997**

by

Erica S. Lawson

**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Arts
Department of Sociology in Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute of Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto**

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IDENTITY IN THE PERIOD OF INDEPENDENCE 1962-1997**

Masters of Arts, 1998

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a qualitative study of colonial and anti-colonial approaches to education and an examination of the use of textbooks in Jamaica's schools. Historically, textbooks, pedagogy, curriculum and educational policies have been mobilized to support the British colonial and neo-colonial project. Since Jamaica gained independence in 1962, successive governments have been challenged to deliver a system of education that reflects the aspirations of Jamaican peoples. However, these aspirations are increasingly complicated by globalization, structural adjustment policies, and the encroachment of the capitalist marketplace on local culture. This study focuses on how the use of local knowledge can disrupt hegemonic practices in the classroom and foster a stronger African-Jamaican cultural identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mother for her encouragement and inspiration. Special thanks to Philip Dugas who showed unconditional love and support long before I even thought of applying to graduate school. Thanks and appreciation to Clare Warner, my sister-friend and room-mate who spent many nights at the kitchen table listening to me, sharing insights, reading drafts and making pointed comments. To Charmaine Crawford who went through my first draft with a keen eye and got me back on track with fresh ideas, I am truly grateful. Thanks to my friends at OISE who listened patiently while I vented my frustration, who shared books, articles, experience and knowledge. To my peers in the anti-racism and indigenous knowledge classes whose ideas challenged and enriched my perspective for this thesis, I thank you all.

Special thanks to my supervisor and mentor Professor George Dei who has made it possible for people like me to find a safe academic space at OISE at a time when academic institutions continue to undervalue the lived experiences of people of colour. To Professor Shahrzad Mojab who went through the early draft when nothing made sense, thank you for your careful feedback and encouragement.

I am especially grateful to Mrs. I. Wright who sent me textbooks and articles from Jamaica and encouraged me through her letters. And finally, many thanks to the teachers who agreed to be interviewed, and to all the people who graciously shared their memories of Jamaica's Independence and other social movements in the Caribbean. This thesis would not have been possible without your support.

**TEXTS, CULTURE AND ANTI-COLONIAL EDUCATION: EMERGING JAMAICAN IDENTITY IN
THE PERIOD OF INDEPENDENCE
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The Problem	4
1.2 Research Objectives and Methodology.....	7
1.3 Organization.....	9
1.4 Towards a Discursive Framework.....	10
1.5 Anti-Colonial and Anti-Racism Discourses.....	17
1.6 Literature Review.....	19
2. HISTORY	31
2.1 Problematizing “Discovery”.....	31
2.2 Slavery and Education in Jamaica	35
2.3 Re-Constructing Women’s Bodies.....	38
2.4 Emerging Education: Towards a New System of Control.....	40
3. CULTURAL IDENTITY IN AN INDEPENDENT JAMAICA	49
3.1 Assessing Independence.....	50
3.2 Race and Identity.....	60
3.3 The Black Power Movement.....	63
3.4 Educational Reforms.....	68
3.5 Language and Resistance.....	71
3.6 Orality in Text and Context.....	84
4. TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITION VISIONS: REGGAE AND POETRY IN TEXTBOOKS	
4.1 Education Then & Now: A Dialogue with Caribbean Teachers.....	88
4.2 Reggae, Rastas and the Changing Political Landscape.....	99
4.3 A New Look at Old Poems.....	109
5. CONCLUSION	115
REFERENCES	121
APPENDIX I	129
APPENDIX II	132

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is dedicated to Caribbean people who are committed to anti-colonial, holistic educational practices. My study came to life as a result of my interest in education in Jamaica where I completed primary school and attended high school up to third form. After careful thought, I decided that I wanted the thesis to be a reflection of my interest in anti-colonial education and the use of indigenous knowledge in texts, curriculum and pedagogy. I also wanted my work to reflect the varied cultural elements that shape my Jamaican identity, notably the nation-language, music and poetry. However, I was faced with the challenge of merging all of these interests to produce a useful body of work that offered practical ways to re-think education in the Jamaican/Caribbean context.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the construction of racial and cultural identities through select textbooks used in Jamaica's primary and secondary schools. I will look at the transition from British-based texts to more Caribbean-focused material between 1962 and 1997, and the connection between educational objectives (which includes pedagogy and curriculum), and an emerging Jamaican/Caribbean identity. I will also argue that the dissemination of anti-colonial education is needed in schools to upsurge oppressive Eurocentric perspectives that have distorted and devalued African-Jamaican cultural identity and artistic expression.

The types of stories told in textbooks in Jamaican schools were designed to civilize and subjugate African-Jamaicans. The goal was to maintain the dominant power structure carefully constructed along race, class, and gender/sex lines. The content and images often portrayed the beauty of European-ness - both aesthetically and in the contributions of European societies to civilization - to the exclusion and devaluation of African aesthetics, culture and art. The message

was clear: African people have made no significant contributions to any society, at any time.

Another aim in writing this thesis is to stimulate discussion about how Jamaica's local language and the indigenous knowledges that it transmits can be better represented in texts. By raising the issue I wish to consider the following questions: What are the implications of centering local knowledges in text and school curriculum? What are the limitations? How will this shift affect pedagogical practices? And what are the implications for the academic objectives set out by schools? By posing the final question, I mean to argue that schools in Jamaica must re-define successful outcomes so that they are not tied solely to preparing students to compete in the capitalist marketplace. Rather, education has to embody individual and communal growth, spirituality and emotionality.

The arguments presented in the research paper are by no means final. I have limited the study to Jamaica because I am a Jamaican woman of African descent. Moreover, I attended school there up until 1981, so I vividly recall the textbooks students used, the type of curriculum we were expected to follow, and the type of practices teachers relied on to make us learn. It is my hope that other Caribbean students and educators wishing to explore the questions raised here will find this research useful.

Considering the scope of my study, I encountered several immediate limitations. First, I immigrated to Canada in 1981. Since that time, I have been immersed in the Canadian educational system so I am not intimately familiar with all the changes that have affected and transformed education in Jamaica. This raises the issue of my "insider-outsider" position, and the legitimacy of carrying out this type of research when I have not made any contributions to improving the quality of education in this country. Second, due to limited resources and time, I was unable to travel to Jamaica to do research. If I had the opportunity to do so, I would have been able to speak, first hand, with educators and students about my project, visit schools and

access pertinent materials from the University of the West Indies library. Nonetheless, I decided to forge ahead, and viewed this project as an opportunity to give something back to the system that shaped my early years. My hope is that this thesis will add (in some small way) to the dialogue about how local cultural sources of information can be used to improve education.

When I began to conceptualize this study, I had no idea where or how I would find textbooks used in Caribbean schools as far back as the 1960s. Fortunately, I became re-acquainted with a childhood friend whom I had not seen since we graduated from primary school in Jamaica. When I told her about my project, it turned out that her sister in Jamaica had kept a small collection of some of the books that we had used in school. Both of them were excited about the work because so little had been done on the topic, and her sister was kind enough to give me four textbooks that she had kept from our primary school days.

My good fortune continued because my sister-friend kept in touch with one of our primary school teachers (who had disciplined me most enthusiastically on several occasions), but who was supportive and helpful when I contacted her. When Mrs. Wright wrote to tell me that she would look for a “few books,” I was not expecting the box of twenty books and newspaper articles that arrived at the post office.

The textbooks used in this thesis are taken from History, Language Arts, and Literature. I chose to focus on these disciplines because they are most susceptible to interpretation and easily manipulated to suit political objectives. Set against Jamaica’s historical, social and political milieu, passages from appropriate texts will be integrated into the body of the thesis to illustrate the changing educational process since 1962. I intend to broaden the definition of “texts” to include examples of music and poetry that are an integral part of Jamaica’s cultural and oral tradition without which no discussion about an emerging national identity would be complete.

Jamaica has a culture rich in music, poetry, dance and drama. All these forms of artistic expressions, especially reggae music, pulsate in sync with anti-colonial political and social messages. They are deeply rooted in African rhythms and find expression in the nation's Creole language. In addition to transmitting culture, music and poetry in particular, represent the main forums through which ordinary Jamaicans have been able to influence the country's political and social agendas. My love for these forms of cultural expression is one of the motivating factors in writing this thesis, so I aim to show how they can be used to enrich learning, and open up interesting possibilities for different pedagogical approaches.

The Problem

My study is grounded in the reality that schools in Jamaica are sites of contestation. On the one hand, school is one of the places where competing interests meet and where power is asserted and reproduced. On the other hand, school holds the potential for ordinary Jamaicans to improve their quality of life through education. Therefore, a number of demands and expectations are placed on these academic institutions.

The colonizing intent of education in Jamaica created a legacy of challenges. Educational reforms in the early years of independence focused on building more schools, implementing the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) to provide wider access to education, creating free spaces for disadvantaged students, and training teachers for the rigors of the profession. When I entered primary school in the late 1970s, I benefited from these impressive accomplishments.

The emphasis on improving education by building more schools and increasing the number of available spaces meant that the quality and content of education was overlooked in the short term. This is not a criticism of the choices that governments made about where to channel scarce resources, for the legacy of colonialism left many aspects of the educational system in

need of improvement. However, Jamaican students and teachers continued to rely on textbooks produced for British children well into the 1970s. Ironically, the use of these texts pointedly illustrated how colonized people came to rely on the master's tools.

My interest in focusing on textbooks stems from the view that books play a central role in supporting colonial education. These books tell stories, and “stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (Said, 1993:xii). Therefore, the dangers associated with external control of textbook content and images become immediately apparent.

Printed material with negative representations of marginalized people have played a crucial role in creating and maintaining dominance. In books such as Robinsoe Crusoe, by Daniel Defoe, the colonial explorer creates:

Demiurge-like, a whole civilization, and has the power of naming ‘his’ islander Friday, for Crusoe ‘saves’ his life on that day; and Friday, we recall, is the day God created Adam, thus strengthening the analogy between the ‘self-sufficient’ Crusoe and God (Shohat, 1991:53),

Black Sambo, by Helen Bannerman, The Jungle Book, and The White Man’s Burden (poem), both by Rudyard Kipling, convey strong messages about simple, child-like natives, in order to justify imperialism and colonialism. Said (1993:9) states that, “imperialism is the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory,” [and that colonialism] “is almost always a consequence of imperialism” [involving] “the implanting of settlements on distant territory.”

Even when the stories in texts are not directly about people of colour, the universality of the written word renders it capable of transmitting powerful ideas about the types of bodies that are valuable and those that are not. Stories like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Pocohantas* are crucial in maintaining cultural imperialism. These stories

shape views about beauty and skin-colour value since both the princes and princesses are white; they support patriarchy, since vulnerable women are waiting to be rescued, and they influence socialization patterns and attitudes that privilege Euro-American values and culture.

These stories, as told in texts and other media, do not capture any of the mythical/cultural aspects of the realities of children growing up in Africa and the Caribbean where orality is an important part of socializing children to function in their cultures. Indeed, they are foreign to the lived realities of the people in these regions. But because these stories and images are globalized by media, other cultures continue to be undermined and measured against these Eurocentric narratives.

Some educators would argue that these books and children's stories are harmless classics in that they capture a sense of timeless innocence, while others propose that in the interest of free speech and expression they should be used in the classroom to entertain and engage children. The issue is not whether these books/stories should be read/told and discussed. Rather the concern should focus on *how* they are read, and *whose* interest they serve when they are legitimized in the classroom.

The persistence of colonial attitudes and ideas regarding race, class, and gender/sex, suggests that the colonial agenda is still lurking under the surface of contemporary texts. Alarmed by the prevalence of dominant ideology in texts, a number of Caribbean scholars, policy-makers and educators have introduced reforms to ensure that textbooks reflect African-Caribbean cultural realities and values. Yet, much remains to be done. Misinformation coupled with the uncritical dissemination of the material does nothing to challenge existing systems of power, or to offer education that is liberating. This, I believe, has to be the goal for all forms of education.

Although the number of textbooks written by and about Caribbean people have increased since the 1980s, only a few include excerpts from music, poetry and stories written in the Creole vernaculars of the region. Where they are included, Creole is limited to one or two examples in Standard English textbooks.

Research Objectives and Methodology

In addition to examining the extent to which textbooks used in Jamaica's schools disrupt hegemonic educational practices, this study intends to broaden the definition of texts to advance an anti-colonial dialogue. Ultimately, the goal is to argue that a commitment to anti-colonial texts, pedagogy and curriculum are instrumental in improving the overall system of education in Jamaica. My study has four primary objectives: (1) to examine select textbooks for content and images, and also for the messages they convey in constructing racial and cultural identity; (2) to examine the cultural, political and social shifts that resulted in more Caribbean content in texts; (3) to present some of the challenges facing Jamaica in its efforts to decolonize education; and (4) to propose strategies that will further erode the persistence of racist, sexist and classist ideologies in the classroom. Although the body of the work focuses on education in Jamaica, wherever appropriate, it draws on similar experiences borne by English-speaking Caribbean countries.

In gathering primary information for this thesis, I interviewed nine Caribbean people. The first three people were asked to speak to what they remember about Independence Day and what the transition meant to them. I interviewed a young man who was a student when the region changed from British-based examinations to exams governed by Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) guidelines. I asked him to share his perspective on this change and how it affected him as a student. I also interviewed a classmate at OISE who grew up in Trinidad at the height of the

Black Power Movement (BPM). The Movement had a tremendous impact on the social and political agendas not just in Trinidad, but also in Jamaica. In addition to shedding light on the Movement's message about racial pride and decolonization, my classmate talked about the type of education children were exposed to. Finally, four Caribbean teachers were asked to share their views on textbooks, curriculum and pedagogy, and the changes in Caribbean education over the course of their professional life.

The participants in this study were selected based on their knowledge of the area they were asked to address. The participants who live in Toronto were interviewed extensively over the phone or in person. In the interest of allowing the reader to follow the interviews as closely as possible, I have opted not to present background information about the interviewees in this section of the thesis. Rather, I decided to provide brief information about each speaker in the chapters that discuss and analyze what the interviewees actually said. In this regard, the reader does not have to come back to the first chapter to find out who is speaking at a given moment. With respect to confidentiality, each interviewee is referred to by his or her initials.

With the permission of my supervisor, the interviewees in Jamaica were contacted by mail and asked to fill out a detailed questionnaire. Conducting research by questionnaire presented a number of challenges. Most obvious is the lack of opportunity to elaborate on questions or ask new ones for further clarification. After reading the responses, it became apparent that some answers raised issues requiring a follow-up discussion, yet this was not possible under the circumstances. Once I reviewed the questions and responses within the context of more focused research objectives, I realized that not all of the information was relevant.

Organization

Chapter One is divided into two parts. Part One focuses on the universal impact of written colonial material on education. I will cite well-known books that support the colonial project to strengthen my arguments. Also, in this chapter, I outline four research objectives and elaborate on the methodology. Furthermore, I discuss the principles of anti-colonialism and provide definitions and examples of indigenous knowledge which is the discursive framework in which this study is grounded. In Part Two, I provide a literature review of materials about the connection between ideology, textbooks and power. Finally, I include an overview of the contestation between Standard English, the language of choice and prestige in Anglophone Caribbean schools, and Creole vernaculars which remain marginalized.

Chapter Two places the issues at hand in historical context and presents an overview of the factors that shaped the country's current system of education. This chapter focuses on how Jamaican history is written, and problematizes the notion of "discovery" which is often the central point of departure for telling Caribbean history in textbooks. Chapter Two also addresses some of the historical oppressions that define power relations in the country, and the way in which education developed to replace physical means (for instance slavery and corporal punishment) of controlling black people.

Chapter Three focuses on the growing pains of a nation attempting to assume full responsibility for its destiny. Part One of this chapter looks at the challenges and concerns facing an independent Jamaica. Namely, the struggle to find a national voice, to legitimize the dominant African- cultural identity, and to overcome the political and social divisions between ordinary Jamaicans and the ruling elite. Part Two covers educational reforms; a brief discussion on the limitations in accessing education; and a detailed critique of the content of primary school texts

used in the early years of independence. Interviews with Caribbean people who share their knowledge about independence and schooling are included and discussed. Finally, the chapter offers examples of work by some Caribbean writers and poets to illustrate how proverbs, folktales and stories drawn from indigenous knowledge forms in Jamaican culture can enrich the learning experience.

In Chapter Four I outline and analyze excerpts from the interviews conducted with four teachers who witnessed changes in Caribbean education. The chapter also provides a broader definition of “texts” by looking at how reggae music and poetry can be included to reflect indigenous culture and critique colonial education. Finally, Chapter Five reiterates the main points raised in this thesis and looks at the pedagogical and communicative implications of indigenous knowledges on perspectives about education.

Towards a Discursive Framework

The development of education in Jamaica centred around the idea that African people lack culture and morality. The project was grounded in the belief that a system of education designed and delivered by Europeans, or people trained in that tradition, offered the best hope of civilizing black people. Alleyne (1988) argues that in Euro-American tradition, forms of belief or behaviours peculiar to other groups are usually seen as inferior and abnormal. Words like “primitive,” “savage,” “barbarian”, and “uncivilized” litter European anthropological narratives as wrongfully propagating that “other cultures” have not evolved. Yet, it is the strong cultural beliefs and practices of African people, so much of which education was meant to destroy, that enabled Africans to resist oppression.

Historically, schools represent a microcosm of the oppression played out in the larger society. School is both an instrument of cultural change and cultural persistence or revival, it can

be an effective instrument for spreading cultural imperialism, and it is useful for fostering notions about the innate or achieved superiority of one culture over another (Alleyne, 1988). In Jamaica, school developed as a site for controlling and exploiting black people to maintain elite group power. In grounding my own political project, I am compelled to locate my body in this thesis and through the definition of texts and the production of knowledge that are its focus. I begin with the position that mine is a black female body, and that black female bodies have been exploited or missing in dominant texts and knowledge production. I extend the argument by pointing out that the body is a crucial factor in the knowledge process, because knowledge lives in the body and memory. Referring to African people's journey through the middle passage, Alleyne (1988:6) argues that:

Political and economic institutions and a full array of tools, instruments and foods could not easily be transported, what could be transported were acquired skills, memories, habits, predisposition, cognitive orientation and language - all beneath the surface of consciousness, and persistent even in the worst condition.

African indigenous knowledges were transplanted to the "New World" despite the inhuman effects of slavery. These knowledges embody culture and historical experiences that form an African worldview. If they are missing or disparaged in textbooks, curriculum and pedagogy, information about African people in Jamaica is false and alienating.

Ironically, school and the colonial education it provided was (and is) one of the few routes to a better life for the majority of African people in the diaspora. Because it is strongly linked to economic security, Africans and Caribbean people place a high value on education. A number of Jamaicans - particularly people who grew up in the pre-independent years under the British system - praise the system of schooling for its discipline, commitment to excellence, order, and high standards. Many of them identify the erosion of these factors in contemporary education as one of the causes for failure among youths.

Notwithstanding a long history of challenges and obstacles, Jamaica's system of education - indeed education in the Caribbean - is rigorous and disciplined. The standards of achievement are high because so much is at stake. Nevertheless, I find romantic readings of "school back home", especially among some older Caribbean people, disturbing. The reality is that Jamaica's system of schooling evolved along clear race, class and gender lines.

On the one hand, primary school was meant to prepare black, working class Jamaicans for low economic and social positions. On the other hand, secondary schools were established to serve the needs of the middle-upper class, white and mixed-raced students who could not afford a foreign (British) education, but who were being groomed to assume positions of power in society. Over the years, there has been steady improvement with regards to an increase in the number of black students accessing secondary education. However, the experience of school and education continue to be mediated by race, class and gender locations, as well as being measured against external forces. How, then, can schools (and the texts used in them) capture the cultural realities of Jamaican people and the ways in which they negotiate their daily existence? I propose that a shift towards an anti-colonial discourse that centres indigenous/traditional knowledges in education in general, and textbooks in particular, can further the process of disrupting hegemonic practices.

An anti-colonial perspective offers a critical reading of the colonial experience of marginalized groups. It gives voice and context to the myriad forms of resistance waged by the colonized, it challenges the view that power lies exclusively in the hands of the colonizer; and it centres the notion that discursive agency and power have always resided in, and among, colonized groups. Dei (1997) argues that Africans survived centuries of oppression because of their strong ties to community and family pattern behaviours. Furthermore, he explains that the anti-colonial discourse hangs on to a critical reading of race, the process of colonialization, and

the structures of imperialism that support it.¹

By centering the colonial experience from the point of view of the colonized, the anti-colonial discourse offers a fluid reading of history that gives continuity to marginalized groups rather than a perspective that presents history in stages (for example, pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial). A categorized historical view, which is usually linear, is a Western anthropological approach that seeks to manage the experience of the Other. Conversely, an anti-colonial critique centres on an indigenous knowledge paradigm that incorporates language and traditional knowledge forms that shape and transmit cultural/social behaviours, literature, politics, and spirituality. In other words, anti-colonialism presents a more holistic view of southern people and the cultural influences that shape their worldview.

By focusing on marginalized people in theory and practice, an anti-colonial discourse validates the indigenous knowledge and cultural/oral traditions that have been historically undermined. A new respect for indigenous knowledge is evident among Caribbean educators and policy-makers who now recognize the value of cultural capital that students bring to the classroom, particularly with regards to language.

In 1993, the Jamaican Ministry of Education drafted a document entitled Reform of Secondary Education. In it, the authors state that:

Most children entering school can be seen as partially bilingual. They are usually fluent Creole speakers moving towards Standard English as a target language. The situation was recognized in the primary curriculum where teachers were encouraged to accept the children's home language and help them move gradually towards Standard English.²

Other examples of accepting and using Creole language to improve learning are evident in the inclusion of poems, stories and proverbs in some Caribbean English Language textbooks. I offer

¹ Notes from George Dei's 1996-97 Anti-racism Studies class.

² The ROSE document is a collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the World Bank outlining curriculum objectives for secondary schools.

a more detailed discussion and illustration of these developments in chapters three and four.

While I cannot argue that an anti-colonial educational approach is now standard practice in Jamaican schools, there is an apparent willingness to recognize the value of the indigenous cultural experience in education. There is also a recognition that indigenous knowledge forms, and what comprises formal education, need not be mutually exclusive.

Anti-colonial discourse is connected to the indigenous knowledge and anti-racism frameworks. Therefore, it is problematic to discuss anti-colonialism without incorporating these discursive approaches towards resistance. The following paragraphs offer definitions and examples of indigenous knowledge and anti-racism practices within the Jamaican context. To illustrate that indigenous knowledge embodies broad social and political perspectives that shape the worldview of an entire people, the arguments are not only limited to the sphere of education. Instead, the discussion uses examples of indigenous cultural practices in the areas of medicine and religion to show how Africans were able to and resist and survive oppression.

Indigenous knowledge may be defined as a knowledge consciousness arising locally and in association with long-term occupancy of a place (Dei, 1998). It refers to the traditional norms and social values, as well as to the mental constructs which guide, organize and regulate a peoples' way of living and making sense of their world (Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 1998). Elsewhere, S. Kroma (1995) defines indigenous knowledge as local knowledge derived from interactions between people and their environment, which is characteristic of all cultures; it spans the entire range of human experience including history, linguistics, politics, art, economics, administration and psychology; and it is the basis for decision-making and for the content of education in traditional societies.

African people who arrived in Jamaica brought with them indigenous knowledges, beliefs and cultural/religious practices, kinship and communal patterns that are evident in what now

constitutes Jamaican culture. So deeply rooted was the folktale tradition in African life, that it survived the slave trade and re-established itself wherever Africans settled, and in whatever languages they adopted (Elabor-Idemudia, 1998). The manifestation and survival of indigenous life ways is not just an act of anti-colonialism, but it also demonstrates that “power and discourse is not possessed entirely by the colonizer” and that oppressed people do develop strategies for survival under destructive circumstances.³ Strategies for resistance and survival are particularly evident in indigenous medical and religious practices that are still a vital part of Jamaica’s heritage.

