

Spring 2005

# The Jako

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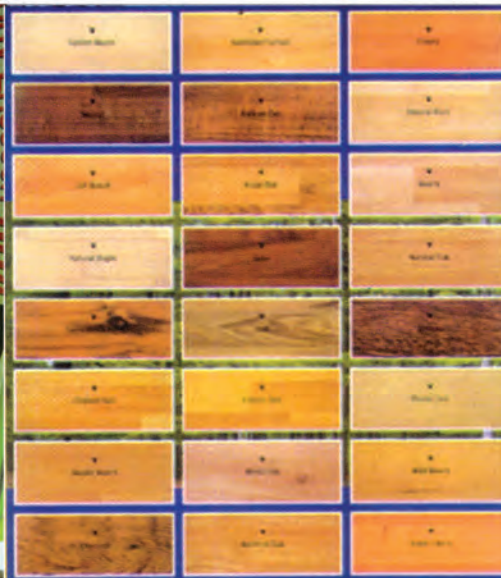


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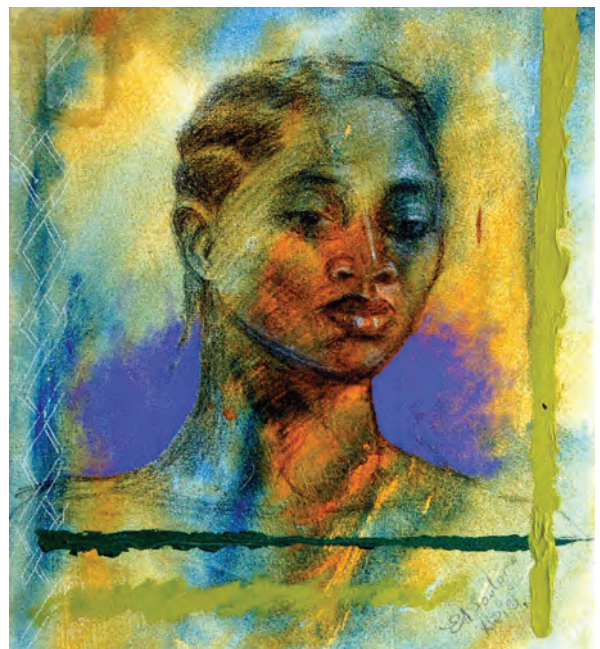
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# On The Lighter Side OF George Odlum

In this issue of The Jako readers will find an enthralling essay that sequences the feature article, St. Lucia's Men of the Century by Anderson Reynolds. Central to this voluminous piece is the writer's researched perspectives on George Odlum, the Politician, whom some have described as the most enigmatic political figure of all time—in St. Lucia, at least. This article gives a new twist to the many commentaries already chronicled about the man, whose greatness has been touted from street corners to the diplomatic field to scholars of note. What precisely constitutes the greatness of William George Odlum? Reynolds believes he has put his finger on that one ingredient, which distinguishes his work from others before him. What do you think?

It is worth recalling that Odlum was not only a politician. Odlum's life was an essay constantly being written and rewritten; it was a play dramatized in full colour on a life-size stage; it was a canvas on which the etchings were always revealing hidden images and new dimensions; it was a dance he himself choreographed and performed as the theatre of his political life dictated; it was a poem he recited in parliament and wherever there was an audience.

That being so, society awaits yet another perspective on that great man of the century. Will someone give us a piece on the

lighter side of William George Odlum: his wit and humour; his recreational pursuits; his loves, his women, his sex life; his role as father and family man; his humanness in his day to day dealings with people. The closest anyone has gotten, was his brother Jon, in his eulogy, rendered in typical Jon Odlum, unorchestrated style.

As a man of letters, a man of the arts, the statement, or, shall we say, representation of George Odlum, will not be complete if we only view this artist from his neck up.

We challenge someone out there to come up with the ultimate essay that will tip the scales and portray the man of flesh and blood—with frailties, anxieties, passions, loves, and other human qualities. 'The Sunny Side Up of George Odlum,' we might call it? Or, 'The Other Half of George Odlum?'

On the subject of art, we see The Jako as not simply reading material, but as a work of art. As such, the publishers are not the only ones who should subscribe to its sustainability. We urge our readers to stake their claim in this venture by contributing articles and writing letters to the editors. You too will then be artists, creating and helping to perfect art.

—Modeste Downes

## CONTRIBUTORS



**Modeste Downes** contributes regularly to the nation's newspapers, and is the author of the recently published book of poetry, *Phases*.



**Mc. Donald Dixon** is a stage actor, playwright, director, poet, and novelist. He is the author of the novel, *Season of Mist*, and the book of poetry, *Collected Poems 1961-2001*.



**Terry Finisterre** is a theatre actor and a sports journalist. His articles have appeared in the nation's newspapers and in such magazines as the SHE. Mr. Finisterre also presents his sport commentaries on radio and television..



**Sarah Peter** is an aspiring journalist and a student at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, Castries, St. Lucia.



**Gyanchand Rayman** is a secondary school English and literature teacher. Besides writing English and short stories, Mr. Rayman is involved in the theatre as actor, playwright and director. Some of his writings have appeared in anthologies in England and America.



**Dr. Prosper Raynold** is a professor of economics at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. He specializes in macro and monetary economics. His research findings have been published in various economic journals.



**Dr. Anderson Reynolds** is the author of two books: the novel, *Death by Fire*, and the non-fiction, *The Struggle For Survival: an historical, political, and socioeconomic perspective of St. Lucia*.



**Sharon Trezelle** is a sociology lecturer at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, Castries, St. Lucia. Some of her articles on sociological issues have appeared in the nation's newspapers. *SEEDS*, her first volume of poetry, was recently published. Ms. Trezelle is the featured poet of this issue.

# Self Discovery Through Poetry

by Sharon Trezelle  
Author of **SEEDS**, and this  
issue's featured poet



I never intended to dabble in poetic language. As a secondary school student, I thought myself to be good at mathematics. While I also did literature and history, I did not really think much of the arts. I was not sure what I wanted to be, but I never thought that one day I would write poetry and love it. In fact, it is indeed interesting to note, that not only do I write poetry and love it with intense passion, but I also create poetry with ease. The reality of this frightens me. I am forced to wonder about thousands of others like me, who did have the talent to creatively express their feelings, passions and ideas, but were not encouraged in that direction.

As human beings, we have an innate desire to express ourselves. It is this capacity for creative self-expression that separates us from animals. If we do not express ourselves creatively, then a significant component of our humanness will die. We will feel a sense of emptiness and frustration.

The arts provide superb opportunities for expression. Peter Abbs, in his book, *The Polemics of the Imagination*, argues that the arts promote "wholeness of being." He is of the view that not only do the arts promote the development of the creative aspect, but it also serves to sharpen the intellectual aspect as well.

Poetry is expression. Through poetry, we present experiences, ideas and feelings in an artistic way. Poetry allows us to express who we are. In so doing, we become better acquainted with ourselves. The writing of poetry therefore, forces us to discover the power and beauty that

lies within us. Poetry, as artistic expression allows us to expose the magical spirit of our imagination. It was the English Poet, Kathleen Raine, who said, "Our true identity as individuals lies within the crevices of our imagination."

Since I have become involved in the art of poetry, I have developed new feelings about myself. I have become acquainted with a part of me that I did not know existed. Poetry (artistic expression) therefore has increased my degree of self-awareness—the seed of self-development. 🌱



# The Jako

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## Subscription and back Issues

We wish to encourage readers to subscribe to the magazine. Subscription rates for readers residing overseas are US\$24.00 for a full year (four issues) and US\$47.00 for a two-year (8 issues) subscription. St. Lucia residents should call or email for subscription rates. See subscription form for further details.

For back issues (Winter 2005) of The Jako, please send payment of US\$6.00 to above address.



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## St. Lucia's Men of the Century

I am writing with reference to a disturbing photo shown on the last and very first issue of your quarterly magazine. I personally feel it is very undignified that the bust of Sir George Charles be bare. My reason for making this statement is that he is topless, with nipples erect and bones poking out. It is very distasteful. Another cause for concern is its location. The bust is at the airport of its name sake, which means that it is the first thing that will greet a visitor's eye on arrival.

Can you imagine what a taxi driver would have to say if a foreigner were to ask, "who is that?" I am calling on the relevant authorities to see that something be done about this. I don't believe that such a stalwart of St. Lucian society be portrayed in a manner that is so demeaning.

Is not a bust suppose to be a work of art and a true representation of its name sake? Are we to be known as a country who cannot, even in art, give our heroes the dignity and respect they deserve?

Delina O'Brien  
Vieux Fort, St. Lucia

Congratulations to The Jako for once again making available to St. Lucia such an invaluable reservoir of literature. I am impressed with the good quality and variety of articles produced in the Winter 2005 issue of The Jako.

Of special mention are three articles. Anderson Reynolds' "St. Lucia Men of the Century," which featured Sir George Charles, George Odlum and Sir John Compton. I am certainly looking forward to hearing from Dr. Reynolds about the St. Lucia Women of the Century!

Mc. Donald Dixon's "The Cinderella Man," a short story to Francis Mindoo Phillip, not only visited a bit of colonial history and created a nostalgic feeling in the hearts of many who enjoyed their days of young barefoot cricket, but warmed my heart to his appreciation and recognition of this revered cricketer, son

of the soil. Please continue to recognize and appreciate those who have contributed to St. Lucia's development.

And Hats off to Modeste Downes on such a brilliant and critical review of the dress musical production of Roderick Walcott's play-Banjo Man. Good luck to The Jako.

Caputo  
St. Lucia

## The Year of Derek Walcott

Congratulations on an excellent, bright and innovative publication. I found your first issue rather stimulating.

Since you are so committed to art and literature, permit me to make an observation. I do not mean to be contentious, just wondering how culturally, psychologically, historically and politically self-destructive we can be?

For a while now, after Walcott's 1992 Nobel award, we as a nation have observed a week of activities-Nobel Laureate Week-our acclamation of two great sons of the soil, which used to climax or usher the M&C Fine Arts Awards. Don't you find it mind-boggling that a sister isle would come up (suddenly) and proclaim A YEAR of activities in celebration of OUR Derek?

I know of Derek's early and enduring association with the Trinidad Theatre Workshop which he founded. I have also read how he has always professed to have two homes—Boston and St. Lucia. But in his poetry he always returns to another two—St. Lucia, and Trinidad—where Santa Cruz never escapes mention. So though not unduly perturbed by his love-affair with Trinidad (for as he says in The Prodigal, 'And Sancta Trinidad. It is that sacred to me.'), it is the interpretation and symbolism of that huge gesture by the Land of the Hummingbird, for us, and the rest of the world, that bothers the juice in my national instinct.

Oswald Raymond  
United Kingdom

## The Development of St. Lucian Culture

I read, with great interest, the article entitled The Development of St. Lucian Culture which appeared in the Winter 2005 issue of The Jako Magazine.

For a long time now the debate over what is and what is not St. Lucia's culture has been ensuing with little indication of the parties arriving at consensus on a clear and appropriate identification of our culture. I have always taken the position that we have both positive and negative aspects of our culture and that unless we realize the negatives, we run the risk of ruining any meaningful gain that could be derived from our culture.

It is against this background that I felt that the author could have concentrated on raising such awareness. Having said this though, let me say that to my mind the article clearly uncovers the misdirected notion that culture needs to be developed. The author makes the point, in the third paragraph that "culture requires no encouragement for it is a natural outgrowth of human beings going through their lives." There is, however, a slight contradiction when one considers how emphatically the author made this point. For having cleared up the misconception, he goes on to say in the second paragraph on page 8 that the CDF is involved in the development of St. Lucian culture.

Nevertheless, the author chronicles with passion his views on the value of culture to a society. Quite appropriately, he identifies the production of cultural products as a public good. Consequently, I have no reservations in supporting the suggestion that funds be raised from a levy on cigarettes and alcohol as an additional source to finance the production of cultural pieces.

I must congratulate the author for penning such an intellectual piece. I trust that his readers including those that hold the powers will, at the very least, be motivated to contribute towards the promotion of the production of works of culture. I know that I would.

Michael Flood  
Castries, St. Lucia

# St. Lucian Women in World Cup Cricket

**F**or two of the three St. Lucians representing the West Indies at Women's Cricket World Cup 2005 in South Africa, it was their first time in this competition. That might sound surprising, when you consider the consistent success that St Lucia's women have enjoyed over the years in regional cricket, but the surprise might be mitigated by the fact that since 1997 West Indies have not played in the World Cup.

**by Terry Finisterre**

George. The 37-year-old police officer is the first West Indian woman to score a Test century, 118 against Pakistan in March 2004. For that feat she made the University of the West Indies (Cave Hill) Hall of Fame and was named St Lucia's 2004 Sports woman of the Year. The left-handed batsman made her West Indies debut just months after joining the St Lucia team in 1999.

I read a lengthy discussion the other day about whether Brian Lara could play

West Indies team at the same time, Nadine is the one who picks up all the awards. But Philippa, a quick bowler of genuine pace, and the only married woman of the three, does her share. She is usually handed the new ball and expected to do a little with the bat as well.

The women of Caribbean cricket are real all-rounders, and not just on the field of play. Verena has been an administrator with the local federation and with the regional governing body. She's also a mother. And, sure, Philippa has a batting average of 16.30, but that's nothing compared to holding down a day job, as all three of the St Lucian women on the West Indies team do.

Courtney Browne is the only male West Indies cricketer I can think of who has a job other than playing cricket. By contrast, only one West Indies woman plays professionally, in England. Professionally, Verena is a National Insurance officer and Philippa is a social worker. There's no room for cynicism



**Nadine George**



**Verena Felicien**



**Philippa Thomas**

All-rounder Verena Felicien has been to the World Cup previously. Opening bat Nadine George and quick bowler Philippa Thomas-Eudovique made their tournament debuts this year. But it may be the last World Cup for all three. They turn in a high level of performance, but the St Lucian women were among the oldest members of the West Indies team in South Africa.

The woman of the hour is Nadine

for the West Indies with Shivnarine Chanderpaul as captain. Verena Felicien made that decision in 2003, after five years in charge of the regional side. A leg-spinning all-rounder, Verena began playing cricket in 1982. Her odyssey has taken her to India, Holland, Pakistan and now to South Africa for her second World Cup. The one you hardly ever hear about is Philippa. Even though she's a month older than Nadine, and they joined the

when these women tell you that they're playing cricket for love of the game.

All three have been involved in cricket for well over a decade, two decades for Verena. All three are involved in coaching, trying to get more young women into cricket. And for the months between their qualification for the World Cup and the event itself, they took to the media to appeal for funds to make the trip. No major sponsor exists, so St. Lucians, Bank of St. Lucia and



Government bore the financial burden.

Even getting competition is a chore, given the paucity of money in the women's game, not just in the Caribbean, but across the world. Cricket commands untold billions in India, but that's when the likes of Sachin Tendulkar are playing. Sponsors flock to former Windies captain Brian Lara, but the region's leading batswoman has to scrounge for a ticket to fly to South Africa to represent the region.

You could forgive them if these ladies were bitter or jealous of their male counterparts, but they are anything but bitter. Verena in particular is always talking about what a "blessing" it is to play cricket. You can hear her laughing away at practice sessions, applauding the great catch or the ball that just slipped past the outside edge of the bat. And she's more animated still when she takes the field for real.

Already, Cricket World Cup West Indies 2007 is generating more buzz than the unlikely adventures of the West Indies women in South Africa. But the structure of women's and men's cricket in the region will change by the end of 2005, as

mandated by the International Cricket Council (which oversees all cricket worldwide).

What will that change—a merger between governing bodies, the West Indies Cricket Board and West Indies Women's Cricket Federation—mean?

It raises the prospect that Verena, for instance, could get back into regional administration and follow the footsteps of former WICB vice-president Julian R. Hunte, another St Lucian. The merger could also mean more money for women's cricket in the West Indies—or it could mean that the distaff game will simply be sidelined by a male-dominated body and will still be struggling for money. But imminent changes at the regional level will surely mean new domestic structures, and greater opportunities for the fairer sex.

Sooner than we might like, Verena, Nadine and Philippa will be done with the game, at least as players. From 32 matches going into the World Cup, the former skipper had 385 runs and 38 wickets. Obviously, it would be nice to retire from cricket in her early 40's with 500 runs and 50 wickets to her name, and she should

get there.

Nadine was there when Pakistan's Kiran Baluch hit 242 against West Indies, in the first official Test match the regional team has been involved in. The police-woman made that historic 118 and 22 in the same game, and she's gunning for Baluch. She's stated that the world record is one of her goals before she begins studying law.

Philippa's 20 limited-overs wickets from 23 matches at an average of 30.40 may not be awe-inspiring, but she's improving as a bowler, and her place in the West Indies side should be safe for a couple more years still. She will get better in that time, and perhaps even lower her economy rate of 3.44 runs per over.

These three ladies have a lot to contribute to cricket; not just "women's" cricket, either. You'd be hard-pressed to find three individuals of either gender as dedicated, professional and unpretentious as these. The game may or may not hold more for them, but one thing is certain—what it's given so far, they have enjoyed.



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# Federation, Integration & CSME

by **Anderson Reynolds**

**“If the CCJ is a bold step back towards federation, then the CSME is a leap, for it represents a much more comprehensive, detailed and binding regional economic and social integration mechanism than what the Common Market had envisaged.”**

## Federation is Coming

**T**he British West Indies Federation lasted only four years, 1958 to 1962, yet the very notion of a federation, much less its implementation, had inspired a people and lifted their hopes and aspirations to new heights. Up to the early 1900's, West Indians had been more or less content to being part of the British Empire, and who could blame them. By 1900 the British King, Edward VII, reigned over 410 million people and his dominion stretched across 11.4 million square miles, making the British Empire the largest the world had ever known. Clearly, if there were one empire to choose to belong to, it would have had to be the British Empire. In fact, not only were West Indians pleased to be under British rule, but culturally the striving was to become English ladies and gentlemen. After all, there was great value in modeling oneself after the British. To be English was to be cultured. Moreover, white plantation owners together with their surrogates in government ruled the land. Most of the civil service jobs and the choice positions at commercial houses were reserved for their offsprings. Exclusive social clubs for whites only cemented their control over the economic life of the territories. Therefore, the closer to being British (if not in color at least in manner-

ism) one became, the better were one's chances of sharing in the wealth of the homeland.

However, soon after the opening of the 20th century, events and circumstances started unfolding that would open cracks in this West Indian coziness with and allegiance to the British Empire. In 1902 the Americans bought the failed

for class distinctions, they came face to face with the American style of racism. The Canal was completed in 1914, and the West Indians who returned home arrived with a new concept of self. Dressed in flashy clothes and jewelry, they exuded self confidence and self importance. No doubt, these outward signs of the good life displayed by people



**British West Indies Soldiers in World War I**

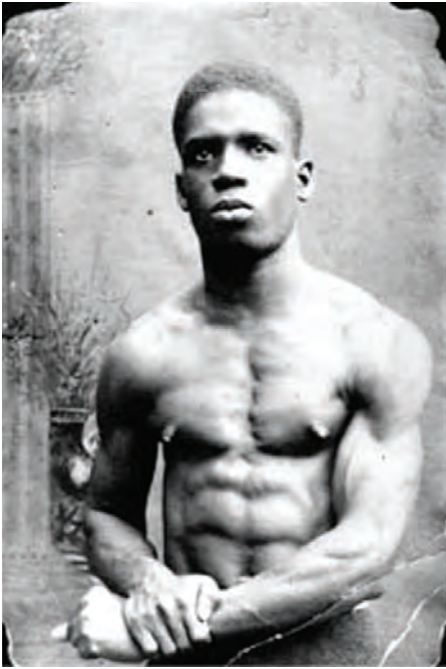
Panama Canal enterprise from the French for US\$40 million, and by 1905 work had begun on the Canal in earnest. Roughly 50,000 West Indians emigrated to Panama to work on the Canal and as such they were to play an important role as agents of change in West Indian society. In Panama, not only did West Indian workers receive a baptism in labor-capital confrontations, an experience they would later put to good use in the Caribbean, but besides exposure to American notions of rugged individualism and disregard

who not too long before were no different than the rest of the population, must have fueled the imagination and expectations of those who had stayed behind of what could be had, not just in terms of luxuries but in terms of education and self actualization.

The Panama Canal workers influenced West Indian societies in other ways. Some used their Panama money to educate their children, thus giving rise to a new generation of professionals of working class parents. Others, having







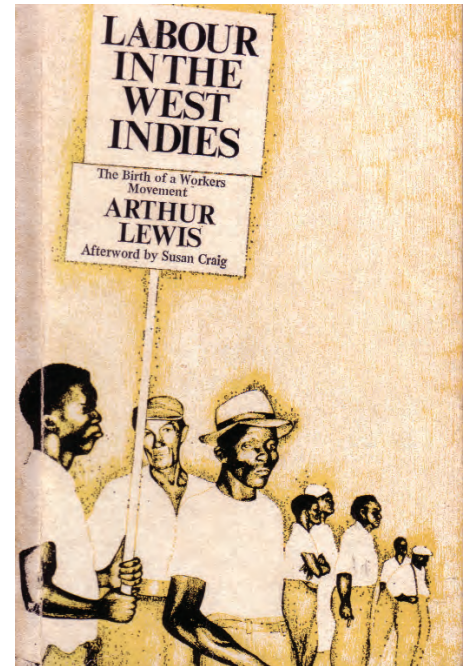
**Winston Willington**  
**A Trinidadian who volunteered**  
**and served in World War I**

been schooled in the labor confrontations of the Panama Canal, and who after their Panama money ran out found themselves on the unemployment roll, became the vanguard of the West Indian labor movements of the 1930' and 40's.

As the Panama Canal came to completion, World War I came along, and with a great sense of patriotism and duty West Indians welcomed the opportunity to fight in defense of the motherland and its empire. From Jamaica alone, 10,000 volunteers enlisted in the British military. In terms of a military power, West Indians would have been hard pressed to do better than Britain. For instance, at the outset of the war, Britain's 442 warships made its Royal Navy by far the most powerful in the world. So one could well imagine the shock these black British soldiers suffered when once in the field they realized that no matter their training, education, talent, zeal and patriotism they were deemed inferior to troops from other parts of the British hegemony, including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and good only for the most menial of tasks. It didn't help that the West Indians observed that both the Americans and the French were treating their black soldiers with greater respect than the British were treating them.

And if all these weren't enough for the West Indian soldiers to get the message that race mattered, and that as long as they remained black or nonwhite they would never acquire full membership into the British empire, the news that must have filtered down from the US to the West Indies, that more than 70 blacks were lynched in the year after the war ended, and that several black soldiers still in army uniforms were among the lynched, would have definitely brought home the point, particularly since the performance and bravery of the 200,000 African American soldiers who served in Europe was legendary. The American 369th Regiment of which many were African Americans were the first soldiers to break through the German lines to reach the Rhine, and during 191 days of fighting the regiment didn't have a man captured, nor did it lose an inch of ground. Out of respect for the fighting spirit of the African Americans, the Germans renamed them the hell fighters, and so impressed was the French Army that it honored the 369th regiment with the Croix de Guerre.

West Indian participation in World War I brought home other lessons. The War marked a period of industrial and political upheaval in Russia. In the October 1917 Russian Revolution, Tsar Nicholas II was forced to relinquish his reign. Lenin was ushered into power and thus began the transformation of Russia from a feudal-capitalist system to a communist state. Since Russia was fighting on the same side as Britain, the War brought West Indian soldiers in contact with Marxism and Russian nationalism. Ideas and sensibilities, which after the humiliation suffered at the hands of their British superiors, they had definitely become much more receptive and sympathetic to, and which no doubt made them question and reexamine their own situation back home and their relation with empire. Clearly, the seeds of West Indian Federation as a breaking away from Britain had been planted. Consider, for example, that it was World War I veterans like Uriah "Buzz" Butler and Cipriani who were at the forefront of Trinidad's labor movement, and consider also, Clennell Wickham, another veteran who after the War, in 1919, founded The



Barbados Herald, a radical and cultural activist weekly newspaper.

Another crack would soon appear in West Indians' cozy relationship with Britain. Italy's fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, came to power in 1922 with grand designs of returning Italy to the glory days of the Roman Empire. In 1936 Italy invaded Abyssinia, better known as Ethiopia. Despite having an overwhelmingly military superiority, Italy used poison gas on their adversary, extinguishing all life over large areas of the country. Italy conquered Abyssinia. The title of emperor of Abyssinia was taken over by the Italian King, Emanuel III. Emperor Hail Selassie fled to England and did not return until six years later in 1941, when the Italian army was defeated in East Africa during World War II. The fact that Britain, the world's super power, had not come to the aid of Ethiopia, was a source of great disgust to West Indians, who saw this as nothing less than a betrayal of the black race.

Yet, if by then West Indians were not totally convinced that this empire business wasn't working for them, the events of the late 1930's would have definitely done the trick. The Great Depression, which left no part of the world untouched, ravaged the region. Workers were subjected to unlivable wages and deplorable working and living conditions. The result was spontaneous labor uprisings with often deadly consequences.





Region-wide, between 1935 and 1939, no fewer than forty-six labor protestors lost their lives in clashes with authorities. British warships docked at bay for the sole purpose of quelling labor uprisings became a salient feature of the regional landscape.

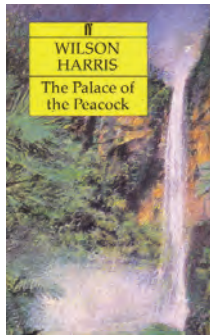
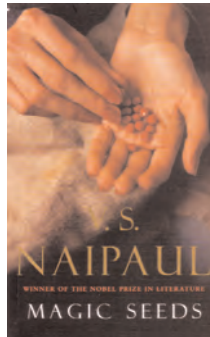
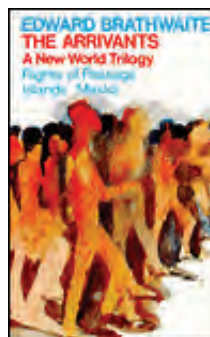
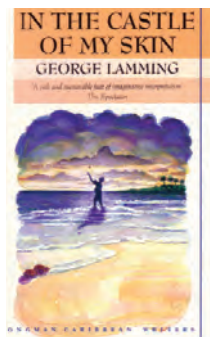
The West Indies was in a state of agitation and unrest. Labor Unions followed by political parties sprang up overnight. In this state of social, political and economic crisis, West Indian Federation became an increasingly attractive proposition.

Crisis forces change and paradigm shifts. West Indian society found itself at a crossroad. The people had arrived at a point where they could no longer deny that they were not British and that they could never be British. If they were not British, they had to be West Indian. But what did it mean to be a West Indian? Clearly, in this period West Indians began an earnest quest of self discovery and self definition. They began the cultivation of a West Indian identity as distinct from their African or Asian roots and their colonial heritage. All this internal examination and discovery found ultimate expression in the notion of a West Indian Federation, such that for once West Indians were willing and able to put aside race, class and island barriers and buy into the concept of regional unity. For once the idealism of regional identity transcended all else.

In his poem, A Far Cry from Africa, Derek Walcott gave voice to the West Indian dilemma of being caught between two loyalties—that of empire and one's original heritage, be it African or Asian. He said:

*Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?  
I who have cursed  
The drunken officer of British rule, how  
choose  
Between this Africa and the English  
tongue I love?  
Betray them both, or give them back what  
they give?*

In hindsight, how has West Indians answered Walcott? It appears that West Indians have not so much as rejected Europe or Africa or Asia, as they have embraced a West Indian identity that may



reflect both inheritances yet represents something new and different. And apparently this excruciating process of finding themselves, of discovering who they are, of consciously becoming West Indian, began in the crucible period of the 1930's through to the early 1960's.

As an indication of the influence of this turbulent period and the spirit of federation on the West Indian psyche, or more specifically the West Indian creative spirit, consider this. Of the ten

authors whom a 1995 survey of West Indian literature, edited by Bruce King, classified as significant West Indian authors, seven were either born in the early 1930's or came of age in the labor and political upheavals of the late 1930's. These authors include Wilson Harris, Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, Derek Walcott, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, V.S. Naipaul, and Earl Lovelace. Two of these significant authors—Derek Walcott and V.S. Naipaul—have since won the Nobel Prize for literature, and a few like Wilson Harris are knocking on the door. It would appear that the creativity of the generation fed by the events of the 1930's and the idealism of West Indian Federation have remained unmatched.

