DEFINING THE CARIBBEAN BY SOME OF ITS CONTRADICTIONS

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Mimeograph, 2000

Knowledge, and by extension intellectual tradition, is created and constructed within a social context. Willie (1981) maintained that knowledge is one of the principal outcomes of action and analysis. Patterns of thought and intellectual insight are therefore best understood in the social and societal context in which actions and analyses were generated. All insights are born in a specific social setting. Universals, if they are any, first arise in the context of specific situations. It is only the chauvinism of the powerful or the sentimentality of the progeny of a particular group that assign greater status and significance to any particular social setting.

The theme, Intellectual Traditions of the Caribbean, forces us to be self-conscious and to articulate the patterns of thought, the nature of the insights and the content of the reflections that have been spawned in the Caribbean over time, as a result of action and analysis. Without attempting to address the meat of the matter of attempting to identify and define particular traditions, this paper attempts to lightly sketch the broad outlines of the distinctive elements of the Caribbean experience that have constituted the social seed-bed of region's intellectual traditions.

The defining features of the social context called the Caribbean are key factors in understanding the ways of knowing, the habits of thought, mindsets, the content of reflection and the matrix of substantive concerns that together have formed the milieu of knowledge generation in this region of the world. The purpose of this paper is to engage in the process of teasing out and identifying the social underpinning of knowledge generation and intellectual traditions in the Caribbean. The assumption is that other contributions to this Theme will engage in the hard work of interrogating the conceptual orientations, thought patterns, mindsets, and genres of argumentation that characterise the Caribbean, and therefore constitute its intellectual traditions.

DEFINING FEATURES OF THE CARIBBEAN

Contradictions and cross-currents are inherent in all aspects of human existence, whether at the level of the individual or the community. The present is lived and the future is constructed in the cross-currents of conservation and change of past patterns. No individual or community is either completely static or totally transformed at any point in time. Inherent in these cross-currents and contradictions are tensions that are unresolved, and probably impossible to resolve, on any permanent basis. It is these unresolved tensions, embedded in the very fabric of human social organisation that provide the dynamic of social intercourse as successive generations confront the substance of these contradictions. In this regard there is general agreement here with Willie (1994) who asserted that unity is essentially a synthesis of dissimilarities, however, each new

synthesis requires an antithesis to be whole. The dualism, or complementarity, that appears almost inherent in social intercourse and social organisation, leads to continuous integration and separation, and repeated cycles of action and analysis that generate knowledge in any particular context.

In seeking to define the Caribbean, with a view to better understanding its intellectual traditions, it is appropriate therefore to identify and focus on the cross-currents, contradictions, paradoxes, conflicts and countervailing tendencies that have marked the social make-up of the region and provide the context for knowledge generation. No attempt is made here to be either comprehensive or exhaustive. Neither is there any attempt to address the deficiency highlighted by Benn (1987) who stated that a Caribbean intellectual tradition that is largely unstructured and unassimilated within a historically-based framework. Rather the intention is to identify what could be regarded as some of the more important and salient defining societal features of the Caribbean that are germane to its intellectual traditions.

The following six contradictions are posited to be among the most salient defining societal features of the Caribbean:
- Migrant mainstreams
- Dominant minorities and marginal majorities
- Modern societies of modest means
- Cultural cradle on the economic periphery
- Common history, identity and destiny punctuated with insularity
- The creative folk and the conforming intelligencia.

Each of these will be discussed in turn.

Migrant Mainstream

The vast majority of the peoples now forming the mainstreams of Caribbean societies arrived in the region over the last five hundred years. Viewed against the period of recorded history, they are recent arrivants. It is reasonable to regard them all as migrants. Indeed, the migrant metaphor could be extended to the first Americans, the so-called Amerindians or native people of the Americas. Indeed, the Arawak, Carib, Ciboney and Taino peoples, that were resident in the region at the time of Columbus, had themselves arrived in the Caribbean from South and Central America in waves beginning around 5000 BCE, Rouse and Cruxent (1969). The Arawak and Taino, who were the most numerous at the time of Columbus moved into the Caribbean within the period of recorded history, probably as recent as the time of Christ, about two thousand years ago, Knight (1978) and Bullen and Bullen (1972). They have been supplanted by waves of Europeans and Africans, and later and to a lesser extent by Asians. These first migrants have either been totally wiped out in some countries of the Caribbean or occupy a very peripheral position in where they are present at all in countries such as Dominica and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

In most parts of the world migrants are minority groups and not the mainstream of the societies in which they live. The converse obtains in the Caribbean. The most recent migrants to the region, that is, of the last five hundred years, constitute the vast majority of Caribbean populations and their mainstreams. While this is a feature shared with North and South America it exists almost to an extreme in the Caribbean.

