2010

'Killer Vacations' and 'Murder Music': The Discourses of Gay Identity, Consumerism, and Race in the Gay-Dancehall Confrontation

James Rogers
Western University, jrog122@gmail.com

'KILLER VACATIONS' AND 'MURDER MUSIC':
THE DISCOURSES OF GAY IDENTITY, CONSUMERISM, AND RACE
IN THE GAY-DANCEHALL CONFRONTATION

(Spine Title: The Discourse of 'Murder Music')
(Thesis Format: Monograph)

By James <u>Rogers</u>
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

© James Rogers, 2010

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION

<u>Supervisor</u>

_____

Dr. Susan Knabe

<u>Supervisory Committee</u>

_____

Dr. Amanda Grzyb

<u>Examiners</u>

_____

Dr. Amanda Grzyb

_____

Dr. Norma Coates

_____

Dr. Steven Bruhm

The thesis by

James <u>Rogers</u>
entitled:

**'Killer Vacations' and 'Murder Music':
The Discourses of Gay Identity, Consumerism, and Race
in the Gay-Dancehall Confrontation**

is accepted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Date_____

_____

Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

ABSTRACT

Using Foucaultian discourse analysis, this thesis examines the discursive practices of Anglo-American gay activists who respond to the homophobic lyrics and violence of Jamaican dancehall music and culture. Since the early 1990s, gay activists in North America and the United Kingdom have mobilized in opposition to the graphic anti-gay violence in Jamaican popular culture. While much has been written about the metaphor, performativity, and symbolic violence in dancehall music, there is a paucity of scholarship that analyzes the discourse of gay activists who, in taking aim at dancehall homophobia, arguably produce the framework in which dancehall is meaningfully discussed. My analysis interrogates the systems of meaning and political tactics employed by activists from Stop Murder Music (U.K.) and Boycott Jamaica (U.S.). I argue that these activists – by relying on the conventions of liberal gay identity politics – fail to engage fully with the cultural, historical, and economic contexts in which dancehall music is performed and produced. Further, I consider how this discursive formation exists within a broader conversation between Western gay and lesbian activists and people in the global south. In my analysis, I pose the following research questions: Firstly, what frames of meaning do Anglo-American gay activists employ to structure their arguments? How do the socio-cultural contexts and the histories of gay activism in the U.S. and U.K. affect these activists' treatment of race, homophobia, gay identity, and political tactics? More specifically, how does the strategy of consumer boycotts, as the principal method of protesting dancehall homophobia, relate to a broader Anglo-American gay identity and political agenda based increasingly in consumption? Finally, how does the prevailing opposition of dancehall defenders and opponents – Caribbean intellectuals vs. Anglo-American gay activists – perpetuate uncritical, homogeneous understandings of homophobia, the lived experiences of Jamaican queer people, and the demographics and motivations of gay activist projects? In particular, I consider how these activists elide the local conditions that shape dancehall music as they navigate the intersections of race, gay identity, postcoloniality, and global economics. Finally, I argue that liberal identity politics and its discursive practices are counterproductive in staging an anti-homophobia politic that targets dancehall culture and Jamaican society. Instead, creating alliances among marginalized groups in the global north and south – which negotiate the intersectional, mutually constitutive nature of sexuality, race, class, and gender – may help to transcend the polarizing discourse of Anglo-American gay activists, and begin to confront the prejudices and structural inequalities expressed through both dancehall music and gay activism.

Keywords: dancehall, gay activism, Peter Tatchell, Buju Banton, postcolonialism, queer theory, discourse, discourse analysis, Jamaica, boycotts, intersectionality

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF APPENDICES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ACT UP – AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power
GLAAD – Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
GLF – Gay Liberation Front
GMAD – Gay Men of African Descent
HIV/AIDS – Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HRC – Human Rights Campaign
ILGA – International Lesbian and Gay Association
IMF – International Monetary Fund
JASL – Jamaica AIDS Support for Life
JFLAG – Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays
JLP – Jamaica Labour Party
LGBT – Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender
MCC – Metropolitan Community Church
MOBO – Music of Black Origin
NGLTF – National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
NSM – New Social Movement
OLGA – Organization for Lesbian and Gay Action
PNP – People's National Party
SMMC – Stop Murder Music Canada

INTRODUCTION

The Reverberations of a Transnational
Sound Clash

Boom bye-bye
Inna batty bwoy head
Rude bwoy no promote di nasty man
Dem haffi dead [1]

Our goal is to turn Jamaica into a pariah state, as long as GLBT people live in a state of terror. This means no more subsidizing the anti-gay slaughter by drinking Myer's Rum and Red Stripe Beer. It requires skipping that Carnival Cruise to Jamaica – so your money won't support murder. If Jamaica were any more homophobic, it would change the name of its signature music, reggae, to 'ray-straight'. The national song would be 'Wasting the Gays Again in Murderitaville'. [2]

Buju Banton's smash dancehall hit "Boom Bye-Bye," the quintessential "rude bwoy"[3] anthem, electrified audiences and galvanized gay activists upon its release in 1992. Written and produced by then-19-year-old Banton, the song's lyrics describe shooting a gay man in the head, a line repeated several times throughout the song ("boom bye-bye/inna batty bwoy[4] head"). This song catalyzed the international dialogue on dancehall homophobia, which has resulted in numerous texts on gay identity, misogyny, authenticity, and cultural imperialism that emanate from Anglo-American gay activists,

---

[1] Buju Banton, "Boom Bye Bye," *The Early Years: 1990-1995*, Penthouse Records, CD, 2001.

[2] Wayne Besen, "Jamaica: A Killer Vacation For Gays," *The Huffington Post*, posted April 11, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/wayne-besen/jamaica-a-killer-vacation_b_185792.html (accessed February 13, 2010).

[3] The rude bwoy is a powerful signifier in Jamaican culture, used to describe the rebellious male youth culture of the 1960s. The rude bwoys, or rudies, were often bandit-like figures, ghetto Robin Hoods who stole from the powerful and proudly affirmed their blackness. Others were cultural rude bwoys, like Bob Marley and the Wailers, who rejected white values through Rastafarianism. The rude bwoy culture endures today as a political and cultural movement that extols blackness, defiance, and swagger, values that are still very much alive in male-dominated dancehall culture. See Donna P. Hope, "Dons and Shottas: Performing Violent Masculinity in Dancehall Culture," *Social and Economic Studies* 55, no. 1-2 (March 2006): 115-131; Norman C. Stolzoff, *Wake the Town and Tell the People* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000): 77-83.

[4] In Jamaica, "batty bwoy" is a pejorative term for gay men. "Batty" is the Jamaican patois word for buttocks. Also common are "chi chi man," "funny man," "nasty man," and the English "faggot." For lesbians, common epithets are "batty gyal" and "chi chi gyal."

Jamaican scholars, and dancehall artists. Jamaican scholars and dancehall artists often defend the lyrical content of dancehall music by underlining Jamaican popular music's tradition of metaphor, wordplay, and religious and symbolic violence. "Boom Bye-Bye," some argue, is more of a symbolic gesture than a literal incitement to violence. Gay[5] activists, on the other hand, interpret dancehall lyrics literally, arguing that homophobic lyrics are indeed calls to action, the products of a deeply repressive and violent Jamaican society.

I would like to establish from the outset that homophobic speech and violence in Jamaica is well documented, and that my analysis will neither ignore the bleak reality for many queer people in Jamaica, nor overlook the often counterproductive discourse of Anglo-American gay activists who purport to speak for oppressed Jamaican LGBT folk. Homophobic lyrics in dancehall culture are produced in a society that is hostile to gays, lesbians, trans people, and people with AIDS. Human rights groups Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are critical of the nation's treatment of its gay citizens, claiming that gay visibility in Jamaica is often dangerous. In 2004, the founder of Jamaica's only gay rights organization, Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (JFLAG), Brian Williamson, was stabbed to death with a machete in an apparently

---

[5] The terminology applied to sexual minorities is highly charged, and each term comes with its own limitations. In order to avoid confusion, I usually refer to the Anglo-American activists as 'gay' and 'lesbian.' This nomenclature echoes the activists' language, while highlighting their sometimes narrow conceptions of gay identity. I have chosen not to use LGBT, as these activists demonstrate little concern for the bisexual and transgender components of that acronym. I use 'queer' when referring to the academic field of queer theory, or to underline the political utility of queerness as a concept. When speaking of Jamaican sexual minorities, I use 'queer' or 'same-sex loving people.' I am wary of imposing identities on people who may not self-identify in such ways, but for the sake of brevity (and uniformity) I find it necessary to apply a label. As I will explain in Chapter 4, queer is appealing because it can imply an anti-essentialist sexuality that acknowledges intersections with other modes of difference. Further, the use of queer functions as a linguistic counterpoint to the Anglo-American gay activists who neglect fully formed intersectional critiques, instead opting to organize around a fixed, stable gay identity. In Chapter 4, I will address the limitations of queer. See Ian Barnard, *Queer Race: Cultural Interventions in the Radical Politics of Queer Theory* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

homophobic attack.[6] Williamson's successor, Gareth Henry, was involved in a

homophobic incident on Valentine's Day 2008. Henry and two other men were allegedly

surrounded by a large mob outside of a Kingston pharmacy, as police egged on the

tormentors.[7] Gay men and, to a lesser extent, women,[8] have frequently been the targets

of mob violence, stabbings, home invasions, and targeted shootings, according to the U.S.

State Department and extensive personal testimony.[9]

Awareness about Jamaican homophobia grew in Britain and the United States in

the late 1980s, as dancehall gained in popularity and urban areas saw large waves of

Jamaican immigrants. Upon the 1992 release of "Boom Bye-Bye" in Britain and the

United States, gay activists quickly mobilized in opposition to Banton's celebratory

descriptions of violence. However, the English translation of the original Jamaican

patois[10] has been the subject of much debate. On October 24, 1992, the *New York Post*

published its controversial English translation of "Boom Bye-Bye," without mentioning

---

[6] Amnesty International News Service, "Jamaica: Amnesty International mourns loss of leading human rights defender," *Amnesty International*, posted June 10, 2004, http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ AMR38/010/2004/en/dom-AMR380102004en.html (accessed November 30, 2008).

[7] "Jamaican gay activist seeks refugee status in Canada," *CBC News*, posted February 14, 2008, http://www.cbc.ca/canada/toronto/story/2008/02/14/gareth-henry.html?ref=rss (accessed June 29, 2009).

[8] It seems that women are less frequently the targets of homophobic violence than men. This is not to underplay the prevalence of violence against women, but rather to argue that gay men in Jamaica seem to be more vulnerable to violence based on homophobia. One reason might be the homosocial nature of Caribbean masculinity, a masculinity which gay men defy by virtue of transgressing gender norms and the sexual order. Another possibility is the long-standing association of gay men with predatory pedophilia, and the biblical prohibitions that specifically target same-sex behavior between men. See Cecil Gutzmore, "Casting the First Stone! Policing of Homo/Sexuality in Jamaican Popular Culture, *interventions* 6, no. 1 (April 2004): 118-134; Ruth C. White and Robert Carr, "Homosexuality and HIV/AIDS Stigma in Jamaica," *Culture, Health & Society* 7, no. 4 (July-August 2005): 347-359.

[9] United States Department of State, "2008 Human Rights Report: Jamaica," http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/ hrrpt/2008/wha/119165.htm (accessed March 29, 2010).

[10] Almost all dancehall tunes are performed in Afro-Jamaican patois (patwa), the primary language of many Jamaicans. Patois is an indigenous language based on West African grammar, taking words from English, Spanish, Chinese, Arawak and West African languages. While many rural citizens speak patois exclusively, most Jamaicans now speak Jamaican English peppered with patois words and phrases. This tension between patois and the Queen's English is one of the most highly contested sites of Jamaican cultural politics. Many 'uptown' folk still consider patois 'bad grammar' and indicative of a poor education. The state and education system emphasize Jamaican English as the only acceptable language of public discourse. See L. Emilie Adams, *Understanding Jamaican Patois: An Introduction to Afro-Jamaican Grammar* (Kingston: LHM Publishing: 1991).

the translation's source or reprinting the original patois lyrics.[11]   In the wake of this
translation – ostensibly provided by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
(GLAAD) and Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD) – gay activists in Britain and the
United States began a campaign to protest dancehall music that included radio boycotts,
concert cancellations, public service announcements, and even the denial of work and
travel visas to Jamaican artists. Peter Tatchell, of the British gay rights organization
OutRage, is the most well known of these activists. Tatchell formed the organization
Stop Murder Music in 2004, after having been at the forefront of the dancehall
controversy since the early 1990s. Through Stop Murder Music, Tatchell hopes to stop
the sale and performance of homophobic dancehall music in the U.K. Tatchell grounds
his activism in liberal human rights discourse, appealing to both morality and the law in
an effort to block dancehall concerts and record sales. Tatchell's organizing inspired
similar groups in North America to protest the homophobia in so-called 'murder music.'
In Canada, activists formed Stop Murder Music Canada (SMMC) and undertook similar
boycott-based activist projects. Most recently, in the United States, the organization
Boycott Jamaica unequivocally called for a consumer boycott of Jamaican exports. This
includes Myer's Rum, Red Stripe Beer, and tourist vacations to the island.

Border Clash

Jamaican scholar Carolyn Cooper offers the concept of "border clash" to describe
the performativity, conflict, and contestation in dancehall culture, and my project takes
up this term as a way to conceptualize the relationship between violent homophobia in
dancehall music and Anglo-American gay activism. Dancehall music and culture are
produced through innumerable clashes over language, sexuality, gender, race, religion,
class, and politics; there is no canon and few universal conventions in the dancehall

---

[11] Ransdell Pierson, "'Kill Gays' Song Sparks Outrage," *New York Post*, October 24, 1992.

genre. Dancehall music is born in the 'session': usually a sound system clash[12] or DJ battle that takes places in an abandoned warehouse, an empty field, or even in the streets of Kingston. At the session, warring DJs 'toast' or rap over pre-recorded tracks, in order to win over the 'massive'[13] and 'murder' the opposing sound. Those DJs who please the 'massive' with their lyrical prowess or exhilarating beats will win the clash. In this interactive, performative space, the 'massive' has an integral role in creating dancehall music, empowered with the ability (and indeed the responsibility) to influence the creative choices of the DJ. Early sessions were literal border clashes, pitting DJs from opposing garrisons, or ghettos, against each other. Garrisons are urban Kingston ghettos controlled by 'dons,' crime bosses who usually have allegiance to one of the two national political parties. In a society that is frequently rocked by urban political violence, the dancehall session is often a serious border clash between garrisons, haunted by the specter of violence and criminality. As Cooper writes, "rival politicians, area dons/community leaders, and their followers contend for the control of territory, both literal and symbolic."[14] These rivalries and confrontations transcend the geographical and extend into Jamaican cultural politics; the dancehall session is a referendum on cultural values and sexual mores, and dancehall lyrics often attack the state, the global economic system, 'Babylonian' racism, and homosexuals as the culprits of postcolonial poverty and the allegedly decaying moral order. Further, through the continuous interactions of the massive, DJs, dons, and even police, dancehall rehearses the pressing

---

[12] Sound system refers to a group of DJs, singers, sound engineers, and selectors (disc jockeys) who represent one 'sound,' or one group at battle in the session. In dancehall, DJs are analogous to MCs in hip-hop, and the dancehall selector is actually the disc jockey, or hip-hop DJ or spinner. In the early sessions of the 1950s, the sound system literally referred to the system itself: speakers, amplifiers, turntables, etc. At the time, a sound system would defeat opposing sounds by simply showcasing its superior equipment. See Stolzoff; Donna P. Hope, "Passa Passa: Interrogating Cultural Hybridities in Jamaican Dancehall," *Small Axe* 21 (October 2006): 125-139.

[13] The dancehall massive is the crowd or audience.

[14] Cooper, *Sound Clash*, 35.

social and cultural issues of Jamaican society, especially the shifting ideologies of
sexuality and gender.

The internal conflicts of the dancehall session have had profound reverberations
in Jamaican society; the contestations over sexuality, race, class, and gender have incited
an explosion of discourse in the Jamaican public sphere. Feminists, for example, often
celebrate female dancehall artists for taking control of their bodies and openly
proclaiming the joy of sex.[15] Other Jamaicans see dancehall as a "primal scream," a
"barbaric" expression of poor black people with no redeeming social value.[16] Still others
praise the authenticity of dancehall as a cultural expression, as the worthy successor to
the Rastafarian reggae of the 1970s. The commonality here is that dancehall inspires
prolific public dialogue and struggles over cultural values, which mimic the very
contestations that occur within the microcosm of the dancehall performance space. My
project is concerned with what happens when these reverberations reach 'farin' (foreign),

---

[15] To this day, there are few female DJs in Jamaica; the division of labor mainly relegates women to the
dancehall "modeling posses" (dancing crews that compete with other crews for the title of "dancehall
queen") and "higglers" (vendors of snacks, drinks, cigarettes, etc. at dancehall sessions). Lady Saw – the
most famous female dancehall DJ in the world – is a notable exception. Since the early 1990s, she has
performed both culture and slackness music. Slackness refers to eroticism and overt sexuality, a common
dancehall genre that celebrates the transgression of middle-class respectability. Slackness lyrics from a
woman, however, take a different shape and elicit different reactions than those from a man. At Reggae
Sunsplash '94, in Kingston, Lady Saw performed a slackness routine that electrified the crowd. During the
song "Welding Torch," she described to the crowd what she wanted her man's "welding torch" to do to her
body, as she gestured to her crotch. The performance sparked a far-reaching debate on female sexuality in
Jamaica. The Rastafarian manager of Lady Saw's back-up band refused to perform with her, and she
endured biting criticism from the press and other dancehall artists. On the other hand, many feminists,
academics and middle-class women supported her, if only to spite the dominance of male sexual
aggressiveness in the dancehall. In response, Lady Saw exposed the double standard of dancehall
sexuality: "Look at all the artistes who even more X-rated than me, others big up the gun and cry down
woman in the worst way and nobody says a word about them" (qtd. in Stolzoff, 239). In a way, defending
a woman's right to participate in slackness is liberatory in the dancehall context. But it is important to note
that Lady Saw's slackness does not unsettle the prevailing sexual discourse. A woman's comfort with her
sexuality is certainly audacious by Jamaican standards, but Lady Saw reinforces the woman's passive role
in sex. Thus, as Stolzoff argues, she "is simply promoting normative heterosexuality, albeit in a graphic
way" (242). For further reading on women in dancehall, see Cooper, *Sound Clash*; Carolyn Cooper, *Noises
in the Blood: Orality, Gender, and the 'Vulgar' Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke
University Press, 1993); Sonjah Stanley Niaah, "'Slackness Personified,' Historicized and Delegitimized,"
Small Axe 11 (November 2006).
[16] Cooper, *Sound Clash*, 16.

when the internal conflicts of the dancehall are dramatized and resignified on an

international scale, often robbed of their original cultural associations. Buju Banton's

"Boom Bye-Bye" is exemplary of the moment when, for better or worse, this typically

black, lower-class expression became truly globalized and the border clash became

international.

As an intervention in the international discourse on dancehall, this project

analyzes the often polarizing dialogues about dancehall homophobia and the alleged

incitement to anti-gay violence. Throughout the recent discourse (1992-present), critics

have been separated into two warring camps: Caribbean intellectuals (usually speaking in

defense of dancehall artists) and Anglo-American gay activists. American and British

media outlets, especially the *New York Post*, *Village Voice* and *Guardian*, were

responsible for constructing this binary early in the discourse, and since then most

arguments about dancehall homophobia have been framed in these terms. As soon as gay

activists targeted Buju Banton, Jamaican intellectuals defended Banton's lyrics on the

grounds that they should be understood metaphorically. This argument was also

premised on the alleged neo-colonialism embedded in criticism from the 'outside,' as a

way of discrediting foreign critics as unqualified and presumptuous. In the other camp,

(mostly white) gay activists from the global north[17] have attacked dancehall music as

glorifying and provoking anti-gay violence. These activists have been armed with the

---

[17] A note on terminology: I use global north/south – instead of West/East or first/third world – to highlight the geographical and economic divides between world regions. If not used critically, the north-south divide has the potential to homogenize and simplify international relations. However, this terminology is appealing because it moves past West/East to emphasize the "highly structured inequality" that characterizes 'northern' and 'southern' relations. Further, the north/south divide is more inclusive, in that it recognizes 'southern' regions within 'northern' countries, and vice versa, based on poverty and social relations. When discussing other scholars' work, however, I usually employ their vocabulary. For instance, when I talk about Edward Said's *Orientalism*, I use the author's East/West, oriental/occidental language. I use Anglo-American when speaking of the particular gay activists or political histories pertinent to my analysis. See Rafael X. Reuveny and William R. Thompson, "Introduction: The North-South Divide and International Studies: A Symposium," *International Studies Review* 9, no. 4 (December 2007): 556-564.

Post's literal "Standard English translation" of "Boom Bye-Bye."[18] To this day, activists' rhetorical strategies often essentialize Jamaican culture as brutally repressive of homosexuals, without considering the cultural and colonial context in which Jamaican sexual mores are reproduced.[19] In contrast to the backward, 'third world' Jamaica, U.S. culture is thought to be sexually progressive. But these battle lines obscure a diversity of positions that are rarely covered in mainstream media. Consequently, Anglo-American media accounts – and anti-dancehall activism – rarely account for the less newsworthy voices of women in dancehall culture, radical and conservative queer activists, queer people who love dancehall music, lesbians of color, and almost all queer Jamaicans, the latter of whom bear the most immediate consequences of Jamaican homophobia.

Caribbean cultural critic Timothy Chin's work on dancehall homophobia offers inroads into questioning the discursive boundaries of this border clash, and opens discourses about queer postcolonial studies.[20] Chin praises the Jamaican scholarship that exposes the ethnocentrism of Western gay criticism; gay activists too often employ charged words like "barbarism," "ignorant" and "hateful"[21] in attempts to convince readers of the imminent danger produced by homophobic dancehall lyrics. Carolyn Cooper, in particular, resists gay activists' attempts to translate dancehall's patois lyrics and to essentialize Jamaican culture. But Chin criticizes Cooper's refusal to challenge the persistent homophobic violence in Jamaica. For instance, Cooper's influential work on dancehall insists that Buju Banton's "Boom Bye-Bye" does not literally advocate the murder of homosexuals. Instead, she asserts that Banton's "lyrical gun" is a symbolic penis; rather than explicitly inciting violence against gays, the lyrical gun is a celebration

---

[18] Pierson.

[19] Timothy Chin, 'Bullers' and 'Battymen': Contesting Homophobia in Black Popular Culture and Contemporary Caribbean Literature," *Callaloo* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 127-128.

[20] Ibid., 127-129.

[21] Timothy Kincaid, "Jamaican Objects to the World's Impression," *Box Turtle Bulletin*, posted August 12, 2009, http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/08/12/2595 (accessed March 20, 2010).

of the DJ's sexual potency and ability to please his woman.[22] If Banton's lyrical gun is meant to symbolize his penis, then Cooper unwittingly queers the lyric "boom bye-bye/inna batty bwoy head," as Banton actually wields his formidable penis on an unsuspecting gay man. However, Cooper downplays the potential of homophobic music to inspire and incite acts of physical violence.

Cooper also argues for a cultural study "stubbornly rooted in the politics of place that claims a privileged place for the local."[23] Cooper chafes at those "foreign experts" who tell Jamaicans how to "understand and develop our society"[24]; in this way, her linguistic choices align foreign dancehall scholarship with development agendas. I agree that commentators from the global north often refuse to recognize the rich political and social satire in dancehall, and ignore the cultural contestations that flow through dancehall performance. Further, there is little doubt that dancehall is often stripped of its original meanings when introduced into new cultural contexts. To reduce dancehall music merely to its homophobic lyrics is to neglect a thorough study of its religious, cultural, and political influences. However, Cooper's privileging of the local forecloses potential analyses that incorporate both Jamaican and non-Jamaican perspectives. Furthermore, as Bibi Bakare-Yusuf argues, Cooper's emphasis on *the* local perspective assumes a homogeneity that simply does not exist.[25] Cooper's argument valorizes a specific, 'authentic' Jamaican voice that is authorized to speak about dancehall from a privileged local perspective. Absent from the exclusively local perspective are the voices of Jamaicans who are critical of dancehall music, or who attempt alternative readings within the local context. Indeed, dancehall culture itself is built upon innumerable contestations over gender, sexuality, race, politics, and poverty. The production of

---

[22] Cooper, *Sound Clash*, 154.
[23] Ibid., 2.
[24] Ibid., 11.
[25] Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, "Clashing Interpretations in Dancehall Culture," *Small Axe* 11, no. 1 (October 2006): 163.

dancehall music is always born of collaboration and disagreement about significant social issues. Thus, there is never one local authority of dancehall culture, but many conflicting interpretations and opinions. Hence, the argument for authenticity breaks down, since dancehall culture continuously absorbs external influences; multiple meanings are actually productive of dancehall culture.[26] Like much of the gay activism I analyze in this project, Cooper's work deploys binary oppositions between the privileged local space and presumably ignorant foreign voices. Thus, I agree with Timothy Chin's assertion that scholarship needs to transcend the "totalizing impulses implicit in both the 'universalist' and 'nativist' positions,"[27] to develop theory that goes beyond the 'us/them' dichotomy to question the assumptions on all sides of the dancehall controversy.

Research Questions & Methodology

Much scholarly work has been dedicated to the performativity, metaphor, and symbolic violence of dancehall. However, there is a paucity of scholarship that analyzes the discourse of the Anglo-American gay activists who, in taking aim at dancehall homophobia, arguably produce the framework in which dancehall is meaningfully discussed. This project is grounded in Foucault's notion of discourse, which enables an analysis that acknowledges the productive aspect of speaking *and* the cultural and historical contexts from which such ways of speaking emerge. As a system of representation, discourse has the power to produce and contain the way a topic is meaningfully talked about, as a result of its inextricable connection to power. In Foucault's conceptualization, discourses form the objects of which they speak.[28] Discourse analysis, then, challenges us to ask how certain discourses have constituted what is 'known' to be true, how one discourse appeared at the expense of another, and

---

[26] Ibid., 164.
[27] Chin, 140.
[28] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002): 36.

how discourses are productive of and constituted by particular historical circumstances. This discourse analysis is concerned with how the discourse of dancehall homophobia produces what can be understood about the topic. Thus, my project hinges on the assumption that the discourse of Anglo-American gay activists is both representative and productive of knowledges and material consequences.

Using Foucaultian discourse analysis, I will study a body of texts from Stop Murder Music (U.K.) and Boycott Jamaica (U.S.) that discuss homophobia and violence in Jamaican dancehall music. My sample begins in 1992, with the first rumblings of gay activism against dancehall homophobia, a dialogue that continues today. The texts in my sample are overtly political, prescriptive essays and blog entries, targeting an audience of Anglo-American gays and lesbians. Peter Tatchell, probably the most important anti-'murder music' activist in the world, will figure heavily in my analysis. In many ways, Tatchell helped to forge the discursive frames in which dancehall homophobia was to be discussed. I analyze his contributions to mainstream news stories, and his own essays in British newspapers and his website (petertatchell.net). In the American sample, I study the writing of three activists from Boycott Jamaica: Michael Petrelis, Timothy Kincaid, and Jim Burroway. This portion of the sample consists of essays published in 2008 and 2009, appearing on the Boycott Jamaica blog (boycottjamaica.org), the Box Turtle Bulletin blog (boxturtlebulletin.com), and Michael Petrelis' personal blog The Petrelis Files (mpetrelis.blogspot.com). In Chapter 3, I will explain much more thoroughly my methodology and theoretical underpinnings.

Based on a Foucaultian theoretical framework, I pose the following research questions to be interrogated through discourse analysis:

1. What systems of meaning do these activists employ to frame their arguments?

2. What are the similarities and differences between American and British dancehall activism? How do the socio-cultural contexts and the histories of gay activism in each nation affect the activists' treatment of race, gay identity, homophobia, and political tactics?

3. How does the prevailing opposition of dancehall defenders and opponents – Caribbean intellectuals vs. Anglo-American gay activists – perpetuate uncritical, homogeneous understandings of postcolonial homophobia, the lived experiences of Jamaican queer people, and the demographics and motivations of gay activist projects? And more generally, what are the unspoken assumptions about certain ways of *doing* gay politics?

      This analysis proceeds from the assumption that discourse produces material consequences. Dancehall lyrics proliferate in a society rocked by real physical violence against homosexuals (or perceived homosexuals). Bibi Bakare-Yusuf argues that this climate of violence, combined with dancehall artists' vaunted social status, can certainly effect material consequences.[29] Bakare-Yusuf, like Timothy Chin, critiques Cooper's refusal to acknowledge the material consequences of lyrical violence: "It is precisely by enunciating violence that the potential and continued possibility of violence is maintained . . . violence can replicate itself at the level of language, just as violent language can have physical implications."[30] Following Foucault, discourse does not merely represent, but also generates meaning and can provoke and incite actions. Therefore, while it is possible to consider dancehall a safety valve for pent-up anger, it is equally possible that dancehall's symbolic violence is generative of physical acts of violence. Indeed, the ritualistic, religious violence of dancehall culture proliferates in a highly violent society, where homicide is quotidian and gay men and women are persecuted in real and brutal ways.[31] However, I charge that Anglo-American gay activists likewise perform violence on Jamaican society. Boycott Jamaica, in particular, actually hopes to inflict economic

---

[29] Bakare-Yusuf, 167.
[30] Ibid., 167-68.
[31] U.S. State Department.

catastrophe or, in other words, to "make Jamaica a pariah state."[32] Public anti-homophobic practices that seek to inflict economic hardship could have dire consequences for the most disadvantaged Jamaicans, regardless of their views of homosexuality. In addition, a consumer boycott might create backlash against gays if they are seen to be complicit in entrenching poverty from the 'outside.' This is not to equate the discursive violence of gay activists with the physical violence in Jamaica, nor to excuse violence against gays as the logical result of economic hardship. Instead, I hope to show that discourse can (re)produce violence. Thus, I focus my study on the sites at which activists, in efforts to combat symbolic and physical violence, actually generate new forms of violence through denial, willful ignorance, and economic actions that exploit the skewed power relations between the global north and south.

Rude Bwoy, Meet Batty Bwoys: Relativism and Essentialism

On a broader level, I offer this analysis as a lens through which to view a larger queer discourse between the global north and south. I position this thesis as a middle voice between uncritical defenses of cultural 'authenticity' and the proliferation of universalist gay identities and cultural values. The gay-dancehall confrontation is just one example of the problematic arguments deployed between global north and south, by gay and lesbian activists, 'local' scholars, and alleged homophobes; these discourses usually efface the experiences of queers from the global south who, ironically, are the purported beneficiaries of northern gay liberation.

The recent meeting of Buju Banton and American gay activists is instructive of the (so far) irreconcilable positions of both parties. On October 12, 2009, "four members of San Francisco's gay community" met with Banton to discuss his troubled history with LGBT people, in the context of an ongoing "Cancel Buju Banton" boycott organized by

---

[32] Besen, "Killer Vacation."

some of the meeting's participants.[33] The boycott had been successful in cancelling

Banton's concert dates across North America. Through the course of the meeting, the

activists suggested several ways for Banton to remedy his pariah status in the "gay

community": "We proposed that he think about making statements in Jamaica calling for

love toward gays, donating to the JFLAG group, hold a town hall meeting in Kingston

about the need to respect gays, and *sing about loving gay people*" (emphasis added).[34]

Michael Petrelis, one of the four gay activists at the meeting, characterized the encounter

as a positive first step toward ending violence in dancehall and in Jamaica.[35] Days after

the summit, however, Banton reassured his fans: "There is no end to the war between me

and faggot."[36] This summit – though puzzling – is symptomatic of the confused and

incommensurable discourses between gay activists and dancehall performers. In one

sense, the activists suggested several emasculating and self-defeating proposals to

Banton; while consistent with much American gay discourse that emphasizes acceptance,

positive representation, and respect, these suggestions betray a profound

misunderstanding of Jamaican society and Banton's possible reactions. The suggestion

to "sing about loving gay people" is especially surprising, given Banton's reputation as

both a "rude bwoy" and poet-prophet of Jamaican 'ghetto sufferers,' a legitimate heir to

the Rastafarian roots reggae tradition. As I will explain further in Chapter 1, for Banton

to agree to 'foreign' gay activists' demands would be to "bow": a submission to foreign

---

[33] Michael Petrelis, "SF Gays Meet With Buju Banton; His First Sit-Down With Gays," *The Petrelis Files*, posted October 12, 2009, http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/10/sf-gays-meet-with-buju-banton-his-first.html (accessed March 20, 2010).
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Qtd. in Andy Towle, "Buju Banton: 'There is no end to the war between me and faggot,'" *Towleroad*, posted October 16, 2009, http://www.towleroad.com/2009/10/buju-banton-there-is-no-end-to-the-war-between-me-and-faggot/comments/page/2/ (accessed April 23, 2010).

pressures, associated both with moral, spiritual degradation *and* a figurative submission to anal violation.[37]

The summit's failure stems in part from the incommensurability of each party's discursive resources: the gay activists' primary strategy was a consumer boycott, paired with a face-to-face meeting framed largely on their terms; moreover, the activists were armed with the assumption that "gay people" comprise a unified community that transcends national, racial, and religious borders. Before the discussion even got off the ground, the activists had put forward essentialized notions of gay suffering and the primacy of consumer-based political tactics. Similarly, Banton also entered the meeting having to speak within preset discursive frames. His mere presence was ineluctably colored by the ongoing boycott against his music. Although Banton was "civil"[38] during the meeting, his refusal to "bow" ensured that his righteous reputation, at least to Jamaican dancehall fans, was left intact. Further, Banton's proclamation that he remains at war with "faggot" suggests that he was motivated to attend the summit more by potential profit losses than feelings of remorse or newfound tolerance of homosexuals.

