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## PARTICIPAN EN ESTE NÚMERO

Scott Timcke  
Halim Majeed  
Iván Ogando Lora  
Félix Valdés García  
Patricia Northover  
Michael Witter  
Antonio F. Romero Gómez

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**Crisis, respuestas  
y alternativas en el  
Gran Caribe**



PLATAFORMAS PARA  
EL DIÁLOGO SOCIAL

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## PLATAFORMAS PARA EL DIÁLOGO SOCIAL



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### CLACSO

Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales - Conselho Latino-americano de Ciências Sociais

Estados Unidos 1168 | C1023AAB Ciudad de Buenos Aires | Argentina.

Tel [54 11] 4304 9145 | Fax [54 11] 4305 0875

<clacso@clacsoinst.edu.ar> | <www.clacso.org>

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### Coordinadores del Grupo de Trabajo

Gloria Esperanza Amézquita Puntiel

Miuca Escuela Multitemática

República Dominicana

gamezquita@gmail.com

Jacqueline Laguardia Martínez

Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe

Vicerrectoría de Relaciones Internacionales  
y Posgrado

Universidad de la Habana

Cuba

galadriel162001@yahoo.com





# Contenido

**5** Editorial

## **PENSAR EL CARIBE**

**9** Recent Developments in the Labour Movement in Trinidad and Tobago

Scott Timcke

**29** Caricom-Cuba Engagement Beyond 2022

New Pathways For The Next Semi-Centennial

Halim Majeed

**39** CARICOM-Dominican Republic Relations

Iván Ogando Lora

## **CARIBEÑOS**

**48** Las muchas Kari que hay en Kari Polanyi-Levitt

Félix Valdés García

**61** Tribute to Professor Emeritus Kari Polanyi Levitt on the occasion marking her centenary

Patricia Northover

**66** In Search of Model IV

Michael Witter

## **DESDE LA CÁTEDRA**

**77** La Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe “Norman Girvan”

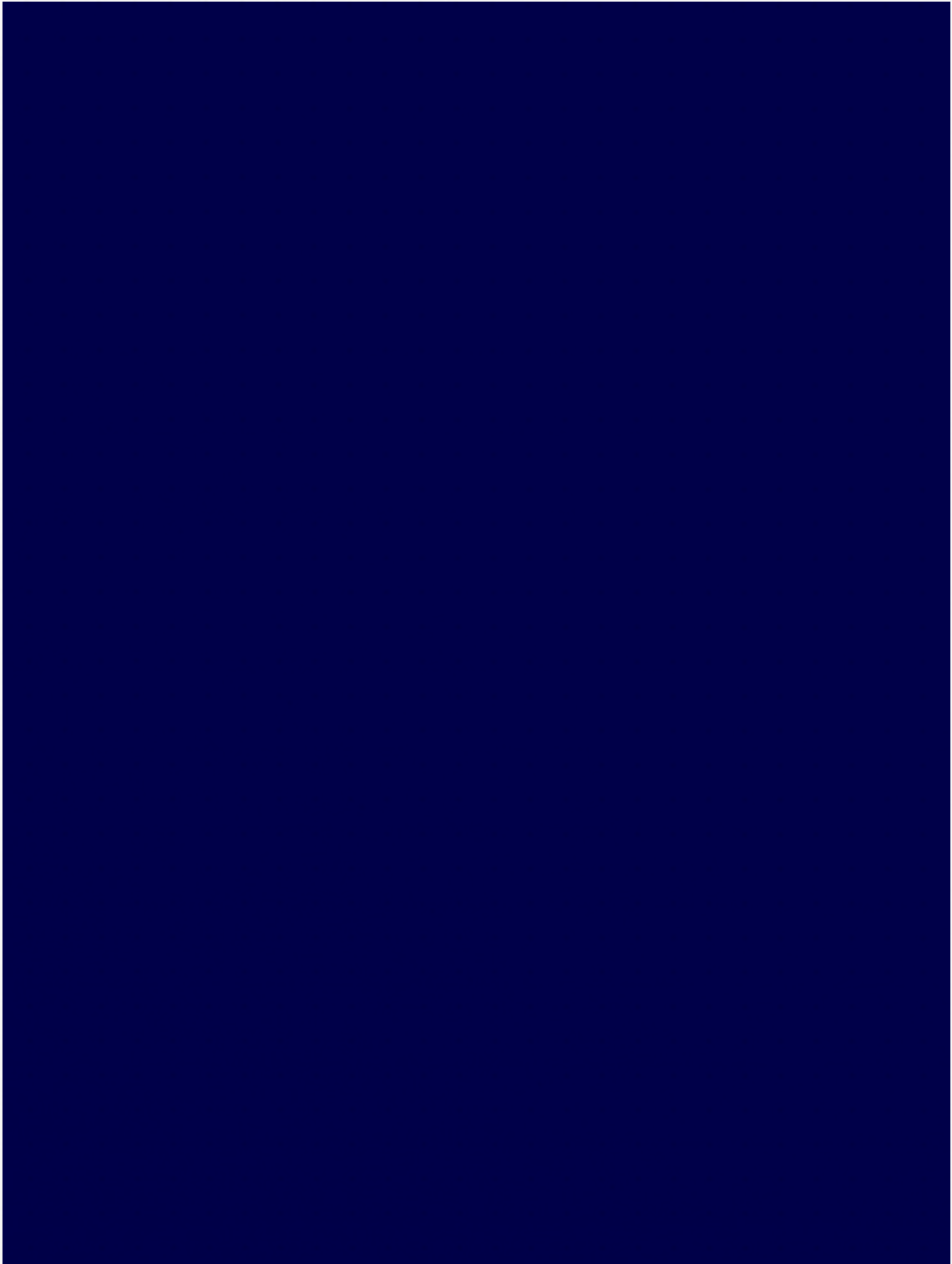
Investigación, pensamiento y acción a favor de nuestros pueblos

Antonio F. Romero Gómez

**80** Convocatoria a la XVII Conferencia Internacional de Estudios Caribeños

La Habana, 18 al 20 de diciembre de 2023 “CARICOM y el regionalismo caribeño: un balance de 50 años”







# Editorial

El Boletín 8 del Grupo de Trabajo CLACSO “Crisis, respuestas y alternativas en el Gran Caribe” se dedica a homenajear instituciones caribeñas en aniversarios de histórica relevancia. La Comunidad del Caribe (CARICOM) que cumplió medio siglo de vida el 4 de julio de 2023 está en el centro de estas conmemoraciones y sobre la CARICOM y sus relaciones con el resto del Caribe insular incluimos los textos de dos embajadores caribeños con vasta experiencia diplomática. Sobre las relaciones entre Cuba y la CARICOM -que también cumplieron 50 años el pasado año- reflexiona Halim Majeed, Embajador de la República de Guyana en La Habana mientras el tópico de los vínculos entre la CARICOM y la República Dominicana son abordados por Iván Ogando Lora, Embajador de la República Dominicana ante la Unión Europea.

Sin embargo, no es CARICOM la única institución que festejamos en este número. El 14 de junio de 2023, la destacada intelectual Kari Polanyi-Levitt cumplió 100 años de vida y en la sección *Caribeños* incluimos tres de los textos leídos en el Seminario Virtual “Kari Polanyi Levitt: Celebrating a True Caribbean Woman” que tuvo lugar el 12 de junio de 2023 y fuera organizado por el Institute of International Relations de la University of the West Indies (The UWI) y el Centro de Estudios del Caribe de la Casa de las Américas. En este apartado presentamos las contribuciones del filósofo cubano Félix Valdés García y de los profesores Patricia Northover y Michael Witter de Jamaica. Los tres académicos, desde perspectivas y experiencias diferentes, nos acercan a la vida y la obra de Kari Polanyi Levitt quien, aunque nació en Viena, es reconocida como una gran intelectual y activista caribeña.

Kari Polanyi Levitt, Profesora Emérita de la Universidad McGill, se licenció en Ciencias Económicas por la London School of Economics en 1947 y obtuvo un máster en Economía por la Universidad de Toronto en 1959. Ingresó en el Departamento de Economía de McGill en 1961 y en 2008 fue investida Doctora Honoris Causa por la Universidad de las Indias Occidentales (The UWI). La profesora Polanyi Levitt es Presidenta Honoraria del Instituto Karl Polanyi de Economía Política de la Universidad Concordia. Ha sido distinguida con importantes premios como el J. K. Galbraith del Foro de Economía Progresista de Canadá y ha sido condecorada con la Orden de Canadá.

Kari ha escrito, coescrito o editado más de quince libros y es autora de más de un centenar de artículos publicados en diversas revistas y ediciones en todo el mundo. En Canadá, es más conocida por su *libro Silent Surrender: The Multinational Corporation in Canada* y por la institucionalización de los estudios sobre el desarrollo, incluida la fundación del CASID. En su obra sobre el Caribe sobresale *Reclaiming Development: Independent Thought and Caribbean Community* (2005), y la publicación junto a Lloyd Best de *Essays on the Theory of Plantation Economy: A Historical and Institutional Approach to Caribbean Economic Development* (2009). Otros textos de importancia son *Life and Work of Karl Polanyi* (1990); *Karl Polanyi in Vienna* (2006) coeditado con Kenneth McRobbie; y *From the Great Transformation to the Great Financialization: on Karl Polanyi and Other Essays* (2013).

El Caribe siempre ha sido el hogar intelectual y cultural de Kari. Desde 1974, Kari ha sido profesora visitante en la UWI. Durante sus visitas, dictó conferencias sobre temas de desarrollo caribeño, comentó sobre las economías del Caribe e inspiró a generaciones de jóvenes economistas. Su trabajo más famoso e influyente trata sobre el modelo de la economía de plantación, desarrollado en colaboración con el economista trinitense Lloyd Best. El modelo permite comprender cómo se conformaron las colonias caribeñas bajo unas características estructurales que persisten incluso después de la obtención de las independencias políticas

y que imponen límites a la capacidad de desarrollo a la vez que facilitan la reproducción de las desigualdades y la dependencia. La economía de plantación se utiliza como marco de referencia por excelencia para entender las sociedades caribeñas, su historia política y sus relaciones internacionales.

Complementan este boletín un ensayo de tremenda actualidad y valía de la autoría de Scott Timcke quien analiza las fortalezas y debilidades del movimiento obrero en Trinidad y Tobago. Por último, incluimos una reflexión breve pero necesaria a cargo del profesor Antonio F. Romero Gómez, Presidente de la Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe “Norman Girvan” sobre la labor de la Cátedra y su contribución a la investigación, pensamiento y acción a favor del Caribe. La Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe “Norman Girvan” fue creada en 2004 y se avecina a cumplir 20 años. La Convocatoria a su XVII Conferencia Internacional de Estudios Caribeños que se celebrará entre el 18 y el 20 de diciembre de este año puede ser consultada al final de este boletín y desde ya los invitamos a que envíen sus propuestas para esta importante cita que cada año reúne en La Habana a estudiosos y amantes del Caribe.

# PENSAR EL CARIBE

**Caribes**  
Número 8 · Enero-junio 2023





# Recent Developments in the Labour Movement in Trinidad and Tobago

Scott Timcke\*

## The National Interest

Trinidad and Tobago caters to oil and gas extraction with state managers tasked to pacify the local population to allow smooth operation of this complex (Girvan, 1970). This is called the national interest, although speaking about in such plain terms is verboten (McDermott Hughes, 2017). Or vulgar. Yet regardless of the prevailing rhetoric of resource nationalism, there were moments in which the oil complex and the wider the economy and society of Trinidad and Tobago was contestable (Jacobs, 1977).

Responding to the accumulated economic catastrophe of the Great Depression where the commodity prices in the world sugar and cocoa markets collapsed, the labour revolt in the late 1930s became a cradle of labour led anti-colonial struggle in the country (Weatherhead, 2020). The local labour regime was partly constituted by a near monopsony in the

\* PhD, Simon Fraser University. Es economista político, investigador asociado del Centro para el Cambio Social de la Universidad de Johannesburgo y afiliado al Centro de Información, Tecnología y Vida Pública de la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Chapel Hill. Fue becario de investigación LUCAS-LAHRI en el Centro de Estudios Africanos de la Universidad de Leeds y Profesor Titular de Estudios de Comunicación en la Universidad de las Indias Occidentales, en el campus de San Agustín. Es miembro del Grupo de Trabajo CLACSO Crisis, respuestas y alternativas en el Gran Caribe.

emerging industrial sector with the United British Oilfields of Trinidad being a subsidiary of Shell and Trinidad Leaseholds Limited. To stave off simmering discontent, the Workers' Compensation Ordinance and the Trade Union Ordinance was passed in 1932 to formalize the hierarchy of capital over labour (Hart, 1999). Yet in the coming years—alongside organizations like The Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association (led by Elma François, Jim Barrette and Christina King)—Tubal Uriah Butler and his colleagues sought to deepen the radical response to colonial racial capitalism.

In 1936 Butler formed the British Empire Workers and Citizens' Home Rule Party and set out to organize a series of job and hunger strikes over the coming months. One of these incidents, in mid-June 1937, was the trigger for a large labour rebellion, now known as the Butler Riots. From strike action in Fyzabad the rebellion soon expanded to include sugar workers. The main axis of the rebellion was labour demanding home-rule as a way curtail the excesses of colonial racial capitalism, a system of exploitation and rule from abroad that had no substantive interest in providing social protections for Trinidadian overhounds.

The response by the British colonial administration was swift. Two British naval ships, the Ajax and Exeter were sent to quell labour, a task that took a month. In the aftermath 12 people were killed and another 50 were injured. Between October 1937 and February of 1938 labour leaders were arraigned and charged under the Sedition Act of 1920. Investigations commenced, and the Forester Commission of 1937 recommended the creation of a Labour Department. In Britain, the Fabian Society published Arthur Lewis's white paper, *Labour in the West Indies: The birth of a workers' movement which advocated for self-determination* (Lewis, 1939). Trade unions registered and obtained legal status. More labour legislation, like the Trades Disputes (Arbitration and Inquiry) Ordinance 1938 and the Trade Disputes and Protection of Property Ordinance 1943, followed. Then the Moyne Commission recommended universal adult suffrage, a development which was introduced after World War II,

although within a system where colonial governors were vested with final authority.