Indeed, art is a search for balance; the period following the turbulent 1930's and leading to and spanning the Federation represented one of the greatest outpouring of West Indian creativity. In his book, The West Indian Novel and its Background, Kenneth Ramchand indicates that about fifty-five novels were published between 1949 and 1959 by twenty different authors. The poets were also active. In this period, Derek Walcott published his first three volumes of poetry; and others, including Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Martin Carter, Frank Collymore and E.M. Roach also added their voices. According to Caribbean Literature lecturer, Sandra Pouchet Paquet, there was also a similar upswing in drama, painting and sculpture, and a number of institutions providing support for the arts were founded, including the University College of the West Indies (renamed the University of the West Indies), the little Carib Dance Company in Trinidad, the Jamaican School of Arts and Crafts, and the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica. Likewise, literary magazines like Guyana's *Kyk-over-al* and Barbados's *Bim* were in full swing, facilitating the exchange of ideas among West Indian artists and intellectuals.

The 1950's St. Lucia Arts Guild provided a good illustration of what was happening region-wide. Among its more notable members were novelist Garth St. Omer, playwright Roderick Walcott, painter Dustan St. Omer, and poet, playwright and Nobel Laureate Derek





Walcott. The period which the Arts Guild spans could certainly be a candidate for the golden era of St. Lucian art and literature, for up till today these above mentioned exponents of the Arts Guild have remained unmatched in St. Lucia in their respective fields of artistic endeavor.

## Away with Federation, Welcome Integration

The West Indian Federation came to an end in 1962, and dashed the hopes and aspirations of a civilization. Professionals and intellectuals who had remained home specifically to contribute to the development of the region packed up and left. Those in England and America who were in the process of making plans to return home to play their part in civilization building stayed put. Literary magazines like Guyana's *Kyk-over-al*, whose founding had been inspired by the mere notion of a West Indian Federation, went out of press. Novelists, poets, dramatists, painters, all took turns lashing out at the politicians for their selfishness and short-sightedness.

And, not unlike the ethnic tensions and chaos that accompanied the breakup of the Soviet Empire, following the demise of the federation, West Indian civilization began cracking up, returning to its pre-federation rivalry and conflicts. In 1962, a bloody civil war along political and racial lines (Blacks versus Indians), flared up in Guyana, claiming hundreds of lives. The larger West Indian territories (larger, if not in size at least in pop-



ulation), including Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados and Guyana, gained their independence from Britain, thus setting up a dichotomy in the region that fueled national chauvinism, where the independent countries thought of themselves as superior to their tinier neighbors. And according to Caribbean and women literature lecturer, Rhonda Cobham, after the collapse of the federation the "fragile regional alliance between the professional middle class and the working class against the common colonial enemy was swept away by a new wave of elitism."

Interestingly, however, ever since the breakup of the Federation, short of giving up their national sovereignty, the former members of the Federation have been taking steps back towards the very federation that had been so dramatically dispensed with. And ironically, Trinidad, one of the islands that was at the heart of

the disintegration of the federation, was the first to propose the formation of a West Indian community.

This Trinidad initiative bore fruit when in 1968 members of the defunct federation established the Commonwealth Caribbean Regional Secretariat and CARIFTA, the Caribbean Free Trade Association. With CARIFTA, the export of any member state would enjoy duty-free, unrestricted access to the markets of other member states provided that the good was on the eligible list of free trade commodities, and that at least 50 percent of the export price of the good could be attributed to inputs originating from member states.

CARIFTA was then followed in 1969 by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), which, among other things, was created to oversee economic development in the region, procure funds for regional development, help finance development projects in member states; provide them with technical support, help to strengthen their financial institutions, encourage and assist in the development of their capital markets, and also help promote public and private investments in their development projects.

In 1973 West Indian leaders transformed the concept of CARIFTA into a more comprehensive Caribbean integration movement by institutionalizing the notion of a Caribbean Community and by establishing a Common Market regime as replacement for CARIFTA. Hence CARICOM, Caribbean Community and Common Market, was born. Among its stated objectives, the Caribbean Community component of CARICOM





would seek to promote greater understanding among Caribbean people and encourage their social, cultural and technological development. The Community would also pursue the advancement of regional economic integration, regional coordination of foreign policy, and regional cooperation on agreed upon activities, processes and provision of services.

With regard to the free trade arrangement among member states, the Common Market component of CARICOM was very similar to the CARIFTA agreement. However, as an economic integration instrument, the Common Market was much broader in scope. For example, besides addressing issues directly related to the removal of trade barriers, under the Common Market members agreed to a number of initiatives, including the adoption of common external tariffs; regional rationalization of agricultural production and marketing; regional coordination of external trade policy, domestic and international eco-

nomics policy, and national development planning; regional harmonization of monetary and fiscal policy, and legal and industrial policies and practices; and cooperation in the development and exploitation of natural resources, and the promotion and development of the tourism industry.

Once on the move, Caribbean integration did not stop at the doorsteps of what was typically considered the British West Indies, namely Anguilla, Antigua, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago. In fact to broaden the net as much as possible, CARICOM designed different levels of membership. One could become a member of the Caribbean Community but not a member of the Common Market, or one could be an associate member, or one could come on board as just an observer. Thus in 1983 the Bahamas became the 13th member state of the Caribbean Community but not a member of the Common Market. In

similar fashion, Suriname joined the Caribbean Community in 1995 to become its 14th member state. In 1991 the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos joined as associated members. So too did Anguilla in 1999, Cayman islands in 2002 and Bermuda in 2003. Several Latin American countries have come on board as observers, and in 2003 Haiti became a full-fledged member of CARICOM, making it the first French speaking country to have done so.

In recent years concerned that globalization would spiral the West Indian civilization into irrelevance, CARICOM governments have taken even bolder steps back towards federation. On the table is the treaty establishing the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), which eleven CARICOM states have ratified, and eight, including Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname, have enacted national legislation giving effect to the agreement.

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With the CCJ, the last vestiges of colonial rule would finally disappear. On second thought, not quite, for the British monarch remains the head of state of many CARICOM countries. Thumps up to Barbados who is now seeking to break away from this tradition and become a republic (though still likely to retain membership of the Commonwealth of which the Queen is the head). Notwithstanding, a CARICOM court of last resort has been in the making since 1970 when Jamaica had proposed a Caribbean Court of Appeal at the Sixth Heads of Government Conference. This brings up yet another irony of the integration movement, for Jamaica was the territory that featured most prominently in the final breakup of the Federation. The CCJ, however, promises to go much further than Jamaica's proposal. In fact, as envisioned, the CCJ will go where few national courts of last resort have gone. For besides replacing the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in Britain as the court of last resort for its member states, the Caribbean Court of Justice will be charged with the interpretation and application of the Treaty establishing the Caribbean Community, including the proposed CARICOM Single Market and Economy. In legal jargon, the CCJ would execute both an appellate and original jurisdiction, in the process acting both as the highest court in the region and as an international court. Here is how Duke Pollard, legal scholar and one of the principal legal consultants to the CCJ, explains it.

In the exercise of its appellate jurisdiction, the CCJ will consider and determine appeals in both civil and criminal matters from common law courts within the jurisdictions of Member states of the Community and which are parties to the Agreement Establishing the CCJ. In the discharge of its appellate jurisdiction, the CCJ will be the highest municipal court in the Region. In the exercise of its original jurisdiction, the CCJ will be discharging the functions of an international tribunal applying rules of international law in respect of the interpretation and application of the Treaty. In this regard, the CCJ would be performing functions like the European Court of Justice, the European Court of First Instance, the Andean Court

## SEEDS

A spiderous mind,  
An Artless, spineless creation,  
Entangled in a web  
Of mathematical proportions,  
Damned a maternal romance,  
A promiscuous, poetic, prance.

Nunly habits uprooted  
mathematical worship,  
The privilege of the  
convent of the mind.  
Prayers with Macbeth  
and Julius Caesar,  
On Stormy Midsummer nights,  
Diminished, determined damnation.

Confessions in the  
heights of 'Wuthering' towers,  
Blessed the death  
of dreaded literary powers.

Under skies of  
soaring skylarks,  
With branches blowing  
in lovely, literary winds,  
And rains pouring  
incredibly incessant blessings,  
The artless, spineless, creation  
Bore literary seeds,  
Honouring a minstrel  
of ethereal deeds.

—Sharon Trezelle

of Justice and the International Court of Justice. In short, the proposed CCJ is intended to be a hybrid institution - a municipal court of last resort and an international court with compulsory and exclusive jurisdiction in respect of the interpretation and application of the Treaty.

Also on the table is the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) as replacement for the Common Market. However, if the CCJ is a bold step back towards federation, then the CSME is a leap, for it represents a much more comprehensive, detailed and binding regional economic and social integration mechanism than what the Common Market had envisaged. In fact, the CSME is such a pervasive undertaking that according to some legal experts its success would be

predicated on a well functioning CCJ that as indicated above would be charged with the explication and application of its treaty. However, the CSME's sharpest break with the Common Market, and what probably has most captured the imaginations of CARICOM nationals, is that besides prohibiting restrictions on movement of goods among member states, it prohibits restrictions on the right of establishment and provision of services; restrictions on the movement of capital; and restrictions on the movement of certain categories of labor, including university graduates, media workers, athletes, artists and musicians.

Therefore, with the CSME, there would be free movement of goods (as under the Common Market), and free movement of all the factors of production including enterprises, entrepreneurs, labor and capital. So as the name suggests, the CSME would indeed be a single economic space. Businesses, enterprises, or entrepreneurs in any member state could freely offer their services and establish themselves in another member state under the same conditions and privileges enjoyed by nationals of that state. Additionally, they would have access to land, buildings, and other property, and there would be no entry restrictions on their technical, managerial, and supervisory staff, and on their spouses and immediate dependent family members.

University graduates, media workers, athletes, artists and musicians would freely take up employment in other CARICOM states without the need to show passports, or secure work permits, and with the transference of their social security benefits.

CARICOM nationals would be free to acquire equity or portfolio instruments such as stocks in the enterprises of any member state; free to secure loans and other financial instruments from banks and other financial institutions anywhere in the region; free to make mortgage payments and interest on loans to any financial institution; and free to repatriate proceeds from sale of assets or dividends, and other income on their investments.







## Welcome to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

### The Eastern Caribbean Has Led the Way

**T**he Caribbean integration movement is not without its subplots. When the federation ended, the larger territories, namely Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago, sought and gained their independence, while the Eastern Caribbean, as if in search of comfort, banded together in 1966 to form the West Indies Associated States Council of Ministers (WISA), which was followed two years later by the establishment of the Eastern Caribbean Common Market (ECCM). Then in 1981 the Eastern Caribbean opted for a more comprehensive integration concept when they enacted into treaty the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), of which WISA became the central secretariat, and the ECCM the Economic Affairs Secretariat. Later, in 1997, the Economic Affairs Secretariat ceased to exist as a separate entity to become a division of the OECS secretariat.

In brief, the OECS was charged with improving and promoting cooperation and integration among member states and with presenting a united front when interfacing with the international community.

Along with the formation of the WISA in 1967, the Eastern Caribbean also established The Eastern Caribbean (EC) Supreme Court to function as a superior court of record for its member states. The EC Supreme Court has two branches—the Court of Appeal and the High Court of Justice. There is a High Court (also referred to as Trial Court) and a High Court Judge in each member state. In contrast, The Court of Appeal is itinerant; it travels to member states, to hear appeals of resident High Courts and Magistrate's Courts in both the Civil and Criminal Matters.

Two years after the formation of the OECS, Eastern Caribbean countries and territories dug deeper into the integration movement when they established the

Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) to serve as the monetary authority for the subregion. The islands served include Antigua and Barbuda, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

The ECCB issues the Eastern Caribbean currency, it establishes a common pool of foreign exchange reserves, and it sets monetary policy for the subregion. More generally, the ECCB sees its mission as maintaining the stability of the EC dollar and the integrity of the banking system to facilitate the balanced growth and development of its member states.

By most accounts, the ECCB is the best orchestrated and functioning integration instrument that the Caribbean has undertaken. It appears to be one of the few integration efforts that is working exactly as designed. Therefore, it was no surprise that when, with the opening of the new millennium, the OECS countries of St. Lucia, Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenada, and St. Kitts were contemplating the integration of their telecommunication sectors, it was the ECCB model of one central authority that they originally turned to. Thus the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunication Authority (ECTEL) was established to be to the telecommunication sectors of these countries what the ECCB was to the OECS's monetary sector. According to this its original intent, ECTEL would have been charged with the formulation, coordination, and implementation of telecommunication policy, and the regulation of the telecommunication sectors of its member states. However, along the way, the governments of some ECTEL member states saw this structure as too great a loss of sovereignty, thus the five islands departed from the central or single authority model of the ECCB, and instead opted for a dichotomous structure, where ECTEL would be responsible for helping to formulate and coordinate telecommunication policy, while each country's telecommunication minister along with his

National Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (NTRC) would be responsible for the execution of telecommunication policy in his country and the direct regulation of his country's telecommunication sector. This change in the original intent, impaired the smooth coordination and implementation of policy, and introduced duplication of function and undue political interference, thus undermining the integrity of the regulatory regime. Nonetheless, the liberalization that followed the establishment of the regulatory regime (ECTEL and the NTRCs), have greatly benefitted the subregion. The flow of royalty, spectrum, and license fees into national coffers has markedly increased. The speed of adoption of new technology has increased significantly. And competition in the cellular market has not only brought down prices and changed the way people relate and how businesses operate, but has set off a mini revolution in that citizens have acquired a new sense of the empowerment that comes along with having choices.

In 2003 the Eastern Caribbean took yet another step in its integration process when members signed the agreement that allowed their citizens to travel freely within the subregion without the need to show passports.

Considering all this—OECS, ECCB, ECTEL, free movement of OECS nationals, the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court—it may be misleading and unfair to regard Eastern Caribbean integration as a subplot to the Caribbean-wide integration movement. Rather, it may be closer to the truth to suggest that it is the Eastern Caribbean that is at the vanguard of the Caribbean integration movement.



This was the first part of a three part article on Caribbean integration. The second part—CSME, Culture & Economics—will be printed in the next issue (July 2005) of the magazine. The author acknowledges the websites of CARICOM, OECS, and the ECCB as sources of information for this article.

# Ronald “Boo” Hinkson & The St. Lucia Music Industry

by Sarah Peter and Anderson Reynolds

An artist is judged by his accumulated body of work. It forms the basis for receiving recognition from his peers, for artistic awards, for attracting future work, or for enticing the collaboration of other artists. A body of work is like a legacy. It keeps the artist alive long after the tools of his trade have been laid to rest. The name Ronald “Boo” Hinkson has become synonymous with St. Lucian music and this is no accident, for both in terms of number of albums, quality of recordings, and domestic and international appeal, the artist has and continues to pile a body of work that is unprecedented in the history of the St. Lucian music industry.

It seemed that from birth Boo was preordained to be a musician. His musical background came from both sides of his family—his mother played the guitar and his father the clarinet. For this reason Boo himself has said that it was no surprise he ended up being a musician.

Boo’s road to fame began at ten when he first picked up a guitar. Why the guitar, you may ask, as opposed to keyboards, or the saxophone or some other instrument? Well, according to Boo, his choice of instrument had to do with inspiration, availability, and convenience. He said, “I think (it was the guitar) primarily because that’s what my mom played. I came from a very humble background and it is just what we could have afforded at the time. In fact, the first guitar brought into our house was given to us by Leo St. Rose who owns Roses Enterprises. He had gone up to England and sent the guitar for my brother. And that’s the guitar I had access to. I owe a lot of thanks to Leo St.

Rose, among other people (laugh), for my success as a musician today. It is also a more intimate instrument. I can carry it around with me, unlike a piano or a keyboard. My family didn’t have a keyboard anyway, so I didn’t have a choice.”

Apparently, even at ten, Boo had music ready to burst out of him because once he picked up the guitar he forgot to



**Ronald “Boo” Hinkson**

put it down such that at the tender age of twelve he teamed up with his brothers and some friends to form the Tru Tones. Two years later, Boo and the Tru Tones embarked on their first Caribbean tour, and under the management and creative leadership of Boo, the Tru Tones went on to become one of the most popular bands in the Caribbean, and the greatest or most famous band to come out of St. Lucia. Along the way, Boo and the Tru

Tones produced an impressive body of work that included five albums—*Tru Tones Combo of St. Lucia* (1968), *Cream of the Crop* (1971), *Show the World* (1974), *Christmas with the Tru Tones* (1975), and *Power Struggle* (1980)—and six singles including, *Condom*, *Burning Eyes and Hungry Bellies*, and *Knickers in the Party*. In the Caribbean, *Burning Eyes and Hungry Bellies* became such a huge reggae hit that up till today many still think the song came out of Jamaica. *Condom*, a soca that brought into focus the controversy that arose between Family Planning, the Roman Catholic Church and some ministers of government when the former proposed making condoms available in St. Lucia via vending machines, also made it big in St. Lucian. And, though a soca tune, *Knickers in the Party* made it onto the British reggae charts in 1998. Since the breakup of the Tru Tones in the early eighties, Boo has added two more albums to his body of work—*Alive and Well* in 1995, and *Beyond* in 2003.

In contrast to his previous recordings, with *Alive and Well* and *Beyond* Boo made a decisive shift towards jazz and instrumental music. Why this change of musical genre?

“Maybe there is more jazz in what I am doing now,” Boo explained. “But there has always been jazz in what I have been doing. If you listen to Tru Tones, there was always a jazz influence. There has always been a tendency to lean towards improvisation. I think what influenced me to go further into it was that there was an era when I found that the soca, our popular music, was boring. There came a time when I got bored doing it. What was popular had no music



in it. We had literally began to take the music out of the music. To me there was nothing to play, so I think that made me make more of a shift. And I began enjoying what I was doing. So I stuck with it.”

Boo added that besides growing up listening to a lot of calypso and reggae, and being a big fan of the likes of Bob Marley and Tots and the Maytals, from very early on (and especially by way of the Voice of America radio program) he listened to a lot of jazz music and pan instrumentalists, including musicians like Barney Kessel, Kenny Burrell, Django Reinhardt, George Benson, Jimmy Smith, and Ramsey Louis. Therefore, the influence these artist had on him would also have contributed to his move to jazz and instrumental music.

The artist may have gravitated towards jazz, but just like, as he admitted, there has always been jazz in the popular

*Blues* and *All Blues* are upbeat, funky, folksy renditions with, as their titles suggest, a touch of the Blues. The last three songs on the album, *Comet*, *Prim* and *Love Everyday* are slow, mellow instrumentals and are the tracks that probably come closest to making a jazz purist happy.

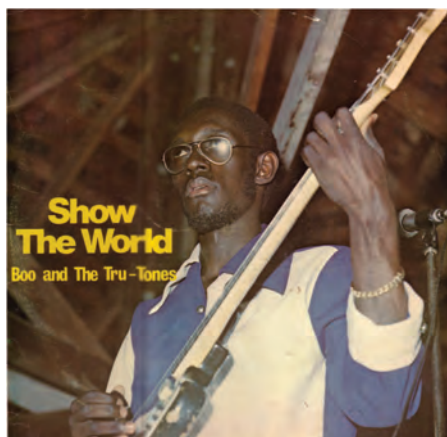
Notwithstanding the eclecticism of *Beyond*, through it all, two things stand-out: Boo’s guitar renditions and the quality of the composition. The artist’s compositions are such that the songs require no voices to convey their messages. Take, for example, *Love Everyday*, the last track on the album. The mood of the song, its composition, clearly says, without words, “evening is approaching, it has been fun spending time with you, but sorry to say, I have to go.”

Boo’s guitar is never loud, never overpowering. Rather it is quiet, almost

well received out of St. Lucia. I did a video for “*King of my Jungle*.” I have that video on BET on a fairly regular basis. I did a big performance on BET. I performed in Los Angeles, Washington DC, St. Kitts Music Festival, Anguilla Music Festival. So the CD has helped.”

Boo’s persistence, discipline and professionalism and his accumulation of a body of work has paid off handsomely. He has shared the stage with such legends as George Benson, Kenny Burrell, Al Jarreau, India Arie, and Grover Washington. Besides performing at the various Caribbean and international jazz and music festivals, his music has taken him as far afield as performing in 1979 at Superbowl XIII (featuring Pittsburg Steelers and the Dallas Cowboys), and more recently featuring in a state function for the former President of the United States, Bill Clinton.

CREAM OF THE CROP THE TRU TONES COMBO OF ST. LUCIA



music that once dominated his repertoire, there is plenty of popular musical influences in his jazz. For example, *Beyond* is reflective of Boo’s Caribbean roots and his Tru Tones days of reggae, calypso, soca, cadence, and R&B.

Indeed, *Beyond* represents a blending of Boo’s musical influences and the culmination of his craftsmanship as a composer, arranger and guitarist. Two of the tracks, *Beyond* and *Round the Corner*, have decidedly reggae beats. The fourth track, *Second Look* comes alive with pan renditions and soca and calypso rhythms. *Song of Love*, *Simply Beautiful*, and *Magic in Love* are love songs reminiscent of R&B music. Of the three, *Simply Beautiful* is probably the most interesting not only because it is strictly instrumental, but also it celebrates the beauty of St. Lucia in much the same way a lover would sing praises to his beloved. *Off the*

playing second fiddle to whatever else is going on in the song. Yet his guitar is to the music what seasoning is to bouyon, what rum is to rum punch, what raisins is to fruit cake. *Beyond* is peppered with clean, quiet, distinctive guitar notes that have become the signature of a Boo composition.

In much the same way Boo named his first CD after the breakup of the Tru Tones *Alive and Well* to signal to the world that even without the legendary band he had founded he was alive and well, the naming of his second CD, *Beyond*, was no accident. The artist admitted that he named the CD *Beyond* to signal yet another shift in his musical career. This time to take his music to a higher professional level, to take it beyond St. Lucia. And apparently Boo is pleased with the results. “I think I have succeeded in doing that. *Beyond* has been

Boo has truly emerged as an international artist. Viewers all over the world have had the pleasure of seeing and hearing his music not only on BET but also on BBC, Bravo TV, and the American program, *One life to Live*. And he has not gone unnoticed by his peers. George Benson, one of Boo’s musical idols, has praised his technical prowess and improvisation. Ronnie Laws said that Boo’s music is “extremely soulful and intense.” Similarly, Stanley Jordan considers Boo “a genuinely gifted and accomplished musician.”

We asked Boo to reminisce a bit and share with us some of the highlights of his achievements as a musician?

“The thing that stands out most in my mind is performing for and meeting Nelson Mandela, because I think that he epitomizes what a great human being is, so that’s one of the highlights of my

musical career. Also, performing at the Super Bowl because at that time it was a big cultural shock for me. There were like a hundred and twenty five thousand people there and that was the population of St. Lucia at the time. To leave here and perform to almost the entire population of my country, was for me a big cultural shock. And I was rather young at the time. There were a number of others. Like the first time I opened for George Benson. George Benson had become one of my biggest influences, I was listening to George Benson long before people (most St. Lucians) knew about him, so when I was called to open for him, it was something that I was looking forward to for a longtime.”

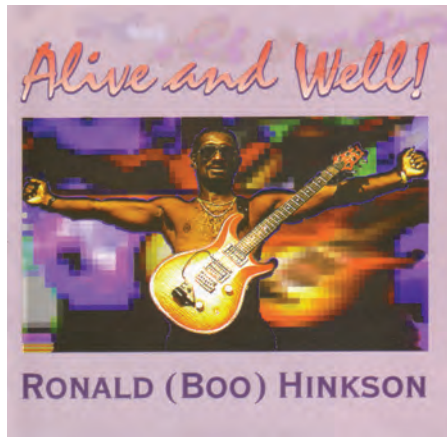
Boo’s body of work and all the international attention he is getting do not tell the whole story. The artist is nothing less than a pioneer in St. Lucia’s music indus-



try. In the seventies Boo and the Tru Tones turned professional, relying solely on music for their livelihood at a time when the term professional artist was still a foreign word to most of his fellow countrymen. Unlike today where there appears to be more recording studios in St. Lucia than there are bands, Boo and the Tru Tones recorded most of their music in an era when producing a single, much less an album, was, to most musicians from the Eastern Caribbean, not only cost prohibitive but inconceivable. Even today, Boo is still leading the way. He is one of the few St. Lucian artists who have leveraged their success at home into an international presence both in terms of performing at musical festivities and their music receiving air play.

This is no accident. Boo has always insisted on being treated like the professional that he is. Insisted on producing

and performing at international standards. And for a while now the artist has been preaching that the only way for a St. Lucian to make headway as a musician is to focus on the international market. He has often explained that St. Lucia is just too small to generate the CD sales to allow an artist to make any kind of dent. St. Lucian musicians, he insists, should produce music at a quality level and with a universal appeal to interest an international audience. Boo has said that the seasonal nature of calypso, and the overwhelming focus of calypsonians on winning the calypso crown, in the process producing songs with mostly a local theme, undermines these musicians’ chances of making an impression on the wider international audience. Calypsonians, he advised, should make the calypso competition secondary to producing for the international market.



Another aspect of Boo’s career that is not revealed in his international acclaim is that he has been able to accomplish all this without having to give up his St. Lucian residence. This is in sharp contrast to the handful of St. Lucian musicians, including Luther Francois, Barbara Cadet, and Carl Gustave, whose names are mentioned along with Boo’s and who have garnered some international attention. Most of these artists, for one reason or the other, have been spending the greater part of their professional time abroad. As a result of Boo’s musical longevity and his uninterrupted presence on the island, he has influenced generations upon generations of St. Lucian musicians. It is any one’s guess how many young persons have picked up a guitar after being inspired by a Boo Hinkson performance. All this when we haven’t even mentioned that the artist has

composed and arranged calypsos for calypsonians with which they captured the coveted calypso crown, one or two of his calypsos made it on the list of what is considered St. Lucia’s best twenty-five calypsos since the country’s independence in 1979, and he has written and arranged songs for several other artists.

Recognizing the role Boo has played in the development of St. Lucian music, we asked the artist what are his thoughts on the St. Lucia music industry?

“I think we made a mistake in allowing the music industry in St. Lucia to develop in an ad hoc manner. By now the powers that be should have recognized that music can be as big an industry as tourism or as bananas, but it is allowed to develop in an ad hoc manner. There are still kids paying import duties on musical equipment in this country. These things should have been dealt with a long time



ago so the industry can grow. Music is a thing that all young people want to gravitate towards. So we need to find the catalyst that would make it grow, make it work for the young people and for the economic growth of the country. I know there are efforts now towards that happening. Of course there are financial constraints, but the efforts have to be more aggressive than that. Also, the musicians need to start a network with each other. We need to begin to play each other’s music. And we need to understand that if Rob Taylor is up front let’s get behind him, or if “Jab” is up front, or Calixte Joseph is up front, whoever is up front, we as St. Lucians have to give them a push up. Because if one guy is on top and we’re pushing him we are all going in the same direction. I don’t think that this is something St. Lucians quite understand.”

Boo’s advice to young St. Lucian





musicians is: "Practice, practice, practice. And they must not attempt to ignore the business aspect of it. You cannot separate the business from the music. If you do that you are going to be used and abused. I must tell them that the myth that you have to take drugs to be good musicians

is just that—a myth. I know a lot of great musicians in the world. Some of them are better than the people who take drugs. The best advice I can give them is to be disciplined, be committed, be honest about whatever you do and practice because there are no alternatives to prac-

tice. You practice, you get good. You do not practice, you do not get good."

Additionally, Boo admonished young musicians to continue to be creative and go out there and play their music. "If you want to perform play some of your music. Sometimes you do not have to say it is yours—just play. You might be surprised how people will accept it. And you must be brave and bold about your creativity. I think some of the best music is yet to come out of St. Lucia. I have great faith in the young musicians in the country."