Traditional Medicines

The cultural practices and the spoken languages of Africans were perceived as a threat to the European colonial project in Jamaica. But they were also the glue that held together African minds, bodies and spirits in the face of hegemony. Part of the cultural practices that African women brought with them to the Americas was their knowledge of preventative and curative medicine (Dadzie, 1990). Women are known to have played a crucial role as healers and mystics in indigenous African societies, and several modern studies have confirmed that both their role and their practice continued during slavery (ibid). Dadzie explains that African women’s “detailed knowledge of the properties of herbs, roots, barks, and plants, passed on from generation to generation enabled slave women to offer a range of treatments, including laxatives, sedatives, inoculations and abortants” (ibid:29).” These practices were perceived as contrary, and threatening, to the colonial medical order which was based on empirical scientific methods in what was essentially a male dominated realm.

³ Notes from George Dei’s Spring 1997 Anti-Racism Studies Class.

Traditional medical practices are still prevalent in the Caribbean. Some Caribbean people typically use herbs to treat common illnesses, even when prescribed medications are available. The continuation of this practice was quite apparent in a recent study conducted on how Caribbean people living in South East Toronto manage and treat respiratory illnesses and asthma. Working with a Professor at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, I interviewed twenty Caribbean immigrants with breathing problems. Of the twenty, twelve reported using traditional medicines (leaves boiled and taken as tea and special balms) along with, or without, prescribed medicines. Some of the participants spoke at length about the effectiveness of and the trust invested in traditional medicines because of the long history of use in the family unit.

Religious Practices

Traditional African religious practice “lent itself quite well to organized rebellion; it was a unifying element to those who believed in it and also provided an acceptable excuse for the gathering of slaves” (Bush, 1990:75). Bush also argues that ‘Obeah’ (the practice of highly secretive forms of magic, herbs, and folk medicines still prevalent in contemporary Jamaica), frightened Europeans who associated these rituals with subversion and paganism. Furthermore, they viewed Obeah and other mystical beliefs as something to be feared, always harmful and destructive because they were incomprehensible to them (ibid).

Differences in religious beliefs underscores the perceived threat of African indigenous knowledges in the spiritual realm. The Christian theological framework which balances the forces of good and evil in the quest for redemption in the after-life, bears little resemblance to the more holistic traditional practices of African spirituality. Whereas Africans viewed spirituality as part of everyday, commonplace existence, Europeans experienced religion only in the ‘other-worldly’ context of Christianity (Bush, 1990), with an eye to reaping rewards in heaven. Adding

to Bush's point, the power invested in the Bible as the final written word on religion and spirituality, significantly contrasted with the African view of spirituality and religion in being holistic, all-encompassing, and oral.

It is not accidental that the Bible was the central text used to educate Africans, and that orality - embodying as it did speech patterns that were unfamiliar and threatening - became associated with being barbaric. By offering education that recognizes and incorporates indigenous knowledge, schools have the opportunity and the responsibility to begin to address some of the historical inequalities in Caribbean society.

Anti-colonial and Anti-racism Discourses

An anti-colonial discourse centres critical race studies in addressing inequalities, thereby closely linking anti-colonial and anti-racism practices. Anti-racism education is often discussed within the context of challenging structural racism in North America. In light of this, it is relevant to briefly problematize race issues in the Caribbean to show how power relations manifest themselves and to examine the usefulness of anti-racist principles in that context.

Racial boundaries in the region are drawn along the lines of black-skin/light-skin/mixed-race people. Whereas the prevailing view is that black skin represents degeneracy and laziness, Ford-Smith (1994:98) points out that the light-skin/mixed race person also embodies a precarious identity that carries its own pain:

It is common to represent the "mulatto" as if s/he is somehow naturally predisposed to collusion with colonialism because of an illusive striving for white privilege, and an inherently ambivalent identity which leads to weak-kneed politics. In Jamaica, the epithet "brown man politics" carries with it the pejorative meaning of collusion and ambivalent.

In some ways, the light skin/mixed race population in Jamaica is discriminated against and stereotyped. However, they typically make up the majority of the ruling class, they come from

wealthy means, and they control most of the resources. In Jamaica, it was Michael Manley, a white Jamaican from a wealthy family, who introduced policies to address the stark exploitation of the black population by light-skin/mixed-race Jamaicans. Although there are common ties along cultural lines, racial discrimination in the Caribbean exists much as it does in North America albeit in different forms. Can an anti-colonial approach that embraces the principles of anti-racism be used to address racial domination in the education system in the region?

If, as Dei (1993:41) states,

anti-racist education means training people in the actualities of equality and justice through a critical teaching praxis which addresses issues of social difference, inequality, racial oppression and sex discrimination in the classroom and schools,

then there is a place for anti-racism education in Caribbean classrooms. This is not to suggest that the ten principles of anti-racism education, as articulated by Dei, are not without limitations when applied to the Caribbean context.⁴ However, the discourse's emphasis on, (1) providing for a holistic understanding and appreciation of the human experience; (2) acknowledging the traditional role of education systems in producing and reproducing racial, gender, sexual, and class-based inequalities; (3) stressing that school problems experienced by youth cannot be understood in isolation from material and ideological circumstance; and (4) questioning power, privilege and the rationalization for domination based on skin colour, are all appropriate in challenging educational and other societal disadvantages. Therefore, an understanding of both anti-racism and anti-colonial discourses can most likely address issues arising from inequality in the majority of Caribbean institutions.

⁴ See Dei's Anti-Racism Education: Theory & Practice, 1996, pp. 27-35 for a list of Anti-racism principles.

Literature Review

Central to the appraisal of the colonial project is an understanding of how the Eurocentric vision came to define others through discourses of power and domination. I would like to approach this appraisal by examining both the hidden and overt agendas of educational texts in the colonizing process. By doing this, I aim to show that ideological inconsistencies and historical inaccuracies in textbooks lead to systemic oppression in the pursuit of knowledge.

Apple (1990:vii) asks, “whose knowledge is of most worth?” Although the question is posed with regards to competing knowledges in American schools, it has universal implications, particularly in situations where education and colonialism are closely related. At the heart of the struggle for complete liberation through education in Jamaica, is the lingering view that anything associated with African/blackness, is worthless. This view was consistently promoted in textbooks and throughout the educational system in general.

The power of texts as agents of socialization cannot be underestimated. If school is considered to be a major agent of socialization, “the textbook is perhaps the most effective sub-agent for inducting the young into the culture of their society” (King & Morrissey, 1988:13). Further, the authors note that textbooks have been the means through which accumulated knowledge and technology of the past have been conveyed to each generation. Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) write poignantly about the role and the use of texts in the contestations that take place in school. The authors capture the essence of texts as tools when they point out that the types of knowledge that appear in texts are not neutral because “texts are not simply systems of facts. Rather they are the results of political, economic and cultural activities, battles and compromises” (ibid:1-2).

Apple and Christian-Smith argue that what gets to become legitimate knowledge is the result of complex power relations and struggles across identifiable class, race, gender/sex and

religious hierarchies. Controversies over official knowledge, they note, usually centre around what is included and excluded in textbooks, signifying more profound political, economic, cultural relations and histories (ibid:3). Apple and Christian-Smith's discussion on the non-neutrality of texts strengthens my argument that colonial education supported the mandate of the dominant European culture to the disadvantage of the African majority. Finally, Apple and Christian-Smith see texts as being important in, and of, themselves since they signify, through content and form, particular constructions of reality and particular ways of selecting and organizing that vast universe of possible knowledge (ibid:3). With this in mind, anti-racist education with its liberatory pedagogical base offers possibilities of resistance and empowerment for people of African descent.

Cherryholmes (1988) argues that textbooks are products of constraints, they are rationally tailored to satisfy state textbook selection committees, and widely reflect accepted scope and sequence guidelines. Cherryholmes further notes that textbooks usually avoid controversial content, and that the choice of texts conform to the professional training, work experience, beliefs and attitudes of the people making the selection.

Cherryholmes' arguments underscores the point that textbooks are not devoid of historical, social and political contexts. Rather, they reflect a particular ideology and represent the values of the dominant group in the society. The author's position support my argument that textbooks are selective about the stories they tell and the views that they represent. Elsewhere, Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) point out that symbolic representations in books and other media are often used to confer legitimacy on the dominant status of particular social groups. Both positions are relevant to the "Third World" where textbook production has been constrained by, and tailored to support the political ideologies of the colonial and neo-colonial project. This constraint has ensured that textbooks do not reflect the cultural experiences of indigenous people,

but present a monolithic, Western view to which all groups must aspire to if they wish to succeed. This point of view is very closely linked to the colonial-capitalist agenda whereby textbook production and content are tied to the availability of financial resources. Therefore, those who have wealth have the power to produce and disseminate knowledge.

Altbach (1984) states that the colonial past continues to influence the intellectual and educational life of many Third World nations. He points to the fact that indigenous sources of knowledge production (including publishing) were unable to flourish under colonial rule, so most countries are saddled with a long history of dependency on external text material. The author notes that publishers are a part of the colonial heritage, and that with few exceptions, modern publishing have deep origins in missionary and/or colonial government activities. Although colonial authorities placed strong emphasis on the production of texts for developing school systems, they usually favored European publishing firms and texts adapted from those used in the metropole. This legacy of control continues to influence the types of books, content and images that appear in Caribbean classrooms.

The fact that textbook content is not neutral and that production is subject to external agendas, raises three questions specific to the Jamaican-Caribbean region: How does imported knowledge shape local identity in education? How has external knowledge production influenced pedagogy and curriculum? And what has been its impact on the nation-language?

Jamaican identity in the realm of education has been, and continues to be significantly influenced by Euro-American culture and worldviews. Traditionally, these ideas have been transmitted through texts, pedagogy and school curriculum, among other forms of media. The images in textbooks continue to be mediated through Eurocentric views about race, class and gender, as revealed in a comprehensive study sponsored by UNESCO, in collaboration with the University of the West Indies in Barbados.

Conducted by Caribbean educators King and Morrissey (1988), the study set out to determine the extent to which colonialism still lingers in contemporary Caribbean textbooks. The result was a comprehensive document entitled Images in Print. I chose to undertake a brief overview of some of the salient points resulting from this study because it is one of few (that I found), that focuses exclusively on racial, cultural and gender biases in textbooks used in Caribbean schools.

King and Morrissey focused on three subjects in their study: History, Geography and Social Studies. Twenty textbooks were selected for review, and a series of questions were designed and used to measure biases and prejudices in the text material. The overall objective of the study was to alert teachers to the persistence of oppressive ideologies in texts and to guide them to choose more appropriate materials with stronger Caribbean content. What follows is a brief summary of the authors key findings in three areas.

1. Control of Textbook Publishing

The study revealed that one of the persistent problems is the almost total control of text book publication by foreign commercial publishing houses. The field has been dominated by the British for over a century and “they are jealous of the incursions of regional and local initiatives into what was once their monopoly” (King & Morrissey, 1988:15). Although the British tried to change the monopolistic image by investing in Caribbean texts over several decades and by aggressively recruiting Caribbean authors and editorial advisers, the problem of a former colonial power controlling textbook publication was obvious.

Most immediately striking is the lack of involvement of Caribbean people in the process of knowledge production. This leaves a clear path for British authors and publishers to incorporate and market racist, sexist and class-biased ideologies in textbooks, in turn having these ideologies legitimized in institutions of learning. Furthermore, the link between knowledge

production and the capitalist market cannot be overlooked. The connection is an example of how education is treated as a salable commodity rather than as an ontological part of cultural identity.

2. Racism in Textbooks

King and Morrissey state that bias in textbooks may take the form of omission or differential treatment. Referring to a study by American educator Klein,⁵ they suggest that “textbooks will be inherently racist if they are not written in a way that reflects the interests of those about whom they are being written” (ibid:25). Quoting from a 1961 report on the treatment of minorities in high school texts used in the United States, the authors note that texts still presented a “white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon view of history and the contemporary social scene, and that the problems of minority groups in that country were still largely neglected” (ibid:25).

It is not difficult to see the similarities in the Jamaican/Caribbean contexts. Although people of African descent typically make up the majority of the population in a number of Caribbean countries, their points of view and cultural experiences were missing from textbooks and school curriculum.

Turning their focus to Caribbean textbooks, King and Morrissey cite a review by Caribbean historian, Brereton who pointed out that some Caribbean texts continued to portray non-white peoples as invisible and passive (ibid:26). Brereton also found evidence of distortion and Eurocentricism. Of the twenty books reviewed for their study, King and Morrissey concluded that while some prominence was given to the experiences of blacks in the Caribbean,

⁵ Klein, Reading Into Racism: Bias in Children's Literature and Learning Materials. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985, p. 1.

some historians were dismissive of the agency embodied by Africans in their survival. Referring to one such text, the authors argue that the entire history of slave resistance in the Caribbean is dismissed by Greenwood and Hamber who declare that:

No concerted risings or rebellions could be planned because there was no trust and communication between slaves. Friendships and alliances would take a long time to develop because of tribal antagonisms.⁶

Greenwood and Hamber failed to recognize that through organized rebellions and uprisings, enslaved Africans were able to undermine the plantation structure and aggravate the owners, even at the risk of being killed.

King and Morrissey note that African history and culture were under-represented in five of the twelve books which could have been expected to include treatment of this theme. This was also true of the Ameridians, East Indians, and Chinese whose historical experiences were scantily treated or completely ignored. In their view, the absence or devaluing of specific bodies and cultures is a reflection of the deep-rooted structural racism in Caribbean textbooks, and by extension, Caribbean institutions of power. The rest of the section on race in textbooks offered comprehensive examples of persistent stereotypes. King and Morrissey also problematized the fact that while people of colour were represented in the majority of the twenty texts, there were significant issues around how they were portrayed.

The authors' critique on race in textbooks could have been enriched by connecting textual representation to larger structures of power inequalities in Caribbean society. For example, there is a direct connection between skin colour, access to "good" education in the region, and those

⁶ King and Morrissey citing R. Greenwood & S. Hamber, Emancipation to Emigration, (MacMillan Caribbean, 1980).

who get to occupy positions of power in Caribbean society. Typically, textbooks reflect the values of white or light-skin Caribbean people with vested interests in aspiring to a European lifestyle. Since race, class and gender locations converge to determine who occupies positions of power in society, without exception, textbooks reflect the values of white or light-skin Caribbean people who are aspiring to a middle-class European lifestyle. By separating each factor instead of viewing them from an integrative perspective, King and Morrissey do not adequately capture the structural nature of the problems reflected in textbooks and education in Caribbean society.

3. Sexism in Textbooks

King and Morrissey ground their findings in this section within the context of the traditional gender-based roles that boys and girls have been socialized to play. They note that on the one hand, boys have generally been taught to be more aggressive, independent and competitive. On the other hand, girls are socialized to be docile and passive in preparation for their roles as homemakers. There is no shortage of critical writings on these types of gender roles as they appear in numerous texts, and King and Morrissey cite a number of them in addressing this issue.

Drawing on Trecker's 1971 research,⁷ the authors point out that women are often invisible in textbooks and other educational material. Trecker conducted a study which revealed that texts are marred by omission and are likely to posit male worldviews. Further, while there has been an increase in the amount of space available for black history, history is often told from

⁷ Janice Trecker, "Women in US History High School Textbooks," in Social Education, 37, 1971, pp. 249-260.

the black male perspective of which the female experience is merely an extension. This holds true for texts about Caribbean history (the majority of which are written by men), which often completely ignore or minimize the contributions that women have made to Caribbean society.

In almost half the books under review in King's and Morrissey's study, much of the material used masculine pronouns to capture the experience of all slaves thereby negating slave women. As an example, the authors point to Hall's statement that:

The unskilled slaves...may well have considered the skilled slaves socially superior since [h]e did not have to labour all day in the cane fields, perhaps had better living quarters, and maybe even had an apprentice boy under him learning the trade"(p. 35).⁸

King and Morrissey offer numerous similar examples to strengthen their arguments regarding gender insensitivity, but they too fall into the trap of using the masculine pronouns they set out to critique. For instance, in explaining the significance of texts, the authors argue that "throughout the ages, textbooks have been the means through which the accumulated knowledge and technology of *man's* past has been conveyed to each generation" (p. 13). This reinforces the point that language is so steeped in the male worldview it still takes a conscious effort to ensure the use of inclusive language.

Identity formation and socialization in education are not limited to the messages and images conveyed to students in texts. As with textbook content, the socialization of students is significantly affected by pedagogical practices and curriculum that are tied to issues of power and inequality.

Apple (1990) poignantly argues that the decision to define some groups' knowledge as

⁸ The quote is originally taken from Douglas Hall's The Caribbean Experience: An Historical Survey, 1450-1960, Heinemann Educational Books (Caribbean), 1982, p. 49.

worthwhile to pass on to future generations while other groups' culture and history hardly see the light of day, says something important about who has power in society. The author supports his position by pointing out that some social studies texts continue to speak of "the Dark Ages" rather than the historically more accurate, and much less racist phrase "the African American and Asian ascendancy," or books that treat Rosa Parks as merely too tired to go to the back of the bus, rather than discussing her training in organized civil disobedience at the Highlander Folk School. Apple uses these examples to illustrate that differential power shapes curriculum and teaching practices. Although the examples are drawn from the American experience, they offer some clues about the how colonialism operates on a universal level in the educational sphere.

Apple speaks succinctly about what he refers to as the "hidden curriculum" in school which helps to maintain hegemony. Apple defines the hidden curriculum as those norms and values that are implicitly, but effectively taught in schools and that are usually not talked about in teachers' statements about academic outcomes. The author's definition suggests that curriculum is much broader than the formal agenda that outlines the specific subjects that students are expected to learn. Rather, curriculum embodies institutional practices, how the school itself is structured, whose pictures are on the school walls, what types of books are in the library, what the teachers look like and the class background from which they come, who works in the cafeteria and janitorial services, and who occupies the highest positions of power in the structure of the school. These are all connected to the process of learning and the maintenance of hegemony. Nowhere is this more evident than in countries that have been directly shaped by colonial practices wherein curriculum and pedagogy work to support a dominant agenda.

Generations of Jamaican teachers were trained in the British tradition. The emphasis on teaching students to speak and write the "Queen's English" to the detriment of the nation

language is still evident in pedagogical practices and curriculum. Furthermore, as members of the middle-class, teachers have a vested interest in ensuring the reproduction of the status quo. The history of who aspires to become a teacher and the type of teaching practices that were deemed appropriate, are deeply rooted in Jamaica's colonial tradition.

Bacchus (1994) states that teachers who were initially recruited from Britain to work in early Jamaican schools were required to be good female Christians of high religious and moral caliber. Moreover, Bacchus argues that the three most important aspects in the professional life of teachers were their religious and moral background, their general level of education, and the training they received. Critically analyzed, Bacchus' arguments indicate that teachers knew themselves to be the keepers of traditions and values that represented the cornerstone of Western civilization.

The pedagogical practices used by teachers and the subjects they were to teach had to adequately uplift the darker races, and uphold the standards of the British empire. This type of approach to education left no room for the reflection and representation of the cultural experiences of people of African descent. The need to regulate black bodies resulted in the use of corporal punishment, forcing students to conform. In Jamaican classrooms, students were beaten for lateness, rudeness (real or imagined), or for failure to complete assigned work.

In high school, it was forbidden to loiter outside school property or eat in public while wearing a school uniform. Students were expected to behave properly at all times or risked being punished. The reliance on corporal punishment and strict discipline suggests that colonized people tend to embrace the authoritarian practices used by the colonizer to maintain control. It also speaks to the state of pedagogical practices in the Caribbean in the post-independence era.

While some educators and parents may long for the good old days when students only spoke when spoken to, this corporal approach did nothing to foster creativity, confidence, and a

willingness to learn by taking chances. Learning by repetition under strict discipline contradicts an anti-racist teaching style whereby students are seen as producers of knowledge. Dei (1996:30) puts it best when he stated that “the tasks of anti-racism educators is to create safer spaces for all students to be able to develop some solutions to social problems. Anti-racism education must accord youths the right to utilize their own creativity and resourcefulness to respond to contemporary issues.” This cannot be achieved if educators insist on hanging on to authoritarian practices in the classroom.

Writing of the controversy between Standard English and Creole languages in the Angolophone Caribbean, Winford (1994) expresses the idea that there is a great deal of prestige attached to standard English, while Creole is still viewed with contempt. Winford argues that these contrasting attitudes are the result of a colonial legacy which places high value on the ability to communicate in Standard English. As the official language, Standard English is the preferred medium of public communication, the vehicle of literacy and the medium of education at all levels of the education system (ibid:44). In contrast, the majority of the population, whose native language is some form of Creole, generally have only limited command of Standard English and in many cases limited opportunity to use it in wider society.

The author goes on to state that while Caribbeanists, educators and language planners now recognize the importance of Creole vernaculars as distinct systems with grammatical structures and socio-linguistic contexts, Creole language(s) remain absent from public life. Public attitudes, shaped by class location and other factors, still oppose the use of Creole. Nonetheless, Creole languages are valid linguistic systems in their own right, representing social identity and cultural experience.

The points of view of all the authors whose work comprise this literature review are useful to understanding the importance of school textbooks, pedagogical practices and

curriculum and the roles they play in reproducing and maintaining dominance. Winford's views about language are particularly crucial in understanding the biases against Creole vernaculars in favor of Standard English in Caribbean schools and texts.

However, the authors cited cannot all offer practical solutions as to how educators might use indigenous cultural experiences and oral forms to disrupt hegemonic practices. By focusing on textbooks that have been used in the past in Jamaican schools, and by offering a wider range in what constitutes texts, I hope to offer a wider range of choices that capture the cultural knowledge and experience that students bring to the classroom.

In addition to outlining the research objectives and the methodological approaches used in this thesis, Chapter One provided a discursive framework that connects anti-colonial practices to indigenous knowledge and anti-racism education. Furthermore, by drawing on diverse sources, the literature review explains the connections between textbooks, pedagogical practices, and dominant group ideology in society. The review has also shown that language remains one of the sites of contestation in schools where Standard English is privileged at the expense of Creole language. In Chapter One, I attempted to lay the foundation on which to build the argument that an anti-colonial approach towards education in general, and texts in particular, should be used to challenge dominant discourse. Chapter Two places the issues raised here in their appropriate historical context.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY

Situating the historical conditions under which education emerged in Jamaica is crucial to understanding how textbooks were used to maintain dominance. Chapter Two discusses discovery, genocide, slavery, racism, and gender in Jamaican society leading up to the use of education as a tool of control. It also shows that the church has a long involvement in shaping education in the country, and how the Bible as text has been instrumental in supporting hegemony. The objective of this chapter is to establish that the educational system in Jamaica is strongly tied to the legacy of slavery and the patterns of oppression in that institution.

Problematizing “Discovery”

Jamaica emerged out of genocide, slavery and indentureship. It is a society that has deep roots in the plantocratic structures that organized economic and social relations among the country's ethnic and racial groups. It is also a country that has tried, with much success relative to its size, to distance itself from the colonial past. The struggle for independence and participation in world affairs as an autonomous nation has done much to move the country forward. Yet for all its success, this forward motion has unfolded in the context of a colonial and neo-colonial paradigm.

Some history textbooks note that on his second voyage in 1492, “Columbus discovered Jamaica...Columbus thought Jamaica ‘the fairest island that eyes have beheld; mountainous, and the land seem to touch the sky...all full of valleys and field and plains” (Black, 1987:20). The half-clad brown bodies of the Arawak and Carib Indigenous peoples - appropriately dressed for their environment - led Columbus and his men to believe that they had stumbled upon savages:

At first glance, the Spaniards could see their superiority over the Arawaks. These small dark-skinned people were half-naked, armed with primitive weapons and without any apparent military organization...