The reason I have taken the time to relay these events is because the contemporary labour movement in Trinidad and Tobago has deliberately sought to frame their current politics as a continuation of the rebellious spirit of the 1930s (Weatherhead, 2020). Certainly there is a measure of similar economic circumstance. After several years of middling economic performance the impact of the coronavirus fell hardest on the poor and the powerless (Timcke and Gomes 2020). But more than that circumstance, the main point of similarity is the spirit of contention. Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the labour movement was beset with intense factionalism. The movement had calcified into antagonistic blocs of charismatic leadership who stifled internal debate and excommunicated mild dissenters. But the pandemic saw unions pursue a renewed recruitment drive supported by improved organizational efforts. More importantly however, in the last two years there was a recognition that due to attacks by capital, if the labour movement was to prevail it had to demonstrate commitment, capacity, and capability, and all these attributes had to be detectable by the public (Weatherhead, 2020).

As class struggle is always a public struggle, it is important to analyse the political fallout of the recent mobilization to assess strategy and tactics. Equally important if less urgent is discussing the prospects of these recent developments, present articulations of grievances and lines of solidarity generate an archive of political thought that could re-shape public life in Trinidad and Tobago. To a degree this kind of question is in a sense always premature because no one can know in advance what specific issues the future will bring and what kinds of intellectual resources those issues will draw upon. Still, how might the products of this conjecture shift the political terrain in Trinidad and Tobago?

## General Conditions

The fall in hydrocarbon prices from 2014 beset Trinidad and Tobago with stagnant economic performance for several years. Delivered in October 2020, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's 2020/2021 Budget was nevertheless confident. "By early fiscal 2020, the economic contraction of the past had been alleviated, and we had emerged from the serious decline in the 2016 to 2017 period" Colm Imbert, Minister of Finance said.

The latest data from the CSO [Central Statistics Office] now shows that from a decline of almost 6 percent in 2016, we restored stability to our GDP in 2018, with growth returning to a balance of 0.1 percent in that year (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2020).

Local banks and the IMF were more circumspect. Republic Bank TT's assessment of the economy that "with intractable, high expenditure and weaker revenue inflows going forward, T&T's debt to GDP ratio is likely to steadily increase." The bank foresaw "retrenchments and plans of retrenchment by both large and smaller businesses have intensified in recent months, with some entities going out of business altogether." (Republic Economic Newsletter, 2020) The IMF cautioned about major weaknesses in the local financial sector where apt data collection and regulations are lacking, while little to no thought has been given to the financial risk beget by climate change.<sup>1</sup> In the final assessment, Garvin Joefield, an economist at Republic Bank, cautioned that "with the pandemic still generating a great level of uncertainty, these forecasts may prove to be optimistic." (Joefield, Garvin (nd) Budget 2020/2021).

The accumulated financial stress from covid was felt across all sectors. Caribbean Airlines, for example, had a proposal for salary reductions between 5% and 20%, with selected staff given a 3-month furlough by September 2020 (Khamal, 2020). In the industrial, service and care sectors

1 IMF's Financial System Stability Assessment on Trinidad and Tobago

capital used covid as a pretext to cut jobs, cut wages, introduce zero hour contracts, and otherwise intensify exploitation. Which few prospects for employment growth in the near term, workers' rights to unionization, collective bargaining, to safe workplaces and dignified work were attacked. At the same time bpTT told the government that it would furlough a quarter of their staff (Julien, 2020). BHP's deepwater exploration units discovered between 5 and 6.6 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in Trinidad and Tobago's waters (Williams, 2020).

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is the largest employer. It also has an extremely poor track record with labour relations. In addition to massive chains of sub-contracting, more than 75% of ministerial staff are short term contract workers, contracts measured in weeks and months. This practice includes general labourers and mid-level managers. Aside from a lack of job security, in contrast to those with long term contracts these workers receive no direct pension contributions or other kinds of benefits (Weatherhead, 2020). One knock on effect is that government workers are trapped as renters and cannot build home equity because without long term contracts they are ineligible for mortgage loans from corporate banks. These conditions are made worst when one considers that almost no workers have a current collective agreement. Indeed, some agreements lapsed in 2012. Promised since 2015, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has also not sought to address the known weaknesses in the Industrial Relations Act. Last amended in 1994, the act allows businesses to declare bankruptcy to avoid paying severances (Industrial Relations Act, 1972). In summary, the Government is all but ensuring the slow immiseration of the citizenry.

For at least the last decade party politics in Trinidad and Tobago has increasingly taken on the character of trench warfare. Proverbial privates hurl racial tropes over perceived slights from decades before. Through endlessly relitigating off the cuff remarks corroded by memory each barrage is an attempt to 'correct the record.' Syntax parsed while meaning denied. Historians nearing their final breaths are eager to enter

this martial realm too, but never exercise their training (Selwyn (2020). Nowhere do intellectuals debate trade offs between real alternative course of action. Or discuss misjudgements. They have sharp words but no sharp thoughts. This understanding of society is moralizing and power serving. Even by the rough and tumble of democratic discourse, this yelling match is fully disconnected from the present material conditions people face, their present concerns, and the current institutional obstacles that thwart efforts to try achieve meaningful social change.

By winning the last two national elections, the current People's National Movement Government (PNM) has been in power since 2015. It is also especially thin skinned. It is commonplace that ministers frame legitimate democratic dissent—petty crime even—as a conspiracy to disrupt government. The other main political party, the United National Congress (UNC) is hardly better as it flirts with Hindutva. The UNC has won the popular vote by nearly 10 points in recent elections, however the Westminster system works against them. This is a source of intense dissatisfaction and behind the party's push for a proportional representation system. While the PNM once embraced the language of decolonization, the party is ever so silent as these colonial political structures favour them.

But regardless of which party forms the government there are enduring problems of misappropriation of public funds, a combination of tacit acceptance of corruption and the lack of budgeting capacity. Even then government spending is primarily based on political expediency while development is merely conceived as successive infrastructure mega-projects conducive to capitalism, a complex securitized through the purchase of advanced surveillance equipment and militarization of the police. Indeed there is an expectation by the middle class that state security must periodically brutalize the black underclass when these groups dare venture from ghettos to revolt (Philip, 2021). Meanwhile newspaper editorials appealed to tropes like “the resilience demonstrated by our ancestors” during enslavement, indentureship, and the movement towards independence, that suffering and sacrifice should be taken as

“inspiration.” (Guest Editorial, 2020). Emblazed on public buildings, the national watchwords, ‘Discipline, Production, Tolerance’ encapsulate the national interest (The Office of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago).

Finally a general atmosphere of xenophobia is prevalent too. “At the pace I am seeing the Venezuelan illegal immigrants come to Trinidad,” said Roger Hosein an academic economist, “by next year [2021] we will see 150,000 Venezuelans in the country.” With prejudice dressed as apparent neutral technical judgement, Hosein agonizes that migration “will draw some labour and capital out of the non-petroleum exportable sector,” developments that are negative if one believe the priority is oil and gas (Perez-Sobers, 2020). But even then who can trust Hosein’s analysis when independent research shows that in December 2021 there were 18,000 known Venezuelan refugees and asylum seekers (ACAPS, 2022). The cultural politics around xenophobia is a wedge issue that ultimately serves to keep the working class divided and divert attention away from focused discussion about the share of the economic dividends. From those miserable many caught in the middle one hears ‘the PNM is the problem. The UNC in not the answer,’ words heard in the sweltering streets and in air-conditioned coffee shops.

## **Parallel Struggles**

The recent objects of politics in Trinidad and Tobago have been shaped by the racial unrest and protests occurring between 2020–2022 in the United States as well as the decolonization movement in the United Kingdom. And with good reason. These societies share a historical experience of colonial degradation that stalks the present through abjection and police brutality. Even so, given different demographics, in Trinidad and Tobago different symbols and sites of protest were used to convey the colonial origins or racial hierarchy.

Between June and July 2020 the small local chapter of Black Lives Matter sought to make the Christopher Columbus statue in Port of Spain into a contestable object. The group did so through making Columbus the personification of the atrocities of European colonization in the Americas, and the heralding of genocide, enslavement and bonded labour that characterised four centuries of colonial racial capitalism. Black Lives Matter sought to pressure public authorities remove the statue, thereby demonstrating the power of their movement to direct authorities.

Kumar Mahabir labeled the Black Lives Matter tactic a “fascist, extremist and warring campaign.” Given that Black Lives Matter was led by Shabaka Kambon (the son of Khafra Kambon who was one of the leaders of the Black Power Movement in Trinidad), Mahabir believed that the pressure campaign was the product of primordialist philosophy in support of self-promotion which amplified already tense racial antagonism between Afro and Indo communities. And much like for the Black Power Movement before, Indo-Trinidadians felt their culture was the final target by Black Lives Matter. Mahabir projected that if the Columbus statue fell, Black Lives Matter would then target the statues of Mahatma Gandhi, like the prominent one in Gandhi Square, Port of Spain, citing Gandhi’s anti-black racism. There may be an element of truth in Mahabir’s remarks, however he defends the statue as “a tourist attraction,” which is an extraordinary weak argument.

Adopting a different tack, Darryn Boodan acknowledged that Columbus is “guilty of pretty much every horrible thing he is accused of,” but Boodan captures a degree of cynicism that surrounds the debate:

The removal of the statue of Christopher Columbus in Port of Spain has left me puzzled. As a proud Trinbagonian I was under the impression that we were treating the symbol of the now infamous Italian explorer the same way we treat with all our important historic artifacts: by neglecting it and leaving it to fall into ruin (Boodan, 2020).



Next, Boodan argued that the outrage is selective, insofar that it does not recognise “brutality, genocide and slavery...were already present right across the South American continent” in the form of Mayan and Incan “bloodlust for looting.” For rhetorical effect he points out how “for some reason no one is suggesting we tear down” Machu Picchu. He builds towards a final point that “the complexities of the past demand multiple and competing narratives” where the terms of otherwise fully justifiable historiography debate about public history ought not be set by “the whims of an angry mob.” (Boodan, 2020). Apparently the complexities surrounding the Christopher Columbus statue are so bewildering that Boodan overlooks that Trinidad and Tobago’s Black Lives Matter chapter is not based in Peru.

Black Lives Matter suggested that Amerindian historical figures replace Columbus. “The logic of our proposal is the same as that of colonising forces across the early Spanish American Empire,” Claudius Fergus wrote. As a Black Lives Matter organizer Fergus focuses on the obliteration of the symbolic order. “Such a monument will exorcise the ground violated by the Columbus statue (Fergus, 2020). These words are telling about governance in the country wherein current nationalist politics readily adopt the same posture as former colonial authorities, in part because the final end has not changed—capitalism is still venerated. It is from this vantage that it is most useful to think through police brutality of the black underclass.

## **Re-Making a Resurgent Labour Movement**

On June 19 2020—Labour Day—the Public Service Association called for extra compensation for healthcare workers. As these workers were coded as essential workers and bore the brunt of risk during the raging Coronavirus pandemic, the union was not necessarily asking for danger pay (Hunte, 2020). Rather they were aggrieved by salary arrears, outstanding gratuity payments, the lack of stipends for nursing students, the lack of

permanent contracts, and poor working conditions. The President of the union, Watson Duke called attention to a looming cost of living crisis. “We are now in 2020 and gas prices have increased, taxi fares have increased, grocery prices have increased, rent has increased.” (Hunte, 2020).

From mid-2020 unions responded to these social conditions. Led by workers in the health care sector and light manufacturing, workers demanded outstanding pay, better working conditions, and assurances against retrenchments. These were positive signs according to Clyde Weatherhead. He thought these issues could provide a beachhead for an expanded effort to increase unionization in other industries. In union rhetoric there were emerging signs that the labour movement saw themselves as fighting for all workers, not just the one who paid dues in closed shops (Weatherhead, 2020). Unions deliberately spoke to concerns of professionals by raising the issue of middle-class decomposition. By speaking to broader concerns, this gave the labor movement a pathos. This broader appeal marked a significant change from post-war union activity, which was very nationalist in character and focused nearly exclusive on manual labour (Teelucksingh, 2013).

Initial efforts to re-form labour movement caught the attention of government officials. Labour regulator President of the Industrial Court Deborah Thomas-Felix called upon employers and trade unions to engage with each other with respect and with compromise. Thomas-Felix conceded that the coronavirus pandemic was used as a pretext to flout principles of good industrial relations and legal labour standards. “It is settled law that it is unlawful for an employer to unilaterally alter the existing terms and conditions of employment of workers. Employers are reminded that they must respect and adhere to the rule of law when making these tough decisions which affect the livelihood of workers and the survival of their businesses,” Thomas-Felix said. In cases where there was no organized Thomas-Felix encouraged capitalists to explain the business case for their decision making so that labourers could better understand the circumstances and be placated. “I urge employers in all sectors to

appreciate the need for workers to be kept informed,” she said (Ramdass, 2020). Ordinarily these are pro-forma sentiments. But in this conjuncture Thomas-Felix and others sought to redirect the energy of emerging militancy back into the boardroom. At stake was the national interest.

This is not to deny that unions made unforced errors or that consolidation by many unions into a movement was a smooth process. For example, in mid-November 2020 disagreement between factions about the postponement of the Public Services Association December executive elections (an election already postponed since November 2017 due to an injunction) led to physical altercations. Police were required to intervene.<sup>2</sup> Still, as part of the effort to revitalize labour education and focus attention on a larger vision, sympathetic journalists wrote about personalities in the labour movements from the 20th century, like George Weekes and Doodnath Maharaj. Both were senior members of the Oilfield Worker’s Trade Union (Johnson, 2021).