The social reality of the Caribbean is that of recent migrants from the Old World constructing new societies in this region. Uprooted, by force or choice, from their ancestral moorings these Old World peoples have been forming societies in setting and circumstances quite different from their historical and cultural origins. This break with their cultural past has had very important implications for construction of Caribbean societies.

This defining societal feature of the Caribbean translates into three very important social characteristics of the region. First, there is very little connection between Caribbean antiquity and contemporary Caribbean societies. Caribbean societies as they are constructed presently are almost totally creations of the last five hundred years. They are indeed very new societies with virtually no connection to any ancestral past in antiquity. Again the point must be made that while this is a feature shared with the rest of the Americas, it exists in the extreme in the Caribbean by virtue of the almost complete absence of the first migrants to this hemisphere, in many of the countries that comprise the region. The past of the vast majority of the peoples that comprise contemporary Caribbean societies resides outside the Caribbean. The Caribbean connection to antiquity is external to the region.

Second, is the pre-eminence of intentional, conscious and deliberate actions taken by the different groups of Old World peoples in establishing themselves in the these new Caribbean settings. While some groups were dominant and had their intentions prevail, all groups that constitute Caribbean societies have been actors with their own agendas. Conflict and cross purpose between groups lay at the very core of Caribbean social formations.

The pre-eminence of the conscious mind at work in these migrant dominated Caribbean societies, is to be contrasted with societies with unbroken connection to their ancestral roots in antiquity in which relationships become so routinised and habitual that there is a distinct sense of an unconscious element in social intercourse. In these latter societies the intentions that underpinned several social institutions laid buried in the distance past and are largely unquestioned. In the Caribbean the intentions underpinning social institutions and formations are not hard to uncover even if they are submerged. Intellectual traditions in the Caribbean, whether founded on intuition or empirical evidence, must contend with the pre-eminence of intentional actions of relatively recent vintage, and their unintended consequences, as these pervade Caribbean life and social structure.

Third, is a primordial sense of belonging elsewhere and an expedient notion of belonging in and to the Caribbean. If the issue of dominance and subordination between groups is

ignored, then Caribbean societies have been recently constructed with a combination of a primordial sense of belonging to Europe, Africa and Asia and expedient concessions and adjustments of Europeans, Africans and Asians to the Caribbean location. The vast majority of Caribbean peoples think of themselves and construct their lives in relation to patterns in Europe, Africa, India, China and Middle East, while making expedient concessions to their Caribbean location. The emergence of the notion of belonging to the Caribbean is of very recent vintage and at the beginning of being a work in progress.

In a real sense the Caribbean has been composed of Pan-Europeans, Pan-Asians and Pan-Africans. It may be co-incidence but very appropriate that 'pan' has become a defining symbol of the region, even if in a musical instrument. The ethos of displacement marks the migrant mainstreams of the Caribbean. The sense of connection with elsewhere is ever present in almost all intellectual discourses in the Caribbean.

Accordingly, Caribbean perception and evaluation of worth are invariably marked by an external dimension as phenomena are perceived and assessed in relation to Europe or Africa or India or China and more recently North America. Probably as a result of this sense of belonging elsewhere Caribbean people are probably more international in their conceptions than most other peoples of the world. The corollary to this is that they are prone to view Caribbean creations negatively.

The notion of belonging in and to the Caribbean can be traced to tenuous beginnings in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, it is as recent as the 20th century that such notions have come to the fore. In this regard, the importance of migration to other parts of the world cannot be overstated with respect to it contribution to developing a sense of belonging to the Caribbean. It has been by going elsewhere, and by interacting with people from elsewhere, especially Europe, Africa, India and China, that Caribbean people of different origins have begun to appreciate the transformation that the Caribbean milieu has wrought in them and therefore the extent to which they belong more to each other than to their Old World origins. In this regard Caribbean people residing outside of the region may have a more articulate and self-conscious understanding of what it means to be Caribbean that those residing inside the region without exposure to the world beyond. Caribbean intellectual traditions therefore have not only been generated and shaped by action and analysis inside the region, but also by Caribbean people resident outside the geographical boundaries of the region.