Overview of Chapters

More broadly, this impasse offers a path into my analysis, as a way to mediate the 'nativist' cultural relativism of dancehall artists and the homogenization of international LGBT people by Anglo-American gay activists. Firstly, I charge that the activists of Boycott Jamaica and Stop Murder Music have failed to study the systemic nature of Jamaican homophobia. Much of the discourse parses dancehall lyrics for homophobic language and lays the blame at the feet of dancehall artists; this is a strategy that rightfully acknowledges the productive power of language to incite actions, but one that

---

[37] Patricia J. Saunders, "Is not everything good to eat, good to talk: Sexual economy and dancehall music in the global marketplace," *Small Axe* 7, no. 2 (April 2003): 110.
[38] Petrelis, "SF Gays Meet With Buju Banton."

neglects a broader understanding of the contributors to homophobic discourse and practice in Jamaica. To shed light on systemic homophobia (and misogyny) in Jamaica enables me to enact a more complete analysis of the problematical nature of Anglo-Amerian gay activist strategies. Hence, in Chapter 1, by way of the history of dancehall music and culture, I investigate the potential roots of Jamaican homophobia. British colonization of Jamaica had profound effects upon the ideologies of gender and sexuality, especially the enforcement of white hegemonic masculinity and the recuperation of masculinity by disenfranchised black men. I acknowledge, however, that the colonial argument can be reductive, and that it neglects to address the exceptionality of Jamaican homophobia.[39] Thus, I also consider the Christian church, Rastafarianism, popular culture, and the state as contributors to Jamaican sexual and gender ideologies. Next, I consider the political, social, and economic features of postcolonial Jamaica, and their implications for the evolution in reggae, and later, dancehall. Then, I discuss the complex cultural meanings of dancehall, the performative and productive aspects of the dancehall 'session,' and the contestations of morality, Rasta culture, religion, and sexuality in dancehall performance. This chapter is meant to situate dancehall culture within Jamaica's particular economic, political, cultural, and religious dynamics; this contextualization is not meant to excuse homophobic practice, but rather to provide a solid foundation on which to examine gay activism that confronts dancehall music.

In Chapter 2, I situate the activist political projects of Stop Murder Music and Boycott Jamaica within their historical and cultural context, by investigating the historical production of Anglo-American gay activism since the mid-20th century. Because this subject is expansive, I have chosen to highlight several themes of the literature that are pertinent to my analysis: the development of an essentialized, "quasi-

---

[39] Gutzmore, 118.

ethnic"[40] gay identity, the tension between radical and reformist politics, and the recent

emergence of a gay identity based in market economics. These themes illustrate how the

historical and cultural situatedness of current anti-homophobic practice molds its

practitioners' discursive strategies. I place particular emphasis on the gay activism of the

1980s, which responded with newfound fervor to the twin threats of HIV/AIDS and the

New Right religious and political movement. The activist projects of ACT UP and Queer

Nation, especially, are germane to a discussion of the deep rifts within gay communities

over representation, race, agenda, and protest tactics. Throughout the chapter, I explore

the different political contexts and activist histories of the United States and the United

Kingdom. Following Scott Bravmann's work, I also problematize the predominance of

modernist gay histories that represent a white, middle-class male perspective.[41] I

consider the ways in which gay conventional wisdom – clearly illustrated by the

signifying practices imposed upon Stonewall – has marginalized certain voices based on

racial, gender, and class divides. Chapter 2 suggests that the coexistence of

confrontational and assimilationist politics has produced historical moments that enable

the discursive practices of Stop Murder Music and Boycott Jamaica.

In Chapter 3, I begin to analyze my archive of blog entries, newspaper columns,

and essays. After defining discourse and discourse analysis, I investigate my sample for

discursive frames, language, and political tactics. Throughout, I consider my findings in

the context of the British and American legal apparatuses, histories of gay activism, and

the issues of race and representation in gay communities. The discourse analysis

problematizes the centrality of white, liberal gay activists in the dancehall discourse, by

asking who is allowed to speak meaningfully about this topic, and what political

---

[40] Steven Epstein, "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity: The Limits of Social Construction," in *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies*, eds. Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider (London: Routledge, 1998): 135.
[41] Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

approaches have become dominant in the discourse. In my analysis of the discourse sample, I focus on several recurrent frames of argumentation: the conflation of racism with homophobia, the appeal to universal gay identity, and the primacy of the consumer boycott as political tactic. These frames highlight most clearly the intersections of race, gay identity, and global economics, which I believe cut to the heart of the international discourse on dancehall homophobia.

In the final chapter, I extend my discourse analysis into the broader contexts of gay discourse produced in the global north, highlighting the analogies of racism and homophobia, the fetish of gay travel, and the limitations of consumer strategies. Then, I broaden the scope to examine previous and ongoing scholarship that probes the intersections of queerness, race, postcolonialism, and economics. I consider the potential of queer theory to collapse dyadic thinking, and create spaces where different voices can be heard and understood differently. Of particular importance is the question of liberal gay identity politics, a formidable obstacle in transcending assimilationism and building coalitions across identity groups. I also look to postcolonial and transnational scholarship that works through different ways of speaking across borders and organizing political and theoretical movements. By thinking through the work of Edward Said, Jasbir Puar, Chandra Mohanty, and Martin Manalansan, I challenge the rhetoric of Anglo-American gay activists who seek to homogenize both the identities of queer people in the global south *and* the cultural complexities of southern societies. Finally, I suggest that intersectional analysis – which interrogates the "transexions"[42] of race, gender, nation, and economics – is crucial if we are to stage more inclusive political actions across borders.

---

[42] Sara Salih, "'Our people know the difference, black is a race, jew is a religion, f*g**tism is a sin': Towards a Queer Postcolonial Hermeneutics," *Wasafiri* 22, no. 1 (March 2007): 3.

CHAPTER 1

Dancehall Music, Systemic Homophobia, and Jamaican Cultural Politics

From the outset, the international dialogue about dancehall culture has polarized Anglo-American gay activists and Caribbean dancehall supporters into separate camps; for nearly 20 years, these dominant voices have dictated how dancehall homophobia has been meaningfully discussed. Gay activists, in particular, stand accused of neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism, which is a charge I will take up more fully in Chapter 4. Without neglecting the troubling level of homophobic violence in Jamaica, I argue that the discourse of gay activists often essentializes Jamaican culture as brutally repressive of homosexuals, without considering the variations within Jamaican society or the context in which Jamaican sexual and gender ideologies have been produced. In a way, dancehall is an obvious target of anti-homophobic politics, due to its visceral, graphic condemnations of homosexuals. But this emphasis on popular culture diverts attention from the systemic homophobia that pervades Jamaican political culture, religion, and postcolonial gender relations. The binary opposition of dancehall defenders and opponents is unstable and misleading, and overlooks many voices implicated in the production of dancehall culture.

The purpose of this chapter is to interrogate the unique political, religious, and cultural realities that contribute to the production of dancehall culture. In an attempt to ground this controversial music in history, I have investigated several areas of the literature: a) the development of colonial masculinity and gender relations, b) a political and economic history of Jamaica since independence, and c) the musical styles, cultural significance, and political and cultural content of the music itself. This chapter will provide a point of entry into understanding this highly contested music and culture.

The Roots of Jamaican Homophobia? Colonialism, Religion, and the State

While many Anglo-American activists[43] dismiss Jamaican standards of gender and sexuality as conservative, it is helpful to understand Jamaican sexual politics as grounded in the civilizing mission of past colonial powers. In colonial Jamaica under slavery, white colonists racialized and sexualized the black body as a justification for slavery.[44] The white planter class installed the honorable British gentleman as the ideal masculine subject. Hegemonic masculinity elevated whiteness, economic and political power, and control over women, all of which black men were unable to achieve.[45] While the primary means of enforcing white hegemonic masculinity was to physically control the black male body, the colonial project also entailed "the denial of black men's minds, the denial of their ability to exercise social and political power."[46] White slave masters exercised racial privilege by making certain markers of masculinity unattainable for black men: property, authority, and even family, since the children of slaves were property of the master.[47] Colonial power enacted both the feminization (through the denial of access to women and their inability to 'own' their own children) and hypersexualization of black men.[48] Taken together, physical and mental slavery left black men with few markers of masculinity.

---

[43] Chief among them are Peter Tatchell of Stop Murder Music; Wayne Besen, Jim Burroway, and Timothy Kincaid of Boycott Jamaica.

[44] For theories on the racialization of black bodies, see William Darity, "The Williams Abolition Thesis Before Williams," *Slavery & Abolition* 9, no. 1 (May 1988): 29-41; Eric Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1991); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

[45] Andrea Davis, "Translating Narratives of Masculinity Across Borders: A Jamaican Case Study," *Caribbean Quarterly* 52, no. 2/3 (June 2006): 27.

[46] Ibid., 28.

[47] Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994): 137.

[48] For a theoretical perspective on the ambivalence of colonial racist discourse, see Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question . . .", *Screen* 24, no. 6 (November-December 1983): 18-36.

The black male body, in particular, was cast as animalistic, savage and sexually virile. Frantz Fanon argues that the fear of the black man is located in the physical: "The black man is attacked in his corporeality . . . . It is his actual being that is dangerous."[49] Hence, the favored punishment for a black man's transgressions, lynching, destroyed his body, the supposed essence of his being. Fanon reminds us that the victim's penis was often mutilated as well, wiping out the organ most threatening to the white man.[50] Crucially, lynching was usually justified as punishment for the black man's unbridled sexual aggression, embodied through the alleged rape of a white woman. This construction of the black man as sexually predatory was meant to deny him access to both black and white women, and hence, power, in terms of white hegemonic masculinity.

In lieu of the accepted traits of white masculinity – respectability, authority, family, power over women and children – many black males adopted alternative signs of masculinity. As a result, many black male slaves in the Caribbean expressed a "subordinated masculinity,"[51] which took physical strength and aggressive sexuality as both a recuperation of masculine power and a means of survival. After emancipation, black men still lacked access to social and economic power. In the absence of more 'civilized' expressions of masculinity, black men in post-slavery (and later postcolonial) Jamaica retained the same indicators: "physical strength and sexual virility."[52] At the same time, the British elites attempted to convert these imagined savages into gentlemen, in order to ensure the stability of the nation.[53] Thus began a project to civilize people of African descent, assimilating them into British manners, government, and conjugal

---

[49] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 142.
[50] Ibid., 140.
[51] Ibid., 142.
[52] Davis, 28.
[53] M. Jacqui Alexander, "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be A Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas," *Feminist Review* 48 (Autumn 1994): 14.

heterosexuality. The colonial state and the Christian Church promoted religious marriage and attempted to mold black men into wage laborers.[54] These two competing versions of acceptable masculine behavior – physically potent 'rude bwoy' and civilized wage worker – did not coexist peacefully.

As anticolonial sentiment swept through Jamaica in the 1940s and '50s, the independence movement – led by the light-skinned middle class – represented a continuation of British ideals of gender. Colonial party leaders Norman Manley and Alexander Bustamante championed the black working class while mediating with the colonial administration.[55] Although they showed a commitment to Afro-Jamaican culture and black pride, the middle-class leaders of the independence movement did not represent a significant break with British culture. American dancehall researcher Norman C. Stolzoff writes: "Jamaican nationalism was itself highly insecure, run by . . . 'mimic men' with an overreliance on European cultural models."[56] Through their speech, behavior and values, the new nation's male leaders perpetuated the ideal of the British gentleman.

Jamaica's independence movement resulted in "constitutional decolonization,"[57] when, in 1962, the Parliament drafted an independence constitution to be voted upon by the citizenry. Soon after it was approved, British Parliament granted Jamaica independence. With independence came a new ruling class, as power shifted into the hands of middle-class, "Westernized," urban, light-skinned men.[58] But the colonial power structure remained intact, and poor blacks remained politically and socially

---

[54] Denise Noble, "Postcolonial criticism, transnational identifications and the hegemonies of dancehall's academic and popular performativities," *Feminist Review* 90, no. 1 (October 2008): 116.
[55] Stolzoff, 72-73.
[56] Ibid., 74.
[57] Trevor Munroe, *Politics of Constitutional Decolonization: Jamaica 1944-62* (Surrey: Unwin, 1972). See also George E. Eaton, *Alexander Bustamante and Modern Jamaica* (Kingston: Kingston Publishers Ltd., 1975).
[58] Stolzoff, 181.

marginalized. For many black men, masculine behavior became a way of reclaiming the power denied them by the light-skinned upper classes. Thus, machismo can be seen as an attempt to recuperate the masculinity that was denied through slavery, disenfranchisement and poverty.[59]

In place of real social and political power, black men continue to express masculinity through reputation or "bigness," symbolized by sexual prowess and physical strength.[60] These expressions often take the form of symbolic (and physical) violence against gay men. Some Caribbean scholars view anti-gay performance as an important site for the black man to express his repressed masculinity.[61] Homophobic and misogynistic expressions are ways for the 'rude bwoy' to garner social status.[62] Andrea Davis asserts that masculinity is essentially homosocial: that men define their own masculinity in relation to other men.[63] Effeminate gay men thus challenge the notion that a man is naturally strong and powerful. As men who confound gender norms, gay black men threaten virile Jamaican masculinity because they represent a clear challenge to the straight man's understanding of his own masculine self.[64] Nevertheless, by holding tightly to hypermasculinity, dancehall expressions often reinscribe hegemonic gender norms while attempting to challenge them. For instance, while dancehall DJs push middle-class boundaries by graphically celebrating sex, they simultaneously denigrate any sexual practice that is not heternormative. (This is an issue I will more fully analyze later in this chapter.) From my readings, I have found that this context is missing from the work of Anglo-American gay critics. Peter Tatchell and others ignore the colonial

---

[59] Mercer, 143.
[60] Davis, 29.
[61] See Hope, "Dons and Shottas"; Carolyn Cooper, "'Lyrical Gun': Metaphor and role play in Jamaican popular culture," *The Massachusetts Review* 35, no. 3-4 (Autumn 1994): 429-447.
[62] Hope, "Dons and Shottas," 128.
[63] Davis, 29.
[64] Ibid., 29.

origins of black Jamaican masculinity and the problem of homophobia, instead attributing homophobia to a general category of black people.[65]

Postcolonial masculinity alone cannot explain the rampant homophobia in dancehall culture. Religion – the colonial Catholic and Anglican Churches and Rastafarianism – has had a massive impact on Jamaican society and culture. The source of (post)colonial homophobia is highly contested, but it is clear that the Christian mission was and continues to be a contributing factor. Jamaica remains a deeply religious country: it reportedly has the most churches per square mile of any nation in the world.[66] Note, however, that imported European Christianity took a different form in the colonies, and Christian teachings on sexuality were often far more virulent in the colonies than in the metropole. In order to regulate sexual practice and keep the slave labor force productive, colonial religious teaching overemphasized passages from Leviticus, Romans, and Genesis that seemed to punish homosexual behavior with divine wrath.[67] Indeed, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which was a centerpiece of the slaves' religious/sexual education, retains its symbolic potency in contemporary Jamaican culture.[68] Many Jamaican Catholics still believe that informing on gay parishioners is a form of atonement.[69] Like the state, the church was an institution of social control, hailing bodies as heterosexual and thus productive, in order to fuel the colonial economy.

Rastafarianism, while in direct opposition to colonial rule, also cemented traditional gender roles. The Rastafarian movement emerged in the 1930s in the West Kingston ghettos. Early leaders were influenced by Marcus Garvey's teachings on

---

[65] See for example Peter Tatchell, "Why can blacks bash gays?," *New Statesman*, October 14, 2002.
[66] Stephanie Black, *Life and Debt*, VHS (Kingston, Jamaica: Tuff Gong Pictures, 2001).
[67] Gutzmore, 126-127.
[68] Ibid., 127.
[69] Peter Noel and Robert Marriott, "Batty Boys in Babylon," *Village Voice* 38, no.2 (January 12, 1993): 30.

anticolonialism, black nationalism, and African repatriation.[70] Garvey's political

positions merged with Judeo-Christian mythology and Afro-Jamaican traditions to form a

new, politically charged religious community. Rastafarians identified the Ethiopian

Emperor Haile Selassie as the second coming of the Messiah, or Jah Rastafari. Rastas

decried "Babylon," or white power, as the source of black oppression. They advocated

spiritual and symbolic rebellion against Babylon and a literal return to Zion, or Ethiopia,

which they believed is the land where man first existed.[71] The Rastas' revolutionary

spirit did not apply to colonial gender ideologies, however; until recently, women were

not permitted to play important roles in rituals and were expected to show deference to

males.[72] Homosexuals were ostracized, offensive in the eyes of Jah. Some of the more

devout followers of Rastafari have adopted medieval punishments for gays, stoning and

burning 'batty bwoys' in the name of religion.[73]

 Jamaican cultural critics Patricia Saunders and Cecil Gutzmore expand upon the

Rastafarian influence on dancehall's (and Jamaican society's) continuing denigration of

homosexuality. In its 1990s incarnation, dancehall became more politically charged, as

artists revisited the Rastafarian origins of reggae.[74] Lyrics combined Judeo-Christian and

Rastafarian symbols to confront government corruption and widespread poverty, often

scapegoating the "chi chi man" for the nation's ills. Rastafarians identify Babylon, the

site of the Israelites' captivity, as the symbol of oppressive white power; Babylon is also

a metaphorical space associated with sexual and moral deviance. Reggae artists often

invoke Babylon as the symbol of political corruption, the oppression of black people, and

moral decay. In dancehall reggae since the 1970s, artists have transferred the famed sin

---

[70] Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 1987): 47.
[71] Ibid., 47.
[72] Ibid., 47.
[73] Noel and Marriott, 30.
[74] Andrew Ross, "Mr. Reggae DJ, Meet the International Monetary Fund," *Black Renaissance* 1, no. 3 (July 1998): 208.

of Sodom onto the modern Babylon.[75] This activation of Old Testament and Rastafarian

fears functions both to condemn deviant sexualities and locate their origins outside of the

nation itself. Therefore, artists can trace the source of this abomination to the white

power structure inflicted upon Jamaican from abroad, an effect of colonialism and

modern tourism. As I will expand upon later, Rastafarian-influenced dancehall artists use

sodomy to symbolize the exploitative economic and political relationship between

Jamaica and the Western powers.

The state itself is also a source of homophobia. Policing sex is a way of

strengthening the nation's authority.[76] Jamaica's civil and economic turmoil has

threatened the legitimacy of the independent postcolonial state. In this climate, state

managers hold fast to "natural heterosexuality," viewing its supposed erosion as

symptomatic of the nation's destruction.[77] M. Jacqui Alexander contends that the

criminalization of certain kinds of sex functions as a technology of control, creating

signifiers "about the kind of sexuality that presumably imperils the nation and about the

kind of sexuality that promotes citizenship."[78] In this scenario, "unproductive"

sexualities are posited as destructive to the nation. Gay men, lesbians, prostitutes, people

with AIDS, and even single women are demonized and policed. Jamaica's buggery and

gross indecency law, which punishes sodomy with 10 years hard labor, is taken almost

verbatim from the 1862 Offences Against the Person Act, imposed on Jamaica by the

British colonial government.[79] In this way, the regulation of appropriate sexuality in

Jamaica remains deeply tied to British colonial socialization, which privileges

---

[75] Gutzmore, 127.
[76] Alexander, "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be A Citizen," 5.
[77] Ibid., 9.
[78] Ibid., 6.
[79] Jeremy Seabrook, "It's not natural: The developing world's homophobia is a legacy of colonial rule,"
The Guardian, July 3, 2004.

monogamous, heterosexual marriage and masculinity based on the honorable British gentleman.[80]

Contemporary political leaders have exploited the nation's discomfort with homosexuality. In 2002, Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) leader and former prime minister Edward Seaga chose TOK's homophobic tune "Chi Chi Man" as his party's national campaign song. The lyrics call for Jamaicans to "blaze di fire," to burn homosexuals and thus heal the nation.[81] Seaga's song choice played on the rumors that opposition leader P.J. Patterson was a closeted homosexual. However, the fact that Patterson easily won the election may suggest that such anti-gay appeals are not as persuasive as they seem.[82]

Political Violence, Economic Crisis, and the Birth of Bashment

Dancehall music is inextricably linked to the political and economic turmoil of post-1962 Jamaica. The early years of independence brought minor economic growth and political optimism; the anticolonial euphoria had not yet waned. In the 1970s, however, the Jamaican economy stalled, exacerbated by the world economic crisis of 1973.[83] Prime Minister Michael Manley, of the People's National Party (PNP), was a moderate Fabian[84] socialist. As the nation's first leftist prime minister, Manley implemented a social welfare system, helped to increase literacy, and promoted a national culture that celebrated Afro-Jamaican expressions.[85] Manley also developed informal bonds with Fidel Castro, openly defying the United States' hegemony in the Caribbean. Manley's socialist project did achieve some success, but as the 1970s wore on, Jamaicans began to chafe at the scarcity of consumer goods and deepening poverty. Stolzoff

---

[80] Alexander, "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen," 10.
[81] TOK, "Chi Chi Man," *My Crew, My Dawgs*, VP Records, CD, 2001.
[82] Davis, 27.
[83] Black, *Life and Debt*.
[84] Fabianism is a non-Marxist socialist movement that advocates gradual political change rather than class revolution.
[85] Stolzoff, 101.

suggests that Manley underestimated the consequences of defying the United States; as a result of Manley's economic policies, Jamaica was almost denied international loans for infrastructure and development.[86]

When Jamaica was successful in securing international funds, the terms were strict and the results counterproductive. In 1973, Manley turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for loans to bolster the country's infrastructure. However, IMF money came with heavy conditions and interest rates as high as 25% per annum.[87] As a condition of the IMF loan, Jamaican currency was devalued and thus inflated. By making domestic currency cheaper, the IMF sought to reduce Jamaica's dependency on imports and expand exports.[88] But this strategy failed, instead burdening consumers with the increasing costs of imported goods. As a result of inflation, Jamaica's capacity to produce and export commodities suffered, leading to chronic economic depression and frequent loans from the IMF, World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).[89]

This economic malaise and social unease contributed to the emergence of politically conscious reggae music in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For many poor black people in the early 1970s, the promises of independence remained unfulfilled. The 'ghetto sufferers' continued to be excluded from economic gains and political influence. The birth of reggae gave voice to this black underclass, who, through music, articulated the Rastafarian visions of an alternative society, black nationalism, and spiritual revolution.[90] Although the Rastafarians had been ostracized in Jamaica since the 1930s, their liberatory message gained traction among the black poor after independence.

---

[86] Ibid., 101.
[87] Black, *Life and Debt*.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Brian Meeks, "The Political Moment in Jamaica: The Dimensions of Hegemonic Dissolution," in *Dispatches From the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*, edited by Manning Marable (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997): 53-56.
[90] Stolzoff, 65.

Rastafarianism offered a critique of the secular nationalist project, party politics and wage labour.[91] Their practices performed symbolic violence on white *and* black oppressors, agitating for spiritual warfare rather than an armed rebellion against the government. As the Rastafarians' primary musical expression, roots or 'conscious vibes' reggae intended to give voice to "the will of the ghetto sufferers not to be marginalized."[92] Reggae lyrics protested poverty, government corruption, political apartheid, and sometimes called for African repatriation.[93] Due in part to its appeal to international decolonization struggles, reggae became the first 'globalized' Jamaican music, and the "Third World's most influential pop music form."[94] Roots reggae spoke powerfully to contemporary African anti-colonial rebellions and to the black pride movement in the United States. Bob Marley wrote songs about struggles in Zimbabwe and other fledgling African nations that emphasized black solidarity, pride, and the triumph over Babylonian oppression; Marley was and continues to be the international icon of roots reggae. To this day, Jamaican roots reggae symbolizes countercultural practices all over the world.

In the early 1980s, Jamaican society and popular music underwent radical changes. Amidst unprecedented political violence, Edward Seaga's Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) was elected to lead the country in 1980. Seaga ascended to the prime-ministership under the banner of economic prosperity, embracing the neoliberal policies of Reagan and Thatcher. Andrew Ross argues that the JLP's election victory represents the collapse of Caribbean socialism; the new prime minister was instead an "enthusiastic agent of Caribbeanstyle Reaganomics."[95] Seaga privatized many of the industries

---

[91] Ibid., 79.
[92] Ross, 8.
[93] See Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance*; Peter B. Clarke, *Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement* (San Bernardino: Reginald/Borgo Press, 1988).
[94] Stolzoff, 94.
[95] Ross, 11.

nationalized by his predecessor. His government also cut social welfare programs and liberalized trade, reducing price controls and tariffs, and approving the creation of free trade zones. Throughout Seaga's tenure (1980-89), Jamaica saw a massive increase in poverty, drug trafficking, and the importation of consumer products and weapons from the United States.[96]

The free trade agreements with the United States in the 1980s and '90s allow multinational corporations to produce goods in Jamaica while avoiding local taxes and duties. The Kingston Free Zone – Jamaica's first free trade zone – is a large complex of factories in the national capital, built with a loan from the World Bank, employing thousands of Jamaican workers. Corporations housed within the complex are outside the purview of Jamaican law, and exempt from paying duties, tariffs, and taxes.[97] The promised job growth has only entrenched local poverty, as workers are paid extremely low wages.[98] Caribbean critics like filmmaker Stephanie Black and M. Jacqui Alexander argue that such neoliberal interventions in the West Indies[99] have created an environment that resembles colonial power relations. Alexander writes:

> Since 'independence', the state has colluded in adopting strategies that have locked these nations into a world economic and political system, the effect of which is re-colonization . . . All of these effects replicate the racialized colonial patterns of poverty, private ownership and lack of access to resources.[100]

---

[96] Stolzoff, 101.

[97] Black, *Life and Debt*.

[98] Ibid. In 2000, the average Free Zone worker earned about $1500 Jamaican, or US$30, per week.

[99] By "West Indies," I am referring to the islands of the Caribbean Basin, including former colonial holdings of Britain, Spain, France, Portugal and the Netherlands. This region is roughly bounded by Florida to the north, South America to the south (although it includes Guyana), Mexico and Central America to the west, and the Leeward and Windward Islands to the east. While these nations and territories are culturally, economically and politically diverse, I employ the term "West Indies" merely to indicate their current economic relationship with the Western powers. As Black's film *Life and Debt* illustrates, the West Indian nations are locked into an exploitative relationship characterized by free trade zones, high-interest structural adjustment loans, and low-wage jobs provided by foreign multinationals.

[100] Alexander, "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be A Citizen," 15.

In many economic sectors, including agriculture and manufacturing, Jamaican companies are unable to compete with foreign multinationals. This has led to what Alexander describes above as "re-colonization," as the imperial Western powers reassert themselves as the global centers of economic power. This pattern has replicated itself across the global south, through globalization, trade liberalization, and international loans targeted at short-term development.

In addition to (and as a result of) foreign debt and ever-increasing poverty, Jamaican society has been crippled by violence for the past four decades. In the 1960s, when the violent crime rate was relatively low for the region, violence was mostly political in nature. In 1967, the two political parties (PNP and JLP) each forged relationships with the ghetto communities of Kingston in order to secure electoral districts. Each ghetto, or garrison, became dominated by a gang, often under the patronage of party leaders.[101] Political parties often supplied the 'don' of the garrison with guns and money in order to secure the garrison's loyalty. Although political violence existed before 1967, the creation of garrisons (and the introduction of guns) created urban political warfare that persists today.[102]

Violence reached a fever pitch during the 1980 election, a time that also marks the approximate birth of dancehall music. Andrew Ross contends that JLP candidate Edward Seaga accepted weapons from the CIA in order to arm the populace against the People's National Party. Party loyalists on both sides murdered supporters of the opposition and bombed polling stations. This atmosphere created an unprecedented level of urban

---

[101] Stolzoff, 84.

[102] This violence is 'political' in the sense that each garrison aligns itself with one of the two national political parties. Opposing sides are not clearly divided along ideological lines, however. Although each political party once represented differing political positions, people living in the ghettos often commit violence for their party without subscribing to its ideological visions. For over 40 years, the ruling party has provided jobs, contracts, and other benefits to its supporters in the ghettos, thus winning supporters through clientelism rather than political sentiments. An adherence to the party's platform or philosophy is not required. In this way, political violence has become institutionalized and practiced as black-on-black crime, separate from 'politics' itself. See Meeks, 59-64.

violence. The *Jamaica Gleaner* reports that in the months leading up to the general election in November 1980, 889 people were murdered in a nation of about 2.1 million.[103]

This political violence and economic insecurity has influenced the displacement of roots reggae by dancehall as the dominant musical form in Jamaica, though reggae has maintained its international popularity. The deaths of Haile Selassie in 1976 and Bob Marley in 1981 left the Rastafari movement without its spiritual guides. At the same time, PM Seaga encouraged Jamaicans to reject everything relating to Manley's socialist government; the Seaga government blamed the revolutionary fervor of Rasta-inspired reggae for the past decade's turmoil.[104] This social climate led to the decline of Rastafarianism, and thus, roots reggae. Many critics align this trajectory with the emergence of dancehall music, also known as bashment reggae and ragga (in the U.K.). Echoing the shifting mood in Jamaica, early dancehall music was largely apolitical, a departure from the rebellious and critical reggae of the 1970s.

The musical form of dancehall was such a drastic shift from roots reggae that many commentators refuse to consider it reggae at all. 'Roots' reggae music, a term that describes 1970s Rastafarian-inspired reggae music, is characterized by strong, accented guitar chords on the upbeat, and a slower pace that allows improvisation from the drummer.[105] The beat is slower than the earlier Jamaican forms of ska and rocksteady. Reggae artists play live instrumental music rather than sing over pre-recorded tracks, unlike newer dancehall forms like dub. Reggae bands were usually fronted by a male singer accompanied by female background vocalists.

While reggae privileges live bands and singers, dancehall tunes are based on digital beats and sound effects. In the typical dancehall song, a DJ, who is analogous to a

---

[103] Howard Campbell, "The 1980 General Election," *Jamaica Gleaner*, August 29, 2006.
[104] Stolzoff, 102.
[105] Ibid., 93.

rapper in American hip-hop, speaks or "toasts" over pre-recorded instrumental tracks. Several current tracks, or *riddims*, circulate within the dancehall scene at any given time. The rhythm of dancehall draws on traditional Afro-Jamaican musical forms like mento, pocomania, and kumina, as well as ska, roots reggae, Trinidadian soca and American hip-hop. The driving pulse of dancehall music is a departure from the relaxed beat of reggae. Tracks usually follow two-chord melodies and feature electronic overdubs, sound effects, and digital drum machines.[106]

Culture, Slackness, Resistance

The new hardcore sound echoes the cacophonous, often violent contestations of sexuality, race, poverty, gender, and politics that emanate from the dancehall session. The dancehall sound, its lyrics, and its performers' attire and behavior have been key sites of Jamaican cultural politics since the late 1970s. While early dancehall music was somewhat apolitical, the music has always confronted upper-class cultural hegemony and challenged bourgeois norms of sexuality and race relations. The most evocative method of overthrowing the strictures of 'uptown' cultural dominance is slackness, or overt sexuality and erotic hedonism.[107] Slackness DJs simply "give the audience what they want," rejecting the Rastafarian notion that music should educate as well as entertain.[108] The slackness genre transgresses both the Christian and Rastafarian moral codes; it glorifies consumption, individualism, and unabashed sexual desire. While DJs position themselves as rebellious, slackness songs often reproduce the hegemonic discourse of sexuality.[109] Rather than overthrow the dominant sexual order, dancehall DJs demonize

---

[106] Ibid., 107.
[107] Niaah, 174. "Slackness" also can refer to government corruption or social inequality. See Lady Saw's song "What is Slackness?": "Slackness when government break dem promise/Slackness when politician issue out guns/So the two party a shot dem one anedda down." Qtd. in Stolzoff, 241.
[108] Niaah, 163.
[109] Saunders, 103.

all manner of prohibited heterosexual behaviors, including fellatio and cunnilingus. As most DJs are male, slackness lyrics usually describe the man's sexual virility and stamina. Lyrics also celebrate his woman's pleasure when she gets *stabbed* or *daggered* by his manhood.[110] In one popular dancehall song of the early 1990s, the DJ boasts: "hear di y'ung gyal ah bawl when she get up tuh nine inch tall."[111] In this line, the slackness DJ boasts of his own considerable endowment and the accommodating nature of his partner.

In contrast to slackness, "culture" music forms the opposite pole of the classic dancehall dichotomy.[112] Culture refers to the Rastafarian influence in dancehall, a thread that has run through the music since the 1970s but did not regain prominence until the '90s. This Rasta Renaissance has revived anticolonialism, black consciousness, Afro-centrism and opposition to the Babylonian system of oppression. The shift in style is most dramatically illustrated by Buju Banton's metamorphosis from slackness/gunman DJ to 'conscious vibes' artist. Shortly after his international hardcore hit "Boom Bye-Bye," Banton had a conversion experience that motivated him to write conscious lyrics that dealt with inequality and life in the ghetto.[113] Culture DJs like Banton deemphasize overt sexuality and gun violence. Instead, they revisit the symbolic violence of Rastafari, taking aim at the state, the light-skinned upper class, and homosexuals. The literal gun violence of dancehall is transfigured into biblical or spiritual violence.