As the labour movement took to protesting in public spaces so clashes between demonstrators and militarized state security forces became commonplace. Indeed protestors were killed by gun fire at events where state security forces were present and were attacking protestors, like in Beetham Gardens on June 29, 2020. When events like this occurred state security forces are shielded from independent investigation (Carrington, 2020). Similarly, when responding to questions in Parliament about the authorization of state security forces using tear gas to disperse peaceful protesting citizens against vaccination policy, in January 2022 Prime Minister Rowley said parents should think before “putting their young children in harm’s way.” (Taitt, 2022).

Foregrounding the question of covid restrictions, between 2020 and 2021 commentators increasingly spoke of an official public discourse where “the call to rebel is drowned by the cracking whip, reminding us that

<sup>2</sup> The most recent postponement was due to Justice Nadia Kangaloo ruling that the voters roll featured duplications of name (Sorias, 2020). Further background in Loutoo (2020).

protesting is not an alternative.” (Lennox, 2021). Others spoke of a “Covid-induced apprenticeship system, where we have to prove to massa we are worthy of unbridled freedom.” (Cross, 2021). The labour movement sought to frame the government restrictions as removing ‘the freedom to a livelihood.’ When the government entertained mandatory vaccination for public sector workers, the labour movement framed the government as comprised of authoritarians who breached the social compact. Some public figures, like former Government Minister Ramona Ramdial, alluded to how the mandatory vaccination policy course was a human rights violation (Ramdial (2021)). Online the labour movement adopted some of the iconography and talking points of the US conservative movement which unhelpfully reduced the discussion about public health to ‘jabs vs jobs (Editorial, 2021). Such a rigid framing by the labour movement could not convey that without public health there can be no economic activity.

Even by mid-2022 the question of vaccination still had purchase. Reports of workers’ dismissed and furloughed at private firms because they were not vaccinated against covid-19 circulated (Anon, 2022). The OWTU insisted that vaccination was a decision of conscience. It was in these moments that the labour movement unproductively blended revolutionary and reactionary politics, a compromise in part driven by the desire to gain sympathy from a public where only half of the adult population were receptive to vaccination against the coronavirus. By May 2022, the government abandoned its plan for mandatory vaccination for public sector workers. Seizing the moment in June 2022, elected leaders in the Joint Trade Union Movement and the National Trade Union Centre supported the motion of no-confidence against Rowley (Sorias, 2022). They cited the decline of living standards, the increase in fuel prices and taxes, and lack of sympathy for the poor who suffer the most of government policy. As one protestor exclaimed, “what are they trying to do to the small men and poor people?” Kenroy Dopwell, a Sea Lots resident, quoted in Rodriguez, Khamarie (2022).

Meanwhile for the 2021-22 school year the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA) sought to avoid the language of job action, one-day strikes, or organized protest actions. Rather they advised their members to observe days of ‘rest and relaxation’ by staying home (Boodram, 2021). While also sharing the general grievances with the broader labour movement, TTUTA had additional specific complaints about the strain put on teachers to make up for schools being effectively closed for 18 months. Certainly there was some online teaching, but intense social inequalities meant that working class children were behind their peers. At the same time there was a the feeling that society had little respect for the profession. “It’s terrible how we are being regarded as babysitters,” TTUTA’s De Freitas said.<sup>3</sup>

## Reactionary Responses

In the third quarter of 2021 conservative forces aligned with capital began an aggressive media campaign to delegitimise the labour movement by labelling the movement’s strategy as outdated and insufficiently nationalist. To get a sense of this campaign, consider the commentary of a former minister of labour, Harry Partap. Arguing that “the labour movement is still stuck in the 1930s and 1940s protest syndrome” Partap scolded the labour movement’s peaceful protests as having no clear goals, unable to comprehend the demands of the moment, nor being effective at adding new employment. “There is nothing to gain by having this activity,” he wrote. By contrast he thought labour should supplicate to capital through stakeholder participation models of corporate governance. “Why should the labour movement be mired in this unproductive syndrome of marching and demonstrating and rabble-rousing?” (Partap, 2021).

Appealing to the need for sacrifice for national prosperity, Rev. Robert Dash targeted the TTUTA and their brewing job actions. In seeking to

<sup>3</sup> Boodram, TTUTA denies ‘sick-out’ call.

assert their labour power teachers “have failed the nation immensely,” according to Dash. “I had called out the leadership of TTUTA and I reminded them that they are mothers and the nation expects a motherly response to the education plan for our children.” Shortly thereafter he wrote that “The minister [of labour] is very aware that she is a mother” whereas TTUTA are “disconnected from their motherhood.” Through gendering the profession and contrasting it to the ministers’ “motherly endowed instinct,” the motif is that teachers were bad mothers, bad caregivers, bad people who refuse to do their ‘natural duties’ who have also shown “shown no gratitude to their employer,” the government. Like Partap, Dash also dismissed orthodox labour tactics. “They seem to think that we are still in the 19th century, where making noise, protesting, striking, day of rest, day of prayer worked. These strategies are ineffective in the 21st century.” Encouraging repression, Dash ended his screed with a call to action. “The nation waits for stern governance.” (Dash, 2021).

Concurrent to these reactionary politics there was a conspiratorial discourse wherein the labour movement was said to be working at the behest of the rich to bring down the PNM government: “You look at those who encourage you to march, protest, picket, sweat, not necessarily to reverse irreversible laws or bring any direct benefits to you who pound the pavement, and you ask yourself: those multimillion-dollar briefs and consultancies that they get, do they declare them fairly to the Board of Inland Revenue?” There was also an underlying racial dynamic to this conspiratorial discourse wherein the Afro community were bad constituents who do not know their real interests and real allies. Rather black people were said to be manipulated by clever brown people working on behalf of white multinationals (Raffique, 2022).

## Attempts to Co-Opt Extra-Parliamentary Opposition

From May 2022, there were near monthly marches in Port of Spain, revisiting monuments and government buildings to invoke imagery of justice in the country's history. (Bruzual, 2022). Rowley's comments on the protests reveal a general degree of callousness: I saw the lawlessness that took place here one day that must have had significant damaging effects on our economy and damaged our comfort and security where people were set about all over the country, the capital city setting fires and generating as much black smoke as possible. Some people believe this is how they talk to the Government (Rodriguez, 2022).

In mid-August 2022, the Journey for Justice was a culmination of these prior efforts. The goal was a display of power during public sector wage negotiations. Unions opposed a 4% offer by government. The Journey for Justice was comprised of members of National Trade Union Centre of Trinidad and Tobago, OWTU, TTUTA, the Communications Workers Union, the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union, Trinidad and Tobago Postal Workers' Union, Banking, Insurance and General Workers' Union, Transport and Industrial Workers' Union, the Industrial General and Sanitation Workers' Union, Contractors and General Workers' Trade Union and the National Trade Union Centre and Steel Workers' Union (Boodram, 2022). While the unions instated that "we are the productive forces in Trinidad and Tobago and without us you can't have capital," (Boodram, 2022) by the end of August the Amalgamated Workers Union accepted the government's offer.

Arguably a considerable amount of energy was spent to achieve modest gains. Members of the labour movement might reply and say a beneficial secondary effect was that individual labourers found their voice. For example between September 2021 and September, 2022 1099 new cases were filed at the Industrial court, an major increase from the year prior (Fletcher, 2020). When presenting these statistics, the Industrial Court

encouraged the labour movement to join the National Tripartite Advisory Council, a forum designed to create a venue for capital, labour and the state to bargain and form a social compact. While presented in the soft language of stakeholder democracy, the political purpose was to co-opt the leadership of organized labour and convert them into managed opposition. “The tripartite mechanism, which is embraced by countries worldwide, regardless of their legal system, is an extremely important and useful tool to assist with the resolution of the myriad issues in the world of work,” Thomas-Felix said (Fletcher, 2020). But the tenor of that council probably came from a few days before. When opening Parliament, President Paula-Mae Weekes blamed the country’s dysfunctional politics on uncivil workers who did not understand the national interest (Express Editorial, 2022). In doing so she well showed how civility is conformance to ruling class norms. What use is a voice if the grammar is not your own?

The basic fact is that a strong militant labour movement is the engine for ever expanding democratization. This movement is best positioned to defend democratic principles of collective life. Certainly technocrats and researchers would prefer that they receive that acclaim, that they are seen as the natural defenders of the democratic order. But how often are they present when the police arrive with truncheons? Or did their briefs justify the system that orders the police to thrash strikers? Meanwhile those that champion the market by definition oppose democratic life. They might enjoy aspects of democratization. They might find aspects to be conducive to their projects. But when does the expansion of liberties for business deepen democracy? If you know of a case then do explain how suppressing collective bargaining rights in one place secures collective bargaining at the poll. Someone might attempt a feeble answer, but the truth of the matter is that the labour movement alone stands as the vehicle for freedom for all regardless of their present circumstance.



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# Caricom-Cuba Engagement Beyond 2022

## New Pathways For The Next Semi-Centennial<sup>1</sup>

Halim Majeed\*

### Introduction

I believe that it is imperative that the golden jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Caribbean Community and Cuba should be the appropriate occasion for examining the path we have taken in the quest for closer relations and, at the same time, looking towards the horizon for the next semi-centennial.

In this effort, I believe that it would be useful to adopt the beautiful imagery of the Cuban poet, Regino Pedroso, admonishing that in order “to gain a deeper view of the horizon,” we “leap on the old wall of the past.”

In this Presentation, therefore, I will leap on the old wall of the past. Indeed, I will seek to give an overview of Caricom-Cuba engagement for the past fifty years before attempting to gain a deeper view of the horizon

\* Embajador de la República de Guyana ante la República de Cuba.

<sup>1</sup> Conferencia magistral pronunciada en la jornada inaugural de la XVI Conferencia Internacional de Estudios Caribeños “Cuba y el Caribe: 50 años de relaciones” el 12 de diciembre 2022 organizada por la Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe ‘Norman Girvan’ de la Universidad de La Habana.

– and that is, proffering potentially innovative pathways towards the next semi-centennial.

## **Background**

Caricom-Cuba relations emerged in the context of the growth and influence of the Non-Aligned Movement, which attracted a number of Caribbean countries to its membership, and deepened the escalating regional appeal “for justice, to history, to regional solidarity” as Sir Shridath Ramphal, phrased it.

Indeed, the first Non-Aligned Conference of Foreign Ministers in the western hemisphere - convened in Georgetown, Guyana, in August 1972, at which the Cuban Foreign Minister, Dr. Raul Roa, and the Cuban United Nations Permanent Representative, Dr. Ricardo Alarcon, were present - brought frontally to the Region’s leaders the matter of diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Subsequently, when Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, by the stroke of a pen, fractured the US diplomatic blockade against Cuba fifty years ago that act of regional sovereignty did not only change the course of hemispheric diplomacy but also engendered a sense of emerging consciousness of togetherness.

As a result, all English-speaking Caribbean countries, on their assumption of the status of nationhood, established formal diplomatic relations with Cuba. And in the year 2002, a Caricom-Cuba Day came into being.

Perhaps, the Caribbean had at last begun to understand the dictum of the Apostle of Cuban Independence, the indefatigable, indomitable Jose Marti: We must save ourselves together or together we will disappear.”

Please permit me to now turn to the Caribbean Community.

## **The Emergence of the Caribbean Community**

The formal creation of the Caribbean Community, as it is today, is a product of generations of dynamic efforts to give impetus to the spirit of togetherness while, at the same time, rejecting the tendency towards separateness, believed to be deeply embedded in Caribbean soul.

Its genesis, the West Indies Federation, formed on January 3, 1958, and seen as the ship of regional unity at that time, foundered, however, on the rock of separateness on May 31, 1962.

But the “self-generating momentum of integration” was not completely lost. Three years later, on December 15, 1965, through the sustained and unrelenting vigor of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, and Guyana the Dickenson Bay Agreement was formally executed but the three Caribbean Leaders. It gave birth to the Caribbean Free Trade Agreement or CARIFTA. It was an embryonic but important effort at re-building regional unity. Indeed, by 1968, eight other territories had added their signatures to that CARIFTA document.

The establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1972 was a strong contributing factor to Caribbean political unity. That act had a dialectic of its own. The four countries that jointly established diplomatic relations with Cuba were the original signatories of the July 1973 Treaty of Chaguaramas, which gave Caricom its legal existence.

The Treaty of Chaguaramas created one of the oldest regional intuitions in the world. It pre-dates, for example, the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992, which ultimately led to the establishment of the European Union. So, in 2023, we will be commemorating the Golden Jubilee of the founding of the Caribbean Community.

And yet, if we were to undertake a cursory comparison of both regional bodies, we would find important lessons to be learned now – and for the next semi-centennial.

But Caricom has not been without its low moments. From 1975 to 1982, the Heads of Government Conference did not meet at all. Then to add salt and pepper to the regional wound, and in the wake of the then US Administration's ideological position of "rolling back the frontiers communism wherever they may exist," the US military descended on the Region manifestly in the form of an open aggression against Grenada in 1983.

The US invasion of Grenada in 1983, for all practical purposes, almost segregated the Community into two camps. It appeared that the notion of Caricom. Two, the brainchild of the North and certain regional vested interests, would be translated into reality.

Those were bitter times. Bad blood flowed among leaders. And the United States continued its machinations, almost unceasingly, to create a chink, indeed, a wider fissure, in the regional armor.

In this political maelstrom then, it was former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, ANR Robinson, who, recognizing that the Region's philosophical and intellectual moorings needed to be re-asserted, presented to the Caricom Heads in Grand Anse, Grenada, in 1989 a Paper titled, *The West Indies Beyond 1992*. In the course of what appeared to be a mood of striking optimism, the Grand Anse Summit produced two ground-breaking results:

An agreement to create "in the shortest possible time a single market and economy..." and a resolution to establish an Independent West Indian Commission for Advancing the Goals of the Treaty of Chaguaramas.

