

The logo for Caribbean Geography Specialty Group. It features a green square with a white 'C' and a blue square with a white 'G' overlapping it. The word 'Caribbean' is in green and 'Geography' is in blue, both in a sans-serif font.

# Caribbean Geography

SPECIALTY GROUP



**NEWSLETTER**  
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## CGSG Newsletter Committee 2022

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# Peeling Back the Layers of Caribbean Geography

by Stacy-ann Robinson

*Much has happened in the region over the past year. In his message in our first newsletter in 2021, then Chair, Dr Kevon Rhiney (Rutgers University), addressed the debilitating impacts of COVID-19 on Caribbean economies and societies. Since then, the severe impacts persisted, but so too did vaccine hesitancy.*

**T**he riots in the French territories of Guadeloupe and Martinique, for example, were a contemporary illustration of resistance to France's imposition of a vaccine mandate on healthcare workers. However, the riots were also about getting justice for former farm workers who had been exposed to chlordane in banana plantations. Chlordane is a pesticide that was first used in Guadeloupe and Martinique in the early 1970s





to combat the banana weevil. The substance was classified as a probable human carcinogen by the World Health Organization in 1979. France itself did not ban it until 1990. However, a governmental exemption allowed its continued use in the West Indies for three more years, until 1993. Much of the discourse around the other issues driving the riots was largely missing from popular media accounts. But as Caribbean geographers, we are called to speak truth to power, and to refuse simple explanations that miss the deep history of the region.

As an example, I was recently invited to participate in a first-year PhD seminar at a European University as an external discussant. The student's research focused on the influence of global discourses on local climate change adaptation initiatives in Barbados. The student justified using Barbados

as a case study by highlighting the country's economic dependence on tourism and fisheries, and by pointing out that it has undertaken several initiatives in order to adapt to the worsening impacts of climate change in the Caribbean. Given the scope of the student's research, I agreed, Barbados is an excellent case study. However, it is an excellent case study for many reasons that were unmentioned—its governance is centralized (unlike many other countries in the region); its Coastal Zone Management Unit emerged out of the Coastal Conservation Project Unit which was created in 1983, before sea-level rise was touted as a threat to small islands, and which is one of the earliest in the region; its Town and Country Planning Act presented an early instance of climate change adaptation policy by establishing coastal setback lines for construction in the mid-1980s; and its firebrand Prime Minister has added fuel to the urgency of climate change adaptation in small island developing states around the world. Several questions started forming in my mind: What does the world really know about the Caribbean? Are we

putting in equal effort to understand the ways in which the Caribbean shapes the world? When we study the region, are we peeling back its layers? Do our thoughts, our work acknowledge and honor the struggle, the resistance?

In a lecture on climate finance that I gave a few weeks ago in my undergraduate Global Climate Policy course, my students bemoaned how pervasive corruption at all levels in Haiti was diverting climate finance from its intended use. They were, however, surprised when I explained that Haiti had to repay France billions for its independence/resistance literally, and that by forcing repayment, France created generations of suffering and destitution. Today, the country's per capita gross domestic product remains extremely low at roughly US\$1,150, and nearly 60% of Haitians live in poverty. And these are among the reasons why comparisons with the political economy of the Dominican Republic are unhelpful, though it shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti. The Caribbean is special. It requires nuance. And, as geographers, we need to be



fierce advocates of looking beneath the colors on the Caribbean map, and peeling back its layers.

In spite of the challenges facing the region and Caribbean geographers more generally, we feel especially honored to have been chosen to lead the work of the Specialty Group. We met quarterly as a Board. We designed a logo, which is making its debut in this newsletter. We produced this, our second newsletter, launched the Courtney Russell Award (in partnership with the GIS Specialty Group), and co-sponsored a session at the annual general meeting in February 2022,

### *“Relational Geographies Across the Caribbean and Pacific”,*

along with the Political Geography Specialty Group and the Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group. We also set a number of initiatives in motion. We developed a long-list of geographers who we could honor by renaming our travel award. We started reviewing the constitution

and by laws with a view to retaining institutional memory on the Board, and compiled a spreadsheet with the governance structures used by other specialty groups. We set up meetings with other specialty groups to explore the possibility of partnering with them on a curated track for the annual general meeting in 2023. We are also currently organizing a mentorship program to help a PhD student towards publication, all while guest-editing a special issue of The Geographical Journal on environmental justice in the Caribbean, which we hope will be published before the end of the calendar year.

Now, the time has come to pass the torch to Dr Alex Moulton (University of Tennessee at Knoxville), who has taken over as Chair of the Specialty Group. Alex is bubbling with ideas. The vision of the Board for Caribbean geography transcends the AAG and we need many hands on deck to help us increase the visibility and legitimacy of the field. Please volunteer to help. Let us peel back the layers together.



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# Barbados Has Rid Itself of the Queen But Not Neocolonialism

by Branko Marcetic

(First published in Jacobin magazine, jacobin.com; reproduced with permission)

*Barbados's decision to become a republic happily brings to an end its centuries-long formal subjection to the British Empire. But as the country has already discovered in its dealings with the IMF and World Bank, not all forms of colonialism are so easily rebuffed.*

It's easy to forget, now that the sun is almost all the way set on the British empire, but the tentacles of the country's royal family continue to slither over its former colonies. Twenty-nine years ago was the last time one of them, Mauritius, brushed off the residue of imperial control and became

a republic, making its new president its head of state, instead of the British Queen. This week, Barbados finally did so too.