Likewise, the Europeans appeared strange and frightening:

The Arawaks for their part, looked on with fear and curiosity as the strange, white-skinned men disembarked from huge vessels, the likes of which they had never seen before. The Spaniards' bodies were covered, shining metal rested on their heads and they carried implements of metal in their hands. Their language was unlike anything they had heard before (Hall, 1987:9-11).

Elsewhere, Black (1987), whose *History of Jamaica* is used in high schools, points out that not all of the Indigenous peoples who Columbus encountered welcomed the Europeans as less critical readings of history would have us believe. Rather, upon arriving in Jamaica, Columbus met with hostility from some Indigenous people whose neighbours in Hispaniola and Cuba had had deadly encounters with the Spaniards. Nevertheless, Columbus was determined to land for he needed to repair his vessels and replenish the wood and water supply:

So he sent the ship's boat on ahead and with crossbowmen who killed and wounded a number of Indians. The Spaniards also let loose a big dog on shore which chased the terrified Arawaks and bit several of them savagely. Then Columbus landed and took possession of the island in the name of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain (Black, 1987:20).

At the end of day, when the bodies of Aboriginal men and women lay dead or dying from diseases they could not fight, from being beheaded, or tortured for sport by the Spaniards, a critical reading of history would reveal the real savages.

Colonial narratives legitimized the search for "treasure islands" by imbuing these quests with scientific and religious significance. Shohat (1991), elaborates on the role of science, cartography and geography in the "discovery project" by analyzing the 1586 map of America labeled "Terra Septentrionalis Incognita:"

On the left side of the map, a drawing of Columbus is juxtaposed with one of Queen Isabella. Underneath, the artist-cartographer's conceptualization of the discovery points to its beginning with a sailing ship, while the bottom shows Columbus and his mission's encounter with nude

natives (largely females)...Images of savage animals and primitive people point to the “content” of the continent in the land, sea and air. The imagery and the nominal inscriptions of places suggests the mastery of the continent and underline the fruits of the discovery (pp.45-46).

Narratives centred around discovery and possession - including the possession of bodies - were crucial to the Eurocentric colonial project. Godinho (1992) explains that discoveries by Europeans brought the consciousness of humankind its unity, thus making the knowledge of the world, and the knowledge of oneself possible. Godinho’s point reveals the difficulty in writing histories outside of the Eurocentric colonial paradigm which is seen as the universal norm. Thus the wisdom and knowledges of civilizations that emerged thousands of years before Europe - many of them lasting for centuries, even achieving higher degrees of progress - are relegated to the status of “backward” and “primitive” curiosities, deserving only to be observed and interpreted by Anthropologists and Ethnographers.

So-called “discoveries” are at the heart of master narratives that place Europe at the centre of history and civilization. In these narratives, history begins with Europe. The ideology of modernization becomes synonymous with Westernization, thus the philosophical discourse of modernity is necessarily Eurocentric. Within the Eurocentric colonial paradigm, cultural histories outside of the European experience are static and frozen in a primitive state. Rosaldo (1989:31) underscored this point when he argued that:

The Lone Ethnographer depicted the colonized as members of the harmonious, internally homogenous unchanging culture. When so described, the culture appears to “need” progress or economic and moral uplifting. In addition, the timeless traditional culture served as a self-congratulatory reference point against which Western civilization could measure its own progressive historical evolution.

It is by design that the colonial project claims discovery and hastens to erase the histories of those it encounters. Abdo and Yuval-Davis (1995:291), state that “in every settler society project, the country is perceived by the settler as a new world - available not only for immigration but

also for establishing a 'new and better society'." This speaks to the contestation of land and the re-writing of history to settle claims of ownership that is often the result of conquest.

Wherever conquest occurs, the colonizers justify violent occupation with the view that the space was unoccupied. If they hesitantly admit that it was populated on arrival, they are quick to point out that the primitive occupants were not using the land/space appropriately or that the resources were being squandered, or left in a state of undevelopment.⁹

These arguments are problematic for obvious reasons, not the least of which is the colonizer's desire to simplify competition for land. Competition is framed within the discourse of those who have the power to take it by force (the colonizer) and those who are undeserving and powerless to resist (the colonized). Said (1993:7) problematizes the occupation of, and contestation for land by stating that,

I have kept in mind the idea that the earth is in effect one world, in which empty, uninhabited spaces virtually do not exist. Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle of geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons, but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.

Writing the history of discovery almost always focuses on the complete destruction of Indigenous peoples. This is a central idea in Jamaican history which, as mentioned earlier, usually begins with the arrival of Europeans. Caribbean history textbooks are rife with titles like "The Death of the Indians," "The End of the Indian World" (Hall:1987), and "The Destruction of the Arawaks" (Black: 1983). The myth of the dead or dying Indigenous culture whose past is housed in the local museum, is a universal and persistent theme in the colonial project. What we encounter on the pages of history are textbook or domesticated Indians produced by the Western science of anthropology (Crosby:1991). Often, these printed narratives do not reflect the reality of the people they propose to represent. Resisting them, especially in the academic arena, is at

⁹ Notes taken from Sherene Razack's "Marginality and the Politics of Resistance" class, Fall 1996.

the heart of the anti-colonial academic project.

Slavery and Education in Jamaica

As with the Indigenous population, a similar fate awaited Africans who were captured and brought to Jamaica. The association of black bodies with primitiveness and degeneracy justified the enslavement of Africans and was supported by theories about biological determinism. Social Darwinism lent scientific credibility to ideas about the inherent inferiority of black and brown people and the superiority of white people (Turner:1987).

Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1895, articulated the British world-view by stating that “the British race is the greatest governing race that the world has ever seen...we have to carry to civilization, British justice, British law, religion and Christianity to millions and millions...who until our advent lived in ignorance, bitter conflict and whose territories have fallen to us to develop. That is our great duty” (Turner 1987:69).

Scholars who take up race and racism as a discipline have long debated the origin of these concepts and how they have historically organized power in different societies. In referring to the use of slave labour on the sugar plantations in the Caribbean, Dunn (1973:225) proposes that:

Some historians think the Europeans in the New World enslaved Negroes primarily because they were racists: white over black. I incline toward the alternative view, that whites enslaved blacks because they discovered that this sort of labour system worked very well.

The enslavement of millions of people cannot be explained by concluding that black people merely provided a cheap form of labour. The use of black bodies in dehumanizing ways resulted in a racist ideology that incorporated material and non-material dimensions. Moreover, the brutality and longevity suggests psychological, cultural, political and social components that are tied to the construction of European identity.

Before slavery began to emerge as a viable economic institution, Europeans had many contacts with African people much of it the context of trade. Miles (1989:1) argues that:

European explorers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not set out without expectations of the characteristics of the peoples they would meet, rather they occupied class positions in feudal societies which had a long tradition of imagining the Other, partly as a consequence of direct contact. Thus Africa was represented in European thought long before European involvement in the slave trade.

Prior to contact with Africans, there is no indication that Europeans held definitive views of Africans as being racially inferior. But critically analyzed, Miles' argument suggests a class-based racialization of peasants in feudal societies.

It also underscores the need for the elite in Europe's feudal system to juxtapose their class position against the peasantry in constructing their class identity. Taken a step further, it appears that European contact with Africans was central to the construction of Europeans as superior beings. Now, they had other bodies against which to measure their superiority which is similar to the patriarchal need to subordinate women to measure the superiority of men. The picture that begins to unfold here, is that systems of oppression go far beyond economic uses, but are central to shaping self, race, gender/sex identities.

Europeans set about making themselves into a superior race by developing very specific myths about who they were and what they had accomplished. But this could only work by creating opposite myths about backward, primitive Africans and Aborigines as a means by which to measure progress. Among the myths identified are (1) the myth of a people waiting in darkness for another people to bring them the light, (2) the myth of a people without a legitimate god, and, (3) the myth of the invader and conqueror as civilizer (Clarke, 1992:33-34).

The prevailing worldview of the rational man and irrational subjects facilitated the entrenchment of slavery and patriarchy in colonial society. These were systems of oppression within which Europeans were able to re-invent themselves and put the myths about others into

action. Within this context, Black and female bodies posed a threat of degeneracy and chaos while white male bodies, providing they belonged to the right class, represented order, rational behaviour and civil society.¹⁰ The unlimited freedom accorded to managing the plantation was part of a social contract entered into by European males in pursuit of individual interests centred around the accumulation of capital. A capitalist division of labour created a pyramid that situated Europeans, particularly wealthy men, at the top.

In the initial stages of slavery as a mode of production, whites were recruited from the British Isles under a system of indentureship. According to Beckles (195:131-132), most of them came to the Caribbean as,

voluntary servants, but many were defenseless persons - convicts vagrants political prisoners and victims of religious persecution - sold by the state that conceived their greater relative value to the imperium in terms of colonial servitude. Considerable evidence suggests the slave-like existence of these plantation labourers and indicate their general treatment measured in terms of material care and loss of civil liberties, was consistent with that experienced by enslaved Africans.

The recruitment of propertyless white women into this system indicates that class played a role in determining what types of bodies were to be exploited. It also shows that as European societies set about reconstructing themselves, decisions were made about who were fit to belong to the state and who were not. That the unfit could be absorbed into the capitalist mode of production had the double advantage of ridding the state of vagrants and providing labour for the colonial economic machine.

Beckle's detailed historiography of women in slavery in the Caribbean shows that landless white women, constructed as whores, were considered unfit for marriage by propertied white men. The women's lives closely reflected those of slaves and it was not unusual for white women and black men to set up households and produce children. But white women were free in

¹⁰ Notes from Sherene Razacks' "Marginality and the Politics of Resistance" class, Fall 1996.

ways that black people were not, and at no point did they have to contend with the saliency of skin-colour racism.

The social arrangements began to change by the early eighteenth century as a shortage of white women in the colonies came to be seen as a threat to the colonial project. On the one hand, there was concern that the already small white population would decrease even further in numbers without white women to bear children. On the other hand, black women were the majority in a number of labour gangs in the sugar producing colonies including Martinique, St. Dominique and Barbados. Their high rates of productivity indicated to the planters that they could have high returns by investing in black slave women who could be exploited for both their productive and reproductive labour.

Reconstructing Women's Bodies

A growing dependency on black slave labour coupled with a shortage of white women, led to a reconstruction of white female bodies in the colonies. Whereas she was once treated like a slave, changes in economic and social conditions declared her:

Unfit for labour on account of her endemic fragility, unsuited to physical exertion in the tropics as a consequence of her possession of a faint heart and delicate skin; terrified of black male sexuality on account of her chaste, virginal and jet-white purity and devoid of lust, gaiety and passion having embraced in its fullness the importance of ordered moral discipline (Beckles, 1995:135).

Re-constructing white female identity further entrenched the benefits of having white skin and drew clear lines between African and European women. Both were subjected to exploitation within a patriarchal system but occupied opposite ends of the spectrum. Whereas white women were relegated to virgin-like domesticity, black women were seen as “defeminized workers, women of strength whose tolerance for pain and hard work were boundless as their appetites for sex and perversion” (Bush, 1990:13). Beckles (1995:134-135) writes that:

As labour gangs became increasingly female in composition and the fertility of black women was propelled into the market economy as the key to an internal reproduction of labour, frequent references appeared in texts to black women as superordinate amazons who could be called upon to labour all day, perform sex all night and be quite satisfied morally and culturally to exist outside the formal structures of marriage and family.

Beckles' argument illustrates how women's bodies were racialized and sexualized, in different ways, to support an emerging patriarchal capitalist system.

At the risk of appearing to categorize women's oppression, I am compelled to point out that racialized gender oppression in plantation society was not "equal." Black women bore the brunt of economic and sexual exploitation with fewer opportunities to change their status. What I am offering is a critical reading of patriarchal domination and how oppressions intersect, without losing sight of which women's bodies had the potential to become valued through class mobility, and which ones never could.

These were the relationships carefully created and sustained under slavery that allowed the plantation to function. The end of slavery in 1838 in the English-speaking Caribbean did not result in equal access to power and resources. Van Dijk (1993) argues that the abolition of slavery neither ended colonialism nor did it coincide with a fundamentally different ideology about non-European peoples. This speaks to the depth of the material and non-material investments Europeans had in the system of slavery, and the fight they would engage in to keep it intact.

Trevor A. Turner (1987), states that when slavery ended in Jamaica, the image of an independent peasantry growing decadent in idleness and ruining the society by withholding its labour from the plantation, frightened the ruling elite. Turner points out that the West Indian Negro was portrayed as a "Quashie" lying contentedly in the shade with his stomach full of pumpkin while society sank into economic ruin and social degradation. These kinds of representations influenced educational policy with regards to newly freed slaves. Unable to

legally control Africans through physical means, Turner argues that education became the method for socializing African people to adapt desired patterns of behavior. Consequently, a system of education was developed to support the changing colonial agenda, and the church as an institution, played a prominent part in the process.

Emerging Education: Towards a New System of Control

Educational development emerged out of a number of economic factors in “post”-emancipation Jamaica, namely the significant decline in the sugar industry and the subsequent efforts to diversify the country’s economy. The decline in their economic fortunes, along with increased competition from the mix-raced (coloured) middle-class, meant that white elites had to fight to hold to their economic and political power. Increasingly, the coloured middle-class gained ground as more and more whites abandoned their plantations and returned to England.

The declining white population led to clearer distinctions between blacks and coloured, as blacks tended to be relegated to peasant farming, small scale trading or landless labourer status. The few who were able to attain modest success through education found themselves alienated from their communities, presumably because they would have acquired a British-based education and worldview, which was contrary to the values and cultural practices of their communities.

The education structure that emerged was not intended to assist black people to make the transition from slavery to freedom. Nor was the objective to offer them an opportunity to participate as full citizens in a society moving towards democracy. Rather, education was to provide “good moral training to the children of the working class” and to develop “habit - custom - not book learning, not pure mathematics, not trigonometry, but habit, training, doctrine and discipline” (Turner 1987:60). Consequently, all the major components of the educational project were enlisted to fulfill the colonial educational mandate.

As an institution, the church played a crucial role in organizing the process of learning around colonial objectives. Missionaries, primarily of the Wellesyans and Morovian order, were largely responsible for lobbying for, and implementing religious-based education in the Caribbean and Africa during the height of European imperialism. I agree with Turner (1987) that the civilizing intent of missionaries of English culture most often found expression in the schools of the Empire; and that textbooks and reading practices have a long history in the church and schooling (Luke:1991).

But the church and its representatives have committed far greater sins than linking education to religious indoctrination. Catholic religion as it was introduced in Jamaica, was a powerful agent in forcing Indigenous peoples to abandon their cultural and spiritual life ways, which were deemed backward by the church. The Bible too, was used to justify slavery. Most notably, the interpretation of the biblical story about Noah's curse on his son Ham who ridiculed him (Noah) in his drunken state, has been cited as one of the reasons why blacks were herded into slavery. The story developed to take on racial overtones, ranging from Ham "being smittened in his skin," to Noah telling Ham "your seed will be ugly and dark-skinned" (Altbach & Kelly, 1978:182-183).

Some members of the church participated in the abolitionist movement, and others, "in defiance of instructions openly sided with the slaves and, perhaps spoke and acted in ways likely to inflame slave resistance" (Hall,1987:66). However, as an institution, the church and its representatives have used Biblical education to dominate Indigenous people.

The missionaries who set out to aid the government in its colonial work through education knew the value of text as tool. It is not accidental that the Bible played a dominant role in constructing the right subordinate subjects to protect specific interests. Bacchus (1994:108) argues that "religious education was considered important because it was expected to contribute

to the moral welfare of the individual by laying a sound Christian foundation among the upcoming generation.” Bacchus further points out that the plantation class in Jamaica,

hoped that moral and religious education would help to teach the newly emancipated Negroes their divinely ordained place as agricultural labourers and the wisdom and blessing of peacefully and orderly executing the duties of the labouring class (ibid).

The religious programs implemented in post-slavery Caribbean schools meant that the day began with the Lord’s Prayer and the afternoon session closed in a similar manner. Using the results of the 1864 examination in Barbados, Bacchus (1994) shows just how strong an emphasis was placed on teaching religion:

1. Reading: Children able to read the new testament with degree of fluency: 49.7%.
2. Dictation: Children able to write dictation from the Psalms: 8.7%.
3. Catechistical Religious Instruction: Children able to say the texts of the Ten Commandments 13.9%.

With reference to the results for the infant schools:

1. Reading: Children able to read a verse from the New Testament: 20.7%
2. Dictation: Children able to write at dictation the 8th Commandment: 7.3%.
3. Catechistical Religious Knowledge: Children able to repeat intelligibly the Lord’s Prayer: 12.3%.

The author’s research illustrates the extent to which religious education permeated all subject areas in the curriculum in addition to comprising a large portion of the timetable.

In further studies, Bacchus (1990) shows that by choosing just the right biblical passages, the elites attempted to secure the moral elevation and spiritual salvation of Africans and to teach them to accept their subordinate position. The “students” were expected to master sentences like:

A high look and a proud heart is sin.
Buy the truth and sell it not.

Lord make me know mine end that I may know how frail I am.

According to Bacchus (1990:213), the catechisms used were designed to “wed religious, social and moral truths into a necessary order,” to provide answers to complex questions about the origin of man, personal and moral obligations, and respect for property. Shipmans Catechism, which was used by the Wesleyan missionaries offers two examples:

- Question:** What sort of place is hell?
Answer: A very dark bottomless pit full of fire and brimstone
- Question:** Will both body and soul be tormented?
Answer: Yes, every part of them at once.
- Question:** How will their bodies be tormented?
Answer: By lying and burning in flaming fire.
- Question:** How long will the torment last?
Answer: Forever (ibid:213).
- Question:** Suppose a servant or a slave meets with an unfeeling master, does that lessen the respect of duty?
Answer: By no means for it is the command of God, Peter 2:18-19
“Servants shall be subject to their masters with all fear”
- Question:** What is the duty of servants as to the property of their masters?
Answer: To keep watch against the sin of theft, waste and negligence, and to be as careful of their master’s property as if it were their own (ibid).

The use of the Bible to ‘civilize’ was not limited to the Jamaican/Caribbean educational experience because it was also used to subordinate other cultures under colonialism. The Europeans who immigrated to the United States used religion to disenfranchise Native people and destroyed their cultures by insisting that Native children be taken away from their families and educated in white schools. Jensen (1984:159) writes that in their effort to manage Native people “...Puritan religious vision, education and civilization were probably pursued for the greater goal of salvation...Massachusetts colonists felt a strong responsibility for the delivery of the Puritan package of theology and pedagogy including literacy, a complicated dogma, and a drastically changed social existence to natives in the Northeast.” To this end, “Missionaries most often used the Bible and catechism as textbooks and later, special readers with moral themes

were sometimes translated into Native languages” (ibid:162).

Over the last thirty-five years, a number of reforms have been introduced to address issues of power in Jamaica’s public schools.¹¹ However, reforms are mediated by the race, class and gender locations of those who have a stake in the system of schooling. Although the majority of the decision-makers and the students are black Jamaicans, power does not necessarily lie in their hands. Even where black Jamaicans control power, class is a factor in determining who gets access to quality education. Despite policies to reform, scholars who write about education in Jamaica agree that the highly racialized and classed conditions under which education emerged, continues to privilege certain groups in the society (Gordon, 1991; Miller 1992; Turner, 1987).

Referring to Miller’s 1971 research findings, Strudwick and Foster state that class affiliation is not based simply upon occupational, income or educational criteria, but is also related to lineage, ethnic origin and skin. In a 1991 study focusing on access to high school in Jamaica, Gordon (1991:181) reported that one of the crucial findings in his research “is the continued racial advantage of light-skinned Jamaican children throughout the post-war period.” In the same year, Strudwick and Foster’s study revealed that inspite of educational policies designed to provide open access to secondary education, access to the high school sector is extremely constricted to the social class origins of the students. Moreover, educational policies continue to racialize and gender female labour. These arrangements perpetuate the marginalization of Caribbean women within a highly structured patriarchal system.

Miller (1986:4) argues that “females appear to have greater access to opportunity - employment and school places.” Drawing on the historical patterns that shaped power relations between blacks and whites in Jamaican society, Miller notes that:

¹¹ Specific reforms are discussed in Chapter Three.

Only a few black men were permitted to rise socially and economically since the vast majority had to be kept as a chief source of labour... The restriction placed on the number of black men that are permitted upward mobility benefits the black woman since by definition the amount of opportunity open to blacks exceeds the number of black men coopted, thus she has more opportunity and greater access to mobility (ibid).

Miller links the historical marginalization of black men to the present educational circumstances whereby black girls outnumber boys in traditional high, private high and comprehensive schools. He also argues that teaching is a profession dominated by women.

Miller is careful to note that while women may appear to have greater access to upward mobility, they are still restricted in how far they are allowed to rise. Although his arguments are relegated to the educational sphere, he draws on historical patterns that have led to present-day conditions. Consequently, his study has wider implications about how labour and economic access are organized within the context of the social system. Miller's arguments can be taken to mean that women in Jamaica are responsible for the marginalization of black men. Thus a closer look at the link between school, gender, and labour is warranted.

As illustrated earlier, the educational system in Jamaica was designed to reproduce the hegemonic practices that emerged in the plantation economy. Education ensured that women continued to be socialized to function within a patriarchal structure. Where they were allowed access, this was done to prepare them for domestic roles in the home or in service related sectors. Moreover, they were socialized to become docile and virtuous as is evident in the 1857 Third Annual Report of the Reformatory and Industrial Association for Girls in Jamaica. According to Bacchus (1994:129), the report stated that girls should be trained to "...give them the opportunity of learning how a life of honest industry drives away poverty and makes time pass pleasantly, and usefully when combined with the Divine blessing, and united with a good moral and religious education."

Similarly, in reference to women and education in Trinidad, Reddock (1994:54), writes

that:

With regards to secondary education...the content of courses for girls was much more general than that for boys, based on the view that it did not have to be as exacting...the curriculum was indistinguishable from that of an English public school...curriculum emphasized the classics, domestic science and needlework, plus bookkeeping, freehand drawing and music.

The Girls' Training Homes established by Canadian missionaries at the turn of the century to train East Indians in Trinidad, also had similar objectives. Reddock goes on to explain that a typical day included Hindi catechism, family worship, gardening and housework, arithmetic, English reading, sewing, writing scripture 'questions and answer in English' and singing. Washing, ironing and starching were also included in the roster of duties that girls were expected to perform (ibid). Reddock describes this kind of education as "Western European housewifization" whereby women of colour were prepared to become helpmates for men and to generally function in stereotypical, patriarchal roles. The patterns of educational socialization to which Bacchus and Reddock refers are still evident in current Caribbean systems.

Leo-Rhynie (1987) who has conducted extensive research on girls and schooling in Jamaica, published data indicating that girls continue to be streamed into subjects that lead to low-paying jobs. Leo-Rhynie's research shows that:

In new secondary, technical and comprehensive high schools, there is a clear distinction in terms of vocational subjects studied by boys and by girls. Girls select secretarial and home economic courses, while boys concentrate on industrial offerings along with accounts and principles of business education (Leo-Rhynie, 1987:115).

Moreover, she found that:

Although male and female teachers have the same qualifications the high school assigns them according to sexual criteria: women are almost always put in charge of home economics, office

practice and commerce, an almost never of agriculture, automobile mechanics or machine shops” (ibid).