The West Indian Commission was led by Sir Shridath Ramphal and included a group of Caribbean "Wise Men" – Alister McIntyre, Roderick Rainford, Vaughn Lewis and the Caricom Secretary General and the Director General of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). They submitted their Report, known to us as Time for Action, three years later to the Caricom Heads of Government at the 1992 Summit in Port-of-Spain.



And yet, there was little movement. Sir Shridath put it bluntly, undiplomatically: "...there was no action, - no political action, no political will to act." When all seemed lost, a ray of light for Caribbean unity emerged some 14 years after Grand Anse and 30 years of the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas. This sliver of luminosity seemed to have manifested itself when the Prime Minister of Jamaica, PJ Patterson, presented a Paper titled, "CARICOM Beyond Thirty: Charting New Directions" at the Montego Bay Summit in 2003. Since then, Caricom has, generally, held the course. While it still has its weaknesses, it is strenuously resolved to be on the right side of history.

Today, in my opinion, the Caribbean Community is not an enfeebled organism, but a movement possessed of greater awareness of contemporary realities in a harsh, unforgiving international environment. It has grown from strength to strength. I believe it has been transformed into a more dynamic force than it was some 50 years ago. In this unity and dynamism lies a stronger affinity for cooperation with Cuba.

Let me now say a few words about Cuba.

## **Cuba and the United States**

Cuba is a powerful nation state – make no mistake about that - endowed with an abundance of natural resources: thousands and thousands of hectares of arable, fertile lands, important minerals (including nickel and cobalt), sugar cane, and tobacco.

Cuba has a large, literate, and highly qualified labor force, a stable industrial and political climate, and a tightly run system of governance and management.

Cuba has a culture, second to none. Alicia Alonzo's achievements in the world of dance and theater is the Gold Standard in the performing arts.

Cuba's medical architecture involved the construction of the Center for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering, and the Carlos Finlay Vaccine Institute, among others, the production of life saving medicines and vaccines, and the continuing, unrelenting drive to surpass its previous scientific accomplishments.

I have taken a moment to remark on these realities, these monumental achievements, about Cuba because too often the focus is on the negative, hyped up in some sections of the Western media.

The Cuban Revolution, the glorious pages of history written by Cuban revolutionaries - foremost among them being President Fidel Castro - and the heroic example set by Cuba cannot be ignored or discarded.

And yet, the economic, commercial, and financial blockade - arbitrarily imposed by the United States - remains in place. It has cost the Cuban economy billions in lost revenues. The Cuban people has suffered - and is suffering - greatly. But the Cuban Revolution remains openly defiant and principled. Cuba is truly an extraordinary country.

In the midst of looking at the blockade, let me pause and reflect, generally, on the positive role that has been played by the European Union, Canada, the United Nations, including UNESCO and other UN Agencies, the Arab States, including the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, the Arab Republic of Egypt, India, and the Africa Union, among others, in relation to Cuba. They all have demonstrated an enlightened and favorable attitude towards Cuba's development.

## **CARICOM-Cuba Relations: A Tentative Assessment**

And this brings me to undertake a tentative assessment of Caricom-Cuba relations. Let me say at the outset that the past fifty years has been reasonably successful despite various kinds of pressures from the United

States to wean away Caricom from a strong, positive, expanding engagement with Cuba.

At a meeting of the Caricom Council of Foreign Ministers held earlier this year, they reiterated that “CARICOM countries are perennially under pressure from the United States to condemn Cuba...” Indeed, very recently, one of those “pressures” came to the fore when several Caricom Governments were being pushed by the United States to expel Cuban Medical Brigades from several Member States. But to their eternal credit those Member States resisted successfully.

Caricom has, over the past decades and up today, voted solidly, repeatedly to lift, unconditionally, the economic, commercial, and financial blockade against Cuba. And this act of continuing solidarity cements the prevailing spirit of cooperation, friendship and understanding and creates an ever-widening avenue for the deepening of collaboration between Caricom and Cuba.

Over the past fifty years, several institutional links were developed, several important Agreements were signed, and eight Caricom-Cuba Summits were held between 2002 and 2022 – a landmark achievement in the political annals of the hemisphere.

Cuba’s contribution to the development and growth of Caricom States has been remarkable, given its own economic short comings.

In amplifying on this, the Caricom Council of Foreign Ministers noted quite importantly, “The importance of Cuba-CARICOM cooperation in the areas of economic development, trade, health, human resource training, construction, sports, education, tourism, climate change and environmental protection, and natural disaster risk reduction and mitigation.”

I would be less than responsible or fair if I fail to remark about the tardiness in the implementation of Caricom-Cuba projects. For reasons unknown to

me I cannot understand how developmental projects, carefully and thoughtfully conceptualized, cannot be executed in a timely manner.

As I said in the beginning, the period under review has met reasonable success. We now have to undertake a more thorough, critical assessment as we prepare for the next fifty years of engagement.

## **New Pathways for the Next Semi-Centennial**

The next fifty years is about the future. And we have to be deeply mindful about it. Indeed, the British historian, E.H Carr, implored us to have the future in our bones. We cannot afford to blunder into the future, or we will be doomed as a people, as a nation, as a partnership.

Long ago, the erudite African scholar, Professor Ali Mazrui urged us to have “a sophisticated awareness of the present.” I would argue that we must now develop a ‘sophisticated awareness’ of the future.

With those philosophical underpinnings, I will contend that Caricom-Cuba engagement for the next semi-centennial will not take place in a political and economic vacuum. It will continue to be impacted by the United States and the false notion that the Caribbean is its backyard. And yet, the United States cannot be ignored in terms of hemispheric realities. Caricom and Cuba must grapple with those realities and jointly devise a *modus vivendi* for regional normalcy.

This does not imply or mean in any way the diminishing of joint regional and international sustained action to struggle for the lifting of the blockade. Indeed, only the unconditional termination of the blockade will usher in normalcy in the region – and in the wider international milieu.

Speaking on December 8, 2002, on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Caricom and Cuba, the former President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, His

Excellency, Dr. Bharat Jagdeo, dealt with the matter of a modus vivendi condignly in these terms:

“It is our realistic expectation that a way will be found for the normalization of US/Cuba relations... The United States of America is a powerful and dynamic nation. The Republic of Cuba has, within its capability, made enduring contributions to our Region and the world. The trade embargo imposed by the US is anachronistic in this era of globalization and trade liberalization and should be removed. Ways must be found for the two countries to work together to normalize their relations for the benefit of the peoples of both countries.”

Caricom-Cuba collaboration during the next fifty years will also be underscored by global arrangements such as South-South cooperation. And it will be touched by the rivalry of Great Powers. Only strong Caricom-Cuba unity will fortify the region against the vagaries of a potentially new cold war.

A “sophisticated awareness of the future” should dictate that Caricom-Cuba relations will have to be fashioned by re-imagining and re-engineering regionalism and togetherness. Inevitably, that leads us in the direction of conceptualizing and institutionalizing a model of regional sovereignty in harmony with national sovereignty. In other words, the Caribbean must aim at fostering in a deliberate manner what the eminent Jamaica leader, PJ Patterson, referred to as “a system of mature regionalism”.

In practical terms, this would mean:

- Strengthening the already existing Caricom-Cuba institutional linkages.
- Completing, within a specific time frame, the Caricom-Cuba Projects that have been started.
- Developing a Caricom-Cuba Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement.
- Initiating a comprehensive Caricom-Cuba Agricultural Project within the next two years.

- Implementing, before the next Caricom-Cuba Summit, a Regional Energy Project.
- Establishing a Caricom-Cuba Pharmaceutical/Medical Project before 2025.

All the above would seriously imply greater people-to-people contact and popular interactions for a better life. And this is fundamentally what Caricom-Cuba relations should be about – our people’s welfare, our people’s dignity, our people’s self-confidence, our people’s self-esteem and worth in society, our people’s desire to live in happiness, peace, and harmony, in an atmosphere where their innate abilities and talents could germinate and reach fulfillment.

## Conclusion

In closing this Presentation, I am constrained to turn to our immortal national poet, Martin Wylde Carter, whose words, ineluctably, thrust themselves in my consciousness with the stark realization that they reflect, unerringly, our own history and our hope for a better tomorrow.

*I come from the nigger yard of yesterday  
leaping from the oppressors’ hate  
and the scorn of myself.  
I come to the world with scars upon my soul  
wounds on my body, fury in my hands...  
From the nigger yard of yesterday I come with my burden.  
To the world of tomorrow I turn with my strength.*

It is my belief that our Caribbean Community, which has leapt from their colonial oppressors’ hate, will integrate more purposefully with Cuba, and together turn to the world of tomorrow, the next semi-centennial, with their combined vision, tenacity, and strength.

Thank you.



# CARICOM-Dominican Republic Relations<sup>1</sup>

Iván Ogando Lora\*

First, I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to the Institute of International Relations at the University of West Indies for the kind invitation to give me the opportunity and honor of addressing this august gathering to reflect on 50 years of history of the Caribbean Community.

While these first 50 years of existence have certainly been full of challenges, they have also seen many relevant achievements in foreign policy, functional cooperation, security collaboration, and economic integration. Thanks to this, CARICOM has earned the recognition and respect of the international community.

Over the past 30 years I have had the privilege of knowing and working alongside many men and women committed to the regional cause, and I have witnessed their determination to overcome obstacles in the process of achieving a more united and resilient region.

Great friends such Sir Edwin Carrington, Brandy Isaacs, Percival Marie, the late Fay Housty, Henry Gill and Richard Bernal, among many many more, come to my mind.

\* Embajador de la República Dominicana ante la Unión Europea

<sup>1</sup> Palabras pronunciadas en el Simposio “CARICOM at 50” organizado por el Institute of International Relations de la University of the West Indies el 14 de abril de 2023.

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly address the peculiar history of relations between CARICOM and my country, the Dominican Republic, as well as reflect on alternatives for its future development.

The countries that make up CARICOM and the Dominican Republic are united in the same geographical space, but at the same time, separated by an insular dispersion that, to a large extent, has made this space one of the most heterogeneous worldwide in terms of its cultural, linguistic, historical, political, and economic diversity. In a general sense, this dichotomy of unity and separation has marked the relationship throughout history.

The fragmentation and diverse colonial configuration along with the modality of plantation economies made fluid communication and exchange between the different colonial territories nearly impossible. That didn't favor the development of an intra-regional trade that would foster economic links between them.

To a certain extent, as the result of this colonial heritage, the history of relations between the DR and CARICOM has run the gamut between periods of intense cooperation and stages of mutual indifference and even political animosity. The responsibility for this dynamic rests on the shoulders of both parties which still today have sectors with considerable levels of mutual misunderstanding.

The first significant interaction between the Dominican Republic and the Anglo-Caribbean territories occurred towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, when the expansion of the Dominican sugar industry led to a significant immigration of workers from the British colonies of St. Kitts, Antigua and Tortola. The vast majority of these immigrants settled around the sugar mills in the eastern part of the Dominican Republic, making a significant contribution to the diversity and cultural richness of the country.



While the Caribbean Community was established in 1973, until the second half of the 1980's, the necessary conditions to foster a rapprochement between CARICOM and the DR did not exist. Relations between the parties were largely characterized by relative indifference.

It is only in 1987 that a stage of rapprochement began, motivated by the Dominican interest in gathering regional support to become part of the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, signatories of the Lomé IV Convention.

Thanks to Lomé IV, the exchange between the Dominican Republic and the CARICOM countries became more consistent, which led the government to formally request its entry into CARICOM in 1991. However, it must be said that at that time, in the DR there was significant ignorance on the part of the public and private sectors and the general public, of what the CARICOM integration process really involved. The country had no experience in participating in regional integration mechanisms and in reality, apart from the government, there were no other sectors pushing the agenda for joining the regional bloc.

On the CARICOM side, there was also a great lack of knowledge about the Dominican reality, which was reflected in a persistent distrust and fear due to the size of the Dominican economy, and what was seen as the possibility that the products of the country would dominate intra-regional trade.

Consequently, the Dominican request did not achieve the necessary support within the bloc, and never received an official answer.

But despite the lack of an official response to the application for membership, in the early 90's the DR was invited to participate as an observer in some of the CARICOM sectoral bodies, in the areas of health, agriculture, education and others, which served to establish contacts between officials from both parties and eventually helped define regional projects within the framework of what would later be the CARIFORUM.

CARIFORUM was established in October 1992 as an ad-hoc regional mechanism for the purpose of programming and coordinating the regional cooperation under the 7th EDF of the Lomé IV Convention. It comprised all CARICOM Member States, plus Suriname, Haiti and the DR. It was agreed that the Secretary General of CARICOM would also serve as Secretary General of CARIFORUM. This led to a new phase of relations in the Caribbean region. Despite some initial difficulties that were eventually overcome as technical meetings and political interaction between private, public and academic representatives from all parties became more frequent, CARIFORUM became an unprecedented space that allowed building bridges of trust and knowledge between the officers.

In particular, and to a large extent thanks to CARIFORUM, in February of 1997, for the first time a Dominican President was invited to participate in a meeting of CARICOM Heads of Government and State. As a result, the conditions to launch the negotiations of a trade agreement between CARICOM and the DR were eventually created and the agreement was signed in 1998. This was the first trade agreement negotiated as a block by CARICOM.

Negotiation and implementation of regional projects under the Caribbean Regional Indicative Program of the 7th EDF led to joint initiatives in areas such as university education, tourism, agriculture, fishing, transportation, cultural development, communications, and disaster management, among others. Likewise, it gave rise to the first regional institution that incorporated all the CARIFORUM countries, the Caribbean Export Development Agency (CEDA), dedicated to the promotion of intra- and extra-regional trade of the countries.

1996 to 2000 were years of great dynamism between CARICOM and the DR, including the reopening of the Dominican embassy in Kingston and the unilateral opening of a permanent mission in Port of Spain.