Barbados hasn't won independence; that already happened in 1966. That victory had been the culmination of a series of political reforms that granted



the island self-governance by the start of the decade, won by many years worth of labor rebellions and mass struggle shaped by the ideas of socialists and black nationalists, and mirrored by similar struggles happening across the Caribbean at the time. Even so, like many former British colonies, in the intervening decades Barbados kept the symbolic trappings of monarchy, never fully cutting the cord.

But the option had always been on the table. A 1979 constitutional commission, pointing in part to

*“the measure of support evinced at public meetings for the retention”*

of the monarchy, recommended that the Queen stay in her position as head of state. Practically, this didn't mean much. Most visibly, it meant the continued existence of the governor-general, the Queen's official representative, and a key role in the somewhat absurd constitutional Kabuki theater familiar to those former British colonies that have never gone all the way and become republics.

Officially, a governor-general, appointed by the Queen on the advice of whoever is prime minister, carries out Her Majesty's constitutional duties: appointing the prime minister after an election, appointing the cabinet and judges on the prime minister's advice, giving assent to bills passed by parliament in order to officially make them law, and (in Barbados) appointing a third of the senate, among others. In practice, this is all understood as pantomime, with the governor-general a symbolic rubber stamp for the actions of the country's elected officials and its voters.

In arguing to keep the system as is, the 1979 commission pointed to a number of factors beyond Barbadians' loyalty to the Queen: that she would be a neutral figure above local political squabbles, that Barbados needed “further social and political maturity,” that as a small country it would benefit from continued ties with a larger one. Looking out at the region's political turbulence at the time, the existing arrangement was viewed as a stabilizing anchor.

There were also geopolitical concerns. Pointing to arguments that saw the

monarch as preserving Barbadian democracy, the commission noted that “the prospect of a one-party state, or perhaps a communist system of government, is a specter perpetually haunting the corridors of power.” This was a decade where both Cuba and the Soviet Union moved to improve relations with Caribbean island nations, who were then still trying to shake off Western influence over their economies and politics and take national ownership of their own resources.

Nineteen years later, the next time a constitutional commission took a crack at the question, this had changed.

*“This time, with very few exceptions, the overwhelming preference was for a system of government in which a president would replace the Queen as the Barbadian head of state,”*

stated its report, which now recommended finally pulling the

trigger.

Those in favor argued the head of state should be democratically elected and a citizen of Barbados, stated the report, and so would inspire greater unity and patriotism. They also pointed to *“notions of snobbishness and an inflexible social hierarchy”* implied by the monarchy, as well as the colonial overtones that *“hardly represents the reality of Barbados today.”* Still, little happened for another two decades. A referendum on the question was officially endorsed in 2005 and planned for three years later, but never happened. More significantly, in 2005, Barbados switched its highest court of appeal — roughly the equivalent of the US Supreme Court — from the Privy Council in London to the Caribbean Court of Justice located in Trinidad and Tobago, an assertion of its independence with both real-world and symbolic impact.

## THE WHITLAM PRECEDENT

But perhaps there were advantages to dragging their feet on making it official — and perhaps the governor-



general was more than the ceremonial figurehead that the pro-monarchy voices insisted. As the 1998 commission noted, “the Crown has a reserve role in the system, in that it can act as a final check on political excesses by using its power to ‘advise’ on the timing or propriety of a request by the government for a dissolution of parliament.” Pointing to the infamous 1975 dismissal of left-wing Australian prime minister Gough Whitlam by his country’s governor-general, the commission called the Queen an *“essential bulwark of our freedom under the law.”*

In truth, the Australian episode was an alarming case study of the dangers of keeping such a system in place. In the three short years he was allowed to be prime minister, Whitlam had passed a raft of vital reforms, including universal health care, free higher education, and an expansion of welfare, all while antagonizing the Washington establishment by withdrawing from Vietnam and other actions. These choices were looked upon so unfavorably that the UK’s MI6 spy service began bugging his cabinet meetings on the CIA’s behalf.

The end result was a soft coup that centered on the unique role of the governor-general, then filled by John Kerr. Embarking on the kind of parliamentary obstructionism that American readers are familiar with, the Australian right engineered a constitutional crisis by refusing to take the routine step of keeping the government funded.

On this pretext, Kerr — who we now know was conferring with Whitlam’s opposition, in touch with the Queen’s secretary throughout, and was being urged on by a CIA who considered him “our man” — dismissed Whitlam from the prime minister’s post and dissolved parliament, leading to protests and strikes. In the elections that followed, the country’s conservatives won in a landslide. Contrary to the Barbadian commissions’ belief the monarchy would be a stabilizing force, in Australia it proved anything but.

Nothing like this explains why Barbados finally took the step it did. The Whitlam dismissal is an exceptional case, not just in Australia, but in Britain’s former colonies more generally. And the Queen was only

one in a confluence of factors that led to the infamous moment. But a factor it was, and reading the now-released correspondence between Kerr and Buckingham palace, we know the Queen was aware of Kerr's intentions, and that her secretary's advice was pivotal in his decision to act.

With the Whitlam case in mind, if you're among the millions who still live under the Queen's supposedly "symbolic" auspices, it's hard not to see an institution like the governor-general as a political Chekhov's gun, the imperial version of a fire alarm behind glass to be broken in case of emergency, never to be used unless exceptional circumstances call for it.

