

## STATELESSNESS AND CORRUPTION IN HAITI AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In September 2013, the Constitutional Court stated that children born in the Dominican Republic to foreign parents who did not have regular migration status had never been entitled to Dominican nationality. The judgement was applied retrospectively to people born since 1929 and it disproportionately affected Dominicans of Haitian descent. In December 2013, the Dominican Republic set out a "National Regularization Plan for Foreigners with Irregular Migration Status". Since the end of this regularization plan, the Dominican Republic has been deporting migrants at a sustained pace. In addition, several thousands of people "returned spontaneously" to Haiti, in many cases after having received threats or having been pressured to leave the country.

Conclusive figures of people deported, expelled or who have "spontaneously" left are not available. According to partial statistics, 40,000 people were deported from the Dominican Republic to Haiti up to 26 May 2016, while at least another 66,000 left "spontaneously".



Haiti's new president  
Jovenel Moïse

More than 2,000 people who have been deported, expelled or left "spontaneously" settled in six make-shift camps close to the southern Haitian border town of Anse-à-Pitres. The living conditions in the camps are dire, with no or limited access to services such as water and sanitation, healthcare and education. Most shelters are tents made of cardboard, branches, pieces of clothing and other discarded materials. Several cases of cholera have been reported in the camps.

### Two generations

The expulsion of a person born in the Dominican Republic also means that their children, also born in the Dominican Republic, have to go to Haiti in order to be able to stay with their parents. Two generations are therefore eradicated from their country of birth.

Of course the Dominican Republic government does not intend to drive out everyone of Haitian decent - *who would then cut the cane?* But the threat of ethnic cleansing puts the remainder of the Afro-Dominicano community in fear and less likely to demand proper wages. Those who fight for their rights can then easily be removed.

*It is, in large part, a cheap labour policy.*

Meanwhile, in Haiti, Hurricane Matthew caused the country's largest humanitarian emergency since the 2010 earthquake, particularly in the southern provinces. More than 500 people were killed and many more injured. Extensive flooding and mudslides damaged infrastructure and buildings and

caused water shortages. Livelihoods in some areas were almost entirely destroyed while 1.4 million people needed urgent humanitarian assistance.

Between January and July, 21,661 suspected cholera cases and 200 related deaths were registered, with nearly 9,000 cases reported after Hurricane Matthew. In August, the UN acknowledged, for the first time, its role in the initial outbreak for which the UN Secretary-General apologized publicly in December. However, the UN continued to deny all attempts by victims to gain access to legal remedies.

### Elections

In this context elections were again postponed and took place in November. Jovenel Moïse was elected as President and was sworn in on 7 February 2017. After two decades of successful anti-democratic subversion, the dominant classes have finally retaken the political upper hand. The recent arrest and prompt extradition of senator-elect and former paramilitary coup leader Guy Philippe, indicted for drug trafficking and money laundering, has revealed the incoming administration's darker side. Moïse's power stems from the electoral success of other similarly unsavory characters.

## **Workers in Solidarity**

We in the UK see the way to ensure workers' rights is to be part of a union. Is this true? Is this true in the Guyana? On a recent trip to Guyana I was hearing anecdotal accounts from workers which suggest that their pay packets were short of amount shown outside the packet. Also that workers on a low wage believed they did not have to be productive, comments like "I'm not earning enough to justify more effort". I observed on a trip to an embassy that the security guard was also the receptionist.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that some employers ignore agreements with the union and don't comply with their obligations to their workers. I also heard comments that suggest that the government in Guyana does not penalise employers who have poor employment rights practices.

In the UK, the present government is on a campaign to diminish the power of unions. So being a member of the union is not enough.

### **What can workers do who are unhappy with working conditions?**

Again from anecdotal accounts in Guyana, the fear of a backlash from the employer against those who stand up for their rights is a reason for not voicing dissatisfaction with working practices. It seems to me that workers do have to be in solidarity with other workers around the globe.

### **What about the workers?**

### **Do they have the responsibility to actively fight for their rights?**

**Absolutely.**

I believe that activism has to begin from within, to be able to bypass fears of retaliation. So a sense of "I deserve justice and fair treatment" is needed. Change can only come from within the person, within the country and this involves action. Being united in solidarity for a better future is the answer. A just, fair system in the workplace is right so why not work towards making this happen. I strongly suggest that, where possible, that employees join a union or organisations that support employment rights. Make your employment rights concern known, make your voice matter.