DJs who perform culture lyrics (as well as "reality" and "gun business"[114]) often cast homosexuality as the cause of poverty and corruption. As in many former colonies,

---

[110] Noel and Marriott, 31.

[111] Ibid., 31.

[112] See Niaah; Stolzoff; Cooper, *Noises in the Blood*.

[113] Stolzoff, 113.

[114] Ibid., 168. Gun business, or gunman, is a dancehall genre that glorifies gun violence and gangsterism, similar to American gansta rap. Banton's "Boom Bye Bye," for example, is both a gun business and rude bwoy dancehall tune.

sodomy symbolizes the impurity of the nation.[115] Dancehall artists often understand

deviant sexual behavior as a foreign influence; cunnilingus and sodomy threaten the

"moral well-being of the sufferers."[116] In Baby Cham's song "Another Level," the DJ

fuses sodomy and political corruption:

> Tell di broddah weh fuck up di economy
> Fe go read Chapter 3 Deuteronomy
> Tell em sey we have to secure we family
> Government corruption ah goh down like sodomy.[117]

Here, the DJ conflates political corruption, economic incompetence and sodomy; each

deviant act is to be punished by biblical wrath ("ah goh down like sodomy"). In this

lyric, the association of "family" with "government" reasserts the heterosexual family as

the fundamental unit of the nation. As Alexander argues, since homosexuality is

unproductive of offspring, it is antithetical to the Caribbean nationalist discourse that

requires the continuous replenishment of the population. In a Rasta-inspired dancehall

song, the remedy to such antisocial sexuality is to call upon the Almighty to rain down

his punishment.[118] Instead of the graphic "boom bye-bye inna batty bwoy head,"[119]

Baby Cham invokes symbolic, biblical wrath to solve the nation's ills. Hence, the

contemporary dancehall resounds with calls to "bun fiya" (burn fire) on the batty man.

Most dancehall artists exist in between culture and slackness without conforming

to one genre. While many writers insist on the slackness-culture dichotomy, it is clear

that other forms continue to disrupt it, including "rude bwoy Rasta," "reality" and "gun

business."[120] The categories of dancehall styles are constantly shifting based on

emerging personalities and the demands of the massive. In order to ensure success and

---

[115] Saunders, 111.
[116] Stolzoff, 110.
[117] Qtd. in Saunders, 111.
[118] Saunders, 114.
[119] Buju Banton, "Boom Bye Bye."
[120] Stolzoff, 163-66.

longevity, many artists record songs in different modes. Beenie Man, the self-proclaimed King of the Dancehall, takes pride in his versatility: "I DJ a little gun, me DJ a little girl, me DJ a little reality, me DJ history . . . 'cause that's what dem want to hear."[121] An "all-rounder" DJ often has the best chance of chart success and, on a micro level, invigorating the dancehall 'massive.' Buju Banton – his rebirth as a culture DJ notwithstanding – continues to perform songs in different styles, including his gunman/rude bwoy hit "Boom Bye-Bye."

Through the various genres of dancehall music, artists contest 'uptown' culture and hegemonic norms governing language, race and sexual behavior. As described in the introduction, it can be useful to understand dancehall as a clash, which points to the competitive, performative nature of the dancehall session and the continuous engagement of cultural politics through music and performance. At the same time, however, DJs often unify the 'massive' by reinforcing normative discourses. For example, DJs often scapegoat marginalized groups in order to rally the crowd and gain support for their sound system. A typical rallying cry might be: "all who hate batty men . . . raise your hand,"[122] which will almost certainly arouse a mighty roar. For example, the smash hit "Chi Chi Man," by TOK – which hit #1 on the British pop chart – uses the call-and-response convention that has been part of black music since the slave period. In the chorus, a group of male singers chant "From dem a par inna chi chi man car/Blaze di fire mek wi bun dem!," echoed by "Bun dem!"[123] This line repeats many times throughout the song. This tune is notable not only because of its international success, but because it pairs triumphal, hymn-like music with the harrowingly violent image of two men being burnt to death in a car. In this example, the artists use a call-and-response that will assuredly elicit support from the 'massive,' and combine it with eschatological religiosity

---

[121] Ibid., 168.
[122] Stolzoff, 208.
[123] TOK, "Chi Chi Man."

and divine punishment. Here, politically motivated dancehall music, bent on blaming homosexuals for social decay, also reinforces conservative ideologies of gender and sexuality.

The dancehall session – which takes place in warehouses, abandoned yards or empty fields – is the primary performance space for dancehall music. Most sessions occur in Kingston, but there are hundreds across the island each year. Outside of the institutions of church and state, this space is one in which poor black 'ghetto sufferers' engage the endemic problems of Jamaican society. The performers and audiences negotiate ways to deal with poverty, violence, and white supremacy in a corrupt society. In the process, dancehall DJs can unify the 'massive' against hegemonic power. In addition, the state perceives the dance as dangerous because of its association with harboring criminals and celebrating victories over the police. Because of this aura of illicitness and rebellion, police surveillance of dancehall sessions is rampant; officers often harass and arrest incoming patrons, and sometimes even "lock off," or stop, the session.[124]

Dancehall music retains its importance in Jamaican culture in part because of the failure of the political system to fully redress social and economic inequalities. Jamaican political scientist Brian Meeks argues that the ruling establishment in Jamaica has lost the confidence of the people. Due to the continuing economic crisis, poverty, and the collapse of any meaningful national political project, the majority of Jamaicans no longer trust the political parties' "right to run things,"[125] a general sentiment that Meeks terms

---

[124] Stolzoff, 10. To complicate Stolzoff's reading, I add that some sessions occur in conspicuously 'uptown' locations, like Ocho Rios, Montego Bay and the more affluent neighborhoods of Kingston. These sessions problematize the uptown/downtown dichotomy. While dancehall is primarily an expression of poor, black Jamaicans, it has gained prominence amongst middle-class youths. When sessions take place in more affluent areas – often populated by lighter-skinned people – the performance takes on a curious mix of downtown/uptown cultural values. Further, I suggest that the uptown session represents a space where profit takes precedence over 'authentic' expressions of lower class angst.

[125] Meeks, 61.

hegemonic dissolution. The postcolonial oligarchy,[126] in power since 1962, is losing its control over Jamaican culture and society. The country is witnessing a concomitant decline in ideological movements like black nationalism, Rastafarianism, and democratic liberalism. In this context, as Stolzoff writes, "there is no clear contender for control over the society."[127] Whose values will determine the cultural and moral direction of Jamaican society? Whose perspective will inform the writing of Jamaican history? Will 'downtown' cultural expressions prevail over 'uptown' to radically redefine Jamaican culture?

At this moment of uncertainty, 'downtown' Jamaicans increasingly look to popular culture to reflect their lived experiences and to redress their grievances. As the hegemony of the brown middle classes[128] breaks down, dancehall music increasingly takes its place as the dominant expression among poor, black Jamaicans. While dancehall is routinely criticized by middle- and upper-class citizens as vulgar and violent, many residents of the ghettos believe that the music speaks to their oppression and poverty.[129] Crisis is nothing new in Jamaica, but dancehall music is a contemporary voice through which the poor can enunciate and negotiate their experiences of crisis. From the perspective of many 'ghetto sufferers,' oppression and inequality – not decaying moral values – are the basis of the Jamaican political, economic and cultural crisis.

---

[126] I refer to the liberal middle class parties – Jamaica Labour Party and People's National Party – which have led the government since independence. Together, they represent one of the strongest and most durable two-party systems in the hemisphere.

[127] Stolzoff, 229.

[128] "Brown middle classes" is a common terminology for the lighter-skinned bourgeoisie in Jamaica. Most Jamaican scholars recognize this group as the inheritors of the political apparatus after decolonization. See Munroe; Eaton.

[129] Stolzoff, 229.

CHAPTER 2

Tensions in Gay Political Activism and the
Limits of Identity Politics

The gay rights discourse on dancehall has emanated from specific historical, cultural and political realities, quite different from the context of Jamaican dancehall itself. The historical production of Anglo-American gay politics is key to understanding the ways in which Boycott Jamaica and Stop Murder Music respond to the perceived threats of dancehall music. In this chapter, I will consider the historical contingencies that have led to the development of a politics based on 'gay identity,' civil rights, and fair representation. The classic dichotomy of Anglo-American gay rights movements, like that of many other new social movements (NSMs), is the tension between moderate, assimilationist politics and radical, direct action approaches. But as I will explain later in the chapter, this binary is actually complex and unstable, and coexists with myriad other tensions. Beyond ideological and strategic disagreements, gay rights movements have been beset by struggles over race, sexual expression, gender, age, and class, among many other differences and identities. In light of these intersecting axes of difference, it may be impossible to speak of a single gay rights movement. However, most of these tensions have remained tangential to the mainstream gay history project. Many of the seminal texts of gay history – mostly written by white men – mention these conflicts only briefly, if at all.[130] I do not intend to write a revisionist history of the gay and lesbian

---

[130] This is not to say that issues of race, gender, class, etc. are completely ignored in standard gay history texts. However, many authors devote little more than a few paragraphs to the race question. To be fair, these authors often discuss race as an issue that demands more scholarly interest, but do not attempt to take on the issue themselves. See Dennis Altman, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1971); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Martin Duberman, *About Time: Exploring the Gay Past* (New York: Seahorse, 1986); David Rayside, *On The Fringe: Gays & Lesbians in Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

movements, but rather I wish to highlight some of the aspects of this fraught history that pertain to my project.

In order to trace the historical development of gay political activism, I will tease out the development of a "quasi-ethnic"[131] gay identity and this identity's intimate connection with the rise of Anglo-American capitalism. This identification of the 'gay community' as an oppressed minority has lent legitimacy to struggles for civil rights, but the ethnic model has provoked considerable tensions around race, gender, class, and sexual expression in the 'community.' In Chapter 3, I will argue that the initial development of gay communities around bars, bathhouses, and gay-owned business has evolved into a Western gay (male) identity organized around commerce. This has profound implications for the type of activism in which contemporary queer activists participate, including the tactics undertaken by gay, anti-'murder music' critics in the global north.

In the following pages, I will first briefly sketch the history of gay rights movements in the United States and United Kingdom from the 1950s to the 1970s.[132] Then, I will discuss the development of an essential gay identity and its effect on gay political organizing. Next, I will investigate the historical and sociopolitical contexts that

---

[131] Steven Epstein, "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity: The Limits of Social Constructionism," in *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader*, eds. Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider (London: Routledge, 1998): 135.

[132] Initially, I had planned to incorporate Canadian activism, but I have found that giving it proper treatment is beyond the scope of this project. Canadian gay activism is a fascinating mix of British and American influences. Gay activism in Canada has been far more sporadic and disconnected in comparison to the U.S. and U.K., and has tended toward smaller organizations that mobilize based on specific events. Like in the U.K., Canadian legislative reform is more seldom than in the United States, so gay activists are often quick to mobilize. Moreover, many legislative changes in Canada occurred without a prominent national gay political presence. In 1969, Parliament decriminalized private sexual activity between consenting adult men. Like in Britain, Canadian law enforced the strict separation of private and public, which would later be used to justify police intervention of 'public sex' in both countries. See Barry D. Adam, "Moral Regulation and the Disintegrating Canadian State," in *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement*, eds. Barry D. Adam, Jan W. Duyvendak, and Andre Krouwel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999): 12-29; Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1987); Rayside, *On the Fringe*.

led to the establishment of OutRage. Finally, I will consider the history of Anglo-American gay rights as the history of an identity politic based on quasi-ethnic organizing, which has become increasingly linked with consumerism and the capitalist market ethos.

Assimilationism vs. Radicalism: The Early Years of Gay Liberation

The tensions of assimilationist and confrontational politics date to the earliest gay organizing efforts in the U.S. and U.K. Gay and lesbian organizing in the United States began in earnest in the 1950s, during a period of intense repression. Early organizations, like the Mattachine Society[133] and Daughters of Bilitis, adopted assimilationist agendas molded by the financial and physical risk of being an 'out' gay person.[134] British gay activism, as well, emerged in a time of strict moralism and middle-class social conservatism.[135] Victorian ideologies of gender and sexuality endured in Britain through most of the 20th century, drawing strict boundaries between public and private space, to

---

[133] The Mattachine Society was founded in 1951 by Communist Harry Hay. The organization initially employed Marxist thought to frame gay men and women as an oppressed group. However, by 1953, all Communist members of the Mattachine Society were forced out, and the organization's political orientation shifted dramatically toward assimilationist liberalism.

[134] Steven Epstein, "Gay and Lesbian Movements in the United States: Dilemmas of Identity, Diversity, and Political Strategy," in *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement*, eds. Barry D. Adam, Jan W. Duyvendak, and Andre Krouwel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999): 34. Also see Duberman, *About Time*, 199-202.

[135] David Rayside traces anti-gay practice in the mid-20th century to 18th and 19th century middle-class ideology, which promoted personal responsibility and restraint, and sought to contain sexual behavior within heterosexual marriage. Thus, gender and sexuality became integral to developing strict guidelines for behavior. As the English middle class (the former *petit bourgeoisie*) rose to power in the 18th century, this ideology of gender and sexuality became a set of widely held beliefs, within which homosexuality gained a prominent place. In the mid-19th century, when other European countries (i.e. Italy, Germany, France) were indifferent toward homosexuality, the British government continued to assert its disapproval. In 1885, Parliament reaffirmed the illegality of homosexual activity. A decade later, Oscar Wilde was prosecuted and convicted under the same law. It is helpful to think about the ways in which these sexual and gender norms affected colonial practice. Certainly, those norms that were exported to the colonies were altered by unique racial and economic dynamics; in Jamaica, for example, the colonial teachings on sexual behavior, especially homosexuality, were far more condemning and virulent than those taught in Britain, for the express purpose of 'civilizing' and controlling an African slave population. See David Rayside, "Homophobia, Class, and Party in England," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 1 (March 1992): 126; Richard Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to Sex and Sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance* (London: Collins, 1990); Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*: *The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981); Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

protect the public sphere from sexual 'deviance' of all sorts, including prostitution, homosexuality, bisexuality, and cross-generational desire.[136] British gay activism, then, centered on legislative reform that reinforced the separation of public and private space.[137] The early-to-mid-1960s saw a more diverse mix of political agendas and tactics, as gay activists took inspiration from the black civil rights movement and, later, second-wave feminist organizing.[138]

Gay liberation marked a radical break from mainstream gay politics, when for a brief period, progressive politics seemed to take precedence over reformist, civil rights organizing. The Stonewall riots, in June 1969 in New York City's Greenwich Village, represent for many historians the beginning of the gay rights movement in the United States.[139] As the legend goes, during a rash of police raids on gay bars (and a few days after the death of gay icon Judy Garland), patrons of the Stonewall Inn fought back against raiding police officers. For several nights, bar patrons – many of them drag queens and people of color – clashed with police, throwing bottles and bricks. While historians and cultural critics can debate the meaning and symbolic significance of Stonewall, it is evident that news of the riots provided an impetus for gay liberation organizations to spring up around the U.S.

---

[136] Rayside, "Homophobia," 126.

[137] The 1967 decriminalization of sodomy between two consenting adults was premised on the separation of public and private space. This legislation combined "stricter penalty and control, toward greater freedom and leniency." This tension can be observed later in British history: even though private sex between men was protected in the private realm, the police and judiciary devoted massive resources to prosecuting thousands of men for public sex through the 1990s. Ken Plummer, "The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Britain: Schisms, Solidarities, and Social Worlds," in *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement*, eds. Barry D. Adam, Jan W. Duyvendak, and Andre Krouwel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999): 133-157.

[138] Epstein, "Gay and Lesbian Movements," 37.

[139] Many American gay activists, especially those on the West Coast, disagree with the characterization of Stonewall as the birth of the movement, as they had already been mobilized for many years. Other New York-based groups read the riots differently, as well. The Mattachine Society famously posted a sign outside the Stonewall Inn, pleading for "peaceful and quiet conduct" (qtd. in Epstein, "Gay and Lesbian Movements," 38). See also Susan Stryker, *Gay by the Bay: A History of Queer Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996).

Gay liberationists attempted to transcend civil rights issues by critiquing the broader political and economic structures that they believed caused oppression. Their political project entailed the destruction of not only homophobia, but also misogyny, racism, imperialism, and economic exploitation. Gay liberation activists often hailed from other contemporary NSMs, including the antiwar, feminist, third world liberation, and counterculture movements.[140] Influenced by Marx, Freud, and Marcuse, many gay liberationists believed that heterosexism coexists with other forms of oppression, and that the root of these inequalities is capitalism. The most important of the gay liberation organizations, Gay Liberation Front (GLF), was founded in New York City in 1969. The group adopted the "personal is political" ethos of Second-Wave feminism; this was reflected in the symbolic import they invested in 'coming out,' which became more than just a personal rite of passage, rising to the level of public political statement and a tool for community building.[141] GLF and other radical/progressive organizations disappeared within a few years, as they eschewed hierarchies and were unable to mobilize a mass base. However, they left a strong legacy of 'coming out' and the affirmation of a gay identity, indispensible tools in building the 'ethnic' gay minority.[142] Crucially, though, GLF's notion of visibility was opposed to assimilation, directed toward building public yet rebellious communities. Years later, OutRage, ACT UP, and Queer Nation would reignite the liberationist strains of visibility and anti-assimilationism.

---

[140] Epstein, "Gay and Lesbian Movements," 38.
[141] Ibid., 40.
[142] British gay liberation, with its own London chapter of GLF, espoused radical, utopian politics bent on reorganizing the state, gender roles, and family relations. However briefly, the British movement united gay men and lesbians in an effort to transcend liberal tolerance, especially the public/private boundary. Plummer, 136.

The Birth of Quasi-Ethnic Organizing: Civil Rights and Assimilation

Gay liberation faded quickly in the early 1970s, but North American and British gay communities witnessed an explosion of activist groups, gay businesses, clinics, counseling services, clubs and churches. Although radicalism persisted, it was mostly drowned out by groups with a liberal civil rights orientation arguing for equal protection based on minority status. Most gay activist organizations abandoned the broad social justice agendas of the 1960s and focused instead on single-issue politics. The National Gay Task Force (NGTF), formed in 1973, was among the first national U.S. gay organizations to form a broad alliance among activists, politicians, and religious groups.[143] Its initial goal was to press states to overturn sodomy bans. Other mainstream projects included the passage of antidiscrimination laws, lobbying the Democratic Party, and the election of openly gay politicians. Activists succeeded in winning court cases, getting gay rights measures on the national Democratic Party platform, and building communities, materially and mentally.

I argue that these mainstream successes were largely the result of the development of a 'gay community' based on an essentialized gay identity. Ironically, the gay liberation movement may have helped to popularize the very sort of essentialism it deplored; with its dependence on 'coming out' as an act of personal and political liberation, and the resulting visibility of gay men and women, gay liberation may have created the conditions for young queer people to assume new gay identities and to populate urban gay neighborhoods. Beginning in the early 1970s, young gay people flocked to the burgeoning 'gay ghettos': San Francisco's Castro, Toronto's Church-Yonge neighborhood, Montreal's gay village, and London's West End, among many

---

[143] Julie Mertus, "The Rejection of Human Rights Framings: The Case of LGBT Advocacy in the U.S.," *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (November 2007): 1053. NGTF was renamed the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) in 1986.

others. With this mass migration and commitment to mainstream politics, young gay

people began to embrace a fixed gay identity.[144] The new gay ghettos became self-

contained communities, spawning gay-owned bookshops, clothing stores, restaurants,

bars, and sex clubs. The gay community even developed a rainbow flag, which Steven

Epstein sees as a way to "mark the territory and welcome the immigrants,"[145] a concept

with much symbolic power in the U.S. and Canada, nations that self-identify as

immigrant societies and embrace the ability to make and remake oneself. The leaders of

these new communities – very often white, middle-class males – saw homosexuality as

an immutable condition; as a legitimate foundation upon which to form communities with

distinctive cultural expressions.[146]

A confluence of factors shaped the development of this essentialized gay identity,

but I would like to focus on gay historian John D'Emilio's argument that capitalism was

the most profound contributor to an identity based on same-sex desire and behavior.[147]

D'Emilio, influenced by Marx and Engels, claims that gays and lesbians are the products

of history, associated with a specific moment in the development of Western capitalism.

Before industrial capitalism was the main economic system, D'Emilio argues, the

heterosexual family was mainly an economic unit; sex was tied to procreation, which

would produce more labor for the household. Urban-based capitalism and its free labor

system, however, broke up the family and moved labor outside of the home and into

cities. Once the majority of people became dependent on labor and commodities from

outside the home, the family became an affective rather than economic unit, and sex was

---

[144] Ironically, this follows the logic of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), which characterized homosexuality as a fixed condition rather than a collection of behaviors. The crucial difference is that gay people in the 1970s reclaimed homosexual identity as something immutable but positive, an identity upon which to build a cultural and political movement.
[145] Epstein, "Gay and Lesbian Movements," 42.
[146] Ibid., 43.
[147] John D'Emilio, *Making Trouble: Essays on gay history, politics, and the university* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 3-17.

able to break free from the constraints of procreation. This transformation enabled the birth of the advertising industry, which offered new pleasures in the form of commodities. Rosemary Hennessy suggests that the inducement to purchase commodities – based not on necessity but desire – required the formation of "newly desiring subjects, forms of agency, intensities of sensation, and economies of pleasure."[148] These new subjects gradually displaced Victorian gender and sexual definition, embodied by the emergence of the 'homosexual'[149] and the concomitant emphasis on sexual object choice over gender identity as the distinguishing feature of sexual identity.[150] Thus, as D'Emilio and Hennessy suggest, capitalism created the conditions for sex to be associated with pleasure, intimacy and love. This affective shift, along with the influx of young people into crowded cities, allowed for the enunciation of erotic and emotional same-sex attraction (the love that dare not speak its name).[151]

D'Emilio's argument is an important contribution, but it resembles other modernist gay histories that privilege white, male experience. Queer scholar Scott Bravmann acknowledges that modern social constructionist texts, like those of D'Emilio and Martin Duberman, enable analyses of homophobia and a celebration of gay culture, but that they have also "tended to reify certain current conceptions of homosexuality which are unified and stabilized."[152] D'Emilio foregrounds the experiences of young (white) laborers who came to major cities in the early 20th century, who established a social life around new gay bars, bathhouses, and drag balls. This account serves to silence the voices of most lesbians and gay people of color. For instance, D'Emilio

---

[148] Rosemary Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 99.

[149] In Foucault's words, "the homosexual was now a species." Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Part I: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990): 43.

[150] Hennessy, 99.

[151] D'Emilio, *Making Trouble*, 6-7. See also Chauncey; Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[152] Bravmann, 5.

neglects to analyze the relative openness of homosexuality within black urban communities during the Harlem Renaissance. Consequently, those "unified and stabilized" identities, emblematic of Anglo-American gay identity, are often based on the experiences of young, white males. In this way, these historical texts have been largely unsuccessful at interrogating the elision of race, class, and gender within 'gay identity'. Bravmann argues that historical representations – beyond simply retelling the past – continue to construct and maintain gay identities in the present.[153] Therefore, it is crucial that historical texts – which are arguments as much as they are narratives – strive to include the experiences of people who have routinely been effaced.

Steven Epstein, in his essay "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity," places the development of 'ethnic-like' gay identity in the larger context of the increased importance of mass identities in modern society. Epstein argues that many social movements in the late 20th century have implemented a sense of "acquired" identity.[154] He defines "acquired identity" as constituted by the "internalization or conscious adoption of socially imposed or socially constructed labels or roles."[155] This type of identity can change over time, in response to the social world. In an advanced capitalist society, in which individuals are free to sell their labor, the relationship of the individual to the mass is fundamentally altered, and group identities become attractive for the freedom to both self-identify and to connect ourselves to others.[156] In the global north, there is considerable pressure to define oneself racially, ethnically and especially sexually. Epstein argues that sexual identification is particularly important, and deviant identities like homosexual tend to become totalizing.

---

[153] Ibid., 4.
[154] Epstein, "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity," 144.
[155] Ibid., 144.
[156] Ibid., 144.

Aside from the influence of capitalism and the modern shift to mass identities, another potent force in the emergence of a unitary gay identity was the perceived political utility of minority status. Gay identity politics emerged around the same time as other ethnic minority movements in the United States. Many gay rights activists observed closely the black civil rights and second-wave feminist movements, seeing the political gains that an essentialized identity could reap for marginalized groups. Gay activists were also inspired by the 'new ethnicity' movements of 'white' European minorities (Italian, Irish, Greek), which chose to downplay the primordial, biological understanding of ethnicity in favor of celebrating cultural products and affective ties.[157] The appearance of the 'new ethnicity' model and racial/gender organizing at the same time as the gay 'territory' is deeply influential to post-1969 gay organizing. As I will discuss in Chapters 3 and 4, this ethnicity model has had profound and sometimes troubling implications for gay politics, culminating in the 'like race' arguments that conflate sexual identity with racial identity.

For perhaps the first time, American gay people saw the political advantage of identifying as an oppressed minority based on the ethnic model. In the United States, especially, an ethnic civil rights strategy had proven efficacious for black Americans throughout the 1950s and '60s. In the civil rights model, groups perceived as victims of discrimination are afforded protection based on "shared identity characteristics"[158]; the law then marks these identity characteristics and makes them an illegal basis for discrimination. Thus, in order to be guaranteed civil rights protection, gay activists

---

[157] This conception fits well with gay identity, which is a "secondary socialization," in that a person's identification as gay must deal with a self that is already partly formed. This socialization is less formative than race, for example, because those socialized as gay already possess a host of other identities. This is not to say, however, that sexual identification is freely chosen and racial identification is fully constrained; rather, Epstein argues that if the ethnicity model is to be utilized by the gay movement, then ethnic gay identity must be seen as neither inescapable nor chosen at will, but instead as a dialectical relationship between choice and constraint. Esptein, "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity," 151.

[158] Jane S. Schacter, "Skepticism, Culture, and the Gay Civil Rights Debate in a Post-Civil Rights Era," *Harvard Law Review* 110, no. 3 (January 1997): 698.

sought to establish a unitary gay identity as the basis for claims of discrimination. Following this model, gay rights advocates were successful in lobbying for antidiscrimination laws in many U.S. cities throughout the 1970s.

But while the civil rights-ethnicity strategy was successful at achieving legal reform, many queer people were excluded, whether through the community's dominant political orientation or racial/class/gender demographics. The gay ethnicity model has fostered the hegemony of white males in the gay rights movement. The major gay rights groups since the 1970s have often been guided by what legal scholar Devon Carbado calls "but for" gay people: people who are fully mainstream "but for" their sexuality.[159] Consequently, broad movement goals have reflected the race and class privilege of dominant white males. This has promoted an emphasis on moderate legal reform, same-sex marriage, and military service, an agenda that has rarely addressed the oppression of women, people of color, and the poor. Thus, to organize based on an essentialized gay identity presumes that 'gayness' is the most significant of the myriad identities one can possess, and that sexual identity is separable from other identities. Clearly, this poses problems for women and gay people of color, who experience oppression based on several axes of difference. Stated differently, essentialist identity politics undermine the movement's ability to form broad alliances with other groups. In the same vein, ethnic gay identity assumes that all gay people have a similar experience of homosexuality. It does not account for the ways in which sexuality is intertwined with race, gender, and class, and how those intersections inform the experiences of individuals.[160]

---

[159] Devon W. Carbado, "Black Rights, Gay Rights, Civil Rights," *UCLA Law Review* 47, no. 6 (August 2000): 1506.

[160] Contemporary with the reification of gay identity, the gay movement(s) in the 1970s experienced major cleavages based on race and gender. People of color formed organizations like the National Black Feminist Organization (1974), the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays (1978), and, later, Gay Men of African Descent (1986). Much of this separatist sentiment developed from lack of representation in the gay movement's tone, agenda, and tactics; many gays and lesbians of color also bristled at the characterization of the gay rights movement as akin to the black struggle.

Intersectionality, a theoretical approach that analyzes the interactions between racism, patriarchy, and class exploitation, emerged out of critical legal studies as a way to problematize identity politics.[161] In Chapter 4, I will discuss the benefits of intersectionality in working through the complex web of oppression that subjugates many members of 'gay communities'.

The New Right and HIV/AIDS – Gay Activism in the 1980s

If the 1970s was a decade of cautious optimism for gay activists, then the 1980s were discouraging and often devastating. The political and social climate in North America and the United Kingdom shifted to the right in the late 1970s. The New Right movement, which gained immense political and cultural influence, materialized in reaction to the perceived excesses of the sexual revolution and the allegedly bloated welfare state. Politically, the movement combined laissez-faire economic policy with traditional social conservatism, finding representation in Margaret Thatcher's Conservative governments and the Reagan/Bush Republican presidencies.[162]

The American New Right movement consisted of a strong base of conservative Christians. The American Right shared its British counterpart's contradictory strains of neoliberalism and social conservatism, but the American movement's organized base of evangelical and Pentecostal Christians had no parallel in the U.K., Canada, or Europe.[163] Ronald Reagan was able to mobilize these conservative Christians, along with classic small-government conservatives and large numbers of the working class, by appealing to

---

[161] Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Critical Race Theory*, eds. Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York: New Press, 1995): 357-383.
[162] Cindy Patton, *Sex and Germs: The Politics of AIDS* (Montreal, Black Rose Books, 1986): 83-100.
[163] Rayside, *On the Fringe*, 42.

the fears of the 'common man'.[164] As in Thatcher's England, gays, blacks, and the 'welfare queen' became scapegoats for 'normal' citizens nostalgic for the supposedly peaceful days before the sexual and social revolutions.[165]

In Britain, New Right rhetoric appealed to working- and lower-middle class fears of the erosion of authority, respectability and social stability. David Rayside observes that politicians played on the nostalgia and anxiety of "the man left out," the average Briton who saw the traditional structures of society collapsing before his eyes.[166] This strategy was successful in a period of economic uncertainty and urban racial tensions. Stuart Hall et al, in the seminal book *Policing the Crisis*, analyze the ways in which the British government actively stereotyped young black males as violent criminals in order to appeal to the fears of 'ordinary' (read: white) citizens.[167] Alongside the famous 'black mugger' image, gay men and women also became ideal scapegoats for a conservative movement that lamented societal upheaval. Simon Watney writes that the persecution of homosexuals as a historical project fit well in Thatcher's conservative revival; the particular social climate of the 1980s allowed the government and mass media to stoke a classic "moral panic" that saw gays, lesbians, blacks, and immigrants, among others, as threats to British societal values.[168] For its part, the mass media offered densely coded images of gays, or excluded them completely. Watney argues that British mass media catered to "an imaginary national family unit which is both white and heterosexual,"[169] a

---

[164] Entertainer and famed Florida orange juice spokeswoman Anita Bryant was perhaps the most prominent Christian anti-gay activist in the late 1970s. Ironically, her public homophobic actions effected the mobilization of a national base of gay activists. In 1977, activists launched a successful boycott against Florida citrus, considered a founding moment in national U.S. gay political action. See Tina Fetner, "Working Anita Bryant: The Impact of Christian Anti-Gay Activism on Lesbian and Gay Movement Claims," *Social Problems* 48, no. 3 (August 2001): 411-428.

[165] Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS, and the Media* (London: Cassell, 1997): 43.

[166] Rayside, "Homophobia," 124.

[167] Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978).

[168] Watney, 39.

[169] Ibid., 43.

mostly fantastical archetype that posited as threats those who would or could not conform.

The social climate toward homosexuality in Britain was informed by persistent notions of respectability and sexual restraint, rather than explicitly religious moralism. British public opinion of homosexuality was low in the 1980s, especially when compared to Canada and continental European countries. Furthermore, the legal apparatus in the U.K. was generally more oppressive than in most other liberal democracies, with the exception of the U.S. Same-sex relationships and parenting rights were not recognized, the military barred gays from serving, and the age of consent was higher for gay sex than heterosexual sex, an issue that would become crucial to gay activism in the early 1990s.[170] But the Thatcher government's (1979-1990) hostility was certainly not anomalous in British history; as Watney argues, 1980s homophobic practice was a continuation of centuries-long national paranoia that took aim at sodomites, witches, Jews, and blacks.[171]

It was during the heyday of Thatcherism and the beginnings of the 'Reagan Revolution' that the first HIV infections appeared among gay men, intravenous drug users, Haitians, hemophiliacs, and sex workers in major British and North American cities. HIV/AIDS provided a potent, visceral image of the homosexual menace. Queer scholar Cindy Patton argues that HIV/AIDS plays into the New Rightist "obsession with matters corporeal"[172]; physical control and restraint are ideologically important to the movement, which is reflected in the prominence given to capital punishment, law and order, and the surveillance and control of sexuality. When AIDS struck in the early 1980s, the New Right found a powerful visual image that seemed to confirm the worst fears of homophobes: that the sexual revolution, which challenged society's traditional

---

[170] Rayside, *On The Fringe*, 38.
[171] Watney, 48.
[172] Patton, 83.

gender roles and familial structures, had resulted in a horrible disease that visually marked the deviant practitioners of homosexuality. Scientists and the media – who initially could not even bring themselves to imagine what kind of sex gay men had – constructed the gay male body as a text upon which was written age-old fears and prejudices of disease and deviant sexualities.[173] AIDS panic cast the disease's victims as agents, guilty parties to be separated from the 'general public.'[174] Thus, in the most religious factions of the New Right movement, AIDS was seen as an appropriate punishment for transgressing the natural order of sexuality. In both the U.K. and U.S., New Right literature in the 1980s conflated the 'gay plague' with the gay person. Although many different people were afflicted by the disease, New Right AIDS rhetoric became an anti-gay campaign that purported to prove that homosexuals were a scourge to society.[175]

The British tabloid press offered a platform for anti-gay and AIDS rhetoric unlike any other mass medium in the global north. The *Daily Mirror* and the *Sun* each sold several million copies per day throughout the 1980s, far more than the more mainstream *Times* or *Guardian*. All but one tabloid was enthusiastic in its support of Thatcher's conservatism.[176] Although the tabloids mostly aligned with right-wing politics, their conservatism did not echo Victorian mores, instead probing the sordid and scintillating, and tolerating sexual excess as long as it was heteronormative. Homosexuality received ample coverage in the tabloid press, but most of it was associated with scandal and criminality. AIDS coverage brought this scandalous coverage to new heights, as the tabloids (through both op-ed pieces and hard news) openly professed homophobia by drawing a clear line between the presumably 'deserving' gay male population and

---

[173] Paula Treichler, *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999): 19.
[174] Ibid., 36.
[175] Patton, 96.
[176] Rayside, *On The Fringe*, 36.

