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Global Culture, Island Identity: Continuity and Change in the Afro-Caribbean Community of Nevis by Karen Fog Olwig

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dailies. Many of the articles spoke of human rights abuses – but who, precisely, was abusing whom?

During democratically-elected president Aristide's seven months in office, Amnesty International documented 26 violations – the majority of these committed by the anti-Aristide army. Boston Media Action, citing the Haitian Platform for Human Rights, recently reported "1867 executions, 5096 illegal and arbitrary arrests, and 2171 cases of beatings and shootings under the coup government." Thus, the coup government presided over 99.8 percent of documented human rights abuses, while the Aristide government presided over 0.2 percent of them.

But a very different picture has often been painted in the U.S. media. Boston Media Action analyzed 415 articles on Haiti taken from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Miami Herald*, and the *Boston Globe*: "For the period from September 30 to October 14, 1991," this study concludes, "the papers we studied devote 60% of all paragraphs on human rights abuses to Aristide, and 40% to the coup government."

It is to precisely these predictable conclusions that Robert Lawless's work speaks. A critique of the facile and superficial, *Haiti's Bad Press* is also a troubling case study of the means by which elite bias comes to have its effects among the dis-empowered. *Haiti's Bad Press* should be warmly recommended, not only to students, but also to the general reader who might be interested in this process.

Global Culture, Island Identity: Continuity and Change in the Afro-Caribbean Community of Nevis. KAREN FOG OLWIG. Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993. xi + 239 pp. (Cloth US\$ 54.00)

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This important book sheds light on the interplay of hierarchy and equality, the local and the global, and the Caribbean and the European in the cultural history of Nevis. In addition to bringing recent theoretical concerns with transnationalism and identity to Caribbean studies, Karen Olwig directs Caribbean ethnology away from static conceptions of kinship and household, religion and social life, and African cultural retentions, and toward an integration of kinship, gender, religion, and

culture in terms of shifting notions of inequality in colonial and post-colonial societies. The result is a very significant argument about the embeddedness of European cultural forms in the Caribbean and their transformation by Caribbean peoples over four centuries.

The book contains eight chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion, and is divided into three sections. Each section is about a particular historical moment, from an early modern hierarchical social order, to a modern reordering of the world along liberal lines, finally to a postmodern fragmentation and redefinition of home and community. The first section, "English Patriarchy, African Bondage," argues that early Caribbean colonial society drew from late medieval and early modern English hierarchical social orderings. Seventeenth-century English in the Caribbean incorporated African slaves into a patriarchal model of farm and home life. Under hierarchical principles, slaves like servants occupied an established social position as inferior persons, but as *persons* nonetheless. Olwig maintains that the English patriarchal hierarchy resonated with hierarchical principles underlying societies from which Africans had been taken, and so made "sense," at some level, to the enslaved.

Part 2, "In Pursuit of Respectability," details the radical restructuring of patriarchal hierarchy, as eighteenth-century colonial production shifted from yeoman farming to industrial-style plantations, and the hierarchical world gave way to notions of equality. But this liberal "egalitarian" ordering was open only to those free men who observed new confines of propriety. Those who could not – women, children, slaves, the insane – fell out of the egalitarian system, becoming "less" than human. This had consequences for a new racism: "while the colonizer tended to regard the early African slaves' cultural practices with a mixture of incredulity and curiosity, the later slave culture became increasingly condemned as immoral and animal-like" (p. 7).