Boo's success has not been without its obstacles. As often happens, when one insists on standards, disdains mediocrity, and stands head and shoulders above most of one's contemporaries, friction arises, and it doesn't help, if, like Boo, one never shies away from speaking and writing one's mind. Some of Boo's fellow musicians have pointed out (obviously with a hint of jealousy) that Boo is too self centered, that Boo is too much about Boo. Off course, if we consider that art, in its purest sense, is more about the artist than the subject of his art, and is more about the artist giving expression to what

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is inside of him than of what's going on in society, then nothing can be more self centered than an artist being an artist.

Last year Boo found himself embroiled in a controversy with the organizers of the calypso competition. According to the artist, on the heels of the overwhelming success of the calypso twenty-five event (where what was considered the 25 best calypsos since independence were performed by their respective calypsonians, and accompanied by an all-star band that included Boo on guitar), the calypso organizers wanted the band to backup the calypsonians at the semi-finals and finals of the year's calypso competition. Although early on they had informed Boo of their intentions, no firm contractual arrangements were arrived at. When the artist finally sat down with the organizers a few weeks before the competition and quoted his price of \$23,000.00 per show, the organizers rejected the offer outright, hired a Trinidadian band instead, and complained openly to the effect that Boo was an uncooperative spoiler who had doubled the price on them. Now, at first glance, EC\$23,000.00 may appear a tidy sum, but considering that the all-star band would involve seventeen members, the take home pay of each musician would come to less than \$1,400.00. Not a windfall by any stretch of the imagination, particularly since the appointment would have included a full week of rehearsals and the musicians were among the best on the island

As far as Boo is concerned this was yet another example of the disregard some St. Lucians have for local (as in home grown) musicians. And who could blame Boo and other St. Lucian artists for harboring such misgivings. Take some of the hotels in St. Lucia. They have devised a strategy called "auditions." They invite a solo musician or a band to an audition. For the audition the artist performs to hotel guests at the same time that they would have performed if they were already hired. So in essence the hotel gets entertainment without dipping into its entertainment budget. Then the next evening the hotel brings a different group for auditioning. So by stringing along a continuous stream of auditions the hotel may never have to worry about paying musicians. Now, as if this wasn't bad



enough, recognizing the lack of opportunities on the island for musicians, some hotels orchestrate a spiral bidding process the final result of which is that the compensation of the groups that are finally hired are such that the musicians would do just as well bagging groceries in a super market, but without the cost of instruments and many late nights of performing. This is probably part of what Boo meant when he advised young musicians not to ignore the business side of the music or else they will be used and abused. The musicians are listening because they have finally gotten together to establish (STAMP), St. Lucian Association for Musicians and Composers. Hopefully, with STAMP, they will be able to tackle this and other problems hampering the development of the industry.

Apparently, Boo has taken all this in good stride. Here is how he responded when we asked him about some of the obstacles he has had to overcome on his way to success.

"Thinking outside of the box in St. Lucia can be very difficult because you can't get many people to go along with you, and you have to be very, very strong. Even if you know what you are doing is right and that's what works for you, if it is not what everyone else is doing, you end up under a lot of pressure. You have to be strong just to ignore it.

The most important thing for me is just becoming a great human being. So striking that balance for me is difficult. To become an ultimate musician requires a lot of sacrifices and I am prepared to do that only up to a point, because it is more important for me to become a great person, a well rounded and great human being. So for me, that is one of my obstacles.

"But as far as obstacles go, in terms of people, many times when people try to put obstacles in my way I just put it down as part of my growth, as one of my experiences, and I learn from it. So what people generally consider to be an obstacle, for me it is part of my evolution, part of my learning process. But there has been set backs here and there. It is difficult to get your music marketed, especially if you do not have a proper network around you. The thing is that I have often done a lot of stuff with my music outside of St. Lucia because you generally can not find the network here.

"Furthermore, because of the way I think, it is difficult for me to identify major obstacles. Because as I said I view these things as part of my evolution, part of my education, part of my learning process."

We come to the St. Lucia Jazz Festival. The same way one cannot discuss St. Lucian music without referencing Boo, one cannot talk about Ronald "Boo" Hinkson without mentioning the St. Lucia Jazz Festival, which, as we were writing this article, was only a month away. Now in its fourteenth year, the St. Lucia Jazz Festival is considered one of the very best of jazz festivals. With a mix of paid and free events, a variety of music ranging from Caribbean to quintessence jazz, a multiplicity of venues that take the musical enthusiast around the island to the most charming and picturesque of settings and with a reputation for attracting some of the biggest names in jazz and R&B, the festival is a delight for young and old, for St. Lucians as well as Caribbean and international visitors. Indeed, regardless of one's background, musical taste, and how much spending money one has, one is sure to leave the St. Lucia Jazz Festival with fond memories.

We cannot discuss Boo without bringing up the St. Lucia Jazz Festival because the event has done more than



any other in consolidating the artist's international status. Indeed, the St. Lucia Jazz Festival has served as Boo's perennial international showcase. The artist has become such a fixture of the event that one suspects that some would feel cheated attending a St. Lucia Jazz Festival devoid of a Boo Hinkson performance. *Beyond* was released in the middle of St. Lucia Jazz 2003. It was launched with such fanfare, such pageantry, and was so overwhelmingly present, that one had the impression that that year the jazz festival was organized specifically to take *Beyond* to market. The launching of *Beyond* provided us with yet another example of Boo leading the way in the St. Lucia music industry. Clearly, in the following year, given the way Robert "Zi" Taylor launched and marketed his CD, *Rise Up*, he had taken a page from Boo's book.

Here is what Boo himself had to say about the contributions of the St. Lucia Jazz Festival to the development of St. Lucia's music industry.


"Our Jazz Festival is fourteen years old, so these kids who were twelve when the festival started are well in their twenties. They have been fortunate to see the best singers, the best instrumentalists, the best performers. They have seen the highest level of production and a lot of us have been opening acts for the biggest performers in the world. So if that does not motivate us, I do not know what would. So, I really think that the Jazz Festival has done a tremendous amount of good for St. Lucian musicians.

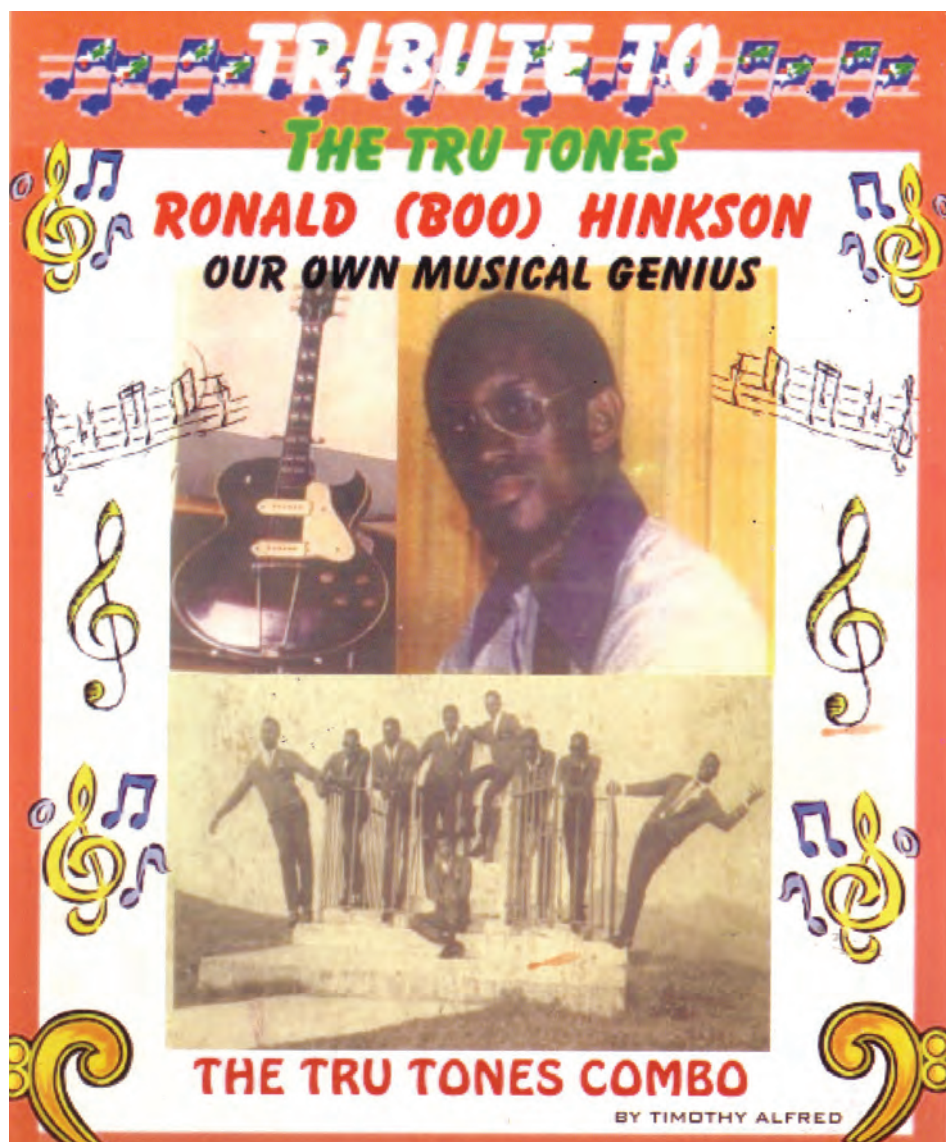
"For myself, it has done a lot of good for me. I do not know if I would have been a regular on BET had it not been for the Jazz Festival. I have a very impressive bio. I can say I have opened for Lauryn Hill, India Irie, Lawrence Clausen, George Benson, some of the biggest names in the world and that is as a result of the Jazz Festival. What it has also done for me is that it has given me a certain stature. So now people deal with me differently. People do not deal with me as a little local boy and a lot of that has come from the Jazz festival. It has given me a more powerful network, because of the connections I have now. So it has helped me tremendously. If any St. Lucian musician has not grown, developed or benefitted from the St. Lucia Jazz Festival, it is because he does not want to.

At fifty-something, Ronald "Boo"

Hinkson's work is far from completion. The artist is still busy compiling his body of work. He spoke excitedly about a new project he is working on. "I am working on St. Lucia's Folk Music because I think we need to have our young people connect to it. It cannot be allowed to die and I think the way to keep your culture alive is to give it new life. So I am doing an album of folk songs. I am recording Charles Cadet's *Poinsettia Blossom*, because based on how well it was written and composed it is the best song ever produced in St. Lucia. I am redoing a song by Joyce Auguste, and I am also doing a version of *Calypso Jail* by Herb Black, which I think is one of the greatest calypsos which came out of St. Lucia. I think this is necessary so that our folk music does not die, and to present it to our people in a new way so that they can connect to it. We have some great music coming out of St. Lucia, and I think it is important

that we go to the cultural center and have it presented to America. Our folk music is that good. I think it is important that we do that. That is why I am focusing on that project."

Clearly, St. Lucia owes Ronald "Boo" Hinkson a lot for helping to develop its music industry, and thankfully his contributions are not going unnoticed. On the eve of our conversation with Boo, award winning St. Lucian journalist, Timothy Alfred, launched a publication titled *Tribute To The Tru Tones Ronald (Boo) Hinkson, Our Own Musical Genius*, in which he reminisces on the heyday of the Tru Tones and what they meant to him as a teenager coming of age. And last year besides gracing the front covers of Cable and Wireless telephone directories, Boo was the recipient of the prestigious St. Lucia Gold Medal of Honor, for long and meritorious contributions to music. 



# Men of The Century (Part II)

**Sir George Charles**



**William George Odlum**



**Sir John Compton**



**by Anderson Reynolds**

**“George Odlum had thought and voiced that his destiny was to be Premier (Prime Minister) of St. Lucia. In hindsight, it is obvious that he had misread the oracle. The correct interpretation was that he would make such a tremendous impression on the St. Lucian psyche, that his stamp would be forever present and he would be counted among the great of his countrymen.”**

## **Foolish Virgins**

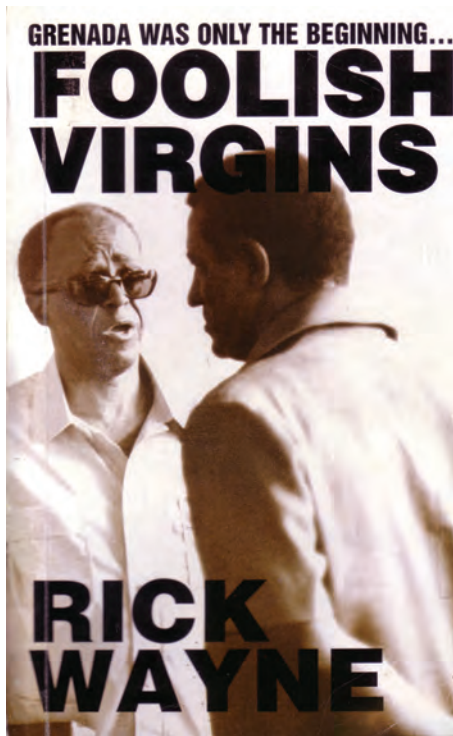
**D**uring the 1974 and 1979 campaigns, many saw George Odlum as the rightful and legitimate heir to the party's leadership. He was charismatic, self confident and no matter in what crowd he found himself it was obvious who the leader was. Not only was he one of the most visible and vocal campaigners of the party, but as a Bristol and Oxford graduate who had held senior national, regional and international administrative and policy-making positions (not to mention his acute intellect and spell-binding oratory skills), he displayed a genuine concern for the poor and the down-trodden. In the eyes of many he was the rightful heir to the legacy of George Charles. However, realizing that as party leader George Odlum's militancy and combative rhetoric might drive voters away, the party had nominated the ex-judge, Allan Louisy, as Party leader with the understanding that if the party were to win the elections, after six months in office he would relinquish the post of Prime Minister in exchange for the Governorship, thus making way for George Odlum to fulfil his destiny as prime minister of St. Lucia. For his part, Allan Louisy had made it clear right from the start that he required nothing less than the top job for having sacrificed his

judgeship to bring respectability to the Labor Party.

As soon as the Labor Party took its place at the seat of power, by his actions George Odlum made it clear that he didn't need the title of Prime Minister to function as one. Without first informing the Prime Minister, George Odlum reportedly sent men to Grenada for military training to supposedly form the nucleus of a People's Revolutionary Army. Although the police department came under the Prime Minister's Office, it was George Odlum who took to directing the police force. At most international meetings that required the presence of the Prime Minister, more often than not it was George Odlum and not Allan Louisy that would represent the country. For all practical purposes, it seemed that George Odlum was the one running the show.

Several weeks after the Labor Party took power, the UWP came together at the William Peter Boulevard in the center of Castries to, as they said, “say thank you to our supporters.” Besides physically attacking the speakers on stage, the crowd pelted them with human excrement. As John Compton was about to make his way to the stage, he was mobbed, punched and clawed. If not for UWP supporters who came to his rescue he would have no doubt suffered serious injury. All of the UWP platform speakers had to run for safety. The meeting was brought





to an end even before it had began. When the special security unit of the police force arrived on the scene and ordered the crowd to disperse and no one moved, they fired tear gas into the crowd. People responded by stoning the police officers and their vehicles. The officers took cover, and the mob proceeded to smash shop windows and carry away the contents of the stores. By the time things settled, all the stores had been broken into

and their contents carried away by looters. During that same period, the country was subjected to further bouts of lawlessness. Young men, some of whom were escaped prisoners, and some others were among those who had allegedly received arms to overthrow the government had the Labor Party not win the elections, went on an island-wide rampage of rape and armed robbery, such that the police took to shooting them on sight.

Six months expired, but citing that he didn't like the leftist direction in which Mr. Odlum would take the country, Mr. Louisy refused to resign as Prime Minister. The ex-Judge had now placed himself squarely between George Odlum and his much awaited and, in the opinion of some, deserved prize of the prime ministership. The coalition that came together under the banner of the Labor Party began to unglue. The Labor Party split into one faction led by Mr. Allan Louisy, and the other led by Mr. George Odlum. The Louisy faction controlled the party machinery and was considered conservative and middle of the road. The Odlum faction was seen as espousing a radical and left of center political and economic philosophy. There was now a power struggle in government. As the power struggle raged on, the Labor Party became increasingly demoralized. Kenny Anthony, an advisor to the government in the Ministry of Education, quit his post in disgust and sort the sanctuary of the University of the West Indies. The George Odlum faction took every opportunity in the mass media to accuse the Prime Minister of incompetency and indecisiveness.

It seemed that despite George Odlum's irrefutable qualifications for the job, even nature was against him becoming Prime Minister. A few months after the 1979 elections, Hurricane David struck, destroying 70 percent of the island's banana crop. And not to be out-done, the following year Hurricane Allen struck, reducing the banana crop to nought, and leaving the island's infrastructure in shambles. All that when bananas were still recovering from the droughts of the 1970's.

Nonetheless, unmindful of nature, the power struggle went full steam ahead. Less than two years after the Labor Party

formed the government, in protest, the Odlum faction along with the UWP opposition voted down Prime Minister Louisy's 1981 budget. Taking that as a vote of no confidence in his leadership, Allan Louisy resigned from his post and the Governor General, in consultation with the House of Assembly, appointed Mr. Winston Cenac as the new Prime Minister of St. Lucia. The Odlum faction resigned from Cabinet and formed a new political party, the St. Lucia Progressive Labor Party (PLP).

Soon, the PLP joined voices with the UWP in demanding an immediate dissolution of parliament and the calling of fresh general elections. Before long, public support for fresh elections came pouring in. The Teachers' Union and the Civil Service Association went on strike. Cable and Wireless imposed a work stoppage. The island's ports closed down. The Chamber of Commerce ordered a total shutdown of stores and businesses. The country had come to a standstill. So bowing to the will of the people and the opposition parties, on January 15, 1982, the Prime Minister, Winston Cenac, announced that the government had been dissolved, that general elections would be held by July 1, 1982, and that a new government of national unity would preside over the country. The interim government, which would comprise five elected SLP members, and two elected members from each of the remaining parties, would have Michael Pilgrim of the PLP as its Prime Minister.

As Winston Cenac had promised, general elections were held on May 3, 1982. The UWP won fourteen seats, SLP two, and the only PLP to win a seat was Jon Odlum. Once again George Odlum had failed in his bid to become Prime Minister, and for the second time in three elections he had failed to win his seat.

For his part, Mr. Rick Wayne, once again, came to the aid of the nation when he gave perspective to George Odlum and the Labor Party's bungling of the government in his 1986 book, *Foolish Virgins*.

Then, as if by magic, coinciding with John Compton's new reign, the banana industry rebounded, reaching unprecedented production and export levels; the country entered ten years of uninterrupted prosperity, turning it into the envy of the Caribbean, and attracting high praise from such well respected publications as *The Economist*. Riding this wave of prosperity, John Compton and his UWP went ahead and won general elections in 1987 and again in 1992. By then, as one of the longest lasting and most successful political leaders in the Caribbean, John Compton took his place alongside such Caribbean political bulwarks as Michael Manley of Jamaica, Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago and Grantley Adams of Barbados, in the process securing for himself no less an honor than the knighthood.

## The End of John Compton's Dynasty

**B**ut then came 1993, a year in which, as a result of a depreciation of the British pound and the flooding of the UK market with Latin American bananas, banana prices dropped below most farmers' cost of production. In response, farmers demanded a guaranteed minimum price of 30 cents per pound of bananas, the dissolution of the allegedly corrupt Board of Directors of the St. Lucia Banana Growers Association

(SLBGA), the appointment of a new board, and the streamlining of SLBGA operations to return a larger portion of banana revenues to farmers. If these demands weren't met, farmers threatened to call a banana strike.

Neither the SLBGA nor the government heeded the demands of the farmers, so on Tuesday, October 5, 1993, activist farmers did not only go on strike, refusing to harvest their bananas, but they also took steps to ensure that the fruit of nonstriking farmers never reached the ports. Besides burning the banana sheds of farmers who refused to strike, striking farmers set up barricades of felled trees, burning tires, large vehicle rims, 10 to 14 wheel truck chassis, and derelict vehicles across feeder roads and at various points on the East Coast Highway, rendering them impassable. At the southern village of Desruisseaux, tucked in the interior of the island, farmers stoned tractor-operating police officers attempting to dismantle barricades. In the turmoil, one officer was injured and was rushed to hospital.

All over the east coast, no sooner had police officers removed a blockade than protesters would erect replacement barriers, even if it meant working overnight. The situation got so serious that the Police Department discouraged motorists from using the East Coast Highway, the SLBGA cautioned nonstriking farmers against taking fruit to market, and hotels at the northern end of the island encouraged vacationers arriving at the southern town of Vieux Fort to take air shuttles to the northern city of Castries, instead of the customary ground taxis.

Thursday, October 7, the third day of the strike, as police officers were attempting to unblock the East Coast Highway along the Mabouya Valley, protestors pelted the police with

stones and bottles. A stone hit one police officer, causing serious injury. The police opened fire, killing two of the protestors. These events would spark unprecedented changes in the structure of the banana industry and would mark the beginning of the end of John Compton's dynasty.

Two years later, in 1995, the middle of an election term, John Compton decided it was time, after nearly three decades, to give up the mantle of leadership. But apparently unable to find anyone in his party he deemed worthy of filling his shoes, of continuing his legacy, he selected Dr. Vaughan Lewis, previously Secretary General of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), nephew of celebrated Nobel Laureate, Sir Arthur Lewis, and son of the distinguished Judge and ex Governor General, Sir Allen Lewis. To hand him the Prime Ministership, the Prime Minister requested of Mr. George Mallet, then UWP elected representative for Central Castries, to step down and allow Dr. Vaughan Lewis to contest the seat in a bye-election. In protest of what he considered John Compton's imposition of Vaughan Lewis on the St. Lucian people, George Odium also entered the contest. Notwithstanding, Dr. Vaughan Lewis won handsomely, and replaced John Compton as Prime Minister. For his part, Mr. Mallet was rewarded with the cushy post of Governor General.

However, the fact the John Compton had to go outside his government to find a suitable replacement for the Prime Ministership exposed one of the greatest weaknesses of his legendary political reign. Beginning with the George Charles era, John Compton had demonstrated an inability and or an unwillingness to work with any one just as or more capable than him.



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The disgust with which both Julian Hunte and Hunter Francois, men considered by many to have been as or almost as capable as John Compton of running the country, were two cases in point. So despite John Compton's glorious accomplishments, by surrounding himself only with people who had no designs on his job or who posed no threat to his leadership, he failed St. Lucia and the UWP in a big way.

Yet on second thought, this predisposition of John Compton's may have been what led to his singularly greatest accomplishment. Most of the development that took place under John Compton can be viewed as a function of the success of the banana industry, the outside world's discovery of St. Lucia as a vacationing spot, world technological development (into which St. Lucia had little or no input), development aid, the simple passage of time (a modernizing world), and population growth providing a critical mass for products and services. In other words, once the country had remained politically stable, most of the development St. Lucia enjoyed under John Compton may have happened irrespective of who was at the helm. But maintaining political stability and inspiring in the outside world confidence in the economic and political stability of your country is nothing to laugh at. After all, a look around the world would suggest that political stability is a prerequisite for economic development. Or for that matter, consider how the 1979 Labor Party power struggle crippled the country, despite the fact that in terms of education and talent, previous and even subsequent UWP governments fell far short of this 1979 Labor Party Government. Therefore, John Compton's shrewdness in maintaining a strong hold on his government and tolerating no insubordination or potential insubordination, allowed him to achieve the political stability that was so lacking in the Labor Party since the end of George Charles's reign. This probably was John Compton's most significant contribution to the country.

Interestingly, people are now accusing Dr. Kenny Anthony, the current Prime Minister of St. Lucia, of being a dictator, the same label that not too long ago was being applied to John Compton. One wonders whether the only way Caribbean governments can work smoothly is for them to have strong, almost dictatorial leadership at the helm. With the political culture as it is, where every government minister may have their own personal agenda, it may well be that the only way to minimize government corruption is to have a Prime Minister that keeps close tabs on all ministries of government. Clearly, a very non-empowering and inefficient way to conduct business. But maybe the lesser of evils given the climate of laxity, irresponsibility and unaccountability that pervade these societies.

General Elections came again in 1997, and it seems now that John Compton had given up the Prime Ministership, all the forces of nature and the country had aligned themselves against the UWP. Since the 1993 strike, banana production and exports had continued to fall. Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, the education advisor under

the failed 1979 SLP government who, in the middle of the SLP debacle had sought sanctuary at the University of the West Indies where he was serving as a law professor, returned just in time to take over the leadership of the Labor Party and contest the general elections. George Odlum, who at the time was the St. Lucia Ambassador to the United Nations, resigned from his post and returned to St. Lucia to contest the elections as a Labor Party candidate. Such was the mass support for the Labor Party that it seems all groups and organizations were campaigning for the party. The Civil Service Association; The Teachers Union; youth and sports organizations across the nation; Rick Wayne, St. Lucia's leading journalist; and banana farmers with memory of the tragic 1993 banana strike, all threw in their support.

The results of the 1997 elections was tantamount to a bloodless coup. The Labor Party won by a 16 to 1 majority. In this Kenny Anthony led Labor Party government, George Odlum, who this time around had won his seat, was made the minister for foreign affairs. However, towards the end of his term, accusing the government of playing a game of *bèlèlesh* (smoke and mirrors) and advocating "bikini budgets," he resigned from his post, and, not unlike 1982 when he had joined forces with John Compton to oust a discredited SLP government, in 2001 Mr. Odlum again teamed up with the then retired John Compton to form a political alliance with which they hoped to successfully contest the next general elections and then introduce a government of national unity. In that alliance, a group of concerned citizens appointed George Odlum political leader, John Compton president, and Dr. Morella Joseph (leader of the UWP) vice president.

Besides still wanting to fulfil his dream of becoming Prime Minister, one sensed that George Odlum had some other reasons for ditching the Labor Party. Wary of his left of center ideology and recognizing his prominent role in the fall of the 1979 Labor Government, the 1997 SLP Government had gone to great pains to ensure that George Odlum had only a very marginal role in the internal workings of the party and the government. So much so, that between George Odlum and the Prime Minister were two deputy Prime Ministers. So, above all other reasons, it was probably this ostracism that caused George Odlum to rebel against



his party.

For his part, John Compton conceded that the government had made a shambles of the economy in general and the banana industry in particular. He said that many businesses and well-respected citizens had come to him with the suggestion of forming an alliance to save the country from the economic mismanagement of the Dr. Kenny Anthony-led Labor government. Yet one could well imagine that in John Compton's mind this new alliance would serve the same purpose as the PLP and the National Labor Movement Party alliance (nearly four decades before) that had provided him the vehicle with which to dominate the country's politics for three decades. Still, one could not help but suspect that another reason John Compton felt compelled to come out of retirement was to protect his legacy, which, since the SLP had attained power, had been under constant verbal assault.

Nevertheless, just when the Alliance had gained national acceptance and momentum and had become a serious threat to the Labor Party's rule come next elections (and in the eyes of many, represented the country's only hope of removing Dr. Kenny Anthony and his Labor Party from power), a leadership struggle developed between George Odlum and John Compton.

George Odlum accused John Compton of an unwillingness or inability to subordinate himself to anyone. And John Compton protested George Odlum's close ties with Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi and the potential harm that could bring to St. Lucia.

At a National Alliance Assembly, which George Odlum chose not to attend, John Compton was unanimously elected political leader of the Party. George Odlum denounced this new election as illegitimate and insisted that he was the political leader. Exasperated with the rivalry between the two men, and concluding that they were causing more harm than good, Dr. Morella Joseph divorced her United Workers Party from the Alliance and proceeded to prepare her party for general elections. But refusing to give up his dreams, George Odlum forged ahead with the much weaker and smaller National Alliance Party, of which he became the undisputed political leader. Mr. Compton on the other hand threw his support behind Dr. Morella Joseph and the UWP.

General elections were due in May 2002, yet the once formidable Labor Party that had come to power with an enviable 16 - 1 majority was now on shaky grounds because of a failing economy (due largely to a weakening tourism sector and a banana industry in shambles).

The UWP, historically a well organized and functioning party, was in disarray and its breakup with the Alliance had left it scrambling to regroup.

