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The Land, the Law and Legitimate Children: Thinking through Gender, Kinship and Nation in the British Virgin Islands

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Introduction: People, Place and Nation

Anthropologists have been taken to task recently for too readily assuming a necessary or natural link between culture, people and place.¹ Like nationalist discourses, anthropological ones often “present associations of people and place as solid, commonsensical, and agreed-upon, when they are in fact contested, uncertain, and in flux.”² This essay is about a place where questions of belonging are currently hotly debated. To understand the competing claims of participants in this debate, it is necessary to pay attention to the specific ways in which the different sides claim their association with the “national territory.” Although all the people involved in the argument about national belonging naturalize their connections to the national space, they do so in subtly different fashions. The two camps I describe in this essay both establish claims to the national territory based on ideas about lineage and kinship, but in doing so they prevent any easy reading of what “kinship,” “lineage” or “territory” might be.

Mindie Lazarus-Black has recently demonstrated that understanding family and kinship in the Caribbean requires an examination of the legal codes and processes Caribbean peoples have used “to define family and to achieve the rights and duties that belong to kin.”³ Understanding how law and kinship intersect in the

Caribbean is furthered by attending to issues surrounding land, and taking the time to look at land allows us to see more clearly the role of kinship and gender in the production of Caribbean nationalisms and the development of nationalist political discourses. The connections among ideas and practices centered around land, gender, kinship and law are central to the the construction of nationalist discourses and the various inequalities they engender in Caribbean national contexts.

The British Virgin Islands (BVI) are a self-governing British Dependent Territory consisting of about forty islands, and populated by about 18,000 people of African and European descent.⁴ Nearly half of the people living in the BVI are not citizens. Most are migrants from other Caribbean islands and Guyana who have been coming in increasing numbers since the 1960s to work in jobs created by a boom in high-class tourism and offshore banking. At present, there are more jobs available than there are people to fill them.

I begin this discussion by showing how the official discourse of nationalism emerges from the intersection of citizenship and land-ownership laws. I then examine the challenges to this discourse, and conclude by discussing the place of gender, kinship, land and law in the construction of nationalism.

The Official Discourse of National Belonging

The 1981 British Nationality Act laid down the principles by which citizenship rights were to be conferred in the dependent territories of the United Kingdom, including the British Virgin Islands. The Act itself is quite straightforward. In part II, section 15, the conferral of citizenship is laid down for the British Dependent Territories, thus:

A person born in a dependent territory...shall be a British Dependent Territories citizen if at the time of his birth his father or mother is—(a) a British Dependent Territories citizen; or (b) settled in a dependent territory. (British Nationality Act 1981, II §15[1])

The Act's definition of "settlement" is somewhat tautological: to be "settled" in a dependent territory is to be subject to no residence, employment or immigration restrictions (V §50[2]). In other words, one is "settled" if and only if one is a "citizen," so in clause (b) above, one is a citizen if one's mother or father is a citizen.

The citizenship of one's mother or father then, is key to one's own citizenship. And "father" and "mother" are specifically and narrowly delimited by the Act:

For the purposes of this Act—(a) the relationship of a mother and child shall be taken to exist between a women and any child (legitimate or

illegitimate) born to her; but (b)...the relationship of a father and child shall be taken to exist only between a man and any legitimate children born to him; and the expressions 'mother,' 'father,' 'parent,' 'child,' and 'descended' shall be construed accordingly. (British Nationality Act 1981, V §50[9])

Prior to 1981, citizenship rights were passed along “patrilial,” or lines of descent traced through legal and nonlegal fathers. Under this earlier system, women could not pass their citizenship rights to their children. The 1981 Act was seen by some as affirming the “natural” bond between mother and child, as women who were citizens were for the first time able to pass on their citizenship. For men, on the other hand, the Act shifted emphasis from “patrilialty” to “legitimacy.”⁵ Now men who are citizens only pass on citizenship rights to some of their children—the legitimate ones born to noncitizen mothers or the legitimate and illegitimate ones born to citizen mothers. The 1981 British Nationality Act thus denies “belonger” status—as BVI citizenship is popularly termed—to children born in a nonlegal union of a believer father and a non-belonger mother.⁶

The emphasis the law places on the legitimacy of children born to non-belonger mothers fits neatly into local land laws and practices. By law and in practice, land frequently is inherited by groups of relatives in common.