One of the results of this type of gender-based streaming in school is that few women gain access to positions of power in Jamaican society. Particularly disturbing is the fact that schools do not take into account the complexities of women’s role in the household and in labour market sectors that have been impacted by the demands of structural adjustment constraints since the 1980s

There is a discrepancy between the way schools set about preparing girls for the workforce and the actual demands of the labour market. On the one hand, Caribbean women bear the brunt of IMF/SAP conditionalities. Barriteau (1996:146), reports that “women’s so-called informal economic informal activity as inter-island traders, higglers or traffickers buttresses the formal economy in critical areas.” She goes on to argue that:

In many countries women supply the larger business establishments with dry goods through a system they have perfected called the suitcase trade. In so doing they do not merely bring goods in. They travel intra and extra-regionally, circumventing language barriers, manipulating foreign currencies, battling customs officers, confronting import regulations, and often undergoing physically stressful situations. By absorbing many of the costs and difficulties of importation, they free larger businesses to employ their capital elsewhere. All these activities keep households and economies afloat...” (ibid).

On the other hand, schools continue to operate from the perspective that girls do not have to be encouraged to meet their full potential as human beings and as workers in their society. Rather, schools appear to believe that girls and boys must be socialized to fulfill narrowly defined, pre-determined gender roles which do not reflect the reality of the economy, or account for the cultural capital that each student brings to the classroom.

In addition to writing about how SAP/IMF policies affect women and middle-class in Caribbean society, Barriteau cautions against the use of essentializing theories to explain the complexities of social relations in the region. Instead, the author argues that Caribbean class, race and gender relations are more heterogeneous, fluid and dynamic than orthodox analyses

allow. While Miller's arguments do much to advance the dialogue about gendered education in Jamaica, it is problematic to imply that black women and girls are benefiting from historical and social conditions that otherwise marginalize the black male, especially since the stark reality of Caribbean life is that females are the victims of a firmly entrenched patriarchal structure.

Chapter Two briefly chronicled the history of Jamaica with emphasis on the system of oppression used to exploit Africans, the power relationships that developed between different groups, and how the church as an institution came to dominate educational development. In this chapter I have attempted to connect the exploitation of black women in plantation society to present-day marginalization in school and in the labour market. The purpose of this discussion is to provide an entry point into the arguments to be presented in Chapter Three, which will build on the historical perspective by focusing on Jamaican independence from England, the challenges facing education, and the political and social issues that independence brought to the fore.

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURAL IDENTITY IN AN INDEPENDENT JAMAICA

Independance wid a vengeance!
Independance raising cain!
Jamaica start grow beard, ah hope
We chin can stan' de strain!

Wen dog mawga him head big, an
Wen puss hungry him nose clean
But every puss an dog know
Wat independance mean.
(Bennett, 1983:217)

This chapter explores the challenges facing Jamaicans following Independence. It looks at what the transition meant to some Jamaicans, at some of the difficulties involved in changing from Cambridge to Caribbean examination (under the auspices of the Caribbean Examination Council, the CXC), at the race and identity issues that are Jamaica's legacy, and at the continuing struggling to reform education.

Excerpts from six interviews are presented in this chapter. The first three interviewees were asked to talk about what they remember about Independence and how it affected them. I interviewed one woman (my mother) and two men (Mr. L.S. and Mr. A.C.) on the subject; all come from working class backgrounds and witnessed many changes in Jamaica's political and economic systems before leaving the country in the 1950s and 1960s. All grew up under colonial rule and left the country before or shortly after Jamaica gained independence from England. One of the men (Mr. A.C), was asked to discuss what it was like to be a student in Jamaica before Independence. I put the same question to Mr. C.M. a young man who attended school many years after Independence, for a brief comparison of some of the changes that took place between decades.

Furthermore, I asked Mrs. D.H. to discuss the mandate of the Caribbean Examination Council and its efforts to strengthen Caribbean control over education. Mrs. D.H., a witness to many changes in Caribbean education, is an experienced Trinidadian English teacher who co-wrote one of the first books with Caribbean content. Born into a middle-class black family, she grew up in colonial Trinidad at a time when women were socialized to “choose” respectable careers that would not interfere with their role as wives and mother.

Finally, I interviewed, Ms. L.A., a social worker and graduate student at the University of Toronto, whose passage into full adulthood was profoundly shaped by the Black Power Movement in Trinidad. Ms. L.A. also talked about education as she experienced in it Trinidad.

Assessing Independence

After thirty-six years of Independence, Jamaica has yet to realize the promise of true liberty. This was articulated by one of the country’s most prominent leaders in the weeks leading up to Jamaica’s thirty-fifth Independence celebrations:

Had we managed to stay the course of development charted in the first ten years of Independence, by now those dreams of emancipation and the visions of 1838 would have been more fully realized...But these hopes (of life, liberty and happiness) were to be disappointed again and again and, except for comparatively short periods in this century, have not really been fulfilled after 159 years (Edward Seaga, “Legacy of Slavery Still Exists,” The Gleaner, July 1997:A2).

The newspaper went on to report that Seaga also stated:

The legacy of slavery continued to exist, and that the culture of survival continued to shape the country’s identity. He mentioned the struggle for space in tenement yards, for space in large families, and for seats on public transportation, continued from the congestion of bodies on the ships that took slaves from Africa to the island (ibid)

Although much has been done in the three and a half decades since Independence, Mr. Seaga’s statement echoes the sentiments of many Jamaicans for whom prosperity remains elusive. A large segment of the predominantly black population still live in squalor in a country where few

control the wealth. What remains is a modern day version of plantation arrangements in a globalized structure. Yet, this is not the vision that most ordinary Jamaicans had when Independence from Britain finally became a reality on August 6, 1962.

The Jamaicans who spoke about the country's Independence did so with pride and an overwhelming feeling of dignity when they were asked how they felt on the day of transition, what took place and what it meant to become independent. My mother - a school girl at the time - remembered the event with a smile and recalled the excitement of participating in a grand celebration:

All the school children attended a huge celebration at the national stadium. It seemed like everyone from the island was there. I was touched and proud to sing our own national anthem. Even today, it still brings back memories that we didn't have to sing the stupid British anthem anymore; that was a very special day for me. I also learned a lot about my own country because our national symbols, like the hummingbird, were now featured on our own money, and that was something to take pride in...it was like being weaned from your mother and becoming responsible for your own destiny (Ms. E.L., personal interview, March 17, 1998).

She went on to say that:

Becoming independent was like graduating from our colonial masters. I'm sure there were problems, but I was still a child...there was a phasing in period, mechanisms were put in place to facilitate a transition period. It's the best thing that happened to us although we're still going through growing pains (ibid).

Her memories and family history, provided insight into the country's economic conditions in the years leading up to and after Independence.

My mother grew up on her parent's farm. The youngest of a large group of siblings, participating in the independence celebrations was one of the few occasions she was allowed to go to Kingston. The happy feelings and hope for a brighter future that my mother and fellow Jamaicans experienced on Independence Day, were not enough to stem the tide of people who desperately needed to leave their homeland in search of employment.

Like ten thousands of Jamaicans who left the country to work in other parts of the globe,

many of my mother's brothers and sisters went to England to work. In 1969, she too immigrated to Canada in search of better economic opportunities. The profoundly uneven distribution of wealth caused by colonialism and slavery created a migrant workforce that continues to be exploited for its labour. The "growing pains" to which my mother refers continue to intensify with the demands of global capitalism, structural adjustment programs and the creation of free trade zones.

Amidst the celebrations, the solemnity of the occasion and the responsibilities of independence were not lost on the nation. The newspapers of the day captured the feeling that Jamaica was about to embark on a new chapter in its history, at once exciting but sobering:

This is the last work day before Jamaica becomes an independent dominion and nation. Let tomorrow, Sunday, be a day of prayer for guidance and of dedication to the new responsibilities of citizenship, for the spirit of a people needs the communion and courage which comes from prayer (Editorial in The Gleaner, August 4, 1962).

Recognizing that independence and freedom are to be cherished and protected, the editorial went on to state that:

Self-government is not automatic. It is reborn everyday only if the people deserve it and preserve it. Tyrants from overseas and from within, from time to time may spring up and seek to take away the people's government. Then the people will have to safeguard their mountains and their beaches against the foreign foe and their citizenship from the wills and cruelty of the dictator (ibid).

The celebrations were not limited to events on the island. Mr. L.S., a long-time family friend, immigrated to England at a time when Jamaicans had British citizen status. Like many Jamaicans before him, Mr. L.S. was optimistic about his future in the Mother Country and was unprepared for the racism he experienced there. He later moved to Canada with his family, but he remembers the celebration that took place not just in Jamaica and England but wherever Jamaicans happen to live:

It was a very happy day for Jamaicans to become our own nation, to stand on our own feet. Before Independence business was slow, but after, it became easier to do business, more money circulated in the economy and there was a general improvement in housing...The older people never thought it

would work - they were used to the old English tradition, you couldn't change them - but the younger people were standing strong (Mr. L.S., personal interview, March 18, 1998).

The country's economic prospects were indeed bright in the early years. Jamaica's high economic output brought material benefits, including improved education and health conditions. However, these fortunes were reversed in the 1970s as a result of a devaluation of the dollar, a decline in export levels following the weakening of the market for bauxite and aluminum, and a fall in oil prices in the 1980s (Omar and Witter, 1989).

Mr. L.S.'s sentiments capture the hesitancy (and resistance in some cases) that many Jamaicans felt amidst the festivities. On the one hand, most people looked forward to an autonomous country free from colonial rule. On the other hand, those who had grown accustomed to being clients of the British, found it difficult to believe that the country could survive without the guidance and protection of the colonizer.

The resistance to Independence that some Jamaicans displayed, shows the internalization of self-doubt and mistrust about the capacity of African-Jamaicans to manage their own affairs. Centuries of slavery and external dependency had led African-Jamaicans to believe that independence could not be truly liberating. Such doubts cut to the heart of identity. Referring to the Algerian colonial experience, Fanon (1963:250) wrote:

Because it is systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "who am I?"

To a significant extent, that is the question that faced Jamaicans on the eve of Independence. The nation's inability to take pride in its African heritage and to usher in Independence by examining the extent of the damage done to the African-Jamaican psyche, left some people confused and angry.

Mr. A.C. was born and raised in Jamaica. He immigrated to Canada in 1966 and worked as the director of student services at a local college in Toronto before embarking on a successful political career. He vividly recalled Independence Day and the challenges of the transition. A younger man at the time, Mr. A.C remembered that he experienced a “slight sick feeling” amidst the flag waving, singing and dancing that marked the day:

There was a lot of celebration, but I’m not sure we all knew what it meant... There were lots of school children involved and I had the impression that we were giving thanks to the jailers for releasing us from jail... We got a gift from the British that day, Up Park Camp, which had held the British army. I felt insulted that the British who had held us for over three hundred years, would now turn around and give us Up Park Camp. (Mr. A.C., personal interview, March 17, 1998).

Mr. A.C.’s comments speaks to the struggle to sort out what has happened and what to do when colonization “ends,” leaving behind a traumatized population.

Mr. A.C.’s comments also reflect the symbolic aspects of a transfer of power which is easier to implement than addressing more pressing problems. In Jamaica, a new flag was raised to replace the Union Jack, a new national anthem was written, and the faces on the money changed, replacing European images with pictures of the country’s heroes. But these events were not immediately followed by changes at the structural level, nor did the transition lead to more equitable distribution of the country’s wealth.

Mr. A.C.’s anger and confusion represents justifiable resentment towards European colonizers for the massive damage they caused. Furthermore, his statements reveal that as long as the pain and suffering caused by slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism remain unaddressed, the wounds will remain forever fresh. None of the European powers that exploited and mutilated African-Jamaicans have taken responsibility, offered compensation, or apologized for the crimes they committed. Failure to come to terms with the past continue to strain relations between different cultural and racial groups in the Caribbean.

On January 22, 1998, I was privileged to hear Earl Lovelace, renowned Trinidadian novelist read from his new book Salt.¹² He framed his reading in the context of the dilemmas facing Trinidad and the rest of the Caribbean. He argued that slavery, oppression and liberation have never been fully addressed since Europeans remain preoccupied with their vulnerability. As well, East Indians live in a state of unease because they arrived under indentureship, and Africans have not yet come to terms with the profound loss of home and human dignity, which keeps them on the defensive.

Mr. Lovelace also noted that African people in the Caribbean have followed a European script, perhaps because the new elites believed that emulating Europeans offered the best hope for personhood and dignity. Nowhere is this more true than in the insistence of Caribbean people that the European system of education not only offers the best chance of a high material quality of life but that it can also make better citizens of black children.

Reflecting on changes in education following Independence, Mr. A.C. noted that

There was a feeling of loss too, because there was a loss felt in educational standards and association with Cambridge. Our exams had to go to England to be marked, and there was a proudness about being able to pass the exam in Jamaica and in England (personal interview, March 17, 1998).

The pride so many Jamaicans felt (and still feel) is ironic considering the difficulties many of them faced in getting into a “reputable” high school. Mr. A.C. spoke about the Church’s control over education and the obstacles black parents faced in securing a place for their children:

When I wrote my exams in the 1950s I ranked 56, but those who were able to give money to the Church could command a place. In those days, people like you and me couldn’t get into Queen’s or Wolmer’s or KC... We never went into a hotel. I used to play in a steelband, but we had to play outside (Mr. A.C., personal interview March 17, 1998).

¹² Earl Lovelace spoke at the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington D.C on January 22, 1998.

Clearly, there was a strong link between race, class and schooling in the years before Independence. And just as clearly, the Church's role as gatekeeper ensured that working class black people were firmly kept from entering the one avenue that held the potential for a better life.

In addition to speaking about the state of schooling, Mr. A.C. also shed light on the segregation black Jamaicans experienced in their own country. Indeed, older Jamaicans who grew up under colonialism are still reluctant to go beyond the gates of some hotels, particularly the ones frequented by tourists. I witnessed this a few years ago when my friend's grandmother refused to come onto the property of the hotel in which we were staying, insisting instead that he meet her at the gate to receive the packages of food she had prepared for him. For many Jamaicans, breaking down the mental barriers of exile in their own country continues to be a challenge.

Given England's long involvement in Jamaica's system of education coupled with its use of education to subjugate Jamaicans, it is not difficult to understand why so many were unable to believe that they could create and implement an education system more suited to the nation's needs. In later years, when the Caribbean developed the Caribbean Examination Council to oversee setting and marking its own exams, the Council had to contend with fears that it could not possibly design a system comparable to Cambridge examination standards.¹³

Mr. C.M. is a Jamaican man in his late twenties who attended school in Jamaica up to the sixth form before immigrating to Canada. He describes his primary school years as challenging

¹³ The Caribbean Examination Council was created in 1972 after a decade of discussions and debates. The first inaugural address was held in Barbados in 1973.

but enjoyable, a time when teachers put a great deal of emphasis on preparing students to pass the Common Entrance Examination (CEE). The teachers, he recalled, were dedicated and encouraged competition between students to push them to work harder. Mr. C.M. successfully secured a place in a respected high school and summed up his experience as follows:

In my day you had people going to high school, it was a major achievement and you had to work or be expelled. If you weren't keeping up the standards, you'd be gone...In those times you had to be qualified to get a job. Now, there's not much emphasis put on schooling (Mr. C.M., interviewed March 15, 1998).

Most of the textbooks he used reflected a Euro-American cultural perspective including texts about "European history, books like Macbeth, Julius Caesar, To Kill a Mockingbird...textbooks were mainly European because we are a former British colony." He said that while he did not experience racism in school, the schools that students attended were largely associated with the class background from which they came. A student from a working class background, he attributes his success to hard work, discipline and the support of some "of the best Caribbean teachers."

Mr. C.M. recalled that he began preparing for the CXC exams in the fourth form. At that point, greater emphasis was placed on Caribbean textbooks and other materials that reflected the region's cultural diversity. Of his experience as one of the students to sit the CXC exams in the early years, he said:

They were far too long. They were also different from past exams where papers were available for you to look at. I think the CXCs were a waste of time because it's only limited to the Caribbean. Cambridge and 'A' level exams from England were better because they came from the University there and were more rounded. The CXC needs to find a way to make itself more recognized (Mr. C.M. personal interview, March 15, 1998).

He believes that the textbooks used in the days of the Cambridge Examinations were better, not

so much because of their content but because they contained centralized information:

I wouldn't think of changing them [earlier textbooks]. The texts then were better... Then you had to work at problems and you had more to work with... now, one text is broken down into two. What you were able to find in one book, you now have to look for in two (ibid).

Nevertheless, he was fortunate enough to be in school at a time when textbooks used in the Caribbean were beginning to reflect Caribbean content and images. Before he graduated, books by black authors were making their way into the classroom and appearing on CXC exams. When I asked Mr. A.C. if he remembered any images of black people in his textbooks when he was a student, he replied, "if I saw a black guy in a school textbook, I'd wonder what the messenger/yardboy was doing in my in book"(Mr. A.C., personal interview). We both laughed when he said that, but the laughter could not hide his sorrow of what had been stolen from him as a student growing up under colonial rule. However, the three decades between Mr. A.C.'s and Mr. C.M.'s schooling did usher in more positive images of African-Jamaicans.

Mr. C.M.'s views about the Caribbean Examination Council were widely shared by a number of Caribbean people who opposed the CXC system because it did not have the same credibility as the Cambridge exams. People worried that their children would not be well educated and did not recognize the CXC's mandate to make testing fairer and more culturally specific. According to Mrs. D.H, a Trinidadian teacher whose career spanned a thirty-year period,

the CXC exams were intended to provide fairer, more relevant local assessment of the extent to which the students had accomplished the learning goals set out as defined by a "Caribbean' consortium of educators, and planners. In practice they were written to compete with the standards set by Cambridge, which were unrealistic and had doomed several generations of average learners as failures, even after completing 12-14 years of schooling. As a consequence there were as many CXC failures as there had been Cambridge failures (Mrs. D.H., July 18, 1998, responding to questions about the mandate of the Caribbean Examination Council).

When I shared Mr. C.M.'s views about the CXCs with her, Mrs. D.H. said that:

The young man you interviewed must indeed have been a victim of the early confusion. In order to satisfy university matriculation requirements, the Examination Board decided on two levels of exams: basic and general. If you got a distinction at the basic level it was not equivalent to a pass at the general level and normally would not, in the opinion of the employers and college requirements constitute having obtained the necessary credentials. It is a crazy system, but now under review following a consortium of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) ministers held in 1988.

Resistance to the CXC has to be looked at within the context of the inequalities it was trying to remedy. The conflict provides an example of what happens when indigenous people are prevented from developing their own institutions according to the cultural values that govern their lives. It also reveals that no matter what is introduced to reflect the Caribbean experience, the academic standards are already set and the parameters of what constitutes success are already clearly defined.

Challenging these set standards calls for nothing less than re-defining the goals and objectives of education to ensure that they closely reflect an indigenous point of view. A shift towards an indigenous knowledge framework means placing greater emphasis on using textbooks with Caribbean stories and images, and the use of pedagogical styles conducive to an inclusive learning environment.

Despite the monumental challenges that still face Jamaicans three and a half decades into independence, the nation has accomplished a great deal. Speaking of some of these milestones, Mr. A.C. stated:

We are a very proud people and I find that in some respects, we've advanced. We've asserted ourselves in having our own banking system and our own educational standards. We now have a better grip on our resources like bauxite and sugar cane, but we had to fight for these things.

However, much remains to be done because the race and class divisions that dominated the country's political agenda in the 1960s have not been resolved.

Race and Identity

In addition to fostering national pride and challenging Jamaicans to control their own destiny, Independence brought about a more urgent call for African pride and a cultural identity based on African values. These early years also brought to the fore the deeply divisive inequalities driven by centuries of race and class exploitation. Palmer (1989:111) writes that “it is clear that one of the most agonizing and protracted struggles waged by the Jamaican people in the last half century has been that aimed at creating a racial identity.” He goes on to explain that:

The majority of Jamaicans, probably as high as 90 per cent, can make claim to an African ancestry. Yet many of these persons, particularly those who constitute the middle classes, find it difficult to come to terms with their possession of a black skin. On the other hand, many lower-class black Jamaicans have often espoused a fierce racial pride which provided them with psychic sustenance in spite of their awful material circumstance (ibid).

Although generalizations about power relationships in Jamaica are not wise (Stone, 1989:33), political struggles continue to be driven by neo-colonialism, class differences and patriarchy and are profoundly racialized. Coming to terms with the African cultural influences that have shaped the country is a challenge that embodies deep contradictions.

The African continent is portrayed as an unending disaster, unable to help itself, dependent and backward, associated with disease and death and more recently, the place where AIDS originated. Some people in my own family who grew up under British rule are horrified to be identified as Africans. They have a love-hate relationship with England, having experienced racism and sexism in that country yet grateful for the opportunity to “make something of themselves.” They are quick to point out that they are Jamaicans and are embarrassed to be associated with anything African.

Newspaper articles written in the early years after independence illustrate disdain for

Africa and a preoccupation with uncertainties about identity in Jamaica. In a letter to the Daily Gleaner in 1963, a citizen wrote to condemn “the introduction of Bantu education here and the corruption of everything educational” (Palmer, 1989:113). In the same vein, a Jamaican wrote to the editor to oppose any identification with Africa, certain that “the only race we belong to is the Human Race and our nationality is Jamaican, not African...what is our culture? What is our religion? Is it some African cult?” Yet another citizen wrote expressing similar sentiments, underscoring many Jamaicans’ comfort with colonialism:

From the time we attained our independence, we have gradually disassociated ourselves from England and have shown in our public and political life less and less respect for her. However, like it or not, England is our mother country, not Africa. We still need help and guidance and Africa can’t give these to us as she needs help herself (ibid:113).

Judging from these sentiments, it would seem that the system of education set up to convince Jamaicans of their inherent inferiority had succeeded. They also indicate the extent to which some Jamaicans had internalized oppression and a poor sense of self-worth both racially and culturally.

An unwillingness to confront racism, patriarchy, class and sexual exploitation was not limited to the public, it was also evident in the country’s leadership. History records that several prominent leaders actively distanced themselves from battling inequalities, opting instead for the “colour-blind” approach.

Alexander Bustamante, the first Prime Minister, declared that in Jamaica, “races work and live together with ever increasing respect for each other” (Palmer, 1989:113) despite the clearly unequal distribution of resources along race, class and gender lines. A columnist for The Gleaner declared “Jamaicanism is the realization and acceptance of the fact that Jamaica is neither black nor white nor pink, but a country in which all men may live together in unity and good fellowship” (ibid). In assessing the country’s progress in race relations after Independence

and sharing his vision for the future, Hugh Lawson Shearer, Prime Minister for a brief period, stated that:

[W]e are a nation of blacks, browns, whites and yellows. Here, we do not know a man for the colour of his skin or the texture of his hair, but by the strength and quality of his character. We do not know the shame, nor suffer the plague of destruction of human pride and indignity which comes from oppression of one race by another (Jamaica Information Service).

Declarations of colour-blindness and racial harmony strategically detracted from discussions about race and other structural divisions that limited access to economic and political power.

They also indicate shared self-interest between the local ruling elite and those who hold power in the larger capitalist arena.

Jamaica is a country where whites have the most and blacks the least. In between, the brown (or mixed-raced) population is more closely aligned with whites and makes up the majority of the middle-class. In his 1972 study about social inequality in Jamaica, Lowenthal (cited in Waters, 1990), reported that “of sixty Jamaicans identified as influential, twenty were white, while only one per cent of the population is white” (p. 29). Waters also states that:

In a study of forty-two companies listed in Jamaica’s Stock Exchange of 1969-1973, Reid found that twenty-one Chinese and White families accounted for over 125 of the 219 directorships and nearly seventy per cent of the chairpersons. No corporate firm was controlled by blacks, and only 6 of the 219 directorships were held by blacks. Two of the 6 were government appointees (Waters, 1985:29)

These reports indicate that emancipation and independence did not produce real structural changes: the black people who work in sweatshops and free-trade zones today, are the descendants of those who laboured on the plantation under similar conditions. The descendants of those who own the means of production also remain in power today. No Jamaican government has adequately addressed the issue.

