

STOP BAUXITE MINING IN THE COCKPIT COUNTRY!

Jamaica's Cockpit Country is under immediate threat from bauxite mining, which would remove forest cover, block and pollute waterways, displace residents, threaten agricultural livelihoods, compromise air quality and threaten the health and well-being of thousands of Jamaican citizens.

The Cockpit Country is an irreplaceable region of limestone forest supporting a unique flora and fauna. In addition, and importantly, it is the major aquifer for rivers rising and flowing both to the northern and southern coasts of the island. These rivers are associated with extensive cave systems which would also be lost or damaged by the proposed mining activities. In many cases knowledge of the underground connections of these river caves is fragmentary, thus making the impacts of mining activities on regional water supplies problematic.

Natural Forest

Cockpit Country is the largest remaining natural forest in Jamaica. The fresh water it stores and releases via almost 40 rivers, streams, springs, upwellings, glades and ponds supplies about 40% of Western Jamaica's water needs. Protection of Cockpit Country also promotes climate resilience in the face of global climate change. It is also home to many Jamaican endemic plants and animals, some of which are only found in Cockpit Country. The area is also an important cultural and historical site for Jamaicans, particularly the Maroons, who still live within its borders.

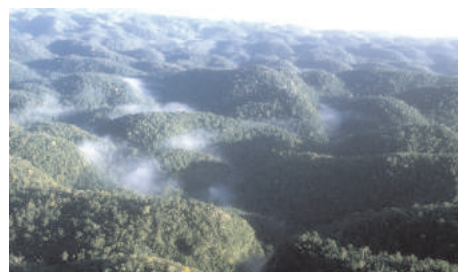


For more than a decade the government of Jamaica has delayed defining a boundary for Cockpit Country, which is under immediate threat: bauxite mining in Cockpit Country would remove forest cover, block and pollute waterways, displace residents, threaten agricultural livelihoods, compromise air quality and threaten the health and well-being of thousands of Jamaican citizens.

Petition

More than 34,000 concerned Jamaican citizens, led by the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET), are celebrating their success in exceeding the targeted 15,000 signatures for a Save Cockpit Country

petition directed at Prime Minister, the Most Honourable Andrew Holness. The petition - which calls on the Prime Minister to establish the boundary of Cockpit Country, close the area to mining, quarrying and prospecting, and declare Cockpit Country a Protected National Park - has attracted 20,407 signatures online and 14,106 signatures.



No justice, no peace

Will ZOSO have any long-term effect?

Given the once-again escalating levels of violent crime in Jamaica, the government passed the Zones of Special Operations (ZOSO) Act in July 2017 premised on a "clear, hold and build" approach. It allows particular crime-prone areas to be put under a state of emergency for initially 60 days, with extensions possible, involving curfews, cordons and searches of people, premises and vehicles with a warrant.

Mindful of the unchanging brutality of the police force, and especially the atrocities carried out in West Kingston in 2010, care was taken to build in safeguards against abuse of citizens by the security forces, both the JCF (police) and JDF (military). Whether these safeguards would work was anyone's guess but most commentators were prepared to hope against hope (nothing more) that they would be effective.

At the same time it was explicitly recognized that without serious social intervention and infrastructural support (the "build" component) any reduction in crime resulting from the "clear and hold" components would be short-lived. A broad-based social intervention committee, headed by the Prime Minister, was to be the driving force although there were doubts that this was really more than just talk, given the unavailability of funds.

Exaggeration

To most people's surprise, a small area in Montego Bay was designated as the first Zone of Special Operations, announced by the Prime Minister on 1 September after consultation with the National Security Council. As with the Iraq war, the figures given to justify the choice were soon found to be complete exaggerations.

Taking this action could have been in response to what the IMF and the local Economic Growth Council had been saying, that crime was hindering economic development. Concern for the safety of our poor inner-city communities was probably secondary, given the usefulness of an exploitable "reserve army of labour". Selecting a small 0.4 square-kilometer area in Montego Bay may have been the result of lobbying by tourism interests and by the fears of tackling somewhere more daunting, with a greater chance of failure.