*Cheryl Griffith*

## **Report from the Tivoli Committee on their recent actions to seek justice for the victims of the Tivoli Massacre**

There is currently a Compensation assessment process being carried out under the Compensation Committee appointed by the government in response to a recommendation in the Report of the concluded Commission of Enquiry.

This is no transparency in this assessment phase, deliberately decided on by the chairman of the CC a former Appeal court judge, Mr Seymour Panton. We have reason to believe that this lack of transparency will result in many being overlooked for compensation. We have no understanding whatsoever of the criteria to be used for compensation. We doubt it will be according to international best practices. This lack of transparency and the sordid role of the Public Defender in collaborating with the process rather than playing a critical, pro people role, means that we can only monitor it by asking around people who went (when we can find them) and then trying to get an anecdotal report on what was the experience etc. This is so frustrating as you can imagine.

In the meantime we continue to do our research on the legal aspects of our plan to bring Private Prosecutions against the three Superior Commanders of the massacre. We are also continuing to seek out the right legal person to lead prosecution exercise. This is difficult because most lawyers are not prepared to go up against the system in such a historical, decisive legal confrontation or we need to have the funds necessary to persuade the more courageous that it is worth the political risk to their legal careers. We are shortly to roll out a public education campaign/fund raising exercise to remind people of why it is necessary to support the struggle to take it to this higher level.

### **Reminder**

*On May 24, 2010, at least 74 civilians were killed in the Tivoli Gardens Massacre by a combined force of about 800 soldiers and 370 police officers. They were on a mission to capture the reputed gang leader Christopher "Dudus" Coke who was barricaded in the community under the protection of his armed confederates*

## Housing - the broken market

**When the government last month admitted the housing market was broken, it was something that many other organizations have been telling the government for years.**

The National Housing Federation, the LGA, Inside Housing, Shelter, all warned the government that was a crisis in the housing market but they chose to ignore it as there are now 89 MPs who are landlords. They warned about the increasing rise homeless, rough sleeping and loss of social housing. As usual this government choose to ignore the problem. Instead they made a new law to make things even worse, the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

The break down of the housing market did not happen by accident or mismanagement, it was planned and directed. One of these planners and directors was former mayor of London, Boris Johnson. He appointed himself chair of the London Planning committee then changed the planning requirement from 50/50 social housing to building "affordable" housing at 85% of the market rate. Local councils opposed him and took the case to court, but when the case was eventually lost there was a huge increase in rents and the price of housing stock. Johnson gleefully described the winning of the court case as "the double whammy".

### Fraud

The Housing Act for 1980 gave the tenants the Right to Buy their own homes at a discount of up to 96%. This resulted in mass of fraudulent house purchases and people being cheated out their homes. It soon became clear with rates of repossession running at over 20% that local council we been asked to a) sell off their own housing but b) still be responsible for homeless former tenants.

The 2016 Housing and Planning Act forced local councils to either pay the government £200-300m or sell off over 300 homes of their most valuable housing stock to give the money to government to invest in housing associations. This is just vandalism of social housing that is owned by local councils.

Most councils have been running out of housing

stock. Some are trying to build without government help or support. They have a up hill task set against raising number of homeless, in Islington the waiting list has gone from over 300 in 2009 to 16,000 in 2016 and getting higher everyday. This is not just a crisis, it is social disaster.

### Broken

If you can afford to rent you are also penalised by a) the rent benefit cap and b) the £40,000 earning cap. £50,000 does not even put you on the bottom rung of the housing ladder in London where property prices start at £400,000 plus. How can an ordinary worker scrape together the deposit to put on a home never mind the mortgage?



This is truly shocking. It means the housing market is only open to the rich or people who have property already and therefore can afford to borrow the large amount of money you need to buy. Once the housing market is broken like Humpy Dumpy it can not be put back.

Are companies going to pay their cleaners £50,000 a year? Are supermarkets going to pay a minimum wage £50 a hour. Where will the staff come from and where will they live with rents in the capital starting at £500 a week.

### Rent Control

Expensive housing means high rents. High rents means expensive commercial property that means high prices in shops and business. So who will be able to afford them? Not many people who live in London today. Islington has lost nearly 20,000 people who have been priced out the borough. So do not blame your local council or the Labour Party for the broken market, the Conservatives are responsible. We desperately need a) investing in council house building and b) ending the right to buy and giving tenants the right to stay in their own homes.