Just as the 1998 commission said, in Australia, the Queen was a "check on political excesses." In Whitlam's case, those excesses were passing a suite of social democratic reforms and trying to carve a foreign policy independent from the Westminster-Washington nexus. Faced with this, a symbolic, ceremonial position suddenly hardened into a very real instrument of colonial tyranny. It's a lesson that shouldn't be lost on the

many former colonies far smaller than Australia that still call the Queen their head of state.

## **FROM ONE EMPIRE TO ANOTHER**

Barbados is, fortunately, now free of this dreadful potential. But it doesn't mean it's free of imperial influence. Like other Caribbean countries, Barbados threw off its colonial shackles in the 1960s only to find that empire had many forms. The impoverished country went into debt to the London Stock Exchange at the same time it was winning its independence from the UK, having never been compensated for the wealth brutally siphoned from it over hundreds of years. Ongoing economic shocks and attempts to deal with them over the decades — notably, by borrowing money to fund the infrastructure to develop its tourism sector after a collapse in sugar prices during the 1970s — lifted that debt to nearly \$8 billion by 2017, or 155 percent of GDP, the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The result has been a decades-long, seemingly endless debt cycle, with Barbados turning to the International



Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to pay down its debt, and those institutions instituting strict conditions on how the money is spent, involving endless neoliberal “reforms.” In 2018, that meant laying off fifteen hundred government workers, privatizing state-owned enterprises, granting the Central Bank of Barbados more autonomy while limiting its financing to the government, and slashing corporate tax rates from 25 percent to between 1 and 5.5 percent. A further shock wrought by the pandemic meant another IMF loan, and the opening

to more austerity to come.

Barbados has taken an important step to making its independence concrete, a step rich with symbolic meaning, and as the Whitlam case reminds us, potential practical significance. More countries will hopefully follow its lead, and it seems some already are. But nations like Barbados will never truly be able to take charge of their own destinies so long as we forget that colonial domination can take many forms — sometimes the business end of a rifle, sometimes a handshake and a loan.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Branko Marcetic is a Jacobin staff writer and the author of *Yesterday's Man: The Case Against Joe Biden*. He lives in Chicago, Illinois. The article can also be accessed online at: <https://jacobinmag.com/2021/12/barbados-neocolonialism-republic-british-empire-self-governance>

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



**D**r. Mayra Román-Rivera is a Lecturer in the Department of Geography at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She was born and raised in Puerto Rico, spending most of her youth just steps away from the beach. Mayra, or Dr. M as she's fondly called by her students, chose to pursue her undergraduate studies at the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras Campus (2012).

There she majored in Geography and Anthropology. While completing her degree, Dr. M had the opportunity to work as a citizen scientist with the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico where she helped to develop a geomorphic profile for a public use property along the north coast of the island. She later became a lead volunteer with the project, helping to train other citizen scientists, targeting K-12 and university students as well as local community members. That experience ignited both a passion for coastal geomorphology and a

drive to help empower communities to learn about and participate in the management of natural resources in their environment, and how they can actively take protection of them into their own hands.

After graduating from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayra's love for coastal geomorphology culminated in the pursuit of a master's degree in Geography at East Carolina University (2012) and eventually a PhD, also in Geography, at the University of South Carolina (2019). For her dissertation research, Dr. M focused on developing a new



method of identifying sand bar systems using remote sensing of satellite imagery. She also examined how sandbar morphology affected beach-dune responses after extreme weather events such as tropical storms and winter storms. The new methodology she developed facilitated the examination of coastal systems without the use of invasive in-situ instrumentation so that coastal systems can be more accessible, and coastal studies can be, theoretically, less expensive.

Another goal of her dissertation research hinged on improving coastal management practices in locations that experience significant erosion in their coastal areas due to weather systems. To this end, Dr. M attempted to understand how all features of the coast - the beach, the dune, and sand bars - all work together and influence each other to help managers make better decisions of what areas need more and/or better protection

during storm events. This research was partially funded by an AAG Dissertation Research Grant and by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).

During her PhD studies, Dr. M and her advisor, Dr. Jean Ellis, developed a project that studied the effects, damage, and beach-dune recovery process of Isle of Palms, South Carolina after Hurricane Matthew made landfall in the state in 2016, the first major hurricane to do so since Hurricane Hugo in 1988. Through this project Dr. M had the opportunity to return to her citizen science roots, working with the community to understand the dynamics of their coastal area and develop better

*Dr. Román-Rivera during her time as a volunteer with the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico training two citizen scientists how to use a refractometer to measure water salinity in Manatí, Puerto Rico (2010).*





*Dr. Román-Rivera taking field notes at Isle of Palms, SC during a pre-storm survey of Hurricane Irma (2017)*

and more robust plans to prevent future erosion issues. This project reiterated the importance of policy work and the importance of the responsibility placed upon scientists to disseminate and share their research within their community of study in a relatable manner.

Presently, Dr. M wants to continue doing research that will help create better management practices and

facilitate the updating of policies regarding coastal communities. She will be going back to her old stomping grounds in Puerto Rico to investigate the current state of mangroves on the island. Cataloging the state of the island's mangroves could help lead restoration and conservation efforts of these ecosystems in areas that were severely affected by Hurricane María, and have not recovered even though four years have passed since it made landfall. This work is important as mangroves are essential for providing protection against storm surge, and yet tend to be overlooked and destroyed for development. Many people also express a general dislike for mangroves owing to a negative stigma that has been expressed since colonial times. Like other wetlands, they are associated with diseases, mosquito breeding grounds, foul odors, and more.