'innocent victims.'[177] Paula Treichler suggests that media coverage functioned to

construct "new oppositions that will barricade self from non-self."[178] This definition of

self (the imagined general public) and non-self (the AIDS patient) serve as a striking

example of Eve Sedgwick's minoritizing and universalizing discourses. In *Epistemology*

of the Closet, Sedgwick argues that the homo/heterosexual binary hinges on a founding

contradiction: the minoritizing view, which holds that the homo/hetero definition is

important only for a small, stable minority; and the universalizing view, which views it as

an issue of importance for many people, acknowledging the permeable boundaries of

sexuality.[179] Sedgwick suggests that this contradiction has ordered Western sexual

thought since the 19th century, and has profound implications for the discourses of sex,

gender, and disease. In the context of AIDS, tabloid media reports functioned to

'minoritize' a certain group of sufferers, while ignoring the potential of any person to

contract HIV and the disease's immediacy in the lives of all people. The mainstream

press, on the other hand, rarely covered HIV/AIDS or gay issues at all.[180]

    The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), a major influence on

OutRage's founding members, formed in 1987 in direct opposition to the poor media

coverage of HIV/AIDS, political inaction, and the lack of access to anti-retroviral drugs.

ACT UP centered on a leftist political agenda and practiced activism-as-theatre, both of

which OutRage would adopt into its uniquely English activist project. The organization –

taking cues from gay liberation, the peace movement, and especially grassroots feminist

activism – engaged in outrageous street theatre and challenged the cultural norms that

---

[177] Ibid., 36.
[178] Treichler, 37.
[179] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007): 1.
[180] North American mainstream media all but ignored AIDS in the 1980s, and when it did cover the epidemic, it often focused on hemophiliacs and other 'innocents' afflicted with the disease. National politicians, too, were loathe to speak of AIDS, in part because it forced the specifics of gay sexual behavior into the public discourse. Reagan did not give a speech about AIDS until 1987, over six years after the first AIDS deaths. See Treichler, 127-148; Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988).

ignored the voices of people with AIDS, staging elaborate "political funerals" in the streets of New York.[181] The group's poster art took aim at government officials, religious figures, and the greed of the health care industry in outrageous, postmodern imagery.[182] However, ACT UP's radical phase, while influential, was brief. The major focus was easing access to HIV/AIDS drugs, and ACT UP leaders believed that a "place at the table" was the most effective method of achieving their goals.[183] Queer scholar Peter Cohen argues that the group's mostly white, middle-class male membership guided its tactics and political orientation. There was gender, ethnic and class diversity within ACT UP, but Cohen asserts that white men had a relationship to power that allowed them to steer the group toward moderate reform politics that sought to engage dominant institutions rather than destroy them.[184] This tension between assimilationist and radical politics – along with rifts between men, women, people of color, and those of different socioeconomic classes – would be repeated in the ACT UP offshoot Queer Nation.

Founded at an ACT UP meeting in 1990, Queer Nation aimed to move past liberal identity politics and transform the national discourse and regulation of sexuality. The group embraced the postmodern impulses to create queer counterpublics, occupy public spaces, and counter the state regulation of sexuality through a multiplicity of

---

[181] Epstein, "Gay and Lesbian Movements," 56-57.

[182] See Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston, *AIDS Demo Graphics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990).

[183] Peter C. Cohen, "'All They Needed': AIDS, Consumption, and the Politics of Class," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 1 (July 1997): 97-100. Cohen offers a class analysis of ACT UP, suggesting that the group's leaders were mostly inexperienced, wealthy, and white. This "class privilege" encouraged them to expect the nation's institutions to work for them. Because of their economic and racial privilege, most of the ACT UP leadership did not seek to overthrow capitalism. In this way, the group was not even remotely radical. Still, there was significant ideological diversity within ACT UP, as many members believed that street protests and disruptions were the key to ACT UP's power.

[184] Ann Cvetkovich argues that while ACT UP was decidedly not a feminist organization, lesbians did have a strong presence in ACT UP, and were able to build strong coalitions between gay men and women. In fact, the gay male leaders of ACT UP often looked to the group's experienced lesbian feminists for political strategies and protest tactics. See "AIDS Activism and Public Feelings: Documenting ACT UP's Lesbians," in *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003). See also Part II in Sarah Schulman, *My American History: Lesbian and Gay Life During the Reagan/Bush Years* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

performances and disruptions.[185] Queer Nation was adept at manipulating the power of mass media to achieve visibility and challenge cultural norms, tactics almost immediately adopted by OutRage in London. But like OutRage, Queer Nation was plagued by tensions over race and class, as it was dominated by white, middle class activists (like its gay liberationist predecessors).

Section 28 and the Return of Radical Politics – The Birth of OutRage

The conservative social and political climate made possible the other major issue that galvanized the British gay rights movement of the 1980s: Section 28 of the Local Government Bill. In December 1987, British Parliament proposed the Local Government Bill, which included a measure to prohibit the promotion of "homosexuality as a pretend family relationship."[186] Parliament passed the bill mostly intact. In concert with the neo-populism of the New Right, proponents of Section 28 framed the bill's genesis as the result of grassroots organizing among concerned parents. The bill would prohibit any "local authority" from promoting homosexuality; the wording was vague enough to include libraries, public parks, pools, sport facilities and even art galleries.[187] Understood within the context of HIV/AIDS and Thatcherite conservatism, many in the gay community perceived Section 28 as a direct attack on the very existence of gay people. To be certain, the law was only one in a series of anti-gay measures enacted by

---

[185] Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, "Queer Nationality," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 193-229.

[186] Rayside, "Homophobia," 121.

[187] Nicholas Lowe, "Who Needs a Prosecution to Make a Point? The Forgotten British Culture Wars," *Social Identities* 13, no. 2 (March 2007): 146. The law provided a legal framework for government censorship, but few people or organizations were ever prosecuted under Section 28. A notable exception is the Gay's the Word bookshop in London, which endured years of harassment by customs officials for 'pornography.' The bookshop case notwithstanding, the major consequence of Section 28 was widespread self-censorship. Lowe details the cancellations of hundreds of events, programs, performances, and art openings for fear of violating Section 28. In lieu of enforcement, the law generally created an atmosphere of panic and misinformation at the height of the AIDS crisis. Another unfortunate effect of Section 28 was the seizure of safer sex and AIDS education materials by customs agents.

the British government, but the historical moment combined with the strong wording of the amendment spurred a vociferous reaction among gay activists.

A rare occurrence in British gay politics, Section 28 served to unite gay men and women as a community, as gays and lesbians were targeted equally by the law (unlike the old British sodomy laws, which criminalized sex between men only). In this spirit of community organizing, left-leaning gay activists formed the Organization for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA). This group represented a return to gay liberationist politics. Protesters engaged in high-profile zaps,[188] invaded the BBC News studio during a live broadcast, and organized a march of 10,000 in London to protest Section 28.[189] Although OLGA collapsed shortly after the passage of Section 28, the group reignited gay activism in the U.K. and directly influenced the founding of OutRage three years later.

The easy passage of the Local Government Bill caused many gay activists – especially those more inclined to moderate, lobby-based politics – to blame their failure on the absence of any national gay rights organization. They claimed that British gays and lesbians needed a professional lobbying group that could get gay rights on the national political agenda.[190] In 1989, the Stonewall Group became the first national, mainstream gay rights organization in the U.K. Members included celebrities and people with connections to the national political parties and government ministries. In contrast to GLF and, later, OLGA, Stonewall adopted a moderate political orientation and a commitment to law reform. The group's leadership hoped to unite gays and lesbians of diverse ideological backgrounds, but created an organizational structure that was meant

---

[188] A zap is a confrontational protest tactic that involves activists infiltrating an event or establishment and provoking an outrageous scene. Often, zaps are meant to humiliate public officials and expose their hypocrisy, inaction, or outright hateful actions toward gay people. Larry Gross, *Up From Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001): 45-46.
[189] Lucas, 5.
[190] Ibid., 9.

to prevent the crippling factionalism of most gay rights organizations. Stonewall would come to serve as a counterpoint to the direct action, progressive politics of OutRage.

Amid the echoes of American gay radicalism and the heightened tensions around Section 28, British activists formed OutRage in May 1990. The group sought to revive the confrontational, direct action politics of gay liberation, but this time with a civil rights orientation. The founders were disappointed with the moderate, if highly visible, actions of the Stonewall Group.[191] OutRage describes itself, in its mission statement, as "committed to radical non-violent direct action," above all fighting homophobia, discrimination, and violence.[192] Some of the group's first actions were directed at what the gay male community perceived to be its biggest threats: the police and judiciary.[193] Queer bashing and the rampant policing of gay men became the group's central issues in the early 1990s. British police in the late 1980s engaged in a number of high-profile entrapment campaigns, patrolling the Hyde Park toilets in London. In 1989 alone, an estimated 5000 gay men were arrested for public sex, the most since the 1950s.[194] At the same time, violence against gays and lesbians was on the rise, exacerbated by AIDS hysteria.

A crucial early organizing effort found OutRage combining legal reform with theatrical street politics, a model that would endure for some time. Parliament introduced Clause 25 in December 1990, a deeply reactionary law that would implement tougher

---

[191] The Stonewall Group was largely responsible for getting gay rights on the political agenda in Britain. In such a hostile climate, it was remarkable that gay activists were able to compel politicians to speak seriously about issues like equal age of consent and queer bashing. However, gay issues were mostly unrepresented by leftist organizations, which saw sexuality as tangential to Marxist class politics.

[192] Lucas, 17.

[193] In Canada, too, the issue of police surveillance and harassment boiled over in the early 1980s. Police in Montreal and Toronto raided gay bars and bathhouses, arresting over 300 men in one Toronto bath raid. The gay movement answered by mobilizing, with varying success, to challenge police activity based on civil and human rights. Adam, 15.

[194] Lucas, 14.

sentences for sex offenses, including consensual adult gay sex.[195] In the same month, a proposed amendment to the Children Act would prohibit gay people from fostering children. The reactions of OutRage ranged from moderate to outrageous: they included letters to MPs asking them to defend their characterization of gay sex as a crime, a demonstration of 10,000 in Hyde Park, and the literal 'scrubbing' of Parliament and the Union Jack to cleanse them of homophobia.[196] These actions set the tone for the future of OutRage: the group fought for basic civil rights and challenged institutional homophobia, but often did so through tactics that emulated its radical gay ancestors.

When OutRage member (and future leader) Peter Tatchell caught wind of Buju Banton's "Boom Bye-Bye" in 1992, his anti-dancehall activism combined the group's focus on the problems of queer bashing, homophobic rhetoric, and media representation. As discussed earlier, the British media's hostility and/or indifference toward gays and lesbians continued throughout the 1980s, and OutRage identified representation as a major issue. OutRage formed ad hoc groups dedicated to fighting homophobia and the censorship of gay images in mainstream media; further, they argued that anti-gay stereotypes contributed to violence against gays and lesbians.[197]

The OutRage actions against dancehall artists were similar to their reactions to 'white' homophobic artists, but negotiating race and postcolonialism proved nearly impossible, opening up a discourse on dancehall that continues today (with little progress on either side). Peter Tatchell pressed major record stores not to stock Buju Banton's

---

[195] Ibid., 49; Clause 25 would criminalize solicitation (including flirting, exchanging phone numbers), procuring (anything that helped two men have sex), and indecency (anything from hugging to sex) between men. Violations of Clause 25 would be punished with 5 years in prison, followed by 5 years of psychiatric supervision.

[196] Ibid., 52.

[197] See Peter M. Nardi and Ralph Bolton, "Gay-Bashing: Violence and Aggression Against Gay Men and Lesbians," in *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader*, eds. Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider (London: Routledge, 1998): 412-433. The authors claim that hate speech in mainstream media often gets broadcasted without comment, contributing to the general acceptance of homophobic speech in North American and British culture. Furthermore, the lack of media coverage of anti-gay violence suggests a much lower incidence of queer bashing than do police records and personal accounts.

albums, and most agreed; activists also sought to prosecute Banton for violating British incitement laws, arguing that speech that incites murder is not protected by British law.[198] In 2004, Tatchell officially launched the Stop Murder Music campaign, which continues to push for concert cancellations, the removal of dancehall music from record stores, and the denial of visas to Jamaican dancehall performers.

OutRage began to lose its radical edge as the 1990s progressed. The group was plagued by racial, gender, and class rifts, which also helped to tear apart ACT UP and Queer Nation before it. But perhaps more tellingly, the group's political orientation seemed to reflect the tide of gay liberalism that swept through North America and the U.K. in the post-Thatcher/Reagan 1990s.

The Gay Nineties (and Beyond): Queer Liberalism

The past two decades of gay rights organizing in the U.S. and U.K. represent a shift to the center; as John D'Emilio notes, activists in the 1990s and early 2000s have demanded inclusion more than transformation.[199] In the U.K., gays and lesbians have achieved some success in law reform. The age of consent was finally equalized in 2001, and the Civil Partnership Act of 2004 granted legal status to gay couples, stopping short of marriage.[200] British gay activists differ from their North American counterparts in that British gays and lesbians are generally less politically apathetic; also, there is more ideological diversity among even the most mainstream gay organizations. Finally, legislative reform is so rare that activists are often quicker to mobilize.[201]

---

[198] Lucas, 144.

[199] John D'Emilio, *The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002): 96.

[200] Liam Concannon, "Citizenship, sexual identity and social exclusion: Exploring issues in British and American social policy," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 28, no. 9-10 (2008): 335.

[201] Rayside, *On The Fringe*, 305. There are far fewer national gay rights organizations in Canada than in the U.S. or U.K. Like in British Parliament, there are few legislative openings around which to rally, which discourages long-term institution building focused on legal reform and government lobbying. Canada is also notable for the lack of powerful right-wing, socially conservative governments on both the provincial

The moderate agenda of American gay rights activism coincides with the unprecedented access and representation of gay and lesbian voices in the American mainstream. An exemplary case is the 1992 presidential election, when, for the first time, several Democratic candidates for president actively solicited the 'gay vote.' While the Democratic Party kept gay rights at arm's length in the 1980s (much like the Labour Party in the U.K.), the 1992 party platform included pro-gay stances. Once elected, President Bill Clinton met with representatives of gay and lesbian organizations in the Oval Office, another first.[202] While this type of access is severely limited by political expediency and the highly organized religious right, it is reflective of what David Rayside has called "the inescapable allure of the American mainstream."[203] Rayside suggests that American politics are uniquely fragmented and localized, so gay and lesbian movements have more access to partisan and electoral politics than their counterparts in Britain, Canada and Western Europe. However, once they are granted access, gay activists are likely to overestimate their party's commitment to gay issues.

The broad goals of the national gay organizations reflect their perceived 'insider' status; civil rights reform, same-sex marriage, military service, adoption rights, and fair media representation have dominated the national agenda since the 1990s. Certainly, there is some ideological diversity among gay and lesbian activist groups, but the bulk of the national organizations devote their resources to what David Eng et al have dubbed "queer liberalism."[204] Lesbian activist Urvashi Vaid, the former executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), argued in 1995 that the gay movement

---

and federal levels. Further, the linguistic and geographical diversity has hindered a large-scale national movement in Canada.

[202] Ibid., 288-290.

[203] Ibid., 281.

[204] David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam and Jose E. Munoz, "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?", *Social Text* 84-85, vol. 23, no. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2005): 10-14.

had become obsessed with political power and legislative reform.[205] Critical of liberal

identity politics, Vaid claimed that the gay movement needed an expanded idea of gay

identity and a connection with broader social justice movements. Thus far, Vaid's advice

has not been heeded, as the gay and lesbian political community remains mostly devoted

to state-by-state same-sex marriage votes and ending discrimination in the U.S. military.

This introduction to liberal gay politics offers a path into my discourse analysis, as it

situates the activists of Stop Murder Music and Boycott Jamaica within their relevant

historical and cultural contexts. The discourse of dancehall homophobia is only a small

part of the broader gay rights movements in the U.S. and U.K., but a part that speaks

volumes about the political agendas and discursive practices of liberal identity politics.

---

[205] See Urvashi Vaid, *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995).

CHAPTER 3

Race, Consumerism, and 'Murder Music':
A Discourse Analysis

The problem is getting very, very bad. The amount of verbal and physical abuse has been on the increase since the rise of ragga. It's almost exclusively by young blacks.[206]

The two preceding chapters have introduced the cultural and political contexts of two very different expressions: Jamaican dancehall culture and Anglo-American gay political activism. While the location of dancehall production is outside of my personal experience, I occupy a more immediate position in relation to gay political activism and its specific discursive practices. As a white, middle-class gay male from the United States, I am the presumed target of liberal gay political activism, including that of Stop Murder Music and Boycott Jamaica. This activism posits its "listening subject"[207] as, at the very least, white and from the global north. Therefore, my analysis is inescapably informed by my position to these texts. With this in mind, I rely on Foucault's theory of discourse, which interrogates the authority of the speaker, the cultural and historical situatedness of discursive practices, and the position of the analyst. In this chapter, I will first define discourse and the method of discourse analysis, followed by an explanation of how I collected my sample and devised my mode of inquiry. Then, I will report my findings, and further contextualize these specific discursive practices with respect to law, race relations, representation, and gay identity.

Discourse and Discourse Analysis

As I will be engaging in a discourse analysis, it will first be necessary to define *discourse* itself, a theoretical concept with a diversity of definitions. For the purposes of

---

[206] Simon Edge, qtd. in Ian MacKinnon, "Ragga music blamed for attacks on homosexuals; Young blacks accused of jibes and violence against gay men," *The Independent*, October 1, 1993.
[207] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 58.

this project, I subscribe to a concept of discourse inspired by Michel Foucault's work in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. In the Foucaultian sense, discourse is a body of possible statements about a certain area or topic, which both "enables and constrains the production of knowledge."[208] Foucault opted to study discourse, rather than language, as a system of representation that has the power to convey, order and produce meanings. In other words, discourses structure the ways in which topics can be meaningfully talked about, inviting certain ways of speaking while excluding others.[209] Discourse constrains what it is possible to know at any moment in history. Foucault links the study of discourse to his understanding of power as productive and situated in multiple loci across the social world. Power permeates all levels of social existence, transcending the power-resistance dyad of traditional leftist thought. This conception of power disavows the binary opposition between rulers and ruled, instead formulating power as "the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable."[210] In this way, power cannot be located in one central point, in the law, or in the state apparatus, but is omnipresent and exercised at "innumerable points."[211] The notion of power as productive and located at multiple points is useful for my analysis, as it allows for a more nuanced understanding of how subjects perform violence on others. Foucault's theory enables us to consider how a subject can be both oppressed and empowered within the same social structure.

Crucially, Foucault conceptualizes power as inseparable from knowledge. Knowledge in this sense refers to a body of texts and its accompanying institutions, or in

---

[208] Julianne Cheek, "At the Margins? Discourse Analysis and Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Health Research* 14, no. 8 (October 2004): 1142.

[209] Stuart Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, eds. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates (London: Open University Press, 2007): 72.

[210] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1*, 93.

[211] Ibid., 94.

other words, what a particular culture recognizes as true.[212] Knowledge is a technique of power, and the two are "mutually conditioning"[213]: knowledge is made possible by and functions through regimes of power and, conversely, power is always transformed through the functioning of knowledge. Power relations always constitute a field of knowledge, and knowledge always presupposes power relations.[214] In this theoretical framework, power can induce new forms of knowledge, including the creation of new discourses, which profoundly shape what a given culture 'knows' to be true. Discourses, then, are "legitimized and sanctioned knowledge,"[215] ways of speaking which are both conditioned by power and transform the very regimes of power that enable them. In this way, discourses allow power to function in more subtle, automatic ways. Stated differently, discourse naturalizes ways of talking and thinking that can become sedimented into common sense.

Critical to this understanding of discourse is the notion that a discourse actually constitutes and transforms its object.[216] Discourse has a material existence: it is realized in texts, which always manifest in material practices. Consequently, for Foucault, texts and practices cannot be studied separately. This is why Foucault's theory of discourse must go beyond the purely linguistic to underline the productive aspect of speaking; we must no longer treat "discourses as groups of signs . . . but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak."[217] Foucault is not interested in individual speech acts, but rather is concerned with the ways power and knowledge interact through discourses. Because of this, Foucaultian theory is not useful for interrogating the

---

[212] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994): 147.
[213] Ibid., 148.
[214] Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," 76.
[215] Grosz, 148.
[216] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 36.
[217] Ibid., 54.

intention of authors and speakers.[218] Instead, discourse analysis asks us to consider how

discourses order the social world, why one discourse appeared and not another, and how

discourses are both constituted by and constitutive of specific historical and cultural

contexts. Foucaultian discourse analysis, specifically, is concerned with the ways in

which texts represent reality. But reality is always subject to competing representations.

As components of a discourse, texts are both the product of *and* produce understandings

of reality, which are subject to contestation.[219] The study of discourse, then, is also the

study of the "politics of representation," or the continuous "struggle over how things are

to be understood."[220] Thus, my project requires an understanding of the realities

produced through discourse, which are situated historically and politically, a project that I

undertook in Chapters 1 and 2; in other words, this discourse analysis will interrogate

how things *were* at each historical moment rather than how they are or should be.

Discourse analysis, like discourse itself, has many competing definitions and

traverses academic disciplines. I will be using Foucaultian discourse analysis, which is

an approach rather than a specific method. Left undefined, it runs the risk of

'methodological anarchy,' so to speak.[221] I argue, however, that a discourse analysis

which eschews social science-style coding and quantitative data need not be anarchic.

More importantly, it is critical that there be congruence between the theoretical

framework and the method. To this end, I have outlined some major points of Foucault's

work on discourse and will conduct a discourse analysis that subscribes to his theoretical

constructs. A potential issue I anticipate is the tension between text and context: how far

---

[218] Ian Parker, "Discovering Discourses, Tackling Texts," in *Critical Strategies for Social Research*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2004): 253.
[219] Cheek, 1145.
[220] Margaret Wetherell, "Themes in Discourse Research: The Case of Diana," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, eds. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates (London: Open University Press, 2007): 25.
[221] Cheek, 1145.

should I go beyond the text to assess historical "situatedness"?[222] A discourse analyst using a Foucaultian framework has the power to impose meaning upon another's text.[223] To mitigate this tension, I am clear that objectivity is neither attainable nor desirable, and my analysis will be unavoidably colored by my own position to these texts and Anglo-American gay activism in general.

Sample and Methodology

The body of discursive events (or statements) that reflects British and American gay activism in response to dancehall homophobia is the object of my study. The texts in this discourse are linked to each other through direct reference, style, historico-political context, and common goals. To paraphrase Foucault, this body of texts will facilitate the study of the relations between statements, between groups of statements, and these statements' historical and political particularities.[224] While Foucault deemphasizes the individual voices and intentions that comprise discourses, he remains interested in questioning who is allowed to speak, why he/she can speak, and from which institutional sites he/she is allowed to speak.[225] These questions challenge us to consider how power and knowledge constitute discourses, giving voice to certain social subjects while denying others.

As I have already established, it is important to situate this discourse in the contexts of dancehall music in Jamaica and gay rights activism in North America and Britain; beyond this, it is also crucial to historicize the specific people and events that are integral to this discourse. With this in mind, my discussion and analysis sections will refer to events in Britian, the United States, and Jamaica that have shaped this changing

---

[222] Cheek, 1144.
[223] Ibid., 1146.
[224] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 32.
[225] Ibid., 55-57.

discourse. My archive begins in 1992, which marks the approximate birth of the international discourse on dancehall homophobia. Articles about dancehall (or ragga, in Britain) first started appearing in British newspapers in the early 1990s. These accounts usually focused on guns, violence against women, and Jamaican music's clear departure from roots reggae, but the discourse soon became dominated by the issue of homophobia in dancehall and in Jamaica. On October 24, 1992, the *New York Post* ran a cover story titled "Hate Music," with an above-the-fold photo of 19-year-old Buju Banton.[226] The accompanying page 5 story included a controversial English translation of Banton's hit "Boom Bye-Bye," courtesy of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD). A few days later, GLAAD organized a radio boycott of "Boom Bye-Bye," and New York radio stations quickly pulled the song. Further, Banton's record company, Mercury, conferred with GLAAD to produce radio public service announcements decrying anti-gay violence. The *Post* article was followed by coverage in the more 'mainstream' *New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *Billboard* magazine. However, "Boom Bye-Bye" had already created an uproar in the U.K. In August 1992, Black Lesbians and Gays Against Media Homophobia and OutRage organized a campaign to ban the song from radio. In September, OutRage (in a campaign led by Peter Tatchell) reported Banton to the Director of Public Prosecutions for inciting violence.[227] By October, Banton had apologized, repudiating violence but upholding his disapproval of homosexuality.[228]

Controversy circulated in the popular press throughout 1992 and 1993, as dancehall achieved unprecedented success in the U.K. Dancehall star Shabba Ranks appeared on BBC's *The Word* television program in December 1992, defending Banton's

---

[226] Pierson.
[227] Paul Burston, "Musical Scares; Batties Bite Back," *The Guardian*, November 20, 1993.
[228] Havelock Nelson, "Controversy Explodes Over Buju's 'Boom,' *Billboard*, November 7, 1992.

song by proclaiming that gays "deserve crucifixion."[229] In March, Ranks was allowed to

appear on *Top of the Pops* in London, and OutRage members, including Peter Tatchell,

stormed the BBC studio during a live broadcast. Throughout the early 1990s, OutRage

demanded the cancellation of dancehall concerts and the removal of certain records from

shelves.

Although the dancehall controversy garnered less attention in the British and

North American press after about 1995, OutRage continued to agitate for concert

cancellations and radio and television boycotts. The uproar over dancehall flared again in

2002, which is around the time that Tatchell's essays began appearing online and in the

mainstream British press. In August of that year, OutRage protested the BBC's playing

of Elephant Man's "Log On" and Capleton's "Bun Out Di Chi Chi," two dancehall hits

with violent, homophobic lyrics; the BBC quickly removed these songs from its *History

of Reggae* program.[230] But it was Peter Tatchell's protest of the Music of Black Origin

Awards (MOBOs) that pushed dancehall homophobia back into the spotlight and

reignited his activist campaign. On October 1, 2002, Tatchell and other OutRage

members protested outside of the awards, and Tatchell later claimed that he had been

beaten by a group of black youths.[231] This incident received much mainstream attention.

Most of the essays in my sample were written after the MOBO incident.

The bulk of my research focuses on Tatchell's most prolific period, after the

founding of Stop Murder Music in July 2004. Since then, the group has been proficient

in attracting media attention. The group soon published a "Dancehall Dossier," a 10-

page electronic document that profiles the eight Jamaican artists targeted by Stop Murder

Music. (See Appendix I.) The dossier features a page on each artist – Beenie Man,

---

[229] Qtd. in Sheila Rule, "The Pop Life; NBC Drops Rapper and He Recants," *The New York Times*, March 3, 1993.
[230] Tania Branigan, "BBC withdraws homophobic reggae tracks," *The Guardian*, August 30, 2002.
[231] Peter Tatchell, "Why can blacks bash gays?"

Bounty Killer, Buju Banton, Capleton, Elephant Man, Sizzla, TOK, and Vybz Kartel –

and lists objectionable lyrics, brief discographies, and retailers that sell that artist's music.

By 2007, OutRage had exerted enough pressure (or bad press) on four of its targeted

artists, and succeeded in having them sign the Reggae Compassionate Act. This

document is a pledge to cease all performances of homophobic songs, while embracing

the peaceful and uplifting message of roots reggae music. Buju Banton, Sizzla, Beenie

Man, and Capleton all signed the Act, but each has since performed the songs deemed

homophobic by Stop Murder Music. Tatchell's campaign against dancehall homophobia

has continued, with his most recent essay appearing in October 2009.

Because of Peter Tatchell's near ubiquity in dancehall activism, I foreground his

writings in this discourse analysis. Tatchell is perhaps the key figure in the international

discourse on dancehall culture. Although it appears that Tatchell published very little

about dancehall in the 1990s, his quotations are frequently included in articles in the

Guardian, *Independent*, and *Evening Standard*. Often, he is the only activist voice cited

in mainstream stories about dancehall. Additionally, his actions are sufficiently public to

attract attention from international scholars. In fact, Carolyn Cooper – in the

groundbreaking 1994 essay "'Lyrical gun': Metaphor and role play in Jamaican dancehall

culture" – frames her argument in direct opposition to Tatchell's anti-dancehall activism.

In academic circles, Tatchell is easily the most cited gay activist in dancehall literature,

figuring heavily in important essays by Cooper, Timothy Chin, and Denise Noble. In

many ways, Tatchell helped to establish the discursive frame in which dancehall has been

discussed among Anglo-American gay activists since the early 1990s.

I will analyze a sample of Tatchell's writings on dancehall and/or Jamaica from

1993 to 2009. Since Tatchell produced little written work on dancehall in the 1990s, I

will rely on his contributions to mainstream news stories beginning in 1993. The sample

will consist of 19 essays from Tatchell's website (petertatchell.net) that pertain to

Jamaica and/or dancehall. In addition, I will look at his Jamaica-related work in the mainstream British press, which amounts to 3 columns in the *Guardian* and 3 in the *New Statesman*. As a supplement, I will also analyze the ways in which Tatchell is cited in mainstream sources. Each of these media outlets allows the enunciation of different discursive frames, and a different presumed audience. The *New Statesman*, for instance, is a mainstream current affairs magazine, while the *Guardian* is a national mainstream newspaper based in London. Finally, Tatchell's website is valuable for analysis because of the particularities of the online medium and its intended audience. Throughout my analysis, I will consider how the medium molds and constrains the possible discourse, and what discursive frames are enunciated in each format.

The second major part of my discourse analysis will be a body of essays and blog entries from members of Boycott Jamaica. This sample consists of 4 blog entries from the organization's website, boycottjamaica.org, written by several different members. Most of the written work on the Jamaica boycott appears on several gay activist blogs. I will analyze 21 entries from the Box Turtle Bulletin blog (boxturtlebulletin.com), written by Boycott Jamaica co-founders Jim Burroway and Timothy Kincaid. Also, I will look at 9 blog entries by Boycott Jamaica co-founder Michael Petrelis, from his personal blog The Petrelis Files (mpetrelis.blogspot.com). This sample presents a unique opportunity, because this activism is on-going, in response to new dancehall music, boycott-related street actions, and most recently the meeting between Buju Banton and California gay rights activists.[232]

---

[232] I have also looked at a smaller group of texts from Stop Murder Music Canada (SMMC), an organization that works with Canadian gay rights group Egale. However, I have chosen not to include this sample in my discourse analysis, as it is beyond the scope of this project. The comparison between U.K. and U.S. groups offers more opportunities for analysis, based on the clear differences in each nation's race relations, speech law, and prominent political tactics. Like its American and British counterparts, SMMC has encouraged market-based tactics and the use of mainstream media for consciousness-raising. The main form of written activism in Canada is open letters to public officials and the heads of major corporations. Canadian activists have adopted a tone and discursive frame similar to its British predecessor, but the

My analysis focuses, in the first place, on discursive regularities, which Foucault describes as the "order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations" of a given discourse.[233] Integral to Foucaultian discourse analysis, though, is the rejection of any inherent unity within a discourse; regularities are based instead on "systems of dispersion."[234] In other words, Foucault suggests that we analyze the gaps, the interplay of differences, and the transformations of objects within a given discourse, rather than delineating the similarities or unities of the discourse.[235] Discursive regularities, then, are actually constructed by the discourse analyst, as a way to impose regularity on an irregular distribution of statements.[236] To study discursive regularities, then, is not to discover themes, nor groups of fixed rules, nor a normative type of statement within a discourse; instead, regularities help the analyst to grasp statements in their historical specificity and to study their correlations with other statements.[237] Therefore, my discourse analysis addresses several questions important to Foucaultian theory: why does one statement emerge rather than another? How does a discourse transform its object? Finally, how do we account for power in discourse?