*Cllr Raphael Andrews*



## Destination Guyana

*Frank Murray has recently returned from a trip to Guyana - he recounts his experiences in the airports in the region*

I have often wondered why the cost of travelling to Australia from Britain is less than half the amount it costs to travel from Britain to Guyana?

It's a catch 22 situation, we are told that not enough people travel to Guyana, well I have friends and family that live in America and they sometimes travel two or three times a year to Guyana because they can get very competitive cheap fares to Guyana. Therefore if the fares were cheaper from Britain, people would be more inclined to travel to and more frequently to Guyana.

I travelled to Guyana twice in 2016 the first trip was in May, for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of independence, if I ever saw a case for more flights to Guyana this was it, there were thousands of people from abroad in the country, for this special occasion, it was a spectacular celebration of Guyanese pride. It was very impressive and well organised and I am certain that there could not have been many people that were not very pleased over the several days of the celebration.

The second trip was in December and was mainly to keep an eye on the work being carried out on building project being carried out on rebuilding my family house In New Amsterdam, Berbice.

In less than a year I've had a vacation and business trip to Guyana.

### Barbados

When I booked the first trip in May, I specifically tried not to go through Barbados, having had a very bad experience traveling through their Airport. This happened about 9 months before, in 2015 on a Return trip from Martinique interchanging at Barbados for England.

Having bought my duty free in Martinique where it was bagged, tagged and sealed in their special security bag. These bags shows if you have tampered with them, it was a proper duty free bag.

On arrival at Barbados they said that all passengers have to collect their baggage, to go through customs and checkout, as there is no transit lounge at the airport and that 'transit' passengers will have to wait in the airport grounds until booking in for their departure flight to their destination.

Realising that I had a duty free bag I asked the official if this would be a problem, and do they provide storage on this the official side of the air-

port, for baggage and/or duty free bags. I was told that they do not have storage, and once the duty free bag is not opened they will have no problem.

### Confiscated

You can just about imagine my anger when on reentry for my departure flight I was informed by the customs officer that they have to confiscate my duty free liquor, because (get this) passengers are only allowed 100 millilitres of liquid through customs. It took about 15 minutes before I started to calm down and that was into their hundredth threat of getting the police. I began to realise that I knew no one living in Barbados and the situation could have escalated out of hand.

To rub salt in my wound, as I walked away after giving a last "cuss" and wishing that someone choke and die from drinking my liquor that they stole from me, I saw the customs officer put the bag aside, next to their hoard of duty free goodies.

I complained to the senior customs officer and concluded he was part of the problem. I complained in writing to Virgin Airways and got no reply. I complained to anyone who would listen, it was then that I began to understand that the problem I experienced in Barbados Airport was not an isolated issue. It was like Pandora's box, with stories of Racial bias, from bad treatment down to 'Chefette' food being inedible.

I actually know Barbadians who don't like to use Barbados Airport

### Detained

I was given an internet link which shows a Grenadian family who were detained by the Barbados police, because they were accused of shoplifting in the departure lounge, they were searched, CCTV videos were looked at, there was no evidence to prove the accusation, yet the family were complaining that they were treated in an appalling manner Including, being locked up in a cell overnight, humiliated and deported to Grenada. All this and a lack of evidence that just did not appear to matter.

*Frank's account will continue in the next issue of Cutlass*



## Why we should add Climate Change to the claim for Reparation for Slavery in the Caribbean - by *Cauline Brathwaite*

Climate change is particularly bad for the Caribbean. This is because many of the two dozen countries in the region are low lying islands and 70% of the 40 million residents live on the coasts where most of the business in the form of tourism is carried out therefore it is highly likely that unless drastic action is not only taken to halt the rising temperature very soon the Caribbean will no longer be recognisable as a place that we know and love. This is because not only are whole countries likely to disappear, if the situation continues, and global warming is not brought under control, the whole region will be under the severest of pressures having to cope with floods, hurricanes, food shortages, disease and mass migration. As a result, as people are displaced perhaps on a huge scale, they will have no option but to seek refuge elsewhere.