For Dr. M, it is important that as our climate, environment, and politics change, scientists and academics do not forget the



important role they play in policy making and educating the masses. This is especially important for the Caribbean region which has numerous small island nations and countries that are very vulnerable to environmental changes for a variety of reasons. No matter where her research or academic journey takes her, Dr. Román-Rivera will strive to help communities be empowered through the dissemination of science and knowledge so they can

work to protect their environments and adapt to the changes that coastal regions are experiencing due to the rapidly changing climate. To aspiring researchers and academics, Dr. M offers the following advice: *“Go out there, explore, take advantage of community initiatives, such as citizen scientist programs, learn, and, most importantly, share your knowledge to help build a stronger, more resilient global community”.*

You can follow Dr. Mayra Román-Rivera on **Twitter** (@Marandra787), **LinkedIn** (@Mayra A. Roman-Rivera), or via **email** (mromanri@utk.edu)



**D**r. Robert Chlala is a postdoc at University of California, Los Angeles, working on a multi-year collaborative project on the geographies of cannabis labor. Rob’s project at the UCLA Labor Center, in partnership with the Center for Advancement of Racial Equity (CARE) at Work, charts the experiences of cannabis workers across the state, in relationship to local/regional geographies of power, wealth and policing.

Dr. Chlala will soon be launching a community-vetted, worker-led survey of 1500 retail and cultivation workers, alongside in-depth interviews and focus groups, to inform comparative regional

mapping, analysis and policy reports/platforms. They will support a deeper academic, organizing and policy conversation on drug legalization, the future of work and the value produced in fugitive

*Cannabis Worker Organizing Rally for Equity in front of Los Angeles City Hall – 2018 – where Rob was researching and co-organizing*





economies. A major area of focus in this is the “legacy” market that has been targeted by policing post-legalization, and understanding the experiences of mostly Black, indigenous, Latinx and Asian or Pacific-Islander workers at the backbone of the industry. This work builds on Dr. Chlala’s dissertation and now book project,

*“Grassroots Market-Making: The Production, Policing and Politics of Value in Los Angeles’ Transforming Cannabis Industry.”*

For Dr. Chlala, his postdoc is a dream project that seemed impossible: he was able to get public funding from California cannabis taxes to try to co-construct a project with workers and organizations that represent them - particularly grassroots groups led by Black, indigenous, Latinx and other migrant communities. UCLA Labor Center and CARE at Work (tied to the Black Worker Center) has honed a research justice approach for many years that made it the ideal home for this 2-year endeavor. A community advisory is overseeing and guiding the entire project. A team of (paid) community surveyor-researchers

will be given access to training and an opportunity to lead in analysis and interpretation of the data, and form recommendations together in accessible data workshops.

Dr. Chlala became interested in Caribbean Geography through the work of Black geographies scholars. According to Dr. Chlala, these scholars offered a critical repertoire on political economy and ecology that examines lineages of the plantation and enslavement, the wholesale ways colonizing actors rendered Black life dispensable, which reverberate clearly in both the war on drugs but also the commercializing cannabis economy. At the same, such literature offered insight re-considering fugitivity and re-centering Black spatial practices like the plot that demonstrate multiple ways of being, of care, of resilience and imagination – produced in the face of what Dr. Jovan Scott Lewis calls “sufferation” economies. The work of these scholars resonated much with many of the complex projects and negotiations of not just surviving – but also thriving – that

Dr. Chlala noticed in his research on the cannabis industry in California. Interestingly, many of Dr. Chlala's cannabis interlocutors also mapped out Los Angeles' market in relation to Caribbean geographies. They recognized the Caribbean diasporic ties to the plant in meaningful ways, where grassroots science and practices, including medical use of elements like THC-A, were developed in Jamaica and Haiti.

Dr. Chlala sees Caribbean geographies as a powerful set of empirical tools and deep and powerful range of theory that helps reconsider what it means to be human in a context of multi-generational violence and erasure.

And, ultimately, he is most excited about the ongoing provocations of Caribbean geography embodied in the work of Sylvia Wynter, in her words *"collectively undertak[ing] a rewriting of knowledge as we know it."* This resonates deeply with Dr. Chlala's own grounding in a Nichiren Buddhist tradition, informing how he views education as a humanistic project of realizing respect and value for all life.

Dr. Chlala's advice for young students and early career individuals working in Caribbean Geography is to embrace the notion of Relationality – a big topic in Caribbean geographies. He encourages emerging scholars to not be afraid of building with





the communities they research and engage with, to collaborate on writing and research with those in and out of the academy, to organize directly alongside their fellow colleagues (“go graduate unions!”), to ground yourself in the spiritual or political communities, and to take some risks in your career path on behalf of such relationships. *“These kinds of relational practices help sustain and nourish us against the isolation and limits imposed on our imagination, and are a key reason I made it through the long PhD process, even when I made some choices that seemed against an assumed status quo”,* he said. In Dr.Chlala’s opinion, spaces like Caribbean Geographies matter not justbecause there is some agreement

on scholarship but because it can be a generative place to engage, learn, and encourage each other, and to find our common humanity in the face of dehumanizing institutions.

You can follow Dr. Chlala on Twitter ([@robertchlala](#)) and check out his recent article: (2020). Misfit medicine and queer geographies: The diverse economy and politics of cannabis in carceral Los Angeles. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 38(7-8), 1180-1197.