Inconvenience

Despite only one-third of the security personnel turning out on the first day, the operation went well in terms of quelling the violence. There were no reports of abuse by the security forces, only the inconvenience of the cordons and curfews. Most residents were thankful for the intervention



but did it really achieve very much?

As with the apprehension of Dudas (Christopher Coke) in 2010, criminals were given ample warning to escape before the arrival of the security forces, with possibly dire consequences for other communities. So was it

about reducing violence, or catching criminals – the answer remains deliberately unclear. Whether Mount Salem will remain peaceful after 60 days when the security forces withdraw is anyone's guess, and those who may have turned informer will be living in fear of reprisals.

But what of the social intervention? Still no budget, just a large and cumbersome committee that has begun surveying the situation and now recommending better garbage collection... Will there be a new community centre, upgrades to housing, schools and streets, income-generating projects, new self-sustaining community groups etc etc? Every commentator has pointed out that social interventions can take years to bear fruit, even if done properly. So what really is the plan, especially when such localized operations only move the violent crime to another area?

Social Interventions

It comes down to Peter Tosh's refrain that peace is not enough - equal rights and justice must also be in the mix. Will this administration be prepared to challenge the status quo, which so suits the privileged (providing it doesn't boil over)? Will they break with paramilitary policing, at the same time finding the funds for wide-ranging social interventions and investments? Will they challenge the finance capitalists, including our local banks, who have Jamaica all too readily committed to the ideology of austerity?

ZOSO may be welcomed by troubled communities which are indeed boiling over. But such a piecemeal approach, even if abuse can be avoided, will surely not solve our more fundamental problems.

Paul Ward

The full article can be found on our website:
cls-uk.org.uk/?p=224

Puerto Rico is a colony

Whatever happens to Puerto Rico in the future, it should surprise exactly nobody that the U.S. response to Hurricane Maria was so atrocious. Why would it be anything else? America has treated Puerto Rico with exploitative contempt since the moment it took control of the island. Colonies don't, as a rule, get the top level of care from the empire.

Technically, Puerto Ricans are all U.S. citizens. They pay taxes and serve in the military and don't need a passport to come to the U.S. mainland, and they deserve the same help the people of Texas and Florida received when they were hit by hurricanes.

But if we are really to confront the reality of Puerto Rico's misery—and the reason why the Trump administration has treated its plight with such callous indifference—we need to start talking about Puerto Rico in a far more honest way. Puerto Ricans may be “American”, but Puerto Rico is not part of America in any way that we should celebrate. It is not a “territory” or a “commonwealth” nor should it be described in any other such obfuscatory language people may come up with.

Puerto Rico is a colony.

It has been a U.S. colony since 1898, when Spain handed it over to America as a price of its defeat in the Spanish-American war. It remained a colony even after 1917, when the U.S. granted Puerto Ricans citizenship rights just in time to draft them into World War I. It remained a colony after 1952, when the U.S. renamed it a commonwealth after granting it limited self-government. (Congress made it clear at the time that the “fundamental” colonial relationship was not changing.) And it is still a colony now.

The indignities suffered by Puerto Ricans are legion. They can't vote for president and they don't have full representation in Congress. A part of their country, Vieques, was used for bombing practice by the U.S. military for generations, causing widespread ecological destruction. (Residents of Vieques suffer from rates of cancer and heart disease that dwarf their neighbors.) Corporations, often backed by American laws, have ruthlessly extracted their wealth.

Debt

You don't have to look further than 2016 to see Puerto Rico's colonial reality. First, in response to a crippling debt crisis—which has deep colonial roots—Congress passed the PROMESA Act, which installed a so-called “oversight board” to oversee the island's financial affairs and which has supreme jurisdiction. (The bill explicitly states that its provisions “shall prevail over any general or specific provisions of territory law, State law, or regulation that is inconsistent with this Act.”) The board promptly imposed harsh austerity measures on the country.

Around the same time, the Supreme Court ruled that Puerto Rico was not allowed to restructure its debt without congressional approval. States can independently restructure their debt, and independent countries can, too. Colonies can't. For good measure, the Court also reminded Puerto Rico in a separate opinion that it has no sovereign rights apart from the ones the federal government chose to grant.