 Nationalism has been the movement that has confronted the issue of belonging to the Caribbean in the most direct and transparent manner. Even then, nationalism has not been able to completely override the sense of belonging elsewhere. In the first instance, people of African ancestry sought to create the new nations in their image. It is not unfair to say that the first wave of nationalism could be labelled African nationalism. More recently, particularly in Guyana and Trinidad, the sceptre of Indian nationalism has come to the fore. The utopian ideal of all citizens belonging to the nation without regard to creed, race, class, gender or origin is still to become the substance and inspiration of national imperative within the Caribbean.

Dominant Minorities and Marginal Majorities

Dominant groups and ruling elites are usually nested within majority groups in societies across the world. As such dominant groups are largely invisible with respect to the gross features that define the particular society. Similarly, minorities are usually marginal and visible by virtue of the differences in gross features with the majority group. Caribbean societies turn these patterns on their heads. Dominant elites in the Caribbean have been visible minorities while the majority groups have been marginalised.

This defining feature of the Caribbean has had profound implications for power relations. Dominant groups in Caribbean have suffered from many of the vulnerabilities of visible minorities, while marginal groups within the region have been endowed with the power of numbers and securities of majority. The power of the dominant groups therefore has been constrained and contained by their minority position. Likewise the subordination of the marginal groups has been mitigated and ameliorated by their majority status. The impositions and hegemony of the powerful have been weakened by minority status while the weaknesses of the marginalised have been bolstered by majority position.

Phenomena of dominant minorities and marginal majorities set in train fascinating sets of contradictory power relationships in the form of diverse coalitions between segments of the dominant elites and sections of subordinate groups as well as ingenious bases for justifying the status quo or resistance and rebellion. One illustration of this phenomenon is the sociology of political leadership in post-war Jamaica. Most Jamaican Chief Ministers, Premiers and Prime Ministers, leaders of mass political parties in which the majority of the members have been drawn from the ranks of the marginalised, have themselves been from the visible dominant minorities. They have been members of the visible minorities that have a track record of working in the interest of the marginalised majority.

Another illustration of this phenomenon is the sociology of political leadership in post-war Barbados. While the Chief Ministers, Premiers and Prime Ministers have been from the same racial group as the majority of the population, they had risen to the social ranks of the dominant minorities largely through education and the professions and could not at the time of their elevation to the pinnacle of political power be regarded as representative of the marginal majority.

The point is that in the era in which political power has passed to the marginal majority, through adult suffrage, the latter have not chosen their leaders directly from among themselves, apart from rare exceptions. They have chosen leaders who have either been from a particular category of members of the visible minorities or from those members of their group that have risen in social rank to levels equivalent to that of the dominant visible minorities.

A further intriguing contradiction that emanates from these relationships is the duality in loyalty, and consequently the shadow of suspicion, that is implied by the social background of political leadership in the Caribbean. Visible minorities within the Caribbean have invariably retained control of the economies of the several countries even through political control now rest to the elected representatives of the marginal majorities. The perceived or suspected dual loyalties of elected political leaders recruited from the ranks of the dominant minorities are almost self evident. Similarly, the perceived or suspected dual loyalties of the middle class leaders recruited from marginal majorities, are not hard to invoke. One end result is the suspicion and distrust that envelops political leadership in the region.

Yet another illustration of this phenomenon is that of Haitian peasants and urban poor in the late 1980s burning primary school textbooks and curriculum materials written in Creole and insisting that their children be taught French in primary school and that the textbooks and curriculum materials be written in French. The marginal majority in the Caribbean do not send their children to school to master the language that they speak but rather that of the dominant elite.

Another dimension of the dominant minority and marginal majority contradiction is that the ideology justifying the status quo is premised on the inferiority of the majority and its converse the superiority of the majority. An example of this ideological orientation is the perennial overestimation of levels of illiteracy in Caribbean populations and use of illiteracy as the justification of the various inequalities that are evident in the Caribbean societies. Yet another example is the inordinate importance attached to the use of 'proper English, or French, or Dutch or Spanish' both in the oral and written form. People's worth and competence are often judged by their mastery of the spoken or written word in the standard form of the language associated with the dominant minorities. The roots of this insistence have been justification of the status quo and the practice of blaming the victim of social inequality on the basis of an assumed inferiority.