# BLACK WOMANHOOD AND COLONIAL BODY MEMORY

## Reflections from Fieldwork

by Suzanne Nimoh

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Landscapes hold memories, overlapping throughout time to create palimpsests of power and violence, and protest and liberation. In the Dominican Republic, the historic neighborhood of the Colonial City of Santo Domingo embodies these configurations. Relics of Spanish

colonial rule and subsequent native genocide, African enslavement, and US imperial occupation haunt the land. These events are not left behind in the past, but appear through place names, memorials, and social structures within and beyond the colonial tourist landscape. How does colonial memorialization guide our presents and futures? How does it shape our experiences as racialized residents, tourists, and researchers? In this essay I meditate on my experience as a Black woman conducting fieldwork in the Colonial City of Santo Domingo, and close with a reflection on the futurity of imperial ruins.

In 2019, I conducted fieldwork and



*Figure 1: Parque Colón in The Colonial City of Santo Domingo. Photo taken by author.*



archival research in Santo Domingo, paying attention to the presence of the historic Colonial City. The Colonial City of Santo Domingo is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, credited for its significance to global multicultural interaction and urban development. This neighborhood in the Dominican capital city is regarded as the first permanent European settlement in the Americas. It still preserves 16th century Spanish military forts, gothic churches, and monuments to colonial leaders, such as Christopher Columbus pictured below, and is the city's major tourist feature. A century later, following Dominican independence, the island faced imperial occupation again, this time by the United States. During the U.S. military occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1916, the empire cemented its power in Santo Domingo through alterations of the landscape, overlaying the Spanish colonial remnants. The geographic impacts of the U.S. empire includes streets named after U.S. presidents, such as George Washington Avenue, and an identical obelisk to the U.S. Washington Monument.

During my research, I felt the overlays of empire and colonization on my body. In my time conducting research in the

Colonial City, I experienced a strange body memory for colonial violences I had not experienced personally. It felt like time travel: a temporal transportation that filled my body with tension. As I walked among colonial ruins, I felt the reinscription of historic racialized and gendered power on my body, which I did not feel in the less historically preserved parts of Santo Domingo. The military forts and gothic architecture constantly reminded me of the African enslavement that occurred when they were installed. Despite passing as Dominican because of my dark skin, my identity made me feel like an outsider; it reminded me that centuries ago I would not be able to walk those streets as freely as I was.

As a Black woman in the United States, feeling unsafe in my body is unfortunately usual. I live with the recognition that I am politically unprotected, and I expected to feel the same in the Dominican Republic. While the landscape reminded me of my lack of power, I felt welcomed by Dominican people. Aside from the intense hospitality I received from local residents (which deserves its own essay), I also felt protected institutionally. After speaking with me, Dominicans would recognize that I was from the United



States by my accent. After my nationality was revealed, I began to be treated differently. I was seen as someone to protect because I was a tourist. I was visiting at a time when North American media outlets were widely sharing the stories of American tourist

deaths in the Dominican Republic. The weight of being part of the U.S. Empire was particularly heavy, as the Dominican Ministry of Tourism had a popular media campaign in response, tagged with the hashtag #DRisSafe. This hashtag became a slogan among local people to welcome tourists into their neighborhood, and resist North American narratives of Dominican danger. When I told Dominicans I was visiting from the United States, they often replied “DR is safe!” to counter any potential judgment I could offer before it came.

Further, being a U.S. citizen came with privileges in the Dominican Republic which I do not hold in the United States. When people I spoke with learned I was from the U.S., they began to offer me recommendations and asked how I was experiencing the island. Employees in the tourism industry and local residents wanted to accommodate me on a deeper level than general hospitality. One of the most surprising inversions of power relations occurred during an interaction with a police officer. I was sitting on the boardwalk of George Washington



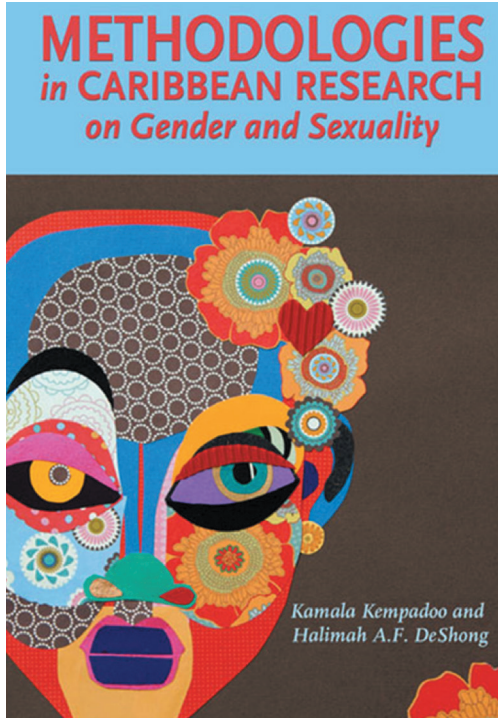
*Fig. 2: Close up shot to Monument of Christopher Columbus, highlighting the statue of the Indigenous woman below him. Photo taken by the author.*

Avenue with a young Haitian man I befriended. He was a regular presence at the boardwalk, working daily as a shoeshiner to support his girlfriend and child. During our conversation, a police officer approached us and asked me if I was okay, concerned for my safety. The Haitian man shared the same dark complexion as me, and I recognized that my U.S. citizenship superseded my racial identity in this moment. As a Black person in the United States, I am accustomed to police officers seeing me as a threat to public safety. To my surprise, my racialized body became a representation of imperial power. Much of the Dominican economy is based on tourism, and it is the most popular tourist destination in the Caribbean. The institutional concern for my safety went beyond my individual body, and was tied to the political economy of the nation. Another case of North American tourist injury on the island would likely be highly publicized once more, at the detriment of the Dominican GDP. Further, the dynamic between the Dominican police officer and the Haitian worker models historic and contemporary Dominican discrimination against Haitians in the DR, which the United States began to encourage during their military

occupation of Hispaniola.

