

MUCH TOO MUCH SELFISHNESS:
NEOLIBERALISM AND THE PRACTICE OF FREEDOM IN A JAMAICAN FARMTOWN

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2013

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This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigates the outcome of a course of reforms that rose to dominance in the late twentieth century on the promise of producing the greatest benefits for the greatest number through the expansion of the global capitalist marketplace. Champions of this approach have promoted capitalist expansion as a new project of liberation. Meanwhile, recurrent seizures of the global economy have undermined the viability of these reforms and raised interest in charting substitute paths of freedom. *Much Too Much Selfishness* contributes to assessing the effects of neoliberal reforms, and to identifying alternative strategies for better living through globalization, by exploring aspects of the creative destruction wrought upon the population of Jamaica, where government and multinational agencies have pursued a consistent and decades-long policy trajectory following the logic of liberation through market expansion. Focusing on conceptions of ethical behavior as expressed by residents of one central-island farmtown, the dissertation charts a corresponding pattern in locally prevalent guidelines for reconciling

individual and collective interests through the practice of freedom. Based on analysis of lessons gleaned from ethnographic and archival research conducted between 2006 and 2013, it places more recent expressions within a lineage ranging from the era of the town's initial settlement as an enterprise of plantation slavery, through the early phases of neoliberal reforms, and into the period concurrent with the research for this study. Following an extended historical discussion, the dissertation returns to the more recent past for a close consideration of the soundtrack of a festival residents hosted in the early twenty-first century to commemorate slavery abolition. It closes by applying recent scholarship about meaningful music to information gathered from interviews, participant observation, and field audio recordings taken during contemporary Emancipation Day festivities, in order to access further refined conclusions about the local impact of neoliberal reforms and the existing alternative approaches to global sociality.

For David Boswell and Trevor Foster, with respect.

...two who passed but remain present.

Acknowledgments

With great appreciation and humility I extend my thanks to the current and former residents of the Jamaican district I have referred to in these pages under the pseudonym of “Middle Rock,” whose generosity, patience, and dignity constitute the underlying bedrock of this dissertation.

For their sacrifices on my behalf, and their support, advice, and insight, I owe a debt of gratitude to my family, beginning with my parents, Jamie M. Storm and Morris J. Sammons, and my sisters, Kate and Meg. Among many other blessings, my grandparents, Mattye Sue and Morris Jordan Sammons, Lucylle Pope MacNaughton, James H. MacNaughton, and Sandy MacNaughton provided foundational inspiration. My step-families encouraged me throughout the process even as more and more calendar pages went by the wayside: Thank you Gary Storm, Victoria, Brian, Gretchen, and Will Gerwig, Eddie Storm, Liz Sammons, Jennifer Legernes and Wayne and Benjamin Maynard, and Laura Legernes.

It has been a privilege to work with the members of my examination and dissertation advisory committee, Vincent Crapanzano, David Harvey, and Leith Mullings. I am grateful to each of them for being so giving of their attention, thoughtful comments, and guidance; the benefits I have received from you all are untellable in substance and variety. Likewise, I count as a blessing the opportunity to thank Deborah A. Thomas, who as the dissertation’s outside reader gave precise and constructive feedback. To my dissertation supervisor, Donald Robotham, must go a special ovation; I thank him for his example, and for direction, perspective, sturdy backing, and timely doses of encouragement.