More specific to this project, I analyze texts based on several prominent discursive regularities that flow through the discourse. For example, the 'like race' argument is oriented toward establishing analogies between homophobia and racism. I consider how the 'like race' argument represents a regularity between object, types of statements, and themes;[238] or, how many dispersed statements about race and sexuality interact and constitute how aspects of dancehall homophobia are meaningfully discussed.

Canadian example is unique in its emphasis on correspondence with government and business elites and its downplaying of direct action street politics.

[233] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 41.
[234] Ibid., 41.
[235] Ibid., 41.
[236] Neils Akerstrom Andresen, *Discursive Analytical Strategies: Understanding Foucault, Koselleck, Laclau, Luhmann* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2003): 8.
[237] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 30.
[238] Ibid., 41.

Integral to analyzing the 'like race' discursive regularity is a consideration of how regimes of power affect how race is discussed among anti-'murder music' activists. Accordingly, in the analysis and discussion sections, I will analyze more fully how power and knowledge interact in specific historical contexts to produce this discourse. I will also analyze these texts for language, but not to investigate individual speech acts or decisions made by writers. Rather, the language criterion will function more to code specific instances of charged, emotional, or evocative language. I will consider the ways in which such language reveals the political orientation of a text; in other words, how language serves to frame arguments. Finally, I will consider the political tactics that are either enacted or prescribed by the texts. Since the sample is almost exclusively made up of persuasive, political writing, the authors often prescribe to their readers a plan of action. I am not chiefly interested in the rhetorical methods used, but rather how these strategies and tactics arise out of particular historical and discursive contexts. For example, Boycott Jamaica's insistence on staging a "rum dump" must be understood within the American context of consumer-based activism, gay identity linked with capital, and the enduring symbolism of the Boston Tea Party. I am particularly interested in how these tactics function in a discursive formation focused on the surveillance and/or censorship of dancehall music.

Findings

My research has located four main discursive regularities at work in this discourse: the analogy of racism and homophobia, the appeal to gay identity, the reliance on consumer-based activism, and the use of Jamaican cultural symbols and stereotypes. These findings will highlight some dramatic differences (and similarities) between British and American dancehall activism, especially with regard to the treatment of racial issues, gay identity, and the varying emphases on economic activism.

The 'like race' argument

The 'like race' argument characterizes statements that conflate racism and homophobia. The activists do this in a number of ways; the most common strategy is to argue that since racism against black and Jewish people is unacceptable, homophobia against LGBT people should also be unacceptable. By extension, writers often argue that, in British society, while racist violence is generally taboo, homophobic violence is routinely downplayed or ignored. This strategy is used only in the British context.

In a 2002 *New Statesman* essay, Peter Tatchell employs this argument in visceral language:

> Imagine the uproar if the gay singer George Michael put out a single that advocated the killing of black people. His music career would be finished and he'd be prosecuted for incitement to racial hatred and murder. Yet black artists are calling for the burning and shooting of queers – and getting away with it.[239]

This example, the lead paragraph of the *New Statesman* column, sets up a clear distinction, within a legal context, between racist speech and homophobic speech. It simplistically juxtaposes the actions of a white gay artist and those of a black artist, and asserts that black people have the privilege of bashing gays without punishment. Later in the same piece, Tatchell extends the analogy outside of the legal apparatus and into the realm of morality. He contends that the celebration of homophobic dancehall artists is the "moral equivalent of the Brit Awards nominating a racist entertainer who incites the killing of black people."[240] Here, Tatchell goes a step further by arguing that racism and homophobia, while distinguishable types of prejudice, are morally equivalent. These examples present similar argumentative frames: the first insists on the legal equivalence of racism and homophobia, the second on the moral equivalence.

---

[239] Tatchell, "Why can blacks bash gays?"
[240] Ibid.

This mode of argumentation – and the often graphic language that accompanies it – is consistent throughout much of Tatchell's writing from the past decade. In several essays from the early 2000s, Tatchell peppers the analogies of racism and homophobia with gruesome imagery; in order to amplify these analogies, he describes as intolerable the practices of "lynching," "extermination," and the "torching and blasting of black people."[241] In this way, he questions why the "extermination" of homosexuals in Jamaica is tolerated when such actions against blacks and Jews in the U.K. presumably would not be.

Closely related to the 'like race' argument is the tendency to conflate different oppressive cultural practices as equivalent or comparable to anti-gay violence. This tactic is often used to argue that since apartheid and lynching are accepted as immoral, so too should be gay bashing. This argument is present in much of Tatchell's work, but does not appear in the American activism. For example, in an essay from 2006, Tatchell writes: "Black people could not get justice under apartheid in South Africa; gay people cannot get justice in Jamaica."[242] This sentence draws a clear parallel between past racist practices in South Africa to current homophobic practice in Jamaica.[243] In another essay, Tatchell confronts the charge that homophobia is simply part of Jamaican culture: "Racism was part of Afrikaner culture in apartheid South Africa, but that did not make it right. By this logic, we should also accept cultural traditions like pogroms, female

---

[241] Peter Tatchell, "Black Hate Singers Urge: Kill Queers," *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, posted 2002, http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/reggae.htm (accessed February 13, 2010).

[242] Peter Tatchell, "Buju Banton Acquitted of Gay-Bash Attack," *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, posted 2002, http://www.petertatchell.net/international/bujubanton.htm (accessed February 13, 2010).

[243] Tatchell's analogy elides the key difference between apartheid in South Africa and homophobic violence in Jamaica: apartheid was an official government policy, while homophobic violence is merely tolerated. Anti-gay violence is covertly supported by some Jamaican politicians, and police often participate in gay bashings, but Jamaican law does not officially condone the assault and murder of certain members of the population. The analogy to lynching might actually be more effective, since lynching in the American South was not technically legal, but was ignored by politicians to the point of being tolerated.

circumcision, lynchings, and honor killings."[244] Here, Tatchell conflates practices from different parts of the world to combat the argument that culture is a suitable excuse for violence. As I noted in the introduction, this gesture critiques the cultural relativism of some dancehall supporters who defend cultural practices based on 'authenticity.'

Gay Identity

Another way in which these activists construct meaning is the use of an essentialized gay identity. The writers from Stop Murder Music and Boycott Jamaica deploy gay identity when arguing for solidarity among international LGBT people. The American activists of Boycott Jamaica attempt to build consensus against 'murder music' by appealing to a worldwide community of gays and lesbians. This tactic often takes the form of direct address to readers. For example, Wayne Besen writes in *The Huffington Post*: "If you care about gay people, tell everyone you know about the dismal human rights record of Jamaica."[245] This example is representative of several essays from Boycott Jamaica members, in that it forwards a mostly uncritical approach to gay identity. LGBT people in the U.S. are seen to have something important in common with LGBT people in Jamaica. American activists employ this notion of shared identity to encourage people to join the boycott: "LGBT Americans, it can be argued, have an obligation to be informed of what LGBT people around the world are experiencing."[246] This technique of eliciting solidarity among international LGBT people can be observed in at least five of Boycott Jamaica's essays from 2008 and 2009.

Departing from Boycott Jamaica's model, Peter Tatchell's early activism prioritizes violence directed at gays, but later he emphatically argues for a more general

---

[244] Peter Tatchell, "It isn't racist to target Beenie Man," *The Guardian*, August 31, 2004.
[245] Wayne Besen, ""The Globalization of Gay Bashing," *Boycott Jamaica*, posted April 22, 2009, http://www. boycottjamaica.org/?p=413 (accessed March 20, 2010).
[246] Jim Burroway, "JFLAG Opposes Jamaican Boycott," *Box Turtle Bulletin*, posted March 30, 2009, http://www.box turtlebulletin.com/2009/03/30/10251 (accessed March 20, 2010).

understanding of human rights. In several interviews with the *Guardian* in the early 1990s, Tatchell frames his activism in terms of sexual identity. For example, he claims: "It's hypocritical of the BBC to seek public help in stopping crime when it's promoting a singer who has advocated for the murder of homosexuals."[247] This coincides with the general tendency of mainstream media to cover dancehall music in terms of its conflicts with the gay community. Tatchell's work in the early 2000s demonstrates a mix of gay rights and human rights language. Arguments are no longer framed exclusively in terms of gay identity. Instead, Tatchell argues for the end of violence against *all* Jamaicans. He repeatedly expands his arguments beyond anti-gay violence to decry violence based on many axes of difference. He insists, "We want justice for all Jamaicans who are victims of violent crime."[248]

Finally, the Reggae Compassionate Act is a clear example of Tatchell's rhetorical attempt to expand 'murder music' activism beyond gay issues. The Act, which was also negotiated by the Black Gay Men's Advisory Board, widens the scope of gay activism. The four artists who signed it pledged to "respect and uphold the rights of all individuals to live without fear of hatred and violence due to religion, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or gender."[249]

Jamaican Cultural Symbols and Signs

The activists from Boycott Jamaica reproduce and subvert Jamaican cultural symbols in imagery and rhetoric. In four of Timothy Kincaid's blog entries, he reproduces an image of the Jamaican flag dripping with blood, as if from a gunshot wound. Another Boycott Jamaica activist, Michael Petrelis, uses (and subverts) Jamaican

---

[247] Qtd. in Vivek Chaudhary, "Gays to Jam BBC Phone Lines," *The Guardian*, April 14, 1993.
[248] Tatchell, "Buju Banton Acquitted."
[249] Peter Tatchell, "Reggae Compassionate Act," *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, posted 2007, http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/reggaecompassionatescan.htm (accessed March 20, 2010).

cultural imagery and corporate logos. (See Appendix II.) In a blog entry from March

2009, Petrelis asks readers to vote on their favorite Boycott Jamaica logo. The examples

include: a logo with photos of a Myer's Rum bottle, a Red Stripe bottle, and a cruise ship

crossed out with a red slash; a picture of the Lion of Judah, a Rastafarian symbol, with

"BOYCOTT" written above it; and finally, a parody of the Red Stripe logo, with the

brand name replaced by "Boycott Jamaica."[250] In this latter example (the eventual

winner), lyrics from Bob Marley's reggae classic "One Love" are printed underneath the

Boycott Jamaica logo: "Let's get together and feel alright."[251] This logo also figures

prominently on the Boycott Jamaica homepage, and blog entries throughout 2009 refer to

the Marley lyric. One notable example uses the lyric when arguing for a boycott:

"boycotts can create lasting change in their participants, helping them 'get together and

feel alright.'"[252]

> Tatchell's Stop Murder Music appropriates Jamaican symbols much less

frequently than its American counterpart, instead insisting on the "true meaning" of

Jamaican musical forms and cultural expressions. The Reggae Compassionate Act,

which was drafted by Stop Murder Music, argues for a return to

> The guiding principles of Reggae's enduring foundation ONE LOVE.
> Throughout time, Reggae has been recognized as a healing remedy and an
> agent of positive social change. We will continue this proud and righteous
> tradition . . . . We do not encourage nor minister to HATE but rather
> uphold a philosophy of LOVE, RESPECT and UNDERSTANDING
> towards all human beings as the cornerstone of reggae music.[253] (emphasis
> in original)

---

[250] Michael Petrelis, "Which 'Boycott Jamaica' Logo Is Best? Cast Your Vote Now!," *The Petrelis Files*, posted March 25, 2009, http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/03/which-boycott-jamaica-logo-is-best-cast.html#links (accessed March 20, 2010).
[251] Ibid.
[252] Michael Petrelis, "SF Chron, SoVo: Jamaican Boycott Reports," *The Petrelis Files*, posted April 3, 2009, http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/04/sf-chron-sovo-jamaican-boycott-reports.html (accessed March 20, 2010).
[253] Tatchell, "Reggae Compassionate Act."

Later, in a 2009 essay, Tatchell frames dancehall as a genre that fails to capture "the true reggae message of justice, harmony, peace and love."[254] In this way, Tatchell's work argues for the return to Rastafarian principles in Jamaican popular music. However, Tatchell's co-optation avoids Boycott Jamaica's subversion of Jamaican symbols and musical forms.

Political Tactics and Goals

Most of the texts in this discourse are political and prescriptive, encouraging their audience to do something to change the situation in Jamaica. From the beginning of the international dialogue in 1992, activist tactics have primarily focused on consumer pressure and corporate response. The following section is a summary of the types of political action that dominate these texts.

In the United Kingdom, OutRage activists began with direct action tactics. These include crashing the live set of *Top of the Pops* and jamming the phone lines for the BBC's *Crimewatch* program, both to protest the airing of homophobic dancehall songs.[255] In 2002, Peter Tatchell engaged in the direct action tactic of public protest outside of the MOBO Awards in London. However, most of the political action in the U.K. has been economic, focusing on boycotts and concert cancellations. As early as April 1993, Peter Tatchell was being quoted in mainstream news stories, demanding the removal of homophobic songs from British airwaves lest gay activists take to the streets to protest radio stations. Early texts in the U.S. discourse also focus on economic actions. For example, GLAAD quickly organized a radio boycott in New York City, days after

---

[254] Peter Tatchell, "Beenie Man concerts axed in Australia & NZ," *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, posted November 16, 2009, http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/beenie-man-concerts-axed-in-australia-and-nz.htm (accessed February 13, 2010).
[255] See Chaudhary.

the famous *New York Post* article appeared.[256] On November 1, 1992, less than a week after the *Post* cover story, GLAAD and Mercury joined together to begin airing public service announcements on New York radio. GLAAD's director for public affairs, Donald Suggs, emphasizes the cooperation with Banton's record company: "Mercury has really taken the high road as the first label to stand up and address this issue."[257] This is the first in a long line of activist efforts to pressure corporations into standing up against homophobia in dancehall.

Tatchell's rhetoric focuses mainly on locally-based activism that would inflict financial hardship on Jamaican artists. The main tactic of Stop Murder Music is to pressure promoters to cancel concerts and corporations to remove sponsorship. In the essay "Reggae Tips," which appeared in the *Guardian* newspaper, Tatchell asserts his intention to "hit [dancehall artists] in the pocket."[258] Later, he uses a similar phrase ("hit them hard in the pocket"[259]) to reiterate the goal of the Stop Murder Music campaign: to prove to artists that homophobic music will cost them money. Another essay from 2009 illustrates Tatchell's efforts to pressure corporations into removing support for dancehall artists. In this essay, he refers to PepsiCo's "regret" in sponsoring a Beenie Man concert; OutRage member David Allison, in a letter to Pepsi, writes: "Backing a concert that includes a notorious homophobe . . . is singularly inept, not to say immoral . . . We ask that you withdraw your sponsorship and re-affirm your support for human rights."[260] Here, Allison agitates for political action that is channeled through consumer practice and corporate responsibility, but couches it in the language of human rights and moralism.

---

[256] Peter Watrous, "The Pop Life," *The New York Times*, October 28, 1992; Bruce Haring, "Mercury to sponsor gay PSAs," *Daily Variety*, November 20, 1992.
[257] Nelson.
[258] Peter Tatchell, "Reggae Tips," *The Guardian*, August 2, 2007.
[259] Tatchell, "Concerts Axed in Australia & NZ."
[260] Qtd. in Peter Tatchell, "PepsiCo regrets Beenie Man support," *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, posted December 9, 2009, http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/pepsi-co-regrets-beenie-man-support.htm (accessed February 13, 2010).

The texts from Boycott Jamaica – as evidenced by the organization's name – prescribe an economic boycott of Jamaican goods and services. Notably, these texts do not advocate boycotting dancehall artists and their music, but instead focus on Jamaican vacations and exports like alcohol. Michael Petrelis asserts the "need to flex gay economic muscle and not spend our dollars in a country that explicitly hates us."[261] An essay by Jim Burroway, from the same month, asks all gay bars and restaurants in San Francisco to stop serving Jamaican beer and rum. Many other essays in the American sample urge supporters to unite as a gay community and boycott Jamaican beer, rum, and vacations. Texts published around April 2009 encourage protesters to wed economic action with street politics: Boycott Jamaica members Burroway, Besen, and Petrelis implore supporters to come to either Harvey Milk Plaza in San Francisco or the Stonewall Inn in New York, and dump Myer's Rum and Red Stripe Beer "where they belong – down the sewer."[262]

Occasionally, Boycott Jamaica literature departs from strictly economic terms. In 2009, San Francisco-based activists sat down with Buju Banton, in what is thought to be Banton's first meeting with gay activists. Petrelis explains what happened in the meeting, including activists' suggestions that Banton donate money to JFLAG, hold a town hall meeting in Kingston, and "sing about loving gay people."[263] Petrelis ends the article by reaffirming the group's commitment to the boycott. This essay represents one of the only texts in the sample that insists on the coexistence of diplomacy and economic actions.

---

[261] Michael Petrelis, "Bay Area Reporter: Boycott Jamaica," *The Petrelis Files*, posted March 26, 2009, http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/03/bay-area-reporter-boycott-jamaica-bay.html#links (accessed March 20, 2010).

[262] Ibid. Also see Besen, "Killer Vacation"; Jim Burroway, "Jamaican Boycott Update," *Box Turtle Bulletin*, posted April 14, 2009, http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/04/15/10691 (accessed March 20, 2010); Petrelis, "SF Chron, SoVo."

[263] Michal Petrelis, "SF Gays Meeting With Buju Banton."

Analysis

In the following section, I will further investigate the discursive regularities and political tactics flowing in and out of this discursive formation. I will contextualize certain discursive practices with respect to British and American law, gay politics, and the issue of race within gay political communities. Key to understanding these discursive practices is to explore the differences between American and British hate speech laws: the U.S. has a constitutional and judicial tradition of enabling hateful speech, whereas British law explicitly forbids it. The legal environment, combined with race relations and the primacy of consumption-based politics, highlight clear distinctions between British and American gay activism. I will focus specifically on violence, racial and sexual identity, representation, and the primacy of economic-based political projects.

Violence, Injurious Speech, and the Law

From the outset of this discourse, gay activists insisted that their chief concern was homophobic violence. In the early 1990s, neither country had reliable hate crimes statistics related to homophobic violence,[264] but OutRage estimated that in 1990, nearly 20 anti-gay homicides in London remained unsolved.[265] OutRage, Stonewall, and other U.K. gay organizations prioritized violence as one of the key threats to the British gay community. OutRage, especially, charged the police and judiciary with overpolicing public gay sex while neglecting violent hate crimes; in fact, one of OutRage's first demonstrations was a media spectacle at the Hyde Park toilets, drawing attention to the

---

[264] Nardi and Bolton, 415, 422. The lack of reliable statistics was due to several factors, including victims' reluctance to come forward because of fear or distrust of police, the difficulty in defining a crime based on homophobia, and the lack of legislation to protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

[265] Lucas, 13.

rampant police surveillance of gay men.[266] It is within this context that homophobic

dancehall music was presented as a direct threat to the British gay community.

The earliest discourse was grounded in the assumption that linguistic and

symbolic violence could beget real violence. In a 1993 *Independent* story, Peter Tatchell

describes the impact of dancehall music: "Since ragga, though, it has become impossible

for me to sit out in my local park without being abused . . . I had two incidents where

bricks and bottles were thrown at me."[267] Here, Tatchell correlates the appearance of

ragga with an increase in homophobic violence. Another *Independent* article from the

same week uses the language of disease, calling ragga an "epidemic,"[268] with black-on-

gay violence as its symptom. But because the U.K. police did not keep statistics of hate

crimes motivated by homophobia, reports of anti-gay violence by black people was

limited to anecdotal evidence. This evidence should also be read within the context of

British race relations in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Conservative government, with

the cooperation of the tabloid press, scapegoated black youths for an alleged escalation in

urban violence in the 1980s. Paul Gilroy describes a British culture in which "'race' and

racism [came] to connote the urban crisis as a whole and that crisis to embody racial

problems."[269] While stoking intense xenophobia and British national pride during the

Falklands war, Thatcher also exploited fears of an "internal enemy,"[270] an urban menace

that was explicitly racialized. News footage of riots and non-violent protest played to

white British fears of urban unrest caused by non-white, former colonial subjects. Gilroy

states that media accounts often represented West Indian immigrants as alien, violent, and

dangerous.[271] Rastafarianism, especially, became connected with urban chaos; news

---

[266] Ibid., 20.
[267] Qtd. in MacKinnon.
[268] James Cusick, "Macho music puts gays in fear for their lives," *The Independent*, October 4, 1993.
[269] Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black In The Union Jack* (London: Hutchinson, 1987): 229.
[270] Lowe, 141.
[271] Gilroy, 241.

reports identified rioters as West Indian based on their "Afro-style hair" [272] and other racial markers. In this way, the dancehall controversy of the early 1990s developed in a culture already well-versed in racialized violence and urban disorder. If, as Gilroy suggests, recent Jamaican immigrants were seen by many white Britons as dangerous, then Buju Banton's growling *patwa* in "Boom Bye-Bye" would be immediately evocative of Jamaicanness and suggest overt physical violence. Thus, the "epidemic" becomes racialized quite early in the dancehall discourse.

The early 1990s discourse on violence developed concurrently with accusations of racism against the white gay community. Contemporary with dancehall criticism, OutRage was dealing with its own internal racial tensions. Spurred by criticism that it was an overwhelmingly male, middle-class organization, OutRage established focus groups on working class, lesbian and "ethnic" issues in August 1991.[273] The group's dancehall actions, though, were polarizing, as many queer people of color were torn between competing group identities; some believed that criticizing dancehall elided homophobic violence perpetrated by whites. Additionally, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, gay political communities in the U.K. and U.S. were experiencing deep rifts based on racial representation and political agenda.

British law offers protection from incitement to violence and hatred, and British activists often frame their responses to dancehall in legal, rather than cultural, terms. Much of Tatchell's writing directly references British incitement laws. In a 2004 *New Statesman* essay, Tatchell notes that "incitement to racial hatred is a crime; inciting anti-gay hate is not."[274] This refers to Public Order Act 1986, which prohibits speech or written material that is "threatening, abusive or insulting" and "intended to stir up racial

---

[272] Ibid., 241.
[273] Lucas, 88.
[274] Tatchell, "Why can blacks bash gays?"

hatred."[275]   The law also prohibits any speech that incites violence or murder. British

activism frequently appeals to the legal prohibition of speech that has the potential to

provoke violence. It is notable that one of OutRage's first actions against dancehall was

to report Buju Banton to the Office of Public Prosecutions, claiming that "Boom Bye-

Bye" was an incitement to murder.[276] This set a precedent that would be repeated

throughout Peter Tatchell's dancehall rhetoric: he has accused Sizzla, Beenie Man,

Elephant Man, and others of violating British law, and Stop Murder Music has

continually called for the prosecution of dancehall artists under incitement laws.

However, until recently, activists were constrained by the fact that gays and lesbians were

not protected under the law; speech that incites hatred of homosexuals was not

recognized until the passage of Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008.[277]

This British appeal to legal doctrine frequently takes the form of the direct

comparison of racism and homophobia. Much of Tatchell's rhetoric has been perceived

as polarizing, as separating gays and blacks into separate interest groups. Certainly, his

early missives about violent black youth did little to soothe the tensions on either side. I

suggest, however, that we consider this discursive move as emerging from the charged

conservative atmosphere of the Thatcher era. The aggressive nationalism of the 1980s –

buttressed by the government, police, and mass media – identified and targeted

individuals who stood outside of the 'general public,' including blacks, gays and lesbians,

sex workers, trade union activists, and people with AIDS.[278] This renewed British

nationalism was a key feature of Thatcherite political practice. Contemporary with this

---

[275] United Kingdom Parliament, *Public Order Act 1986*, c. 64, Office of Public Sector Information,
http://www.opsi. gov.uk/RevisedStatutes/Acts/ukpga/1986/cukpga_19860064_en_4#pt3-pb1-l1g21
(accessed March 29, 2010).
[276] Burston.
[277] United Kingdom Parliament, *Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008*, c. 4, Office of Public Sector
Information, http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk/content.aspx?activeTextDocId=3479635 (accessed March 29,
2010).
[278] Watney, 43.

conservative sentiment was the development of an essentialized gay identity in Britain, although the British understanding of identity has not assumed the 'ethnic' cast popular in the U.S.[279] As I explained in Chapter 2, this emergent gay identity was fostered by the burgeoning gay villages, businesses, nightlife, and community service organizations that appeared in the 1970s and '80s. In this way, an identity model allowed British gays and lesbians to organize as a cohesive community, which could be opposed and compared to other identity groups. Analogizing race and sexual orientation might be a way for British gay activists to assert a powerful shared identity, regardless of the tensions and chasms within that identity group. Therefore, while black and gay oppression are distinct in many ways, it seems that Tatchell employs the analogy to claim an essentialized gay identity and to underline blacks' and gays' shared oppression under Thatcherism. Furthermore, comparing the two identity groups draws attention to what Tatchell perceives as the inadequacy of British speech laws: the lack of protection (pre-2008) for sexual identity groups. Indeed, much of Tatchell's language insists that British culture and law are intolerant of hate speech directed at blacks and Jews. By Tatchell's logic, British culture is more accepting of – or at least indifferent to – homophobic speech. These statements urge the inclusion of gays and lesbians as a protected minority.[280]

In the United States, however, gay activists do not have recourse in federal law, as free speech is broadly protected by the First Amendment. Hate speech is generally a

---

[279] Ibid., 14.

[280] Based on my research, the United States seems to have a richer history of the rhetorical pairing of racism and homophobia, but curiously, the tactic does not appear in any of the American activism in this sample. In the early 1990s, during the national debate on sexual orientation discrimination in the U.S. military, many gay activists linked old racial segregation policies with the current exclusion of homosexuals. Activists claimed that the military's discriminatory practices against gays mirrored those against black people. This tactic builds on a history of the gay rights movement making direct links to the black civil rights struggle of the 1950s and '60s. The conflation of racism and homophobia has also been used to argue in favor of same-sex marriage; American activists have often referred to the long history of miscegenation in the U.S. and the 1967 Supreme Court ruling that made it legal in all states. Based on this tradition, I find it surprising that the 'like race' argument is not taken up by American 'murder music' activists. See Alycee J. Lane, "Black Bodies/Gay Bodies: The Politics of Race in the Gay/Military Battle," *Callaloo* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 1994): 1074-1088.

protected form of expression. The only exceptions are obscenity,[281] defamation[282] and incitement to riot,[283] which has made the prosecution of hate speech difficult, if not impossible. The U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld the right to inflammatory speech, and even the incitement to murder. In *Brandenburg v. Ohio* (1969), the nation's highest court ruled that the Ku Klux Klan's inflammatory racist rhetoric and warnings of revenge on blacks and Jews were protected under the First Amendment.[284] Unlike in the U.K., U.S. law offers no protection *from* speech, only freedom *of* speech. But despite enduring rhetoric from the American right and left, this freedom of speech is highly constrained and subject to murky judicial precedents. Judith Butler argues that American courts wield arbitrary judgments in order to criminalize sexually graphic material, while hate speech is allowed to stand under the First Amendment.[285] Federal courts have repeatedly expanded the category of obscenity to include many types of gay and lesbian imagery and speech. This entails the positioning of 'pornography' and other supposed obscenity as "fighting words," which prohibits speech based on its potential effects, rather than on its content.[286] Ironically, the use of "fighting words" by the court actually recycles the arguments used by proponents of hate speech legislation – that speech can incite action – in order to further criminalize queer expressions.[287] Thus, in the absence

---

[281] U.S. Code, Title 18, Part 1, Ch. 71. The Supreme Court defines obscenity as speech, writing or visual material that fulfills the following three criteria: a) it must be seen as appealing to "prurient interests" based on "contemporary community standards"; b) it must depict or describe sexual conduct in a sexually explicit way; and c) lack serious artistic, political, or scientific value (Miller v. California, 413 U.S. 15 [1973]). However, obscenity has been difficult to legislate, since there is explicit legal precedent that allows for different standards in different jurisdictions. The famous line from Justice Potter Stewart, "I know it when I see it," encapsulates much of the American debate on obscenity laws. See Watney, 59-62.

[282] To qualify as defamatory speech (slander or libel), speech must be proven to be both false and injurious to an individual and/or corporate reputation. See Robert C. Post, "The Social Foundations of Defamation Law," *California Law Review* 74, no. 1 (January 1986): 691-742.

[283] See U.S. Code, Title 18, part 1, ch. 71.

[284] Brandenburg v. Ohio, 395 U.S. 444 (1969).

[285] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 62.

[286] Ibid., 63.

[287] Butler takes up J.L. Austin's theory of speech acts, distinguishing between illocutionary speech (which "in saying do what they say") and perlocutionary speech (which produces effects as consequences). Butler suggests that hate speech can be illocutionary, or performative, in that its very utterance constitutes an

of hate speech legislation, the American 'murder music' activists I studied never advocate for legal action against dancehall artists, but their activism instead takes the form of economic protest.

Gay Politics and Consumption

Contemporary gay identity, it seems, is inextricably linked with capitalism. Certainly, the activism of the Murder Music and Boycott Jamaica campaigns is bound up with market forces and consumption. This is evident in the tactics they employ, which are based on the boycotting of certain cultural products and services – and, crucially, lack a sustained critique of global capital. As I discussed earlier, the essentialized gay identity popular in current gay politics may have been impelled by the development of capitalism in the Anglo-American context. As gay and lesbian visibility rose, and corporations perceived the 'community' as a lucrative new market, gay and lesbian identity became subsumed by the capitalist marketplace. This corporate recognition, however, has rarely translated to political power.

For much of the twentieth century, gay male identity has been intertwined with the market, as much of the urban gay subculture developed around bars, baths, and sex clubs. The commercialization of gay sex has only increased with higher visibility. Legal scholars David Skover and Kellye Testy write that the market has "colonized and exploited their sexuality, and offered alluring visions of the active, freewheeling, and unfettered commercial pursuit of the 'good gay life.'"[288] The bathhouse or spa is exemplary of this intersection of gay sexuality and commerce, as a site that combines sexual pleasure with the unsurpassed efficiency (and anonymity) of advanced capitalism.

---

injury. As language is conventional, the speaker of a word like "nigger" or "faggot" draws on a history of linguistic resources, making community with a tradition of hateful practices. Thus, the speaker is guilty not of origination, but of the "repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices." Butler, 51.
[288] Daivd M. Skover and Kellye Y. Testy, "LesBiGay Identity as Commodity," *California Law Review* 90 (2002): 241.

But beyond sex clubs, capital has ushered gay people into mainstream advertising and image-making. Starting with Absolut in 1979, major corporations began marketing to gays and lesbians through the 1980s and '90s, viewing the 'community' as prosperous and trendy. Many companies – including IKEA, Subaru, Benetton, Calvin Klein, and Saab – saw the gay market as an "untapped goldmine."[289] This corporate gaze has resulted in unprecedented gay visibility in the public sphere, but ignores the economic realities of gay communities.

Visibility, nonetheless, is not necessarily liberatory. The "myth of gay wealth,"[290] for example, circulates stereotypes that gays and lesbians are wealthier than the average American. Sociologist Angela Ragusa points to income studies suggesting that self-identified gays and lesbians actually earn less per year than heterosexuals. This myth has had serious consequences for gay political and social liberation. For example, in the U.S. Supreme Court decision on *Romer v. Evans* (1996), Justice Antonin Scalia wrote a much-cited dissent arguing that gays and lesbians did not deserve "special rights."[291] Scalia described gays and lesbians as possessing disproportionate economic and political power, and therefore undeserving of equal protection.[292] Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the 'special rights' trope and the misperception of gays as a wealthy demographic allowed Republicans and the religious right to repeatedly deny legal protection to gays and lesbians.

---

[289] Ibid., 231.

[290] Angela Ragusa, "Social change and the corporate construction of gay markets in the *New York Times'* advertising business news," *Media, Culture & Society* 27, no. 5 (September 2005): 656.

[291] Skover and Testy, 228; Darren L. Hutchinson, "'Gay Rights for 'Gay Whites'?: Race, Sexual Identity, and Equal Protection Discourse," *Cornell Law Review* 85, no. 5 (July 2000): 1381-82. *Romer v. Evans* ruled against an amendment to the Colorado state constitution that would prevent any municipality from recognizing gays and lesbians as a protected class. Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote the majority opinion, which asserted that gays and lesbians were not being granted "special rights," but simply those rights that all other citizens are granted.

[292] Hutchinson, 1381.

Clearly, increased gay and lesbian visibility in U.S. mainstream media is not always accompanied by social and political victories.[293] Instead, Rosemary Hennessy argues that this visibility is part and parcel of the continuing commodification of American life; gay and lesbian imagery is often class-specific and representative of 'lifestyle' culture, which promotes individualism through purchasing.[294] This appropriation of gay and lesbian imagery by the market – which fails to promote progressive political agendas – often elicits approval from mainstream gay organizations, hungry for visibility of any kind. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) is exemplary of American gay organizations that take on issues of representation. GLAAD was founded in 1985 to promote fair and inclusive representation as a way to counteract discrimination; the group monitors mainstream media, issuing annual reports and hosting an awards dinner. Despite its shortcomings, GLAAD has done important work: affirmative images of gay and lesbians in media can be empowering and inspirational, and this visibility often paves the way for civil rights protections.[295] But the success of GLAAD is accompanied by arguments within the gay political community. Many progressive gay activists charge that GLAAD doles out 'straight charity,' rewarding major corporations for limited representation of gays and lesbians. Furthermore, GLAAD's opinion of what constitutes 'positive' representations are up for debate. What sort of representations should be considered positive? Should gays and lesbians be more concerned with realistic portrayals? Even more problematic for progressive activists is that GLAAD's concern with fair media coverage and representation hinges on its mostly uncritical view of corporate media. The organization does not attack the structure of mass media, nor does it quarrel with the ever expanding

---

[293] Hennessy, 112.
[294] Ibid., 133.
[295] Ibid., 112.

role of capital in what Hennessy calls the "aestheticization of daily life."[296] The result is a gay political strategy that targets corporate responsibility, without a sustained critique of commodified gay identity.