The complexities of colonialism and imperialism shape the landscape, as well as our day to day lives. In the Colonial City of Santo Domingo, relics of United States military occupation and Spanish colonialism are preserved on display. I went into fieldwork prepared to study the exclusionary built environment and colonial remnants, but was unprepared with how it would shape my experience as a researcher. I felt these histories of power as I walked through the streets and viewed memorials of former leaders who did not include me in their vision for the nation. I felt as if I was trespassing in someone else's fantasy. Further, while my identities do not give me much privilege in the United States, I was able to recognize the weight of U.S. imperial influence I carried with me. I was strangely institutionally protected, and my fellow Black people were seen as a threat to my wellbeing. As Black American researchers, it is important for us to be aware of our different, and somewhat paradoxical, subject positions when conducting research abroad.

## FEATURED PUBLICATIONS



### Methodologies in Caribbean Research on Gender and Sexuality

by Kamala Kempadoo and Halimah DeShong

*Methodologies in Caribbean Research on Gender and Sexuality* is a volume organized by Kamala Kempadoo and Halimah DeShong, two important researchers in the areas of transnational and Caribbean feminisms, and feminist research. Their book is a multi-disciplinary collection containing 29 chapters organized around 7 main themes: History and Historiography; Methodologies for Feminist Organizing and Action Research; Researching Gender; Researching Sexualities; Researching the Visual and Cultural; Methods for Analyzing Talk and Text; and Reflections on Positionality.

As defined by the authors in the introductory chapter, this collection brings a “contribution to critical discussions of

methodology undertaken by feminists, and other gender and sexuality studies scholars, in the Caribbean”. The emphasis is on English-speaking countries and the collection brings a mix of canonical texts discussing methodologies for doing research in the region as well as new critical perceptions on feminist methodologies in the Caribbean. It is an important read for those interested in anti-colonial, counter-hegemonic, or feminist work.



### Suspicion: Vaccines, Hesitancy, and the Affective Politics of Protection in Barbados

by Nicole Charles

In *Suspicion: Vaccines, Hesitancy, and the Affective Politics of Protection in Barbados*, Nicole Charles explores Barbados’ experience with the government promotion (2014) and people’s rejection of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. Guided by black feminist theory, transnational feminist studies, and science and technology studies, the author shares her ethnographic fieldwork results. She explores Afro-Barbadians’ hesitation, feelings, and traumas that led them to refuse vaccination for young women despite the increase in cervical cancer in the Caribbean.



Considering Barbados' more extended political and cultural history, Charles insists that peoples' suspicion is based not on irrational ideas but on fragmented and distrustful relationships resulting from historical mistrust of government and medical practices on colonized communities. The book offers new insights on racialized, biopolitics, and biomedicines as well as the intersection between colonial and postcolonial states and public health measures.

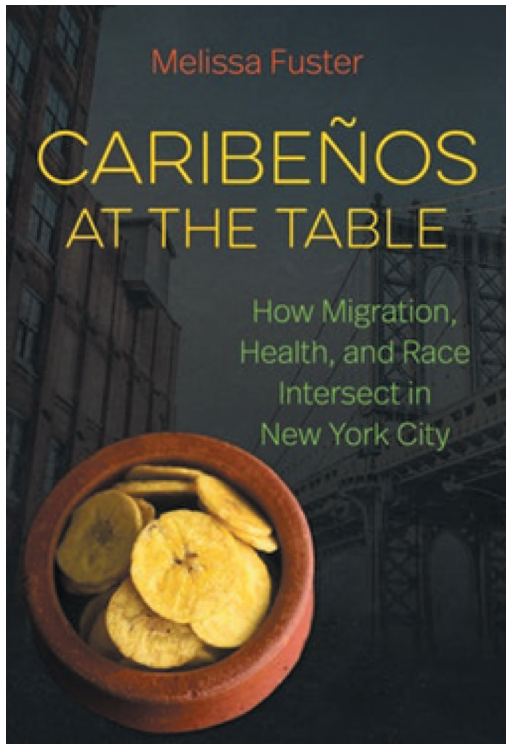


## Colonial Debts: The Case of Puerto Rico

by Rocío Zambrana

In *Colonial Debts: The Case of Puerto Rico*, Rocío Zambrana delves into the experiences of this archipelago as a key case to illustrate the intersection between neoliberalism and disaster capitalism. Puerto Rico has one of the highest financial debts in U.S. history and was hit by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. In this context, the author reflects on the continuation of coloniality in the island through the lenses of political economy. Zambrana also stresses how debt functions as an apparatus of predation, profit, dispossession, and violence.

Throughout the book, the author uses a decolonial approach to also examine multiple acts of resistance within the island territory, such as land rescue, feminist group mobilizations, and the events of the Summer of 2019. These acts of subversion are presented as material practices to “turn the present into the past.” They illustrate specific political conjunctures at which citizens try to rearticulate power dynamics and unbind from the current situation of coloniality reinstalled and reinforced by debt.