The National Alliance, which was never on solid ground to begin with, was sinking. The leadership struggle and the subsequent withdrawal of the UWP had caused people to lose faith in the party. More so because this was the very same party that was preaching government of national unity. Furthermore, without the UWP the National Alliance didn't have the necessary machinery with which to seriously contest a general election.

Recognizing its predicament of a weak economy, the Labor Party was quick to capitalize on the unpreparedness of the National Alliance and the UWP. It called early elections for December 3, 2001.

Two other parties, the Staff Party and the Freedom Party,

joined the fight. But to many they were only of 'nuisance value.'

The polls proved that the Labor Party had gambled correctly. The unpreparedness and disarray of the Alliance and the UWP were too great to defeat a well organized and functioning Labor Party, even one facing a failing economy. On December 3, 2001, the St. Lucia Labor Party returned to power with a 14 - 3 majority, making it the second consecutive elections that the party had won by a landslide, and thus leaving one to wonder whether George Odlum's dream of a one party state had finally become a reality.

## The Death of George Odlum

Regarding dreams, George Odlum's Alliance won not even one seat, (the UWP winning all three opposition seats), so once again George Odlum had failed to achieve his ultimate claim to fame. This would prove his last chance, because two years later, on September 28, 2003, he passed away at the age of sixty-nine after a year-long battle with pancreatic cancer. Nonetheless, realizing that "important Caribbean



thinkers" were passing away without due recognition of their contributions to society, while George Odlum was on his death bed, St. Lucia made plans to celebrate his life with an evening rally of speeches and cultural presentations at the Derek Walcott Square in Castries. Unfortunately, George Odlum died on the morning of the same day of the rally, but fortunately he was aware that he was being honored. A few weeks later, George Odlum would receive further honor when the Jubilee Trust Fund celebrated his contributions to the creative arts with the publication of an anthology of poems titled, *Roseau Valley and other Poems for Bro. George*. The Fund also established a George Odlum Foundation, and an annual George Odlum Grant for creative artists.

George Odlum's death was indeed an all consuming national (and even international) affair. The author could not recall any other public figure whose passing so touched the nation (the author included), left the nation with such a void, such a sense of loss, such a sense that St. Lucia (and the world) will never be the same now that George Odlum was no longer in it.

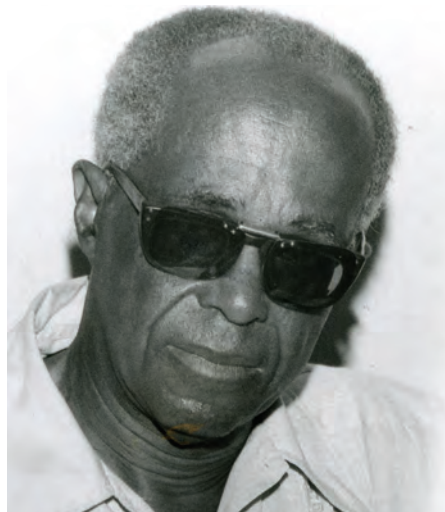
George Odlum's funeral was fit for a king. The funeral procession started in Vieux Fort, some forty miles from Castries, its final destination, and all along the way crowds came to greet the procession and to pay their last respects to the fallen leader. The



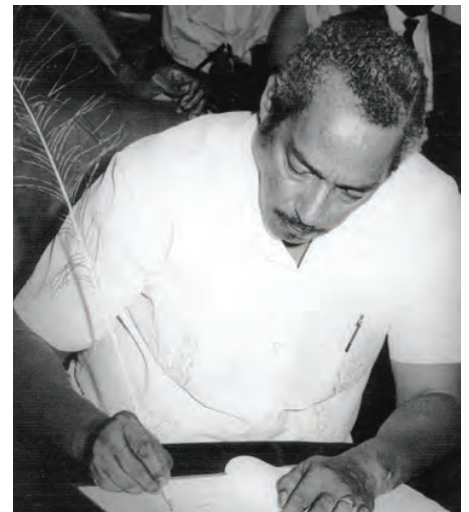
## The Prime Ministers of St. Lucia



**Sir John Compton**



**Allan Louisy**



**Winston Cenac**



**Michael Pilgrim**



**Dr. Vaughan Lewis**



**Dr. Kenny Anthony**

procession made a stop at the Cul de Sac Valley, where George Odlum had fought so many battles for farm workers. In Castries, before heading to Victoria Park for the funeral ceremony, the procession also stopped at the Castries Market Steps, giving due recognition to the platform from which George Odlum had so many times held a nation spellbound. An eye witness to the funeral ceremony, writing in the *Mirror*, said, "In death the man popularly known as 'Brother George' got what he enjoyed in life. A marathon funeral at the Mindoo Philip overflowed with lengthy and sometimes fiery tributes and passionate eulogies to a life of sporting prowess, colorful oratory, political mobilization and public service ... Hundreds attended the service ... where followers, friends and representatives of fraternal political organizations from Antigua, Barbados, and St. Vincent recalled a great orator and integrationist."

Presiding over the ceremony, Monsignor Patrick Anthony said, "We are gathered here today for the funeral of a native son. In the inimitable Georgian style, he who transformed the political platform on Jeremie Street into the University of the Market Steps has today transformed Mindoo Philip Park into a people's Cathedral."

In the days and weeks following George Odlum's death,

over forty lengthy tributes appeared in the nation's newspapers. Their titles, moreso their contents, told the whole story: *He Would Be King*; *Touched By An Angel*; *St. Lucia Has Lost An Astute Statesman*; *Drums Roll For Bro George*; *George United Them*; *Reflections of Brother George*; *Politician Journalist Philanthropist*; *Brother George Remembered*; *They Cannot Stand In Your Shoes Brother George*; *Sing Hosanna, Farewell Brother George, I Still Love You*; *The Multifaceted Persona of George Odlum*; *Was Odlum Misunderstood to the Last*; *Would George's Death Unite Our Nation*; *Brother George Odlum: A Recognized Member of The Caribbean Literati*; *Labor's Lost Leader*; *St. Lucia and the Region Celebrate the Life of George Odlum*; *George Odlum Gone But Remembered*.

The *Mirror* said: "In death, as in life, St. Lucia's enigmatic politician and master orator, George William Odlum, knocked down icons and grabbed mass attention." The Prime Minister of St. Vincent, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, said: "George was always full of insight and nuance analysis. His magisterial grasp of literature, history, politics, philosophy, economics, and Caribbean *picong* made him at once teacher, practitioner, sage, and raconteur ... George was among the best ever in the region as an articulator of progressive ideas, the lifter of the people's conscious-

## The Greatness of George Odlum

ness and the mobilizer towards noble ends.” Jeff Fedee said: “George was a colossus who bestrode the political, social, and intellectual landscape of St. Lucia like a giant, compared to our pygmy existence ... I feel quite worthless when I measure my role and contribution to life, with that of George Odlum.” Nicholas Joseph said: “Odlum’s politics gave birth to a nation of progressive sons and daughters. He aroused their curiosity and consciousness and inspired a cadre of youth to commit their lives to public service.” David Vitalis of the *Mirror* said: “Odlum was a man dedicated to the promotion of critical thought. Many young men acquired their political consciousness from Odlum and his political twin Peter Josie who challenged the status quo at public political meetings.” Dr. Edel Edmunds, former St. Lucia’s Ambassador to the UN, said: “He (George Odlum) exuded a diversity in thought and action emerging as George the scholar, and philosopher, accompanied by George the orator, George the actor, George the master of the stage, and George the dramatist.” Cletus Springer, columnist for the *Mirror* said: “To some, he (George Odlum) was a dealer in hope, who frequented

Just about all the tributes to George Odlum said he was a great orator, a great thinker, an accomplished writer, a man of the theater, a great athlete, and that he raised political consciousness. It is society that bestows the title of greatness on an individual, and as these outpourings indicate, St. Lucia and beyond said loud and clear that George Odlum was a great man. So then what was the principal source of George Odlum’s greatness?

That George Odlum was probably the greatest orator to come out of St. Lucia and one who could hold his own among the World’s best was clear to see. But being a great orator is not a sufficient condition, in and of itself, to warrant the man of the century honors.

While it was clear that George Odlum was a great orator, it wasn’t as clear that he was a great thinker. An acquaintance with socialist and communist philosophy and a reading (or a listening)

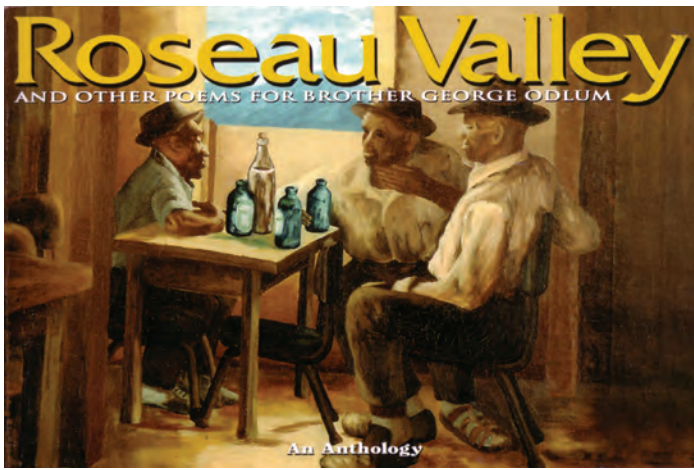


the ghettos spreading a cocktail of well-chosen words that encouraged the *Malaway* (the poor) to raise their heads to behold a sky, full of limitless opportunities.” Former Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Dr. Vaughan Lewis, said: “His (George Odlum’s) was a politics of relentless perseverance, reflecting the nature of his life in other spheres of endeavor.” Mary Bruce said, “Everybody loved Brother George; Brother George just had to say walk, and everybody would walk; He would say Strike! And everybody would strike. With Brother George at the helm, nobody was afraid of anything.” Julian Hunte, St. Lucian UN Ambassador and President of the UN General Assembly, said: “George Odlum was a visionary who understood that for St. Lucia to be truly independent a strong and cohesive nation had to be built.” The St. Lucian government said, “As Foreign Minister, Mr. Odlum was the architect of the government’s foreign policy, the highlight of which was the establishment of relations with the People’s Republic of China (PRC).” Frank Girard of Daher Broadcasting Service (DBS) said: “Brother George had been responsible for the political awakening of a whole generation of St. Lucians as far back as the 1960’s onwards.” Denis Da Breo, editor of the *One Caribbean*, said: “George was a man many years before his time.”

of the works (or rhetoric) of such personalities as Eric Williams, CLR James, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Fidel Castro, and nationalist African leaders of the fifties and sixties, suggest that George Odlum’s political thinking was nothing new. It could be argued that most of George Odlum’s political failures resulted from his tendency of imposing ideologies obtained from abroad on a St. Lucian society at odds with the premises of these ideologies.

George Odlum came of age and was educated in an era where revolutions disposing of colonial and dictatorial governments were commonplace. It was also the era when communist ideology was finding a home in the oppressed peoples of the Third World. In most, if not all, of the countries where revolutions came to past, conditions there were begging for a revolution. Clearly, the racism and cruelty that African Americans were facing in America warranted the black nationalist, and armed self-defense rhetoric and ideologies of Malcolm X. The wholesale exploitation of the Cuban people for the benefit of a few Cubans and for the entertainment of fun seeking Americans certainly was sufficient justification for Fidel Castro to dispose of the Fulgencio Batista regime. Under England’s oppressive and debilitating colonial rule, India and Pakistan were more than justified in using their all to gain their independence. After being subjected to centuries of brutal European exploitation, who could blame the Africans for crying out “Africa for Africans.” And in Grenada, with Eric Gairy, the Prime Minister, using his Mongoose Gang to assassinate and intimidate opposition leaders,





one could well understand and appreciate the Grenadian Revolution.

But in St. Lucia, where since 1951 general elections have come and gone like clockwork, where throughout the island's political history there has been only two instances in which there were reason to suspect that a ballot box may have been tampered with, where there are few or no known cases of government embezzlement of public funds, and where there has been little restraint on freedom of speech and of the press (especially those not under government control), George Odlum's call for a revolution, for the forceful overthrow of the government, was clearly at odds with the St. Lucian reality. More so when one considers that the Labor Party's failures in the later half of the sixties and in the seventies probably had more to do with the internal strife and squabbles that rendered the party innocuous than with the population being enamored with the John Compton led UWP government.

To displace the UWP government, George Odlum and the Labor Party would have needed to put aside their pettiness and individual ambitions for the good of country and party and present a united political front. But instead, George Odlum went to great lengths to paint a picture of St. Lucia that fitted his imported ideologies. It appeared that George Odlum was a man with a ready-made ideology and a preordained existentialism or state of being, looking for a country on which to experiment. If the country didn't fit the ideology, well, no problem, he simply had to use his gift of words to make the necessary adjustments. People were often befuddled about some of George Odlum's political decisions. The discrepancy between George Odlum's ideologies and ideals and the St. Lucian reality may go a long way in explaining some of his seemingly inexplicable political stances.

Borrowing ideas (especially if they are good ideas) is not necessarily a bad thing, but it doesn't classify one as a great thinker. A great thinker is an original thinker. George Odlum did not leave any books behind chronicling his life and ideas. However, as the owner of, and a major contributor to the *Crusader*, he left plenty of newspaper articles and editorials behind. Many of the articles were witty, satirical, informative (especially those that focus on topics other than politics), and well crafted. But for the most part they were meant as attacks on rival political parties and personalities. They were not well developed thought processes where the author deliberated and expanded on his ideas. Neither were they well developed pieces

diagnosing and analyzing St. Lucian society. So while George Odlum's writings may have been reflective of an acute intellect and a gifted writer, they may not have pronounced him a great thinker.

George Odlum dabbled into the world of art and theater, but his dedication to and involvement in these undertakings wasn't sufficiently pronounced to have left a body of work in the manner of say the likes of the Walcott twin brothers, or Dustan St. Omer, or Garth St. Omer, or at least nothing to come close to bestowing upon him the honor of a great man of the arts and theater. In sports his heroics between the goalpost was the stuff legends are of, but clearly (by itself) this youthful preoccupation wasn't of sufficient national import to qualify him as a great man.

Among all the attributes people cited (in their tributes, in their calls to radio and television programs and in informal interviews conducted by this magazine) as evidence of George Odlum's greatness, the one most often repeated and given the greatest emphasis was that he raised the political consciousness of the nation. No one explained or went into any great detail as to what exactly they meant by political consciousness and what was this consciousness that he raised. Notwithstanding George Odlum's many talents, the greatest part of his working life was spent as a politician and a newspaper man (a journalist, to be more exact). Both occupations have to do with raising awareness, so it is fitting that the public would point to his success at raising political consciousness as probably his most significant contribution to the nation. So maybe, therein lies George Odlum's single greatest claim to greatness. To investigate this claim, it may help to delve into the nature of the political consciousness that George Odlum raised.

George Odlum's politics was one of inclusiveness. No citizen was too low to bypass his gaze. He brought in people—small farmers, the unemployed, laborers, stevedores, rastafarians—into the political fold who had long been designated second class citizens and relegated to the margins of St. Lucian society. George Odlum was a great humanist. He embraced every St. Lucian with a warmth, understanding, empathy, and brotherly love that said no matter your status in life, you too are deserving of love, of citizenship; you too are welcomed into the family of nationhood. He made those considered the least in society to realize that St. Lucia was as much theirs as it was that of the head of state; that they too were deserving of decent housing, jobs, livable wages, and of sending their children to secondary schools, and to colleges and universities. He made them believe not only were they deserving of these things, but it was their right to fight for it, to demand it of their government. George Odlum impressed upon the forsaken that they were just as important to the development of the country as the doctors, lawyers, and big shot business people; that they too had an important role to play in the country's development.

He dared the populace to dream, to aspire to better and greater things. He dared them to look beyond St. Lucia as a colony or ex-colony to a country that can forge its own identity, that can determine its own destiny. He made St. Lucians understand that they were no less bright, no less beautiful, no less intelligent, no less creative than any people in any other part of the world. George Odlum, Peter Josie, and the other members of the St. Lucian Forum were the ones who popularized the use of St. Lucian creole on the political platform. Hitherto, even though patois was the mother tongue of the country, it was regarded as

vulgar, slave language, the language of the uncouth and uneducated. By bringing patois into vogue, Odlum and his group said in effect that patois was on par with the languages of the colonial masters, and if so then St. Lucians were on par with the people who had enslaved and colonized them. They said in effect that to speak patois was to be St. Lucian, that the best patois speakers (who were mostly rural folks), those who probably couldn't speak a word of English, were the quintessence St. Lucians. George Odlum and the Forum impressed upon St. Lucians that things local, things inherently St. Lucian, were to be honored and appreciated above things from outside.

George Odlum said that when he returned to St. Lucia after his studies in England, he realized that slavery, colonialism, and Roman Catholicism had inculcated in St. Lucians a culture of servitude, of an acceptance of their fate or station in life, of docility in the face of religious and government authority. He also recognized that the laws, institutions and customs that St. Lucia had inherited from the French and English weren't designed with the best interest of the people (who now populated the island) in mind, but for the benefit of the plantation owners and the colonial powers who saw it as being in their best interest to keep the population in servitude.

For the most part, the George Charles-led labor union turned political party had been a voice of protest and a struggle for the rights of the working class. Under John Compton, aided by bananas, the country made great socio-economic strides, but the government had operated more or less within the structure and institutions laid down by Britain. But these were the same structures and institutions that George Odlum was seeing as not being in the best interest of the majority of St. Lucians, and which were helping to perpetuate the self-defeating culture and patterns of behavior that the people had been forced to adopt to survive. George Odlum must have been keenly aware that though the reigns of government were now securely in the hands of people who had risen from among the populace, the real power, the economic power, were still in the hands of a minority of people, remnants of the decedents of the island's slave and colonial masters. Maybe it was for this reason that George Odlum hadn't simply concerned himself with getting into power, but spoke of revolutionary changes.

George Odlum, Peter Josie and the Labor Party showed great disdain for tourism (which probably to them was reminiscent of slavery) and they talked of nationalizing industries. George Odlum often questioned the appropriateness of the Westminster style of government for St. Lucia. He saw what passed as democracy as a hoax, a farce on the people of St. Lucia. Because according to him, how could a country be truly democratic when it possesses a largely uneducated and timid population who could easily be cowed into submissiveness and whose

vote could be easily bought with a few dollars, a shot of rum, a promise of a job. Instead, George Odlum proposed a single party system in which the best minds would come together to work in the best interest of the country.

Of course, some may have seen that as self-serving when the chief proponent of such a system was already convinced, and made no bones about it, that he possessed the best of the best minds and therefore he would naturally be the one heading this single party system. And there is also the concern of how does the country go about changing the government if the great majority of people become dissatisfied with its performance.

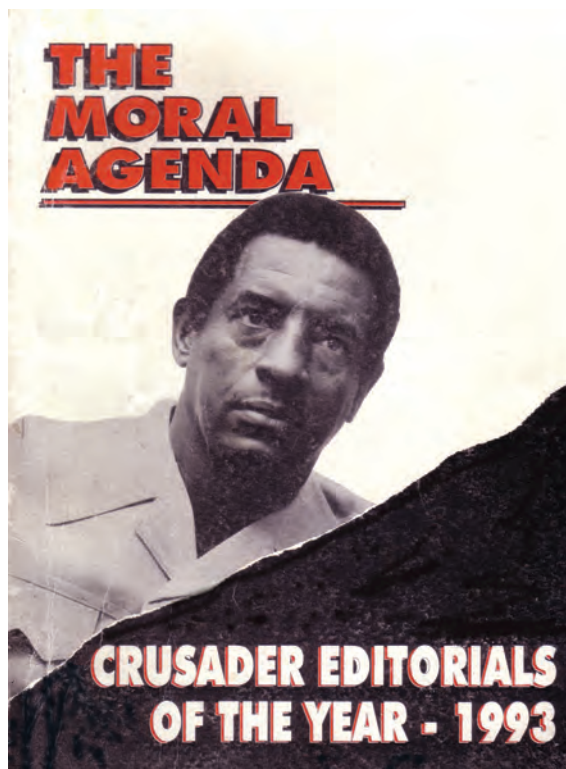
Indeed, George Odlum wasn't convinced that simply changing governments would have changed the real economic and power structure of the country. Hence the reason he wasn't simply interested in replacing John Compton as leader of the

country, but he wanted to radically break away from the country's colonial and slave legacy and instead to begin the work of fostering black pride, national identity and self-realization. He hoped to begin the process of mending the psychological damage of self-loathing and inferiority that slavery and then colonialism had heaped on St. Lucians. On the political platform George Odlum often said that when the Labor Party got into power the people would be free. It seemed that what George Odlum was trying to say was that for the first time since the ancestors of the majority of St. Lucians left the shores of Africa and India there was hope of total freedom—physical, mental, spiritual, economical, political.

As mentioned before, George Odlum wasn't the first person to dream of these ideas. Neither was he the first St. Lucian to go about educating the people on their political rights, their rights as citizens, their moral right to have

access as anyone else to the best the country had to offer. Labor unions had always seen it as part of their function and responsibility to educate their members and the general public on their rights as workers and citizens and on the main goals and objectives of unionism. In fact, the union didn't have a choice but to focus on educating its membership. In the early days the unions faced an overwhelmingly illiterate labor force who saw the union simply as an organ to address their individual grievances with their employers. The big picture of collective bargaining and representation was lost on most workers. One of George Charles's first duties upon joining the St. Lucia Cooperative Workers Union back in 1945 was to conduct adult education classes with the modest goal of teaching union members to read and write, at least up to the point where they could sign their names, understand basic union goals and operations, and safeguard themselves against employers shortchanging their wages. The business of raising political awareness among the masses has been around ever since the inception of labor unions and political parties.

If George Odlum's nationalistic ideas didn't originate with





him, and if it is true that from since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century St. Lucians have been engaged in the raising of political consciousness, why is it then that George Odlum is the one who is being singled out for this honor?

First, George Odlum may not have originated the ideas, but he was at the cutting edge of radical and nationalistic world politics. In the sixties, when George Odlum began making an impression upon St. Lucia, cable television news, the ubiquitous worldwide web, and the personal computer were still decades away. Meaning that St. Lucia's exposure to the outside world was extremely limited. This combined with the fact that St. Lucia was

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## **Pays Natal**

This god-sent pebble of my birth,  
Fixed for all time in waters  
Reeking of the stench from the armpits of history,  
In better times laced with glittering sands  
In whose laps weary waves came to rest their surfing curls;

This apostolic dot of earth  
That homes amnesiac minions  
Disendowed of all ancestral endowments,  
Now dares to claim a voice where lion-nations disassemble.

This pinprick with hardly a worth,  
A near still-born in the womb of impotence  
Lactating at the breast of long-deceased empires,  
Devoid of a will, she stretches out  
For the stone-clenched hand of Ben-E-Factor.

This nowhere of an island-state,  
Latched to other fetuses of common phallic jerk  
Shaken off like grains of sand and abandoned,  
Suffers the faticidal stampede for baited crumbs.

This sun-encumbered chunk of rock,  
Catapulted by David's sling  
To land here, and forever anchored,  
Is marked to emerge and shape destinies for many.

This lethargic, rheumatoid speck,  
Fallen moat from creation's eye,  
Shall rise, like a phoenix,  
From the ashen cleavages of sulphuric breasts,  
To fashion a people fit for nationhood.

This paradisaical, brown-green stone,  
Where the iguana and Laureate are brothers,  
Where the lozèi and periwinkle lie in warm embrace,  
Where the Rose and Magwit wage war in jest only;

This incomparable rock, whose divine mamelles  
Defy gravity, never bent heavenward,  
Stands as the ultimate poem, written by the finger of God,  
Her every gesture a dress rehearsal for the grand recital.

—Modeste Downes

a poor, backward island (even in comparison to other West Indian islands), hugely uneducated, with only a select few possessing a secondary, much less a college education, suggests that George Odlum with his acute intellect and exposure to the crosscurrents of world ideas gathered during his stay in England and on his regional and international jobs, was far ahead of most St. Lucians in his thinking. George Odlum, therefore, was well equipped, probably more so than his predecessors, for the job of raising political consciousness. In fact, probably it was because George Odlum was far ahead of most St. Lucians in his thinking that so many thought of him as a great thinker, an original thinker. On a world stage George Odlum may not have been praised as a great thinker (a radical politician, yes), but for St. Lucians he was indeed a first.

Second, to really educate people, to guarantee that whatever you are preaching will sink in deep into their psyche and to get them to act upon what they have learned, you have to first grab their undivided attention, you have to speak in a language that they can understand, you have to bring out the relevance of your teachings to their lives, you have to clothe the teaching in a substance that would make it appetizing, chewable, easy to swallow and then digestible. As said above, George Odlum didn't just have ideas, he was at the cutting edge of radical nationalistic politics. But could he deliver?

It is here that all the other talents of George Odlum that I have discarded as being insufficient in and of themselves to bestow upon him the status of greatness come into play. George Odlum used his lively intellect, his oratorical prowess, the flair that had turned his goal keeping into an art, and his knowledge and understanding of literature, drama and theater to mesmerize and hold the nation spellbound, to have people begging for more of what he was offering, to have them waiting patiently and eagerly for hours in the hope of hearing him just one more time. George Odlum's brilliance at holding a crowd in awe was such that no one, supporter or foe alike, could leave his audience without feeling touched, without feeling that they had witnessed a phenomenon, without sensing that they had been through an unforgettable experience. It was under such a spell that George Odlum told the people that they can rise above their current station in life and soar with the best from any part of the world, that he empowered the nation with the thought that their destiny was in their own hands, that excellence and perfection had more to do with attitude, discipline, hard work, mental fortitude than the size of one's country or the amount of resources it possesses, that it was time that St. Lucians unshackled their minds from their slavery and colonial past and be free for real. This was the opium of change that George Odlum preached, this is what one suspects that both his detractors and admirers meant when they said that George Odlum raised the nation's political consciousness, and probably it is for that, above all else, that they have pronounced him a great man.

So the man who never presided over a government, who never completed a full political term in office, who was one of the chief architects of the country's worse political debacle, a debacle that according to John Compton set the country ten years back, is being mentioned in the same breath as George Charles who helped lay the political foundation and established the industrial relations upon which the nation was built, and John Compton who, taking off where George Charles left off, laid down the economic and infrastructural foundation of the coun-

try, and who was considered one of the Caribbean's most successful and effective political leaders.

George Odlum had thought and voiced that his destiny was to be Premier (Prime Minister) of St. Lucia. In hindsight, it is obvious that he had misread the oracle. The correct interpretation was that he would make such a tremendous impression on the St. Lucian psyche, that his stamp would be forever present and he would be counted among the great of his countrymen.

This is not surprising, for the men and women whose names never seem to recede to the backlog of history are not necessarily the great warriors and builders of nations, the great emperors and Kings, but those whose weapons were ideas and precepts, and whose battlefields were the hearts and minds of nations. I am talking about the Jesus Christ's, Shakespeare's, Muhammad's, the Buddha's of the world.



**Peter Josie**

## George Odlum: The Error of his Ways

However, notwithstanding George Odlum's greatness, it came with side effects. So intent was he on changing the course of history, on displacing the John Compton regime, on wiping out the final vestiges of slavery and colonialism, that he was willing to use any and every means. Thus, in advocating that if the Labor Party couldn't get into power by law, then they would get into power by violence, and then backing this up with stock piles of ammunition (and willing candidates to use these weapons), he was saying in effect that it is o.k. for citizens to use violence to achieve their goals.


The same way that soldiers find it necessary to dehumanize their enemy before they could bring themselves to slaughtering them, in attempting to change the system George Odlum went about denigrating the nation's institutions of authority. A perfect example of that was the occurrence in the House of Assembly, January 11, 1982, in the middle of the famous Labor power struggle, when George Odlum initiated playing catchers with the mace, the very symbol of governmental authority. Another example, was George Odlum's sanctioning of his supporters' jeering and physically abusing members of the opposition party at their political rallies. This behavior and attitude on the part of George Odlum may have signaled to the population that once they disagreed with the government or with any other authority it was ok to disrespect them, to verbally and physically abuse them. It is not far fetched to suggest that George Odlum may have helped foster in St. Lucia a culture of incivility and disrespect of authority.