Unfortunately, this dynamism was not maintained with the arrival of the new century. Due to a series of intra- and extra-regional factors that came together, not only the development of the CARICOM-DR relationship ended up stagnating, but also led to a setback in its quality and intensity in the following years.

The need to negotiate with the EU as CARIFORUM a new trade cooperation scheme replacing the existing unilateral and non-negotiated arrangement from the Lomé Convention, provided a new opportunity of intense interaction between the parties. The initial phase of the negotiations for the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Association Agreement or EPA began in April 2004 and the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery was entrusted with coordinating on behalf of the region.

The negotiation process was not easy, but the truth of the matter is that thanks to the joint negotiation, both Dominican Republic and CARICOM countries could obtain much better trade terms in the EPA, and by 2008 the Caribbean became the first ACP region to sign an Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU.

By 2011, the relations between the Dominican Republic and CARICOM had improved. Changes in the institutional structure of CARIFORUM had been agreed upon and bilateral trade had been steadily increasing. All this favorable environment contributed to a lively climate of collaboration and rapprochement, comparable to that of the late 1990s. In July of 2013, an official invitation was made to the Dominican President as a special guest to the XXXIV Meeting of CARICOM Heads of State and Government, held in in Port of Spain. It was the first time in more than a decade that a Dominican President attended a CARICOM meeting, and we all expected a new golden era in these relations, but little did we know.

Less than three months later, in September 2013, the Constitutional Court of the DR issued its infamous ruling 168-13, which denied Dominican

nationality to thousands of people born in the country to parents with an irregular migratory situation.

This regrettable event, which mainly responded to a domestic political struggling, immediately sparked strong opposition from human rights groups both inside and outside of the country. CARICOM took a very critical stance on the issue that unfortunately resulted in a political distancing. Despite this, it must be noted that coordination of the regional cooperation within the framework of CARIFORUM as well as trade between the parties were not affected.

Although relations with CARICOM as a bloc cooled, they have been slowly reestablished and strengthened at the bilateral level with member countries of the bloc in the ensuing years. In 2018 the DR opened an embassy in Antigua and Barbuda. Also that year, the Prime Minister of Jamaica made an official visit to Dominican Republic, which was reciprocated in 2019. Furthermore, the need to jointly coordinate a roll over trade agreement with the UK after the Brexit, as well as the need to have a common regional approach for the negotiation of the post-Cotonou agreement, provided a new opportunity for an increasing official exchange between the parties.

In 2020, the new elected government in the Dominican Republic established foreign policy priorities that included a relaunch of relations with CARICOM. As a result, initiatives have been taken to open an embassy in Georgetown, Guyana and concurrent diplomatic representatives have been appointed to Suriname, Barbados, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Today it is recognized that the absence of a membership to the regional bloc does not nullify the possibility and the need to have a much more intense and fluid relationship between CARICOM and the DR. Experience shows that, when both parties have worked on a common agenda, they have achieved mutual benefits that would not otherwise have been

possible, as was the case in the EPA negotiations and also the process for rolling over the CARIFORUM-EU EPA conditions with the UK after the Brexit. As we have seen, the rapprochement and cooperation between both parties have been mediated to a large extent by the cooperation of the EU, through CARIFORUM, which has played a key role, becoming in many cases the main space of interaction.

Throughout its almost 30 years of existence, tangible progress has been made in bringing the parties together. The programming and execution of the regional resources of the EDF have been well executed in the context of the CARIFORUM and the post-Cotonou agreement provides the possibility of working together and taking advantage of the opportunities that this new scenario will provide.

Nevertheless, it would be highly beneficial to develop a proper DR-CARICOM joint agenda that transcends European cooperation and that properly address issues of bilateral concern in order to coordinate initiatives aimed at a more inclusive and sustainable coverage agenda for the Caribbean.

At present, we have relevant challenges on both the domestic and the international horizons which hamper progress toward achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for all our countries. Among the many shared challenges for the Caribbean, we can mention slow economic post Covid recovery compounded by strong inflationary pressures, little dynamism in job creation, declining investment and growing social demands. Also, climate change and its negative effects on our economies is a paramount concern; A complex international scenario in which the Russian invasion in Ukraine has caused growing geopolitical tensions, less vigorous global economic growth and higher energy prices; furthermore, we have the recurrent imposition of new non-tariff barriers from common trade partners, food insecurity, the reduction of non-reimbursable cooperation flows for development cooperation, just to name a few.

Bilateral efforts should be convened to define and coordinate innovative ways of collaboration and develop coherent joint initiatives that allow responses that could guarantee the defense of common interests more effectively than doing it separately as CARICOM and DR.

Due to the nature of the countries of the region and the challenges in the fast-changing international scenario, the establishment of strategic bilateral alliances that recognize CARICOM-DR differences and similarities in a framework of respect and collaboration, as well as the fostering of joint regional understanding and cooperation, should not only be an option to consider, but rather a necessity, to guarantee the defense of the common Caribbean interests in the global context.

In this regard, strengthening CARIFORUM as a space for consultation and coordination that goes beyond of what has been its traditional agenda may be one alternative worth to considerate. Another may be establishing a separated joint CARICOM-DR Commission, to deal with specific bilateral issues related to political dialogue, trade and functional cooperation in several areas. Any initiative in this regard would certainly help promote better communication and mutual understanding which would benefit the entire region.

I congratulate CARICOM in its first 50 years of existence and look forward to celebrating many more of its achievements in the years to come, for the benefit of all the peoples of the region.

# CARIBEÑOS

Caribes  
Número 8 · Enero-junio 2023



# Las muchas Kari que hay en Kari Polanyi-Levitt<sup>1</sup>

Félix Valdés García\*

Es una dicha conmemorar cien años de vida con la persona presente, como me aseverara mi hija al diseñar con otros este homenaje. Este es el caso de Kari Polanyi Levitt, una caribeña verdadera.

Pero quiero hacerlo desde el recuerdo, de la memoria de haber compartido con ella un mes de frecuentes encuentros en Montreal, en septiembre-octubre de 2011. No la había conocido personalmente a pesar de saber de sus venidas a La Habana y de la publicación de su libro con Lloyd Best La teoría económica de la plantación en 2009 por el Fondo Editorial de la Casa de las Américas, un centro que siempre sabe dónde están las mejores cosas dichas sobre este pequeño, pero intenso espacio geográfico, que es el Caribe.

- \* Licenciado en Filosofía por la Universidad Estatal de Bielorrusia. Master en Filosofía y Lic. en Lengua Rusa por esta universidad. Profesor de Filosofía y Doctor en Ciencias Filosóficas. Actualmente es Investigador Asistente del Instituto de Filosofía de La Habana y sus áreas de investigación se relacionan con el estudio de la filosofía cubana, caribeña y latinoamericana. Vicepresidente de la Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe “Norman Girvan” de la Universidad de La Habana.
- <sup>1</sup> Palabras pronunciadas en el Webinar “Kari Polanyi Levitt: Celebrating a True Caribbean Woman” organizado por el Institute of International Relations de la University of the West Indies (The UWI) y el Centro de Estudios del Caribe de la Casa de las Américas en ocasión del 100 cumpleaños de Kari Polanyi Levitt el 12 de junio de 2023.





Foto de Kari Polanyi Levitt tomada por Talisman (Tali) Brolin



Foto tomada durante la estancia de Félix en Montreal cuando conoció a Kari

Le escribí un mensaje a Kari. Le dije que estaría un mes revisando algunos archivos sobre la presencia de pensadores radicales en la década del sesenta en Canadá y que mi interés era saber por ella, de primera mano, sobre aquellos ardientes años, de sus relaciones con la intelectualidad de la Indias Occidentales de paso por Montreal, ciudad que en esa década fuera el centro principal de actividades y de creación teórica sobre el Caribe. Además, por lecturas sobre ese tiempo sabía que Kari se había convertido, tanto para los intelectuales y activistas caribeños, en un referente principal, en un atractor central.

La isla de Montreal y en ella las universidades de McGill y Concordia, se habían transformado en los centros académicos que albergaban los mayores debates sobre temas insulares. Allí se daban cita los más activos representantes e intelectuales de un espacio que buscaba la independencia de la Corona inglesa, que a su vez venía de la experiencia y el fracaso de la Federación de Indias Occidentales, al mismo tiempo que vivía la conmoción de sucesos de gran impacto como lo fueran el triunfo en 1959 de una revolución en la isla mayor, el proceso de descolonización africano con Kwame Nkrumah como estandarte en Ghana y para todo el intenso proceso emancipador en el África negra subsahariana. También resonaba el Movimiento por los derechos civiles en los Estados Unidos. Como diría el poeta cubano Silvio Rodríguez “La era está pariendo un corazón”.

En este lapso se desarrollaron los más diversos encuentros, debates, sucesos, desde los Comités de las Conferencias Caribeñas que organizaba las Annual Caribbean Conferences on West Indian Affairs (1965, 1966, 1967) e invitaban a conferencistas como C. L. R James, Goerge Lamming, hasta el Congreso de Escritores Negros (1968) o las revueltas de finales de los sesenta en la universidad de Concordia por motivos racistas. En todo este acontecer Kari estuvo justo en el vórtice, tanto en Montreal como en Trinidad y Tobago, Guyana y Jamaica.

Para sorpresa mía, su respuesta a mi correo fue inmediata. Aceptaba recibirme y facilitarme incluso su augusto despacho en McGill. Solo me pedía

le llevara ejemplares del libro publicado por Casa. Coordinamos la fecha del primer encuentro, pautado para el día siguiente de la llegada a Montreal. A partir de entonces iría a su casa en Outremont a entrevistarle. Un día después me llevó a su despacho, me presentó a las autoridades. Otro día fuimos a Concordia, a un encuentro con un estudiante en un café, a la conferencia de un reconocido filósofo húngaro de paso por Montreal. Desde el inicio quedé instalado en su despacho, que no era más que una pequeña oficina en el cuarto piso del emblemático edificio Leakop, con una placa a la entrada que decía: “Kari Polanyi Levit, Emeritus Professor”, posición de la que se había retirado desde 1992. Dentro del local, un aspecto de incuria, repleto de cajas vacías, descuido. La administración había empezado a mudar la papelería de la profesora y a desocupar el gabinete. Quedaban sus tazas de té, pocillos de café y, en ese cubículo de ventanal de cristal del cual se podía divisar el inmenso parque de una de las entradas a la universidad, pasé la mayor parte del tiempo, transcribiendo las entrevistas, leyendo o buscando libros en la biblioteca.

Sabía que la obra de Kari era trascendental y que en ella había varias Kari. Una tras otra rotaba sus diversas dimensiones profesionales y de vida. Una era la de profesora de economía de la universidad, otra una apasionada caribeñista, otra albacea del legado de sus padres y de su herencia húngaro-austríaca. Y, la cuarta dimensión estaba ligada a su constante activismo político y académico, el cual atravesaba las dimensiones anteriores.

Kari llegó al Caribe por primera vez en la Navidad de 1960. El profesor de Toronto, B. S. Keirstead –invitado a la UWI por su primer rector, el economista Arthur Lewis–, le pidió a su exalumna que le acompañara a Mona para trabajar en un estudio para el Gobierno de la entonces Federación de las Indias Occidentales, sobre tarifas Inter-territoriales de Carga y para los Servicios Federales de Embarque. Este trabajo le hizo andar entre Jamaica y Trinidad y reencontrar allí a compañeros de estudio de Inglaterra, como Lloyd Braithwaite, Gladstone Mills (Charlie), o a los contagiosos jóvenes economistas graduados en la metrópolis como

Alistair McIntyre, Lloyd Best, también a William Demas, todos reconocidos luego como notables académicos y activistas caribeños.

Desde entonces Kari se sintió conquistada por la brillantez y el entusiasmo de los resueltos profesores que aclamaban por desafiar, desde el conocimiento y el esfuerzo intelectual, los modos coloniales de pensar. Ellos se veían envueltos en la crítica a “lo viejo” (la dependencia colonial en el ámbito del saber) y en pensar “lo nuevo”, que estaba ligado con la descolonización en toda su extensión. Los jóvenes economistas, sociólogos, historiadores y cada uno ‘de todo un poco’, buscaban nuevos paradigmas, adecuados al desarrollo del Caribe, a sus pequeñas economías y sociedades, una región con una historia preñada de rupturas y deformaciones estructurales originadas por el saqueo colonial. Este grupo que se daría a conocer luego como Grupo Nuevo Mundo ((New World Group, NWG), trataba de andar por sí mismo, opuestos a las nociones de “talla única” provenientes, como era habitual, más al norte del Mar de los Sargazos.

A partir de entonces Kari comprendió que “esta gente era la suya”. Así me dijo. Ellos le contagiaron de su energía mientras ella les fue recíproca. Desde su nueva posición en McGill, al frente del Centro de Estudio de Áreas en Desarrollo (CDAS), a partir de 1963, se propuso ayudar, haciendo de este espacio un lugar que favorecería la colaboración académica. El primer estudiante en llegar a Montreal fue William Demas, justo ese año. Pasados más de cincuenta años, a Kari se le refleja en el rostro su aprecio por Demas y por el trabajo que asumiera en el Centro, referido al futuro económico de países de pequeñas dimensiones y su desarrollo. Así se daba inicio a un tema primordial que les conducía a la revisión crítica de perspectivas académicas en boga, tanto en las academias del norte y Occidente, por Gunnar Myrdal, Dudley Seers, como por los economistas latinoamericanos de la CEPAL, Raúl Prebisch, Celso Furtado, Osvaldo Sunkel, dentro de la tradición del enfoque estructural, y para quienes la dimensión histórica del análisis económico, pasaba a ser fundamental. De la estancia de Demas en McGill se publicó un libro, principal para desarrollos posteriores entre los economistas de la región, en particular

para la teoría de la economía de plantación de la cual ella, con Lloyd Best, emprenderían juntos. Se trata del volumen: La economía del desarrollo en los países pequeños (1965), basado en la realidad económica y social, histórica, del Caribe.