Since at least the 1740s, when Quaker settlers on Tortola freed their slaves and granted them perpetual rights to the land on which they lived, women and men have both had access to property through inheritance. Groups of siblings, both male and female, have tended to inherit property of their mothers and fathers in common tenure. As a result, over time, increasing numbers of relatives have had the ability to lay claim to relatively small plots of land. Until the early part of this century, and in many cases into the present day, land plots remained undivided, and people would share the land to which they had common rights instead of dividing it up into separate “shares.” A person with claim to the land generally would need the permission of all the other people with any claim on it before building or farming on it, or selling a piece of it to another person. Historically, however, the only people consulted have been those actually living on the land. At the turn of the century, however, as a class of British Virgin Islander civil servants and lawyers began to emerge, British common law was increasingly brought to bear on BVI common tenurial traditions. These laws did not interfere much with local tenures (many of which, after all, had their basis in the common law brought by the Quaker settlers), but in land disputes they did tend to disfavor the claims of widows of landowning men who had not provided their husband with “issue.” In addition, before 1926, the law favored first-born sons over their mothers and other

siblings in disputes over inheritance. After 1926, however, the rights of the first-born son as heir-at-law were abolished, and British land law again approximated the BVI traditional pattern of even distribution to surviving relatives, whether under common tenure or under a system of evenly divided shares.⁷

Long-standing BVI property laws and common courtesy, thus, at present require that all persons with claim to a piece of land be consulted before any party holding a claim begins construction or development on the land. Although this frequently results in conflict, most British Virgin Islanders cite this pattern of land ownership as giving rise to their sense of “independence” as a people and a “nation.” As one informant put it, everyone has “a piece of the rock” she or he can go back to in time of need. One elderly man held that the main difference “in character” between British Virgin Islanders and other peoples of the Caribbean is their independent-mindedness, based on their history of land ownership: “We have always been an independent people. It was different from St. Kitts, Antigua because they were always dependent on plantations [even after Emancipation]. [But] we are not servile, and [so] we should not sell it [our land].”

While at the turn of the century conflicts over land inheritance involved British Virgin Islanders exclusively, today the conflicts foremost in peoples’ minds involve the divide between citizens with “rightful” claims to BVI land and immigrants and their children with what are perceived to be “legitimate” claims. This is because of the changes in citizenship law. Illegitimate children of believer fathers and non-believer mothers cannot make legitimate claims to their fathers’ land and, more importantly, cannot participate in the sense of independence that comes with it. Non-believers must petition the government for a “Non-Believer’s Land Holding License” before they can purchase land. This involves an application stating the potential buyer’s development plans for the land, along with a commitment to complete any proposed development within three years of the time of purchase. Land so purchased cannot be sold to or inherited by another non-believer without application for another such license.

According to popular tales, the Virgin Islands were so named by Christopher Columbus after the legendary British martyr, Saint Ursula, who with her eleven thousand attendant virgins, was murdered by the Huns sometime in the third century A.D. Columbus, sighting the islands for the first time, apparently thought they looked like countless dead virgins. Today, the eleven-thousand-and-one martyrs live on in the metaphorical uses to which the territory’s name is put. Almost without exception, punning and wordplay invoking the “virginity” of the islands take place in discussions about the land and the presence of immigrants on it. For many older BVI Islanders, the land takes on deeply religious meanings. One elderly man told me that, before the rapid development of the 1960s and increasing immigra-

tion, "Tortola was a garden! Fruit on every tree, fresh water from the springs, fish would jump into your boat!" And an elderly woman farmer asked, "Where did God put Man? In a Garden! We are descended from farmers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!" Saint Ursula's Day, meanwhile, is a national holiday.