That was why I thought it was ironic when, after the December 31, 2000 Castries Cathedral killings, perpetrated by two misguided young men, George Odlum said that he took some of the blame for the atrocity because he had allowed himself to lose touch with the common elements of the society. If he had made it his duty to be around, he may have been able to avert

the incident. The irony was not that George Odlum accepted blame for the travesty, but he accepted blame for the wrong reasons. His source of blame was the culture of violence he had helped give rise to. It was even more ironic that Peter Josie, who in the heyday of his political career was an even greater proponent than George Odlum of the use of violence to achieve political ends, recently led a march against the escalating violence in the country.

However, as I said earlier, it is the people that bestow the honor of greatness on individuals. Despite the fact that George Odlum's advocacy of violence is common knowledge, since his death few have voiced such an opinion, and when one so ventured, his comments have been heavily criticized. Maybe the public have been willing to overlook this indulgence of George Odlum's because they thought that this was the only way the system could have been shaken up, the only way that (to borrow a term from

Rick Wayne), the "John Compton Institution" could have been dismantled. But what is meant by the John Compton institution? Well, considering that John Compton presided over the country for so many years and during so many of the critical points in the islands history, many of the entrenched people in positions of authority were sympathizers of John Compton; also many people had come to believe that John Compton was the only one that could hold the country together, that to consider somebody else for the job was to court disaster. This was another mythical hold that John Compton had on the country. After all, he wasn't called "Daddy Compton" for nothing. At independence, St. Lucians twenty-five years and younger had memory of only one person—John Compton—ever heading the government.

Maybe another reason St. Lucians were willing to overlook this aspect of George Odlum's political career was because on his death bed he had apparently seen his error. He spent his last breath talking about healing the nation, and making amends with the likes of his protégé, Dr Kenny Anthony, with whom he had a fallout when he resigned in 2001 from his ministerial post and formed the Alliance. In fact, in his dying moments, not unlike another great man, King Solomon, who after a lifetime of indulging in all the pleasures and knowledge of the world said, *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit*, George Odlum was reported to have said: "I made a mistake. I thought politics was all. But it isn't about politics. It is about redeeming your country from the inside out. It is about creating communities where people love one another, where political differences don't divide us in a way that we cannot say that you are my brother and I am responsible for you." And his daughter, Yasmin, said: "George died a spiritual man. George died a man who knew God." It takes a truly great man, especially one like King Solomon who had taken great pride in his intellectual prowess, and who had been convinced that he was born to lead, to admit that he didn't quite get it right. 



# Friendly Neighbors

## A Short Story

“D anny, you need to keep on trying. The constant dripping of water will wear away stone.” That was advice from Antoine, a colleague who was an incurable optimist.

by **Gyanchand Rayman**

“Yeah, except that it will take – perhaps forever?” I said.

I was telling Antoine about my new neighbors. How stiff they were. I had made a few attempts at being friendly but had gotten nowhere. Every member of the family had looked at me straight in the eye and never bothered to return my wave.

“Antoine, if the first time I waved surprised them, shouldn't they have been prepared for the other occasions and respond like civilized beings?”

“Oh, come on. Don't be judgmental. They've probably had bad experiences with neighbors.”

Yeah right, bad experiences!

Anyway, I thought that I should try my utmost to dispel any undesirable notion that they might have had of me. After all, I am an amiable and cheerful person and I am sure that if I put my mind to it that I'd soon have them smiling with me from ear to ear.

So, there I stood at my back door, one day, and surveyed the jungle that was my yard. (Hey, I was not responsible for that. I'd just moved in.) It was in stark contrast to my neighbors' yard which was well groomed. Everything was neat – the knolls, the rolling slopes, the trees, the flowers. Mmm. Impressive.

Within the hour, with gleaming cutlass in hand, I was wading through acres of green, hacking and slashing and pruning until a few towering trees and I were the only things left standing triumphantly in an otherwise vast, decimated expanse.

Then I began to cart away piles upon piles of debris – until I reached the fence that separated my yard from my neighbors'. I looked at the two wilting banana trees lying beside my fence, and I looked at the clump from which they had been cut, on the other side. I saw old pipes in

my yard, with a few of them projecting into my neighbors' yard – from whence I gathered they had come. I saw old tyres and bottles and tins and garbage bags – some relatively fresh, with ants swarming on one that contained corned beef tins. I considered for a moment what a good neighbor ought to do, under the circumstances, and thought that I should be guided in my actions, accordingly. I felt that I owed it to my worthy neighbors to show respect for their property. So I took my time and raked everything that could have possibly belonged to my neighbors and dropped them in a heap on the inside of their fence, in their manicured yard.

While I was engaged in this neighborly act, brother and sister and mother and father had gathered silently on a shaven knoll in their yard and were observing my industry. I did not bother to exchange a word with them. I thought that my act of friendliness spoke for itself. I had so thoughtfully provided a convenient location for them to dispose of their garbage, in future. Hm, I was sure they must have held me in the very highest esteem then.

So the months rolled by and I continued my friendly waving while they responded with their usual friendly silence. My dog Rex, too, I noticed, was inclined to show regard for their household. Regularly, at nights, he would jump the fence and visit their pretty female Labrador. An so it did not come as a surprise to me that he became quite enamored of her and sired a litter of her pups. Quite cute these pups were—little furry things padding about with their tongues lolling out.

These past few weeks, I've been up before daybreak, and out on the road to walk Rex at 6:00 am, and along a secluded path, lined with trees, I would meet my neighbor-sister who would be out with her dogs also. Very neighborly, I'd reach down and scoop-up one of her fur-balls and pet it. She'd invariably, also, pick-up

a pup that's within reach and caress it and whisper endearments. And there we'd stand, in the crisp morning air and in the first light of dawn, two friendly neighbors sharing smiles and petting pups. Smiling and petting, and whispering endearments, with no other eyes to witness us, but those of our approving canine companions.



**Painting by Arnold Toulon,  
Featured artist of this issue.**

# The Economics of Corruption

by Prosper Raynold

**M**ost economists define corruption as the abuse of public or governmental power for private benefit. Accordingly, I will adopt it as my working definition of corruption. While this definition of corruption is restricted to the public arena, it nonetheless casts a broad net. For example, as defined here, corruption includes blatantly corrupt acts such as the unauthorized sale of passports and outright embezzlement of public funds as well as subtle acts such as specifying the requirements for an advertised job in ways that rule out all but an official's friends or cronies even if no explicit bribe is paid. In fact, it also includes seemingly insignificant acts by government employees such as calling in sick in order to accomplish some private task. In interpreting this definition of corruption, one should note that private benefit is by no means restricted to directly observable personal benefit. For example, a government official who hires a person from his village or clan over a more qualified candidate may be abusing his or her governmental authority for the private benefit of his or her village or clan and

## **Opportunities to abuse governmental power for private gain are an inevitable by-product of governments' economic role in market economies.**

may thereby acquire IOU's (I owe you's) that raise his or her status in the village or clan. It is also important to note that as defined here, corrupt acts may or may not be illegal. For example, under most jurisdictions it may not be illegal for the head of government to divulge privileged information to his or her siblings that gives them a competitive advantage over other citizens. But surely, a head of government who does this has abused public power for the private benefit of his or her siblings. One may disagree on how strictly the definition of corruption employed here should be interpreted and I expect that this will be influenced by societal norms and cultural factors. However, my hope is that a careful consideration of the economic consequences of corruption will encourage a relatively conservative or strict interpretation.

It is important for citizens to know what constitutes corruption; to be aware of its prevalence; to understand the conditions under which opportunities for corruption arise and are taken advantage of; to appreciate the economic consequences and/or costs of corruption; and given the preceding competencies, to develop a sense of the kinds of actions, policies, and institutional mechanisms that are required to combat corruption. This arti-

cle provides a discussion of some of these issues with particular emphasis on the costs of corruption.

## **Government Activism and Opportunities for Corruption**

**T**he quality of democratic government is heavily reliant on the choices voters make at the polls. However, the quality of these choices depends on the extent to which voters are informed about current affairs and the political and economic landscape in which their representatives are required to make decisions on their behalf. To the extent that corruption or the potential for corruption is an important part of the landscape, making informed choices at the polling booth requires an appreciation of the societal impact of corruption. Is corruption an important part of the political landscape? Is it likely to be in the future? My answer to both questions is a resounding yes that is informed by the observation that the necessary and sufficient conditions for corruption to thrive exist in virtually every state albeit at differing levels. Corruption is ubiquitous in both time and space. For example, in a widely cited treatment of public administration written in the fourth century B.C., Kautiliya characterized the ubiquity of corruption as follows:

*Just as it is impossible to not taste the honey that finds itself at the tip of the tongue, so it is impossible for a government servant to not eat up at least a bit of the king's revenue.*

Voters who are interested in fighting corruption should and do place substantial weight on the perceived personal integrity of those who offer themselves for political office. However, it is not clear that they pay as much attention to the implications of advocated economic policies for corruption. My sense is that voters take the level of opportunities to engage in corrupt acts as given and elect political parties or politicians who, based on voters' perception of their integrity, are least likely to take advantage of these opportunities. Unfortunately, to the extent that voters fail to appreciate and thereby ignore the effects of advocated economic and other policies on opportunities for corruption, this approach may be fundamentally flawed. For example, the analysis to follow will demonstrate that failure to appreciate the implications of proposed policy on opportunities for corruption could result in the election of a political party that is successful in positioning itself as the anti-corruption party but may concurrently propose a set of well intentioned economic policies that have the unintended consequence of increasing opportunities for corruption. For a voter who accepts the seeming inevitability of corruption suggested by Kautiliya, the importance of limiting opportu-





### **Overlooking the city of Castries, St. Lucia's seat of Government**

nities for corruption looms large and should place a high premium on developing an understanding of how opportunities for corruption arise.

Economic theory suggests that opportunities to abuse governmental power for private gain are an inevitable by-product of governments' economic role in market economies. At the most general level, the economic role of the government is to provide support for the market system when it yields socially desirable results and to correct for the market system when it yields results that are deemed socially undesirable. In democratic political systems, socially desirable outcomes are defined by political competition. In particular, open election campaigns allow political parties to advance competing views on what is socially desirable. If a given election result is justifiably interpretable as conferring

## **The relative absence of arm's-length relationships increases the probability that government officials will engage in corruption by granting preferential treatment to relatives and friends.**

a mandate, the winning party gets an opportunity to implement its previously advanced views on what is socially desirable. To the extent that unfettered markets yield results that are considered socially desirable under the prevailing view, no economic role is envisioned for the government.

However, the view that unfettered markets will yield some socially undesirable results and that there is an economic role for government is widely accepted. For example, the consensus view in economics is that in unfettered markets, goods for which producers are unable to capture most of the benefits associated with their production will tend to be produced at levels below the socially optimal level. Similarly, goods whose production

includes some costs that are borne by society at large instead of by the producer will tend to be produced at levels that exceed the socially optimal level. In the former case, we observe either government subsidies as is common in education or outright government provision as in the case of national defense, law enforcement, and public roads. For goods that are over produced (for example pollution) we observe government regulations or taxes intended to force producers to incur the full costs of their productive activity and thereby bring their production in line with socially optimal levels. These examples are illustrative of the view that the degree of government intervention (i.e. the government's economic role) in the economy in any given era or country is defined by the gap between what is currently deemed to be socially desirable and the results generated by markets in the absence of government intervention.

In practice we observe governments around the world intervening in markets as regulators and facilitators of economic activity, as providers of public goods (i.e. goods for which purely market incentives may not lead to positive output such as public roads and infrastructure, border control, and national parks), and as income re-distributors. For example, the market system is fundamentally reliant on voluntary exchange. Such exchange cannot take place in an environment in which property rights are not adequately defined and protected. To see this, imagine a world in which property rights are not properly defined and/or enforced. Would you be willing to buy a piece of property if you could not verify that it belongs to the seller or if you believed that you would have no recourse if a third party chose to steal your newly acquired property? Similarly, in order for markets to work well, it is vitally important for market participants to have the ability to conduct transactions that require the exchange of a good, service, or payment today for some good, service, or payment in the future. However, in order for an economic entity to enter into an exchange that requires future performance, it must be confident that it will have recourse in the event the other party fails to perform. Consequently, coherent contract law and enforcement of contracts is vitally important to the functioning



**Government Waterfront Buildings, Castries, St. Lucia**

of markets. These observations highlight the consistency of government definition and enforcement of property rights and contract law with the view that some government actions support and/or facilitate the operation markets.

In a pure market system at least some socially desirable public roads and infrastructure will not be built because private agents will not be able to capture enough of the gains from these projects to make them profitable. As a consequence the government corrects the purely market result by building roads and infrastructure. However, in order for it to do so it may award construction and maintenance contracts that inevitably provide opportunities for ministers and other officials entrusted with the public power to award contracts in ways that yield private benefits. In addition, the maintenance of civil order requires govern-

## **Our culture may make it more difficult to conduct government business with private entities at arm's-length and may contribute to corruption.**

ment regulation of the use of roads by, among other things, requiring drivers' licenses and licensing of automobiles. This in turn creates opportunities for government officials entrusted with governmental authority to abuse this authority for private gain by, for example, issuing driver's licenses to undeserving individuals in return for a monetary bribe or some other consideration.

Government programs to redistribute income typically specify eligibility criteria for the beneficiaries of these programs. In most cases political leaders typically rely on civil servants to administer these programs and thereby, provide opportunities for them to abuse their governmentally derived authority to, among other things, grant undeserving benefits to relatives and friends. In some cases political leaders maybe deliberately vague in specifying eligibility criteria in order to grant greater discretion to civil servants who are willing to assist them in granting favors to political supporters.

Clearly, the pattern of government intervention in markets creates opportunities for corruption as defined earlier. This pattern extends to all areas of government intervention in economic activity or markets. For example, government imposition of border controls in the form of tariffs, immigration requirements, and

controlled issuance of passports create opportunities for customs officers, immigration officers, and employees of the passport office to use their governmental authority for private gain. In fact, one of the great ironies of government intervention in economic activity is that while many interventions may be well intentioned, opportunities for corruption increase as government intrusion in markets increase. This may present voters who are concerned about corruption with a difficult conundrum if political parties that are most likely to advocate an anti-corruption plank are also more disposed to increasing government intervention in markets.

Despite the clear positive correlation between the invasiveness of government intervention in markets and the opportunities for corruption, it bears re-emphasizing that government intervention in markets creates opportunities for corruption but does not by itself create corruption. The Nobel laureate, Gary Becker, has suggested that corruption, as defined here, would not exist if all governments were abolished. However, his observation must be weighed against the fact that countries like Canada, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden that by most measures have relatively high degrees of government intervention in markets are among the least corrupt countries in the world. Clearly, government intervention in markets is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the existence of corruption. There are other conditions such as the relative absence of arm's-length relationships that encourage or facilitate taking advantage of opportunities to engage in corruption. While a thorough discussion of the conditions under which government officials are likely to take advantage of opportunities to engage in corrupt activities is beyond the scope of this article, a brief discussion of arm's-length relationships in markets is likely to be particularly instructive.

### **Arm's Length Relationships and Corruption**

**W**hile it is difficult to precisely define an arm's-length relationship, it may be easier to talk about what it looks like. Accordingly, for the purposes of this article we will assume that an arm's-length relationship exists between a government agent with the authority to grant licenses, contracts, etc., and private entities who apply for these licenses, contracts, etc., if the decision to award the license, contract, etc., is not influenced by personal relationships or emotional connections. In situations where an arm's-length relationship does not exist, it is much more likely that decisions on contracts, licenses,





**Greaham Louisy Administration Building  
Office of the Prime Minister of St. Lucia**

and so forth will not be based on consistently applied rational and transparent procedures and universally accepted principles. The relative absence of arm's-length relationships increases the probability that government officials will engage in corruption by granting preferential treatment to relatives and friends. In fact, the absence of arm's-length relationships could be so pervasive that government officials may come to believe that they deserve special consideration from strangers who apply for licenses, contracts, passports, etc. When such consideration is not forthcoming, these unconnected applicants may face an increase in the costs of acquiring licenses etc., in the form of longer waiting periods, unnecessary documentation, or in extreme cases, outright denial.

After spending a few months in 1989 studying life in the Danish village of Hvilsager (population 104), Prakash Reddy, an

## **Corruption imposes significant economic costs by altering or distorting economic incentives in ways that are inimical to the public good.**

Indian professor of social anthropology recorded his impressions of the relations among the villagers in a paper titled "Danes are Like That" which was reviewed by the Economist magazine in its January 25, 1992 issue. Professor Reddy found an emphasis on individualism and independence and a general absence of close relations among villagers. For example, villagers knew very little about their neighbors and hardly visited each other's houses. Within families, children were raised to be independent and encouraged to leave home as soon as they turned eighteen. Adult children hardly visited their parents and preferred to keep in contact via the telephone. The elderly were put into group homes and seem contented. Given our observations about the nature and importance of arm's-length relationships, it seems reasonable to argue that Danish culture, as represented by the villagers in Hvilsager, should be relatively conducive to the maintenance of arm's-length relationships between government officials and the

people they serve.

If an anthropologist were to undertake a similar study in St. Lucia or the broader Caribbean, I suspect his impressions would be very different. Our children are raised within extended families that extend beyond blood relations to members of the church and neighbors. Upon becoming adults children leave their parents homes after they get married, enter a live-in relationship, or emigrate. Our society frowns upon individuals who "foresake" their families by failing to share resources with less fortunate members of the family; by withholding emotional support in the form of visits and other contact; and by refraining to use governmental and other authority to help members of the extended family. Perhaps because of the perceived obligation to help family members in the ways described above, individuals do not hesitate to give unsolicited advice or otherwise insert themselves in other peoples business. Consequently, in contrast to the Danish case, our culture may make it more difficult to conduct government business with private entities at arm's-length and may contribute to corruption as defined earlier.

## **Corruption Distorts Incentives**

**M**y experience with economic theory and the conduct of economic analysis has taught me that the best way to understand how a given event, phenomenon, or change in the economic environment affects the economy is to examine its effects on incentives. Among other benefits, this approach is useful for understanding how income taxation or changes in income tax rates affect the economy, how inflation affects economic performance, how a natural disaster such as a hurricane affects the economy, how changes in monetary and or fiscal policy affect the economy, and for our current purposes how corruption affects the economy.

Given the wide range of activities that may satisfy our definition of corruption, it is impossible for me to individually identify every type of corruption and its costs. Therefore, we need an organizing or guiding principle. Accordingly, I offer the following principle. Corruption imposes significant economic costs by altering or distorting economic incentives in ways that are inimical to the public good. In what is to follow, I will argue that corruption distorts incentives along a number of dimensions and that these distortions lead to inefficient allocation of resources that have debilitating effects on aggregate economic activity and prospects for economic growth.

## **Corruption and Policy Effectiveness**

**A**s noted earlier, governments play an important corrective role in the economy. In particular, governments use their powers to tax and regulate to correct for market results that differ from what society deems desirable. Corruption frequently impedes well intentioned government regulations intended to improve social welfare and may thereby significantly reduce government effectiveness. To illustrate, consider the following scenario. The government of a developing country received a credible report from an international environmental organization. The report detailed substantial environmental and

health risks associated with fumes being released from four oil refineries operating in the country. Upon investigation, the government found that all of the refineries were releasing a hazardous substance into the atmosphere at levels that exceed international standards. Since all of the refineries were operated by U.S. based multinational firms, the government also checked the standard that would apply in the U.S. and found that U.S. standards were even stricter than international standards. In accordance with its corrective role, the government passed legislation requiring firms to clean up the fumes being released in accor-

## Large infrastructure projects and defense expenditures are more amenable to the arrangement of kickbacks than are projects in education, healthcare, and maintenance of infrastructure.

dance with international standards and hired an environmental scientist to monitor compliance. In order to comply with this new legislation each of the refineries would have to incur costs that would reduce their profitability.

Three of the refineries (lets call them refineries R1, R2 and R3) made the necessary changes to their production processes, incurred the costs associated with the newly imposed standards,

and given that the price of refined products are fixed by the government, were forced to accept lower profit margins due to their inability to pass the higher costs on to consumers. The fourth refinery (refinery R4), which was the least efficient of the four, immediately employed a "facilitator" who makes a living by helping expatriates navigate or in some cases circumvent the maze of government regulations to be satisfied in the ordinary conduct of business. The facilitator in question is a close personal friend of the environmental scientist charged with monitoring the refineries. Over an afternoon barbeque and with the help of a substantial monetary offer, the facilitator convinces his friend to falsify his compliance reports on refinery R4 to indicate compliance with regulations. Having arranged to circumvent the new regulations, refinery R4 made cosmetic changes at its plant and with the exception of regular payments to its facilitator and the environmental scientist, did not incur the additional costs incurred by the other refineries. As such, its profit margin was significantly higher than that of its competitors. Within three years of these events, under the weight of reduced profit margins and government refusal to allow increases in the price of refined products, refineries R1-R3 closed operations while refinery R4 expanded to fill the void. Given its new found monopoly power and its increased leverage with the government, refinery R4 was confident that it could coerce the government to increase the regulated prices of refined products. In addition, concerned that its failure to comply with regulations may be revealed in the future, refinery R4 decided to begin compliance with government regulations. To minimize its vulnerability to exposure, it appointed the environmental scientist to its newly created and lucrative



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position of chief compliance officer and put its facilitator on a long-term retainer contract. Within six months of beginning compliance, refinery R4 filed a petition with the government to have it increase the price of refined products. Given the fact that refinery R4 was now the only refinery in the country and rumors that it might close operations in the country if its request was not granted, the government acquiesced.

It should be clear that the scientist in the scenario described above used his governmental authority for private benefit and that his actions qualify as corruption as defined in this article. What are the costs of this corruption? I see several costs all of which are suggested by economic theory and consistent with empirical evidence on the costs of corruption. Firstly, despite the

## Corruption leads to white elephants, poorly constructed roads, bridges, and other infrastructure, and poorly maintained roads and government buildings.

government's proper intention to protect the environment and citizenry from the pollution generated under unfettered markets, the corrupt actions of a government official allowed refinery R4 to circumvent the government policy and from the onset compromised the effectiveness of the attempt to force the industry to internalize the cost associated with its production. The scenario described above does not include corruption on the part of cabinet level government officials. This is significant because it highlights the fact that the enlightened policies of an honest cabinet are likely to be distorted and rendered ineffective by a corrupt bureaucracy. As such, a generally ineffective government may be a major cost of corruption.

The corruption described above allowed refinery R4 to buy access to a more permissive set of constraints relative to the set



of constraints available to its competitors. In particular, by paying bribes, refinery R4 was able to buy significant cost advantages over its competition. This is a classic example of what I earlier referred to as the distortionary effects of corruption. By improving the incentives available to refinery R4 relative to that available to its competitors, corruption made it possible for the least efficient refinery to thrive and ultimately led to the demise of its more efficient competitors. Economic efficiency demands that the production of any good or service be undertaken by the most efficient firms, that any given job should be filled by the most qualified or productive applicant, that government contracts should be awarded to the best applicants, etc.,. However, in order to achieve this efficient outcome competitors in any given endeavor must compete on a level playing field, corruption gives some competitors (whether for a job, market share, government contract etc.) an unfair advantage over others and thereby hampers economic efficiency.

The preceding scenario provides an opportunity for us to elaborate on the effects of corruption on economic efficiency and social welfare. As noted, ultimately the only refinery in the country was refinery R4, as such it became a monopoly and was able to use this monopoly power to coerce the government into allowing an increase in the price of refined products. Consequently, consumers ended up paying higher prices for refined products and in effect refinery R4 was able to pass the costs of cleaning its fumes to consumers. It is well known that for most products or services monopoly production is inefficient relative to more competitive industrial or market structures. Monopolies tend to restrict output and increase price to maximize their profits. So despite the fact that refinery R4 ultimately complied with new regulations, the cost to consumers in the form of higher gas prices and to society at large due to reduction in efficiency and the increased market power of refinery R4 was higher than it would have been in the absence of corruption. The only beneficiaries were refinery R4, the facilitator, and the environmental scientist while everyone else was made worse off.

## Corruption: Public Investment, Health Care, and Education

In preparation for its annual budget debate, the cabinet of a small developing country meets to consider the amount and composition of its planned capital expenditures in the forthcoming year and its planned expenditures on health care and education. Among the proposals to be considered is a 19 million dollar shopping and entertainment complex in the downtown area of the prime minister's district. The prime minister has been under a lot of political pressure in his district due to the decline of the downtown area, and some political pundits have started to question his re-electability. The government hopes that the new complex will be instrumental in resuscitating the area and plans to rent space to private operators (mostly political cronies) at below market rates. However, despite the availability of a team of urban planners and economists with substantial experience in conducting impact studies, no formal study of the impact of the proposed shopping area has been commissioned or conducted.

In addition to the foregoing, a confidential report prepared by the country's public health service recently highlighted the

appalling state of bathrooms (toilets) in schools and government offices throughout the country. The report notes that many schools have poorly functioning toilets that frequently overflow and that hand washing facilities are either non-existent or far from adequate. The health service has reported an alarming rise in reported illnesses and deaths from diseases that are usually associated with fecal matter. In addition, an epidemiologist and a health economist associated with the ministry of health have released a joint report in which they argue that sick students, teachers, and government employees transmit diseases to family members and other associates, who in turn transmit to others. In addition, family members who do not get sick miss work to take care of loved ones. They estimate that the loss of productivity associated with this cycle amounts to tens of millions of dollars per year. They conclude that refurbishing and/or upgrading toilets in all schools and government offices will reduce this cost by 80 percent. In light of the foregoing, the ministry has developed a plan to rectify the problem that will cost 20 million dollars.

The government can boost its capital expenditures budget by 19 million to build the shopping complex or it can boost its maintenance budget by 20 million to fix the toilets. However, given the budgetary constraints it faces the government can only come

## **High levels of corruption are associated with high primary school drop out rates, high infant mortality rates, high child mortality rates, and a higher percentage of low birth weight babies.**

up with 20 million dollars. In making its decision, the cabinet carefully considers the available reports and the pros and cons of each project. Most prominent among the criteria employed are the political visibility of the project (i.e. the extent to which the party and the prime minister will be able to get political credit), the project's potential to reward supporters of the ruling party, and the opportunities the project provides for kickbacks to the ruling party's reelection fund. In the end the capital expenditures budget is boosted by 19 million dollars and the maintenance budget by 1 million dollars. Is this action by the cabinet an act of corruption?

Earlier we defined corruption as the abuse of public or governmental power for private gain. In determining whether the decision to fund the shopping mall is a case of corruption, consideration of the motivations of the cabinet is of utmost importance. As described, the cabinet gave relatively greater weight to the fortunes of the ruling political party. However, the interest of any political party including the ruling party is a private interest. Consequently, using private criteria such as the electoral fortunes of the ruling party to make public resource allocation decisions is fundamentally corrupt. What are the costs of corruption in this case and what do they teach us about the effects of corruption on society?

Governments are regularly faced with choices similar to that described in the preceding example. To the extent that criteria

such as political visibility and the ease with which kickbacks can be extracted from projects, are the primary criteria used to rank projects, the playing field will be tilted in favor of certain types of projects. Most economists who are active in research on corruption suggest that large infrastructure projects and defense expenditures are more amenable to the arrangement of kickbacks than are projects in education, healthcare, and maintenance of infrastructure. Moreover, on average, infrastructure projects offer the greatest political visibility. Consequently, to the extent that corruption of this type exists in a country, its budgetary decisions will inefficiently favor large infrastructure projects over expenditures on healthcare, education, and maintenance. Consequently, this leads to excessive investment in projects that are amenable to corrupt exploitation at the expense of expenditures on healthcare, education, and maintenance. In addition, since kickbacks increase the cost of these projects, this kind of corruption increases government expenditures while reducing the rate of return society earns on these investments.