Regardless of the economic realities of most gays and lesbians in the U.S. and U.K., much of gay politics has shifted to market-oriented activism. Contemporary gay movements come with branded images (like the No H8 logo[297]), or are based upon Paypal donations and benefit dinners. This preoccupation with consumerist politicking is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the prominence of boycotts. The 2009 Jamaican boycotts, for example, invoked the revolutionary American symbolism of the Boston Tea Party by dumping Jamaican rum and beer. To be sure, the event used theatricality and media savvy that bore the influence of ACT UP and OutRage. But at its base, the boycott is a way for gay activists to make political statements by exercising – or neglecting to exercise – their purchasing power. The gay and lesbian activists of Boycott Jamaica have fully embraced the tenets of gay capitalism: that sexual identity is linked with commerce and that political gains can be made through consumption practices.

The American gay movement has a long history of boycotts, whereas the British movement does not. Boycott Jamaica's protest draws on the symbolic and historical resources of gay economic actions against corporations and governments. Alexandra Chasin notes that the boycott as political strategy became widely popular among gay activists in the 1990s; for years, it had been used mainly by labor unions to intensify

---

[296] Ibid., 132. Hennessy's coinage refers to the integration of cultural production with commodity exchange, resulting in the continuous and rapid flow of images. As a function of the commodity fetish, these processes obscure social relations and labor practices through the promotion of a lifestyle politic. As part of this process, gay and lesbian representation puts forward white, middle-class images that erases the experiences of marginalized members of queer communities, especially the poor, unemployed, and racialized.

[297] No H8 is a campaign begun in 2009 to protest the passage of Proposition 8, which prohibited same-sex marriage in California. The campaign has circulated numerous photos of celebrities – including Kathy Griffin, Pete Wentz, and even Cindy McCain – with the "No H8" logo painted on their faces.

strikes.[298] But in the past two decades, the boycott has become a common tactic, used by activists on many sides of the political spectrum, ranging from GLAAD to the ultra-right wing Family Research Council. Certainly, many American-based boycotts signify on the symbolism of both the Boston Tea Party and the Montgomery bus boycotts of 1955. The Boston Tea Party is especially instructive with regard to the Boycott Jamaica action, as the latter mimics the colonial Americans' dumping of foreign goods. In Boston, colonists protested the importation and outsized taxation of British goods in an attempt to disrupt the sale of British products in the colonies. According to legend, colonists dressed as Indians and dumped goods into the harbor. Boycott Jamaica activists reenact the literal rejection of foreign goods and invoke the American historical memory of rebellious colonists; the "rum dump" enables gay activists to reproduce the imagery of oppressed people rejecting the material evidence of their oppression which, in this case, is Jamaican rum and beer.

Boycott Jamaica draws on the symbolic impact of Harvey Milk and the Stonewall Inn as powerful signposts in gay American history. Jim Burroway evokes the memory of assassinated gay politician Harvey Milk in order to drum up support for the boycott, set to occur at "Harvey Milk Plaza, site of many actions by Milk in his crusade against Coors beer."[299] Burroway relies on the mythical power of Harvey Milk to lend gravitas by association. As evidenced by numerous books, awards, and two successful feature films,[300] Milk holds an esteemed place in gay rights history, a powerful symbol of the importance of 'coming out' and the exercise of political power within the system. Milk's

---

[298] Alexandra Chasin, *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes To Market* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000): 146.

[299] Jim Burroway, "Jamaica Boycott Kicks Off In San Francisco," *Box Turtle Bulletin*, posted March 28, 2009, http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/03/28/10228 (accessed March 20, 2010).

[300] The list includes the Oscar-winning documentary *The Times of Harvey Milk*, Gus Van Sant's feature film *Milk* (for which Sean Penn won the Oscar for Best Actor), and Randy Shilts' biography *The Mayor of Castro Street*. There is also a school for LGBT students in New York City named Harvey Milk High School. In 2009, Milk received a posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom from Barack Obama.

assassination by a fellow San Francisco supervisor has helped to solidify his legacy as an American gay pioneer. During his life, Milk's political agenda focused on legal reform, boycotts, and street actions, a tradition that gay activists continue today. Thus, Burroway's reference to the 1977 Coors boycott provides a potent association with Harvey Milk and gay political history. Since Milk participated in a successful boycott of Coors Brewing Company, we are asked to assume that he would likewise support economic action against another oppressor. But there are key differences between the Jamaica boycott and Milk's Coors boycott: although Coors was an ideal target because of the company's contributions to anti-gay, right wing organizations, Milk actually joined a labor strike that was already in progress.[301] This type of coalition politics was a hallmark of Milk's political career, as he readily took on issues as diverse as ageism, unfair labor practices, and xenophobia in San Francisco politics. This dedication to multiple-issue politics is conspicuously absent from Boycott Jamaica's actions and, indeed, from much of American gay politics in general. The 1977 Coors boycott offers an example of coalition-building and engagement with political economic issues that is lacking from much of today's gay liberal politics.

This is not to say that all market-based activism is ineffective, or that gays are alone in the commercialization of sexuality and difference. Rather, I provide this context to demonstrate how contemporary gay activism mobilizes the symbols of gay history to channel politics through consumption practices. Critical to this discourse are the ways in which Anglo-American gay activists navigate issues of race, globalization, and cultural production. It is clear that the poverty, religiosity, postcoloniality, and blackness inherent in dancehall culture present a litany of new problems to gay activists. Thinking about the mainstreaming of gay politics and the widespread acceptance of 'ethnic' gay identity

---

[301] See Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982): 83-84.

might help to understand how these discourses emerged. In the following chapter, I will expand my discussion of the discourse sample to assess how my findings relate to broader issues in queer, postcolonial, and race scholarship, and how the discursive formation of dancehall homophobia illuminates the ways in which activists and scholars speak across borders and across cultures.

CHAPTER 4

Interventions and Intersections: Queerness, Postcolonialism, and Race in Anglo-American Gay Discourse

The discourse on dancehall and homophobia forces us to confront the intersections of queerness, postcolonialism, race, and global economics. One of the chief limitations of the British and American gay activist discourse is the absence of intersectional analysis. In keeping with the single-issue politics of contemporary liberal gay activism – which favors agendas of inclusion into major institutions, privacy rights, and the freedom to consume – Stop Murder Music and Boycott Jamaica neglect to fully interrogate the conflicts and clashes inherent to this international discourse. Furthermore, activist discourse reflects some of the fundamental tensions and trends in Anglo-American gay politics in the past 30 years: race and representation in gay political agendas, the primacy of consumption-based politics, and the fetishization of travel and tourism as part and parcel of commodified gay identity. In this chapter, I will expand upon and critique the key regularities of the discourse analysis. To engage with activist discourse is to question who is allowed to speak and, conversely, who is excluded from speaking and acting in certain gay political strategies. By analyzing these texts at the intersections of race, tourism, economic privilege, and postcolonialism, I will critique certain aspects of this discursive formation and consider how they relate to a broader international queer dialogue.

Later in the chapter, I will expand the scope of my analysis to contextualize this project within scholarship that takes place at the intersections of several disciplines. Queer, feminist, and postcolonial scholarship – especially the work of Jasbir Puar, Martin Manalansan, Chandra Mohanty, and Edward Said – is helpful in theorizing new ways of approaching this discourse and its complexities. In particular, scholarship that probes the boundaries and crossings of queer, postcolonial, and race theory might be effective in

destabilizing 'universal' gay identity and the discursive conventions that orientalize global south societies. Edward Said's work in *Orientalism* is key to theorizing how the production of knowledge in the global north performs violence on the global south. In the context of this project, I will argue that Anglo-American activists orientalize Jamaican society by attempting to homogenize Jamaican homophobic practice and the lives of Jamaican queer people.

Discussion

In this section, I will expand my discussion of the discourse sample by situating the aforementioned discursive regularities within the broader contexts of gay politics: the conflation of racism and homophobia, the fetish of travel and tourism, and the centrality of market-based activism. These themes demonstrate the ways in which Anglo-American activist discourse on dancehall homophobia activates broader issues in gay politics.

Race and Sexual Orientation

Peter Tatchell's repeated conflation of racism and homophobia – and by extension, racial and sexual identity – may be successful in garnering empathy for victims of discrimination and violence, but it runs the risk of polarizing racial and sexual identity groups into separate camps. This strategy might also marginalize people who straddle the boundaries of several identities. Tatchell's analogy of racism and homophobia opposes (white) homosexual and black (heterosexual); in Tatchell's writing, he claims that black homophobes are rarely punished for hate speech, but white racists are subject to legal repercussions and cultural disapproval. In this framework, the sexuality of the black person is never specified, but we are to assume he is heterosexual. Additionally, the opposition of black and gay serves to posit a homosexual subject who is decidedly not black. To oppose black and gay as cohesive categories is to assume

whiteness as the default trait of the homosexual subject, although this assumption is almost always below the surface.[302] Critical race scholar Darren Hutchinson argues that this comparative approach further marginalizes queer people of color, by constructing homosexuality in binary opposition to blackness.[303] Black people of color are caught in a double bind: the opposition of racism and homophobia forces people to choose between competing, coexistent identities and oppressions. Rather than probing these interactions, Tatchell and others construct these analogies without any deeper exploration of how different community members experience oppression. In the British context, activist rhetoric might be made more inclusive by thinking about the prevailing relations of race and ethnicity in British society, the criminalization of blacks by the New Right, and the erasure of queer subjects on the basis of racial, class, ethnic, and gender identities. Instead, Tatchell's Stop Murder Music campaign continues to conflate racism and homophobia, without fully interrogating the ways in which this strategy excludes certain voices. I argue that the only group who has the luxury of analogizing race and sexual identity are people with racial privilege, those white gay men who do not experience oppression along several different axes.

Intersectionality is one theoretical approach that has attempted to analyze the ways in which people experience different types of oppression as interlocking phenomena. Legal scholars have focused intersectional theory mainly on the interactions of racism and patriarchy that affect women of color. Critical race theorist Kimberle Williams Crenshaw claims that identity politics often ignores intragroup difference, especially with regard to the way people experience oppression based on various identity characteristics.[304] An intersectional approach enables scholars to engage with many simultaneous modes of oppression, investigating not only how these systems of

---

[302] Lane, 1076.
[303] Hutchinson, 1360.
[304] Crenshaw, 357.

oppression interact, but how they "mutually construct one another."[305] Crenshaw

proposes that intersectional theory might mediate the splits along class, racial, and gender

lines that are common in group organizing efforts.[306] In the context of Tatchell's

reduction of race and sexual orientation, intersectionality can expose the failure of gay

activists to seriously engage with racial, class, and ethnic diversity. This approach can

heed bell hooks' call to examine the many interlocking forms of domination experienced

by different members of the community in question.[307] By speaking openly about the

distinct ways in which people experience oppressions, scholars and activists alike can

shine a light on those community members who previously existed in the shadows.

Furthermore, intersectionality has the capacity to look past biological understandings of

both race and sexual orientation, to acknowledge that both identities are deeply molded

by social relations.

Travel, Tourism, and 'Economic Democracy'

Amidst the fraught and contentious debates over race, representation and

homophobia in gay political communities, the 'murder music' activists have frequently

been charged with enacting cultural imperialism, racism, and re-colonization; these

accusations have come from black anti-racist activists, Caribbean scholars, dancehall

artists, and queer people of color. While Tatchell and Boycott Jamaica argue that they

are simply trying to help queer Jamaicans, and that certain cultural practices are

indefensible, I contend that there are certainly colonial gestures at work in this discourse.

If any area of activist discourse can be understood as rehearsing old narratives of

colonialism and imperialism, it is the uncritical view of Caribbean tourism. Pivotally, the

---

[305] Patricia Hill Collins, "Gender, Black Feminism, and Black Political Economy," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 658 (March 2000): 47.
[306] Crenshaw, 375.
[307] See bell hooks, "Feminism: A Transformational Politic," in *Race, Class and Gender in the United States*, ed. Paula Rothenberg (New York: Worth, 2001): 601-608.

Boycott Jamaica discourse hinges on the celebratory language of the gay tourism industry and unproblematic understandings of gay – and indeed, heterosexual – capital.

Gay tourism is instructive of how gays and lesbians are summoned to the marketplace, and welcomed into consumer society through both the consumption and production of identity. This industry is one of the clearest intersections of gay consumerism and the global south. Like advertisers in other industries, gay tourism allows corporations to position themselves as more 'progressive' than the mainstream, relying heavily on the sexualized imagery of tanned, muscled, usually white male bodies.[308] M. Jacqui Alexander's work on tourism illustrates how travel is understood as an important part of gay identity, as advertised by gay tourism companies based in the global north. Through an analysis of the travel literature of the International Gay Travel Association and the Spartacus International Gay Guide, Alexander suggests that these major American gay tourist agencies speak mainly to white, able-bodied, and wealthy gay men. The emphasis on whiteness and maleness overshadows lesbians, working-class gays, and people of color. At the same time, travel guides for the Caribbean, for example, often enact an Orientalist mode of signification, viewing the Caribbean as a land of mystery, naturalness, and (sanitized and managed) exoticism. Gay travel guides serve as a "travel curriculum,"[309] informing potential travelers about what kind of pleasure is to be found in certain locales, how 'friendly' the people are, and where the threat of homophobic violence or legal action is most high.

Through the "commodification of Otherness,"[310] gay travel literature produces queer native subjects, upon which white tourists can act out their latent fantasies. This travel narrative is truly Orientalist, in that the faceless, nameless, "queer fetishized

---

[308] M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005): 75.
[309] Ibid., 81.
[310] bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," in *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, eds. Sharlene Hesse-Biber, Christina Gilmartin, and Robin Lydenberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 179.

native"[311] it produces has no agency of his own, nor is he ever imagined to be a traveler; he exists only as part of the feminized, tropical paradise constructed through tourist literature. As bell hooks suggests, a sexual experience with this racialized Other is thought to effect a transformation, a conversion experience that does not even require one to leave the sexual mainstream.[312] Queer sex is simply another aspect of human social life that has been subsumed by capital. The native – who has no sexual or economic agency – has been effaced by the commodity fetish, his (sexual) labor and social existence erased by the relations of gay capitalism. The 'rent-a-dread' phenomenon and the 'dancehall tourist,' which see white women travel to Jamaica in search of sex with black men, are replicated in gay sex tourism. Many dancehall tunes rehearse images of predatory white men on the hunt for young black men; these images serve as visceral embodiments of Jamaica's subjugated status in the global economy and the supposed genesis of homosexuality as located in the global north, spread like a contagion by wealthy white invaders. Even Lady Saw, who has spent a career trying to destabilize sexual norms, has complained bitterly of the supposedly rampant gay sex that happens in Jamaica's resort towns.[313]

Regardless of the homophobia that informs these perspectives, I argue that gay sex tourism does reinscribe the global north-south dichotomy on a bodily level. Echoing Fanon's statement that the black man is viewed as nothing more than a body, this sex tourism in Jamaica entails the silencing of queer black men through both economic and sexual domination. hooks argues that this "imperialist nostalgia"[314] reenacts the colonizing journey, enabling travelers to escape the "blank landscape of whiteness."[315] Unlike colonization, however, this sexual imperialism eschews overt domination in favor

---

[311] Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 70.
[312] hooks, 180.
[313] Stolzoff, 229.
[314] hooks, 182.
[315] Ibid., 185.

of consuming the fantastical and fictionalized Other as a sign of racial progress. In this way, the faceless queer native and the land of plenty in which he lives are barely differentiated; each is fetishized as objects to be bought and sold. This fetishization of people and geography allows the construction of a gay consuming subject.[316] Because of this, I suggest that gay tourism is the apotheosis of global gay capital, able to cross national boundaries while making room for the expression of 'gay identity' in non-Western locales. Marketing is directed toward the stereotypical white, healthy, and wealthy gay (male) consumer, which heterosexual capital and gay capital alike have come to perceive as representative of the entire gay community.[317]

Calling on the tropes of gay tourist literature, writers from Boycott Jamaica implore their readers to avoid cruises and resort vacations in Jamaica, suggesting that the country's dependence on tourism revenue makes it "uniquely vulnerable"[318] to consumer-based activism. But these writers stop well short of examining gay tourism in general. The advice is simply to "avoid Jamaica,"[319] to "skip that Carnival Cruise to Jamaica – so your money won't support murder."[320] This treatment of tourism takes the form of a warning: avoid Jamaica, because your dollars will support homophobic violence. But to these activists it is not necessary to avoid all Caribbean destinations. Indeed, Boycott Jamaica activist Timothy Kincaid opens one essay with an ode to Caribbean cruises: "Sailing on a cruise liner has always been an economical way to vacation. You are fed great food, pampered by courteous staff, entertained, and your accommodations move themselves each night to a new beach or breath-taking jungle, all

---

[316] Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 86.
[317] Ibid., 75.
[318] Besen, "Killer Vacation."
[319] Timothy Kincaid, "Travel Warning – Stay Away From Jamaica," *Box Turtle Bulletin*, posted March 7, 2009, http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/03/07/9523 (accessed March 20, 2010).
[320] Besen, "Killer Vacation."

for a set price lower than what you would expect to pay at a decent hotel."[321] This

excerpt could have been lifted from a travel brochure, as it praises the convenience, ease,

and novelty of taking a cruise. The writer lists the cruise's numerous pleasures, focusing

on the consuming subject's privilege to experience new worlds and new pleasures. This

gesture should be understood within the context of gay capitalism and the production of

the queer consuming subject, theorized by Alexander, Jasbir Puar, and Rosemary

Hennessy. Puar contends that queer tourism serves as a marker of 'first world' privilege

and elitism; gay and lesbian travelers are a "group momentarily decriminalized through

its purchasing power,"[322] who are usually spared the violence and persecution

experienced by many 'local' queer people. Caribbean vacations, in particular, are often

marketed as safe and exciting ways to both express one's sexual identity in a foreign

space and experience the local gay life of tropical islands. Alexander, who has done

influential work on queer tourism, suggests that travel is sold as an integral piece of gay

identity, yet another way to purchase acceptance in a society based in consumption.[323]

But this access is grounded in economic privilege, in that only those consumers with

disposable income can afford to experience their gay identity through travel. This

gatekeeping results in the exclusion of certain queer subjects from gay travel

advertisements in favor of often white and wealthy consumers.[324] Consequently, the

highly constrained inclusion of some gay consumers (which is mistaken for social

acceptance) occurs through the effacement and erasure of other gay people.

The discursive practices that celebrate gay economic 'freedom' necessarily

represent only a portion of queer communities, and further mystify the real social and

economic conditions in global south nations. For instance, Boycott Jamaica's rhetoric

---

[321] Kincaid, "Travel Warning."
[322] Jasbir Puar, "A Transnational Feminist Critique of Queer Tourism," *Antipode* 34, no. 5 (November 2002): 942.
[323] Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 79.
[324] Puar, "Queer Tourism," 942-43.

often juxtaposes Jamaica's beauty with its supposedly moral and cultural ugliness.
Timothy Kincaid notes Jamaica's physical splendor, but warns against its violence:
"While the island has great physical beauty, its soul is seething with hatred and you are
its target."[325] Here, Kincaid imagines a primeval paradise marred by the violent, hateful
actions of its people. I suggest that statements like these help to reinscribe colonial
perceptions of the global south as exotic and paradisiacal, but also dangerous and 'other'.

These discursive gestures – which combine consumer capitalism with the social
and cultural experiences of a specifically American homosexuality – can be investigated
using postcolonial scholar Anne McClintock's formulation of fetishism. In *Imperial
Leather*, McClintock suggests that during the rise of consumer capitalism in the 19th
century, European commodities did the "civilizing work of empire" [326]; the commodity
was both a symbol of imperial pride and a messenger of European progress and
modernity. McClintock employs Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, which states
that the commodity presents itself as the product of relations between objects, rather than
relations between people.[327] The commodity fetish erases the labor, social relations, and
larger political and economic dynamics that contribute to commodity production; in other
words, the commodity becomes a fetish, a meaningless object imbued with magical
properties.[328] Tourism, though not always embodied in a material object, reproduces the
logic of the fetish: tourism advertisements – and the resorts and cruises themselves –
function to erase the labor relations and global economic realities that make global north-
to-south tourism possible. Tourism becomes a magical signifier of American gay identity
that diverts attention away from the privilege, elitism, and international hierarchy upon
which international tourism relies. Rosemary Hennessy argues that gay and lesbian

---

[325] Kincaid, "Travel Warning."
[326] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995): 222.
[327] See Chaper 1, Section 4 of Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 1* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1955).
[328] McClintock, 207.

visibility in the U.S. has deflected attention from the international division of labor; the gay-friendly policies of Disney, for example, rest on the company's decidedly *un*friendly labor practices in 'third world' nations.[329]

In Jamaica, vacationers experience a caricature of ethnicity and cultural identity, mimicked by 'locals' who are paid (usually very little, by American standards) to proclaim "Yah, mon" and "Irie" and other stereotypical Jamaican phrases.[330] In north shore destinations like Montego Bay and Ocho Rios, tourists are strongly discouraged from leaving the resort; resort staff rarely warn tourists about violent crime or theft, but instead insist that everything they need is on hand at the resort.[331] As a result, vacationers often experience a limited, and indeed fictionalized, version of life in Jamaica. What is effaced is the lack of public infrastructure, the poverty and violent crime of Kingston, and the lived experiences of the very people who work at resorts to create such 'Jamaican' experiences. That the tourism industry is kept afloat by the unseen labor of lower-class women is a fact that many gay activists in the global north fail to notice, and is a fact that is actively hidden from view.[332] The discourse of Boycott Jamaica, by focusing on the imminent danger of Jamaican travel and the "hatred" and "barbarism"[333] of Jamaican people, neglects to address the political, economic, racial, and even sexual dynamics at work in Caribbean tourism, nor those same dynamics that have helped to forge the uniquely Jamaican homophobia which I explained in Chapter 1.

This production of queer consuming subjects through tourism is concomitant with the practice of gay politics through consumption. The boycott is a similarly fetishizing process, as it occurs only on the level of consumption. As I explained in Chapter 3, the

---

[329] Hennessy, 140.

[330] See Stephanie Black's 2001 documentary *Life and Debt*.

[331] Ibid.

[332] M. Jacqui Alexander, "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997): 95-96.

[333] Kincaid, "World's Impression."

visibility of gays and lesbians in North America has often been achieved through commodification. In the United States and United Kingdom, gays and lesbians have been summoned to the marketplace, encouraged to pursue new desires.[334] This entrance into the market coincides with the primacy of 'lifestyle,' which promotes an ideology of liberal individualism that sees identity as malleable and definable through consumption. Consumption is a way for gays and lesbians to gain entry into a public sphere that once only offered condemnation. In lieu of legal recognition in the U.S., corporate recognition has been a nearly ubiquitous consolation prize. This visibility has no doubt improved the daily lives of many gays and lesbians. And it is important to remember that many sexual minorities have forged productive and meaningful lives within a system of commodified identity. However, this market-based identity has serious consequences for gay politics. As I noted in Chapter 2, much gay political activism in the past few decades has been channeled through the marketplace, a trend which is most clearly represented by the consumer boycott.

The boycott is premised on the "purposeful absence of exchange,"[335] or the principled refusal to purchase certain products in order to pressure the producer to change its policies. This "economic democracy"[336] relies on the liberal capitalist concept of consumer sovereignty, meaning that consumers have freedom of choice in the marketplace, and that the exercise of that choice can determine corporate activity. This model[337] suggests that consumers can express individuality through purchasing, and in a sufficiently competitive market, corporations are forced to modify products and practices to fit consumer tastes. The capitalist concept of supply and demand seems to ensure that consumers have consequential influence over what the market provides. Individualism,

---

[334] Hennessy, 103.
[335] Chasin, 146.
[336] Ibid., 148.
[337] Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980): 222.

then, manifests itself through the 'freedom' to make unique and personal purchasing decisions. And since 'lifestyle' holds a privileged position in American gay identity, gay and lesbian consumers get the chance to have their identities validated by the market. Thus, a boycott both articulates the preferences of consumers and secures their identities through the refusal to consume certain products.[338]

While many boycotts have been successful at pressuring corporations to change objectionable policies,[339] the strategy has limitations. I would like to problematize the boycott as political strategy, and explore some of the issues with Boycott Jamaica's action. Firstly, a boycott is pro-capitalist, because it grounds political action in the inherent fairness of the market. A successful boycott implies that the system works, and that "the market will lead toward increasingly moral social policy."[340] In this way, boycotts do nothing to challenge the supremacy of free market capitalism. Further, by promoting activism-by-consumption (or rather the withholding of consumption), boycotts reinforce the liberal notion that progressive social and political change can be effected through the market. However, this strategy hinges upon a form of enfranchisement tied directly to money: when votes are cast in the market, "every ballot requires the rhetorical penny."[341] Boycotts usually require that political actors have discretionary income. After all, not all activists can afford a principled refusal to buy certain goods, or a diversion to another corporation's goods. In a market economy, it is clear that wealth is never distributed equally, and as a consequence, not all citizens have the same 'voting power'. Thus, as Chasin claims, boycotters are often united by class interest, defining political actors as "income earners."[342] This unity is usually made invisible through

---

[338] Chasin, 150.
[339] The Montgomery bus boycotts of 1955, which effected the racial integration of the city's public transportation system, are a highly successful example of a boycott based on the civil rights model.
[340] Chasin, 157.
[341] Ibid., 151.
[342] Ibid., 156.

activist rhetoric and media representation, which often purport to represent the interests of an entire community. In this way, the boycott denies those citizens who lack the economic privilege of selective, ethical purchasing, and it fails to recognize the class interest of the political actors. Despite good intentions, affluent citizens will always have more political clout when using strategies based on "economic democracy."[343]

Boycott Jamaica, in particular, evades questions of unequal economic practice in a postcolonial world. As I argued earlier, the group's suggestion to simply spend money elsewhere does not address inequalities beyond sexual orientation discrimination. Additionally, Boycott Jamaica's rhetoric does not indicate a deep engagement with the limitations or potential negative effects of a boycott. Notably, the group advocates a boycott of Red Stripe Beer, which is actually one of the only Jamaican companies to have condemned violent dancehall lyrics.[344] The company has withdrawn sponsorship of several dancehall concerts, including Reggae Sumfest, the largest reggae music festival in Jamaica. Not surprisingly, these actions have been rather unpopular in the Jamaican press. In Jamaica, for a corporation to take a stand against dancehall violence and homophobia is indeed a significant gesture. This is why Boycott Jamaica's decision to boycott Red Stripe is puzzling, as the company has taken steps to distance itself from dancehall music and Jamaican homophobic practice. Activist Michael Petrelis defends the decision to boycott Red Stripe by pointing out the company's failure to openly condemn homophobic violence: "it is nice of a Red Stripe spokesperson to offer a general condemnation of violence of all kinds, but notice that the word 'gay' is missing from the quote."[345] Petrelis refuses to consider Red Stripe's gesture within its cultural context, where the company's statement caused much controversy *and* where any mention of

---

[343] Ibid., 151.
[344] Michael Petrelis, "The Gleaner: Gays in US 'Boycott Jamaica,' *The Petrelis Files*, posted April 1, 2009, http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/04/tie-us-aid-to-jamaica-to-gay-rights.html#links (accessed March 20, 2010).
[345] Ibid.

dancehall violence would connote violence against women and homosexuals. Indeed, Jamaican dancehall fans – and Jamaican corporations – are well aware of the strong international opposition to the music's misogynistic and homophobic lyrics; I suggest that Red Stripe's announcement, with or without the word "gay," plays on the average Jamaican's understanding of dancehall violence as colored by homophobia and misogyny. To quarrel with their failure to use the word "gay" is to impose on Jamaica an American understanding of visibility and corporate responsibility, and to ignore the significance of Red Stripe's decision.

Wayne Besen, another Boycott Jamaica activist, openly embraces the negative effects of a boycott. His writing performs a type of violence on Jamaica: "our goal is to turn Jamaica into a pariah state."[346] The goal is to put sufficient economic pressure on the people of Jamaica so the government will have no choice but to act. A successful boycott, however, would likely inflict economic damage on the nation's poorest citizens, without regard for their personal opinions on homosexuality. In a nation already crippled by poverty, inflation, and debt, it is unlikely that a small-scale boycott will compel political leaders to make any sweeping rhetorical gestures in condemnation of homophobia. Furthermore, to attempt to exacerbate Jamaica's economic woes by making it a "pariah state" is counterproductive and even cruel; sending a country into even deeper poverty does little to address the social, cultural, and economic causes of misogyny and homophobia. While activists have thus far compelled a few owners of gay bars and restaurants in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles to remove Jamaican products from their businesses, the boycott is small, has received almost no mainstream media coverage, and is unlikely to make any demonstrable impact on Jamaica.

Perhaps the most problematic of Boycott Jamaica's actions is the complete lack of engagement with Jamaican queer people. Aside from the support of several Jamaican

---

[346] Wayne Besen, "Killer Vacation."

expatriates in North America, the general response among Jamaican queer people – if given voice at all – ranges from indifference to condemnation. The nation's only gay rights organization, JFLAG, has opposed the boycott from the beginning. A statement from the group states that they do not wish to be perceived as inflicting financial harm on fellow Jamaicans, fearing a surge in violence. The statement also notes, "members of our own community could be disproportionately affected by a worsened economic situation."[347] This argument sheds light on the fact that queer people are subject to the same class oppression that afflicts homophobic heterosexuals, and might be even more vulnerable to economic crisis due to their marginal position in Jamaican society. Despite protest from JFLAG, Boycott Jamaica went ahead with the boycott. Michael Petrelis has since defended the group's decision by arguing that JFLAG simply cannot be seen as supportive of the boycott, but that most queer people living in Jamaica approved. No evidence was provided to support this claim. The decision to ignore the protests of Jamaica's only gay organization reflects the broader failure of these activists to fully engage with the lived experiences of Jamaican queer people. The boycott in particular betrays an individualistic, market-based political orientation, which does not fully account for how northern consumption practices impact upon people in the global south. Like gay tourism, gay political action has the potential to perform violence on non-northern, non-white people – gay and straight alike – by effacing the underpaid labor and inequitable trade relationship between global north and south. This is not to say that boycotts should be abandoned completely, but that they must be paired with a deeper understanding of the effects of 'economic democracy' on already disadvantaged people.

---

[347] Qtd. in Krishna Rau, "Jamaica's queer group says boycott is a bad idea," *Xtra*, April 11, 2008. http://www.Xtra. ca/public/viewstory.aspx?AFF_TYPE=1&STORY_ID=4615&PUB_TEMPLATE_ID=2 (accessed February 18, 2010).

Theoretical Interventions

The themes that travel through this discursive formation bear the traces and echoes of Anglo-American gay politics and theory, as well as specific ways of looking at and speaking about the global south. Scholarship that works on the boundaries of queer, postcolonial, and race studies might be effective in de-centering the binary oppositions that mark activist responses to Jamaican dancehall. In the following section, I will first examine the contributions of postcolonial theory by discussing Edward Said's *Orientalism*, as well as feminist and queer analysis that relies upon Said's theoretical constructs. I contend that Anglo-American governments, media, and even political activists occupy a position of privilege in relation to most Jamaicans, and accordingly enact orientalizing discourses upon Jamaica by ignoring its heterogeneity. I wish to avoid reproducing the binary oppositions that postcolonial theory seeks to problematize; consequently, it is important to be precise about who is speaking, who benefits from this speech, and how these gay activists reproduce (or do not reproduce) colonial discourse. Finally, I will consider how queer postcolonial and queer race studies help to challenge the discursive practices of Tatchell and the Boycott Jamaica activists.

The Uses of Orientalism in Postcolonial, Feminist, and Queer Theory

As a founding text of postcolonial theory, Edward Said's *Orientalism* provides an ideal entry point into conceptualizing the discursive and economic gestures of gay tourism and political activism. Said defines Orientalism as a lens through which the West views the East: "a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient."[348] Orientalism is an academic *and* political doctrine, which consists of

---

[348] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979): 202.

metaphors, imagery, and language used in Western thought to explain the Orient.[349] The

chief gesture of Orientalist discourse is the generalization of large groups of people into

workable categories; it necessarily wipes out the lived experiences of individual people

by attributing them to a monolithic group. This body of learning and knowledge enables

the West to position itself as liberal and humane, while casting the Orient as debauched,

backward, and untouched by history.[350] Although Said framed his study of Orientalism

exclusively in terms of West vs. East, Occident vs. Orient, I argue that this template can

be expanded to describe power relations between Western nations and other postcolonial

regions. Said maintains that "only an occidental could speak of Orientals,"[351] meaning

that the Foucaultain 'speaker's privilege' belongs to white people of the West because of

the global relations of power and economics. As explorers, travelers, and conquerors,

"occidentals" have the power to define and study the less powerful "Orientals," by virtue

of alleged economic, political and racial superiority. Crucially, the political and

academic project of Orientalism functions to define and construct the Occident as much

as it does the Orient. The production of knowledges about the Orient assured Westerners

that they are learned, progressive, and most certainly members of an elite race. Said

writes,

> the actual color of their skin set them off dramatically and reassuringly from the
> sea of natives, but for the Britisher who circulated amongst Indians, Africans, or
> Arabs there was also the certain knowledge that he belonged to, and could draw
> upon the empirical and spiritual reserves of, a long tradition of executive
> responsibility towards the colored races.[352]

The Westerner comes into being through this encounter with the 'other,' drawing on the

reserves of Orientalist discourse to prove that he, the Western white man, is responsible

and humane in his behavior toward foreign peoples. But this racialized 'other' is not

---

[349] Ibid., 203.
[350] Ibid., 300.
[351] Ibid., 228.
[352] Ibid., 226.

completely foreign, due to the extensive body of knowledge and learning that exists in the European imagination. The historical pattern of conquest, study, and research in the Orient has produced the West in its own imagination; that is, the West has come to define itself mainly through its opposition to the backward, mysterious, and primeval East.