Independence Movement

Like virtually all colonies, Puerto Rico also has an ongoing independence movement, which has fought for liberation from the U.S. through both peaceful and militant means. Though it does not garner substantial support at elections and in polls, it is nevertheless accepted as a legitimate and meaningful part of the island's politics, and it has a rich history. (It was once viewed as such a threat that the Puerto Rican government banned people from speaking about independence or even displaying the country's own flag, lest they inspire nationalist sentiments.) Historical advocates of independence such as Pedro Albizu Campos are regarded as heroes by many.

It's almost certainly true that someone less racist and incompetent than Donald Trump would have coordinated the relief efforts after Hurricane Maria more effectively, or treated Puerto Ricans more compassionately. Trump's personal ugliness, his basic lack of human decency, is sui generis. But we can't make the mistake of thinking that he is the fundamental problem Puerto Rico is facing. The system is the problem. Colonialism is the problem.

Jack Mirkinson, editor of *Splinter*



A demonstration in New York against the Federal Reserve's failure to bail out Puerto Rico.

"1.5°C to stay alive":

Climate Change, Imperialism and Justice for the Caribbean

In the wake of the two recent hurricanes that have devastated parts of the Caribbean, **Leon Sealey-Huggins** of Warwick University has published an excellent article in *Third World Quarterly*. "What has happened this year has been terrible to watch," says Dr Sealey-Huggins, "and what is of immediate concern now is the clear-up operation. There is a need for fast and direct help and support from the world. But it is also crucial that we take time now to set this in a wider historical and political context and listen to the Caribbean region - otherwise these kind of events will just keep happening in same, or worse, pattern of repeats" he states.

The full article can be found on-line at <http://bit.ly/2x4dXEV>. We thoroughly recommend it.

The Centre for Reparation Research

The new Centre for Reparation Research at The University of the West Indies will lead the implementation of CARICOM's Reparatory Justice Programme, which broadly seeks to foster public awareness around the lasting and adverse consequences of European invasion of indigenous peoples' lands, African enslavement and colonialism in the Caribbean.



Its establishment was prompted by the UWI Vice Chancellor's engagement with the Heads of Government of CARICOM, especially after Heads agreed in 2013 to join the long-standing movement for reparatory justice, pioneered by enslaved Africans and sustained by Rastafari and civil society, and to request that the UWI supported the research agenda of the movement. The Centre, directed by Historian Verene A. Shepherd, seeks to build awareness and conduct research that will advance the claim for reparation for native genocide, African enslavement, deceptive indenture, colonialism and its legacies, in support of the CARICOM and Global Reparatory Justice Movement.

More details from their website www.reparationresearch.org

Defeating Domestic Violence in the Americas: Men's Work

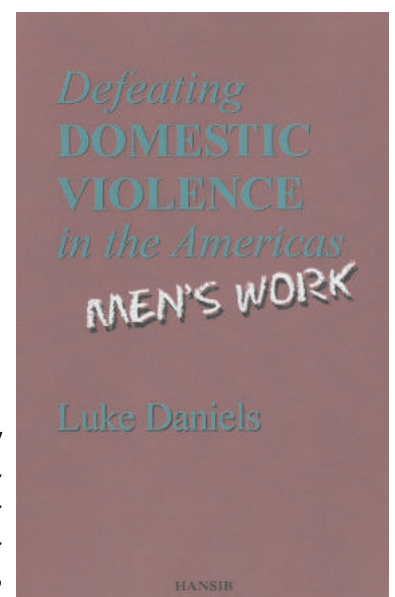
by *Luke Daniels*, Published by HANSIB Publications £15 plus p&p.

This book argues that our history of violence is partly responsible for the "machismo culture" endemic in the region, and which is directly linked to domestic violence. Raising awareness about our history of violence will help towards a positive change in attitudes and behaviour. Luke Daniels charts the region's history of violence before and after the coming of Columbus, looking at the effects of native genocide and slavery, and how that history impacts on the violence in our societies today.

"Part history, part manifesto, part urgent call to action, this carefully researched work provides a sobering account of the pandemic of domestic violence in the Americas and its damaging effect on society as a whole. Drawing on decades of experience as a counsellor, Daniels analyses the root causes of violence in the region and offers creative and far-reaching proposals to bring about lasting change" - Dr Kate Quinn, UCL

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