## **Caribeños at the Table: How Migration, Health, and Race Intersect in New York City**

by Melissa Fuster

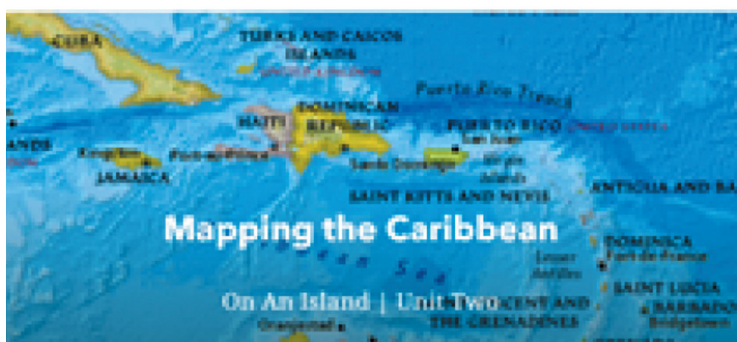
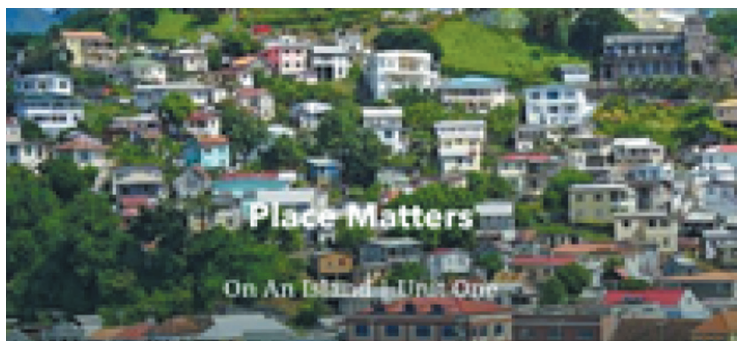
From the opening paragraph, where Melissa Fuster hooks us in with early childhood memories of food, to her description of Hispanic Caribbean foodways in the city, we know we are in for an interesting ride as she builds her case in *Caribeños at the Table: How Migration, Health, and Race Intersect in New York City*.

To understand these linkages, she takes us on a journey alive with the smell of arroz con gandules and carne guisada, bringing to life some of the people and neighborhoods of New York City along the way. The stories in the book often feel very personal and yet she challenges the reader to think about health equity, migration and race.

According to Fuster: *“To talk about a ‘cuisine’ is to talk about a style of cooking, characteristic of a distinctive place.”* However she demonstrates it is so much more as she explores food, migration, and health through cultural and historic contexts. She criticizes in the book the over simplistic emphasis on culture for diet related health outcomes and explores drivers for change.







## On An Island | Teach with GIS lessons

by Sandra Turner

Understanding how the world works is said to be connected to the geographic spaces we occupy and the places to which we are deeply connected.

Sandra Turner, a global climate change education leader who teaches aquaculture, climate science and ocean literacy, brings us her latest project - or as she calls it “works of art” - that takes us on a Science of Where journey. She offers lessons to the learner - a kind of journey - from understanding the basic idea of

‘why place matters’ to making a map to plate tectonics and volcanoes.

In these lessons, Turner helps young learners understand geographic concepts and introduces them to mapping and GIS technologies illuminating real time problems across the Caribbean Region. More details can be found on the website: <https://teach-with-gis-learn.org/hub.arcgis.com/pages/on-an-island>.





# CARIGEO Student Competition

From Linda Peters

**The #YourCaribbeanStory Contest – co hosted by UN-GGIM Americas, CARIGEO and Esri – encourages university students aged 18 and over to create and share stories about the Caribbean through GIS.**

**T**he Caribbean is a unique region, comprising many nations and territories across the Caribbean Sea with varying geography and geology. Situated largely on the Caribbean plate with more than 700 islands, reefs and cays it has a tropical climate shaped by natural hazards and vulnerability to critical issues such as sea level rise, coastal erosion, precipitation and landslides. The Caribbean islands have some of the most diverse ecosystems in the world. The land of the Caribbean is home to many different people with varied cultural backgrounds and heritage. The waters of the Caribbean are home to many types of fish, coral reef and seagrass and contribute greatly to the biodiversity in the region as well as the local economy.

The CARIGEO student competition provides exposure to real world issues and a chance for students to

tell their story. Whether interested in environmental issues, climate, natural hazards, demographics, culture, economy or history – geography is the common thread across all these areas.

Join us as we kick off the 2022 CARIGEO Student Competition. This competition intends to highlight the stories of some of the brightest student minds in the Caribbean. If you are a university student who resides in the Caribbean or you are from the Caribbean and study abroad, you are welcome to attend:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/your-caribbean-story-launch-event-tickets-244077712007> [eventbrite.com]

The contest is open for registration until Feb 28th and students will have until April 30th to submit all final work products. For more info, go to: <https://yourcaribbeanstory.caribeangeoportal.com/>

# 2022 Courtney Russell Award recipients

## Aleem Mahabir and Kristinia Doughorty

From Stacy-ann Robinson

*The Courtney Russell Award was created in 2022 to honor Dr. Courtney Russell as a light in the GIS community, and to help sustain his legacy through supporting graduate work that has a focus on the Caribbean, and/or students who are pursuing GIS research and careers.*

This award offers two \$400 travel awards to attend and present their work at the AAG annual meeting or at a regional AAG meeting. It is awarded jointly through the Caribbean Geography Specialty Group and the GIS Specialty Group (chaired by Dr. Bandana Kar). Special thanks to Courtney's former colleagues, Dr. Clio Maria Andris, Dr. Bandana Kar, Dr. Ron Briggs and Dr. David Cowen for their support.