Following Said, transnational feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in the essay "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," challenges the hegemony of Western scholarship and activism. In her analysis of Western feminist discourse, Mohanty interrogates the production of the "third world woman" as a monolithic identity group.[353] Mohanty asserts that in constructing the 'third world' woman, feminists fail to account for the global relations of power and the (relatively) hegemonic position of Western feminism. As a result, feminist critique assumes a universal 'third world' female subject, in what amounts to "discursive colonization."[354] Although colonization usually implies structural and economic domination, it can also be used to explain the ways in which Western scholars deny the heterogeneity of their 'third world' subjects.[355] Mohanty charges that the feminist discourse in question constructs 'third world' women in specific ways: first, these discourses presuppose "women as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires."[356] Secondly, they provide inadequate evidence of universality; and finally, these feminist discourses proffer a homogeneous notion of female oppression, which varies little across cultural and political borders. The result is the construction of 'third world' women as victims of male violence, women who are exploited and powerless. These discourses hinge on the 'global sisterhood' concept in feminist scholarship, which maintains that globally,

---

[353] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991): 52-53.
[354] Ibid., 52.
[355] Ibid., 52.
[356] Ibid., 55.

women are the victims of patriarchy and male domination. Female oppression, therefore, is seen as an international phenomenon. Mohanty argues that although these scholars seek the liberation of women, their methods and theoretical frames actually efface the lived experiences of 'third world' women, and gloss over cross-cultural and cross-border differences. These discursive moves rob 'third world' women of political agency and effectively freeze them in history.[357]

Gay political practice – like Western feminist scholarship – can perform a similar homogenizing violence on queers of the global south. In several essays, South Asian queer scholar Jasbir Puar confronts gay liberalism with a critique of a post-9/11 U.S. nationalism that increasingly summons certain gay and lesbian subjects into the national fold. As I discussed in previous chapters, the primacy of liberal identity politics and market-based gay identity has profoundly shaped the ways in which queer people organize in the United States. This type of activism – paired with the decriminalization of sodomy in 2003 and more recognition from major corporations – has allowed for unprecedented, yet limited, acceptance in the American public sphere. Puar argues that after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the American state and mass media portrayed Arabs as fanatical and sexually deviant, but also repressive of sexuality and gender.[358] Media accounts rehearsed familiar Orientalist conventions, showing women in full burkhas, men in turbans and kaffiya, and countless stories of gays being executed and women being raped. George W. Bush, hardly a champion for women's right at home, condemned the

---

[357] Ibid., 72. See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 66-111. Spivak's influential essay critiques the attempts made by Western intellectuals to represent subaltern 'third world' subjects. Spivak contends that these scholars enact epistemic violence by both denying the heterogeneity of subaltern subjects and neglecting to criticize the historical role of the intellectual. Like Said and Mohanty, Spivak traces the production of both the imperialist subject and the subject of imperialism, constructed through the inequitable relations between 'first' and 'third world.'

[358] Jasbir Puar, "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages," *Social Text* 84-85, Vol. 23, no. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2005): 122-123.

Taliban for its treatment of women.[359] Curiously, the president aligned with American

liberal feminists by proclaiming the victimhood of Afghan women.[360] In contrast, the

United States was understood as a safe space for feminists and gays, and this notion was

a crucial element of post-9/11 patriotism. Although 9/11 reignited reactionary gender

and sexual norms,[361] U.S. powers simultaneously celebrated the nation as sexually

progressive in comparison to the Middle East.[362] Puar writes, "aspects of

'homosexuality' have come within the purview of normative patriotism after September

11. In other words, what we see in the deployment of heteronormative patriotism is . . .

the incorporation of aspects of queer subjectivity into the body of the normalized

nation."[363] Of course, this queerness is highly constrained; only certain queer subjects

were ushered into normative nationalism, most notably those 'gay heroes' lionized by

gay conservatives like Andrew Sullivan, people who served in the military or died in the

World Trade Center rubble.[364]

What makes the post-9/11 atmosphere notable is that queer people in the United

States, emboldened by corporate attention and legal victories, colluded in this

construction of this U.S. nationalism. Puar argues that national gay organizations like the

Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)

were so preoccupied with same-sex marriage and military service that they neglected to

critique the Iraq War and the numerous torture scandals.[365] In one example, when a U.S.

Navy bomb was decorated with the phrase "Hijack This, Fags," GLAAD objected to the

---

[359] Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai, "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots," *Social Text* 72, vol. 20, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 127.
[360] Ibid., 127.
[361] See Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream: Myth and Misogyny in an Insecure America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2007).
[362] Jasbir Puar, "Mapping US Homonormativities," *Gender, Place and Culture* 13, no.1 (February 2006): 70.
[363] Puar and Rai, "Monster, Terrorist, Fag," 126-127.
[364] Puar, "US Homonormativities," 70.
[365]: Puar, "Queer Assemblages," 123.

homophobic language but said nothing about the imperialist war itself.[366] This emphasis on representation is symptomatic of the liberal orientation of major gay activism in the United States. In fairness, GLAAD is an organization created to monitor media images and speech for homophobia (without a mandate to critique U.S. foreign policy). However, the paucity of queer left critique of the 'war on terror' speaks to a larger move away from leftist politics in favor of centrist, reformist positions. There was little queer political action to challenge the use of 9/11 as justification for war, the accepted 'truths' about Muslim revulsion at homosexual sex, or the ironic 'feminism' of a president known for hard-right social policy at home. Due to the primacy of single-issue identity politics, gay political action has too often reinforced the us vs. them binary forwarded by the U.S. government and media. More broadly, I contend that gay activists in the global north draw upon Orientalist traditions in relation to cultural practices of the global south; in carving out sites from which to speak, these activists often silence the voices of other marginalized people.

Queer Studies and the Potential of Intersectionality

Queer theory can offer strategies to overcome the universal assumptions of much gay political praxis, especially when directed at the global south. If the practitioners of queer theory retain the intersectional approach the discipline affords, then queer criticism can more fully address the mutually constitutive nature of different modes of identity and oppression. In the introduction to *Social Text*'s special queer studies issue, David Eng et al urge fellow scholars to return to the fundamental queer notion that sexuality is intersectional with other differences.[367] Queer theory has political promise precisely due to its "broad critique of multiple social antagonisms, including race, gender, class,

[366] Puar and Rai, "Monster, Terrorist, Fag," 127.
[367] Eng et al, 1.

nationality, and religion."[368] Sexuality is thus neither extraneous to nor more significant

than other modes of difference. The authors conceive of a queerness that transcends

liberal identity politics: 'queer' can never fully describe a subject, because queer identity

always intersects and is produced by other types of identity.[369] Although I use 'queer' to

describe certain people, I also acknowledge the impossibility of 'queer' being completely

representative of an individual's identity; instead, queerness as a theoretical tool

challenges us to engage with interlocking and mutually constitutive differences,

identities, and forms of domination. Queer studies is thus a theoretical framework that

enables a broad critique of the processes that produce, normalize and sustain identity.

Following the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michael Warner, and Judith Butler,

queer studies is a "subjectless critique"[370] with no fixed referent, meaning that the

discipline recognizes no privileged subject position, and attempts to deconstruct the

positivism inherent in contemporary identity politics.[371]

However, many critics from within and outside of queer studies have accused

queer critics of failing to theorize race and class as inseparable from sexuality.[372] Queer

scholar Ian Barnard, in particular, charges queer authors with neglecting to fully analyze

---

[368] Ibid., 1.

[369] The use of 'queer' as a verb is illustrative here, as it demonstrates the way in which queerness impacts upon a subject or institution without ever fully describing it.

[370] Eng et al, 3.

[371] Queer scholar Jose Munoz theorizes queerness as a "field of utopian possibility" that exists only in the future, a "not-yet-conscious" politics that has the potential to subvert pragmatic identity politics. In this formulation, there is no fixed group of gay and lesbian people, but only a "we" defined by the potential to imagine a utopian queer politics dedicated to repudiating 'truth' and challenging oppressive institutions. Munoz's writing, in the tradition of "subjectless" queer studies, denies the existence of a privileged subject and thus deconstructs the assumed 'gays' and 'lesbians' of gay and lesbian identity politics. Jose Esteban Munoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009): 22.

[372] Robert Reid-Pharr, "Extending Queer Theory to Race and Ethnicity," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 48, no. 49 (August 16, 2002): B7-9; Steven Seidman, "Identity and Politics in a 'Postmodern' Gay Culture: Some Historical and Conceptual Notes" in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 105-142.

the "always racialized nature of every queerness."[373] Barnard argues that in its current

incarnation, queer theory lacks the potential to be truly liberatory. Queer theory, he

suggests, sometimes reproduces the same racial exclusions and normalizations of

American gay and lesbian politics.[374] As I explained in Chapter 2, liberal gay politics has

culminated in what Lisa Duggan calls "homonormativity,"[375] or the reframing of gay

politics in terms of inclusion, privacy, consumption, and neoliberalism. This

homonormativity is also influenced by the decades of white male hegemony in Anglo-

American gay politics and the consequent marginalization of the poor, people of color,

lesbians, and trans people. Barnard suggests that while institutionalized queer studies too

often remains complacent in this exclusionary politic, he has faith in queer theory's anti-

essentialist potential: especially its anti-homophobic critique, its deconstruction of the

homo/hetero binary, and its capacity to describe "multiply inscribed subjects."[376] This is

where a theory of queer race becomes useful: instead of naming only sexuality, queer

theorists should understand every sexuality as racially marked, and every racial

identification as always already sexualized.[377] Barnard contends that by rigorously

theorizing race and sexuality as mutually constitutive systems of meaning, rather than as

separate identities, queer theorists can regain the radical potential of the discipline to

politicize identity and move beyond the primacy of sexuality.[378]

Scholarship in queer race and queer postcolonial studies enables scholars to

analyze the intersections of gay activism with international sexual and cultural politics.

Queer postcolonial studies provides inroads to studying the complex relationships of

---

[373] Ian Barnard, *Queer Race: Cultural Interventions in the Racial Politics of Queer Theory* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004): 2.
[374] Ibid., 5.
[375] Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon, 2003): 55. See also Michael Warner, *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999).
[376] Barnard, 15.
[377] Ibid., 2.
[378] Ibid., 2.

sexuality, postcoloniality, nation, migration, and global economics. More specifically, I

find the work of Martin Manalansan, Judith Halberstam, and Gayatri Gopinath helpful in

problematizing Anglo-American gay political gestures in relation to Jamaica.

Manalansan, in particular, draws upon the theoretical influence of queer studies, applying

it to the study of migration and postcolonial identity. Queer, he argues, is still a powerful

"anti-normative signifier"[379] when theorized as interactive with identities, practices, and

institutions. As a theoretical and political framework, queer sheds light on the ways in

which sexuality is regulated and normalized by social practices and institutions. Thus,

queer scholarship takes cues from Foucault by investigating the cultural situatedness of

sexuality. Manalansan's contribution is an examination of the factors that shape sexual

identities, practices, and desires in the global south and in diasporic communities. From

this new discipline comes evidence that globalization[380] does not necessarily result in the

homogenization of sexual identity. Manalansan suggests that "non-Western sexual

ideologies do not follow a unilinear assimilative process into Western sexual models but

rather are involved in syncretic processes that create alternative sexual politics, cultures,

and identities."[381] In this understanding, Western hegemony does not necessarily

obliterate 'indigenous' sexualities, but rather creates hybrid forms that both resist and

adopt Western sexual ideologies.[382] People who engage in same-sex behaviors in other

---

[379] Martin Manalansan, "Queer Intersections: Sexuality and Gender in Migration Studies," *International Migration Review* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 225.

[380] Media scholar Terry Flew offers a capacious definition, which conceptualizes globalization as a process and a "series of tendencies" rather than an outcome. Flew's explanation accounts for not only global economics and trade liberalization, but also international migration patterns, telecommunications systems, non-governmental organizations, and importantly, the "global circulation of ideas, ideologies, and 'keywords.'" This circulation of ideas is made possible through the internationalization of Western media corporations, and their role in building communication infrastructure in 'developing' countries. Further, it acknowledges the profound implications of Western media presence in non-Western settings; in particular, Flew notes that the global media disseminates culturally specific systems of meaning and values. Terry Flew, *Understanding Global Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 67.

[381] Manalansan, "Queer Intersections," 230.

[382] Hybridity, theorized by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, offers a lens through which to examine the effects of colonial discourse and practice. Hybridity is the process by which cultural differences come into

places in the world (outside of North America and Western Europe) often understand

their sexualities in strikingly different ways than do people in the West. Gayatri

Gopinath notes, for example, that many queer people in South Asia "reference familiar

tropes and signifiers of Anglo-American homosexuality – such as the coming-out

narrative, while investing them with radically different and distinct significations."[383]

Certainly, Western media and consumer products have profound implications for non-

Western sexualities, but it would be incorrect to assume that the globalization of sexuality

wipes out older identities and expressions.

Much gay and lesbian discourse from the global north purports a universal gay

identity that unites same-sex loving people of all races and cultures. Through the

"US/UK news duopoly"[384] of international media, images of Anglo-American gays and

lesbians inevitably reach the global south. Although this dissemination of media is not

colonial in structural terms – since the markets for Anglo-American media are not

directly controlled by colonial powers – the "US/UK duopoly" and the proliferation of

consumer goods have profound effects on the global south. In the framework of

postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha, we might read the reactions of southern queer

people to northern LGBT imagery as falling somewhere between passive acceptance and

---

conflict through colonization, where stable colonial identities can become displaced or challenged. In colonial practice, 'natives' often take up colonial cultural objects, like the Bible, and displace their intended meanings through repetition, appropriation, and translation. In Bhabha's example, colonized Indians displace the 'universal' status of the Bible and expose it as a tool of colonial social control. Following Derrida, this displacement exposes the multiplicity of meanings to be read in any text, and challenges the universal truths imposed by the colonial powers. Crucially, hybridity finds a middle voice between submission and resistance. Homi K. Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 144-165.

[383] Gayatri Gopinath, "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora: South Asian Sexualities in Motion," *positions* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 473.

[384] Daya Kishan Thussu, "Live TV and Bloodless Deaths: War, Infotainment, and 24/7 News," in *War and the Media*, eds. Daya Kishan Thussu and Des Freedman (London: Sage, 2003): 120. The "duopoly" refers to the dominance of American and British news corporations throughout the world. BBC World and CNN International broadcast Western-based 24-hour news in nearly every country in the world. In this way, U.S. and U.K. news outlets have the ability to set international news agendas, frames, and visual and production standards, while disseminating Western cultural values.

outright rejection. The syncretic, hybrid sexualities born through globalization certainly warrant further study, and queer postcolonial studies is well positioned to question the sometimes homogenizing discourse of Anglo-American theory and praxis.

The symbolism of Stonewall is a powerful example of how northern gay discourse puts forward essentialized understandings of gay identity and political activism. The signification of Stonewall since 1969 has taken on a life of its own, morphing from a local act of resistance into a founding "revolutionary moment"[385] in gay history. Early on, the riots came to embody the myths and tropes of the gay liberation movement: the importance of 'coming out,' street politics, visibility, and gay pride. Manalansan's essay "In The Shadows of Stonewall" problematizes the production of knowledges about Stonewall and their impact on a global north-based 'international' gay movement which sees Greenwich Village in 1969 as its symbolic birthplace.[386] Manalansan situates Stonewall as part of a larger discursive move among Western gay activists to impose universal notions of sexual identity upon people in other parts of the world. By establishing Stonewall as the catalyst of international gay liberation, American activists – and the European, African, and Asian activists who have taken up meanings of Stonewall – have cemented 'pride' and 'coming out' as pivotal features of liberated gay identity.[387] Pride celebrations around the world, which often occur in June to commemorate Stonewall, reproduce Western notions of the pride/shame binary; as Judith Halberstam writes, this opposition equates the 'closet' with shame, and being out with pride.[388] But this dyadic thinking glosses over sexual identities and practices that do not conform to the

---

[385] Martin Manalansan, "In The Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma," *GLQ* 2 (1995): 427.
[386] Ibid., 425-426.
[387] Judith Halberstam, "Shame and White Gay Masculinity," *Social Text* 84-85, Vol. 23, no. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2005): 221.
[388] Ibid., 223.

pride/shame, out/silence binaries. International pride celebrations, by looking to

Stonewall for inspiration, often erase culturally specific histories of queer liberation.[389]

International gay organizations that endeavor to catalogue gay life in the global

south also universalize gay identity. In Manalansan's example, the International Gay and

Lesbian Association (ILGA), based in Belgium, claims to represent 'gay and lesbian'

people globally, but its name alone glosses over the complexities of sexual identities,

desires, and practices. ILGA publishes *The Pink Book*, a document that monitors the

social and political conditions of gays and lesbians in over 200 countries. The guide

deploys concepts like 'the closet,' 'homophobia,' and 'gay and lesbian' without regard

for cultural specificity. In this way, the publication limits its perspective to a

Western/Eurocentric gay liberation ethos. *The Pink Book* also links silence and secrecy

to 'the closet,' revealing a dyadic and hierarchical understanding of being 'out' and

'closeted.'[390] Gay and lesbian are implied to be universal categories, whereas many

global south countries have sexual ideologies that vary based on class, religion, and

gender expression. Frequently, notions of gay visibility and 'the closet' vary within the

same country. Halberstam agrees that this globalization of a "mythic queer past"[391]

produces a romanticized version of gay history that ignores fundamental tensions and

rifts within queer communities. Within the United States, the myths of Stonewall were

built upon the rebellious actions of drag queens and queer people of color; however, the

---

[389] Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001): 87. See also Stuart Marshall, "The Contemporary Use of Gay Politics: The Third Reich," in *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video*, ed. Bad Object-Choices (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991). Marshall problematizes the use by gay activists of pink triangle imagery, a cultural artifact from the extermination of homosexuals by the Third Reich. Marshall argues that the "silence=death" slogan that accompanies the pink triangle actually confuses historical accounts, as silence about one's homosexuality could actually save a life. In a reversal of the popular gay slogan, visibility was often a death sentence. In this case, and in the case of many global south queers, silence indeed does equal life, as exposure sometimes invites anti-gay violence. Thus, northern conceptions of pride and visibility are often incompatible with the southern queer people who rely upon silence to survive. See also Jasbir Puar, "Global Circuits."

[390] Manlansan, "Stonewall," 429.

[391] Halberstam, 222.

values with which Stonewall has been imbued are reflective of a disproportionately white and privileged perspective in gay political agendas.[392] Moreover, the overtly anti-assimilationist actions of the Stonewall rioters have been mobilized and re-signified in the service of assimilationist, liberal gay politics. When this mythical past becomes globalized, it has serious implications for queer people in other parts of the world. By asking who is allowed to speak meaningfully about the gay past, Halberstam and Manalansan aim to destabilize the legitimacy of the Stonewall origin myth.

The Anglo-American gay activists of Stop Murder Music and Boycott Jamaica would have us believe that all same-sex loving people across the world have something profound in common: whether or not they identify as 'gay,' their homosexuality makes them similar in some way to gays and lesbians in the global north. In a *Huffington Post* essay about the Jamaica boycott, Wayne Besen writes: "Gay people will no longer sit by passively while *our people* are brutalized and killed" (emphasis added).[393] This statement assumes that 'gay people' are global, that the identity group transcends borders, languages, religions, and cultures. The appeal to "our people" implies an essentialized gay identity, covering over differences in gender, race, and class in favor of a universal population of gay people. The particular choice of words, "our people," also invokes the 'like race' argument so popular with British 'murder music' activists. Here, Besen uses the language of ethnic nationalism to address an international gay community, united by the universal signifier of homosexuality. Like race, this 'people' seems to be one that exists prior to social relations; but, as postcolonial and critical race theory have demonstrated, even race does not exist before social relations, but is rather constituted by these relations. As black nationalists appeal to a people united by African ancestry,[394]

---

[392] Ibid., 222.

[393] Wayne Besen, "Killer Vacation."

[394] See Clarke; Anthony Smith, "The Myth of the 'Modern Nation' and the Myths of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11, no. 1 (1988): 1-26; Anton Allahar, "Class, 'Race,' and Ethnic Nationalism in Trinidad,

'gay identity' similarly evades questions of social construction and cultural variation, opting to apply a culturally specific signifier to cultures that often reject those identities. I do not mean to conflate race- and sexuality-based identity politics, as the differences between racial and sexual identification are numerous and important. However, I do wish to emphasize that political projects that unite people based exclusively on race or sexual orientation necessarily avoid engaging with the ways in which many axes of difference interact to produce identities.

In the context of this project, Jamaica is illustrative of the complexities of sexuality and the influence of the global north. Many Jamaicans – in keeping with many postcolonial societies – perceive homosexuality as a "foreign sometin'," [395] a direct result of European colonization. This idea is bolstered by the Rastafarian belief that Jamaica is an African nation, oppressed by 'Babylonian' beliefs and morals. Homosexuality, then, is something imported by white people that runs counter to 'African' ideals. However, both Jamaican homophobes and northern gay activists ignore the fact that homophobic law and practice were imposed by the British colonial government to control the slave population, as I discussed in Chapter 1. In this light, I suggest that Anglo-American media, which is widely available all over Jamaica, contributes to feelings of 'queer imperialism.' Further, the presence of gay cruise ships in Jamaican harbors exacerbates anxieties that American gays and lesbians are trying to impose their beliefs on moral, Christian Jamaican people. The example of pride marches is instructive of how gay activists from the global north assume culturally specific sexualities and modes of activism to be universal. In April 2010, activists staged the first ever "gay pride" in

---

in *Ethnicity, Class, and Nationalism: Caribbean and Extra-Caribbean Dimensions*, ed. Anton Allahar (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005): 227-257.
[395] Noble, 109.

Jamaica. The "Walk for Tolerance"[396] took place in Montego Bay, with no reported interference from police or anti-gay violence. The march, attended by about 100 people, was organized by Jamaica AIDS Support for Life (JASL), InterPride Committee on International GLBTI Human Rights, and the U.S.-based Metropolitan Community Church (MCC).[397] There is no indication that JFLAG was involved in the event. Since the information about this pride event is limited, I hesitate to analyze it fully, but it is clear that Jamaica's first gay pride march was framed in the Anglo-American terms of 'coming out' and visibility. The leadership of InterPride and MCC, both global north-based international gay organizations, prompts questions about the extent to which Jamaican-based community activism played a part in this event. I do not intend to downplay how empowering and satisfying it might have been for queer Jamaican participants. Certainly, to walk public streets as an open same-sex loving person in Jamaica is not a daily luxury for most. And to be able to openly touch someone of the same sex without retributive violence or harassment is nothing to be ignored or diminished. My chief concern with an event like this, however, is its reliance on American gay liberationist concepts of pride, visibility, and an end to silence. While we can celebrate the potential for progressive social change in Jamaica, we should also interrogate how this event came to be, and indeed who benefits from it. What happens when InterPride leaves and the news cameras stop rolling? Does 'gay pride' gloss over other possibilities of sexual expression? Queer postcolonial studies, by addressing these questions of universalism and inequitable relations of power, has the potential to destabilize the prevailing 'truths' of gay identity and politics.

It is also crucial to study the culturally and historically specific formations of sexuality and gender in global southern contexts. In Jamaica, ideas about visibility and

---

[396] "Jamaica Stages First Public 'Gay Pride,' *UK Gay News*, posted April 8, 2010, http://ukgaynews.org.uk/ Archive/ 10/Apr/0801.htm (accessed April 10, 2010).
[397] Ibid.

silence vary across social strata. Affluent, 'uptown' queer Jamaicans who live in the hills surrounding Kingston are often protected from homophobic violence, by virtue of being physically removed from the more dangerous garrison communities near the harbor.[398] Security fences, secluded homes, and middle-class values sometimes enable wealthier men and women to live more open lives as same-sex loving people. This openness, however, is tempered by the symbolic violence of popular culture, politicians, and the church. And since they are not guaranteed protection from physical violence, visibility is highly constrained. Still, in a society imagined as the "most homophobic place on earth,"[399] middle- and upper-class same-sex loving people often escape violence and live without the constant threat of violence. For instance, in 1999, JFLAG founder Brian Williamson managed to open a gay dance club in New Kingston, a middle-class neighborhood in the capital. (However, the fact that Williamson was murdered in an apparently homophobic attack casts some doubt on the possibility of open queerness in Jamaica.) On the other hand, queer people in poor communities are often more vulnerable to violence. Since queers in the ghettos likely have less privacy, they are more prone to "do their business in the streets."[400] The ghettos of Kingston and Montego Bay are already rocked by violent crime, and queers are afforded less security in dangerous communities. Because of this, poor queer people are more often the targets of homophobic violence in Jamaica.[401]

HIV/AIDS stigma in Jamaica also affects how different people understand and express their sexualities. In Jamaican society, HIV/AIDS is highly stigmatized, in part due to its association with homosexuality and the perception of the disease (and the

---

[398] White and Carr, 354.
[399] Tim Padgett, "The Most Homophobic Place on Earth," *Time*, April 12, 2006.
[400] White and Carr, 354.
[401] Ibid., 354.

behavior which supposedly causes the disease) as an import from the colonial powers.[402]

Consequently, homophobia and AIDS stigma affects the access and visibility of queer

people. Poor men and women are more likely to rely on public health services for

HIV/AIDS treatment, but run the risk of being exposed (or perceived) as homosexual,

and are therefore vulnerable to violence and persecution.[403] Economic privilege,

however, allows certain people to opt out of public health and instead seek care from

private doctors. Thus, wealth facilitates the invisibility of AIDS among upper classes and

reinforces the disease's association with poverty. Because poor people are often unable

to procure anti-retroviral drugs, they are much more likely to show the visible signs of

infection as their disease progresses.[404] These visual markers of disease (and perceived

homosexuality) expose poor queer and non-queer people to violence, exclusion, and

police harassment. To be sure, the wealth/poverty binary is unstable and rife with

contradictions; although the income gap in Jamaica is strikingly wide, not all people fall

into the categories of wealthy and impoverished. Also, I do not intend to foreclose the

diverse ways in which people of all socioeconomic classes perceive sexual identity and

practice. However, this example does demonstrate that class and location have profound

effects on understandings of silence, visibility and gay identity.

The "Homophobic Hellhole"[405]: The Violence of Liberal Gay Politics

Taking cues from the writing of Puar, Mohanty, and Manalansan, I would like to

conclude by addressing the ways in which Anglo-American gay activism orientalizes

Jamaican society. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Anglo-American gay activists have

painted an undifferentiated picture of Jamaica as homophobic and violent. Boycott

---

[402] Ibid., 354-355.
[403] Ibid., 354.
[404] Ibid., 354.
[405] Besen, "Killer Vacation."

Jamaica activist Timothy Kincaid often gestures at a unified Jamaica: "You are a nation that celebrates violence" is paired with the demand that Jamaicans "repent of [their] murderous ways."[406] Kincaid is also prone to inflammatory, visceral descriptors like "its soul is seething with hatred."[407] These discursive moves represent Jamaica as a dangerous, violent place, and Jamaican people as unified in their hatred of homosexuals. As rhetoric, the persuasiveness of these phrases is questionable, but as discursive practice they are part of a broader tendency to criminalize entire nations for the crimes of some. There is little doubt that the Jamaican government often sanctions anti-gay violence, and that popular culture is rife with homophobic imagery, but to characterize the entire country as a "homophobic hellhole"[408] is reductive. Like Orientalist discourses, these discursive practices deny the lived experiences of individual people, and characterize the actions of some Jamaicans as representative of the entire culture. Following Puar, these Western queer liberals thus position the United States as relatively progressive, distancing 'our' liberal society from 'them' in Jamaica. In the process, Boycott Jamaica activists leave American homophobia under-theorized, colluding with the U.S. nationalist project that has summoned a rather small group of gays and lesbians into full (consumer) citizenship.

Although I am critical of the cultural essentialism of Anglo-American gay activists, I do not want to foreclose discussion of 'strategic essentialism' and its potential political utility. Postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak famously suggests a "strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest."[409] Although Spivak – by virtue of her frequent use of Derridean deconstruction – usually resists essentialism, she also puts forward the possibility that essentialism might have strategic use for

---

[406] Kincaid, "World's Impression."
[407] Timothy Kincaid, "Travel Warning."
[408] Besen, "Killer Vacation."
[409] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987): 205.

political purposes. In the context of Spivak's writing, it might be politically useful to speak as a woman or a subaltern subject, for example, to challenge colonial discourse.[410] This is not to deny that these categories are historically and socially constructed, but to willingly mobilize such categories to create solidarity and make political change. Feminist scholar Diana Fuss also contributes a powerful argument in favor of 'risking' essence for political purposes.[411] Fuss approaches essentialism from a different perspective than Spivak, using the 'risk' of essence as a way to challenge the impasse of the constructionism vs. essentialism debate in feminist theory. Rather than rejecting essentialism as such, Fuss contends that even the most anti-essentialist social constructionist discourses – like deconstruction – rely upon "hidden essentialism."[412] Fuss argues that essentialism is not "always and everywhere reactionary," for this very accusation hinges upon the irreducibility it disavows, by assuming that essentialism has an essence.[413] Instead, she suggests: "the radicality or conservatism of essentialism depends, to a significant degree, on *who* is utilizing it, *how* it is deployed, and *where* its effects are concentrated" (emphasis in original).[414] Thus, Fuss leaves room for politically motivated uses of essentialism that are not necessarily reactionary nor liberatory. Fuss' writing peers into a middle ground in which neither essentialism nor constructionism can satisfactorily theorize the social world, and insists that each term of the binary opposition frequently relies upon the other, though this reliance is often unspoken or effaced.[415]

With this in mind, I acknowledge that activism is very often, and necessarily, essentializing. Activist discourse must, to some extent, boil down complex issues into digestible pieces in order to elicit wider support. Many activists simplify complicated

---

[410] Ibid., 205.
[411] Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989): 1.
[412] Ibid., 13.
[413] Ibid., 21.
[414] Ibid., 20.
[415] Ibid., 1.

social issues with great success; a good example is the outrageous imagery of ACT UP, especially its "silence=death" slogan, which helped to publicize and politicize the suffering of people with AIDS. However, with reference to Fuss' insistence that the radicality of essentialism depends upon who deploys it and how, I would argue that the Anglo-American activists I have studied do not 'risk' essence in a radical or progressive way. As I have argued throughout this thesis, these activists often put forward uncritical, essentialized understandings of gay identity, race, and ideal gay political action. To be clear, this is not to say that the "risk of essence" is always invalid.[416] To activate essentialism may indeed be valuable, especially if used to distribute messages to potential activists, build affinities between different groups of people, or even to incite anger among people not directly affected by the issue in question. At the same time, I am not entirely convinced that, in practice, strategic essentialism is always worth the 'risk,' so to speak. For instance, does strategic essentialism perform violence on the very people it seeks to liberate? If so, when, how, and by whom? Can essentialism as a directed strategy – not a general theory – actually distance itself from rigid essentialist theoretical frameworks? Can we continue to engage in anti-essentialist theoretical projects *and* selectively deploy essentialism in political praxis? I do not intend this project to answer these questions. I hope instead that this project challenges the uncritical uses of strategic essentialism by *certain* political actors, while leaving open the possibility of more inclusive and progressive activism.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter was meant to consider existing scholarship at the intersections of queer, postcolonial and race studies. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this project to fully critique the limitations of gay liberalism in international cultural politics. Instead,

---

[416] Ibid., 1.

I offer these writers as exemplary of scholarship that can problematize the ways in which we stage politics across borders and cultures. Postcolonial scholar Sara Salih recently wrote of the queer-dancehall confrontation: "a queer postcolonial reading . . . may suggest interpretive possibilities in which the complexities of national, sexual, gendered positionalities are acknowledged and critiqued."[417] Indeed, queer postcolonial analysis might offer unique readings of this discourse. This new discipline may also have the capacity to challenge the fixation on identity politics that currently drives Anglo-American queer activism. By interrogating the "transexions of race, gender, and nation,"[418] not to mention misogyny, violence, music, class, and international development, interdisciplinary scholarship suggests the potential for bridging gaps and performing a more productive "sound clash."[419]

---

[417] Salih, 3.
[418] Ibid., 3.
[419] Cooper, *Sound Clash*, 1.

AFTERWORD

You can't talk about gay rights in Jamaica when a black boy does not even have food and clothes. How the hell are you going to tell him to allow somebody to be gay, when he isn't even being allowed to eat?[420]

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that the Anglo-American gay activism that targets Jamaican dancehall homophobia is deeply flawed, and sometimes enacts violence through discourse and political strategies. I suggest, then, that theoretical work must be done that seriously engages with the intersections of many types of oppression, since Jamaican homophobia is just one symptom of an international problem linked to poverty, global capitalism, repressive gender and sexual ideologies, and racial subordination. I have argued that theorists like Mohanty, Puar, Manalansan, and Alexander, among others, have made significant strides in exposing the hierarchies entrenched in the interactions between global north and south. Developing types of political praxis, however, might be even more difficult than the theory that supports it.