The land occupies a central symbolic place in discussions about the rapid development of the BVI. Perennial conflicts born out of patterns of land inheritance helped convince the territory's leaders of the need to reclaim land from the sea when planning the development of the capital city, Road Town, in order to make the territory more attractive to investors and tourists. British Virgin Islanders continually point to this new land as a symbol of the islands' progress. They also discuss how, in keeping foreigners localized on this new space, reclaimed land helps protect the "virginity" of the rest of the islands. And indeed, these protectionist policies have checked uncontrolled foreign development, and have helped the British Virgin Islands avoid the "Miami syndrome" blighting their U.S. Virgin Island neighbors.

BVI Islanders frequently describe the islands' "virginity" as under siege by marauding migrants. The interconnectedness of three distinct themes of "legitimacy"—of birth, of rights to citizenship and of claims to land—comes to the fore in belongers' statements about certain recently arrived groups of migrants. Belongers describe immigrants from Guyana as "hoarding and destructive of the environment." They are also seen as "clannish" and "crafty," and thus a threat to belongers' businesses. One believer states:

Our parents taught us not to pick fruit until it is mature, and to throw back little fish. They come and gather immature fruit, and take all sizes of fish, and scrape tiny snails off the reefs. They move onto your land without permission.

Another believer maintains:

They are greedy and want to save even the rust from the pennies! And they eat, eat, eat! Everything in sight! They would clear the land of all the plants just to eat!

Recently, significant numbers of Dominicans have arrived in the British Virgin Islands. Some of these people are second- and third-generation descendants of British Virgin Islander men who went to the Dominican Republic in the beginning of this century to work on sugar plantations. In the past five years, they have started to petition the government for conferral of the citizenship status they feel is rightfully theirs. One believer woman, describing the situation to me, said:

Dominicans have been coming in droves recently. There is communication now, by air, so no real problems in their coming here. But they cannot claim property unless their father wills it to them or gives it to them because they have no rights, because they are illegitimate.

She continued:

The people who are coming are children of BVI islander fathers. It seems there were two brothels the men used to go to. But I suppose the fathers would have died by this time, so the people we are seeing are their grandchildren.

This informant, and others, articulates the three themes of legitimacy—of birth, citizenship and land claims—when discussing Dominican migrants, and connects these with sexual morality. By implication, she holds Dominican women to be whores. She does so in accordance with the widely held belief among belongers that Dominican prostitutes brought AIDS to the islands, and are therefore not only dirty and amoral, but a profound threat to the nation.

The official discourse of national belonging rests thus on the threefold nature of “legitimacy” as encoded in law and in cultural practice and belief. Just as Guyanese (purportedly) do not respect the land or fair business practices, Dominicans (purportedly) do not respect moral convention or personal hygiene. Both violate “legitimacy” in its various aspects. And both are therefore systematically excluded from full participation in the nation as citizens.

As the official discourse stitches together the three threads of “legitimacy,” it prescribes sexual morality in fabricating a sense of the nation and those who “belong” to it. Children born to non-belonger women are citizens (and landowners) only by virtue of their mothers’ virtue. Illegitimate offspring of non-belonger women are stateless, because the state needs to protect itself from illegitimate incursions lest its “purity” be stained.

The Counterdiscourse of National Belonging

Of course, in a territory in which half of the residents are classed as noncitizens, alternative discourses of nationhood and national belonging are bound to arise and gain popularity. On August 3, 1991, Benji V, a man from St. Kitts living in the British Virgin Islands, was crowned Calypso King at the annual Miss BVI beauty contest. His winning song, entitled “Where We Born Is Where We From,” made an explicit challenge to the official and legal discourse of national belonging by invok-

ing U.S. and Canadian citizenship policies. I will quote from the lyrics at length; note that Benji V adopts the subject position of a *belonger* man:

They say if me girlfriend get my baby in my country,
the baby can't have the same rights like me.
How come when anybody go to Rock City⁸ to get their baby
the baby can have the same rights like Farrelly?⁹
Where a baby first is born, that country must be their own;
they must have the rights like anybody born in the same region.
So if the mother born in Antigua and she children born in Tortola—
Where we born is where we from.