The general comfort with the colonial structure left in place by the British and the benign view towards the country’s colonial past lies in the way in which Independence came about.

Nettleford (1989:2) asks: "to what extent did the event of 1962 depict a will to build a new world from the ruins of the Crown Colony system that preceded it?" He answers that the Crown Colony system had been in decline by way of contained reform through the British Colonial Office:

This was done through a skillfully crafted policy of phased transfer of power to Britain's Caribbean colonials who were put in apprenticeship in preparation for the time when they were deemed fit to rule and govern. The 'energy' that characterized revolutionary change of the political order, was conspicuously absent from Jamaica in 1962 as a result.

Nettleford's argument finds support in Said's observation that the core of the problem is that although "official" nationalists want to break with colonialism, "another quite different will becomes apparent: that of coming to a friendly agreement with it" (Said, 1994:272). This "friendly agreement" deepened the divisions between ordinary Jamaicans and those in power and fueled the determination of the former to transform the meaning of blackness and African-ness. In addition, there was an urgency - influenced by the Black Power Movement in the United States, and its subsequent rise in Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago, to change the structures that kept colonialism intact.

The Black Power Movement

The Black Power Movement in Jamaica, especially active in the early years after Independence, significantly influenced the way Jamaicans began to see themselves. However, ideas about African pride and dignity and challenges to racism and European dominance, were not new to Jamaica's social consciousness. Decades earlier, Marcus Garvey had advanced similar ideas, pushed by the Pan-African Movement at home and abroad. For that - and for calling on black people to reclaim their dignity and African identity - he was banned from entering Jamaica. The Rastafarians had been preaching Garvey's message years after his death, but they, too, were

ostracized in their own country. The political climate of the 1960s in the United States and Africa gave new legitimacy to Garvey's ideas and the teachings of Rastafarians. Ironically, once shunned by Jamaica's establishment, Marcus Garvey is now one of Jamaica's national heroes.

Black Power in Jamaica, in Trinidad and Tobago, and in other Caribbean countries, struck a chord among large segments of those societies, focusing as it did on disrupting white dominance, class exploitation and metropolitan control (Wiltshire-Brodber, 1988).

On March 16, 1998, I spoke with a of classmate at OISE who was born and raised in Trinidad but who immigrated to Canada as an adult. Born into a working class family, Ms. L.A. spoke about coming of age during the 1970s at the height of the Black Power Movement (BPM) in Trinidad and about her education. Although her parents did not approve of her attending BPM meetings, she was old enough to go without their permission. The BPM had a profound impact on Ms. L.A. as a young adult in a country that not long ago had gained its independence from England.

Sitting in the quiet of the student lounge at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto, Ms. L.A. shared her story in a clear, strong voice:

Being a bank teller here (in Toronto) is no big deal, but back home, it was a big deal. To get those jobs, it didn't matter what your education was. If your skin wasn't a certain colour, and your hair wasn't a certain texture, you didn't get that job. The Black Power Movement opened your eyes to all these things...maybe you noticed it, but you were too embarrassed to tell yourself, so they let you know that there's a problem....They let you know that it's not fair, it's not right. If you are qualified for a job, go for it. And if you don't get it, find out what the other person had that you didn't have. Before Black Power, you didn't dare think like that because nobody talked about racism and oppression. It was Granger and Shaw, the leaders, they are the ones that started talking about these things. I learned a lot. I learned a lot about myself as a human. And I learned a lot about myself as a Black person (Ms. L.A., personal interview, March 16, 1998).

The BPM is largely, but not exclusively, credited Trinidad's February Revolution in 1970. Like Jamaicans, Trinidadians were outraged by the persistence of the colonialism and racial injustice that Independence promised to uproot, outrage that resulted in mass protest.

Bennett (1989:129) best summarized some of the problems that the BPM and its supporters were forcing Trinidadians to confront:

By the mid-1960s, critics such as the university-based intellectuals who belonged to the New World Group, as well as...[s]tudents, workers, the urban unemployed, and middle-class exponents of Trinidadian Nationalism and Black Power who constituted the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), concluded that decolonization had only initiated another phase of colonialism. Their criticism, along with that of...Walter Rodney was undoubtedly influential in shaping the character of the social disturbance...Primarily concerned with the issue of West Indian dependency on foreign capital, the radical intellectuals...were prominent critics of post-colonial development.

Instead of acting to redress the grievances the government did nothing. The result was that:

inspired by the anniversary of the Sir George Williams University Affair¹⁴ a group of two hundred students and their supporters participated in a protest denouncing Canadian imperialism and racism. Within days, the events of February 26, 1970 had escalated into a massive Black Power demonstration that paralyzed Trinidad and Tobago. The disturbances lasted until the declaration of a "State of Emergency" on April 21 when the authorities brought the situation under control, leaving the Trinidadian political system more or less intact.

Bennett argued that events at Sir George Williams University "became insignificant in relation to the events that followed," for what happened at Sir George had meaning to the extent that "it enabled NJAC and other organization to link racism in Canada to the realities in Trinidad" (1989:136).

That the political system remained intact does not mean that the protest was ineffective. Although the February Revolution did not uproot colonialism from Trinidad, the BPM and its supporters influenced the social and political climate and brought about some change in the country's social structure. Asked how she thought the Movement helped to decolonize Trinidad, Mrs. D.H. replied:

They (the BPM) objected to the situation where black people couldn't have a chance. And at that time, because of the petro dollars, they also resented the foreign influence in the economy, so they protested. It was after that that you actually had black women being allowed to work in banks and so on...That made a difference (Mrs. D.H., personal interview).

¹⁴ On February 11, 1969, a group of Caribbean students attending Sir George William University in Canada complained about racist practices by a biology professor. They took their grievances to a university board. This was to no avail. Finally the students staged a sit-in at the university's \$1.6 million computer centre, after which followed a ten-hour battle with police resulting in the destruction of the centre, the school cafeteria and faculty lounge.

Trinidad became independent in 1962. Events there remind us that change in power does not necessarily necessarily lead to the end of economic, political and social injustice. BPM did raise the public consciousness, not just about capitalist exploitation but about taking pride in one's Blackness, a message that would change how young Trinidadians would look at their institutions.

When we got on to education, Ms. L.A. spoke about the dominance of Eurocentricism, including over the body and relations between man, woman and children:

We were reading about golliwogs and learning all sorts of crazy songs
(here she breaks into a song girls were taught to sing)
Brown skin girl stay home and mind baby.
Brown skin girl, stay home and mind baby
And if he don't come back, throw 'way the damn baby

She continued:

You learned all kinds of negative things about you... You learn that in school. Teachers represent you in the way they were trained to represent you, and even themselves, but they were teaching you to be anything that will be as near to non-indigenous as possible. So you go to school, and you have to have a uniform... and the kind of [natural] hairstyle you have or the hairstyle I have [locks] would not have been accepted. You have to braid the hair to make it look a certain way, and all of that is what they get from the white masters.... You can't have Black Consciousness with a British school curriculum. What kind of foolishness is that?

Ms. L.A.'s experience underscores that the colonization of education was not limited to textbooks and teaching practices but extended to disciplining and regulating the body in dress and appearance, engulfing the mind, the body and the spirit. Although she recognized the limits of Black Power's message (for instance, it did not address gender inequality), Ms. L.A. credits the Movement with providing her with the tools to analyze and challenge racial injustice.

Similarly, "Jamaica Black Power advocates also put the striving of a black image through a re-evaluation of ourselves as blacks, as a necessary precondition of attainment of power" (Nettleford, 1993: 524). Jamaicans began to question the legitimacy the elite whose members

held the highest positions of power, foreign ownership of key industries, and the control of commerce. The work of Walter Rodney, Guyanese historian and essayist, did much to raise the social consciousness of Jamaicans and other Caribbean people.

Rodney was acutely aware of the international ramifications of racism and the oppression of black people across the globe. He believed that Black Power must call for a break with imperialism; must lead to the assumption of power by the black masses in the islands and produce a “cultural reconstruction of the society in the image of the blacks” (Palmer, 1989:118). His views were well-received by the students at the University of the West Indies, where he taught African history, by a few intellectuals and by the marginalized poor and unemployed working-class in Jamaica. He posed a direct threat to the middle-class and the government who accused him of using the university to hide his “subversive activities.” Like Marcus Garvey before him, Rodney, whose “lectures in African history gave to Black people a sense of past achievement and therefore a future purpose” (ibid:117), was expelled from Jamaica in October 1968.

The government’s response further demonstrated its failure to acknowledge, let alone remedy deep structural divisions and widespread oppressions. In addition to recalling Independence, Mr. A.C. remembers vividly the deeply rooted racism that lingered in Jamaica:

Many of the top jobs had been held by whites - the chief of police was always white, so were people in industry....Quite a few high school principals were white. When the replacements began, there was excitement among “our little nationals” who could now take these jobs. When I visited my colleagues in the office, the “Black Face, White Mask” hadn’t come home to them, driving big cars and joining country clubs. So here they were in all these positions - they were worse than the white man, their attitude was far worse...these nationals had something to prove - the black face was really a white man (Mr. A.C., personal interview, March 1998).

But the Black Power Movement did bring about a change in attitude and a shift towards negotiating more equitable relationships with global capitalists in favour of ordinary Jamaican workers. The shift became apparent in the 1970s when Michael Manley began to address some

of the issues the Movement raised:

When Michael came in, he re-visited the (bauxite) contract for a penny-a-ton and said it was unfair. When he tried to redress it, they took it to the World Court, so he taxed it. Bauxite could have made us very, very rich. He also tried to address the banana and sugar workers issues, and negotiate ownership with the United Fruit Company (Mr. A.C., personal interview March 1998).

The Movement's call to challenge colonial and neo-colonial relationships and to foster more positive images of blackness undoubtedly influenced educational reforms.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, those reforms took place in stages, with changes in textbook content occurring much later. The Movement's insistence that colonial images of black people were no longer tolerable paved the way for the inclusion of stories and pictures about the region's people and places. Some of these stories appeared in the local language. Given the long entrenchment of Standard English and culture in many Caribbean countries, Creole in texts was not a small accomplishment. The following section briefly highlights some of Jamaica's educational reforms and discusses the roles of Standard English and Creole in shaping Jamaica's culture.

Educational Reforms

Miller (1989:224-225) summarizes post-Independence educational reforms as follows:

In the independence period the educational system has been Jamaicanized at all levels. Jamaicans constitute the senior and junior staff in the schools and in the central bureaucracy. The change in this area represents almost complete reversal of the past. The majority of the non-Jamaicans employed in the educational system are Caribbean nationals who cannot be regarded as expatriates. The Jamaican employment of personnel in the educational system is probably the single most complete reversal of a colonial pattern. The curricula of the schools have also been Caribbeanized and Jamaicanized. At least the examples informing learning in schools are now more indigenous than in the colonial past.

Such changes were the result of reforms in education which officially began in 1957. Each new decade has introduced new reforms. Between 1963 and 1966 the government introduced the 70:30 policy of awarding free places to high school through the Common Entrance Examination

(CEE). According to the policy, 70 per cent of the 2000 free high school spaces awarded annually would go to children from primary schools and 30 per cent to children from preparatory schools.

During that period, the government converted sixteen senior modern schools into junior secondary schools, built fifty new schools, trained teachers for the junior secondary level and drew up curricula for junior secondary teachers and students.

The 1970s brought in free high school and university education, curriculum development for all levels of the public system and special schools for handicapped children as part of public education. In 1973, the Caribbean Council Examination replaced Oxford and Cambridge as the body examining students at the end of high school.

The reforms were impressive but long overdue. They occurred at a time when Jamaica enjoyed financial returns from the tourism, bauxite and manufacturing industries. However, by 1978, a downturn in the country's economy led to severe setbacks and even reversals in educational reforms.

Despite the commitment to reform education, there were real limitations on structural changes because of continued dependency on external forces. According to Miller (1989:225):

The external dependency of the educational system has continued with some interesting differences. Imperial control has been replaced with the conditionalities of external programmes.

The downturn in the economy resulted primarily but not exclusively from the OPEC oil crisis of the 1970s. The sharp drop in oil revenues meant Jamaica had to borrow money and to subject itself to the conditionalities of the International Monetary Funds (IMF). Almost overnight, the school fees abolished in 1973 were re-introduced. In 1986, the Ministry of Education closed eight primary and all-age schools in rural areas, many schools fell into disrepair, and teachers suffered a fifty percent drop in their standard of living because salaries did not keep pace with

mounting inflation.

Clearly, educational reforms ebb and flow with global market forces, a further reminder that Jamaica's autonomy is severely limited. Under such precarious circumstances there are no guarantees that reforms will take hold. On the contrary, all reforms can be easily reversed, depending on the economic priorities of the day. However, some educational reform continued, albeit in areas that did not necessarily require major capital investments.

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has produced a series of booklets outlining the core curriculum objectives for each stage of primary education (for example, the Foundations of Self-Reliance: A Curriculum Guide for the Primary Stage of Education) and booklets outlining the Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE). ROSE in particular, is the result of a joint project between the Government of Jamaica and the World Bank to improve national educational standards for secondary schools (grades 7 to 9). The government has also begun to address some of the issues of language and power and continuity between the child's home and community environment and the school. Finally, the Common Entrance Examination for entry into high school has been abolished, replaced with the National Assessment Programme.

In summarizing his arguments about educational reforms over the last thirty-five years, Miller cautions the reader not to judge the system too harshly. He points out that colonialism goes back past over three hundred years old, compared to only three and a half decades of independence. In conclusion, he asks: "if emancipation of the mind is a necessary precondition of further liberation from the colonial past, should the Jamaican state not pay for the education of its nationals?" (p. 227). Can emancipation of the mind be accomplished in circumstances where educational reforms and developments are financed by other states and multilateral agencies?" (ibid.). These questions are especially timely given the impact of the IMF conditions on education. Equally important is the rift between Standard English and Creole in Jamaican

schools, an issue which the government is beginning to address, but in ways that raise more questions than answers.

Language and Resistance

Language as a means of control was central to the success of colonialism. The dominance of English in the Caribbean reveals the loss of language as one of the most enduring colonial legacies. The contestation between language, culture and identity is best articulated by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1987:9), who writes that "language was the most important vehicle through which power held the soul prisoner; the bullet was the means of the physical subjugation, language was the means of the spiritual subjugation." Wa Thiong'o also argues that:

Values are the basis of a people's identity, their sense of particularity as members of the human race. All is carried by language. Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience's in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next (ibid:15).

Speaking Creole in the classroom was strongly discouraged. Although we were not subjected to wearing signs bearing the inscription "I AM STUPID" or "I AM A DONKEY," as was Wa Thiong'o when he spoke Gikuyu in school, our teachers openly associated our mastery of Standard English with our intelligence.

Battiste (1997:23) defines literacy as "an ambivalent process of modern consciousness." She argues that "certain myths have disguised the functions and value of literacy in society," ensuring that literacy is viewed as the "benign liberator of the mind, modernizing agent of society and an economic commodity necessary for national development" (ibid). Perhaps this explains why, long after independence, educators were content to use the tools of literacy handed down by the colonizers. Images and stories - particularly in textbooks - were deemed as neutral and capturing a universal experience. But the underlying message was clear: breaking away from

the traditional practices and embracing the written word, specifically Received Standard English and the transmission of English culture through the language would inevitably lead to modernization of independent nations.

Nettleford's understanding of language as an important transmitter of culture sheds some light on the importance of ensuring that the language spoken by Jamaicans makes its way into the country's institutions. Nettleford (1978:13), notes that while most Jamaicans speak their native-born, native bred tongue - "patois" or "Jamaica Talk" most of the time:

It is the Standard English of the metropolitan brand which, though functionally a second language, is culturally mandatory if one is to get on in the society... This has led in the past to serious neglect (which is now being corrected) of closer examination of the learning needs, language wise, of the Jamaican child whose first language is...his Creole tongue...what excuse can there be for depriving him of his native tongue forged out the specifics of his and his forebears' experience simply to make room for what is consecrated the universal and powerful language? Need the two be mutually exclusive?

Reforms were implemented to address Nettleford's last question by examining previous approaches to education in general, and to language in particular. In the draft outline of Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) in 1993, the Ministry of Education and Culture addressed "The Jamaican Language Situation" as follows:

Our language situation makes its own unique demands on our language programme. Most children entering school can be seen as partially bilingual. They are usually fluent Creole speakers moving towards Standard English as a target language. The situation was recognized in the primary curriculum, where teachers were encouraged to accept the children's home language and help them to move gradually towards Standard English. In grades 7-9 there has to be some continuity in approach if we are to continue to build the student's self concept while facilitating the learning process. We should recognize that for some students conceptualisation thinking and talking may be best done in Jamaican Creole (Ministry of Education/ World Bank Report, 1993, p. 1).

The report goes on to state that:

The resources of both Languages must therefore be utilized in the learning process. Some students have attained some measure of academic proficiency in Standard English which enabled them to pass the CEE but the majority are underachieving in the skills required for reading and writing and learning as they move across the curriculum (ibid).

The government's recognition that Jamaican Creole is a vital part of learning is a significant measure of how far the local language has come in gaining acceptance. But there is a significant gap between what the report proposes and what happens in the classroom where Creole is not officially recognized.

According to Wa Thiong'o (1987:16), "language is...inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world." The statement begs the question: how is the student's identity shaped when he or she is gradually encouraged to break ties with the language spoken in the home? Although Caribbean governments can be praised for moving in the right direction, there still needs to be an awareness that this "right direction" is being mediated by a larger educational ideology with colonial and neo-colonial roots.

Despite efforts to disparage them, some aspects of African cultures survive through the local language spoken by Jamaicans. Jamaican Creole is pejoratively referred to as "patois" or "Dialect," terms that relegate it to permanent marginal status. (Donnell & Lawson Welsh, 1996:11). Donnell and Lawson Welsh point out that "Creoles are language systems in their own right, with syntax and lexicons of considerable sophistication, and are found globally" (ibid). The importance of the status accorded to Creole or 'nation language' in the attribution of literary value should not be underestimated (ibid.). With this in mind, I will use the term "Creole" when discussing the Jamaican language in the remainder of this thesis.

As mentioned earlier, we were vigorously discouraged from speaking Creole and a strong emphasis was placed on mastering "the Queen's English." While learning English, we were rarely exposed to textbooks reflecting our own reality. Instead, we were rewarded for being able to recite Shakespearean verses and other English poems, particularly in high school. Excerpts from famous British novels frequently appeared in our texts as part of learning grammar and

verbal reasoning. A case in point is a brief story about the Robin, found in Better English Book Four, a 1962 primary school reader:

Some robins migrate during the winter to warmer lands such as Southern Europe but others stay in England and sing quite cheerfully, even when thick snow covers the ground. In fact, they are such a typical feature of the English winter scene, that they are often included on Christmas cards. During the winter, the robin occupies a particular area of the ground, usually near to houses (Ridout, 1962:20).

After reading the story, the students are instructed to “find the words used to describe the robin, and then write out the meanings and place the right word in front of each. If you do this correctly, the words will be in alphabetical order” (ibid:21). The instructions raise questions about the wisdom of testing students on material that is not culturally specific. Apart from postcards from relatives abroad, or books and movies depicting winter scenes, what does a Jamaican child know or care about winter in England? How is learning limited, even alienating, when the information at hand is devoid of a meaningful frame of reference?

A story about Jamaica’s famous hummingbird - or other birds native to the region - and perhaps how climate and environment affect their life patterns would have sufficed. The New Caribbean Junior Reader 3, a collaboration between different Caribbean educators, offers an example:

The Green Parrot of St. Lucia, or Jacquot, as he is known in St. Lucia, lives in the tallest trees in the rain forest. It is a rare bird and not many people have seen it. That is one of the reasons why the group of youngsters from the youth club were very excited. They wanted to spot Jacquot flying between branches of the Gomier and Balata trees (Mordecai & Gordon, 1987:69).

There would be no cause for alarm if Euro-centred narratives did not dominate textbooks.

One of these stories is about Robinson Crusoe,¹⁵ a European man who is shipwrecked and stranded on an island for almost thirty years. Being self-sufficient, Crusoe survives his ordeal by building a small house, maintaining a garden, and raising animals. Because it is an excerpt,

¹⁵ “Robinson Crusoe,” cited in Better English Book Four, by Ronald Ridout, p. 9. See Bibliography for details.

what the story does not say is that Crusoe spent the time preoccupied with protecting himself from the savages who lived on the other side of the island, and entertained thoughts of acquiring a loyal slave.

As luck would have it, one day he saves a “black savage” from cannibalism by shooting the would-be-diners. From then on, Man Friday becomes Crusoe’s loyal and trusted slave. Interestingly, even in a remote, tropical setting, Crusoe manages to benefit from racism by dominating a black man. The story is a frightening example of how racism permeates European narratives. At the end of the excerpt, students are instructed to read the entire book and tell in their own words how Man Friday came to live with Robinson Crusoe. It is ironic that Jamaican students, inheritors of a brutal history of slavery, were subjected to the use of this story to teach English.

Like many Caribbean students, one of my educational rites of passage was the recitation of William Wordsworth, “Daffodils”:

I wander lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretch in never ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
tossing their head in a sprightly dance.
(Cited on the Internet).

Donnell and Lawson Welsh (1996:4), explain that a number of textbooks were promoted by school syllabuses as “unproblematically apolitical,” and cite Wordsworth’s “Daffodils,” as an example:

Written by a white man about flowers native to England, within Anglocentric culture, it is seemingly both objective and purely aesthetic. However, the poem cannot be identified as ideologically neutral within a Caribbean context where daffodils are unfamiliar and perhaps defamiliarizing.

I still appreciate the poem's simplicity and aesthetic beauty. But as a pre-teen girl in a country struggling to legitimize its own cultural identity, a poem by Louise Bennett, who is described as the "only poet who has really hit the truth about the society through its own language," (Nettleford, 1983:9) was equally important to learn.

In "Census," Bennett comments on the difficulties in gathering accurate data in for elections under the country's New (1944) Constitution:

But govament fas' ee mah? Lawd:
Me laugh so til me cry
Me dis dun tell de census man
A whole tun-load o' lie

Him walks een an sidung like is
Eena my yard him grow,
An yuh want hear de femelia tings
De man did want fe know

Him doan fine out one ting bout me
For me y'eye soh dry
Me stare right eena census face
An tell him bans o' lie.
(1983:131).

Compared to "Daffodils," Bennett's poem, is far more relevant to Jamaican students. Used creatively, it does not have to contravene Standard English curriculum objectives. Rather, poems like this and other sources that use Creole language offers students a range of choices.

No-one can justifiably argue for the exclusion of other histories and points of view from curriculum and texts. Holistic pedagogy cannot promote academic closure or one central view to the exclusion of others. I do not regret learning Shakespearean sonnets, nor do I regret learning about the European Renaissance in history. But I do take issue with centralizing these Eurocentric narratives in textbooks meant to teach Caribbean students. Schwartz (1992:341),

best articulates this travesty by pointing out that “the debate has to focus on emancipatory versus hegemonic scholarship and the maintenance or disruption of the Eurocentrically bound master scripts that are imparted to students.” An example of the master scripts to which Schwartz refers is the following passage from one of our English readers:

The road to Hermiston runs for a great part of the way up the valley of a stream, a favourite with anglers and with midges, full of falls and pools, and shaded by willows and natural woods of birch. Here and there, but at great distances, a byway branches off, and in a gaunt farmhouse may be descried above in a fold of the hill; but more part of the time, the road would be quite empty of passage and the hills of habitation. Hermiston parish is one of the least populous in Scotland; and by the time you came that length, you would scarce be surprised at the inimitable smallness of the kirk, a dwarfish ancient place seated for fifty (Thomas and Prescod, 1975:65).