Alister McIntyre, quien enseñaba en el Campus Mona, enviaba a sus estudiantes a McGill para realizar estudios de postgrado, fundamentalmente con el acompañamiento de Kari. De entre los jóvenes recibidos estuvieron Edwin Carrington, Ainsworth Harewood y Adlith Brown, todos con posterioridad, connotados intelectuales y políticos economistas caribeños. De esta relación mutua, se publicó en 1967 un libro sobre las relaciones económicas entre Canadá y las West Indies.

El Grupo Nuevo Mundo, coordinado por Lloyd Best pretendía deshacerse de presupuestos inoperantes en la ciencia social y económica vigente. Ellos polemizaban con la herencia intelectual, con las teorías que ocultaban el estudio de la región. Por eso Lloyd Best formuló su concepto referido a la necesidad de hacerse de un pensamiento independiente (the independent thought), y de ir al pasado desde el presente para crear otra ciencia, otra teoría de raíces caribeñas, que permitieran la independencia de la región misma, y con ello esa otra noción de Best: Caribbean freedom. Es decir, el NWG acudía a los propios fundamentos del saber, a las rupturas con las epistemes clásicas, un proceso que implicaba, no solo la independencia económica, política, jurídica, sino del saber mismo, de los presupuestos sobre los cuales se va a conocer y a actuar en lo adelante. Esto era ya, prematuramente, una revolución en la esfera del pensamiento y un vuelco epistemológico, anterior a las formulaciones actuales, de moda en las academias del Norte y Latinoamérica. Para ellos había que emprender una independencia epistémica, alcanzar la soberanía en este ámbito. Sus trabajos estuvieron decididamente marcados por tal propósito.

En 1964, en la sede de la UWI en St. Augustine, Trinidad y Tobago, Kari y Lloyd decidieron enfrentar el estudio de la economía caribeña.

Formularon un modelo base, partiendo desde sí, por medio de un método de aproximaciones sucesivas y de historia razonada, que partía de la experiencia histórica, colonial del siglo XVII. Su propósito era facilitar cuestiones prácticas y urgentes: comprender para transformar su mundo y desde la interpretación teórica, aprehender la realidad de los jóvenes estado-nación que aparecían con la independencia (¿formal?) de la Corona Británica.

La plantación esclavista constituía para ambos el punto de partida, el modelo que le permitía comprender el desarrollo económico de las pequeñas islas antillanas. La plantación era la institución económica, original y genérica de la economía insular, instituida en el siglo XVII que abarcó todas las áreas cultivables y las desbordó, hasta irradiarla totalidad de las instituciones actualmente existentes, lo cual ha sido una marca imborrable de la experiencia antillana. La Historia (con H mayúscula) comienza a ser para sus estudios económicos una arista que no quedaba al margen, y que les distingue, así como lo deja dicho el propio Best desde el comienzo, en varias conferencias. Este tema se hizo la primera tesis, el primer capítulo del libro que se publicara en La Habana.

Me asombraba hablar con Kari. Ella contaba con naturalidad, tantas anécdotas de su trabajo con Best, sus relaciones con el NWG y la revista, sin embargo, no descubría en la conversación con ella que le atribuyera demasiada importancia a la relevancia teórica y sobre todo de ruptura epistémica que sus estudios implicaban. También reconocía que para la teoría, la mayor parte de los datos sobre la plantación eran tomados de la experiencia en el Caribe anglófono, no así de las “islas independientes”, como me decía, para referirse a Cuba, Haití y República Dominicana. El Caribe eran las West Indies, las Antillas inglesas, tal y como para los francófonos el Caribe es la Caraïbe. De Puerto Rico supieron algo más porque Best tuvo mayor cercanía como estudioso con esta isla.

En 1966, y para dedicarse a los proyectos planteados entre ambos, Kari Levitt logró una subvención para trabajar con Lloyd en McGill y así

emprender juntos el estudio sobre el crecimiento impulsado desde el exterior y el proceso de la industrialización en el Caribe. Todavía con asombro recuerda la llegada de la familia y su involucramiento en su acomodo, su traslado por las calles de la ciudad. En Montreal, Lloyd fue muy activo. Se desenvolvía entre el New World Group, la edición de la revista New World, las conferencias, algunos compromisos en Puerto Rico, así como la participación en la vida política-intelectual de Montreal en estos años, que les colocaba en un ajetreo –y también ante riesgos–, jamás olvidados por la profesora de McGill. La consumación de ello se expresa en las Conferencias Internacionales de los caribeños residentes en Canadá, donde por primera vez formulara sus conceptos Independent Thought y Caribbean Freedom.

Un día me contó, aun con el asombro en su rostro por lo sucedido, cómo cargaban en su carro volúmenes salidos de imprenta de los New World Quartely y de cómo corrían de la imprenta a la universidad, marcados por la premura y el carácter de Best. De estas lides surgió una relación especial entre ambos.

El estudio propuesto resultó tan amplio que no pudo terminarse en el tiempo previsto, pero como decía Norman Girvan, enfrentaron el imperialismo metodológico inherente, una “economía de talla única”. Del trabajo quedaron cuatro volúmenes inéditos de texto, mimeografiados. Algunos adelantos fueron publicados en la revista del NWG. Kari recuerda como George Beckford insistía en dar a conocer, bajo el título “Características de la economía de plantación”, sus avances, en un libro que él organizaba, bajo el título *Economía del Caribe* (1975).

La teoría de la economía de plantación no vio publicados sus postulados, sus modelos, de modo definitivo, hasta 2004, cuando la autora, tras 35 años de haberse dado a conocer parcialmente y constituir una perspectiva de análisis, decidiera con Lloyd reunirlos y publicarlos definitivamente, sin necesidad de hacerle cambio alguno. Un tiempo después el dinámico y genial amigo de Kari falleció. En 2009 salieron a la luz, traducidos

al español y publicados la Casa de las Américas en La Habana, los ensayos de una teoría que marca una escuela, una perspectiva, gracias a la intensidad de varios, en particular al empuje de Graciela Chailloux Laffita.

La teoría de la economía de plantación pudo haberse convertido en una escuela caribeña de economistas como lo fuera la escuela cepalina en Latinoamérica, pero esta vez para el análisis de las realidades nuestro-americanas insulares. Sin embargo, el no haber sido publicada en sus años, completada paulatinamente como ello fuera desde su experiencia y puesta en práctica, hizo que el neoliberalismo de los ochenta hiciera de todo el acervo acumulado, de las ideas que se validaban, una de sus víctimas.

Polanyi Levitt y Best, advertidos del papel de las instituciones, de las estructuras, de la historia como herramienta del análisis económico, propusieron una pauta de análisis, un esquema, una teoría caribeña, que no significaba un simple modelo económico formal, sino constituía una herramienta para la transformación económica, en función de lo cual siempre se desarrolló. Tanto Best como Kari, reaccionaban impulsados por el fracaso de la teoría de “industrialización por invitación”, promovida por Arthur Lewis durante la posguerra, con la generosa intención de eliminar el desempleo en las islas.

Era necesario abandonar la adaptación de perspectivas allende el Atlántico Norte, y de más arriba del Mar de los Sargazos. ¿Cómo guiar la política económica y social en las islas caribeñas, para solucionar el desempleo, la desigualdad en los ingresos, la exclusión económica y social y poner fin a esa perenne dependencia de la asistencia externa? Este fue el aguijón de todos y no la simple ciencia por la ciencia.

No se trata de la plantación en sí, sino a partir de ello explicar los ciclos de florecimiento y bancarrota, donde lo primero no es autosostenido, como tampoco la bancarrota libera a la economía de la dependencia, pues se mantiene ese rasgo de la plantación introducido por la propiedad foránea,



(capital extranjero) y una producción orientada a la exportación, que ve fracasar en su impulso inicial, de apogeo e invasión total. Esta realidad se convierte en una condición de dependencia económica permanente: crecimiento sin desarrollo, ajustes sin cambios estructurales, diversificación sin transformación. Para los autores del libro que compraba en La Habana, se trataba de algo como si fuera un organismo vivo que merece ser analizado en su síndrome.

En Cuba, tanto Ramiro Guerra como Manuel Moreno Fraginals han apuntado en sus estudios de la industria azucarera cubana, los rasgos de la plantación en su forma clásica. Ramiro Guerra en su preocupación por el latifundio cañero a inicios de los veinte en Cuba, partió del caso modelico de Barbados, cuando el capital extranjero insufló recursos financieros para abarcar toda el área cultivable de una isla, trasladar la mano de trabajo esclava barata, y desarrollar la plantación en esta, orientada a la exportación del producto total, hasta entrar el propio sistema en crisis por sus necesidades de expansión limitadas en estas condiciones. Moreno igualmente refirió en detalles los mismos rasgos de la plantación azucarera cuando esta se implanta en diferentes tiempos y espacios en el Caribe, caracterizado por: capital extranjero, mano de obra esclava, economía para la exportación, uso desmedido del espacio y extorsión insular total.

Polanyi Levitt y Best, abstraídos del rasgo individual, observan como el fenómeno se da, desde la plantación típica, que denominan pura (modelo I), a los modelos modificados y ampliamente modificados (modelos II y III), que mantienen en esencia el mismo patrón de desarrollo, dejando para después el modelo alternativo, o el antimodelo IV. La economía se sostiene por las instituciones y la cultura de cualquier sociedad; el desarrollo es un proceso desde dentro, por lo tanto, cualquier política que conduzca a las transformaciones económicas y sociales debe tener en cuenta estos constreñimientos dejados por el legado histórico, social y político.

Las nuevas propuestas, las afirmaciones que dejan de ser hipótesis para convertirse en convicción, en punto de partida, la búsqueda inquieta de los jóvenes intelectuales se convirtió en uno de los movimientos académicos y prácticos de mayor influencia teórica del Caribe anglófono, con su revista, sus acciones prácticas. Montreal fue uno de sus puertos más importantes a donde todo esto llegara y de donde saliera, de vuelta al Caribe y al mundo.

Habría que señalar que la labor de Polanyi Levitt no fue solo académica en esta región. Tras el trabajo con Best, William Demas la invitó a desarrollar un sistema de cuentas económicas nacionales entre 1969 y 1973, debido a su experiencia en contabilidad económica multisectorial y a sus conocimientos sobre las economías de la región insular. Ello ponía en desarrollo la teoría ensayada, y por ello, su resultado constituye el ensayo seis de la teoría de la economía de plantación.

Al cerrar la década del sesenta vino un tiempo convulso. Las revueltas en Mona tras la negación de entrada de vuelta de Montreal a Walter Rodney, los sucesos en Concordia, el movimiento Black Power, la crisis en el gobierno de Eric Williams, el movimiento obrero, etc., hicieron del espacio insular un sitio un tanto aciago.

Entrados los años setenta Kari trabajó como profesora del Instituto de Relaciones Internacionales de la UWI en St. Augustine, Trinidad (1974), mientras en 1978 aceptó la condición de profesora visitante del Departamento de Economía de Mona, Jamaica (1978-1980), labor que le fuera suspendida por el gobierno, con posterioridad, por razones de índole política.

Cuando iba a su encuentro la primera vez, no sabía de toda la trascendencia de su obra ni todas las Kari que había juntas detrás de enigmática mujer. Solo imaginaba su pasión por el Caribe y su entrega absoluta, su compromiso político con procesos liderados por Eric Williams, Chedi Jagan, los Manley en Jamaica, o Trevor Munroe, y Maurice Bishop. Tampoco

sabía de su extensa labor académica canadiense ni de su interés por la economía para el desarrollo. No sabía de sus libros sobre la inversión en su país adoptivo, de sus resultados sobre “El estado de Estudios para el Desarrollo en Canadá”, o la fundación de la Asociación Canadiense para el Estudio del Desarrollo Internacional. Todo me vino junto.

No obstante, este homenaje no puede dejar de hacer mención a esa otra Kari que también descubrí. Sabía que era la hija única del reconocido científico Karl Polanyi, autor de *La Gran Transformación* (1944). Eso explicaba sus estrechos nexos con Hungría y Austria, los países de sus padres y que ella además, con otros especialistas, fuera albacea y promotora del estudio de la obra de ambos. Un día me llevó, tras mucho andar en bus por la avenida Sherbrooke, al Archivo Karl Polanyi, al cuidado de la Universidad Concordia. Allí se custodia todo lo relacionado con su padre. Pero mayor fue la sorpresa cuando pude apreciar la historia de la madre, tan grande como la del autor de un estudio tan profundo sobre el desarrollo del capitalismo inglés. Ilona Duczynska, su mamá, fue una mujer valiente, comprometida, muy capaz, políglota y versátil intelectualmente. De joven tuvo un activismo que se me hacía parecer a Rosa Luxemburgo, pues compartieron, ella un tiempo después, Zurich como centro de actividades y refugio. Me sobrecogió ver, entre tanto documento histórico, libros infantiles rusos, aquellos de los primeros años del poder soviético que su madre le traía del país de los Soviets, cuando por estrechas relaciones con los líderes de la Revolución de Octubre, y aun en Suiza antes de 1917, le hicieron ir en largos e intensos días a San Petersburgo y Moscú, ciudades que protagonizaban una nueva ilusión. Kari creció viendo textos infantiles en cirílico, tal vez traducidos por su mamá y quería mostrármelos porque sabía que había vivido allí y que hablaba ruso.