I have many to thank among the staff and faculty of the City University of New York. Ellen DeRiso deserves special mention. A Summer Research grant from the PhD Program in Anthropology provided the chance to start off strong. Barbara Pospisil, Kay Powell, Alida Rojas, and Judy Waldman were each instrumental in my completing my degree. For opportunities to share and improve my work, and injections of support vital to finishing the research, I thank Jerry G. Watts, Zee Dempster, James L. de Jongh, and others in CUNY's Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean. I am grateful to the staff of the Mina Rees Library, especially Polly Thistlethwaite, and the valiant individuals who cover the circulation and information desks, the IT helpdesk, and the office of interlibrary loan services. I thank the staff of the Graduate Center's Office of Financial Aid for their skill and kindness. From the Center for the Humanities, I thank Aoibheann Sweeney and Sampson Starkweather. In the Office of the Provost I thank Rachel Sponzo. At Baruch College, CUNY, I thank Glenn Petersen. At Medgar Evers College, CUNY, I thank Rosalina Diaz, Emmanuel Egbe, Robin Ford, Lorraine Kuziw, Michael Needle, Frank Riley, Bart Van Steirteghem, and Janice Zummo, and especially Brenda Greene, Nancy Lester, Philip Ording, Karen Pitt, and Doris Withers. At Queens College, CUNY, I thank Shakiela Greene and Sara Stinson, as well as Murphy Halliburton, James Moore, Arthur Rostoker, and Doreen Schmitt.

Every course I took as a student at the Graduate Center figured into writing this dissertation. Thanks to Talal Asad, Jacqueline Nassy Brown, John Collins, Gerald Creed, Roberto Delgado, Ellie Hisama, Louise Lennihan, Miki Makihara, Jeff Maskovsky, Thomas McGovern, Jane Schneider, Jonathan Shannon, Julie Skurski, and Ida Susser. Kevin Birth's influence in the process has been particularly great. Thank you Kevin for time and attention, and

for the reminders to write, to stop writing, and to follow that passage from James and to write about what people are doing and not what it appears they ought to be doing.

As I pieced together orphaned passages into chapters I reaped tremendous benefits from several research and discussion groups. I thank the CUNY Center for the Humanities, organizers Marcela Echeverr  and Premilla Nadasen, and the collective of co-participants in the 2011-2012 Andrew W. Mellon Interdisciplinary Seminar, for sharing ideas and generative feedback.

Thanks to organizers Herman Bennett, Kelly Baker Josephs, Nicole Burrowes, and Ryan Mann-Hamilton as well as the contributors to the seminar in Caribbean Epistemologies at the CUNY Graduate Center. Thanks to the Slavery and Freedom Working Group at New York University, and especially to Jennifer Morgan, and again to Herman Bennett, for creating and steering the group. To the Black Marxism reading group, and the overlapping ensemble that came together for the Green Lantern sessions, I owe exceptional and sustained appreciation. Thank you for the camaraderie, the goodness of your company, and for sharing the fruits of your extraordinary work, intellect, and conviction.

In addition to those above, I have accrued debts to a group of teachers, friends, interlocutors, and kin whose specific gifts cannot be encapsulated here, but who deserve mention for having enriched my life during the period when I worked toward completing this dissertation. Thank you Kobi Abayomi, Raja Abillama, the staff of the African and Caribbean Institute of Jamaica, Amna Akbar, Ozan Aksoy, Zaheer Ali, Adunni Allen, Sharon Allen (Joy) and daughters, Yasmine Almachnouk, Moji Anderson, Andy, Alessandro Angelini, Arbin, Grace Asphall, Aston (Pearl), Atnel, Gage Averill, Robyn Kali Bacon & Rachael Martin, Fadi Bardawil, Boubacar Barry, Vivian Berghahn, Acacia Berry, Kenneth Bilby, Major S.S. Birthwright (JDF), Patricia Blanchette, Claudette Blackburn, Mas Roger Blake, Jamie Blake,