We could born in St. Lucia, and live in Grenada;
We could born Dominica;
Well, we could have green card for the States, and born in Bermuda;
We could live in England for years, that's not the answer;
Where we born is where we from.

If a woman from England goes to Canada
Born a baby, that baby is a Canadian.
But the baby still have rights in his mother's land,
And if he needs a birth paper, he have to get one in Canada
Because where foreign man get birth paper in foreign land?
They, have to get it in the land where they was born.
And if a child need a passport he should achieve one without a storm,
Because where we born is where we from.

What's wrong if a woman gets a child in a next man's land?
That is something a lot of us can't understand.
But it could be land, sea or even in the air
All our babies, they have to born somewhere.
A child never know where his mother will put him out.
He is innocent, he doesn't know his whereabouts;
Until he reach to a stage that he could understand, he will say
Where we born is where we from.¹⁰

The challenge to official policy and discourse could not be clearer. And Benji V brought the house down. Where official policy emphasizes the “natural” connections among marriage, mother, child and nation, Benji V focused on the “naturalness” of the connection between place of birth and child. His counterdiscourse thus skirts the issue of legitimacy altogether. It ties a child directly to the nation-state in

which it is born; there are no intermediaries—such as parents, legal strictures surrounding kin and land ownership, and so forth. Where the official discourse relies on the conjuncture of three themes of legitimacy to establish the nation, Benji V simply links national identity and the rights associated with it to place of birth. And for Benji V, the nation is a naturally given piece of territory.

The kind of move Benji V is making in establishing challenges to the official discourse of national belonging is echoed throughout the territory. The August 8th, 1991, horse races at Sea Cows' Bay on Tortola featured Prospect versus Kentucky, two horses which, according to the commentator, were "born of foreign parents right here in the BVI, so they're local horses." Of course, were they *people* they wouldn't legally be "local" at all. But like Benji V's song, the message is that birth in a territory should be the basis of citizenship in that territory-cum-nation, regardless of legitimacy.

The counterdiscourse is subject to multiple readings, and like the official discourse, it ends up denoting and defending a particular character of nationhood. A contestant in the Miss BVI beauty contest stated during the competition that her one wish for the BVI would be "to build better incentives for local businesses, keep money in the country." A *non*-belonger woman who works for a *foreign*-owned rental car agency expressed agreement with the contestant's statement and, with the rest of the crowd, rose to her feet, cheering. Although she has no "legitimate" claims to citizenship (or land), her economic standing depends on the BVI's continued prosperity, and so she supports protectionist land, labor and citizenship policies.¹¹ Non-belongers' support of protectionism is not paradoxical given their sense of being "of" the nation in which they were born, whether or not they have "legitimate" claims to it. In recent years, youths have taken to using the term "born here" to designate their status as members—albeit, as far as the state is concerned, "illegitimate" members—of the nation.

The "born here" category, and the particular kind of nationalism it represents, has the effect of excluding some non-belongers from the counterdiscourse of national belonging. The day after Benji V's performance, an elderly believer reprimanded a Trinidadian residing in the BVI—but *not* born there—by stating, "Hey, where we born is where we from, and you're from Trinidad" [that is, "shut up!"]. The Trinidadian was disciplining a child in the older man's care, and the latter was invoking the counterdiscourse not quite politely to tell the younger man to butt out.