Su mamá Ilona vivió intensamente el compromiso con el cambio, enfrentó los desmanes contra los obreros del entorno austrohúngaro, colaboró con la revolución de Bela Kun, con Karl Radek y la Tercera Internacional. Se le tildó de luxemburgista, se le expulsó del partido, no aceptó la

perfidia ni los rumbos posteriores que se sucedieron en Hungría y en la URSS estalinista. Fue por su mamá que la familia vino a Pickering en Canadá y no pudieron radicar en Nueva York donde su padre recibiera una beca y un puesto de trabajo como profesor de Columbia. El gobierno de los Estados Unidos le negó la entrada a la amiga de los bolcheviques, a la revolucionaria austríaca. Descubrí, escuchándola, que su madre fue cardinal en la vida de la familia, tanto como lo fuera el peso que su padre les legara, y que allí, en este edificio se conservara en ordenados archivos. Kari se me empezó a parecer entonces mucho más a su mamá, a la militante entregada y valerosa. Descubrí en ella esa otra dimensión. Entendí, visualicé de nuevo, como en cámara lenta, aquel momento, aquel primer día en Montreal entrando con ella, a McGill, y ella, al ver a mujeres en una huelga planificada, se salió del camino y acudió a ellas para abordarles, para preguntarles y animarles en sus reclamos. Esa chispa electrizó su cuerpo y me hizo ver a la mujer que vibra, aun, ante las voces de aquellas trabajadoras de servicio de McGill.

¡Feliz cumpleaños Kari!



# Tribute to Professor Emeritus Kari Polanyi Levitt on the occasion marking her centenary<sup>1</sup>

Patricia Northover\*

Greetings everyone, it is truly a great honor and privilege to be able to join this virtual gathering today of scholars and friends, to offer a small tribute to Prof Emerita Kari Polanyi Levitt- a true Caribbean woman, intellectual pioneer in the Caribbean radical tradition and within the field of critical development studies. I salute Kari as she arrives at this august moment in her life celebrating 100 years. I feel a special connection to her, having discovered in my research for this tribute that the Plantation Economic Model was being born in the same year that I was born. I also feel a special responsibility to the critical intellectual gifts that you have bequeathed to us. Especially, as a member of the somewhat younger Caribbean generation of female development economists, given my special love for philosophy and black critical theory which has fuelled my own critical theoretical engagements, alongside Prof Michaeline Crichlow,

\* Economista crítica del desarrollo y Senior Fellow del Instituto Sir Arthur Lewis de Estudios Sociales y Económicos (SALISES) en The UWI, campus Mona. Es licenciada por la Universidad de Cambridge y The UWI y se especializa en filosofía de la economía, teoría crítica de la raza y decolonial, desarrollo rural y estudios caribeños.

<sup>1</sup> Palabras pronunciadas en el Seminario Virtual “Kari Polanyi Levitt: Celebrating a True Caribbean Woman” organizado por el Institute of International Relations de la University of the West Indies (The UWI) y el Centro de Estudios del Caribe de la Casa de las Américas en ocasión del 100 cumpleaños de Kari Polanyi Levitt, el 12 de junio de 2023.



**casa de las américas**



**The Institute of International Relations**  
in partnership with the **Centro de Estudios del Caribe**  
presents

**Kari Polanyi Levitt:**  
**Celebrating  
a True  
Caribbean  
Woman**

**Monday, June 12, 2023 | 2 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. (AST) | via Zoom**

undertaken in order to “Flee the Plantation.” I thus believe I have a special cosmic debt to Prof Levitt who has opened up spaces for me to pursue a critical poethics for new world Futures.

Kari Polanyi Levitt is one of our most distinguished Caribbean political economists, who is steeped in the interrogation of modernity’s freedoms, both from the lens of European critique and crises, and from the womb space of globalization, that is, the Archipelagic Americas, with special reference to what Charles Wagley in 1957 described as the “Plantation Americas.” Specifically, the cultural sphere founded by the political economic

and racial ordering of the Plantation system which included Brazil, the Caribbean and Southern USA.

Born in Vienna, in the interwar years to parents, Karl Polanyi and Ilona Du/csyn/ska, who were of a decisively radical pedigree, Kari found her way to the study of economic problems via the London School of Economics where she first met with and was taught by Arthur Lewis, St Lucian born Caribbean Economist who would become the first Black Nobel Laureate in Economics and pioneer of the field of development economics. Far removed from the innocence of this chance, or perhaps, fated meeting, Arthur Lewis would later become the central economic figure against whom Prof Kari Polanyi Levitt would come to define her own position on Caribbean development.

Entangled in time and space, Kari Levitt and Arthur Lewis, have moved counter-positionally within global spaces, in coming to terms with the constraints on the Caribbean development process. In particular, Lewis' trajectory to establishing new categories for the economic analysis of the Caribbean and Lesser developed countries, was stimulated by his movement from the then so called periphery to the Center (and back again) given his life ambition to disrupt the dominant articulations of place within imperial spaces. This movement in space facilitated his movement in thought fed by his study of economic history, international relations and industrial economics.

Kari Levitt's move was from the Center to the Semi-periphery (of Canada) on route to her encounter and relational history with an ideologically casted Caribbean Periphery. Her cognitive frames were moulded by her study of statistical planning tools for guiding national development, as well as by a deep knowledge of the Marxist PE paradigm and the contradictions of FDI by TNC in Canada.

The geopolitical movements of both were underpinned by distinctive radical traditions of social justice which spurred each to seek out relevant

economic models- sensitive to the reality of countries lodged in a state of comparative economic poverty or underdevelopment. Rooted in these movements and traditions both Levitt and Lewis would become fonts for innovations in conceptual prisms.

For her part, Kari created, in the creative ferment and cross fertilization of ideas with Best and McIntyre in 1964, the ideas that would become the Plantation Economic Model- PEM- Later to be elaborated in 3 historical variants, and to be transcended by the promised counter model 4 for economic and socio-cultural decolonization that would deepen a process of political decolonization.

As Prof Polanyi Levitt has herself emphasized in her 2005 text *Reclaiming Development: Independent Thought and Caribbean Community*, and I quote “the explanatory power of the plantation models reaches beyond the modelling of contemporary economic structures, to illuminate the many ways in which the legacy of the ‘Plantation System’ has conditions the behaviour of all groups and classes, and all institutions including the state.” EOQ. As such this effort of theorizing Caribbean reality must be treated as a fundamental plank of the struggle for what Best has described as “Independent Thought and Caribbean Freedom.”

While Lewis broke the colonial mould by articulating a theory that was grounded in the specific characteristics of countries who were shaped by the conjuncture of subsistence and capitalist sectors. And by arguing that sustainable economic growth would lie in the radical transformation away from economic dualism, he failed to lay bare the ontological distinctiveness of the historical and cultural-political system that nurtured and sustained dualism.

In this regard, while both Lewis, Best and Levitt were breaking colonial moulds of thought for realizing greater epistemic sovereignty in considering the nature of the development problem and the possibilities for structural and social transformations, the PEM, both in its ideology and



method went further into the heart of what Walter Mignolo describes as the ‘colonial matrix of power;’ a power matrix that speaks to the colonial force operating within modernity through the economy, authority systems, gender and sexuality and knowledge and subjectivity. The PEM was able to go further than Lewis, because of its greater emphasis on the “deep and enduring legacies of the plantation system” and its modes of exploitative extractivism vis a vis non-white spaces, which today remain as ‘racial sacrifice zones.’

Accordingly, the critical breakthroughs led by Kari and Lloyd in seeking epistemic freedom through their situated and standpoint epistemologies, - modes of knowing that reject positivist mantras of neutrality, empiricism and formalistic deductivism in theoretical modelling- represent a vanguard standard for the epistemic and political movements being expressed through critical and decolonial theory.

Indeed, despite the criticisms, retreats and regressions suffered in economic thinking after the Plantation School of thought, - that was grounded in and politically moved by the transdisciplinary and radical collective of the New World Group-, Kari Polanyi Levitt, is quite correct in remaining confident in the immense critical value of her work in the Caribbean and its power to act as a foundation for our own vital double movements in times of existential crises within the Caribbean and the world.

And as a sign of the turning times, I wish to flag that in the 2003 Issue of Finance of Development published by the IMF, there was an article by rising economist Daron Acemoglu, entitled: *Root Causes, A historical approach to assessing the role of institutions in economic development*. This I believe is a fitting acknowledgement of the power of a good idea, which Kari in her passionate and determined commitment to the Caribbean region, helped to inaugurate alongside the Late Lloyd Best – iconoclastic scholar and Caribbean visionary.



# In Search of Model IV<sup>1</sup>

Michael Witter\*

I begin with saying thanks to Kari from the students whom she inspired, excited, and mentored; from the academics whom she challenged to think creatively; from the Caribbean public, with whom she engaged in many a Talk Show, for her contributions to understanding our reality; and from the many friends who would have wished me to salute her for the warm, enduring and generous friendship she shared with us. I believe they all want me to wish her the Happiest of Birthdays so far and hope she continues to manage her health challenges as she starts another journey around the Sun. I have received more of her generosity and love than most, and so I say thanks again on behalf of my family and me.

For her 100th birthday, I want to use this opportunity to explore a nagging concern of Kari and those Caribbean political economists who have maintained a focus on problems of economic development for the region, with implications for many other former European colonies. That is, I will extend the enquiry of the plantation economists beyond what is, to

\* Fue profesor por más de 40 años en The UWI, campus Mona, en el Departamento de Economía, y en los últimos años como investigador principal en el Instituto Sir Arthur Lewis de Estudios Sociales y Económicos. Durante estos años, también fue profesor visitante en varias universidades de EE. UU. y trabajó en comisión de servicio en la Agencia Nacional de Planificación, rebautizada desde entonces como Instituto de Planificación de Jamaica. En 1974 se doctoró en Economía por la Universidad de Wisconsin, Madison (EE. UU.), por su trabajo sobre el crecimiento de las pequeñas economías impulsado por las exportaciones.

<sup>1</sup> Versión editada de las palabras pronunciadas en el Seminario Virtual “Kari Polanyi Levitt: Celebrating a True Caribbean Woman” organizado por el Institute of International Relations de la University of the West Indies (The UWI) y el Centro de Estudios del Caribe de la Casa de las Américas en ocasión del 100 cumpleaños de Kari Polanyi Levitt, el 12 de junio de 2023. Versión del 14 de julio de 2023.

what could be, by exploring the requirements for model IV in the typology conceptualized by Lloyd Best and Kari Polanyi Levitt.

Fifty-five years ago, Lloyd extracted and published (Best, 1968) the model of Pure Plantation Economy (Model I) from their joint work, and together they subsequently developed – and published (Best and Polanyi Levitt, 2009) more than 40 years later – the rest of the typology. That is, Model II<sup>2</sup> was called Plantation Economy Modified designed to capture post-Emancipation colonial economy in the Caribbean. And Model III, Plantation Economy Further Modified, sought to embody the differentiation of the economy, and by extension, the society, in the post-World War II transition to political Independence. What was left to complete the research programme was the articulation of Model IV – a model of self-sustaining economic growth, as the basis for an inclusive social and economic development.

There have been “further modifications” of the Caribbean economies over the last 40 years when the region became indebted and has had to respond to the demands of debt repayment under the conditions of the Washington Consensus championed by the IMF and the World Bank. Today the dependent periphery of global capitalism is bound firmly with financial and technological ties to the centres of capital in addition to the traditional trade ties. There are also cultural ties – tastes, values, and patterns of behaviour – which are quite pernicious and effective in sustaining the multi-dimensional dependency. The traditional agricultural and mineral exports have declined almost everywhere and disappeared in some, primarily in favour of tourism with its characteristic low wage insecure employment and limited linkages to domestic production. The exceptions in the CARICOM Caribbean are the traditional oil exporter, Trinidad and Tobago, and now the emergent oil exporter, Guyana. The official development strategies of both societies recognize the need to

2 Until the Essay on the Theory of Plantation Economy was published in 2009, models II and III existed only in a widely circulated mimeographed manuscripts bound in black covers.

transition from dependence on non-renewable resources and to adjust to the non-fossil fuel regime as a central plank in managing the impacts of climate change.

Dependence on imported basic food, especially protein, and energy has been increasing. In some economies like Jamaica, imports are now more than three times<sup>3</sup> the value of exports of goods, with earnings from tourism and remittances from migrants covering most of the gap.

Migration has expanded the Diaspora and made many families into transnational entities. On the one hand migration results from the displacement of workers from their employment and the incapacity of the economy to absorb new workers productively. On the other hand, migration feeds a process of unequal exchange of labour whereby the young, bright and trained and educated leave, while the old, infirm, and criminal cast-offs, often without productive skills, return to the Caribbean as dependents on the local branch of the family and/or the State.

More than a decade ago, the late and esteemed scholar Norman Girvan pointed out the existential threats (Girvan, 2010) to the Caribbean from debt, climate change and crime and other forms of social disorder. He was not then aware of the impact of a pandemic like COVID 19 nor the likely and imminent disruption of the economy from the application of Artificial Intelligence techniques as additional threats.

## **Transforming Caribbean Economy with “Model IV”**

Both Kari Polanyi Levitt and Norman Girvan have called for Model IV. In an email on September 13, 2006, Kari wrote:

- <sup>3</sup> In Jamaica in 2022, the value of imports of good was 3.4 times the value of exports of goods. Remittances were 1.8 times and tourism gross inflows were 1.9 times the value of exports of goods.

“On the search for Model IV, it was of course the purpose of the work done by Lloyd Best and myself in the development of Models I, II and III to escape from the legacy of the plantation. In that regard, the residentiary<sup>4</sup> sector is critical, but it is less a matter of what is physically “in-shore” or “off-shore” than pursuit of policies which systematically build national ownership and control.”

Further down in the same email, she wrote:

“In addition to the uncertainties which characterize the international economic and financial order at this time and rising levels of insecurity resulting from aggressive policies of the current US administration, the islands are exposed to the consequences of climate change in the form of exceptionally destructive natural disasters including rising sea levels. For all of these reasons, the high degree of dependence on food imports now demands to be addressed more urgently than ever. This points in the direction of priority to policies of land use and the reconstruction of domestic agriculture.”<sup>5</sup>

## **Toward Model IV**

Because the Caribbean is so completely integrated with some of the major western economies, national strategies must be designed and implemented within the parameters of what is politically and economically possible in the global and regional contexts.