Slaves responded to these hierarchical and egalitarian orderings by valuing "sociability" on the one hand and "respectability" on the other. The inclusion of slaves in a hierarchical order demanded "sociable" relations with others, the extension of mutual ties of obligation and support inherent in a hierarchical system (similar to Peter Wilson's "reputation" except that Olwig documents its English dimension). Olwig argues that just as the hierarchical order was eroding under new forms of plantation organization, Caribbean slaves forged solidarities to counter the situation of social death they experienced as unfree persons; these resembled earlier English hierarchical modes of obligation and hierarchical social interaction. Slaves were thus able to express new cultures through a hierarchical "English" form. Later, in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, people were considered free and equal only insofar as they could clearly demonstrate their rational and Godly living through legal marriages, the work ethic, property ownership, and “‘decent and correct’ manners and morals” (George Mosse, quoted on p. 69). Free people of color adopted “respectability” immediately before emancipation as they sought to differentiate themselves from the mass of the unfree. After emancipation the culture of respectability “came to underwrite the new colonial order,” as the ranks of the respectable middle classes of color swelled and as colonial infrastructure increasingly depended on local lackeys (p. 13). Respectability relied on educational and religious institutions which taught upright and independent living, not such sociable institutions as rum-drinking and incurring debts and obligations. Methodism uniquely suited the needs of the emerging respectable classes, for it provided access to leadership positions for poor people and became an important route to respectability and visibility in the new social order.

Olwig argues that the twin values of sociability and respectability have played off each other at least since emancipation, and have shaped the character of decolonization, state formation, and twentieth-century migrations. This is the subject of Part 3, “Home Is Where You Leave It: Paradoxes of Identity.” Political self-determination brought the contradiction between sociability and respectability to a head. The liberal state is founded on and demands respectability, but economic conditions make respectability difficult to achieve and maintain. Olwig suggests that emigration resolves this contradiction because through inclusive (hierarchical) often kin-based ties of sociability and obligation, emigrants send remittances “home” and enable family and friends to achieve and display (egalitarian) respectability without appearing to have achieved it at their neighbor’s expense (p. 173).

Emigration calls into question the very notion of “home,” for Nevisians have reoriented their notions of household toward the global community that sustains it. Consumption of Western luxury goods allows display of respectable living even as people obtain these goods by ties of sociability. Olwig connects the emphasis on display to the reification of “culture” as a commodity in efforts to produce a “national” culture. The final chapters of the book examine new cultural practices in the United States and England through which Nevisians show off their “West Indian” way of life to a global audience. These cultural forms – family reunions, “cultural” celebrations, and expressions of national culture – are precisely the kinds of “culture” recognized by the West, and so Nevisians once again express their “locally generated cultural forms within a foreign medium” (p. 153). For Olwig, however, expressing local difference through global community

may well provide room for maneuver in a world “where Western concepts of equality leave little room for the recognition of other ways of thinking and acting” (p. 208).

Trinidad Ethnicity. KEVIN A. YELVINGTON (ed.). Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993. vii + 296 pp. (Cloth US\$ 31.95)

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Caribbean people's ability to maintain multiplicity challenges neat analytic compartmentalization. The multidisciplinary nature of this book promises not only to capture the complexity of ethnicity in one of the most economically developed and ethnically heterogeneous societies of the Caribbean, but also to lend new insights. *Trinidad Ethnicity* is organized well; the introductory historical articles addressing social and racial stratification in colonial Trinidad provide a solid basis for subsequent discussions on how ethnicity permeates the economic, political, and cultural life of contemporary Trinidad. Yelvington has skillfully enabled a structured engagement to emerge from the individual pieces without compromising the diverse perspectives of the contributors.

There is a problematic tendency in the literature dealing with Indo- and Afro-Caribbean relations to conflate the terms race and ethnicity, and this book is no exception. Terminological slippage can indicate a failure to articulate cogently the relations between abstract theoretical concepts, but sometimes it can also reflect local complexities and idiosyncrasies. In Trinidad, and the Caribbean at large, it is common to refer to people of African descent as a race and to those of East Indian descent as an ethnic group. This difference in terminology is in part due to the way Trinidad's diverse population has been historically imaged. Since this collection engages the discourses on race and ethnicity, the diverse nuances of the terms and their inter-relation should have been explored along with more prudent application of the terms.

The articles vary in analytical rigor. Some contributors rise to the challenge of countering conventional wisdoms while others merely reproduce them – namely, in the form of the plural society model. Indeed, three of the articles (those by Ralph M. Henry, Colin Clarke, and Ralph