The famous Italian bribery scandal commonly referred to as *tangentopoli* (bribe city) provides a dramatic example. After the scandal broke and a large number of public officials were relieved of their governmental authority, capital spending fell dramatically to reflect a reduction in the number of projects being undertaken and in the costs of the typical project. Transparency International reported that within three years the cost of rail links in the city of Milan fell by 52 percent, the cost of a kilometer of subway fell by 57 percent, and the budget for a new airport terminal was reduced by 59 percent. Unfortunately, the costs of corruption cannot be measured simply in terms of increases in the costs of government or public investment. The volume titled *Governance, Corruption, and Economic Performance* edited by George T. Abed and Sanjeev Gupta and published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) contains several chapters on the effects of corruption on economic performance. In the chapter titled *Corruption, Public Investment, and Growth*, Tanzi and Davoodi use data from a large cross-section of countries to demonstrate that high corruption is associated with high levels of government or public investment; low government revenue; low levels of operating and maintenance expenditures; and poor quality of infrastructure. In other words, corruption leads to white elephants, poorly constructed roads, bridges, and other infrastructure, and poorly maintained roads and government buildings.

Perhaps the most heartbreaking effect of this kind of corruption is its diversion of public expenditures away from education and health care in favor of public investments that are more suitable to corrupt exploitation. The role of education as a primary requirement for sustained economic growth is well understood as is the importance of adequate health care. It is impossible for an undereducated and sickly population to achieve its full potential. Consequently, the failure to adequately invest in health care and education is not only of concern for current societal welfare, but has important implications for the foreseeable future. These are not simply theoretical conclusions; they are supported by empirical evidence. For example, in chapter ten of the aforementioned IMF publication, Gupta, Davoodi, and Tiongson show that in a sample of more than 50 countries high levels of corruption are associated with low quality public health care provision and with high primary school drop out rates. Even more disturbing is their finding that high levels of corruption are associated with high



IT'S DIFFICULT TO TELL WHO ARE  
THE ONES WHO WORK WITH THE  
DRUG BARONS



EXCUSE ME?  
ARE YOU TRYING  
TO ACCUSE ME OF  
SOMETHING?

infant mortality rates; with high child mortality rates; and a higher percentage of low birth weight babies.

### Labor Market Effects of Corruption

**T**here are two primary avenues via which corruption imposes economic consequences in labor markets. First, when hiring and promotion decisions emphasize criteria other than education, training, and experience it reduces the return to human capital (i.e. an applicant's accumulated education, training, and experience) and thereby, reduces the incentive for young people to invest in human capital. So for example, if hiring and promotion decisions are dominated by nepotism, family connections, and willingness to grant sexual favors, the returns to these characteristics rises relative to the return to human capital. As a consequence, rational economic agents will reduce investment in human capital and in favor of increasing investment in developing connections and other similar characteristics. For those who have already acquired human capital and those who do not have access to connections, alternatives such as emigration and criminal activity may beckon.

Within the class of government employees, corruption may distort incentives by increasing the defacto return to some occu-

pations relative to others. For example, in some countries despite the fact that customs officers' legal salaries are relatively low, the demand for these positions outstrip that for other more fulfilling jobs. In fact, the most talented graduates end up working for the customs department. This phenomenon reflects the perception that customs officers can substantially augment their legal compensation by engaging in corruption. When these conditions prevail within a country's civil service, even if the overall level of education, training, and experience may be quite high, the distortion of incentives hampers attempts to match applicants with the jobs to which they are most suited and may result in an array of mismatches that make it almost impossible to achieve minimal efficiency in the delivery of government services.

Earlier, I highlighted the view that in cultures in which there is a relative absence of arm's-length relationships, corruption is more likely to thrive and that government officials may come to believe that they should receive special consideration to grant licenses, contracts, etc. to applicants with whom they have no special relationship. So, for example, government officials may deliberately increase the time it takes to grant a license and demand speed money from strangers or may find reasons to deny the applicant until a bribe is paid. Under these conditions,

### In most countries the adverse effects of corruption on small and medium sized business enterprises is more severe than its effects on large enterprises.

strangers find it more efficient to employ the services of facilitators who, because of their substantial prior investment in developing connections, are able to exploit the lack of arm's-length relationships to get things done. Several observers have noted that members of the class of facilitators are typically among a country's most gifted and innovative citizens and are lured away from other more productive endeavors by the fact that the return to facilitating is much higher than the return to other endeavors such as the professions, entrepreneurship, and public service. This skewing of the return to facilitating relative to other activities that from a societal point of view are more productive is another example of the distortionary effects of corruption.

### Implications of Corruption for Economic Growth and Development

**S**o far, our examination of the economic costs of corruption suggests that corruption leads to low quality infrastructure that is poorly maintained. Macroeconomists have long recognized the potential for public investments in infrastructure and in research and development to enhance private productivity. For example, a well maintained system of feeder roads makes it easier for banana farmers to get their produce to market in good condition, reduces losses due to damage in transit, and thereby increases farmers' profits. Similar arguments can be made about projects that reduce transportation cost, improve telecommunications, or lower the costs of electricity. To the extent that corrup-

tion reduces the productivity of such public investments it also reduces private productivity and thereby hampers economic growth.

We also noted that corruption favors less productive infrastructure projects over expenditures on health care, education, and maintenance of infrastructure such as roads. Inadequate funding of healthcare and education leads to a sickly and undereducated workforce that is less productive and thereby leads to lower rates of economic growth. Poorly maintained roads increase the rate at which vehicles depreciate. Depreciation is a form of consumption (i.e. consumption of capital). As such, an increase in depreciation of vehicles implies an increase in capital consumption or a decrease in the savings rate. To put it differently, if the roads are poorly maintained, your car will require more frequent maintenance and replacement of parts and will have a shorter useful life. As a consequence, you will end up spending much more on transportation than you might if the roads were properly maintained. The extra resources you spend to fix or replace your car are resources that could be saved for a down payment on a new house, to finance your children's education, or to start a small business. To the extent that investment is dependent on savings, any reduction in the aggregate savings rate will lead to a reduction in private investment and to a reduction in capital and the rate of economic growth.


A substantial body of statistical evidence documents the negative effects of corruption on investment in physical capital by both local and foreign firms. For example, using a corruption perception index that ranks countries according to perceived levels of corruption, Professor Shang-Jin Wei of Harvard University calculates that if the level of corruption in the Philippines could be lowered to that of Singapore which has relatively low levels of corruption, investment as a fraction of gross domestic product would be higher by 6.6 percent. Many developing countries attempt to increase the flow of investment from multinational firms by offering to reduce the rate at which their earnings are taxed or by granting tax holidays. Professor Wei estimates that reducing the level of corruption in India to that in Singapore would yield an increase in foreign investment equivalent to the increase that would be realized if the tax rate multinational corporations would have to pay on each additional dollar of profits was reduced by 22 percentage points. In other words, if multinational firms operating in India would ordinarily have to pay 40 cents of each additional dollar of profits to the government, it could avoid offering a tax break of 22 cents and still achieve the same increase in the flow of foreign investment by reducing the level of corruption in India to the Singaporean level. Virtually all theories of economic growth assign an important role to capital accumulation in the growth process. Since capital is accumulated by investing, investment in physical capital by both domestic and foreign firms is an important determinant of the rate of economic growth. Wei's results and that of many others clearly document that corruption has a negative effect on investment and ultimately on the rate of economic growth.

In most countries the adverse effects of corruption on small and medium sized business enterprises is more severe than its effects on large enterprises. This reflects the fact that in contrast to large enterprises, small and medium size firms are less likely to be "connected", have fewer resources with which to pay bribes or employ facilitators, and because of their smallness, are more susceptible to the corrupt whims of government officials.

I noted earlier that corruption distorts incentives in favor of those who are willing and able to pay bribes or otherwise secure special treatment. To the extent that large enterprises are better able to secure these favors, corruption enhances their fortunes to the detriment of small and medium sized firms. This is of particular concern to growth economists because it is now widely accepted that compared to large, well established firms, small and medium sized enterprises are more innovative and more active in the development of new products or services, and as such, are the primary drivers of economic growth in most countries. In addition, small and medium sized enterprises are relatively labor intensive which helps explain the well documented facts that small and medium sized firms account for the bulk of employment in most economies and that they create most of the new jobs. Consequently, to the extent that corruption allows large firms to gain a competitive advantage relative to small or medium size enterprises, it discourages economic growth and job creation.

Corruption hampers economic growth. So what? Consider this. The World Bank reports that in 2002 gross domestic prod-

## **The extent that corruption allows large firms to gain a competitive advantage relative to small or medium size enterprises, it discourages economic growth and job creation.**

uct (GDP) per capita was 4124 US\$ in St. Lucia and 9423 US\$ in Barbados. According to the International Monetary Fund's data, the average rate of growth of real GDP per capita between 1999 and 2003 for St. Lucia and Barbados were respectively, -1.14 percent and 0.18 percent. The negative rate of growth for St. Lucia captures the fact that real GDP per capita has been falling in St. Lucia. According to the World Bank, GDP per capita in Haiti in 2002 was 415 US\$. I used well known algebraic techniques to answer the following question. How long will it take for real GDP per capita to fall to Haiti's level if St. Lucia maintains an average rate of growth of -1.14 percent? My answer: 201 years. If St. Lucia's average growth rate falls to -3.0 percent (it was -5.5 percent in 2001), its GDP per capita will reach Haitian levels within 77 years. Alternatively, and on a more positive note, if the average growth rate is 1 percent (the IMF estimates it was 0.9 percent in 2003), it will take 83 years for GDP per capita in St. Lucia to approach the current level in Barbados. Without accusing anyone of corruption, if we assume that a corruption reduction initiative in St. Lucia could increase the rate of growth from 1 percent to 2 percent it would take 41.5 years for GDP per capita to reach Barbados' level, and if a growth rate of 3 percent can be achieved, it would take 28 years. Finally, in addition to the obvious implications of slower growth for social welfare, consider the following observations. The IMF reports that there is one physician in St. Lucia for every 2533 persons. In Barbados that number is 749. There is one hospital bed per 136 persons in Barbados, that number is 292 for St. Lucia. Finally, according to the IMF, infant mortality per 1000 live births is 12 in Barbados and 16.8 in St. Lucia. 



# Arnold Toulon

## An Artist with a Difference

by Anderson Reynolds



In a recent interview with *The Star* newspaper, Derek Walcott asserted that there is an exceptionally large concentration of talent (painting, sculpture, theatre) in these small Caribbean islands. To this I may add that in the Caribbean, matches, in terms of international standing, for writers of the likes of Derek Walcott, V.S. Naipaul, Wilson Harris, George Lamming, and Edward Brathwaite, are to be found not among the writers (of the generation that came after them), but among the painters.

In the previous issue of *The Jako*, we introduced Cedric George, a St. Lucian painter who apparently has come up with a new philosophy of art. The artist is making plenty of waves in St. Lucia and the Caribbean with his new approach to painting. The only question that remains unanswered is how will the international critics view his work.

In this issue of *The Jako* we introduce yet another artist, Arnold Toulon, who is attracting just as much attention

and whose works are equally compelling. However, the story of Arnold Toulon began not in St. Lucia, but in Dominica, a land that boasts of zouk, creole music festivals, mountain chicken, a river for each day of the year, and the last remaining Carib community in the Caribbean islands; a land where Roseau, the capital, offers one of the few reliefs from lush, forbidden mountains sprouting spectacular waterfalls and warm-water lakes; and a land that has remained one of the few Caribbean nature holdouts, where hotels and tourism have hardly made a dent and to which "unspoilt" is more than a cliché.

Arnold was born and raised in Roseau, a city that missed out on the multiple fires that have been a nemesis to Castries and therefore has remained a capital of quaint, multi-storey, wooden buildings, making modernization sound like a dirty word.

He was born at a time when Japanese recondition vehicles and minibuses were thirty-years away; when the few colorful,

hooded buses that passed as public transportation turned any trip out of the capital into an event; when the absence of television left one with no choice but to fall back on one's own creativity and mischief for entertainment; and when hanging out on the block, or looking onto the streets from one's doorsteps, was the closest thing one had to a television set, or to watching a sitcom, or to getting on a talk show.

In 1993, Arnold Toulon traded Dominica for another tropical paradise—St. Lucia—and another Caribbean capital—Castries. We met with the artist on the heels of his most recent art exhibition held at the Inner Gallery in Rodney Bay, St. Lucia. From all appearances the exhibition had been a huge success. The opening night was overcrowded, and in the days to follow a continuous stream of people made their way to the gallery with the hope of picking up a painting and brushing shoulders with the artist. In fact, Arnold was in such high demand that we had to wait two weeks after the exhibition to get an audience with him. Watching the artist dividing himself among his many admirers, each wanting to spend as much time with him as possible, each seeking explanations for the madness behind his paintings, brought up images of a reggae superstar. But the crowded attention he was receiving wasn't the only thing that conjured images of a reggae star. His neat, waist-long dread locks, slim frame, and ripened-mango complexion that recalls a mix of Carib, African and European ancestry, likened him to Bob Marley.

Intrigued by the amount of attention Arnold was receiving in a country though blessed with artistic talent wasn't particularly known for its patronage of the arts, we asked a few of his admirers, "What about Arnold's paintings that appeals to you?" The answers were always the





same: "The colors." We asked the question, but it wasn't that we didn't know the answer, for no one could look at an Arnold Toulon painting and remain untouched by the colors. A feast of colors. Tropical colors. Caribbean colors. Primordial colors. Rich, bold bands or patches of red, green, yellow, blue, orange.

Still, looks could be deceiving. If an onlooker thinks that color is all what Arnold's paintings are about, she simply

needs to peer a bit more closely to arrive at the contrary conclusion that the brilliant, impossible-to-ignore colors are a facade, a trick, not unlike trees sprouting brightly colored and sweet scented flowers to attract nectar-seeking insects, or the fairer sex's adornment of themselves to trap unsuspecting members of the opposite sex.

The real action in Arnold's painting is what lurks behind the colors. Underneath the colors are world within worlds, and multiple planes of reality. The first time you look, you may see only schools of fish and canoes. A second or closer look may reveal a cottage with a flower garden and children playing. A third look may uncover women bathing and washing in a river. With patience, a fourth look, and to one's surprise there is a six piece musical band equipped with among other things a saxophone, violin and a banjo. No matter how many times and how long one looks there is always something else underneath the impossible-to-miss colors waiting to be discovered. Such is the world of Arnold Toulon. An earthy, primordial world. A world freshly created, waiting to be named. A world that conjures the pristineness of Dominica, his country of birth and upbringing. But that's not all. For if his colors are irresistible, then his women cannot fail to intrigue. In fact, it is almost impossible to find an Arnold Toulon painting that is not populated with women. Not just one woman but multiples of women. Faces within faces, bodies within bodies, complete spectrums of poses, worlds within worlds, all in the same painting.

With anticipation, and glad that we had finally managed to catch up with Arnold, we sat with him in the courtyard of the Triangle Pub at Rodney Bay, right next to the Inner Gallery where his works were on display. As we began conversing, it occurred to me that the artist shared yet another trait with the great Bob Marley. He was a philosopher, and he harbored no qualms about sharing his take on life. It was clear that no one could tell Arnold's story better than himself, so for most of the interview we were content to sit back and, as if watching a movie, or reading a novel, allowed ourselves to get pulled into the world of Arnold Toulon, his growing up, his early days in the art world, his coming to grips with his Caribbean heritage, the implications of

that heritage to his art, and his breakaway from tradition to find his own and unique voice.

## Arnold Toulon: The Early Years



*I grew up in Roseau, Dominica. It was a very simple and rough little town in those days. Cute in its own way, but fairly undeveloped. Our home was situated on Hillsborough Street, nicknamed Freedom Street, because this was where a lot of the freedom rights people used to congregate. Popular little street. There was always a lot of street activities where people hang out in a shop opposite and discussed politics. All of us used to come ... that's in the sixties going into the seventies. There was a lot of street life. You sat on your steps a lot in those days. You heard a lot of what was going on, the local culture, and everything. Very interesting time in my life. They didn't have as many cars, way back then. We had less distractions. We played few indoor games in those days, and we used to go up to the rivers, go up to the mountains, go on the beaches, tracking each other through the streets of Roseau, and playing those type of games, and so on.*

*From an early time I was always attracted to the arts. My dad used to do art, but I never really saw him paint. He had practically stopped (painting) before I was growing up. But I saw what he had done, and I had a brother who used to draw a lot. I started doing graphics with him; doing signs—street signs, signs for companies—and also there were some paintings we started doing.*

*In those days anything I could find, every substance of art—pictures from books, from the library, from friends, from my home—became a means of learning more about painting. I practically pretended that I was studying and*

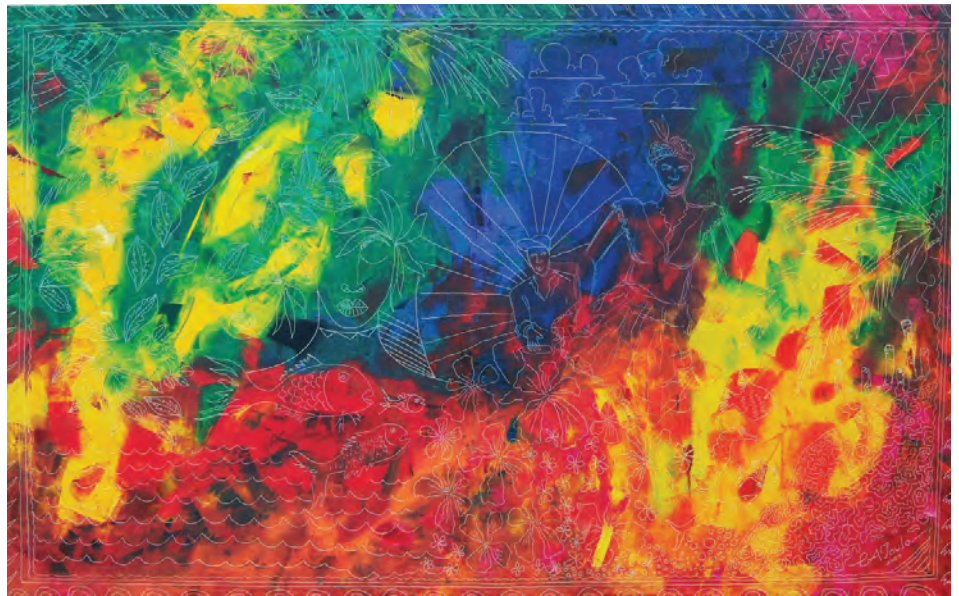


made myself study art. Read and learned a lot about it— technique, artists from different times, different centuries, and so on.

Then I attended high school, St. Mary's Academy, it was a Christian brotherhood school. But like everywhere else, after you leave primary school, emphasis on art and singing, which I loved, were kind of secondary. During that time I got involved in theater with Alwyn Bully, the playwright, and with my brother, Paul Toulon. We used to have a small drama group called National Youth Theater, doing plays and skits. Also, I took part in a lot of the local theater companies, playing drums, shak-shak, even the calabash filled with beads; playing with groups, doing drama across the island. Drama, encompassing everything—acting, singing, dancing, even drawing, and so on. We were doing this without any big funding. We basically slept at people's homes all over the countryside when we went on weekends to perform at community centers, some of them were really rustic, some of them were not too bad.

In those days my painting style was based on surrealism, and it dealt a lot with anamorphic and dream-like images. I was working with oils at the time too; but then I started working with charcoal, pencil, experimenting a lot with other mediums. I was still in High School then, so I wasn't too sure exactly where my life and art were going, but I dreamt a lot.

Eventually there were two scholarships offered around 1981 to two artists to study. There was this businessman called John Keller who figured that there was no emphasis on the part of the government in developing any of the artists, yet there were a lot of young people like myself who were able to do very good work, being self taught and all that. Even today you can remember that there are quite a few musicians coming out of Dominica. So there is always that talent. That's one of the things we try to make people become aware of. It's not something to sideline. It is actually a reality that there are kids with that talent, and if you don't develop it, what are they going to do? So I got the scholarship to go to study in Jamaica. I studied in Jamaica from 1982-1986. But even before that I had taken a course with Louis Desire, a Haitian sculptor who had come to live in Dominica. He was teaching wood carv-



ing and I took a course with him. Of course, it was very Haitian in style. Also we had our own type of art classes among my brothers, my friends. Our own dance, drama and art classes. We just kept the culture going, we didn't depend on government for it to happen. We were like soldiers on the front line.

### Arnold Toulon: Coming to Grips with his Caribbean Heritage



**M**ore than most places, the Caribbean embodies a cross current of races and cultures. The French creole language and culture of Dominica and St. Lucia, Arnold's countries of birth and adoption, present excellent examples of this mix of culture. And Arnold's mixed Carib, African and

European ancestry provides a good example of the intermingling of races that have occurred in these islands. Arnold explained that all of these cultural and racial influences have come together in making us who we are. He said that he started traveling among the islands from an early age and this has made him think of himself more as a Caribbean person than as being of a particular nationality, like say being Dominican or St. Lucian.

The artist said that growing up he was very much conscious of the phenomenon of European classical traditions lying side by side the more spontaneous and earthy Caribbean culture. His sister who took piano lessons would come home playing classical pieces like Mozart and Beethoven, yet on the streets there were guys playing popular music by ear, and everywhere in Dominica there was this rich and vibrant, though not necessarily schooled Caribbean culture that included rituals like carnival, the belle-aire, quadrille, and shak-shak dances; and conte, a style of story telling popular throughout the Caribbean islands. There were also the different harvest celebrations like, for example, crop over in Barbados.

One suspects that all of these cultural and racial crosscurrents, and Arnold's multiplicity outlook and approach to life, have found their way into his art. Indeed, it may not be farfetched to suggest that Arnold's paintings have been his way of coming to grips with his Caribbean heritage, his way of defining who he is, of finding order in all this mishmash of culture and races that is the Caribbean. The



## Royal Denial

I am neither 'Christian'  
nor Rastafarian,  
I am the queen,  
Look at my crown,  
I've had it from birth.

I will shield my crown  
From chemical warfare,  
I will bear the burden  
of my ancestry  
With dignity;

I will not travel along  
the straight, paved road,  
I want to feel the rocks,  
I need to see the trees  
as they sway to and fro  
in the gentle breeze,  
I want to be free to enjoy  
the goodness of the salty sea.

I shall not be enslaved  
By stupidity,  
By notions of inferiority;

My crown is a beauty,  
Its twists and turns  
Can impregnate  
a fertile imagination,  
It's reality is truth.

My crown will reign,  
I will not deny  
my royal ancestry.

—Sharon Trezelle

artist sheds light on how he purposefully set out to portray the Caribbean in his art.

*I always thought that I would learn all the rudiments, all the classical style, all the formal style, all the techniques, all the craftsmanship I could absorb and learn. Yet, I have always believed in developing a local style, and in traveling I realized that it wasn't just a local style, it was a Caribbean style. You know you get books to study and all of the books depicting people from other countries, people that don't really look like you and their life is so different from yours. Canadian books, English books, showing guys running in snow, and telling you what a train is. We knew more about their country than they knew about ours. I always realized the difference. I always*



*had the conscious urge to see how do I depict my vision from my point of view as someone from this archipelago.*

*I didn't want my art to look transmigrated. From the beginning you copy the impressionist style and this other style, and that other style and you work within that genre, but I always felt that I wanted to paint something more indicative of where I was from. And I have been able to do that. People tell me that. They just see my art and they know it is from a Caribbean country. A warm, rainy and sunny country.*



## Arnold Toulon: Order behind the Madness

**I**s it the colors that make people see your paintings as Caribbean? *I think the color is the thing that did it. Because I stop worrying about the imagery. A lot of people are too concerned about depicting imagery literally, as they see it. The Pitons in front of them, or flowers in front of them. But I look at what are the colors, how can I use color*



*to depict the mood of that thing, of that face, of that time, of that object. And how to simplify it so that even when you look at it your mind is telling you, "yes, I know what that is but it doesn't say what it is directly." It is not literal, it is sometimes suggestive.*

I realize your paintings are multilayered. At first what you see is the bright colors, but then underneath the color there is a whole other life, women in rivers washing, there seems to be schools of fish in almost all your paintings. They are usually populated with women, each painting has multiple depictions of the female form. There is never one single depiction. Sometimes there are faces within faces. Your paintings are multilayered. Underneath the color a lot is happening.

*In my paintings you get elements of sky, elements of life under the sea; part of the earth but it's another realm that is inhabited by other fellow life forms, which live in that environment. When you see all those aspects, it is like a whole universe I am presenting. I am giving nearly everything there is in creation in one painting. It has water, it has earth, it has life, both above the earth and below the earth. Putting the basic elements that make up the completeness of the universe.*

It's like with each painting you are recreating the universe. So the saying that artists do play God has some truth to it?

*Well, the thing is we cannot play God. To tell you the honest truth, it is easy to play God. I mean you playing. If you give a kid a little doll they will pretend it*





is a real little baby. They are playing. That's what you are allowed to do.

In my mind God obtained his or her legitimacy through the act of creation. That's why I think that creativity is the highest form of activity there is. What are your thoughts on the nature of creativity?

*The thing about creativity is that by its own utterance it means that it is both constant and changing. And that's what culture means, actually. Something that's constant but changing. Culture can never be stagnant. For instance, even when we say we have to pick up the shak-shak dance, or the quadrille or belle-air dance, or whatever, basically what we are really doing is actually preserving a tradition. It becomes like an archive. What you find is that the young people who are dancing those old traditions today are modifying it in their own way. They have to. Actually this is essential to what it is. It is never meant to be stagnant. But it is passed on with a certain pattern, yet it is constantly reinventing itself. But yet for it to remain what it is there are certain things that it has to be for it to be called that. It's like the dual nature of things. One is constant and the other one is ever changing.*

So do you see that as being manifest-

ed in your art? For example, how has your art changed overtime?

*It just changes. It just goes. If you have a technique and you can apply the technique ten times in the same way, then it is just a method. But in art you cannot deal with methodology alone. Well, you could be making a statement about methodology, if you want to look at it that way. But at that point you could become stagnant. So any time you work, and if you work constantly, your hand and your mind and your eyes keep seeing new ways to do things. Life is constantly a struggle, and the only way to be victorious is by constantly struggling with life. But not struggling as in fighting against it, but in conquering the sun. One of the things art does for society is to keep some aspects of the society alive that is usually neglected.*

In the struggle for survival people forget that man shall not live by bread alone?

*Of course.*

Could you share with us the basic philosophy behind art?

*Well, art is a means of communication, and I use my art to communicate with people. Everybody who views my work, is like I am telling them a story. My painting allows me to spread a message*

*of what I feel inside. The message sometimes is stark and harsh, other times it is a bit humorous, and sometimes it's really serious. I deal with human issues. Sometimes in your own relationships you develop problems and you try to figure out how do I deal with it and make it make sense. I paint a lot of pieces that deal with people dealing with people. Our environment is important to our survival, so a lot of times in my work there is a lot of pristine, virginal forest kind of feeling coming out of the color, or really colorful vistas of places. I try to convey the good I see, because there is a lot of negativity, there is so much negativity surrounding us. So I ask, how do you fight the dark? You can only fight it with light.*

Does that also speak to your choice of colors; very bright colors?

*When people paint a landscape, that's the same thing they trying to do. They're see the mountain looking green, the flowers looking red, and they're painting the flower red and the mountain green. But (instead of drawing the shapes) I take the colors I see and I put them out. I put the color into a different context, but it should trigger your mind to the objects you associate with these colors. So I use colors as a metaphor, as a starting point. That way I am getting people to react to my work, but I am also getting them involved with it, to be interactive, to work it out, to ask you to think.*

What about the arts that has made you take it up as a lifelong undertaking?

*I made it a lifelong undertaking because I was aware that I was not the only one, and I had two good things going for me. I had parents who used to sing and paint and whatever, and who loved the arts, and who never said don't do that, and they encouraged me in doing what I was doing. They didn't have the money to help me do it any better, but they gave everything they could. I also came from a family where there was a lot of art going around me, so I realized if I have that good fortune to be in a situation like that, then I had to do it, so that the kids who probably didn't have such an easy start, could at least see how it could be done. That's another thing that helped me stay at it.*

Let me ask the question in a different way. What about painting that has made you so drawn to it?