Yet another dimension of the juxtaposition of visible dominant minorities and marginal majorities is fear and violence as almost endemic ingredients of social relations and social intercourse. The dominant minority's fear for their physical survival and in turn uses fear to seek to ensure their survival. Likewise the marginal majority is prone to use rebellion or the threat of rebellion as means of ameliorating their marginality. Structural and physical violence therefore co-mingle as elements within the power and social relations and spills over into patterns of thought and action and modes of analyses that are often articulated in apocalyptic terms.

Modern Societies of Modest Means

Caribbean societies are modern societies of modest means. To put it bluntly the modernity of Caribbean societies is not matched by the economic means normally associated with modernity. One way of quickly and crudely stating this defining feature of Caribbean societies is by way of reference to their relationship with Western Europe

and North America over the past five hundred years. From the time of Columbus Caribbean societies have been part of the Western world. Western culture was imposed as the standard. Capitalist economics dominated the relationship between the imperial powers and their Caribbean colonies. The product of this history is modern societies of modest means.

A more profound and more precise understanding comes from tracing the transformation in human societies from antiquity to the present time. The poles of this transformation from 'traditional' to 'modern' can be set out succinctly as follows:
1. From societies organised on the basis of blood bonds and kinship as manifested in tribe, clan, lineage, caste and family to societies organised on the basis of voluntary institutions such as school, church, political party, trade union, company and civil service which assures access to all persons irrespective of blood bonds or kinship relationship, whether factual of fictive.
2. From societies in which the basic unit of social organisation was the kinship collective, to societies organised on the individual as the basic unit.
3. From rights in people held by the kinship collectives to which they belong to rights of individuals enshrined in constitutional law.
4. From the purpose of life being the perpetuation of the lineage, to individual material progress being the benchmark of success and fulfilment.
5. From government predicated on descent from a royal lineage to government by consent of the citizens who hold sovereign power.
6. From kingdoms premised on patriarchal structures to nations predicated on utopian values.

On each one of these continua Caribbean societies are firmly located toward the modern pole. Caribbean history has been dominated by institutions such as the church, the company especially the plantation, the political party, the school and the trade union and not by tribes, clans or castes. Indeed, Old World peoples coming to the Caribbean quickly lost most of their connections to tribe, clans and castes. Displacement from these ancestral roots loosened and weakened those ties and made then vulnerable to replacement by allegiance to the modern voluntary institutions. Again issues of human rights, individual material progress and government by consent have been rallying themes in Caribbean history. Further, the Caribbean has had no indigenous kingdoms, no resident royal lineage and only pretensions of landed gentry or aristocratic elites.

From this analysis one would say that Caribbean societies are located at the very forefront of the transformation from traditional to modern forms. However, it is without the financial means associated with social modernity. The lack of fit between the social and the economic fractures the assumption that the first is a necessary corollary of the second as is often assumed in the case of Western Europe and North America.

The lack of fit between the modernity of Caribbean countries in relation to their means can be illustrated with respect to the ranks of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries on the UNDP Human Development Index, HDI over the last five years. This Index ranks

about 173 countries world-wide on the basis of human resource development criteria including years of schooling, adult literacy and educational attainment. Of this number, 31 are listed as industrialised if one excludes the new countries emerging from the break up of the former Soviet Union, and 46 if one includes them. For the purpose of this discussion one will exclude these 15 former Soviet Union republics from the industrialised country category.

When the HDI ranking of these remaining 31 industrialised countries are compared with the ranking of the 12 Commonwealth Caribbean countries, included in the list, nine of the 12 Commonwealth Caribbean countries are ranked before the last ranked of the 31 industrialised countries. Barbados is the highest ranked Caribbean country at 20 to 24, placing ahead of Ireland, Italy, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Portugal and just below Israel, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Belgium. Among the 127 countries listed as developing, Barbados ranked 1st and Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas 5th and 6th respectively. The point to note is the considerable overlap on the Human Development Index between these so-called Developing Commonwealth Caribbean countries and the so-called Developed First World countries. By income levels Caribbean countries are decided of modest means, however, in terms of the measurement of addressing basic human needs Caribbean countries overlap with the so-called First World.