At a recent talk at UCL, Dr Leon Seally-Huggins of Warwick University argued that not only was climate change an urgent problem for the Caribbean, in order to address this fairly we need to re-frame the discussions to hold to account those who have benefited most from what has caused it and to link action on climate change with Reparations for slavery.

He argues there is a fundamental problem with the way that climate change is managed between former colonisers and those that they colonised which is to do with the history of unequal power between them. It has been conceptualised this way to suit the former colonisers. Therefore the rich, ex-colonial powers reduce climate change discussions to discussions about 'technical problems' such as 'parts per million' and 'greenhouse gasses'. Structuring the debate in this way makes certain kinds of discussions impossible.

Who made the majority of the greenhouse gasses that cause climate change? Who has benefited the most and the longest. from the use fossil fuels that have caused climate change? Whether it is fair or proportionate to act that as though every country is equally culpable for producing climate change to the same extent?

He also pointed out that whilst these topics are not for discussion, talks about Sovereign Debt are on the table, as are discussions about reducing climate change under the guise of 'being democratic; 'with the assumption that every country has to reduce the causes of global warming by the same amount. There are never discussions about the benefit that the previous colonisers derived from the processes that created climate change.

The Netherlands have the 16th biggest economy in the world. In 2012 it was announced that they would be spending 16 billion to shore themselves up against climate change, there was no mention that the roots of this wealth was based on

expropriation and exploitation of wealth from its former colonies, who of course are not part of the survival plan.

As long ago as 1946 Eric Williams's book *Capitalism and Slavery* showed that when Britain became involved in the Transatlantic Slave Trade it created previously unimaginable wealth for the large numbers of slave owners and funded the Industrial Revolution, which began around 1750. Not only did it enable large scale manufacturing process, the infrastructure of the country in the form of roads, rail and water was also developed using the fossil fuels of coal and oil that we now know are responsible for creating the carbon dioxide that has created global warming. A lot of the money to fund this this came from slavery.

Catherine Hall's work shows that the money paid to former slave owners when slavery was abolished was £20 million pounds. Today's equivalent would be £16.5 billion. The slave owners had to be compensated this amount because of the amount that they were going to lose. Therefore this shows how much money from slavery was part of the British economy at that time. We should also not forget that Britain's involvement in that slave trade had been in operation for over 300 years when it was abolished.

Although money on could never undo the harm that Slavery and it's effects have caused successive generations of slave descendants, the very least they could be to ensure that the Caribbean continued to exist.

After the seminar J Brian Matthews, who is an Emeritus Professor of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Geophysical Institute, spoke of the way in which data obtained by taking measurements from Lake Tanganyika, they observed that tropical solar heat balance passed +2°C above pre-industrial levels in 2011 due to greenhouse gas insulating blankets

He writes that after 1750 the temperatures rose at faster than exponential rates as did Antarctic carbon dioxide. It should be emphasised that these are actual real temperatures verified from fossil sediments, ice cores and from modern measurements with accurate thermometers. There has been no alteration to fit models or hypothesis. The exponential post 1750 trend line is calculated from real data.

Therefore this is definitive proof that Global Warming began at the beginning of the Industrial revolution. At this time Slavery was in full swing, and Europeans were the only ones profiting. The Caribbean is in peril because of global warming and now is the time for us, the descendants, to be saved from the effects of slavery funded industrialisation. Hard science has made our case for Reparations for Slavery stronger.