Robert Blake (Rakka), Devon Wint/Blake (2 di world), Rich Blint, the staff of Bobst Library at New York University, Bobo (Mile Gully taxi), Clifton Bogle (Bounty), Barry Bonnito, the late Mr. David Boswell, Mr. Lloyd Boswell, Niguel Boswell (Zeeks), Omar Boswell, Kenneth & Donna Boswell and family, Errol Boswell (all-rounder), Mas D (King David) Boswell, Wayne Boswell (the van & the voice), Mike Boyle, Julian Brash, Kamau Brathwaite, Akissi Britton, Ms. Bulgin, the staff of Butler Library at Columbia University, Sam Byrd, Carlton, Mike Cation & Julia Stackler, the late Barrington Chevannes, Claude (aka Massop), Iris Cofield, Sgt. Cohen (Cottage Police Station), Omar (Heavyman) Coke, Mas Coke & Mrs. Coke, Mike Coke, Weston Coke, Jean-Paul Colleyn, the staff of the Columbus Metropolitan Library, Ms. Concey & Mas Archie, Sibyl Cooksey, Carolyn Cooper, the late Jayne Cortez, Cutta, Mas Daryl, J. Michael Dash, Sgt. Major L. “Sas” Davey, Ms. Evadne Davey, Austin Davey, Paul Davey, PG Davey (Mattahan), Katrina Davey, Rev. & Mrs. Christopher Davis and family, C. Daniel Dawson, Rebecca de Guzman, Horace Demetrius, Kenton Demetrius, Debbie Demetrius & sons, Derrick (phone card!), Manthia Diawara, Dibbles, Maggie Dickinson, Nathan Dillon & family, Henry (Mas P) & Mrs. Jackie Dixon and family, Cora Dixon, Valerie & Alvin Dixon, Ms. Dorette, Gail Drakes, Neville Duncan & SALISES, Nicholas Ebanks (Tallman), Laura & Eli Elder, Lise Esdaile, Everton (Strength), Jennifer Ewers, Alvin Ewers, and Mas Ewers (Brooklyn/Alligator Pond), Ezron, Christine Folch, James Ford, the late Mrs. Beryl Foster, Desmond Foster, the late Trevor Foster (Bingy), Foster Barracks company past and present (JDF), Donette Francis, Cliff Francis, Terri Francis, Beryl Francis, Steve & Dequiandra Fradkin & family, John Frankfurt, Jacinth Frith, Martin Frith (Bounty), Mrs. Dorothy Frith & family, Vincent Frith, Mas Alfred Frith, Joelle Frith, Alan Froberg, Bruce Fudge & Louisa Shea, Ifeona Fulani, Mas Garwood, Rania Ghosn & El Hadi Jazairy, Michael A. Gomez, Adrian Gottlieb, Jonathan W. Gray,

Kenrick Gray (Tony Soprano), Mr. & Mrs. Ivor Griffiths, Tino Gutierrez & family, the staff of the Half King, Shay Harris (IRAAS & much more), Tina Harris, Faye V. Harrison, Beth Haymaker (since steel-toes hit Bread Co.), Bobb & Joanne Haymaker and the Haymaker/Muir/Bane/Nelson/Maloney clan, Robert Hinton, Dorothy Hollingsworth, Peter James Hudson, Winnie & Patrick Hylton, Danielle Jackson, the staff of the Jamaica Archives & Records Department, the staff of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust, Ms. Janet (over at the school), Jeff (Nana), Mas Alrick Johnson (Johno = Jah know), Imani Kai Johnson, Anthony Johnson & Johanna Almiron, Rev. Owen Johnson & Mrs. Maxine Johnson and family, Douglas & Yvette Johnson and family, Annette Johnson, Olive Johnson, Mas L.U. Johnson and family, Sadio Jonas, (Dr.) Amy Jones, Mas Joseph (Uncle Son), Humayun Kabir, Banu Karaca, Kristie Kelly (CUSO-VSO), Kiki (Dangerman/the barber), Lyra Kilston, Gac Kim & Layla Hearth Kim and family, Ramona Knepp, Akemi Kochiyama, Lando, Mr. Laylor, Orion Layton & Ellen Luepke Layton (and Beatrice of course), Colin & Ms. I.M. Leavene, Tina Lee, Andres Leon, Horace Levy, Stacey Lewis (Madge), Barbara B. Lewis, Natasha Lightfoot, Robert Linton, Morgan Liu, Lloyd, Mr. & Mrs. Lodge, Rev. Abraham Lotha, Rev. Adrienne Lotson, Jennifer Lutton, Mas Bozzie Lyons, Kevin McGruder, Dorla McIntosh & Kevin Penton and family, Diana McIntyre-Pike, Bill McKinney, Shea McManus, the staff of the Manchester Parish Library, the late Manning Marable, Markey, Seth Markle, Philippe Marius, Erin Martineau, Ms. Mary, Francis Mattadeen, everybody at the meat & seasoning shop, Ms. Messam, Herbie Miller, Ivor Miller, Wayne Modest, Linda Morgan, Andrea Morrell, Nada Moumtaz (lukt), Hugh Nash, Junior Nash, Mas Levi Nash, Mr. L. & Ms. Bobbet Nation and family, Natty (Jeff), Dan Neely, Andy Newman, Nadine Newman, Richard T. Niemerg & Wendy Ma, Njoroge Njoroge & Suzanna Reiss, the Nkiru Center for Education and Culture, NOSA, Megan Obourn, Sobukwe