*Well it is not about being drawn to it.*





The thing is that the talent is there. Something inside you is speaking and you go and you do and realize you can. And then you realize you can do it better and better. But you still have to develop craft, no matter how much it is in you. And when I say craft, there is a difference between the arts and the craft. The craft means the ability to put it down. Even if you feel creative and you can draw, if you don't know how to use oil paint then it could be a disaster. You could do fifty oil paintings and they spoil after six months, or they're cracking up. Being drawn to it is about the fact that you know you have that talent in you. And I think the greatest thing about it, to answer your question, is that it constantly challenges me to do better.

And I guess one thing about art is that there is no end to improvement?

Every level of perfection belies another one.

So it's a constant challenge and the challenge itself is partly the motivation for doing it?

Look at Castries for instance. Nobody thought they would have all these cars in Castries streets when they planned the city earlier on. So at the time it was perfect. It had a square here and a square there, one of the nicest towns in the Caribbean. But now there is no where to put cars. So what is perfect at one time is just one level of perfection. You have to discard it as soon as you get it and move on.

Who were your main influences as

far as art is concerned?

I admired the cave paintings of bison and of guys trying to stab them with spears, recreating or celebrating the hunt. These were some of the earliest works that I admired. And the masters like Picasso, Rembrandt. The masters were always the people I marveled at, because they were masters and were really good for their time.

Were there local painters in Dominica that inspired you?

Well, my brother, Paul Toulon, was the main one. Today he is more of a draftsman, an excellent draftsman. His paintings were intricate, surrealistic pieces. A really very fine artist.

Where do your ideas come from?

Daily Life. The gift of breath that God has given us.



## Arnold Toulon: The Break with Tradition

All artists, be they writers, poets, musicians, sculptors, painters, and no matter their talent, begin their artistic quest by imitating those who came before them and whose art they admire. But gradually, as artists mature they begin to develop their own distinctive style, to carve their own artistic niche, which is immediately recognizable by the observant eye, in the process fostering new traditions that future generations of artists may imitate. This is nowhere more evident than in the martial arts, where the title of Master is bestowed

on an artist only after he or she has come up with a new and distinctive style of fighting. Arnold Toulon's break with tradition occurred in 1992, at the age of thirty-one. Here is how he explained it.

Well, in the show (the recent exhibition) you see the black and white piece I called 'Learning' it coincided with the time when I felt that I had reached the height of what the renaissance was doing. In my own way I did. I understood how they were rendering their forms and shapes. I had studied to a level where I figured I had gotten the point. You could say I mastered it or I didn't. That doesn't matter. I got the point. And finally I realized that now the only thing next was to say what I wanted to say.

But I found that the paint brush kept bringing me back to the traditional style of painting. So I wanted another way of applying paint to the canvass, another way of drawing. So I started scratching out with an ice pick on acrylic painting. But it was tearing up the canvas. So I changed from acrylic to oil, which is a longer-drying paint. But to apply it I started using phone cards. It gave me less control (than the paint brush). To handle it, to master it, was like using a backhoe. You cannot use a backhoe to make a small trench drain. You take a little shovel and you do that. But if you want to make a huge drain, four feet across you use a backhoe. And that was what I was doing. Using one of the most difficult methods to achieve something with some kind of finesse to it. But I began to master it, and then I used the ice pick to scratch underneath the paint to create a narrative base on the background color.

The use of phone cards to apply paint was Toulon's own invention. The use of the ice pick to etch images on oil isn't his invention, however the systematic, pervasive, and consistent way in which he uses the ice pick to create whole compositions on canvass represents yet another break with tradition. It appears that no other painter has used etching on oil as a complete technique, as a painting style, at least not to the extent that Arnold has.

## Arnold Toulon: The Business of Art

In the Caribbean where artists are seen as people who are undisciplined and lazy, and who have plenty of





free-time but with nothing constructive to do; where to the politicians art and culture are things simply to give lip service, to employ during political campaigns, and to glorify national celebrations and entertain visiting dignitaries, but otherwise to be ignored, because material support of the arts is not known for helping to win elections; where to the population a good music CD is a pirated one; where paintings are not to be bought, but to be glanced at when hanging in public places; and where the only books worth reading are those borrowed and not those purchased; going into art full-time, or depending on art for one's sole source of income is precarious indeed.

Yet Arnold Toulon has been little else than an artist and he has been full-time at it from since early adulthood. And defying all the odds, he has not only been successful as a full-time artist but in some ways he has helped pioneer the business of art in St. Lucia. Beginning with his first exhibition, *Visions of Reality*, in 1977, Arnold Toulon's paintings have been displayed in over forty solo and group exhibitions, across sixteen or more territories, including Dominica, St. Lucia, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Trinidad, Jamaica, Aruba, Curacao, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Austria, Switzerland, Boston and Paris.

We gleaned some further insights into Arnold's life as a full-time artist, and his thoughts on the business of art.

When did you decide to become a full time artist?

*Around thirteen, fourteen years old. I just figured that's what I wanted to do. But I didn't know if it would happen. I went to high school. I finished high school in about 1979. And I was doing a little theatre at the time. But in 1979 or 1980 Hurricane Allen smashed the island. All the theatre houses went through rehabilitation. Theater was disbanded for awhile. So I started painting a*

*lot more. Then I went on scholarship, that kind of skyrocketed it up. From there I took part in every little show in Dominica: independence shows, Expo 1977. I remember it. 1977 Expo was probably my first formal showing with a group. When I left high school the only other thing I did was to work as a taxi driver sometimes for a hotel, taking the tourists on specialized tours. And working at bars sometimes on a weekend to make a little money. Also, I taught for about three months in a secondary school. But basically I went full time into my art.*

How do you go about preparing for an exhibition?

*When I am doing a series of work, I try to prepare my material or have my material prepared. So that I am not painting two days or five days and then stopping and preparing canvasses. I try to have material ready. Now there are some pieces that are done separately, like if I do one idea, that's one piece. I usually have to get my ideas solid before I start painting. And I work on fifteen, twenty, thirty paintings in my head at one time, when I'm doing a series of work, I cannot write them down. I have to have them in my head. Because when I am working, I cannot be glancing at the paper. I just work. If I don't know it up there it doesn't make sense. I study something until I understand it in my head well enough so when I go to work I just put it down.*

How easy it is for a painter to make a decent living in St. Lucia?

*Very difficult. The thing is that, if you look at a country like Jamaica, there is a lot of corporate sponsorship of art. In St. Lucia that's still in a young stage. It's not in a negative stage, but it's in a young stage. I have had to be holding shows every year since 1994. By holding a show there is a chance of people really coming and see you. So holding a show is one of the greatest things. Then people see the different aspects of what the artist does. It is encouraging to young artists. And also it is attention grabbing. Trying to get the public to realize that we are doing it and we are being consistent. That's the way to get a whole body of artists on board. When I say body of artists this includes all the artists who been working here for years. To get into that pattern of really sticking to having*

*shows, apart from selling privately. Even if it is once a year. It makes the public become involved.*

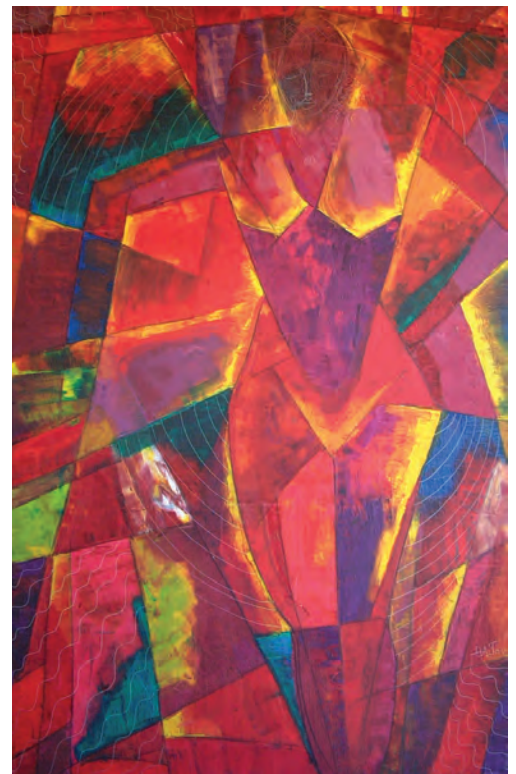
So art galleries play a vital role in the development of the art as a business?

*Yes, that's why you really need art galleries. They display art how art should be displayed—proper lighting, proper display. That then creates a level of appreciation for the work. Because the work is presented in the right manner. That's very important. When we start to trivialize the gallery concept and start to have solo acts all around then the whole concept of the international artist suffers. We can't get there. To get international status like our cricketers, we have to act like we are international already. We cannot be international by being amateurs. We have to think and act like professionals.*

How has the Jazz Festival and such activities helped in facilitating the artist?

*Any festival or activity that brings people into the island will create opportunities for artists. That's why I have always tried to hold a show during jazz. People come here and they leave with a lasting impression of the art. You see, the thing about it is you cannot go half, half about it. At each show you always aim for the highest level you can reach, and each time you go you do it a bit better.*

What is the best way institutions like the CDF can go around helping artists?





The best way they can help the plastic artists in St. Lucia is by giving good concessions (customs) on art material and supplies. Because you find many student artists can hardly afford to buy anything to paint on. Its hard for their parents to give them enough sometimes to do art projects at school.

Would you encourage a young person to become a full-time artist?

Of course. But then again he has to be serious about it. To go into painting full-time you're going to eventually need sponsorship. Because to start you're never going to make it on your own. The artist would also have to make some sacrifices to arrive at a level where they can be taken seriously. The other part is having more art education in schools. Once you have a country that has taken on tourism, then tourism will be one of the major outlets for the arts. The other thing the young person can do is to participate in every opportunity where his paintings can be shown, to get his work known. He could start from the little village shows and then onto the national art festivals. He should take part, and keep taking part, and he should never give up.


What interesting stories surrounding your art that you could share with us?

Well, imagine I'm sitting in a geography class in high school, early high school, in second form. I am about thirteen years old, and I 'm listening to the teacher talking about this and that country, European countries, America, whatever. And years later, I'm seated in a little café in Paris, sipping espresso, while I have an exhibition going on right there in that same city. Realizing that it's actually happening.

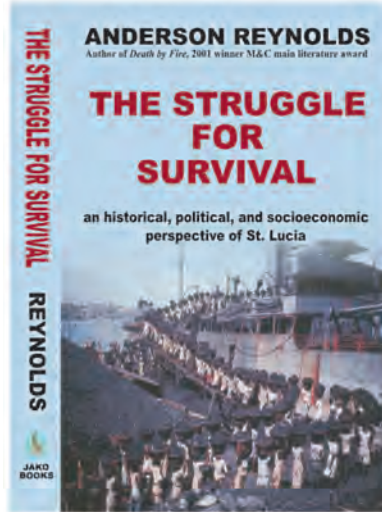
So it seems that you are pleased with how far your art has taken you?

Of course. In some places where I have shown my art, I am being treated as celebrity. And seeing your work reaching out to all those people from all those countries, and they understanding where you're coming from, helping to open their minds to our culture and our life down here. You actually become an ambassador. People wanting to visit your country because of having come in contact with you or your art. A lot of cultural exchanges become a reality as a result.

Where do you see your art going?

Internationally, more and more and more. To the limits. 

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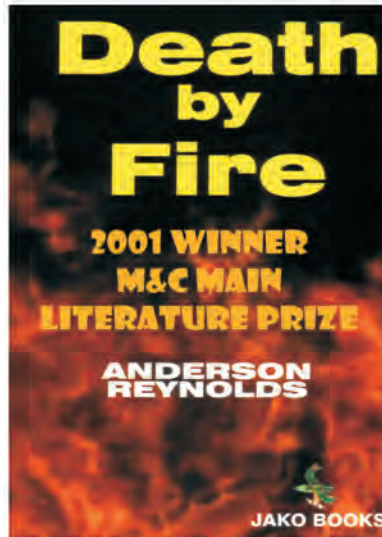
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# The Captain's Last Breath

## A Short Story

No one cared enough to remember when last he won an election honestly through the ballot box, without the need to defer the final count until next day when his henchmen would produce the extra boxes that they had specifically prepared weeks before and held in safekeeping to assure his victory, even though they knew he had no opposition. No one of any substance came forward to offer their candidacy and holding General Elections every five years was a mere formality where no odds could be given in favour of the winner. It had always been a one-horse race. He had been at the helm longer than anyone cared to remember and no one in Calabar wanted him deposed. They never referred to him by name, but by the endearing epithet with which he had christened himself in his earlier campaigns: 'Calabar is a ship,' he often said, 'and I am your Captain.' It suited his style: a feigned benevolence, devoid of guile, malice and those other seeds of malcontent that were the weapons of despots. He had become the epitome of the inveterate statesman, strutting through decrees in the halls of parliament with the victorious ease of a fighting cock, in his white-laced shoes that were immaculately spotless, even on those days when mud settled on the pavement after a heavy shower.

A stream flowed through the heart of the town. On rainy days it grew into a river and swelled through the streets dragging the sediment collected in the hills behind it. This sediment turned to mud after the showers ceased and stuck to the soles of shoes, encasing them in red marl that hardened with the sun. On the eve of every election Josephus Calazar always promised to build his citizens a new wall along the banks of the stream,

to harness its floods. He had repeated this promise to them so many times that children knew the phrases by heart, but for reasons known only to him the project never seemed important enough to pursue after he had returned unopposed to his post. Despite the discomfort of traipsing through the sludge with extra weight on one's feet, no one complained.

He had no sins to answer; no enemies; no opponents. He had ruled Calabar with a tight fist for more than a quarter of a century. Everyone owed him a favour which they were eager to repay with unswerving loyalty. When he spoke on the airwaves the nation digested every syllable he uttered with an unquestioning credulity they usually reserved for the Holy Scriptures. He had become a god. His words were gospel – the unadulterated truth. Even when overwhelming evidence uncovered facts that clearly indicated the contrary, the people of Calabar refused to concede that he was fallible.

The people could remember clearly the time when an infestation of rats engulfed the country from coast to coast. They were everywhere: they swung in the breeze from the branches of coconut trees and poured into the streets from the old warehouses where rice and flour were stored. On Sundays they danced on the high altar and snatched the consecrated host from the priest before he pronounced the final blessing. They nestled in old women's purses and peeped at the judge in court through barristers' gowns. They messed on the draft decrees that Josephus Calazar was planning to impose on parliament and he was offended. He complained bitterly to the nation about the frequent visits of foreign ships to the port and how they had transported the plague to halt the march of progress in his sacred land.

He decreed that he was closing the port to foreign ships until the scourge was brought under control. The citizens of Calabar rejoiced. Their astute Captain had taken up their cause and was steering the good ship away from the shoals. Calabar had no merchant navy of its own, except for a few fishing boats. In addition to fishing they conducted a nefarious trade that was outside the thin arm of the law and, with the port closed to foreign ships, commerce stopped. All the workers whose livelihood depended on the port were made redundant, for there was no revenue to sustain their presence. To correct this, Josephus Calabar issued a further decree: 'All Citizens of Calabar who have been displaced by the closure of the port will henceforth be official rat catchers of the state. A bounty of one dollar will be paid for each rat caught and delivered to the Government Treasury.'

The longshoreman whose lives had been dedicated to manual labour raged through town with their machetes, their wives and children following at their heels with crocus bags. By the end of the first week the town was cleared and they had taken the fight into the hills and the surrounding countryside. Within one month there was not a rat left in the country. The rat catchers used the ingenuity gleaned from rubbing shoulders with foreign cooks to preserve their kill. They pounded coarse salt until it crumbled in their hands like the fine salt sold in the shops, and dusted the rat carcasses with the powder. Then they slung them in rows on their kitchen roofs to dry in the sun. The carcasses took a couple of days to cure. At the end of the curing stage, the longshoremen turned rat catchers proceeded to the Treasury to claim their bounty.

They came in trucks, vans and carts; all beasts of burden in the state had been commandeered. Every man jealously guarding his mountain of crocus bags until it was his turn for them to be counted. Officials from all departments of Government regardless of rank were deployed to count the carcasses and issue receipts. It took more than ten days to complete this task. At the end of the exercise, Government officials were still tallying up their sheets when Josephus Calazar again took to the airwaves, this time to denounce what he termed 'A callous act of genocide.'

'I simply asked that the rats be

caught,' he said, 'not tortured and mutilated. Rats have co-existed with man since the birth of time. Who are these butchers in Calabar driving them to the point of extinction? I will not sit idly by ... I will defend them. What will the world think of us? They will say that we, the people of Calabar, have no heart.' He was angry. He did not bother to wait for parliament; he had served long enough to issue decrees of his own, particularly when he declared that it was his duty to act promptly in a state of emergency.

'All those who were responsible for this senseless crime will be brought to justice. I therefore call on every citizen of this state to clothe himself with the law and apprehend them. A reward of one hundred dollars will be paid for each one convicted.' Such decrees need no further sanction.

A minor inquisition had begun. The longshoremen, their wives and children, who had so admirably demonstrated their devotion to duty, were hounded in the streets, in their homes and in the bars along the waterfront which they frequented on evenings. The overzealous citizens of Calabar, in response to their captain's call, extended their programme to include customs brokers, shipping agents and tally clerks. Any and everyone who had been remotely connected with the port was arrested. The prison yard was full. Tents had to be borrowed from the Red Cross to provide nighttime cover. In the days that followed a long procession of frightened souls paraded before the magistrates and were convicted without being afforded the luxury of a defense. Each family was fined one hundred and fifty dollars, which was paid without grudge. The smiles on their faces after sentence had been passed were smiles of relief, and they went back to their homes praising their Captain for appealing to the magistrates to be lenient with them, although they had no proof that he had. Nor had there been any rumors to that effect. Part of the sentence was an order to retrieve their horde of rats from the Treasury compound and bury them, after handing in their receipts to the clerks.

The citizens who had captured the longshoremen and their families and the other port workers – most of whom were innocent of any misdemeanour – went to the treasury to col-

lect their reward. But Josephus Calazar would not allow it. He did not bother to issue a decree, as time was not on his side. He telephoned the national Treasurer, a man he had personally hand-picked from the obscurity of the tax collector's office, and instructed him in the strictest terms to collect a levy equivalent to the reward for the purpose of building the river wall. The claimants stood for hours in the long queues that stretched into the streets only to be told individually, after completing a battery of forms (one of which was a statement voluntarily agreeing to surrender the levy), that there was nothing to receive. In effect, what was given with the right hand was taken back with the left. But these citizens too were happy.

Their Captain would at last build the wall and their contributions would make it possible. Josephus Calazar, the inveterate statesman, had yet again fulfilled the wishes of his people. He had rid his country of the infestation of rats and he was to deliver them from the misery that caked their shoes when the rains poured.

After more than a year of inactivity he reopened the port to foreign ships. The event was proclaimed in the official gazette as a day of reconciliation, and in

the weekly newspapers as a day of deliverance. Foreign dignitaries were invited, including those from faraway lands. One Sunday, in the blazing heat of a two o'clock sun, he made special mention in his speech of the courage of the brave longshoreman who had battled against overwhelming odds to rid their country of the scourge that had invaded it. He was careful not to mention the word rats. The longshoremen had been given special seats in the front rows next to his ministers and foreign dignitaries. He singled out the foremen and was at pains to praise their special skills in mobilizing their men at short notice to neutralize the emergency. The applause when he finished speaking was heard for miles around, and everyone present nodded in approval. An elder statesman moved the vote of thanks, praising the Captain in an hour-long address for having lifted his country from the quagmire of poverty to the pinnacle of success. Before leaving Josephus Calazar solicited pledges from all the foreign dignitaries to have their ships call again at the port and so restore the standard of commerce to the levels which the country had grown accustomed. He issued a decree the next day, forming a board of examiners whose sole duty was to board and inspect all foreign ships before they entered port to confirm that they were rat-free before being given clearance to berth. With this final act, the problem was laid to rest and never referred to again.

No one knew his age. He was not born in Calabar. The people who knew him as a boy when he first came to this country had long since passed on. Those who tried to assess his age by counting the wrinkles on his face never arrived at the same conclusion, because he never remained long enough in one spot for a proper count to be done. Neither did he look anyone straight in the face, so that they might see the tell-tale puffs from insomniac nights of plotting the destiny of his country, bagging under his eyes and the grey stubble protruding from his chin, even after he had shaved. None of his closest advisers knew, although they were curious to find out, being particularly concerned about his likely successor. They too had grown old along with him and felt that the time had come when someone from their ranks should be groomed



**Arnold Toulon**



for this high office before it was too late. Some didn't mind if it was for only a day. They had been close to the reins of power long enough to have felt its pulse. He had never been ill from the first day he took the oath of office, but they were wise. They knew that one day the inevitable would happen and they would not be prepared. Josephus Calazar had never married officially, although he had a wife at his side on rare occasions. His appetite for young girls was legendary. With these he had fathered countless offsprings, all having the sallow tan that was his trademark. It was considered an honour to bear his child and the young women of Calabar sought his favours. Some bore twins in his name. As a result of these unions, the country had become one happy family. Replicas of his face in varying stages of wear were seen everywhere. Some of the longshoremen who had been arrested in the debacle culminating in the dissipation of the rat population in Calabar (which was no longer remembered) closely resembled him, down to the strut in their walk. His face appeared on postage stamps, on currency, in drawing rooms and even in the sacristy behind the altar where his portrait hung next to the Pope's. He was the saviour of his people – their gift from God.

The wall that was to harness the floodwaters of the stream was completed before the commencement of the next rainy season, accomplished by free labour supplied on Sundays and public holidays by citizens of the town. There were more holidays in that year than ever before, as Josephus Calazar declared them at will in order to get the wall completed on schedule. That year, for the very first time in his long reign, he declared his birthday a public holiday. The bonanza that the court had gleaned from the longshoremen and the other port workers went towards the purchase of bricks, cement and steel. Sand and stones were obtained from the stream which was desilted along its length.

Josephus Calazar decided there would be an official blessing. The event would take place during the anniversary of independence celebrations, which was a two-week affair, culminating with a parade of the nation's youth at one of the country's many parks. On the appointed day the riverbanks were crowded along the full length of the wall. People flocked from every village to celebrate yet another

milestone in their history. At a spot where the stream had meandered freely around the piles of silt it had deposited there, where bulldozers had plodded day and night to flatten the land to form a small park encased by the new wall, a platform was built from imported timber, with a rostrum and a battery of microphones which the attendants had checked and rechecked to ensure they would function when the Captain came to speak. The Archbishop and other members of the clergy were seated on the platform, with an empty seat to the right reserved for Josephus Calazar.

He arrived by helicopter—to cheers from the crowd—immaculately dressed in a pale blue suit with his usual pair of white shoes, spotless and dazzling. As he disembarked and hurried to elude the rotating blades he held his hands clasped above his head, a signal that he used quite often to indicate victory. He acknowledged the cheers of the people and was visibly moved by the large numbers present. They had climbed the mango trees, were hanging from windowsills and swarming on the rooftops of every house that overlooked the stream. Josephus Calazar climbed the platform without waiting to be escorted in accordance with protocol and stood in front of his seat for the national anthem, which was played by the military band whose full complement was present dressed in their formal regalia of black, red and gold. Josephus Calazar stood still during the anthem, surrounded by the clergy. Not a muscle in his body moved, but his eyes were screwed to the bank of microphones, his hands itching to reach them. He never bothered to employ bodyguards, he did not need them. His long association with power had imbued him with a sense of immortality that neither man nor nature could dispel.

That day, the children who gathered in the new Small Park along the riverbank were stripped of their usual numbers because of the limitations of space. Only the best schools had been allowed to participate, and even then not more than thirty students from each school. The band played a lively rendition of one of the popular local songs specially arranged for the day and the children marched past in the order they had rehearsed for months. There was not a single break in their files. Josephus Calazar stood as erect as a soldier for the salute, but all eyes were glued

to him long after the command 'eyes front!' had been given. His eye swept over their heads, admiring the roofs that had sprung up since he first took the oath of office. In the bright sunlight that lit his face he appeared bored and distant. Had it not been the celebration of such an important event he might have yawned. He had taken too many salutes in his time and it showed in his eyes.

As soon as the children had returned to their positions, marked in white lime by the grounds men, the Archbishop approached the rostrum. He began with prayers. The blackbirds perched on the telephone wires that ran overhead were miraculously quiet. The Archbishop was short and precise. When he was finished a priest came to the rostrum with an onyx bowl filled with water and the Archbishop blessed the water and took the onyx bowl from him. He descended the riverbank, where he sprinkled holy water on the wall and on the crowd that had impulsively flocked around him. He returned to the platform looking exhausted under his scarlet robes. It was the hardest task he had performed since his elevation to the post.

Josephus Calazar had grown impatient. He had crossed and uncrossed his legs a thousand times before the Archbishop returned. He had been alone on the platform during the blessing of the wall, counting the seconds. It was his show and nobody was allowed to steal it. Before the Archbishop and his clergy could settle in their seats and shake off the beads of sweat that had dampened their cassocks, Josephus Calazar was on his feet. He headed for the microphones and tapped them one by one until he found the live ones. He delved into his coat pocket to retrieve the eight sheets of paper on which his speech was typed in bold print and double-spaced. He carefully unfolded the thin onionskin sheets and placed them on the rostrum that was draped in the national flag, the same colour as his suit. His voice began crackling through the loud speakers, which was placed on both banks of the river so that all the people could hear him. He stopped for someone to adjust the frequency. He looked over his shoulder for the signal to continue, but only the clergy was there. He tapped the microphones once more, and began his speech again. This was always the season for his finest speeches, when he exhorted the nation to

emulate his humility:

"To lay the bricks and mortar for the foundation on which great nations stand. No angle would be left uncovered. No great deed would be left untold." He began with his customary salutations:

"My dear people of Calabar, this may be the last time that I will have the honour to address you as your Captain." There was a note of sadness in the voice which made his tone convincing. "As you know I've steered the good ship for many a year with a firm hand. From the rocks of despair into the calm waters of good fortune."

Someone with a voice that competed with the loud speakers shouted: "Long live the Captain! Long live the Captain!"

Josephus Calazar paused to allow the people to cheer, a minute may have passed before he raised his hands above his head and there was silence once again.

"We are not masters of ourselves," he continued, "no matter if we were born in an ajoupa or a wall house. Each of us will have to take that final bow and go to that country from which no one has returned to tell us about its state." He fidgeted

with the text as a light breeze blew through the papers, slightly unnerving him. He looked up and directed the next sentence to the children who were listening with deep interest.

"I have carried the torch for four generations and I have held it high. But the flame is hungry for oil. If it is denied, it will consume its wick. You, the youth of this country, can supply the oil. You can give continuity to what I have started."

The man who had no enemies, who had been revered like a God among his people, was confessing to mortal fragility. It was being transmitted live on the air-waves across the nation. Every village and hamlet was listening to him.

"I cannot be with you forever." He was continuing his speech in the usual slow pace that he used to maximum effect, picking his phrases carefully and punctuating them with pauses that allowed ample time for applause. As he paused during one such interval, his eyes returning to the paper to choose the next phrase, the loud report from a rifle tore through the trees along the riverbank. It scattered the blackbirds on the telephone wires who went screaming across the

field. The wind began blowing harder, and the eight sheets of paper on which Josephus Calazar had written his speech started flying away from the rostrum with the breeze. They flew in the direction of the children, who broke ranks fighting to retrieve them. Josephus Calazar took out his handkerchief and mopped his forehead. He looked up at the people dangling in the mango trees and smiled. When he fell forward on the rostrum the smile was still on his lips.

The citizens of Calabar stood dumbfounded along the length of the new wall. No one moved. They waited for their Captain to return to his feet. An old woman began reciting the "De Profundus" that she had memorized in French as the clergy filed away from the rostrum.

The citizens of Calabar shuffled slowly along the riverbank wall, some whose children were part of the parade searched through the crowd, scanning the sea of faces until they found them. Soon the park was empty, with Josephus Calazar alone on stage. Then there was silence—not even the blackbirds spoke.