If the objective was to provide Caribbean students with examples of proper English, then examples could have been drawn from the students’ daily reality. Passages from texts written by Caribbean authors, focusing on Caribbean places and experiences could just have easily made the appropriate points.

An excerpt from Brother Man, a novel by Jamaican author Roger Mais, is far more useful to Caribbean student than external literary works. Written in 1954, the book captures the struggles of the Rastafarians who “were a feared, despised and rejected group” (p.xi), and the challenges of validating an African-Jamaican identity. The opening scene is set in a working class neighborhood and captures the sights, sounds and smells in a local community:

Around the yam-sellers barrow, and the tripe-seller’s basket, and the coal-vendor’s crazy push-cart drawn up against the steamy sidewalk, they clack, interspersing the hawking and the bargaining, and what-goes-on in the casual, earnest, noisy, meaningless business of buying and selling and where the mango-seller sets down her country-load. They clack where the neighbours meet in the Chinese grocery shop on the corner, leaning elbows against the counter with its saltfish odour and the spilled rice grains and brown sugar grains amid the dusting of cornmeal and flour under the smirking two-faced scale, waiting for change (Mais, 1954:7).

This excerpt is a microcosm of how some Jamaicans live and go about their daily business.

When I read it, the scene brought back vivid memories of my grandfather’s regular trip to Mr.

Mack's corner store at the junction which served as a mini-town square. The large counter which took up most of the space of the tiny shop was always sprinkled with flour and rice grains.

Youthful for his age, it was in the shop that my grandfather shared a drink and a chat with his friends after a day of farming. Out of respect for their age, I did not go into the shop when the men gathered, but I loved to sit outside and smell the sweet tobacco smoke from my grandfather's pipe.

Proverbs

In most traditional societies, orality is the basis of cultural identity and a means of transmitting indigenous knowledge of folkways from one generation to another (Elabor-Idemudia, 1998). Elabor-Idemudia goes on to state that "oral features such as ritualistic chants, riddles, songs, folktales and parables, articulate not only a distinct cultural identity, but also give voice to a range of cultural, social and political, aesthetic and linguistic systems which have now been muted by the long history of colonialism and cultural imperialism." (ibid:43). The oral transmission of cultural lessons is crucial for preparing the person to function in his or her culture.

Orality captures hidden or subtle meanings through facial expressions, gestures, and tones in ways that written forms cannot. These lessons often made their way into texts originally written to socialize British students. But since Caribbean people were perceived as an extension of the British, we were exposed to the same lessons in the textbooks we used. A partial list of proverbs taken from Better English Book Four illustrates this point:

1. Don't count your chicken before they're hatched.
2. Never buy a pig in a poke.
3. Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

4. Empty vessels make the greatest sounds.
 5. Little strokes fell great oaks.
 6. Slow but steady wins the race.
- (Ridout, 1962: 109).

The text instructs student to read the stories and identify the appropriate proverb for each story. These simple sayings impart meaningful lessons. But when they are in textbooks written for British students and taught to Caribbean students, they lose a great deal of their oral meaning. Static and lifeless in a texts with illustrations of “Dick” and “Jane” type caricatures, these proverbs lack the cultural connection to the experiences of Caribbean life.

Centering the body in the act of using proverbs and stating them in culturally appropriate language does much to convey their meaning. One stern look from a Jamaican parent followed by a proverbial warning for bad behaviour is often more arresting than the stroke from a belt. When my grandmother’s friends visited, I would hang around the verandah where they sat hoping to hear a juicy bit of gossip about a wayward neighbor. Aware of my eavesdropping, my grandmother would quietly, but firmly say, “lickle pickney have big ears,” which was my cue to leave and stay out of “big people talk.” This type of proverbial message in text, written in Creole language that takes into account local linguistic devices, would be far more appropriate in the classroom, connected as it was to cultural frames of reference that students share. This view is shared by Ong,² who writes that:

In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence. Your thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antithesis, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other expressions, in standard, thematic settings...in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall (cited in Carolyn Cooper’s Noises in the Blood, 1993:39)

Ong's understanding of primary oral culture is best exemplified by Bennett's poem "Proverbs."

I have highlighted the proverbs in the poem to draw the readers attention to them:

'When ashes cowl dawg sleep in deh'

For sence Mah dead yuh see
All kine a ole black nayga start
Teck liberty wid me

Me no wrap wid dem, for me
Pick and choose me company:
Ma always tell me seh: **'Yuh sleep
Wid dawg yuh ketch him flea'**

Me know plenty a dem no like me,
An doah de time so hard
Me kip fur from dem for **'Cockroach
No bizniz a fowl yard'**

Ah teck me time gwan me ways an doan
Fas eena dem affair;
Me tell dem mawnin, for **'Howdy
An tenky bruck no square'**

Sometime me go a parson yard
Sidung lickle an chat -
**'Ef yuh no go a man fir-side, yuh no know
Ow much fire-stick bwile him pot'.**
(Bennett, 1983:217)

Not all of the proverbial sayings are metaphorical in meaning but rather transmit literal messages. Yet, all of their meanings are tied to a particular context that take into account their endogenous location which makes them far more useful to African-Jamaican students.

Folktales and Fables

One of the most enduring indigenous aspects of Jamaican culture is the stories about Anansi (or Anancy). With long historical West African (Asante) roots, Anansi stories personifies Elabor-Idemuda's observation that folktales survived the slave trade (1998). Space does not

allow for an elaboration of the complex significance of Anansi in slave culture, but stories about the spider's ability to survive through wit and cunning continue to entertain and teach valuable lesson. Burton (1997:63), states that,

the essential theme of the Anancy story...is the outwitting of the powerful by the weak...the use of tactics, or a whole repertoire of oppositional devices on the part of the weak first to evade, and then to manipulate in their favor a power that, if used directly, can and must destroy them....Anancy's realm is the realm of the poly-morphous, perverse, of endless deviation, deflection, switching roles...the storyteller's art is likewise one of subterfuge and multiple meanings, so that any Anancy story operates polysemically, with one meaning say for children, and another for adults..., and another still for outsiders, particularly outsiders who are white.

Anansi's ability to outwit Massa in the game of survival is central to the meaning of the stories. Complex and multiple, the stories have double meanings, especially in how they were told in plantation society. On the one hand, slaves identified with Anansi as a "mythical manipulator of the mighty and vicarious avenger of the humiliation they felt in every day life" (ibid:64). On the other hand, "whites who...were present at the telling of an Anancy story would take pleasure in a protagonist whose bowing and scraping before authority caricatured the already caricatural act the slave played out daily before them" (ibid). Anansi became marginalized in mainstream Jamaican culture, associated with poor blacks, who, like Anansi, were viewed as tricksters, or ginnals.¹⁶

True to his character, Anansi, trickster, survivor, has made his way into primary school textbooks where he continues to teach and entertain Caribbean learners. The "Reading to Enjoy A Story" section of Unit 3 in English for Life (p. 19) asks students, "How many stories do you know about Anansi the Spider Man?" Do you know the one when he was trying to catch the Kling Kling bird?"¹⁷ After reading the story, students are invited to answer a series of questions

¹⁶ "Ginnal" is the Jamaican Creole word used to describe an untrustworthy, manipulative person.

¹⁷ Both Anansi stories are included in the Appendix I at the end of the thesis. The school textbooks referred to in this section are listed in a special section in the Bibliography.

to develop comprehension skills; further, they are instructed to try and recognize implied or unstated ideas in the story. Similarly, Unit One in Language Arts for Primary Schools (p. 1), begins with “Let’s Talk About Anansi,” followed by a story about how Anansi caught Snake by tricking him. Again, students are instructed to answer questions pertaining to comprehension.

Both stories, accompanied by colourful illustrations, appeals to the age group they are meant to teach. Apart from their entertainment value, there are moral lessons in each story. That Anansi is not the hero in the first story (about the Kling Kling bird), adds a level of complexity to the trickster’s character. While no-one can reasonably expect school-age children to analyze the importance of Anansi to Jamaican culture, these stories, told in the home and school, provide examples of the value of an indigenous-based knowledge. They also represent examples of how folk culture can be used in texts to enrich the learning experience.

New Caribbean Junior 1 and New Caribbean Junior 3, designed for a young student audience, offer a collection of folktales from across the Caribbean and other regions to engage and teach. The story of “The Mouse Girl” (in the first book is a folk tale from India about the strength that resides in small things. There is also an Aesop fable,¹⁸ (pp. 78-80), that teaches the value of true friendship. The second book includes a folktale from Haiti, “How Compere the Tiger Was Thrown Over the Cliff,” “How the Yawarie Got its Shell”, a tale from Guyana, and “Under the Shade of the Mulberry Tree,” a Chinese folktale (pp. 66-68). Through the stories they tell and through the different races used in the illustrations, the books are good examples of viewing the world through multiple lens.

The texts mentioned above represent a shift towards more inclusive Caribbean material.

¹⁸ Aesop is supposed to have been a African slave in Greece.

But in case the reader is left with the impression that colonial images in textbooks are in the past, let me hasten to point out that the Nelson's West Indian Reader is still an integral part of Early Childhood Education in the Caribbean. These readers are designed to teach kindergarten students the alphabet, how to form basic words, and how to match pictures with sentences. I looked at the first and second primers for this thesis.

While they are simple and easy to read, all the situational stories use European children to demonstrate the meaning of basic words and sentence structures. For example, the "Look and Say" section of the first primer, five children are in an action scene followed by a short verse:

Sam and Pam like Jam
Tim and Tot like Ham
Is the Ham in a Jar. No
The jam is in a Jar.
I like Ham and Jam
Has Pam a ham. No.
(p. 19)

Like the words, the pictures are very simple and could easily be changed to situate black children in the story. In both textbooks, none of the pictures used to demonstrate word meanings include black children. Furthermore, all the nursery rhymes in the second primer (Pat-a-Cake and Jack and Jill, p. 45; Little Jack Horner and Little Bo-Peep, p. 46) are firmly grounded in Eurocentric views about socializing children.

What remains particularly disturbing is that the same primers were used by Caribbean people who grew up in the pre-independent era, some of whom confirmed that these texts have not changed. One of the stories in the "Picture and Sentence Matching" section in the first primer reads as follows:

Dan is the man in the van. A pot is in the van.
Tot got a pan from Dan. Tim ran to Dan in the van.
Dan let Tim drive the van (p. 24).

Ironically, a Calypso song entitled “Dan is the Man,” critiques this type of education which emphasizes Standard English in a manner that is disconnected from the reality of Caribbean life.

What follows is a partial quotation of the song:

According to the education you get when you small
You'll grow up with true ambition and respect for one and all
But in my days in school they teach me like a fool
The things they teach me I should be a block-headed mule

Pussy has finished his work long ago
And now he resting and thing
Solomon Agundy was born on a Monday
The Ass is in the Lion Skin
Winkin Blinkin and Nod
Sail off in a wooden shoe
How the Agouti lose he tail and Alligator trying to get
monkey liver soup

The poems and the lessons they write and send from England
Impress me they were trying to cultivate comedians
Comic books made more sense
You know it was fictitious without pretense
But like Cutteridge wanted to keep us in ignorance.
(Cited in Voiceprint).

The Mighty Sparrow's “Dan is the Man” is a satirical critique of Captain J.O. Cutteridge's West Indian Readers (1926 to 1929), a six-volume textbook widely used in the Caribbean for three decades (Donnell & Lawson Welsh 1996:126). By using calypso as an alternative discourse, “Dan is the Man” stresses to importance of oral communication. Not only is it crucial to account for the performance element in assessing calypso, it also shows that calypso intervenes significantly into cultural debates regarding the privileged status of written texts and the nature of literature itself (ibid: 126).

The contemporary primers, like their predecessors, are written to teach young learners the basic structures of Standard English. But can this not be done by using images and situational stories that most closely reflect the daily realities of Caribbean students? This clearly begins to happen in primary school texts, but should actually begin from the pre-primary stage in a

student's life to ensure a stronger, connection between learning inside and outside the classroom. If a critical approach is taken to writing these types of primers, basic steps must be implemented to indigenize the material to make it relevant to young readers. These include changing the images to reflect Caribbean people and their environment, juxtaposing Caribbean nursery rhymes and daily situational experiences that reflect Caribbean reality to promote learning.

If the political project at hand is to rupture what constitutes 'proper language' in texts, then it is crucial that the language spoken by Jamaicans become centred in texts and schooling. Not only does this ensure that school is an extension of the students home (particularly children from working class backgrounds), it also challenges Eurocentric notions of literacy which is connected to the acquisition of knowledge as a commodity, rather than a holistic, sustaining way of organizing a people's life. Further, the ability to write and speak "proper English" remains a measurement of academic success. It also ensures that the full linguistic potential of Jamaican students remain unexplored (Nettleford, 1978). What I am proposing is a multi-centred approach to learning that allows students to draw on their linguistic/cultural experiences to make learning more dynamic.

Orality in Text and Context

Concerns about the loss of the integrity of oral traditions in written texts have to be read differently in the Jamaican context than in Euro-American educational locations. I say this as a student who has been educated in both places, as a woman who was socialized in the Jamaican cultural institutions (school, family, church), and as someone who has had to develop a politically-based black identity to challenge racism in Canada.

Although the basic structure of colonialism is similar in both locations (the centering of white, middle-class values and narratives), in contemporary Jamaica the teachers and students in

the classroom were (and are) predominantly black. We all spoke a similar language despite the fact that we had to leave that language outside the classroom in our quest to learn “proper English.” At least in my daily existence, race was not an obvious issue. When I attended high school (which was all girls), everyone in the class looked like me and shared a common cultural bond, albeit mediated by class locations. Where students of different races encountered each other, there was a feeling of camaraderie influenced by a sense of “Jamaican-ness”.

The students who now read Caribbean literature and poetry in the classroom share the culture that produces this type of literature. Additionally, in the wider social and political structures, the people who visibly occupy positions of power are predominantly black. The media, (especially radio), disseminates information, drama, and music produced by local Jamaicans, and there is a sense of a common culture defined by a specific language that is not Standard English. Given the popularity of Jamaican culture, the stigma of backwardness is diminishing. Capturing the students’ reality as transmitted through fables, proverbs and stories in texts, though not without its critics, is gaining wider acceptance in texts. Since people of African descent make up over ninety per cent of Jamaica, it is not difficult to see how and why traditional knowledge forms of expression are leading the decolonization process. This is not without its problems and limitations, but it certainly contrasts my experience in the Canadian context.

When I arrived in Canada almost fifteen years ago, my mother warned me that in many instances, I would be one of few, if not the only black child, in many of my classes. I could not fathom her warning until I actually sat in classrooms where all the teachers were white, and the students of colour were few. I was terrified to speak for fear of being teased for having a strong Jamaican accent. The sense of self and wholeness I had in Jamaica gradually eroded as a feeling of invisibility slowly set in. There were no opportunities for self/cultural expressions, nor were the schools I attended open to or welcoming of African people. The few texts that attempted to

chronicle “the black experience” (**Uncle Tom’s Cabin, To Kill a Mockingbird, Black Like Me**) were threatening. They were not read critically and were often left unproblematized. Furthermore, these type of texts left me defensive, feeling as I did that my body brought to life their content and that I had to justify my very existence. There was no room and no opportunities for any oral forms of expression under these circumstances. If there were, they would be seen as exotic, marginalized experiences, “apart from” the universal, white experience that Canadian schools are meant to impart.

In Chapter Three, I presented interviews conducted with Jamaicans who remember Independence, with a student who shared his views about the changes in education, and with a Trinidadian social worker whose life was influenced by the Black Power Movement (BPM). I discussed the concerns presented by the BPM both in Trinidad and Jamaica and how it changed that social and political agendas in those countries. Finally, the chapter argued for more Caribbean content in school textbooks by presenting examples of culturally appropriate materials. Chapter Four is a detailed discussion about how a greater reliance on cultural sources of information in textbooks can improve textbook content and pedagogy.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL VISIONS: REGGAE AND POETRY IN TEXTBOOKS

Chapter Four presents an analysis of the interviews conducted with four Caribbean teachers whose respective careers span between twenty and forty years at the primary and secondary school levels. The questions were designed to elucidate issues about power and knowledge, pedagogical practices and textbook content. The chapter also proposes a broader definition of texts to include reggae music and poetry, both in Creole, and how they can be used to critique colonial educational practices, and act as social and political commentary.

Education Then and Now: Interviews with Caribbean Teachers

Three Jamaican teachers, Mrs. I.W., Mrs. C.B., and Mrs. L.L., and one Trinidadian teacher, Mrs. D.H., were interviewed for this thesis. Mrs. I.W. is a retired primary school teacher whose career lasted forty one years. Mrs. C.B. has been teaching primary school for the last twenty two years, while Mrs. L.L. has taught at the high school level for the past twenty years. Mrs. D.H. began her teaching career in Trinidad at a time when few other avenues of employment were open to women. She taught English for many years and co-authored one of the first English texts to include images of Caribbean people. She is currently completing her Ph.D at the University of Toronto. The three Jamaican teachers were asked to fill out a questionnaire, and Mrs. D.H. was interviewed in person. I began the interview by asking each woman to talk about how she came to choose teaching as her profession:

My head teacher found me to be a dependable and responsible pupil. After I was successful in my first examination and was old enough, I was promoted to Pupil-Teacher. I enjoyed this and so continued to become a trained teacher” (Mrs. I.W, retired Primary school teacher, responded to questionnaire).

I was motivated to become a teacher by my desire to help others achieve their full potential. I have been a teacher for twenty-two years” (Mrs. C.B. Primary school teacher, responded to questionnaire).

Most of my teachers in primary and high schools were dedicated and caring. I saw them as role models and was motivated to make my contribution to society through teaching. I’ve been teaching for more than twenty-years (Mrs. L.L., High school teacher, responded to questionnaire).

We were Roman Catholics. They [her parents] didn’t want their children, especially girls working in an environment that might not have been - in their view - Christian, so they suggested we should be teachers...that was the way to go if you wanted to be what they called in Trinidad - decent (Mrs. D. H., personal interview).

The teachers’ responses are not without historical context that has to be taken into account when analyzing the data. Caribbean teachers have played a front line role in ensuring that the socializing intent of educational objectives were carried out. Entrusted with the responsibility of training children to become Christian citizens of high moral character, “it was more important that a teacher be of good, honest principles than of high intellectual culture” (Turner, 1987:62). Turner goes on to argue that the assumption of the Jamaican government in 1870 with “respect to candidates for entry into teacher’s college was that they were coming as ‘already socially formed human beings’ from a society that was depraved, uncontrolled in its appetites, idle and lacking in civilized graces” (ibid:63). Consequently, for teachers to become agents of change, they had to be removed from that society and “fitted out with new attitudes and habits” (ibid:62).

From its early days, teaching became imbued with strong gender biases based on the assumption that women, being of a higher moral character than men, were more suited for teaching young children and older girls. In 1883, the Governor of Jamaica lobbied for trained females teachers on the grounds that “it was hopeless to expect any moral upliftment in the mass of the women of Jamaica until they could be taught by their own sex” (ibid:63). It is within this framework that the teachers’ comments must be viewed.

Mrs. I.W.'s experience of moving into the profession as a pupil-teacher under the guidance of a head teacher is one of the ways that promising female students were groomed to become teachers. Because teaching was viewed as a 'natural' extension of women's role as caregivers and homemakers, it was also one of the few areas of employment available to them. Although the profession came to be dominated by women, this was not always the case. Reddock (1994), explains that in Trinidad, the number of female teachers increased significantly during World War II as men left the service for more lucrative jobs on military bases. Furthermore, Trinidad's declaration of nationwide compulsory education necessitated a significant increase in pupil-teachers in 1946. However, once in the profession, women were subjected to patriarchal institutional values resulting in exploitation and discrimination.

Teaching as an extension of women's socialization as help-mates is further evident in the responses provided by Mrs. C.B. (*I was motivated by my desire to help others*) and Mrs. L.L. (*Most of my teachers...were dedicated and caring...I saw them as role models and was motivated to make my contribution to society through teaching*). These experiences echo the view that teaching is a calling whereby agents of change with missionary zeal can find fulfillment by participating in the upliftment of students while contributing to society. Therefore, the profession of teaching took on the role of a moral and social service agency and elevated teachers to a position of authority and respectability in the community. Indeed, in the Caribbean, teachers were expected to discipline students in school in the manner that parents disciplined them at home.

Mrs. D.H.'s comments that she entered the profession because of its Christian tradition and appeal to decent women, speaks loudly about the moral values and the restrictions placed on women of the day. She was encouraged to become a teacher because it would not interfere with her duties as a wife and a mother, important roles that all respectable women would inevitably

assume.

Historically, women's marital status determined the conditions of employment or whether they would be employed at all, not just in teaching but in many other professions. Reddock (1994:63), writes that "from the early 1920s women teachers and civil servants were encouraged or forced to resign on marriage; unmarried mothers, of course, were not accepted into the teaching fraternity." These types of discriminatory practices pre-supposed that a woman's paid work was only a temporary arrangement because after marriage, her husband would take care of her. Reddock (ibid:65), points out that "this manipulation of women's position illustrates the flexibility of the family wage concept. It provides for the possibility of withdrawing large numbers of women workers from the labour force when necessary but of taking advantage of their lower wage cost when convenient" (ibid). Between Mrs. D.H.'s experience and Reddock's analysis, it becomes clear that patriarchal values and moral concerns within the demands of a capitalist marketplace all intersect to perpetuate the exploitation of female teachers.

The disruption or continuation of colonial educational practices significantly depends on the teacher's participation in the process. Given that teachers are entrusted with authority, the type of classroom atmosphere she creates and the pedagogical style she uses can encourage or alienate students from the learning process. With this in mind, I asked each teacher to describe her teaching style:

Firm but loving. I always created a pleasant atmosphere. I was flexible in the use of chosen methods (Mrs. I.W.).

My teaching style is one that is flexible. I teach, but I also allow my students to do research for themselves (Mrs. C.B.).

My teaching style involves the use of role play and other non-verbal materials lecturing, questioning in order to get students to examine information critically and draw logical conclusion from sources, student research and presentations. (Mrs. L.L.).

Caribbean teachers relied heavily on corporal punishment to discipline students. Mrs. I.W.'s flexibility "in the use of chosen methods" is vague, but based on the fact that her career spanned a forty-one year period, and that she taught at the primary school level, is it not likely that her methods included the use of corporal punishment? What emerges is a picture of a teacher with good intentions, trained in the British tradition, teaching in a predominantly black school that used textbooks written for British students. If the teacher is not critically aware of the issues of power, then her pedagogical practices perpetuate rather than challenge the reproduction of domination in the classroom.

Under those conditions, the classroom is not a place that encourages inclusivity but relies on learning by repetition and rule enforcement. The conditions are also conducive to an abuse of power since teachers often execute harsh disciplinary actions involving caning or beating students.¹⁹ In a follow-up phone call with Mrs. I.W., she confirmed that "back then" teachers thought that they were doing the right thing and often felt that they needed to prove to the headmaster that they could do the job. In other words, teachers had good intentions, but as Fine (1991) argues, good intentions drown within structural disempowerment and institutional loyalty, ensuring inequitable outcomes.

The other two teachers, Mrs. C.B. And Mrs. L.L. replied that their teaching styles encouraged independent research, the use of role play, critical analysis of information and class presentations. Without comprising their power, the teachers' responses imply that they are willing to create an atmosphere that encourages students to learn through performance and self-directed projects. Their comments must be read by taking into account that Jamaican schools

¹⁹ As a primary school student, I witnessed students been beaten for minor offences.

still emphasize order and discipline to meet educational outcomes. However, there appeared to be room for creativity on the part of the students. This, coupled with the recognition that students come to school with their own cultural experiences, complete with a language of cultural transmission, holds the potential for a classroom environment wherein the teacher allows the student to take risks in the learning process.