A Cultural Cradle on the Economic Periphery of the West

The Caribbean virtually embodies all the cultural contradictions manifested in the hemisphere. These contradictions are best established by comparison with the rest of the hemisphere.

English-speaking North America has practised the Anglo-version of Western culture with virtually no accommodation to the culture of the earliest Americans whom Columbus, in a quandary concerning his location, mistakenly called Indians. The dominance of Anglo-European culture has existed within the context of European numerical dominance within the United States and Canada. Hence all its interactions have been with the cultures of minority groups, particularly the African-American minority. Even then the overriding principle of the melting pot has been to melt all into the Anglo-European mould. While multi-culturalism has emerged with strong supporters in the latter part of the twentieth century, the melting pot metaphor and its assumptions of a single culture, still evokes strong passions.

In the rest of continental America, from Mexico to Chile, the Iberian version of Western European culture has prevailed. However, the Iberian version of Western culture has been much more accommodating of the culture of the first Americans. With the exception of Argentina, and Chile to a lesser extent, the major characteristics of Latin America have been the amalgamation of Iberian culture with that of the culture of the first Americans. The resulting mestizo culture is a major component of what is generally referred to as Latin American. In other words, a defining difference between the North and South in the

Americas is the intersection and interaction of the imposed culture of Western Europe on the culture of the first Americans.

In the cultural panorama of the Americas, the Caribbean presents some unique differences. First, while the Caribbean shares with the rest of the Americas the historical dominance of Western European culture, the region harbours a wider mix of the different Western variants that have dominated, whether Anglo, French, Dutch or Spanish. Second, with the exceptions Belize, Dominica Guyana and St Vincent, the culture of the first Americans is almost non-existent by virtue of their early extinction in most of the region. Unlike Latin America there is no equivalent of the mestizo culture. Third, the intersection and interactions of the various versions of Western European culture have been with the cultures of Africa and Asia. Fourth, while Western European cultures have been dominant, they have had to make major concessions to African and Indian culture.

The resulting Creole culture of the Caribbean is neither European, nor African nor Asian. In a real sense Caribbean Creole culture is the most inclusive, cosmopolitan and broadly based culture within the Americas in terms of its synthesis of elements drawn from numerous cultural variants from three Old World Continents. The Caribbean is not only located in the geographic centre of the Americas but it could lay claim to being the cradle of an emerging American culture, where the latter is understood with respect to its broadest meaning.

The rich diversity of Caribbean culture is to be contrasted with the openness and vulnerability of the very small economies of the countries that comprise the region. There is absolutely no need to mount a strong argument on the premise that Caribbean economies are on the periphery of the hemisphere and the world. Their location on the periphery of the global economy is beyond dispute.

Banks and financial institutions have been failing in different parts of the world. Some back of the envelope calculations have indicated that whereas the bail-out of financial institutions accounted for three per cent of GDP with respect to the Savings and Loan fall-out in the United States and approximately 12.5 per cent of GDP in South East Asia, in Jamaica the recent bail-out of the financial sector amounted to 33 per cent of GDP.

Cultural and economic realities are out of sync in the Caribbean, as is the case with its social modernity and economic means.

A Common History and Shared Culture Constrained by Insularity

Yet another defining contradiction of the Caribbean is the common history and shared culture punctuated by the insularity of so many island countries. The co-incidence of geographic, political and linguistic borders superimposed by the island geography of the region, as small land masses dot the vast expanse of the Caribbean Sea, facilitates insularity and parochial thinking.

While the region is invariably confronted with common external stimuli, the discreteness and separateness of the different countries almost always evoke different responses. This paradox between common stimuli but divergence in response confers upon the Caribbean the closest approximation to a naturally occurring social laboratory. This is true whether one is dealing with macro-economic matters such as structural adjustments, monetary union, educational reform or music. The shared history and common culture insures comparability. The divergent responses facilitate the testing of hypotheses with the aid of naturally occurring control groups.

Indeed, Caribbean unity and integration are prized precisely because of the great obstacles to be overcome in its achievement. Interestingly it is European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement that are prompting and prodding Caribbean integration. Left to itself it is doubtful whether any degree of integration would be attempted in the region. The failed West Indian Federation was largely the brain-child of the departing imperial power. It fell apart is less than a decade.