The Global context: Today there is persistent global instability with the USA as the leading pole in a multi-polar world challenged by at least China economically, various challenges to the USA dollar as the reserve

- 4 The “residentiary” sector of the pure plantation economy (Model I) encompassed the small settlers - maroons, emancipated slaves, urban tradesmen, and generally small scale producers.
- 5 Kari Levitt’s email to Halcyon Lawrence and Norman Girvan on September 13, 2006, reflecting on a Roundtable Discussion that was held after the launch of her book, Kari Levitt, *Reclaiming Development*, Ian Randle Publishers, Kingston.

currency for international trade, assertion of the BRICS or the E-7<sup>6</sup>, war in Ukraine and elsewhere that impacts supply lines, the decline of the post-Brexit UK, and the consolidation of the European Union under the leadership of Germany and France.

The Regional context: The CARICOM Caribbean is among the most heavily indebted countries with a weak and struggling regional integration movement despite its 50 years of existence.

Required Government Development policy posture:

The government must establish a Strategic Policy Framework, in which it:

- Commits to inclusive sustainable development; this will require deliberate efforts to
- builds regional and international partnerships as geopolitical space allows, especially around food, energy and adaptation to climate change;
- promotes public-private partnerships for green investments, especially with foreign investors

The strategic policy framework will in turn consists of frameworks for social, economic and environmental policy in synthesis.

Social policy should:

- Place strong emphasis on a modernized/re-imagined education system to cultivate critical thinking and productive citizens;
- Promote wellness lifestyles, and strengthen public health guidelines;
- Plan settlements as the framework for the construction of shelters;

<sup>6</sup> The E-7 are the BRICS without South Africa plus Turkey, Indonesia and Mexico.

Economic policy should:

- Institute debt management that emphasizes re-payment with minimal fiscal stress and prioritizes foreign borrowing for activities that earn and/or reduce the spending of foreign exchange;
- Invest in infrastructural development that prioritizes digital communications nationally and access roads for agricultural products to reach markets;
- Promote agro-industry around food for domestic consumption and export, with special attention to supplying the regional tourist industry;
- Promote high value-added tourism supplied with Caribbean entertainment and food;
- Discontinue mining and extracting non-renewable resources. In this regard, the two oil producers – Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana – already recognize the need to transition out of oil export dependence.

Environmental policy should:

Prioritize adaptation to climate change by:

- Promoting public-private partnerships to manage hillside erosion and coastal zone management;
- Encouraging recycling and re-purposing as waste management strategies;
- Strengthening waste disposal guidelines and processes.

The table below highlights the structure of Model IV, after the fashion of Models I-III, consisting of three main sectors. Sector I, the export sector is more diversified in output and markets than the corresponding mono-crop sector in the previous models. Sector II supports the domestic economy primarily, though with export capabilities as well. Sector III is

the residentiary sector expanded and modernized into an agro-industrial sector targeting the domestic and the regional and international high-value added food markets.

The dynamic for Model IV is expanded beyond the growth of the value of the export sector by the increased rate of reinvestment of the surpluses into the domestic economy, with priorities given to activities that are socially inclusive and environmentally friendly, or green investments. Managing the incentive structure for investment, with flexibility and agility, to support the balanced growth of the economy is the principal challenge for the government.

## **Model IV – Sustainable development based on inclusive economic growth**

Sector 1: High value added tourism linked to the agro-industrial and entertainment industries both of which are also export-oriented;

Sector 2: Services sector with a regulated Finance sector incentivized to shift the balance of lending to the productive sector including the Micro, Small and Medium sized enterprises which collectively have become the largest employer;

Sector 3: Residentiary sector expanded into agro-industrial processing activities.

Dynamic of Model IV: Surplus (= profits+interest+technology payments+rents) accruing to foreign and local investors incentivized for re-investment in local productive activity.

Characteristics of Model IV:



- Declining import dependence for basic food and fossil fuel based energy, and increasing self-reliance on domestic food and renewable resourced energy;
- Central Bank transformed to have a development mandate;
- Declining external debt with new debt tied to export earnings and/or import bill savings;
- Declining Net Migration – internal and external;
- High level technology in production, with investment staying abreast of the relevant technological changes, especially information technology;
- Increasing income equality;
- Increasing gender equality;
- Declining fossil fuel energy intensity of productive activity, and increasing renewable resourced energy intensity;
- Deepening democracy in the pursuit of policies of inclusion based on a revised republican constitution that is sensitive to the historical and cultural traditions and puts people at the centre.

This is one path to one version of Model IV within the global capitalist system. It is assumed that leaving the system is not a viable option in the near future, nor is the collapse of the global capitalist system imminent. Further, it is a path that assumes the political continuity of a democratic system of some sort without a sharp rupture by a process whereby power is forcibly concentrated in the hands of a minority.

## **Outline of a Political Process**

Establishing model IV requires a political process to form a government with the strategic vision outlined above. Against the background of the divisiveness and tribalism that is the legacy of colonial governance, and more recently, the loss of trust by young people in the political processes and their

institutions, it is difficult to see a democratic political process emerging that will win and maintain state power in order to lead the transformation.

Such a political process must:

- be inclusive, and capable of dynamic coalitions;
- be grounded in the realities of people's lives;
- be information-driven;
- communicate regularly and effectively;
- have agile leadership, committed to inclusive sustainable development, and capable of adapting as the local, regional, and global conditions shift and permit the necessary initiatives.

The government formed by such a process should implement a Mobilization strategy that encourages and facilitates workers' organizations, business organizations and civil society organizations to mount programmes of development activities. Some examples are set out below.

- Unions, farmers and other workers' organizations should:
  - » Promote worker education and skill training as a principal element of life-long education;
  - » Partner with relevant financial institutions to develop insurance and pension programmes.
- Business organizations should:
  - » Prioritize and facilitate worker training programmes;
  - » Prioritize and facilitate pension programmes;
  - » Prioritize Green investments;
  - » Partner with the public sector institutions for climate change adaptation projects especially where the private enterprise is directly impacted; e.g., hotels and sea defences, hillside farmers and defences against deforestation and erosion.

- Civil society should:
  - » Develop Social programmes in partnership with the public and private sector institutions, especially for the youth and the vulnerable;
  - » Develop Environmental programmes, especially for local climate change adaptation, with the public and private sector institutions.

In a recent speech, PJ Patterson, a former Prime Minister of Jamaica, argued that social and economic development is the logical extension of the struggles against the oppression of slavery and colonialism and the unequal relations bequeathed to the present economic life. The focus here is on the historical continuities. Change is the dialectical companion of continuity. Perhaps the break in the continuity Patterson has identified is that instead of struggling against what was imposed by others, the struggle now must target a world envisaged by a collective vision, designed in the context of the dynamic global realities, and built by the efforts of free people with voice. This is part of the thinking behind the proposed Model IV.

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# DESDE LA CÁTEDRA

**Caribes**  
Número 8 · Enero-junio 2023



# La Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe “Norman Girvan”

## Investigación, pensamiento y acción a favor de nuestros pueblos

Antonio F. Romero Gómez\*



Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe ‘Norman Girvan’  
Universidad de La Habana

Los estudios sobre el Caribe han constituido históricamente, un tema relevante para la docencia y la investigación en la Universidad de La Habana (UH), al que han dedicado tiempo y esfuerzos, distinguidos profesores en el campo de la historia, de la cultura artístico - literaria, la lingüística, la geografía, las ciencias económicas y otras disciplinas. A partir de los años 1970s se intensificaron - con respaldo estatal - los contactos

\* Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe, Universidad de la Habana, Cuba. Integrante del Grupo de Trabajo CLACSO Crisis, respuestas y alternativas en el Gran Caribe.

culturales y académicos de Cuba con los países caribeños, en los que la UH desarrolló actividades que tuvieron una repercusión positiva en la enseñanza de la historia y en la ampliación de los conocimientos sobre este peculiar espacio geográfico y sociohistórico; al que pertenece Cuba.

Sin embargo, paulatinamente se hizo evidente la necesidad de estructurar un programa permanente y coherente de proyección docente y científica para el estudio del Caribe. Por ello, se constituye en diciembre de 2004 la Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe; con el propósito de estudiar el Caribe con una constante reflexión teórica, metodológica e investigativa sobre la base de un enfoque multidisciplinario.

Desde entonces el trabajo de la Cátedra ha promovido entre los estudiantes, profesores e investigadores el interés por conocer las problemáticas del Caribe contemporáneo; ha aportado a especialistas y funcionarios públicos, análisis útiles para la actividad científica y docente de la propia UH y para la elaboración de propuestas de política; ha organizado conferencias, seminarios y otras actividades de postgrado relacionados con disímiles temáticas caribeñas; y ha difundido los resultados de su actividad y la de sus colaboradores nacionales y extranjeros mediante diversos formatos.

En estos casi 19 años de trabajo, se han abordado esencialmente: i) los desafíos del desarrollo económico y social (incluyendo el papel central del turismo) en el Caribe; ii) el cambio climático y resiliencia caribeña; iii) la mujer caribeña; iv) industrias culturales y creativas; v) las relaciones internacionales e inserción externa del Caribe; y vi) Cuba y sus relaciones con el Gran Caribe.

La obra de la Cátedra es resultado de la acción colectiva de su heterogénea membresía, y se ha beneficiado de importantes personalidades – no sólo cubanas – que han apoyado desde el punto de vista práctico e intelectual su labor.

Especial referencia merece el Prof. Norman Girvan, destacadísimo intelectual y activista político comprometido siempre con las mayorías; que amó al Caribe y a la Revolución cubana. Por ello, al fallecer – en abril de 2015 – se adoptó el acuerdo de incluir su nombre en la denominación de nuestra Cátedra, como homenaje al que tanto hizo por el progreso, la dignidad, la unidad y la defensa de los intereses de los pueblos caribeños.

La Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe “Norman Girvan” está consciente de las potencialidades de progreso y desarrollo que se pueden abrir para un Gran Caribe unido, si somos capaces de revalorizar las ingentes riquezas derivadas de la privilegiada posición geográfica, de los recursos naturales y humanos, y de la enorme diversidad biológica y rica cultura de nuestros pueblos.



# **Convocatoria a la XVII Conferencia Internacional de Estudios Caribeños**

**La Habana, 18 al 20  
de diciembre de 2023  
“CARICOM y el regionalismo  
caribeño: un balance  
de 50 años”**

La Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe ‘Norman Girvan’ de la Universidad de La Habana, fundada en el año 2004 tiene como propósitos fundamentales promover los estudios del Caribe desde una perspectiva multidisciplinaria tanto en el ámbito universitario como mediante la cooperación con otras entidades vinculadas al análisis de la realidad caribeña; y estimular el intercambio de información relevante sobre el desarrollo económico y social del Caribe entre los especialistas cubanos y extranjeros de diferentes disciplinas, mediante conferencias, congresos, publicaciones y otros medios.

Al cumplirse en 2023 los 50 años del establecimiento de CARICOM la Cátedra convoca a su XVII Conferencia Internacional, la cual tendrá como tema central: “CARICOM y el regionalismo caribeño: un balance de 50 años”. Este encuentro se desarrollará en La Habana entre el lunes 18 y el miércoles 20 de diciembre de 2023.



Entre los objetivos del evento están analizar la evolución y desarrollo de CARICOM y sus principales avances e insuficiencias a medio siglo de su creación. Se promueve la reflexión sobre el proyecto del Mercado Único y de Economía del Caribe (CSME por sus siglas en inglés) y sus posibilidades reales de instrumentarse en la actualidad. La contribución de la CARICOM al regionalismo caribeño y latinoamericano, así como su papel en promover los intereses de los Pequeños Estados Insulares en Desarrollo (PEID) caribeños en instancias multilaterales será otro de los temas a discutirse en los marcos de la conferencia.

Para participar en la Conferencia podrán presentarse propuestas de paneles completos o ponencias individuales que deben ser enviadas por vía electrónica a las siguientes direcciones: milamartinezreinosa@gmail.com y antoniof.romerogomez@gmail.com

Se aceptan propuestas en español y en inglés.

El mensaje debe indicar en el Asunto/ Subject del mensaje:

Propuesta de participación XVII CONFERENCIA INTERNACIONAL DE ESTUDIOS CARIBEÑOS

Fecha límite para la presentación de propuestas: 22 de octubre de 2023

Fecha de notificación de aceptación de propuestas: 8 de noviembre de 2023

Normas para la presentación de propuestas

A. Propuestas de paneles completos:

- Título del panel
- Nombre del organizador del panel

- Resumen (ABSTRACT) del panel con una extensión máxima de 300 palabras (NOTA: No enviar los resúmenes de cada ponencia del panel)
- Nombre de los panelistas (indicar la institución a la que pertenecen)
- Información básica de CADA panelista: (a) Disciplina en la que trabaja; (b) breve currículum de una extensión máxima de 5 líneas.
- Título de TODAS las ponencias del panel
- Nombre del comentarista (en caso de que se incluya un comentarista)
- Datos de contacto del organizador del panel (dirección postal, teléfono, email)

#### B. Propuestas de ponencias individuales:

- Título de la ponencia
- Resumen (ABSTRACT) de la ponencia con una extensión máxima de 250 palabras
- Información básica del panelista: a) Disciplina en la que trabaja; (b) breve currículum de una extensión máxima de 5 líneas.
- Datos de contacto del panelista (dirección postal, teléfono, email)

#### Contactos

Para el envío o entrega de propuestas, así como para la solicitud de información, se contactará con los coordinadores de la Conferencia:

- Antonio Romero Gómez [antoniof.romerogomez@gmail.com](mailto:antoniof.romerogomez@gmail.com)
- Milagros Martínez Reinoso [milamartinezreinoso@gmail.com](mailto:milamartinezreinoso@gmail.com)



Boletín del Grupo de Trabajo  
**Crisis, respuestas y alternativas en el Gran Caribe**

Número 8 · Enero-junio 2023