Mrs. D.H. replied that although she followed a traditional teaching style, she also encouraged the students to be creative by reading and performing poems and stories that had meaning to them. She noted that these were the moments when students, especially those who had the most difficulties, would become engaged and interested in learning. However, she told a story about her own experience as a student in a Catholic run school which poignantly highlighted the pedagogical tradition that most teachers adhered to, in addition to capturing the social inequalities that the school reproduced:

I went to a school (in Trinidad) run by Dominican sisters. The same nuns ran the orphanage at the time. We didn't know this then but there was one girl in my class who lived at the orphanage and I always remember that when they began the year, everyone would form into groups...there were few black children in my class but there were children I knew from my neighborhood; this (black) girl was alone ...and no-one would speak to her. Well, anyway it came out at the end of the term when they had a mark day. They called out your marks and where you placed in the class. This girl, she did very badly and she was standing there, and the Principal who was a nun said to her 'and you, you who come from the orphanage and got a chance like this...', so the whole school of five hundred upper middle-class kids knew. I mean kids who were chauffeur driven to school knew that girl's status. The school was extremely and hierarchically structured...so that the conditions at home made sure that you stood out (Mrs. D.H., personal interview).

The recounting of this humiliating event revealed the attitudes that church representatives held towards black students in their care. The principal's belief that the orphaned girl should be grateful to the church and the school for giving her a place to live and learn, positions the church as a charitable institution providing hand-outs to undeserving blacks. Furthermore, her remarks showed that a student's skin-colour and class location determined how she would be treated by

educators. Finally, the situation revealed that educators are the representatives of institutional values reflecting the structural arrangements in society. If they are not critically engaged in working to disrupt these arrangements, they remain front line agents of domination.

Having established the teachers' reasons for entering the profession and interrogating their pedagogical practices within the traditional context of schooling, I asked them to talk about their understanding of anti-colonial educational practices, including anti-racism and indigenous knowledge:

Anti-colonial education is against the colonial chosen subjects which are so distant from our experiences hence learning by rote.

Anti-racism education means different subjects being taught to different races.

Indigenous knowledge is that of the native surroundings with which one is in contact (Mrs. I.W).

Anti-colonial education: same education whether you are colonial or not.

Anti-racism education: same education regardless of race.

Indigenous knowledge: knowledge centered around the local people or people of a nation (Mrs. C.B).

Anti-colonial education: equal educational opportunities regardless of race, status or creed.

Anti-racism education: education which focuses on the environment and culture as well as the needs of its people rather than on those of the Mother country.

Indigenous knowledge includes the traditions of a native people, i.e. written and oral traditions, artifacts and ecofacts (Mrs. L.L).

Generally, the responses captured the basic elements of anti-colonial education outlined in Chapter Three. Mrs. I.W.'s response indicated that she is aware that subjects that appeared on the curriculum were alien to the needs of the local community, and that students were expected to merely repeat the information rather than thinking about what it meant to their lives.

Furthermore, Mrs. L.L. noted that anti-colonial educational approach must focus on knowledge production from local environmental and cultural sources to ensure that the curriculum is relevant to the community. Both responses addressed the need to centre subjects in the education process in order to promote meaningful outcomes. These views are in keeping with anti-racism

and indigenous knowledge pedagogical practices.

While the teachers' feedback on anti-colonial education demonstrated an understanding that education in the Caribbean needs to be more equitable both in access and outcomes, the responses did not reveal an understanding of the structural inequalities that anti-racism proposes to address. The view that anti-racism education means "equal educational opportunities regardless of race, status, or creed" (Mrs. L.L), is indicative of a more multicultural approach rather than "an action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression" (Dei, 1996:25). In other words, the general recognition that hegemonic practices persist in schools is not firmly linked to racism.

The reading of anti-racism education as the "same education regardless of race" (Mrs. C.B) further demonstrates the investment in a colour-blind approach rather than a radical reading of the challenges facing education resulting from colonialism and neocolonialism. In fact, while addressing some of the changes in educational policy during her career, Mrs. I.W. stated that when the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) was instituted "there was disagreement from the upper class that the poor children would have to mix with their children in school." This statement is an example of how class and race intersect to produce inequitable outcomes. The majority of the people targeted by the CEE were black children from poor families who have traditionally not benefited from Jamaica's educational system. Yet, it is safer to emphasize class rather than race differences because of the view that class status can change while skin-colour cannot.

All the teachers had a good understanding of indigenous knowledge and easily spoke to the importance of using this type of knowledge to decolonize education. In addition to their definitions of indigenous knowledge outlined above, the teachers pointed out that an anti-colonial approach in general and the use of indigenous knowledge in particular were very useful

because:

They help to preserve the history of the people, to correct bias views and to create a sense of self-awareness and help in the development of positive attitudes and a national consciousness (Mrs. L.L.).

These approaches have enabled nations of the Caribbean to appreciate its history and to move forward with dignity as they seek to improve their human resources (Mrs. C.B).

In addition, Mrs. D.H. relayed one of the best experiences of her career when she talked about using local poetry to teach students who were deemed to be slow and unable to learn:

If they (the students) caught one thing that they liked, how they would respond!
I remember for example, Edward Brathwaite's poem "Brother Man the Rasta Man"
...well, you should have seen those kids perform. It really got them excited about learning.

Despite the acknowledgment that indigenous knowledges have a place in the classroom, the emphasis remains on preparing students to learn Standard English and generally grooming them for successful professional careers. Even when students expressed resentment about strong foreign content in school curriculum, ultimately, they would have to compromise:

There were black middle-class students, really, really bright kids getting scholarships to Morehouse even then, within the environment, there's almost a kind of reaction to what is foreign in terms of curriculum. But strangely enough, there is also an acknowledgment on their part that we have to do this if we want to get through in the world...but these are the smart ones...who are prepared to have a double role as a student.

Mrs. D.H.'s comment confirms that Eurocentric knowledge continues to be valued as the ticket to success. It also begs the questions: what should schools do to ensure the success of working class kids who are unable to play double roles? And how can a stronger emphasis on all the factors of anti-colonial educational practices be used to disrupt hegemonic school practices?

Finally, the teachers were asked to comment on the importance of textbooks in the educational process; what they believe textbook content should do; and the changing content of texts in Caribbean schools.

Mrs. I.W. noted that "books provide information to develop skills and allow for children

to do research on their own...these books should contain information on Tourism, and the geographical structure of their own country.” With regards to the changing nature of Caribbean textbooks, Mrs. I.W. observed that “books are now produced to teach more about Caribbean communities - history and development whereas before it was foreign-oriented.” Mrs. L.L. argued for books “to help students to acquire knowledge in various subject areas. Textbooks should contain accurate, relevant and unbiased information” [and they] “need to help prepare Caribbean students to cope in a world in which there will be increased centralization, instability in employment, increased competition and reduced co-operation.”

While pedagogy has a lot to do with how books are used in the classroom, it is clear from the responses that demand is placed on the relevance of information in textbooks, especially in making students aware of their history, and in fostering nationhood. However, there appeared to be a strong connection between “relevant information” and the market economy, especially with regards to teaching students about the value of tourism, and preparing them for employment. Although pleased by the proliferation of textbooks written by, and for, Caribbean people, Mrs. D.H. pointed to one of the limitations teachers encountered with the new texts:

We found ourselves having to use about four or five texts because we found that while they have a variety of things to offer, there wasn't a text that we could use as a class text, we found the quality of the texts being produced lacking in terms of what we feel we need to teach kids - competence in language.

Mrs. D.H.'s argument speaks to the relationship between access to economic resources and language, and to the importance of ensuring that textbooks allow students to master the knowledge(s) that are valuable in the market place. She also noted that the home conditions, particularly the emphasis placed on speaking Standard English in that environment, greatly determines academic outcomes:

When I went to school, you knew that you spoke a certain way at home. But you knew how to write English... now the kids aren't making the transition and you get a lot of problems and it affects them... we know that if you can't write, you can't achieve and that's the reason why they're not passing the exams.

Addressing the discrepancy between the child's home language and Standard English is a recurring issue in language education. How can Caribbean teachers teach English to students who are (at least) partially bilingual and prepare them to sit exams whereby the content and expected outcomes are predetermined?

To meet this challenge schools must be willing to suspend the belief that the English language is the only language worth mastering. Along with a shift in attitude and accompanying policies, teaching language calls for educators who understand and respect Creole as a valid and valuable language form in its own right. An anti-colonial approach at this structural level opens up a number of possibilities, including a broader definition of "texts" to include locally produced materials in Creole form.

Unfortunately, the questionnaires did not allow for elaboration the way a face-to-face interview would. Nonetheless, I can safely argue that the information contained in texts (as discussed in earlier chapters), are not neutral or value free, but reflect a particular worldview and ideology. Consequently, calling for information that is "unbiased" (Mrs. L.L.), is difficult to achieve, especially if the child is being groomed to function in the global marketplace.

The connection between the market economy, education and language, were common themes throughout the four interviews and there was an underlying assumption that a successful education is one that prepares students for a better economic future. This does not mean that the teachers did not understand the importance of anti-colonial education and the use of indigenous knowledges to further this process. However, there was a clear tension between the ideology of schooling for successful outcomes, and the perceived limitations of an anti-colonial approach

towards this goal.

The following section looks at how Jamaica's rich Creole heritage can be brought to schools in order to bridge the gap between the knowledge most students bring to the classroom, and the knowledge they are expected to have when they leave. My argument is that incorporating reggae music and Creole poetry into the learning process and viewing them as valid text materials, provides an opportunity to disrupt the practice of centralizing Eurocentric texts, curriculum and pedagogy in Caribbean schools. Furthermore, these cultural forms of expression are rich in material that offer a radical critique of the colonial/neocolonial experience, in addition to chronicling the political and social events that shape Jamaican society.

Reggae, Rastas, and a Changing Political Landscape

Reggae music is a people music....Reggae music is news...is news about yourself, your own history...things that they won't teach you in school.

(Bob Marley, cited in Janet Decosmo's "To Set The Captives Free: Religion and Revolution in Bob Marley's Music." IJCRES, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1998)

Reggae music is credited with putting Jamaica on the map. Musical ambassadors like Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Jimmy Cliff, and Bunny Wailer brought the music to the world stage and gave it international recognition. Female artists like Rita Marley, Judy Mowat and Marcia Griffiths have also made significant contributions to the reggae scene in Jamaica and abroad. Apart from its entertainment value, reggae music is deeply political. It has been described as a "social music, like calypso, concerned with topicality" (Johnson, 1993:5); and it professes strong connections to Africa and a pride in Black identity that cuts across continental and diasporic cultural barriers. There are any number of songs whose lyrics capture the pain, the joy, and the aspirations of black people in general and Jamaicans in particular, especially those who are the country's constant "suffarahs".²⁰

²⁰ "Suffurahs" are Jamaica's poor and exploited people.

Historically, Rastafarians in Jamaican society have been marginalized, scorned by middle-class, and harassed by the police for their beliefs and appearance. They have also been at the forefront in urging Jamaicans to confront the truth about colonialism, and to come to terms with their African identity. It was not unusual for the police to cut off a Rastafarian's locks to demonstrate contempt for the "cult." When I was growing up, it was common knowledge that Rastafarians stole little children, so I was taught to be fearful, especially during the years that I lived in Kingston. I realized later on that Rastafarians were ostracized because they dared to speak the truth about the injustices that structured Jamaican society, thereby posing a threat to the status quo. The first group to adhere to Marcus Garvey's teachings on African pride, unity and self-reliance, Rastafarians looked to Africa (particularly Ethiopia) as their ancestral home, and Haile Selassie as their true god.

The close association that grew between reggae artists and Rastafarian philosophy, served to popularize the latter as reggae music took on a decidedly critical tone, tackling race/class divisions, and oppressive social conditions. The Babylon system, perceived to be all that is evil in Jamaican and Western capitalist society, comes under intense criticism in Rastafarian/reggae music culture. Members of this oppressive system include the police, who are seen as its protectors, politicians, and the middle-class who maintain their position at the expense of the poor. As much as Rastafarians are shunned because they are perceived to be against Christianity, the Old Testament is at the heart of Rastafarianism, although the group has its own interpretation of Biblical events. Further, musical lyrics are imbued with religious images in the Rastaman's fight against Babylon:

Come we go chant down Babylon one more time
For them soft, yes them soft
Them soft, yes them soft
Come we go chant down Babylon one more time

Men see them dreams and aspiration crumble in front of their face

And all their wicked intentions to destroy the human race
And that's how I know, that's how I know
A reggae music, mek we chant down Babylon
(Taken From Bob Marley's Confrontation album).

Marley's musical chanting that threatens to bring down Babylon invokes images of Joshua's battle to capture Jericho in the name of the Lord:

Then the Lord said to Joshua,March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days; Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horn in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up. every man straight in (Joshua 6:13, The Fall of Jericho).

Following the Lord's instructions, Joshua and his people's loud shout brought down Jericho's wall. Marley's lyrics imply that by chanting reggae music, Rastafarian's aim to bring down Babylon.

True to its conservative nature, the Jamaican government banned several early musical recordings that leveled strong criticism against it. "Everything Crash", a 1968 release by the Ethiopians is one such example:

Look deh now - everything crash
Firemen strike – Watermen strike
Telephone pole men too
Down to the policeman too
What bad by the morning
Can't come good a evening
Every day carry bucket to the well
One day the bucket bottom must drop out
Everything crash.
(Cited in Waters).

The song names four of a number of strikes that occurred in 1968, and speaks to the notion that daily strains and stresses will result in disaster. Furthermore, it uses proverbs to communicate that something that is broken cannot be fixed (Waters:1985). The government also banned "Fire, Fire" by the Wailers that described the riots in Kingston after Rodney Walter was prevented from re-entering Jamaica:

Fire, fire – They have no water...
Who you gonna run to? Who you gonna run to?
Who you gonna run to? -- They have no mercy.
Stand up and fight it – Stand up and fight it
Stand up and fight your fight
'til you give me freedom.
Come and tell me true
Why you been treating me crude
You see the fire burning
And you don't know where you turning.
Fire, fire.
(Cited in Waters).

If protest songs were not banned outright, they received very little air play in order not to scare or offend middle-class sensibilities. But in the 1970s, reggae music and Rastafarian symbols were increasingly appropriated by the government to further political objectives, and by rebellious middle-class youths searching for an identity. Ironically, Hugh Shearer, one of the country's most conservative government officials, stated that "there is only one man who sets the election date, and that man is "I" man"²¹ (Waters, 1985:100).

The 1972 national election contested by Michael Manley and Edward Seaga, was filled with Rastafarian symbolism. Both leaders appropriated reggae music and Rastafarian language to further the objectives of their respective political parties. This appropriation was particularly evident in the significance attached to Manley's "Rod of Correction." The story of the Rod is worth quoting at length:

In 1970, Michael Manley and P.J. Patterson went to East Africa for a formal visit. Reportedly, when they visited Ethiopia they met with the Emperor Haile Selassie, who gave Manley a walking stick in the usual formality of gift exchanges... Patterson had acquired a horsewhip in Kenya... when the two returned to Jamaica... P.J. stole the show with his horsewhip. This must have inspired Michael to use the rod; his ego could not have taken being upstaged by P.J. The rod became known as the Rod of Correction. Manley used the rod with skillful showmanship. When he came onto a platform to speak at a mass meeting, the rod would be in a box with people already onstage. He would go to them and take the rod out of his box, then hold it up and turn slowly to the audience... The rod had a distinct political message... (it would correct the social and economic ills of the country, and it was promised that it would correct JLP arrogance (Waters, 1985:111).

²¹ "I" being the Rasta's way of making the speaker the subject in conversation.

Manley's rod came to take on feverish religious significance. People began to believe that it had special supernatural powers and would scramble to touch it at election rallies which had taken on the air of religious outdoor meetings. Manley became known as Joshua, who would lead his people into battle against the JLP to a more prosperous life. He promised to "Beat Down Babylon," a phrase that is also the title of a popular Rasta/reggae song by Junior Byles. In order to capture the powerful religious image of Manley (a.k.a. Joshua), a reggae song - *Lick dem, Joshua, Lick dem/Lick dem with the Rod of Correction* - was specifically written to further publicize the political journey to the Promised Land.

The African symbolism of the Rod cannot be overlooked. Waters (p.125) argues that "the rod is connected to older, African religious currents in Jamaica...Rods were used in a number of Obeah ceremonies in which people were beaten to rid them of evil spirits, and in the Myal cult during...slavery." 1972 marked the year in which Rastafarian beliefs, concerns, and reggae music became a part of the mainstream political landscape. In a vie for votes, a PNP representative even acknowledged that Rastafarians were harassed, but the speaker blamed the opposing party for the persecution.

Whether this new recognition resulted in structural changes in the society is doubtful. Appropriation allows those in charge to sympathize with the plight of the oppressed, but rarely does it lead to sharing power. Nonetheless, the issues raised by Rastafarians through reggae music and through poetry cannot be underestimated. The language of reggae, and the fact that it became a legitimate vehicle for artistic and cultural expression and social justice, paved the way for indigenous knowledge forms to gain legitimacy.

Rastafarian beliefs and reggae music culture are strongly shaped by sexism and patriarchy, and must be critiqued accordingly. However, Rastafarians and reggae can also be credited for helping to advance African-Jamaican/Caribbean culture, particularly in school texts,

though this may not be immediately obvious.

Mrs. D.H. witnessed many changes in Caribbean education over several decades. I asked her how reggae, calypso and other forms of artistic and cultural indigenous expressions eventually came to influence textbook content. She responded by stating that:

I would suspect that historical and social conditions in the various Caribbean countries influenced the kind of literature and music produced which in turn influenced the nationalist feeling about the kind of education the populations need to have in order to build up a nation free of colonial imposition. I believe that educators responding to the expressed needs of the people's more endogenous concept of development attempted to use the art forms to teach. This would account for the proliferation of local texts, both preceding and immediately following the inception of the CXC. Your statement assumes a priori that need not be tested empirically, but is easily supported by looking at the number of texts emerging from these territories as soon as they become new nations (Mrs. D.H., April 1998).

With this in mind, I would like to turn to a brief discussion of how reggae music tackled colonial education and consequently influenced some of the changes now apparent in school texts.

The academic institution does not escape the reggae artists' critique of Babylon exploitation. Long viewed as an instrument of colonialism that deliberately repressed the truth about African people's contributions to civilization, formal schooling is suspect. Moreover, textbook content that promote alienation through nursery rhymes, and distort history, are often subjected to critique through music. Peter Tosh's "You Can't Blame The Youth" offers an example:

You can't blame the youths, you can't fool the youths
You can't blame the youths, you can't fool the youths
Teach the youths to learn in school, that the dish ran away with spoon
Teach the youths to learn in school, that the cow jump over moon
So you can't blame the youths, you can't fool the youths...
(Cited on the Internet).

The singer calls for school to tell the truth about some of history's so-called great men:

You teach the youths about Christopher Columbus,
and you say he was a very great man
You teach the youth about Marco Polo,
and you say he was a very great man
You teach the youth about the Pirate Hawkins

and you say he was a very great man,
You teach the youths about the Pirate Morgan,
and you say he was a very great man,
So you can't blame the youths, you can't fool the youths...
(ibid).

Without missing a beat, Tosh reminds us that these men, giants of history, can rightly be criticized for criminal activities:

For all these great men were doing
Robbing, raping, kidnapping and killing
So called great men were doing,
robbing, raping, kidnapping and killing
So you can't blame the youths, you can't fool the youths...
(ibid).

At the heart of the lyrics lies the message: if the criminal behaviour of these men are glorified in legitimate school texts, young people will learn that crime pays. Ultimately, school and the type of education it promotes, has to take some of the blame when youths go astray. Indeed, the song's interpretation of the historical roles of the men it mentions, is very different from their portrayal in formal text.

Although the widely used history textbook, The Caribbean Experience: An Historical Survey, 1450-1960, acknowledges that the "main purpose of pirates and buccaneers was not trade, but plunder," (Hall, 1987:21), students are asked to consider their achievements and recognize their importance, especially that of Henry Morgan who captured Jamaica in 1655. On the next page, we learn that "one of the most important foreign traders to enter the Spanish colonial trade was an Englishman, John Hawkins" [whose trade in slaves in Panama was] "carried out peacefully, though Hawkins found the Spanish reluctant to become involved in contraband trade" (ibid:22). These historical accounts may very well be true, but they do raise questions about who gets to write them and from what perspective. Most importantly, how should history be written and told when conquest and tremendous loss of life and culture are the results?

In the interest of advancing anti-colonial education, it is important to use textbook information along with analytical music like Peter Tosh's. Much of Tosh's music is a commentary on social injustices and a critical reading of history that have made many Jamaicans uncomfortable with what appears to be the singer's confrontational attitude. Yet, his musical analysis, as demonstrated in You Can't Blame the Youth, is both simple and insightful. It reveals that "history" as presented in written text, is only one version, and that different groups of people, especially if they are the oppressed, have another interpretation of historical events. The usefulness of this type of music to promote indigenous knowledge and raise critical awareness in the classroom is evident, and has great potential for stimulating classroom discussion. Ultimately, it need not be used to the exclusion of, but rather alongside written texts to offer a wider range of reading and to accommodate differences in learning.

Burning Spear's "African Teacher" offers another critique of Eurocentric pedagogy. Incisive and political, the song's lyrics call for African teachers in the classroom. In Jamaica's case, it speaks to the importance of using teachers who teach from an African (Jamaican) perspective to keep students engaged:

Teach me teach me teach me teacher
Teach I and I Amharic Teacher
Teach me teach me teach me teacher
Teach I and I African teacher

I never be late, I always early
I never absent, I always present
That's why I and I nah siddung inna no back bench

Natty like to be bright, bright, bright, so bright.
(Taken from the Hail H.I.M., 1980)

Simple, yet profound, the lyrics argue that students who are excited by the process of learning are unlikely to be absent, and would want to sit at the front of the class if they are learning from a teacher with an African world view:

African teaching is a part of I and I culture
Part of I and I...
Teach me teach me teach me teacher
Teach I and I Amharic teacher

I admit we go to school
but we never finish
not until we reach upon the side of Africa
wherein I and I can be teach by African teacher (ibid).

Critically read, these verses address one of the reasons black children become disengaged from the learning process. Simply put, when their lived cultural realities are not reflected in the curriculum and texts, they are likely to tune out, and eventually drop out:

Teach me teach me teach me teacher
Teach I and I Amharic teacher

I and I like to be teach by African
African teacher
Natty like to be bright, so bright (ibid).

“Natty like to be bright, so bright” reinforces the point that the passion to learn is often unmatched by content, pedagogy, and curriculum.

“African Teacher” calls for much more than the occasional inclusion of an indigenous poem or story in text. Rather, it speaks to the importance of African teachers in the classroom who share similar experiences and cultural values with their students. Above all, it is a statement about disrupting racialized power structures in the classroom. Depending on one’s location, this position can be read from two different perspectives, but there is one underlying similarity. On the one hand, students of colour in predominantly Euro-American contexts have a much harder time finding teachers of colour in the classroom, let alone teachers who have an African-centred world- view. On other hand, teachers in Caribbean schools are predominantly of African descent. Yet, both systems are steeped in Euro-Anglo concepts and traditions and share similar problems regarding the abuse of power. Calling for “African” teachers in both spheres go beyond the

physical presence of African bodies, which in and of itself, is crucial. But the song also points to the importance of ensuring that these teachers are aware of, and teach in a manner that draws from the student's African heritage.