The Creative Folk and the Conforming Intelligencia

No discussion about the defining features of the Caribbean, or about Caribbean intellectual traditions, could be complete without reference to what could be regarded as its crowning contradiction. Almost everything that defines the Caribbean in terms of food, music, language, dance etc. have been the creations of its folk. Further, the most creative and divergent postures in thought have come from among the lesser schooled sections of the society. Conversely, that the most conforming ways of thought have come from the highly schooled segments of the society.

The contrast being drawn here can be highlighted by the fact that affirmative forms of resistance to Western ideology and its assertions of superiority have come in their most strident and eloquent terms from among those segments of the populations, and from persons, not numbered among the most schooled in the region. This is true whether one is reviewing Marcus Garvey and the UNIA, or the founders of Rastafarianism, or the creators and chief exponents of Calypso and Reggae, or Dance Hall.

On the other hand, the most schooled in the Caribbean have been far more accepting of the dominant Western ethos. In this regard, it is necessary to recognise two differing forms of conformity. The first is characterised by an almost uncritical embrace of the truisms of Western Enlightenment to the point of regarding Western civilisation as the terminus of human social history and the destiny of all other societies. The modern hero is Western Enlightened man civilising the rest of the world.

The second embraces resisting forms of affirmation of the West like Marxism and Post-Modernism. The hidden fact is that both Marxism and postmodernism are resisting forms of affirmation of the Eurocentric world view, not withstanding their withering critique. Even in asserting the demise of the modernity project, the decadence and bankruptcy of the modernity, the exploitative aspects of capitalism and its demise, both

Marxism and post modernism clearly point to the superiority of the industrialised West. They both portray the economy and culture of the West as manifesting features of late capitalism, or of post industrial society, a stage not yet reached by the rest of world. Even in decadence Western societies are the most advanced societies in the world.

For almost all of the century, the leading lights of Caribbean intellectual thought have drawn their inspiration from critiques of the West that have affirmed the superiority of Eurocentric forms. This is true from C.L.R James, to Franz Fanon, to Eric Williams, to Walter Rodney and to Michael Manley.

This conformity of the schooled needs to be viewed within the context of the fact that education that offered upward social mobility was also offered on the terms that required adoption of the culture of the dominant elites. At the same time, a prime strategy of significant sections of the marginal majority was that of 'outdoing the master through mastery of his culture'. These two tendencies converged to produce the Black Englishman complete with an Oxbridge accent and properly regaled on ceremonial occasions. This is not to say that these sons and daughters of the Caribbean were mere imitators of the imperial power. Rather, like J. J. Thomas of Trinidad in the nineteenth century sought to challenge and resist the imperial power within the logic of the imposed paradigms. However, in so doing the sons and daughters of the region, themselves became disciples of these paradigms.

The culture and knowledge of the folk within the Caribbean has been at loggerheads with schooled scholarship. At the same time it is the culture and knowledge of the folk, the less schooled that has defined the Caribbean.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

By attempting to define the Caribbean in terms of some of its social contradictions, this paper has tried to sketch some of the broad social parameters of patterns of thought, mindsets, intellectual insights and scholarship in the Caribbean. Social uniqueness is never is a single factor or feature. Hence, no claim is being made that any one of the contradictions sketched above is peculiar to the Caribbean. However, it is in their combination that Caribbean uniqueness resides.

The question to be answered is whether the uniqueness of the Caribbean social milieu has translated into unique intellectual traditions and therefore original contributions to the understanding of the human condition. It has not been uncommon for so-called developing regions and former colonies to be regarded as intellectual outposts in which theories and grand conceptual schemes are tested but not generated. The question is, to what extent has Caribbean intellectual traditions conformed to this external perception? Conversely, to what extent Caribbean intellectual tradition has accepted its own authenticity and generated paradigms that are more inclusive in depicting and explaining the human condition?

Hopefully this Conference will re-affirm the authenticity of Caribbean experience and its capacity to contribute insights that are universal to the human condition and to human social formation. Drawing inspiration from Caribbean contradictions, and driven by the dynamics of regional paradoxes, Caribbean intellectuals must fully explore and exploit the potential to create original intellectual insights, conceptual schemes and frames of reference that exceed and supersede prevailing Western paradigms. Probably of equal importance is willingness and perceptiveness to recognise and embrace works emanating from the Caribbean that have done just that.

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