## Killing Communists in Havana by Steve Cushion.

a review by Raphael Andrews

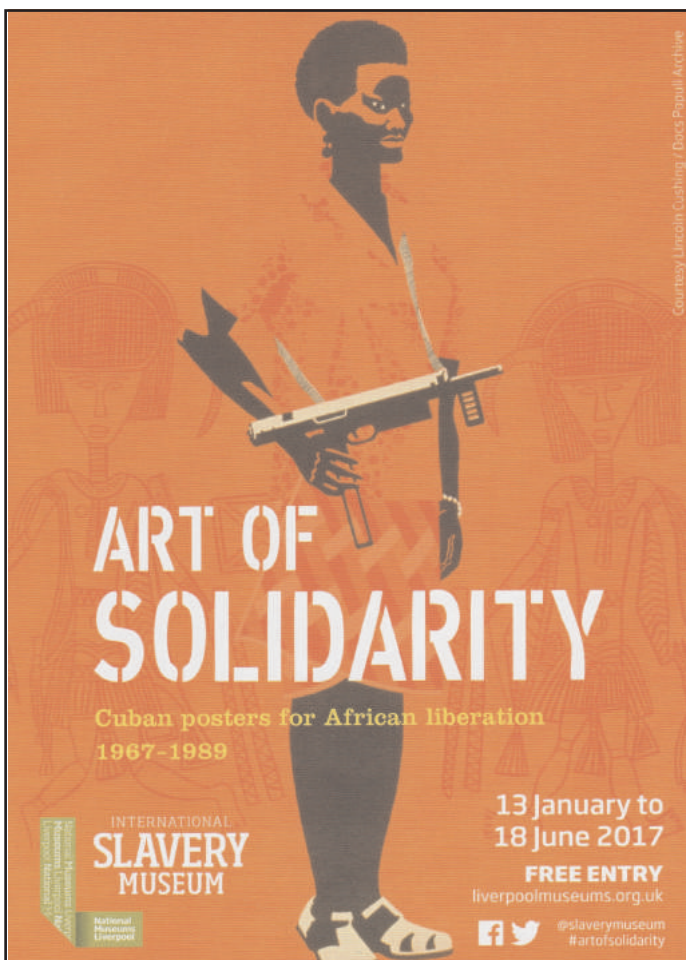
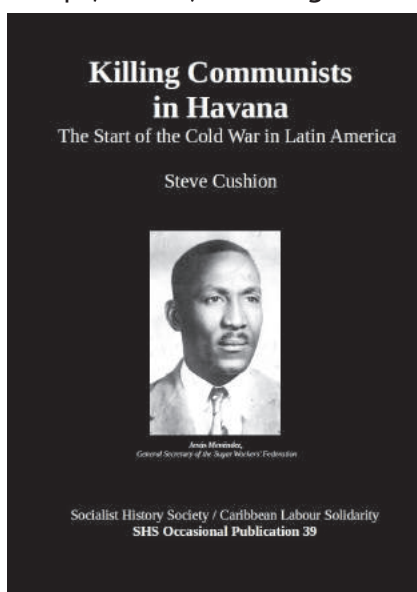
This short book is an excellently researched and documented account of Cuba in the 1940s. I was interested in as it was period about which I knew very little.

I was surprised to find the book well written, interesting and enjoyable in macabre way. You can not fail to be fascinated and amazed at the break down in law and order as the political and social structure degrades into chaos under the weight of crime, greed, corruption and drugs. On page 19 we are told about a dispute between two sets of gangster being broken up by the police. The gangsters were fighting over taking over the money they would be raking off from selling off jobs in the Tramway company.

Later on Cushion, describes how the whole state falls into chaos as gangsters and corrupt officials fight over exploiting businesses and the trade unions in Cuba. No government, no matter who elected them would be able to deal with on-slaught of corruption and a drugs fueled economy. People lost faith in or support for their officials and their politicians and the whole state was powerless or unwilling to stop the chaos. This has parallels to our time, with companies been given a free hand by the Tories to access the public purse and the state unwilling or too corrupt to check their excesses. In 1940s Cuba utility companies were owned by foreign companies, just as in today's Britain where the excesses of Southern Railways are making the privatised railway a national joke. Trains late or delayed and passengers paying the highest fares in Europe. The government is failing on prison, social care, housing and now the NHS all wrecked by the states dogma of the private market. A similar situation led in Cuba to a military take over in 1952 by the far Right, and the even more corrupt, Batista, resulting in increasing domination from the US. In the end, when it came, the Revolution was inevitable.

All in all a great read that explains what can happen to a state when corruption destroys it from within and foreign gangsters from without.

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### Art of Solidarity

**Cuban posters for African liberation 1967 - 1989**

13 January to 6 August 2017 - Free entry

Art of Solidarity provides a fascinating look at posters produced in Cuba as a form of social and political resistance, designed to support freedom movements around the world.

The exhibition features 32 rarely-seen posters from a private collection which highlight some of the liberation and independence movements that swept through Africa after the Second World War.

Produced through the Organisation in Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), the posters are beautifully designed and wonderfully colourful, yet reflect what would become some of the most ruthless conflicts and historically significant events taking place in Africa during the Cold War era.

These posters reveal the idealistic spirit of the Cuban Revolution, which was intent on fighting imperialism, globalisation and defending human rights.

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