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# A Synthesis of Three St. Lucian Novels

by Modeste Downes and Anderson Reynolds

St. Lucia has no shortage of writers for whom poetry is their favored medium of literary expression. Whether this is due to the influence of the great Derek Walcott remains an unanswered question. What is known, however, is that St. Lucians haven't taken to writing novels as they have to crafting poetry. For example, while there are plenty of St. Lucian poetry collections to go around, the authors' research unearthed only nine novels written by St. Lucians and set in St. Lucia. The first of these novels, *A Room on the Hill*, was published in 1968 and was written by Garth St. Omer, cousin of the legendary St. Lucian painter, Dustan St. Omer, and a member of the famous 1950's St. Lucia Arts Guild. Garth St. Omer followed *A Room on the Hill* with three other novels in quick succession, including *Shades of Grey* (1968), *Nor Any Country* (1969), and *J—, Black Bam and the Masqueraders* (1972), making him second only to Derek Walcott as an internationally recognized St. Lucian literary figure.

After the publication of *J—, Black Bam and the Masqueraders*, St. Lucia had to wait twenty-three years for the publication of another St. Lucian novel and the emergence of a St. Lucian novelist other than Garth St. Omer. This honor went to microbiologist, Dr. Earl Long, with the publication of *Consolation* in 1995, followed by *Voices from a Drum* in 1996. Dr. Long has since authored *Slicer* (2000), a novel set in America, and his third St. Lucian novel, *Leaves in a River* is scheduled for publication later this

year.

Four years after the publication of *Voices from a Drum*, and marking the start of the twenty-first century, three new St. Lucian novelists emerged as if from nowhere, each with a novel set in St. Lucia, together forming no less than one-third of the total canon of St. Lucian novels. The first of these novels, *Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters*, by Michael Aubertin, was published in 2000 by Caribbean Diaspora Press. The second was Mc. Donald Dixon's *Season of Mist*, also published in 2000, by Xlibris Corporation.

non is that all three works can be unquestionably classified as historical novels. A fact that hasn't eluded Mr. Jacques Compton, former director of Radio St. Lucia and the Department of Culture, and a man of letters, a cultural activist, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and a Chavalier De L'Ordre Des Arts Et Des Lettres. In the foreword to *The Struggle For Survival: an historical, political and socioeconomic perspective of St. Lucia*, he asked: "What is it about the concern with history that has been occupying Saint Lucian contemporary writers? Dr.



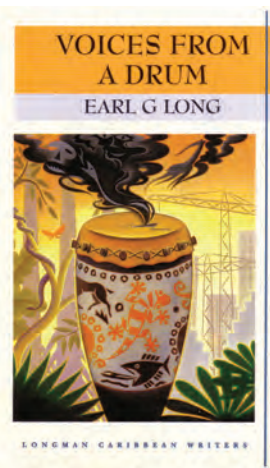
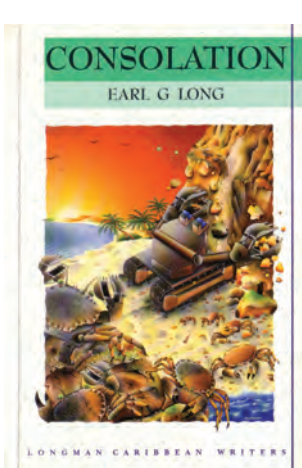
The Novels of Garth St. Omer

Death by Fire, the third novel, was written by Anderson Reynolds, and published in 2001 by Jako Books. Reynolds has since followed *Death by Fire* with *The Struggle For Survival: an historical, political and socioeconomic perspective of St. Lucia* (2003), which, though a nonfiction, reads (as the cover copy suggests) very much like a novel. Similarly, Mc. Donald Dixon followed his first novel with a second publication, a book of poetry titled *Collected Poems, 1961-2001*.

Besides the timing and the fraction of St. Lucian novels these three books represent, another interesting phenome-

Anderson Reynolds in his first novel, *Death by Fire*, Dr. Earl Long in his second novel, *Voices from a Drum*, Mr. Michael Aubertin with his novel *Neg Maron*, and Mr. Mc. Donald Dixon in his first novel *Season of Mist*, all have been dealing with the St. Lucian historical experience."

Answering his own question, Mr. Compton said, "That 'backward glance,' it has occurred to me, is not simply an effort to come to terms with that historical experience, but, more importantly, to establish who and what we are, what makes us tick. It is, in a very definite way,



### The Novels of Earl Long

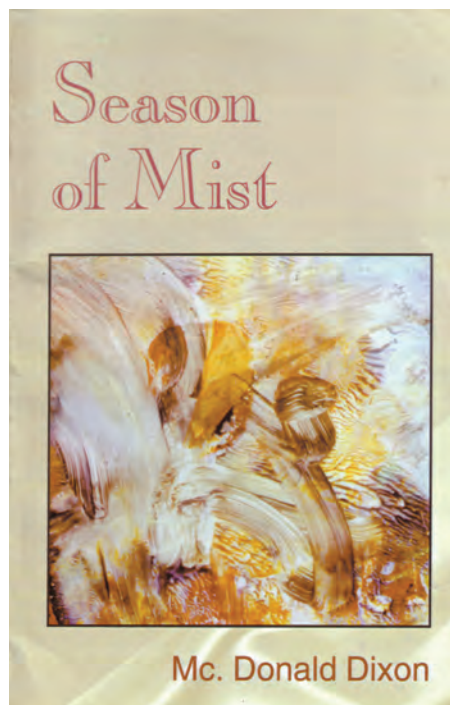
to establish the Saint Lucian personality, the Saint Lucian national and cultural identity.”

It stands to reason, therefore, that these three most recent St. Lucian novels represent a significant addition to St. Lucian literature. All three novels have received at least one extensive review—*Neg Moron: Freedom Fighters* was reviewed by journalist, Jason Sifflet (now with the *Star* newspaper); *Season of Mist* was reviewed by Jacques Compton, and *Death by Fire* was reviewed by The Voice editor, Victor Marquis, by poet Modeste Downes, and by Jacques Compton. However, the books have not been reviewed or analyzed as a group, nor has any significant contrast and comparisons been made of them. Accordingly, with this article we hope to provide a synthesis of these three novels and in so doing highlight their collective contributions to West Indian literature and their importance to St. Lucian society.

### Season of Mist

It was the 1790’s, part of the time period that Charles Dickens described in *A Tale of Two Cities* as: “it was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” The French Revolution was on its second leg. In France, the guillotine was hard at work; among its prizes the head of the King of France, Louis XVI. In St. Lucia, the French and the English were at war yet again. In between them were the African slaves ever seeking opportunities to run away to freedom. As part of the high-mindedness of the revolution, France abolished slavery in St. Lucia and its other territories. Euphoria

and excitement reigned among ex-slaves and French revolutionaries alike. Egalite, Fraternite, and Liberte filled the air. In celebration and recognition of the revolution, the island’s towns and villages were renamed with French Revolutionary names. Unfortunately for the ex-slaves, all this liberation and celebration were short-lived because the English soon invaded St. Lucia, wrestled the island from the French, and promptly reinstated slavery. Having tasted freedom, many of the recently freed slaves joined French revolutionaries in the forested uplands of the island where they waged guerrilla warfare against the British army and plantations on the wrong side of the revolution. The slaves who had runaway to freedom long before the revolution and those who had turned guerrilla warriors to maintain their freedom would forever



be labeled neg marons. This war lasted four years, from 1794 to 1797, during which the neg marons attacked, ransacked and burned down the plantations, killing everyone in their path opposed to their cause; in like manner the British chased after and harassed the neg marons, and when they came upon a neg maron settlement or camp they obliterated everything and everyone in sight.

This is the time period and the backdrop of Dixon’s *Season of Mist*, which tells the story of Madlienne Des Voeux who, born in a neg maron camp at the foot of Morne Gimie, was never a slave. However, Madlienne is an only child. Her mother dies shortly after giving birth. One afternoon, fresh from a hunting trip, Madlienne and her band of five companions, all boys and all about her age, arrive at camp to find everyone, including Desolee, her father, the maroon chief, slaughtered. The culprits: a band of vigilantes organized by a nearby plantation that the neg marons used to raid. Though barely past her teens, overcome with grief, Madlienne vows to avenge the death of her father. She said, “I will find the men who killed my father even if they are rotting in hell. I will dig up their bodies and kill them again.” But Madlienne will have to wait ten years before she can embark on that path. Meanwhile, having lost her people, she and her five companions join the French Army in the woods, *L’Armee Francaise dans les bois*, where she leads in the fight against the British for her people’s freedom. Ten years later, as the guerilla war is winding down and the neg marons’ surrender to the British is imminent, she says goodbye to her childhood companions and the army in the woods and sets out to fulfil her ten year old pledge of avenging her father’s death.

Much like flushing out ducks on a hunt, one by one, Madlienne locates and assassinates the leaders of the campaign that had brought genocide on her people. Until there is only one left, Alexandre Gimat, the mastermind behind the murderous affair. However, he proves more elusive than the others, for he has moved to France. But Madlienne is willing to wait for his return. And while she waits she makes a living housekeeping, and passes the time cultivating an orchard, and tending vegetable and flower gardens. By the time Alexandre returns to St. Lucia, slavery is already abolished, and both him and Madlienne have entered old age. Yet



Madlienne's thirst for revenge is unabated. She works her way into the home and the good graces and confidantes of Gimat, until everything is poised for the ultimate kill.

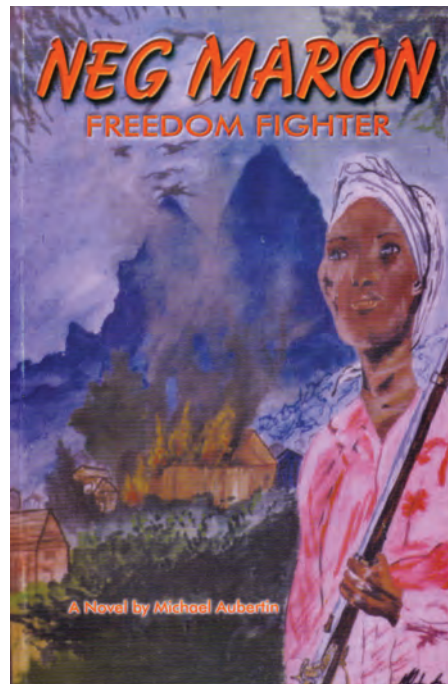
Season of Mist portrays the brutality of the neg marons' freedom war against the British and the high level of intelligence, planning and military organization and cunning that they brought to the war. Dixon's heroine, Madlienne Des Voeux, was probably inspired by the historical figure, Flore Bois Galliard, a mulatto woman and a military leader of the army in the woods, whose stronghold was at the foot of the Pitons. In this character, Dixon brings out the great dignity, fierceness, purposefulness, and fighting spirit of the neg marons, particularly the ones who were born in Africa or as Madlienne Des Voeux, born and raised in neg maron camps and hence were never enslaved.

Season of Mist examines the effects on the human spirit of extreme and devastating losses. It is a meditation on a life singularly dedicated to hatred and vengeance. Madlienne's devotion to avenging the death of her father has come with a heavy price. She is forced to give up her childhood friends, her closest companions in the war against the British and the last of her remaining clan. She denies her own nature, banishes her natural needs, kills things inside of her that threaten to abort her mission. For the sake of fulfilling her vow of vengeance, she chooses a solitary existence devoid of the comfort of a spouse and the joy of children.

Season of Mist, however, departs from the recorded history in two significant instances. First, the novel depicts the neg marons as falling into very unsavory conditions after their surrender to the British and before they were reabsorbed as slaves on the plantations. We see them fighting each other for scraps foraged from refuse heaps and raiding their own people for rations in short supply. However, a reading of Robert Devaux's *They Called us the Brigands: The saga of St. Lucia's Freedom Fighters*, suggests this wasn't the complete picture. Devaux indicates that after the war the Brigands or neg marons were placed in the West India Regiment and, keeping with their request of not being reenslaved and returning to Africa, the regiment was sent to the West Coast of Africa. The duration of the Brigands' war

is a second instance where the novel departs from recorded history. Dixon has the war lasting ten years, but the history books suggest a period of four years, from 1794 to 1797.

## Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters



Michael Aubertin's *Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters* begins somewhere in the 1750's or 1760's and ends in 1797 with the neg marons' surrender to the British, so like *Season of Mist*, and as the novel's title suggests, it also explores the phenomenon of the neg marons as freedom fighters. But whereas most of the pages of *Season of Mist* are devoted to the conflict between the neg marons and the British and the consequences or ramifications of that conflict as embodied in Madlienne Des Voeux's singular focus on avenging the atrocities that the conflict wrecked on her people, *Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters* is also about, or rather, dramatizes slave plantation intrigues, military battles between the French and the British, and the debilitating social and psychological repercussions of slavery.

Most of the novel surrounds the Ti Anse plantation, situated somewhere in the neighborhood of Carenage, renamed Castries. At Ti Anse there is James Golang, a proud and intelligent field

slave with an infirm leg who possesses the gift of song and storytelling. He is in love with Emmanuelle, an ambitious slave beauty who, upon the wish of the master, Claude Leger, has moved beyond Golang's reach to the plantation house where she is to serve as companion for Victoire, the master's young, spoilt wife. Jacques, the sadistic and sex crazed overseer of Ti Anse whips the slaves at will and takes great pleasure in raping the women within earshot of their men who, being slaves, are impotent to do anything about it.

At Ti Anse things go into a tailspin when Claude falls sick and dies a premature death in Europe, but not before he sires Gabrielle, the result of many nights of bedding Emmanuelle against her will while his wife is asleep in a bedroom next door. With her husband dead and Gabrielle, the only other person with claims to his estate abandoned and enslaved somewhere in France or the French Antilles, Victoire settles down to running her plantation. But Jacques, the overseer, has his eyes on the plantation, which he plans to own through a union with Victoire. To spoil things for Jacques, in comes Englishman Alfred James who had joined the army for the sake of glory and to escape English countryside boredom, only to discover that he has no stomach for the gore and misery that came with the territory. After just one battle in St. Lucia, the battle between the French and the English for Morne Fortune, he defects and gains sanctuary at Ti Anse. Victoire falls for the Englishman and, to the great chagrin of Jacques, transfers her affection from him to the deserter. The plot thickens when, now fifteen or seventeen, Gabrielle is brought back to Ti Anse as a slave. Despite the plentiful attention the Englishman is receiving from Victoire, he falls in love with Gabrielle. But before anything could happen between them, Golang, taking Gabrielle with him, runs away from Ti Anse and joins the neg marons in freedom. And when the neg marons' guerilla war against the British begins about fifteen years later, Golang joins the war camp of the legendary neg maron military leader, Flore Bois Galliard, at the foot of the Pitons, and becomes one of the most resourceful of neg maron military leaders. But before Golang makes his exit from Ti Anse, he gives Jacques a sound beating when the

overseer came visiting with murderous intent. So there we have Jacques vowing to find Golang to take revenge for the humiliating beating, and Alfred James to bring back the woman whom Golang had stolen from right under his very nose. And interweaving all this intrigue is the French and the English constantly engage in senseless battles for the island.

Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters alludes to the social and psychological damage that slave plantation life heaped upon the slaves. It suggests that the slaves patterned their treatment of each other after the slave masters' and overseers' cruel and debasing treatment of them. Self loathing, the popular use of expletives, verbal abuses, and the degrading treatment of women, are, according to the novel, some of the enduring effects of slavery. Though not explicitly stated, from the novel one can also deduce that slavery contributed to the development of such social problems as sexual promiscuity, a high incidence of shacking as opposed to marriages, disdain for farming or any activity that is reminiscent of slavery, the enduring perception of government (or for that matter any other estab-

lished authority) as slave masters and hence the deliberate damage and disrespect of government property (bagai betche), and the concept of beauty as having straight hair and light complexion.

In the novel, the observation of the social and psychological damage slavery brought about is viewed through the eyes of Golang, the slave story teller on the Ti Anse plantation. To many young male slaves, the closest thing they ever had to a father or an authoritative figure was the slave master and his overseer. So it wasn't surprising that they would pattern themselves after them. Painfully witnessing young male slaves imitating Jacques' debasement of female slaves, Golang felt compelled to do something to arrest the psychological damage. So as a pretext of entertaining the master and his wife, he staged a play popularly known in St. Lucia as Papa Jab, the Devil at Christmas, in which the plantation owners and other whites were depicted as the real devils and therefore should not be emulated. In fact, it was this enactment that had so angered Jacques, the overseer, that led him to make an attempt on Golang's life.

The debilitating effect of slavery is

shown at its excruciating worst when Jacques rapes young Marguerite within earshot of Sylvester, her lover, and she is being comforted and cradled by Emmanuelle, who lets her anguish flow into a song once popular among St. Lucian children but who probably had no inkling of its origin much less its meaning. As Emmanuelle sang: An ti pyé pòyé / I té ni dé ti flè / An ti van vini / I jété tout a tè (A little cedar tree / It had two little flowers / A small breeze came / It threw all down), slave women in huts throughout the plantation picked up the refrain, and in this one gesture it was as if they were giving voice to all the suffering that slavery had brought upon their race.

Later, as a neg maron leader living in a neg maron camp, Golang's sense of the social and psychological damages of slavery becomes even clearer when he compares life on the plantation to life in his camp. For absent are the expletives that escape the mouth of the slaves every time someone falls or is getting a beating, absent are the constant fighting and quarreling that take place among the slaves, and absent too are the slaves' degrading treatment of their women in the manner



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of the overseers and plantation owners. So, if, indeed, there is some validity to this portrayal of neg maron communities, then one can conclude that the neg marons helped ameliorate or undo the psychological damage of the slave plantation system.

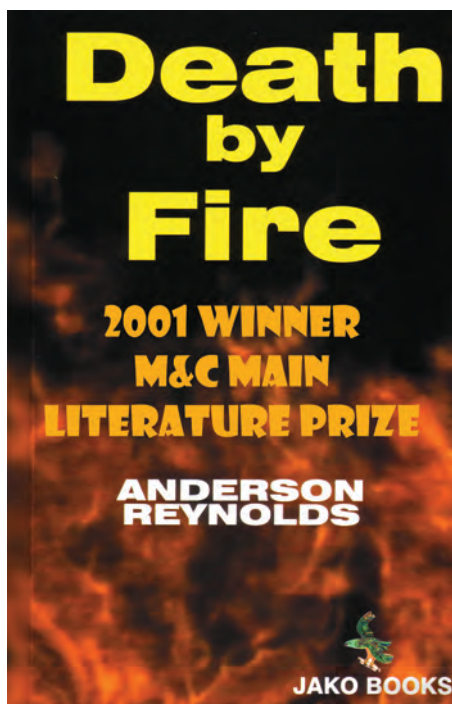
In the St. Lucian psyche neg maron is a derogatory word. A name assigned to someone whom one wishes to insult. A name that says one is ignorant, backward, uncouth, uncivilized. This is clearly suggestive of how successful the white slave masters were in denigrating the neg marons and brain-washing the slave population into thinking that running away from slavery and living self sustained in the woods was an act of debasement and savagery. Yet, in *The Struggle For Survival: an historical, political and socioeconomic perspective of St. Lucia*, Dr. Reynolds suggests that arguably no other group did more to perpetuate the island's African culture than the neg marons. He argued that this proposition suggests itself because, "firstly, evidence suggests that the slaves who were most likely to run away were not those born in slavery, but those who had had a taste of freedom. Most of those would have been born and raised in Africa, and therefore would have most of their African culture intact, a culture to pass on from one generation to another. Secondly, the concept of self selectivity suggests that the slaves who chose to run away were those who were the most proud, the most independent, the most obstinate. The very ones who were most likely to resist the efforts of the plantations to strip them of their African culture. Thirdly, away from the plantation, not only were the neg marons less influenced by the de-Africanizing slave culture that the plantation system bred, but they were more free to perpetuate their own African way of life."

This suggests that rather than denigrating the neg marons, St. Lucians should be proud of this aspect of their history. Proud that their ancestors did not take slavery lying down. Proud of their resilience, dignity, and perseverance in the face of adversity. Therefore, by telling the story of the neg marons, and keeping that aspect of the history alive, in the process inducing St. Lucians to be proud of their ancestors, proud of their history, and proud of their heritage,

Season of Mist and Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters, along with *They Called us the Brigands: The saga of St. Lucia's Freedom Fighters* by Robert Devaux, represent important contributions to the social development of St. Lucia.

In his book, Robert Devaux also indicates that St. Lucia and Jamaica were the two Caribbean islands where the most neg maron settlement sites were found, suggesting that the maroonage phenomenon was most prevalent in these two islands. Therefore, studying maroon life in St. Lucia and Jamaica may provide valuable insights not only into the heroism of our ancestors against great odds, but also into the genesis of West Indian culture. Thus, to the extent that *Season of Mist and Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters* have done so, they represent significant additions to West Indian literature.

### Death by Fire



Although Anderson Reynolds's *Death by Fire*, touches on slavery, in contrast to *Season of Mist and Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters*, most of the novel takes place in the post-slavery period and through to the early 1970's. And although the novel visits places as far-off as India, most of it is set in Castries, and within Castries, the slums of the Conway, which in more recent times have been cleared and replaced

with high-rise government building blocs, a multi-storey carpark, and a Julian's Supermarket.

Against the backdrop of the mythical gods of the land (meant to be the Pitons) reaping havoc on the French for moving the capital from Soufriere to Castries, on the Caribs for allowing the French to carry away the capital, and on Castries for accepting the capital too greedily, *Death by Fire* tells the story of two mothers and their sons, and how the nature of the relations between the mothers and their sons influenced how the sons turn out. On one hand there is Christine, a never-before-seen beauty, who completely neglects her son, Trevor, because her fast-pace and glamorous life leaves her with little time for him. On the other hand, there is Felina, a woman betrayed by her first love but not before she is made pregnant with his son, Robert. Unable or unwilling to forgive her lover, she transposes her hatred of him to Robert. The story says that the two women were never to become friends. However, facing different but equally debilitating circumstances at home the two boys seek solace in each other and become bosom friends. And as often happens when children are neglected and or abused the two boys follow a path of petty crime and antisocial behavior, such that it is clear to Colletta, Conway's self proclaimed soothsayer, where Robert, who seems to have pass on his mother's hatred of him on to the world, will end up. The only question is whether Trevor, the more timid of the two and who bears no one ill, will end up the same place with Robert.

What brought the two women to the Conway partly explains their disposition. Valda, Christine's Indian grandmother, is tricked into migrating to St. Lucia as an indentured servant when her husband and stepmother (obviously) wrongly concluded that she couldn't bear children. Julita, Valda's daughter and Christine's mother, was kicked out of her home by her father when he found out she was pregnant for Leonce, a black man. The couple left the Forestiere-Baboneau area and moved to Castries. At eighteen and in the heights of her crowning glory Christine became pregnant with Trevor for a married man who, for obvious reasons, wished to keep the affair undercover. To make up for his need for secrecy he bought Christine a two-room house in the Conway. As for

# THEY CALLED US BRIGANDS

*The saga of St. Lucia's  
Freedom Fighters*



By Robert J. Devaux O.B.E.

Felina, her father and five brothers and sisters were killed in the great 1938 landslide that claimed 92 lives. Only by a miracle was Felina and her mother, Nelda, saved. After the landslide, Felina and Nelda moved to Castries where Nelda found work as a charbonnier, an activity that would eventually claim her life, and which would cause Felina to part ways with God.

Death by Fire provides a dramatization of many of the great natural calamities and historical events that have shaped St. Lucian society. Slavery, East Indian indentureship, the great 1938 landslide at the twin villages of L'Abbaye and Ravine Poisson, the 1948 Castries fire that destroyed three-quarters of the city, the terrible outbreak of cholera in 1854 that by one account claimed 1500 lives, the coal-carrying plight of the charbonniers when Castries was a coaling station, and the carrying of bananas unto Geest Banana boats by armies of women, are all depicted and integrated in the novel and are shown to have great impact on the lives of the characters who inhabit it.

Death by Fire asks several questions that are very pertinent to modern day St. Lucian society with its youth disengagement and escalating crime rate. What are the causes of crime and other forms of antisocial behavior? Are crime and social decay a result of poverty, unemployment, depressed socioeconomic circumstances? Or a result of obeh or some other form of malice or curse that someone has placed on the people? Or is it a result of the punishment a hidden force such as

God, or an evil spirit or the mythical gods of the land (as in *Death by Fire*) has heaped upon the people for some unknown crime, or for living in abomination, as was the case of Biblical Sodom and Gomorrah? Why are some people poor? Is it because they are just plainly and simply lazy? Or is it because of governmental neglect: the government hasn't done enough to educate its citizens and to foster the climate and infrastructure that would allow businesses to thrive and thus improve the island's unemployment situation? What does the home (parental disposition, the relationship between parents and children) and family structure have to say about how children turn out? And how do the attitudes and prejudices of the community influence (negatively or positively) the psychology of children?

Additionally, *Death by Fire* provides a characterization of the social and economic conflicts that used to plague the relationship between Indians and Blacks in St. Lucia's recent past. The novel also provides a meditation on the nature of fate. It begs the question: Are our lives preordained from birth, so no matter how hard to the contrary we try, our fates are sealed? Or is there something called free will that allows us to determine how our lives will turn out? If so, how do we explain the many acts of nature (the 1938 landslide, for example) and man (slavery, for example) over which the vast majority of us have little control?


Taken together, *Season of Mist*, *Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters*, and *Death by Fire*, summarize the past of present day St. Lucians. The first two novels dwell on slavery and, by extension, its enduring mark on the St. Lucian psyche. Still, within this dark era of St. Lucian history, both *Season of Mist* and *Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters* capture the period, though brief, during which our ancestors took control over their lives and many fought to gain their freedom and others to maintain it, thus clearly suggesting that our ancestors hadn't taken slavery lying down, but, like most other people in such circumstances, did everything in their power to undermine the plantations and to seek their freedom. Taking off where these two novels ended, *Death by Fire* focuses on the post-slavery era, the period when we began having a say in how our lives were conducted, and explores the forces that

have shaped our society. In the process, the novel provides a cultural and sociological characterization of near present day St. Lucian society. Therefore, together, these three novels provide no less than a slice of the cross section of St. Lucian history and sociology.

## The Authors

These three most recent St. Lucian novels have been brought to us by three contrasting personalities. Mc. Donald Dixon started his career as a banker, and now he is a special trade advisor to the government of St. Lucia. Besides writing poetry, novels and short stories, Dixon is an accomplished photographer and painter and he is involved in the theatre as both actor, director and playwright. Dixon has been involved in the arts since his teenage years. He said that at sixteen, while browsing the shelves of his secondary school's library, he stumbled upon *Twenty-Five Poems* by Derek Walcott and from that moment he knew he would be a writer. In recognition of Dixon's longtime contributions to literature and photography, he was honored in 1993 with the St. Lucia Medal of Merit.

Like Dixon, Michael Aubertin is a multifaceted artist. Besides writing fiction, he is a song writer, musician, and a one time calypsonian. His short story, *Calypso Finals*, won a BBC Caribbean Magazine award, and recently he wrote and produced a hit reggae tune (performed by his son) as a tribute to Bob Marley. *Neg Maron: Freedom Fighters* grew out of Aubertin's master's dissertation, which dealt with patterns of gender socialization in St. Lucia. For several years Aubertin headed the Department of Culture, renamed the Cultural Development Foundation.

Anderson Reynolds holds a PhD in Food and Resource Economics from the University of Florida. Before resettling in St. Lucia in 1999, he worked for two years with the University of Guelph as a visiting professor and then for nine years as a corporate economist with the American telecommunications giant, Southwestern Bell. In contrast to Dixon and Aubertin, Dr. Reynolds was already in his thirties when he began delving into the world of creative writing. 





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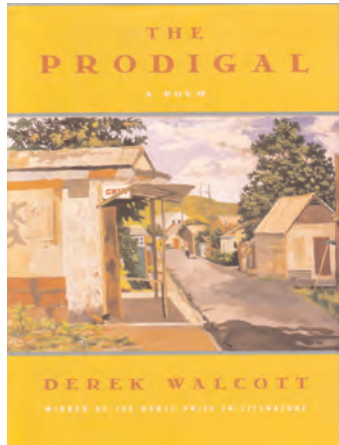


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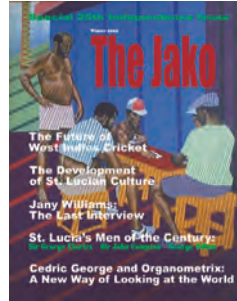


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