The counterdiscourse has other implications as well, especially in the wider Caribbean context. Even before decolonization (which, for the BVI and other colonies has still not been realized), Caribbean peoples had been deeply ambivalent toward their affiliations to larger communities such as nations. Intra-Caribbean and transatlantic migrations have further encouraged this ambivalence, and it is not

uncommon for people to identify more strongly as people of the “Caribbean” than as members of a particular island nation. The ambiguity of national affiliation is played out particularly sharply in the BVI, where relative prosperity and national pride have gone hand in hand with increased immigration and the nationalist discourses inspired, in part, by the 1981 British Nationality Act.¹² For example, two days after Benji V’s performance, the local band Caribbean Ecstasy led a crowd through Road Town as part of annual festival celebrations. One of the band’s songs contained the refrain “It don’t matter where you’re from,” and then extolled members of various national communities to “jam” and “jump” (as in, “It don’t matter where you’re from; Antigua posse ready to jam. It don’t matter where you’re from; St. Kitts posse ready to jam”; and so on.). At the Miss BVI contest, one of the contestants included in her talent number a speech invoking “the days of Emancipation” while she quoted the theme of Festival 1991: “Don’t fret, let’s fete; All o’ we is one in 1991.” In the same spirit, a minister from Guyana spoke at a public event of the happy day when she would carry a passport stamped “Citizen of the Caribbean.”

In contrast to the official discourse of national belonging, the counterdiscourse eliminates mediating factors—such as kin or land ownership—from the “fact” of belonging to a nation. The foundation of the counterdiscourse—that *place* of birth alone should confer national identity and citizenship rights—is taken further in expressions of pan-Caribbean solidarity. I think there is a logic linking “where we born is where we from” to “it don’t matter where you’re from.” When citizenship rights and national identity become a matter between an *individual* and her or his place of birth, inequalities based on legitimate birth and land ownership cease to affect an individual’s legal rights as a citizen. This is the ideal of liberal civil emancipation. As all individuals become equal individuals in the new liberal political milieu, “where you’re from” just does not matter anymore—except outside your “own”—that is, your “natural”—national context into which you were born. The difference between Benji V’s nationalism and the pan-Caribbean one of Caribbean Ecstasy is merely that of defining the limits of the “nation” in terms of its territorial borders; the underlying politics of birth and nation are the same.

Conclusion

Both the official and counterdiscourses of national belonging in the British Virgin Islands take the nation as a natural and necessary fact of life. Both end up excluding different groups of people from the nation. The official discourse locates national belonging in legally defined kin relations based on the “natural facts” of gender difference and reproduction. The counterdiscourse, holding forth the liberal ideal of individualism, maintains birth in a particular territory as a central

event, naturalizes divisions of territory into “nations,” and elevates the birth of individuals as the basis of national belonging. Both thus rest on particular configurations of land, gender, kinship and legal discourse.

In both the official and counterdiscourses, the land, the place of the nation, is centrally important to one’s claims to “belong.” BVI Islanders trace lineages and cite land ownership to prove their place as sons and daughters of the “virgin” soil. Non-belongers claim rights to the territory in which they were born. This counterdiscourse in particular should lead us to examine the naturalization of nation and birth in other Western models of citizenship, kinship and gender. As Carole Pateman, Dipesh Chakrabarty and others have argued,¹³ the Western notion of liberal civil emancipation is predicated upon a notion of autonomous individuals connected in predetermined national communities. The nation alone gives birth, as it were, to its citizens. For the nation-state to be imagined as a collectivity of atomistic individuals all “born there,” connections among individuals must be denied. This goes together with the “self-evident” divisions of the land masses of the earth into “nations,” and the congruence of feeling and interest they are held to engender.¹⁴ According to this logic, people do not make nations; rather, nations make people.

The essentialism of the official discourse lies in its concern with kinship, defined almost exclusively in terms of paternity and legitimacy. It has the effect of policing the sexuality of women, both citizen and alien. The essentialism of the counterdiscourse—strategic or otherwise—meanwhile promotes the kinds of inequalities more familiar in places like California: “Where you’re born is where you’re from” echoes the same deeply conservative and protectionist sentiments expressed by many Anglo-Americans on the U.S.-Mexico border, with the same potential to increase surveillance of pregnant noncitizen women who, it is feared, might bear their children in the “wrong” place. Unlike their compatriots in London, New York or other diasporic contexts,¹⁵ the Caribbean peoples living in the British Virgin Islands are rapidly beginning to *assert* rigid demarcations of land masses, cultures and peoples.¹⁶ These national terrains are being reconfigured in a field of meaning and power fundamentally implicated in the construction of gender, kinship and land. They are being enacted in cultural practice, and formalized in state law.