In order to look toward the future, and think about effective, inclusive ways of staging politics, I have chosen to end with the ideas of Jamaican poet Staceyann Chin. Chin is a lesbian poet, performance artist, and activist now living in the United States, who has achieved a remarkable level of success in slam poetry, especially considering the often radical nature of her work. A victim of sexual assault in Jamaica – an attack which she says was motivated by homophobia – Chin now speaks internationally about violence, misogyny, homophobia, and poverty in Jamaican society. In 2007, she even appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* to talk about her experiences with homophobia in Jamaica. Chin's work intervenes in the often inflammatory discourse of Anglo-American gay activists by taking account of the many forms of oppression in Jamaican society; she argues that homophobia is symptomatic of a complex matrix of subordination, informed

---

[420] Staceyann Chin, qtd. by MayaTrotz, *Jouvay.com*, posted November 9, 2004, http://www.jouvay.com/ interviews/ staceyann.html (accessed April 22, 2010).

by capitalism, national pride, corrupt politics, religion, and poverty.[421] Consequently, her work, as evidenced by the quotation above, exposes the narrowness of single-issue gay politics by addressing the scourge of poverty in Jamaica. Chin expands the category of oppressed peoples to include lesbians, the poor, and all women, treating homophobic oppression as a class and gender issue as much as a sexual one. Following the black feminist appeal to interrogate the forces of patriarchy, racism, class exploitation, and homophobia, Chin urges a more expansive and inclusive approach to anti-homophobic work in Jamaica.

This is not to say that white Westerners should not be involved in Jamaican anti-homophobic politics, nor do I locate the possibility for political action solely within the 'local' and 'authentic' experience. However, at the very least, Anglo-American gay activists must work with the Jamaican people they purport to represent. For Boycott Jamaica to argue that most Jamaicans support a consumer boycott – even though JFLAG unequivocally denounced it – is not nearly sufficient. By enacting American-based boycotts on Jamaican goods, Boycott Jamaica demonstrated a clear disregard for the voices of Jamaican queer people, while uncritically deploying American consumerist and imperialist privilege. Instead of a boycott, I believe that any political praxis that hopes to make change in Jamaica must seriously engage with the opinions and lived experiences of Jamaican queer people. Beyond being only a queer issue, we must acknowledge that many Jamaican people – yes, even homophobes – are victimized by the international division of labor and the lack of social welfare programs. Anglo-American gay activists, in their emphasis on homophobia, ignore even the most obvious of other forms of oppression, especially the metaphorical and physical violence against women condoned by some dancehall music.

---

[421] Ibid.

Due to the interactive and productive nature of oppression, I argue that political praxis must engage with other groups of marginalized people. One possible strategy is for gay social justice groups to align with trade unions and other labor organizations in the Caribbean region. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Harvey Milk's participation in the Coors Brewing Company boycott was just one component of a wide-ranging labor strike. Through coalition politics, Milk addressed the concerns of groups other than homosexuals, and in turn earned the support of many union members for gay legal reform. I am not making the simplistic argument that participation in union actions will automatically earn gay activists the support of Jamaican people. However, I do think that political actions that address the intersectional nature of domination, and demonstrate an active concern for the lived experiences of the Jamaican working class, can help to assuage the tensions between Jamaican people and 'foreign' gay activists. For instance, Chin plans to start a poverty relief program in Jamaica directed at impoverished youth. She envisions a group of queer women collecting food and clothing for young black children, in an effort to both help the poor and offer positive, affirming images of queer people for young Jamaicans. Like Milk's boycott, efforts like these may serve a dual purpose: to fight oppression and domination beyond homophobia, and to create solidarity between formerly opposed groups of people based on mutual understanding and respect.

In the Jamaican context, political strategies situated in political economy might be ideal, because they have the potential to transcend the polarizing nature of liberal identity politics. Workers, after all, are not necessarily united by race, sexual orientation, or gender. This type of politics may also counteract the stereotypes of Western gay people as wealthy, exploiting tourists, trolling the Jamaican shores for erotic encounters with young black men. As Rosemary Hennessy reminds us, the 'gay-friendly' policies of American corporations often rest on the backs of exploited, underpaid workers in the

'third world.'[422] To expose and attack the exploitative nature of global capitalism – even in the small-scale politics of Jamaican labor unions – might help to expand Anglo-American gay political agendas *and* reverse the largely negative representations of white gays in Jamaica as neo-imperialists. But this type of politics will require Anglo-American gay activists to expand their perspectives, and attempt to address the many ways in which people are dominated; it is not necessary to abandon critiques of homophobia, but to expand those critiques in ways that will include the poor, the unemployed, and queer people of color. Only when gay activists acknowledge the urgency of fighting interlocking forms of oppression can we begin to stage inclusive, understanding politics between global north and south, and indeed within our own communities.

---

[422] Hennessy, 140.

Bibliography

Adam, Barry D. "Moral Regulation and the Disintegrating Canadian State." In *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement*, edited by Barry D. Adam, Jan W. Duyvendak, and Andre Krouwel, 12-29. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999.

Adams, L.Emilie. *Understanding Jamaican Patois: An Introduction to Afro-Jamaican Grammar.* Kingston: LHM Publishing Ltd, 1991.

Alexander, M. Jacqui. "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be A Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas." *Feminist Review* 48 (Autumn 1994): 5-23.

Alexander, M. Jacqui. "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy." In *Feminist Genealogies, Democratic Futures*, edited by M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 63-100. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Alexander, M. Jacqui. *Pedagogies of Crossing*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Allahar, Anton. "Class, 'Race,' and Ethnic Nationalism in Trinidad." In *Ethnicity, Class, and Nationalism: Caribbean and Extra-Caribbean Dimensions*, edited by Anton Allahar, 227-257. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005.

Altman, Dennis. *Homosexuality: Oppression and Liberation*. New York: Outerbridge & Dientsfrey, 1971.

Altman, Dennis. "Rupture or Continuity? The Internationalization of Gay Identities." *Social Text* 48, Vol. 14, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 77-94.

Altman, Dennis. *Global Sex*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Andersen, Neils Akerstrom. *Discursive Analytical Strategies: Understanding Foucault, Koselleck, Laclau, Luhmann*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2003.

Bakare-Yusuf, Bibi. "Clashing Interpretations in Dancehall Culture." *Small Axe* 11, no. 1 (October 2006): 161-173.

Banton, Buju. "Boom Bye Bye," *The Early Years: 1990-1995*. Penthouse Records. CD. 2001.

Barnard, Ian. *Queer Race: Cultural Interventions in the Racial Politics of Queer Theory*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004.

Berlant, Lauren. *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

Berlant, Lauren and Elizabeth Freeman. "Queer Nationality." In *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, edited by Michael Warner, 193-229. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Bhabha, Homi K. "The Other Question . . ." *Screen* 24, no. 6 (November/December 1983): 18-36.

Bhabha, Homi K. "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817." *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 144-165.

Black, Stephanie. *Life and debt* [motion picture], VHS. Directed by Stephanie Black. Kingston, Jamaica: Tuff Gong Pictures, 2001.

Bravmann, Scott. *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Butler, Judith. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Campbell, Horace. *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1987.

Carbado, Devon W. "Black Rights, Gay Rights, Civil Rights." *UCLA Law Review* 47, no. 6 (August 2000): 1467-1519.

Chari, Hema. "Colonial Fantasies and Postcolonial Identities: Elaboration of Postcolonial Masculinity and Homoerotic Desire." In *Postcolonial, Queer: Theoretical Intersections*, edited by John C. Hawley, 277-304. Albany: State University of New York, 2001.

Chasin, Alexandra. *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Goes To Market*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of a Gay Male World: 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.

Cheek, Julianne. "At the Margins? Discourse Analysis and Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Health Research* 14, no. 8 (October 2004): 1140-1150.

Chin, Timothy. "'Bullers' and 'Battymen': Contesting homophobia in black popular culture and contemporary Caribbean literature." *Callaloo* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 127-141.

Clarke, Peter B. *Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement*. San Bernardino: R. Reginald/Borgo Press, 1988.

Cohen, Peter C. "'All They Needed': AIDS, Consumption, and the Politics of Class." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 1 (July 1997): 86-115.

Concannon, Liam. "Citizenship, sexual identity and social exclusion: Exploring issues in British and American social policy." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 28, no. 9-10 (2008): 326-339.

Cooper, Carolyn. *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender, and the "Vulgar" Body of Jamaican Popular Culture*. Durham, Duke University Press, 1993.

Cooper, Carolyn. "'Lyrical Gun': Metaphor and role play in Jamaican dancehall culture." *The Massachusetts Review* 35, no. 3-4 (Autumn 1994): 429-447.

Cooper, Carolyn. *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture At Large*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Crenshaw, Kimberle Williams. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women." In *Critical Race Theory*, edited by Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, 357-383. New York: New Press, 1995.

Crichlow, Wesley. *Buller Men and Batty Bwoys: Hidden Men in Toronto and Halifax Black Communities*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.

Crimp, Douglas and Adam Rolston. *AIDS Demo Graphics*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1990.

Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.

Darity, William. "The Williams Abolition Thesis Before Williams." *Slavery and Abolition* 9, no. 1 (May 1988): 29-41.

Davenport-Hines, Richard. *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to Sex and Sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance*. London: Collins, 1990.

Davis, Andrea. "Translating Narratives of Masculinity Across Borders: A Jamaican Case Study." *Caribbean Quarterly* 52, no. 2-3 (June 2006): 22-38.

D'Emilio, John. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

D'Emilio, John. *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University.* New York, Routledge, 1992.

D'Emilio, John. *The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

Duberman, Martin. *About Time: Exploring the Gay Past.* New York: Seahorse, 1986.

Duberman, Martin. *Stonewall.* New York: Penguin, 1993.

Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy.* Boston: Beacon, 2003.

Eaton, George E. *Alexander Bustamante and Modern Jamaica.* Kingston: Kingston Publishers Ltd., 1975.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Essay on Self-Reliance.* East Aurora, NY: Roycroft, 1905.

Eng, David L., Judith Halberstam and Jose E. Munoz. "Introduction: What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?" *Social Text* 84-85, Vol. 23, no. 3-4 (Fall 2005): 1-17.

Epstein, Steven. "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity: The Limits of Social Constructionism." In *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader*, edited by Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider, 134-159. London: Routledge, 1998.

Epstein, Steven. "Gay and Lesbian Movements in the United States: Dilemmas of Identity, Diversity, and Political Strategy." In *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement*, edited by Barry D. Adam, Jan W. Duyvendak and Andre Krouwel, 30-90. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1999.

Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Faludi, Susan. *The Terror Dream: Myth and Misogyny in an Insecure America.* New York: Henry Holt, 2007.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* New York: Grove Press, 2004.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 2008.

Fetner, Tina. "Working Anita Bryant: The Impact of Christian Anti-Gay Activism on Lesbian and Gay Movement Claims." *Social Problems* 48, no. 3 (August 2001): 411-428.

Flew, Terry. *Understanding Global Media*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Friedman, Milton and Rose Friedman. *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge Classics, 2002.

Fuss, Diana. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Gilroy, Paul. *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. London: Hutchinson, 1987.

Gopinath, Gayatri. "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora: South Asian Sexualities in Motion." *positions* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 467-489.

Gross, Larry. *Up From Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994.

Gutzmore, Cecil. "Casting the First Stone! Policing of Homo/Sexuality in Jamaican Popular Culture." *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 6, no. 1 (April 2004): 118-134.

Halberstam, Judith. "Shame and White Gay Masculinity." *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (Fall 2005): 219-233.

Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978.

Hall, Stuart. "What is this 'black' in black popular culture?" *Social Justice* 20, no. 1-2 (Spring-summer 1993): 104.

Hall, Stuart. "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse." In *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, edited by Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates, 72-81. London: Open University Press, 2007.

Hennessy, Rosemary. *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Hill Collins, Patricia. "Gender, Black Feminism, and Black Political Economy." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 658 (March 2000): 41-53.

hooks, bell. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." In *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, edited by Sharlene Hesse-Biber, Christina Gilmartin, and Robin Lydenberg, 179-194. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

hooks, bell. "Feminism: A Transformational Politic." In *Race, Class and Gender in the United States*, edited by Paula Rothenberg, 601-608. New York: Worth, 2001.

Hope, Donna. "Dons and Shottas: Performing Violent Masculinity in Dancehall Culture." *Social and Economic Studies* 55, no. 1-2 (March 2006) 115-131.

Hope, Donna. "Passa Passa: Interrogating Cultural Hybridities in Jamaican Dancehall." *Small Axe* 21 (October 2006): 125-139.

Hutchinson, Darren L. "'Gay Rights' For 'Gay Whites'?: Race, Sexual Identity, and Equal Protection Discourse." *Cornell Law Review* 85, no. 5 (July 2000): 1358-1391.

Kinsman, Gary. *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987.

Lane, Alycee J. "Black Bodies/Gay Bodies: The Politics of Race in the Gay/Military Battle." *Callaloo* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 1994): 1074-1088.

Lowe, Nicholas. "Who Needs a Prosecution to Make a Point? The Forgotten British Culture Wars." *Social Identities* 13, no. 2 (March 2007): 139-158.

Lucas, Ian. *outrage! an oral history*. London: Cassell, 1998.

Manalansan, Martin F. "In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma." *GLQ* 2 (1995): 425-438.

Manalansan, Martin F. "Diasporic Deviants/Divas: How Filipino Gay Transmigrants 'Play with the World.'" In *Queer Diasporas*, edited by Cindy Patton and Benigno Sanchez-Eppler, 183-203. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

Manalansan, Martin F. "Queer Intersections: Sexuality and Gender in Migration Studies." *International Migration Review* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 224-249.

Marshall, Stuart. "The Contemporary Use of Gay Politics: The Third Reich." In *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video*, edited by Bad Object-Choices. Seattle: Bay Press, 1991.

Marx, Karl. *Capital Volume 1*. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1955.

Massad, Joseph. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 361-385.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Meeks, Brian. "The Political Moment in Jamaica: The Dimensions of Hegemonic Dissolution." In *Dispatches From The Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*, edited by Manning Marable, 52-74. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Mercer, Kobena. *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Mertus, Julie. "The Rejection of Human Rights Framings: The Case of LGBT Advocacy in the US." *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (November 2007): 1036-1064.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." In *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, edited by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, 51-80. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991.

Munoz, Jose Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Munroe, Trevor. *Politics of Constitutional Decolonization: Jamaica 1944-62*. Surrey: Unwin, 1972.

Nardi, Peter M. and Ralph Bolton "Gay-Bashing: Violence and Aggression Against Gay Men and Lesbians." In *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader*,

edited by Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider, 412-433. London: Routledge, 1998.

Niaah, Sonjah Stanley. "'Slackness Personified,' Historicized and Delegitimized." *Small Axe* 11, no. 1 (November 2006): 174-185.

Noble, Denise. "postcolonial criticism, transnational identifications and the hegemonies of dancehall's academic and popular performativities." *Feminist Review* 90, no. 1 (October 2008): 106-127.

Noel, Peter and Robert Marriott. "Batty Boys in Babylon." *Village Voice* 38, no. 2 (January 12, 1993): 29-36.

Parker, Ian. "Discovering Discourses, Tackling Texts." In *Critical Strategies for Social Research*, edited by William K. Carroll, 252-261. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2004.

Patton, Cindy. *Sex and Germs*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986.

Phillips, Richard. "Histories of Sexuality and Imperialism: What's the Use?" *History Workshop Journal* 63, no. 1 (2007): 136-153.

Plummer, Ken. "The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Britain: Schisms, Solidarities, and Social Worlds." In *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement*, edited by Barry D. Adam, Jan W. Duyvendak and Andre Krouwel, 133-157. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999.

Post, Robert C. "The Social Foundations of Defamation Law." *California Law Review* 74, no. 1 (January 1986): 691-742.

Potter, Jonathan and Margaret Wetherell. *Discourse and Social Psychology Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*. London & Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1987.

Puar, Jasbir. "Global Circuits: Transnational Sexualities and Trinidad." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 1039-1062.

Puar, Jasbir. "A Transnational Feminist Critique of Queer Tourism." *Antipode* 34, no. 5 (November 2002): 935-946.

Puar, Jasbir. "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages." *Social Text* 84-85, Vol. 23, no. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2005): 121-139.

Puar, Jasbir. "Mapping US Homonormativities." *Gender, Place and Culture* 13, no. 1 (February 2006): 67-88.

Puar, Jasbir and Amit Rai. "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots." *Social Text* 20, no. 3 (November 2003): 117-148.

Ragusa, Angela. "Social change and the corporate construction of gay markets in the *New York Times*' advertising business news." *Media, Culture & Society* 27, no. 5 (September 2005): 653-676.

Rayside, David. "Homophobia, Class and Party in England." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 1 (March 1992): 121-149.

Rayside, David. *On the Fringe: Gays and Lesbians in Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Reid-Pharr, Robert. "Extending Queer Theory to Race and Ethnicity." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 48, no. 49 (August 16, 2002): B7-9.

Reuveny, Rafael X. and William R. Thompson. "Introduction: The North-South Divide and International Studies: A Symposium." *International Studies Review* 9, no. 4 (December 2007): 556-564.

Ross, Andrew. "Mr. Reggae DJ, Meet the International Monetary Fund." *Black Renaissance* 1, no. 3 (July 1998): 208.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Salih, Sara. "'Our people know the difference, black is a race, jew is a religion, and f*g**tism is a sin': Towards a Queer Postcolonial Hermeneutics." *Wasafiri* 22, no. 1 (March 2007): 1-5.

Saunders, Patricia. J. "Is not everything good to eat, good to talk: Sexual economy and dancehall music in the global marketplace." *Small Axe* 7, no. 1 (April 2003): 95-115.

Schacter, Jane S. "Skepticism, Culture and the Gay Civil Rights Debate in a Post-Civil-Rights Era." *Harvard Law Review* 110, no. 3 (January 1997): 684-731.

Schilt, Paige. "Queering Lord Clark: Diasporic Formations and Traveling Homophobia in Isaac Julien's 'The Darker Side of Black.'" In *Postcolonial, Queer: Theoretical Intersections*, edited by John C. Hawley, 185-206. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.

Schulman, Sarah. *My American Life: Lesbian and Gay Life During the Reagan/Bush Years*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Seidman, Steven. "Identity and Politics in a 'Postmodern' Gay Culture: Some Historical and Conceptual Notes." In *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, edited by Michael Warner, 105-142. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Shilts, Randy. *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.

Shilts, Randy. *And the Band Played On*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988.

Skover, David M. and Kellye Y. Testy. "LesBiGay Identity as Commodity." *California Law Review* 90 (2002): 223-256.

Smith, Anthony. "The Myth of the 'Modern Nation' the Myths of Nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11, no. 1 (1988): 1-26.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York: Methuen, 1987.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 66-111. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Spurlin, William J. "Broadening Postcolonial Studies/Decolonizing Queer Studies: Emerging 'Queer' Identities and Cultures in Southern Africa." In *Postcolonial, Queer: Theoretical Intersections*, 185-206. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.

Stolzoff, Norman C. *Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

Stryker, Susan. *Gay by the Bay: A History of Queer Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996.

Sullivan, Andrew. *Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.

Thussu, Daya Kishan. "Live TV and Bloodless Deaths: War, Infotainment, and 24/7 News." In *War and the Media*, edited by Daya Kishan Thussu and Des Freeman, 117-132. London: Sage, 2003.

Treichler, Paula A. *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.

Vaid, Urvashi. *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.

Warner, Michael. *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, edited by Michael Warner. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Warner, Michael. *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. New York: Free Press, 1999.

Watney, Simon. *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media*. London: Cassell, 1997.

Weeks, Jeffrey. *Sex, Politics and Society*: *The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*. London: Longman, 1981.

Wetherell, Margaret. "Themes in Discourse Research: The Case of Diana." In *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, edited by Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates, 14-28. London: Sage Publications, 2001.

White, Ruth C. and Robert Carr. "Homosexuality and HIV/AIDS Stigma in Jamaica." *Culture, Health & Society* 7, no. 4 (July-August 2005): 347-359.

Williams, Eric. *Capitalism & Slavery*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1991.

Discourse Archive Bibliography

Besen, Wayne. "The Globalization of Gay Bashing." *Boycott Jamaica*, April 22, 2009. http://www.boycottjamaica.org/?p=413 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Besen, Wayne. "The Violence Continues . . . Now, What's Your Plan?" *Boycott Jamaica*, August 15, 2009. http://www.boycottjamaica.org/?p=437 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Besen, Wayne. "Jamaica: A Killer Vacation For Gays." *The Huffington Post*, April 11, 2009. http://www.huffingtonpost. com/wayne-besen/jamaica-a-killer-vacation_b_185792.html (accessed February 13, 2010).

Branigan, Tania. "BBC Withdraws Homophobic Reggae Tracks." *The Guardian*, August 30, 2002.

Brettle, Rob K. "Letter: Ragga, 'racism' and attacks on gays." *The Independent*, October 8, 1993.

Burroway, Jim. "Jamaica Boycott Kicks Off in San Francisco." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, March 28, 2009. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/03/28/10228 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Burroway, Jim. "JFLAG Opposes Jamaican Boycott." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, March 30, 2009. http://www.box turtlebulletin.com/2009/03/30/10251 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Burroway, Jim. "Jamaican Boycott Update." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, April 14, 2009. http://www.boxturtle bulletin.com/2009/04/14/10667 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Burroway, Jim. "Jamaica Boycott: What Are The Alternatives?" *Box Turtle Bulletin*, April 15, 2009. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/04/15/10691 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Burroway, Jim. "Live Nation, Ticketmaster Promote Murder Music Concert Tour." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, August 25, 2009. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/08/25/14278 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Burroway, Jim. "British Consul Killed in Jamaica in Anti-Gay Attack." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, September 11, 2009. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/09/11/14596 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Burston, Paul. "Musical Scares; Batties Bite Back." *The Guardian Weekend Page*, November 20, 1993.

Burston, Paul. "Inside Story: Batties Bite Back." *The Guardian*, November 20, 1993.

Chaudhary, Vivek. "Gays to Jam BBC Lines." *The Guardian*, April 14, 1993.

Chideya, Farai. "Hip Hop's Black Eye." *Spin*, August 1993.

Cusick, James. "Macho music that puts gays in fear for their lives; James Cusick meets homosexuals who are targets of hatred that ragga rouses among the young." *The Independent*, October 4, 1993.

Gibbons, Fiachra. "Gay rights protest at MOBO Awards." *The Guardian*, October 2, 2002.

Haring, Bruce. "Mercury to sponsor gay PSAs." *Daily Variety*, November 20, 1992.

Kincaid, Timothy. "Conditions Remain Frightening for Gays in Jamaica." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, February 1, 2008. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/02/01/1379 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Jamaican Church all but Endorses Violence Against Gays." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, February 18, 2008. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/02/18/1451 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "NYT Reports Jamaica's Anti-Gay Violence, Ex-Gay Efforts." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, February 25, 2008. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/02/25/1470 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Jamaican Tourism Minister Shrugs Off Violence Against Gays." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, April 7, 2008. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/04/07/1767 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Jamaica Gleaner Calls for 'Dealing' with Homosexuality." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, April 10, 2008. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/04/10/1789 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Jamaica Gleaner Continues Its Hate Campaign." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, April 12, 2008. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/04/12/1800 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "More Homophobia Spewing out of Jamaica." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, April 14, 2008. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/04/14/1803 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Almost Getting It." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, April 17, 2008. http://www.boxturtlebulletin. com/2008/04/17/1828 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Jamaican Objects to the World's Impression." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, August 12, 2008. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/08/12/2595 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Travel Warning – Stay Away From Jamaica." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, March 7, 2009. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/03/07/9523 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "This is Jamaica and we are against homosexuals." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, April 6, 2009. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/04/06/10443 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Jamaica's Culture of Torture and Death." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, July 21, 2009. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/07/21/13488 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Jamaican Police Deny Murder Was Gay Hate Crime." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, September 14, 2009. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/09/14/14672 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Gay Jamaicans Get Church." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, September 25, 2009. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/09/25/14898 (accessed March 20, 2010).

Kincaid, Timothy. "Jamaican Prime Minister: 'No Acceptance of Same-Sex Unions'." *Box Turtle Bulletin*, October 14, 2009. http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2009/10/14/15585 (accessed March 20, 2010).

MacKinnon, Ian. "Ragga music blamed for attacks on homosexuals; Young blacks accused of jibes and violence against gay men." *The Independent*, October 1, 1993.

Morgan, Joan. "No Apologies, No Regrets." *Vibe*, October 1993.

Nelson, Havelock. "Controversy Explodes Over Buju's 'Boom'; Rock Steady Going Strong; Elliot's Press." *Billboard*, November 7, 1992.

Petrelis, Michael. "Which 'Boycott Jamaica' Logo is Best? Cast Your Vote Now!" *The Petrelis Files*, March 25, 2009. http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/03/which-boycott-jamaica-logo-is-best-cast.html#links (accessed March 20, 2010).

Petrelis, Michael. "Bay Area Reporter: Boycott Jamaica." *The Petrelis Files*, March 26, 2009. http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/03/bay-area-reporter-boycott-jamaica-bay.html#links (accessed March 20, 2010).

Petrelis, Michael. "Tie US Aid to Jamaica to Gay Rights Improvements." *The Petrelis Files*, April 1, 2009. http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/04/tie-us-aid-to-jamaica-to-gay-rights.html#links (accessed March 20, 2010).

Petrelis, Michael. "The Gleaner: Gays in US 'Boycott Jamaica'." *The Petrelis Files*, April 1, 2009. http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/04/gleaner-gays-in-us-boycott-jamaica.html (accessed March 20, 2010).

Petrelis, Michael. "SF Chron, SoVo: Jamaican Boycott Reports." *The Petrelis Files*, April 3, 2009. http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/04/sf-chron-sovo-jamaican-boycott-reports.html (accessed March 20, 2010).

Petrelis, Michael. "Gay Jamaican Exile Endorsed Boycott in 2008." *The Petrelis Files*, April 4, 2009. http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/04/gay-jamaican-exile-endorsed-boycott-in.html (accessed March 20, 2010).

Petrelis, Michael. "SF Gays Meet With Buju Banton; His First Sit-Down with Gays." *The Petrelis Files*, October 12, 2009. http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/10/sf-gays-meet-with-buju-banton-his-first.html (accessed March 20, 2010).

Petrelis, Michael. "Gleaner: 'Jamaica is Deeply Homophobic'." *The Petrelis Files*, October 26, 2009. http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2009/10/another-gay-murder-in-jamaica-wapo.html (accessed March 20, 2010).

Petridis, Alexis. "G2: 'They're good beats. We don't take the lyrics seriously': Controversy is raging around homophobic rap and ragga. But one group of DJs and club-goers love this music – even though they're gay." *The Guardian*, September 6, 2004.

Porter, Adam. "Ragga: The Music of Guns and Sex." *Evening Standard*, April 14, 1993.

Rule, Sheila. "The Pop Life: NBC Drops Rapper and He Recants." *The New York Times*, March 3, 1993.

Sanneh, Kelefa. "Dancehall's Vicious Side: Antigay Attitudes." *The New York Times*, September 6, 2004.

Sinclair, David. "Global Music Pulse; The Latest Music News From Around The Planet." *Billboard*, December 5, 1992.

Tatchell, Peter. "Black Hate Singers Urge: Kill Queers." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, 2002. http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/reggae. htm (accessed March 10, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "Why can blacks bash gays?" *New Statesman*, October 14, 2002.

Tatchell, Peter. "The reggae lyrics of hate." *New Statesman*, September 29, 2003.

Tatchell, Peter. "Dancehall Dossier." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, 2004. http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/Dancehall-Dossier-FINAL.pdf (accessed March 20, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "It is not racist to condemn black homophobia." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, 2004. http://www.petertatchell.net/ international/blackhomophobia. htm (accessed February 13, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "It isn't racist to target Beenie Man." *The Guardian*, August 31, 2004.

Tatchell, Peter. "Black and gay and hunted." *New Statesman*, October 4, 2004.

Tatchell, Peter. "The Queer Killing Fields of Jamaica." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, October 4, 2004. http://www.petertatchell.net/ international/jamaica.htm (accessed March 10, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "Sizzla Denied Visa." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, November 4, 2004. http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/sizzla.htm (accessed March 10, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "Buju Banton charged with gay-bashing attack." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, September 26, 2005. http://www.petertatchell. net/popmusic/bujubanton.htm (accessed February 13, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "Jamaica: Tragic end to attempted gay-bash attack." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, January 6, 2006. http://www. petertatchell.net/international/ jamaicagaybash.htm (accessed March 20, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "Buju Banton acquitted of gay-bash attack." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, January 20, 2006. http://www.petertatchell. net/international/bujubanton.htm (accessed February 13, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "Jamaican gay leader escapes lynching." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, February 20, 2007. http://www.petertatchell.net/ international/jamaicangayleader. htm (accessed March 20, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "Jamaica's police shame." *The Guardian*, March 26, 2007.

Tatchell, Peter. "Reggae tips." *The Guardian*, August 2, 2007.

Tatchell, Peter. "Politicans and pop stars are to blame." *The Independent*, September 12, 2009.

Tatchell, Peter. "Buju Banton's violations of the Reggae Compassionate Act." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, October 9, 2009. http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/buju-bantons-violations-of-the-reggae-compassionate-act.htm (accessed February 13, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "Beenie Man concerts axed in Australia & NZ." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, November 16, 2009. http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/beenie-man-concerts-axed-in-australia-and-nz.htm (accessed February 13, 2010).

Tatchell, Peter. "PepsiCo regrets Beenie Man support." *Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Democracy, Global Justice*, December 9, 2009. http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/pepsi-co-regrets-beenie-man-support.htm (accessed February 13, 2010).

Usborne, David. "BBC Plays 'Burn Gays' Reggae Hit." *Independent on Sunday*, August 19, 2001.

Watrous, Peter. "The Pop Life." *The New York Times*, October 28, 1992.

Zabihyan, Kimi. "A Roar From the Lion's Den." *The Guardian*, December 8, 1995.

APPENDIX I – Dancehall Dossier example[423]

DANCEHALL DOSSIER **OUTRAGE!**

Buju Banton

Buju Banton
Real Name: Mark Myrie
Date of Birth: 15 July 1973

Amnesty International statement, 19 August 2004, issued by Susan Lee, Programme Director Americas, International Secretariat, AI London:
"We can confirm that Amnesty International has received information from reputable national and international human rights organisations concerning reports that Buju Banton was involved in a homophobic attack. These reports take the form of statements that allege that on June 24 2004, six men were driven from their home and beaten by a group of armed men, and that the alleged assailants included Buju Banton (Mark Anthony Myrie). The reports further allege that this attack was apparently motivated by hatred of gay men: the victims reported that both before and during the attack the assailants had called the men "battymen" (homosexuals). Amnesty International is further aware that several of the alleged victims were interviewed by a Human Rights Watch researcher who was in Jamaica at the time. Amnesty International has also received reports that several of the alleged victims made official reports to the Constant Spring police station on 25 June 2004."

Where to buy:

Boom Bye Bye
www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00005NF2K

Boom Bye Bye
www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/B000001TB5

Boom Bye Bye
www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/B000001T9W

Buju Banton - Boom Bye Bye
Boom bye bye
Boom [as in gun sound] goodbye, goodbye
[as in we won't be seeing you again, you're dead]
Inna batty bwoy head
In a queer's head
Rude bwoy no promote no nasty man
Rude boys don't promote no queer men
Dem haffi dead
They have to die
Send fi di matic an
Send for the automatic [gun] and
Di Uzi instead
The Uzi instead
Shoot dem no come if we shot dem
Shoot them, don't come if we shoot them
[as in don't come to help them]
Guy come near we
If a man comes near me
Then his skin must peel
Then his skin must peel
[as in pour acid over him]
Burn him up bad like an old tyre wheel
Burn him up badly, like you would burn an old tyre wheel

QUICK FACTS

- Banton is being sought by the Jamaican police in connection with a gay-bashing attack in Kingston, Jamaica, on 24 June 2004.

- He performed Boom Bye Bye as recently as Sunday 8 August 2004 at the Smirnoff 96 festival in Negril, Jamaica

- Boom Bye Bye incites the execution-style killing of gay and lesbian people, by shooting them in the head, pouring acid over them or setting them alight, and burning them like car tyres.

For more information about the campaign
Web: http://www.stopmurdermusic.org
Email: info@stopmurdermusic.org
Telephone: +44 (0) 770 843 5917

STOP MURDER MUSIC

Album: Best of ...
Track: Boom Bye Bye
Artist: Buju Banton
Release Date: 3 Sep 2001
Label: Penthouse

Album: Strictly the Best 9
Track: Boom Bye Bye
Artist: Various Artists
Release Date: 5 Mar 2001
Label: VP Records

Album: Boom Bye Bye
Track: Boom Bye Bye
Artist: Various Artists
Release Date: 31 Oct 1992
Label: Jetstar

---

[423] Tatchell, "Dancehall Dossier."

APPENDIX II: Boycott Jamaica Logos[424]

---

[424] Michael Petrelis, "Which 'Boycott Jamaica' Logo is the Best? Cast Your Vote Now!"