**Aleem Mahabir** is a PhD candidate at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.

His research interests lie at the intersection of Urban Social Geography and Psychology. His current work focuses on the link among psychosocial dispositions, exclusion and underdevelopment among marginalized populations in Caribbean cities. In 2019, he was

awarded a Graduate Fellowship Award from the Urban Geography Specialty Group of the American Association of Geographers in recognition of his research. He has also been involved in several projects organized under supranational entities and NGOs

including the IADB, the FAO, the Nature Conservancy, the Hungry Cities Partnership, and the Clinton Foundation. Apart from his research pursuits, he is actively involved in social initiatives and community outreach programs in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Kingston, Jamaica. He also does student outreach among excluded populations at his university campus, focusing on understanding

the unique experiences and needs of Muslim and LGBTQIA+ students. At the AAG, and with the support of the Courtney Russell Award, he will present his paper, *“Alternative domains of injustice: Exploring hope(lessness) and psychosocial resilience among residents of an excluded urban community.”*

**Kristinia Dougherty** is a PhD Candidate in Geography at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.

Her research interests include soil science, sustainable rural livelihoods, and disaster risk management. As a graduate research assistant, she has worked with regional agencies such as the World Bank, Inter-American Bank and USAID on local projects aimed at improving climate change adaptation within vulnerable communities. She also volunteered with the UNDRR in 2020 and 2021, and has been volunteering with UWI Commuting Students Office

since the 2019/2020 academic year. Her academic background, research experience, and deep commitment to empowering communities in their resilience building enables her to generate reports with a holistic multidisciplinary approach to sustainable development. At the AAG, and with the support of the Courtney Russell Award, she will present her paper, *“Assessing the socio-ecological resilience of nutmeg agroecosystems in Grenada.”*



**Bio: Dr. Courtney Russell** was a native of Kingston, Jamaica.



He came to the United States and earned a Graduate Certificate in GIS in Fall 2003 and a Masters in Geographical Information Sciences in Fall 2004 from the University of Texas-Dallas under Dr. Ron Briggs. He was a wonderful research and teaching assistant and his master's project was titled *"Impact of Over*

*65 Tax Limitations on Municipal Revenue: A spatial analysis."* He joined the University of South Carolina-Columbia to pursue his PhD under Dr. David Cowen in 2004. His dissertation, titled *"After-school programs (ASP) in South Carolina: supply, demand and underserved areas,"* was completed in 2008. Courtney was a beloved friend and a colleague who had a sincere dedication to his research in GIS, and much pride for his home country of Jamaica. He had a wonderful smile and made everyone more at ease and our time with him was too short. Courtney passed away from cancer in 2008 in Dallas, Texas and was survived by his wife Maxine.

# Professor Emeritus David Barker

By Alex A. Moulton



*Barker at his retirement party in 2012, surrounded by several of his students. [Credits: Rose-Ann Smith]*

**P**rofessor Emeritus David Barker, former Head of the Department of Geography and Geology at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona Campus, died on February 19, 2022. Professor Barker was born in Doncaster, England in 1947. He had a BSc from Aberystwyth University in Wales, a PhD from Bristol University, and a postgraduate Diploma in Urban and Regional Studies from University of

Birmingham. Joining the faculty at UWI Mona in 1980, Professor Barker advanced through the academic ranks becoming full Professor in 2005, and then Emeritus Professor in 2015. Professor Barker served as Head of Department from 1994-1996 and again from 2005 until his retirement in 2012. Dave, as he was affectionately called, was an ardent supporter of Caribbean geographic scholarship. He was an early advocate for the creation of the Caribbean Geography Specialty Group and supported the efforts that led to the group's establishment. Dave wrote the feature article of the inaugural CGSG newsletter last year. He did so while ill.

For the past 40 years Professor Barker supported Caribbean geographical pedagogy and research at the secondary and tertiary levels. Barker's research centered on Caribbean agrarian systems, and examined small-



scale farmers' decision making, rural development, human dimensions of global change, land degradation, indigenous technical knowledge, and food security. His 'Tropical Agricultural Systems and Development' and 'Geographical Thought and Research Methods' classes were staples of UWI Mona geography education.

Professor Barker was co-author or co-editor of eight books and more than 60 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. His recent monographs include: *'Global Change and the Caribbean: Adaptation and Resilience'* (edited with Duncan McGregor, Kevon Rhiney and Thera Edwards) and *'Global Change and Caribbean Vulnerability: Environment, Economy and Society at Risk'* (edited with McGregor and David Dodman) both of which were outcomes of the British-Caribbean Geography Seminar Series, co-organized with McGregor in conjunction with the Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers. Barker was co-founder of the journal *Caribbean Geography* and served as the journal's Editor from 1983 until his passing. Barker served as State Representative for the Caribbean



*Barker doing an interview in 2018, Millbank district (Portland) Jamaica. [Credits: Donovan Campbell]*

in the Southeastern Division of the AAG in 2014. He was a past-President of the Jamaican Geographical Society and served on the Executive Council in various capacities for over 35 years.

Barker is survived by wife Dianne, daughter Yolande and twin grandchildren Nathaniel and Naomi. He will be missed by countless geography students he supervised and mentored.