Notes

¹ This paper has benefited greatly from the careful readings of Jane Collier, George Collier and Stefan Helmreich. I would also like to thank Colleen B. Cohen, Michael O'Neal, the editors of this volume and the participants in the "Gender and Kinship" roundtable at the Minnesota conference. Special thanks to Nan Enstad and Birgitte Soland.

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² Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1992): 6-23. Some earlier work in anthropology also problematized, rather than assumed, the connections both "analysts" and "natives" make between place and sense of identity or belonging. See, for example, Martin Silverman's ethnography of "displaced" Banabans, *Disconcerting Issue: Meaning and Struggle in a Resettled Pacific Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971); and Andrew Strathern, "Kinship, Descent and Locality: Some New Guinea Examples," in Jack Goody, ed., *The Character of Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 21-33. Note especially Strathern's discussion of how ideas about shared substance ("blood") and ideas about shared locality ("land") intersect in forming a sense of belonging or identity. I would like to thank the editors for bringing this literature to my attention.

More recently, Liisa Malkki has traced out the bonds between "blood" and "land" as grounded in arboreal metaphors in western and other nationalist discourses; see her "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1992): 24-44.

³ Mindie Lazarus-Black, "Why Women Take Men to Magistrate's Court: Caribbean Kinship Ideology and Law," *Ethnology* 30 (1991): 119-133.

⁴ The principal islands are Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Jost van Dyke and Anegada.

⁵ A point of clarification: prior to the 1981 Nationality Act, technically only "legal" fathers passed citizenship rights down patrials. In practice, however, and especially in the Caribbean with its high rates of "illegitimacy," the requirement that the father be "legal" was often ignored. Furthermore, prior to 1981, one could legally establish a claim to citizenship if one could prove that a direct male ancestor had been legally born to a citizen father; in other words, if one's grandfather had been a legitimate child of a male citizen, one had a legal claim to citizenship.

I will not rehearse the body of literature on the high rates of "illegitimacy" in the Caribbean. Richard Price provided an apt critique of the framing of the "problem" by North American social scientists in his "Studies of Caribbean Family Organization: Problems and Prospects," *Dedalo* 14 (1971): 23-59. See also Ortmayr, and, in general, the essays in Part IV of this volume, as well as Rose Brewer's "Matrilineality and Patrilineality" conference paper, "African-American Family Formation: Adolescent Fathers, Mothers and Kin." "Legitimacy" is bound up with Western traditions (and monotheistic ones; see Eilberg-Schwartz in this volume, as well as Carol Delaney, *The Seed and the Soil: Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), which place primacy on

"fatherhood" as opposed to "motherhood" for ascribing status, identity and so forth. The irony of the 1981 Nationality Act for Caribbean kinship is that, whereas the Act was intended to ensure a means of mothers passing on their citizenship rights to their children, in practice it reconstructed and reinvigorated "fatherhood" (via notions of "legitimacy") as centrally important to citizenship.

⁶ "Belonger" and "non-belonger" are legal terms which refer to landholding and employment rights; legally, they are not immigration or citizenship categories. However, since the passage of the 1981 Nationality Act, BVI Islanders and immigrants have used "belonger" and "citizen" (and "non-belonger" and "noncitizen" or "foreigner") interchangeably. In this essay, I use the terms "belonger" and "non-belonger" in their popular (i.e., nonlegal) senses, to mean "citizen" and "noncitizen," respectively. I have explored the shifts in the popular and legal meanings of belonger and citizenship statuses and identities in 'Belonging,' Citizenship and Flexible Specialization in a Caribbean Tax Haven," *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 16 (3): 9–18, 1993.