As much as arguments that point to the potential loss of oral meaning when they make their way into written forms are valid, reggae lyrics are often a fusion between orality and the scribal mode. They also illustrate that "verbal creativity does not spontaneously divide into two discrete categories, orature and literature" (Cooper, 1993:117). The blurring of oral and scribal lines are also evident in "the performance poetry of Louise Bennett, Mikey Smith and Jean Breeze [which] illustrates the interpenetration of oral and scribal forms" (ibid). Furthermore, "fundamental ideological contradictions at the heart of Sistren Theatre Collective's *Lionheart Gal* project exemplify the difficulties that arise in attempting to separate the authors voice from the pen" (ibid).²²

Cooper's observations speak to the fluidity, sophistication and interconnectedness between oral and scribal forms of expressions in segments of Jamaican society that are labeled illiterate. She describes the reggae songwriter's art as a "dynamic process in which words, music and dance are organically integrated with an Afrocentric aesthetic" (ibid:117). This is in contrast to the educational sphere where the written word carries much power and validity. Here, the focus is on espousing facts, paying careful attention to grammar, and using scribal forms to shape reality, rather than focusing on oral knowledge production that centres the body in the process. What Cooper has brilliantly shown, is that the two need not be mutually exclusive.

²² *Lionheart Gal* is a collection of life stories by and about Jamaican women. Edited by Honor Ford Smith and published by Sister Vision Press in 1987, all the stories (except one) are written in Jamaica's nation language.

A New Look at Old Poems

The ancient concept of the poet is that she is endowed to speak for those who do not have the gift of language, or for those who - for whatever reasons - are less conscious of what they are living through.

(Adrienne Rich, cited in J. Edward Chamberlain' Come Back to Me My Language, p. 153).

Unique in its combination of African sources and British colonial traditions, Caribbean poetry expresses the breadth and depth of the legacies that shape Caribbean life. Through poetry, Creole language is given some measure of legitimacy. It is also the forum of expression that gives voice and validity to indigenous knowledges and experiences. The poetry of Louise Bennett, Derek Walcott, Valerie Bloom and Leroy Calliste are profoundly shaped by the experiences that Caribbean people face in daily life, and by the social and political conditions that define these experiences. In 1952, Jamaican writer, Evan Jones, helped to bring local language into greater use with his poem "Song of the Banana Man":

Touris, white man, wipin his face,
Met me in the Golden Grove market place
He looked at m'ol clothes brown wid stain
An soaked right through wid de Portlan rain,
He cas his eye, turn up his nose,
He says, 'You're a beggar man, I suppose?'

He says, 'Boy, get some occupation,
Be of some value to your nation.'
I said, 'By God and dis big right han
You mus recognize a banana man
(Cited in Chamberlain, 1993:97-98).

"The Song of the Banana Man" was one of the first poems to centre a Caribbean character, and to address the tension between working class Caribbean people and the scorn with which they were viewed by whites, and by implication, people in the Caribbean from a higher class structure.

Like musicians, Caribbean poets have not been shy about tackling the persistence of colonial education, particularly the power dynamics that is prevalent in Standard English. John

Agard's "Listen Mr Oxford Don" provides an example:

I ent have no gun
I ent have no knife
but mugging the Queen's English
is the story of my life

I don't need no axe to split up yu syntax
I don't need no hammer to mash up yu grammar

Dem accuse me of assault
on de Oxford dictionary
imagin a concise peaceful man like me
dem want me serve time
for citing rhyme to riot.

I'm not a violent man Mr. Oxford don
I only armed wit muh human breath
but human breath is a dangerous weapon

So mek dem send one big word after me / I ent serving no jail sentence
I slashing suffix in self-defence / I bashing future wit present tense
and if necessary

I making de Queen's English accessory/to my offence
(Cited in Brown, et. al., pp. 109-110).

Caribbean poetry, particularly those written in Creole language, have indeed been "mugging the Queen's English" in its insistence on using and developing the region's nation language.

Although formal texts place an emphasis on Standard English as the universal language best suited to conduct business and bridge the gap between various vernaculars, English is not devoid of history and power dynamics. Chamberlain (1993:69) proposes that:

From the beginning of European settlement in the New World, language was the most popular instrument for turning barbarians into civilians. At the heart of the endeavor was a sort of secular evangelism, a preaching of the gospel of intellectual and emotional progress. It was assumed that European thought and feeling were superior and that these superiorities were embodied in its languages.

Yet, in an ironically sweet example of how Creole poets have found a voice through *their* language, John Agard's poem threatens to force "proper English" to adapt to the linguistic needs of the local situation, effectively "beating it up." Agard's poem also recognizes the tension

between the written word and orality, and in a clever twist, threatens to mug the former with the power of the latter: “I only armed wit muh human breath / but human breath is a dangerous weapon.”

Even poems not written in Creole, often express ideas that challenge colonial perceptions of Caribbean people and their contributions to history. In “Tomorrow Belongs to the People”, Guyanese poet, Arthur Seymour, pays homage to working-class Caribbean people, naming them as the true makers of history:

The efficient engineers dam the conservancies
Design the canals and the sluices
The chemist extract their sugar to the ton
The millers service the padi into rice
And the heavy lorries and unpunctual ships
Bring ground provisions from the farms

But always the people is a hero, a vast army
Making raw material for skill and machines to work upon
They frequent the cinemas
Throng the races and the dance halls
Pocket small wages with a sweating brow
And ragged clothes;
But it is their ignorant, illegitimate hands
That shape history

History is theirs,
Because history doesn't belong
To the kings, and the governors and the legislature.
History basically
Is the work men [and women] do with their hands
When they battle with the earth
(Cited in Brown et. al., p. 239).

Evidence of Caribbean poetry in Standard English textbooks is as much a testament to how far poetry has come to be accepted, as much as it opens up the challenges of placing oral forms in written texts. The following poem “New Scholar,” by Louise Bennett, is a perfect example. The first five verses are quoted:

Good mahnin, Teacher - ow is yuh?
My name is Sarah Pool.
Dis is fi-me li bwoy Michael
An mi jus bring him a school

Him bawn one rainy day ma'am,
It was comin awn to night -
Ugly baby grow pretty fi true,
For dis one was a sight.

Him bawn de week when Rufus
Jack-fruit tree did start fi bear,
Is dat same mont Oby pig dead
But mi fegat di year.

We call him Mi, Mike, Mikey,
Jay, Jakey, Jacob, Jack
But him right name is Michael Jacob
Alexander Black.

No treat him rough, yaw Teacher,
Him is a sickly chile -
As you touch him hard him meck nize
Some people say him pwile.
(cited in Grant, 1997, p. 8).

Grant uses the poem to address the use of language - which is evident in the instructions to the students - and the questions that they are asked to address after reading it. One of the questions is: "which bits of this poem made you laugh?," but it is followed by a caution "that it is not the language which makes us laugh, it is the situation". (ibid: 9). Although the author is obviously sensitive to the ridicule to which Creole language can be subjected to in a Standard English text, it struck me as profoundly disturbing that Caribbean learners have to be reassured that their language is nothing to laugh at. It is also a reminder that students in the classroom who speak Creole, instead of Standard English, continue to be stigmatized, or labeled as stupid.

Grant points out that "Language changes....Dialect is used in some situations, Standard English is used in others. This does not mean that one language is better than the other -just different. The aim of this course is to enable you to use Standard English, in speech and in writing, whenever you feel you need to" (ibid). However, since the entire text is written in

Standard English and “dialect” is only used in poetry, the use of Creole is severely restricted. This raises questions about power, the place of orally-based forms of expressions, and the use, or lack of use, of Creole language in textbooks.

First, why should Creole only appear in texts as poetry or fictional stories? While they are important, these forums clearly leave Creole in the realm of performance, rather than exploring its fullness as a living, working language used by Jamaicans in the business of their daily lives.

Second, must Creole and Standard English in texts remain mutually exclusive? It is widely accepted that English is the universal language of business, but Creole has its own richness. structures and syntax that transmit important ideas and emotions. Why then, shouldn't it be given a prominent place in the classroom?

Third, in the interest of bridging the gap between the public and private spheres to offer an enriching, holistic learning experience, how can texts incorporate the richness of the language that is a vital part of the country's national and cultural identity?

Only a few short years ago, Caribbean poems, let alone those written in Creole, would not have appeared in textbooks at all. The act of reading a poem in Creole in a school text is a remarkable accomplishment. In many ways, it is indicative of how far we have come in reclaiming a cultural language that is still stigmatized and perceived as exotic. And I recoil at the thought of not having it in text. Yet, I cannot overlook its continued marginalization in texts in the pursuit of teaching “proper English.” How this should be addressed remains a challenge for Caribbean educators concerned about furthering an anti-colonial educational agenda.

In this chapter, I analyzed the personal accounts of four experienced Caribbean teachers. I presented the teachers' view on pedagogy and textbook content, grounding my research in first hand accounts of some of the changes that have taken place in the Caribbean educational system.

Moreover, this chapter has shown that the inclusion of reggae music and poetry in Jamaica's nation-language offers a valuable critique of colonial education and ultimately should be included in textbooks and curriculum. More materials from these forums give students and teachers wider perspectives on history, politics and social events rather than complete reliance on traditional textbooks.

In addition to tying all the major arguments of this thesis together, the final chapter offers further thoughts on the pedagogical and communicative implications of applying indigenous knowledges in schools, as well as defining resistance for educational transformation.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Chapter Five reiterates the central focus of this thesis and strengthens the case for the inclusion of indigenous knowledges in Jamaican schools as a way of transforming educational practices.

I began this thesis by arguing that the educational system in Jamaica developed to protect colonial interests. At no point in its early history did the system of education attempt to reform race, class and gender/sexual inequalities which had come to shape the relationships between Jamaica's racial groups. Rather, there was an insistence on the use of education to perpetuate these inequalities. Under these conditions, African indigenous knowledges were not reflected in school textbooks, curriculum and pedagogy. Indeed, the colonial project demanded an eradication of these types of knowledge, particularly where they were viewed as a threat to capitalist expansion.

I chose to focus on textbooks in the colonial educational project because of the power and the authenticity invested in the written word and because, historically, print and literacy positions Western knowledge as superior to others. The development of print and its link to capitalism may have been instrumental in creating "solidarities on an essentially imagined basis among the bourgeois" (Benedict, 1996:77). But in later years, print provided permanency and legitimacy to colonial ideologies, including their perceptions of Southern peoples.

The use of education to dominate blacks has roots in the use of the Bible as a text of "truth." The textbooks used in Jamaican schools were written by, and for, a white Christian population and it is their values and cultural experiences that have been used to shape Jamaican identity. This type of written documentation authenticated Western knowledge to the detriment

of an orally-based indigenous worldview shared by African-Jamaicans. Although some progress has been made by incorporating written materials and images closely resembling an African-Caribbean cultural perspective, the inclusion continues to be mediated by Eurocentric class, race, and gender locations.

One of the most persistent challenges for Caribbean students, parents and educators is how best to implement a system of education that includes diverse perspectives, avoids inertia, and offers broader definitions of what comprises valid texts. This calls for a closer look at what constitutes Western knowledge compared to indigenous knowledge forms and how the latter can be normalized in the sphere of education.

Western knowledge is firmly invested in rationality and scientific objectivity. It emphasizes modernization and development, and it places a high value on knowledge that is acquired in books. Only knowledge that can be “proven” gets to become truth, and these are the truths that become universal. Within this framework, black bodies and women are seen as “irrational” subjects who must be controlled, who cannot be trusted to contribute to civilization, but who must be civilized and subdued.

This particular worldview has given rise to a language that organizes reality, that sets universal standards, and transmits the cultural values that, if emulated, will eventually lead to global progress. Furthermore, it is a worldview that lays claim to the absolute certainty of knowledge and the autonomy of the individual. This approach has left no room for diverse points of view. Unfortunately, generations of colonized people have been socialized to view the acquisition of Western knowledge as a measure of superiority.

In contrast, indigenous knowledge is rooted in the local and long term occupancy of a place. It is expressional and oral, and it embodies experience and practice which provide the contextual basis of knowledge. Indigenous knowledge incorporates spirituality emphasizing

holistic connections between the mind, body and spirit. It takes the view that knowledge is evolving and multi-dimensional and that the universe cannot be ordered and controlled. Moreover, it emphasizes the connection between the individual and his or her community. An anti-colonial perspective that incorporates an indigenous knowledge approach ensures that cultural identity and experience are central in knowledge production. Thus, the body, its connection to genealogy, language and orality become prominent in the learning process.

An indigenous knowledge perspective assumes that knowledge is unique to a particular culture and that knowledge consciousness develops out of a particular location. This does not mean that knowledge is acquired in isolation, or to the exclusion of external sources. Rather, an indigenousness knowledge framework presumes that local people are best suited to articulate their needs and know the best ways to meet them.

I do not wish to imply that indigenous knowledge is solely a response to Western hegemonic education. Rather, I propose that an anti-colonial discourse that synthesizes indigenous knowledge principles offers critical and multiple readings of history, colonialism, and opportunities for resistance inside academic institutions.

Dei (1998) explains that “the academic project of decolonization requires breaking away from the ways in which the indigenous human condition is defined and shaped by dominant European-American cultures, and to assert an understanding of the indigenous social reality informed by local experience and practices”.²³ Dei’s position summarizes the core of what I have been arguing in this thesis, as well as what the goal of radical education in the academy ought to be.

The anti-colonial educator in Jamaica has to approach her work from the perspective that

²³ Re-thinking the Role of Indigenous Knowledges in the Academy: A conversation with George Dei. 1998. Unpublished paper.

education continues to operate in the Euro-American paradigm. Disrupting this deeply entrenched hegemonic arrangement calls for nothing less than a radical shift in the approach to schooling, including choice of texts, curriculum and pedagogy. There has to be a commitment to the idea that African-Caribbean culture embodies critical sites of knowledge that must be tapped into. Although this is beginning to happen, it is not enough to include pictures of black children and the odd Creole poems in textbooks. The situation demands nothing less than exploring all the parameters of education, drawing on the local environment (for example, language, oral history and science) to enhance learning. Students have to know that much of what they need to learn can be taken from their indigenous locations.

Kroma (1995) best articulates that schools in the Third World continue to undermine indigenous knowledges in three ways. First, schools fail to advance indigenous knowledge as worthwhile subject matter for the learning process. Second, they limit the exposure of children to the local knowledge of their communities. Third, they create attitudes in children that mitigate against the acquisition of local knowledge. The author also names these factors as some of the reasons why students eventually lose interest in school, resulting in poor attendance and eventual drop-out.

Part of the challenges facing the limited use or complete omission of indigenous knowledges is the perception that they are obstacles to “development,” rather than dynamic sources of information. Many Third World countries have invested in a Western development model which purports a break with tradition to pave the way for a First World standard of living. Ultimately, formalized education, inculcating European-American values, is viewed as the best way to accomplish this goal.

In Jamaica, governments and educators have been pro-active with regards to restructuring the education system to meet local needs. However, little attention has been paid to

how education can bridge the gap between schools and the communities in which they function.

by tapping into local cultural resources. This includes:

1. Broadening the definition and sources of texts to include reggae music and local poetry in order to increase critical awareness and offer a wider range of choices. The inclusion of music and poetry are only two suggestions, for the country's multi-cultural, multi-ethnic mix certainly ensures many other sources from which to draw.
2. Re-thinking the use of language in texts and curriculum to ensure that Creole is not marginalized.
3. Viewing students, parents, and their communities as integral sources of knowledge.
4. Inviting elders into the classroom to tell their stories and share their knowledge about the country's history and traditions.
5. Re-thinking the meaning of "successful outcomes" to include spirituality and emotionality, personal growth, and the ability to live as part of a human community.

In this thesis, I have argued that textbooks have been, and continue to be, a central tool in organizing knowledge in Caribbean schools. Focusing on Jamaica, I have illustrated that whereas textbooks were clearly written to socialize Jamaican students to adopt Eurocentric ways of behaving and viewing the world, since the 1980s textbooks increasingly include Caribbean cultural perspectives. But this is done within a pre-determined framework that defines successful outcomes and emphasizes preparation for the labour market. Additionally, local knowledges are rarely included to offer holistic learning and multiple readings even though Jamaican culture offers rich and diverse sources of information. The use of reggae music, poetry and stories in this thesis provide examples of a few of the possibilities for an improvement in learning by increasing the range of text information, and creating classrooms that are not dependent on corporal punishment and discipline.

Although the focus of this paper has been to interrogate the uses of textbooks and how they can include indigenous knowledges, textbooks cannot be looked at without accounting for

curriculum and pedagogy. To this end, I have argued that an anti-colonial approach to education also creates spaces to make curriculum and teaching practices relevant to Jamaican students. Radical pedagogues create classrooms that are non-threatening, open to different learning styles, and encourage students to try out new ideas and take risks.

In reviewing research material for this thesis, I came across policy papers and proposals for reforming Jamaica's school system. Many of the proposals have been implemented and the changes that have occurred since Independent are impressive. However, very little has been published on how textbooks can be improved to further decolonize education, let alone structural changes to accommodate indigenous knowledges in all aspects of the learning process. Consequently, a great deal remains to be researched and written in this area. But it is my hope that this thesis will provide an entry point for future exploration on this important subject.

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APPENDIX I

Excerpt from a Folktale

For a long time Anansi tried to catch Kling Kling. They were friends no longer. Anansi set traps and hid them in the grass near the berries on which Kling Kling loved to feed. He made the withes from the woods into long, slippery nooses and hid them where Kling Kling liked to walk. But it was no use. Kling Kling was too clever. He saw all the traps and avoided them. Sometimes he would hide in the top of a tree and, without a sound, watch Anansi set a trap; then when it was all done he would suddenly cry out 'Why?' and fly away leaving Anansi puzzled and angry.

At last Anansi went to his friend Tiger, and said: 'I beg you, Mr. Tiger, help me catch that old Kling Kling bird. He wouldn't pay his fine. He flew away, and I cannot catch him at all.'

'And what will you give me if I help you catch him?' asked Tiger.

'Oh, my sweet Tiger,' said Anansi, 'I will give you a cow.'

'A whole cow?' asked Tiger, who was very greedy and very fond of cow.

'A whole cow. Mr. Tiger. I promise,' said Anansi. So Tiger thought and thought for a long time and at last he said: 'I tell you what we will do, Br'er Anansi. I will lie down in the house and pretend to be dead. You must take a bell and walk all round the town calling out at the top of your voice: "The great King Tiger is dead; the great King Tiger is dead.'" Then all the people will come to the funeral, and you can catch him.

Now the next day was a great market day. Kling Kling went to the market and bought peas and rice and codfish and plantain and sweet potatoes. While he was buying the sweet potatoes he heard a bell ringing, and he asked the people what it was. 'Ah', said a stout market-woman, 'the great King Tiger is dead.'

'What! You mean that Tiger, the great Tiger is dead?' asked Kling Kling.

'Yes,' said the people standing round; 'yes, what she says is true. The great King Tiger is dead.'

'And when did he die?' asked Kling Kling.

'Yesterday just before twelve o'clock.'

'Then', cried Kling Kling, 'I must hurry away to put on my second-best coat and go to the funeral.' Kling Kling rushed home and put on his second-best two-tailed blue coat and his shoes that were so new that they cried out 'quee-quee' when he walked in them. When he had finished dressing Kling Kling went to Tiger's house. When he got there he saw a great crowd of people outside, and he shook his head and said:

'So the great King Tiger is dead!'

'Yes,' they replied, 'the great King Tiger is dead.'

'When did he die?'

'Yesterday just before twelve', they replied.

'What killed him? Was it fever? Was it an accident? How did he die?'

'The heat of the weather killed him,' they said.

'And had he laughed at all since he died?' asked Kling Kling.

'No.'

'Then he isn't dead at all,' said Kling Kling. 'Don't you know that a man is not dead until he laughs a big laugh?'

Tiger was in the nearest room, listening at the window. When he heard what Kling Kling said he broke out into a great laugh that shook the house, and Kling Kling said, 'Ha-ha, I never yet heard a dead man laugh!' and he flew away. So Tiger never got the cow.

(From Anansi the Spider Man, by Philip M. Sherlock, Jamaica. Cited in Gray, English for Life, 1993:17-19)

How Anansi Caught Snake

One day, Anansi set out to catch snake. Now snake was one of the smartest animals in the forest. So, Anansi thought for a long time before he came up with a clever plan.

First, he cut a long bamboo pole. Then he took the pole and went in search of snake. He found snake down by the river. Snake lay coiled up lazily sunning himself.

'Morning, Brer Snake,' said Anansi.

'Morning, Brer Anansi. Don't come too close. You can't trick me. I know you want to catch me'.

Anansi gave a sigh. 'Yes, Brer Snake. You are too smart for me. But now I can't prove to the other animals that you are the longest animal in the world.' Anansi sat down.

'Of course I'm the longest,' said Snake, as he stretched himself out to his full length.

'I think you're the longest,' said Anansi. 'But I can't be sure. You are too far away from the pole.'

Snake came and lay down next to the pole. Anansi stood by his head.

'You look longest,' said Anansi. 'But wait, I saw you move. Now I can't be sure'.

'Tie my tail then,' said Snake foolishly. 'Tie me to the bamboo pole, then you will see I am longest.'

So Anansi made Snake lie still, and he tied him tightly to the pole. He tied Snake's tail, he tied him round the middle and finally he told him to stretch out some more. Snake gave a mighty stretch. 'More, more!' said Anansi, and quick as a wink he tied Snake's head to the pole.

At last he had caught Snake! Anansi took the bamboo pole and set off down the path. Too late. Snake saw that he had been tricked. Anansi caught the Snake because he was so vain.

Taken from Language Arts for Primary Schools, by Don Wilson and Hyacinth Campbell with Betty Wilson, pp. 1-2.

APPENDIX II
RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Part I: Jamaicans who Experienced Independence

1. What do you remember about August 6, 1962?
2. Do you remember any special moments about that day?
3. What do you remember about the times? Were they exciting? Confusing?
4. What did it mean to you to have the country become independent from Britain?
5. After the party was over, what were some of the problems/challenges facing the country?
6. How did these challenges affect you and your family?
7. What are your impressions now that Jamaica has been independent for over thirty-five years?

Part II: Questions for Teachers:

1. What motivated you to become a teacher and what was the length of your career?
2. How would you describe your pedagogical approach or teaching style?
3. What were some of the political issues framing education when you taught?
4. What is your understanding of Anti-racism education? Anti-colonial education? Indigenous Knowledges?
- 4a. How are these approaches useful in the Caribbean educational context?
5. What do you think education should offer students? Has the system in your country offered this type of education?
6. What is the role of textbooks in education and what type of information should these texts contain?
7. How did educational objectives change after your country gained independence?

8. How did the textbooks change to reflect these objectives?
9. What kind of future are Caribbean students being prepared for and what is the role of textbooks in this process?
10. What systems of oppression are still evident in the school system? In textbooks?
11. What strategies can Caribbean teachers use to offer education that is more liberatory and holistic?

Letter of Consent

Date:

Dear:

I am a graduate student in the department of Sociology and Equity Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am undertaking a qualitative study about textual, pedagogic, curricula and instructional practices in Jamaican schools between 1962-1997.

As a Jamaican woman who attended primary and high school in that country, I am interested in looking at how education has changed to include more Caribbean content in textbooks, and at how schools can disrupt hegemonic practices the classroom by drawing on local sources of knowledge.

In addition to examining textbooks, I intend to interview four Caribbean teachers about the changes they witnessed in education, their pedagogical practices and the types of books they use(d) in the classroom. I have attached a questionnaire for you to complete. After answering the questions, please feel free to add any information that you believe is relevant to this study.

Please be informed that all the information in this study will remain confidential. Initials will be used to identify speakers throughout the thesis, the data collected will be destroyed within two years of completing the thesis, and the name of the school where you taught (or teach) will not be mentioned.

Thank you for your cooperation. I can be reached at **(phone number & address)** if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Erica Lawson

CONSENT FORM

I have read Erica Lawson's letter about her study on education in Jamaica, and I agree to participate. I understand that my name will not be used and that the school where I taught will not be identified.

Signed: _____

Date: _____