⁷ Jean Besson has explored in great detail the "family land" phenomenon and forms of common tenure in the Caribbean. She argues that land ownership in the Caribbean is symbolically central to ideas about autonomy and individual liberty conceived as against or resistive to a cultural memory of plantation slavery. Common tenure arises, she maintains, because of the overall scarcity of land available for individuals to lay claim to as they establish their autonomy. I would suggest that Besson perhaps does not take her analysis far enough. There seems to me to be no necessary contradiction between individual autonomy and ideas about "scarcity" of resources—the weight both concepts carry in liberal political and economic discourses suggest that both are central to the market- and state-building projects of modernity. See Jean Besson, "Symbolic Aspects of Land in the Caribbean: The Tenure and Transmission of Land Rights among

Caribbean Peasantries," in Malcolm Cross and Arnaud Marks, eds., *Peasants, Plantations and Rural Communities in the Caribbean* (Surrey: Department of Sociology, University of Surrey), pp. 86–116; Jean Besson, "Family Land and Caribbean Society: Toward an Ethnography of Afro-Caribbean Peasantries," in Elizabeth M. Thomas-Hope, ed., *Perspectives on Caribbean Regional Identity* (Liverpool: Centre for Latin American Studies, 1984), pp. 57–83; Jean Besson and Janet Momsen, eds., *Land and Development in the Caribbean* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1987); Jean Besson, "Agrarian Relations and Perceptions of Land in a Jamaican Peasant Village," in John S. Brierley and Hymie Rubenstein, eds., *Small Farming and Peasant Resources in the Caribbean* (Winnipeg: Department of Geography, University of Manitoba), pp. 39–61. For a detailed discussion of the family land phenomenon in the British Virgin Islands, with special reference to its changing gender, kinship and legal dimensions, please see my *Recharting the Caribbean: Land, Law and Citizenship in the British Virgin Islands*, Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1994, chapter 2.

⁸ "Rock City" is slang for the island of St. Thomas in the United States Virgin Islands (USVI).

⁹ Farrelly was Governor of the USVI when Benji V sang his song.

¹⁰ Lyrics copyright © 1991, Vanclair Benjamin.

¹¹ I would like to acknowledge Colleen B. Cohen for making this point.

¹² See Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black In The Union Jack* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Gilroy discusses how British citizenship laws have relied implicitly on ideas about a perceived racial community needing to be preserved for "true" Britons. Indeed, the British Nationality Act effectively denied British citizenship to the children of immigrants from independent Caribbean nations. In the BVI, however, the Act was greeted by many belongers with pleasure, especially as political turmoil in the Dominican

Republic and Guyana brought more and more immigrants from those countries, and as the BVI achieved one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean. BVI Islanders found themselves reluctant to share the spoils of their economic prosperity, even with their "long-lost" Dominican cousins.

¹³ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Death of History? Historical Consciousness and the Culture of Late Capitalism," *Public Culture* 4 (1992): 47–65.

¹⁴ See Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1992): 6–23. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); and Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, 1986).

¹⁵ This is in contrast to the situation Dick Hebdige, Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy have described for the Atlantic diaspora of Caribbean peoples. See, in addition to Gilroy's work cited above, Dick Hebdige, *Cut 'n' Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music* (London: Methuen, 1987); Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Dias-

pورا," in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Cultural Difference* (London, 1990), pp. 222–237. See also Stefan Helmreich, "Kinship, Nation, and Paul Gilroy's Concept of Diaspora," *Diaspora* 2(2): 243–247, 1992.

¹⁶ My assumption in this conclusion, of course, is that immigrants to the BVI and their children will, eventually, be successful in obtaining citizenship rights or in forcing a redefinition of the legal statuses "belonger" and "non-belonger." The intent of my conclusion is to sound a cautionary note, however, on the kind of community that might be designed after this becomes the case. The counterdiscourse demands we come to grips with the contradictions of liberal political theory and its ethics of freedom, individuality and choice. For a discussion of these dilemmas for feminist practice, see Jane Collier, "Negotiating Values: 'You Can't Have It Both Ways,'" in Patricia Lyons Johnson, ed., *Balancing Acts: Women and the Process of Social Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 163–177. See also Kath Weston's "Matrilineality and Patrilineality" conference paper, "Forever is a Long Time: Friendship and Enduring Solidarity in Gay Kinship Ideology."

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