Odinga, Mojeje Omuta, Ceren Ozgul & Arman Artuc and family, Delores A. Palmer, June Palmer, Pardy, Horace Parker, Michael Partis, (Uncle) Peter, Mark Phillipson, Christine Pinnock, Khary Polk, Mr. & Mrs. Oscar Powell, Ted Powers, Brian Purnell, Stan Pryzanowski, Andrea Queeley, Kareem Rabie, Mariya Radeva, Evan Rapport, Jeremy Rayner & Mónica Herrera, Faiz Razi, Ian Reid, Robert Reid-Pharr, Corrine Richards, William Robinson, Ivette Romero, Dan Rood, Tricia Rose, Rovel, Lily Saint, Sophie Saint-Just, JC Salyer & Paige West, Tyler Schmidt, Kelly Schrepfer (wceird, right?), Hillina Seife, Robert Sergeant, Owen Sergeant, Shabba, Barry Shank, Douaa Sheet, Robert Smith & Claudia Morrison and Deshaun A. Smith, Byron Smith & Ava Frith and family, Jeffrey Smith, Garth Smith, Ms. Janique Smith (Bird) and family, the late Mas Bigga Smith, Spider, Bug & Nataleen Steadman and family, Carl Stephenson, Cheryl Sterling, Jonathan Stillo, Jennifer Stoever Ackerman, Victoria Stone-Cadena, Gloria Swaby, Emma Taati, Alan R. Takeall, Selena Tapper, the three-card pool players, the barbacks, the cashpot players (26), the C train, the Q train, the staff of Think Coffee on Mercer Street, the cat-burglar (motivation), Roger (Diego) & Ms. Pat Thompson and family, Steve Thompson, the staff of Thompson Library at the Ohio State University, Rev. Ronald Thwaites, Paul Tierno, Dawn Lee Tu, Jose N. Vasquez & Emi Murumatsu and family, Ana Vinea, Adam John Waterman, Anita Waters, Sonia Watson, Keith & Shelly Watson and family, Johnny Watson (Bulldog) and family, David Watson (Belgian), Corresa Whyte, Karen G. Williams, Hank Williams, Christopher Winks, Mas Winston, Daphne Witter, Ghenete Wright-Muir, Janette Yarwood, and Zepher.

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Introduction

Between 2006 and 2010 I traveled from the U.S. to Jamaica five times in order to do research for this dissertation. I spent the majority of my time there—about a year and a half—living in the town I will be referring to as Middle Rock.¹

I first learned about Middle Rock through a description of the annual Emancipation Day festival that started taking place in the community in the late 1990s. At the time I was following a more general desire to pursue my doctoral research in rural Jamaica. From coverage of the event in the online archives of Jamaica's two nationwide daily print newspapers, the *Gleaner* and the *Observer*, I also learned that a social and philanthropic organization of past students of Middle Rock's local school had co-sponsored the event, and that they had a chapter in New York City, where I was living and going to school.

An internet search engine turned up a record of a group with the same name having filed papers to certify the organization as a not-for-profit entity, so I contacted the attorney whom the web page listed as having handled the case. I introduced myself as a student in the cultural anthropology program at CUNY who was interested in the finding out more about the festival for my doctoral dissertation. I asked if she could tell me whether the record I had found was correct, and, if so, whether she could tell me if it was the same organization as I had read about in the Jamaican newspapers. Fortunately for me, she confirmed it and offered me information about how to get in touch with one of the group's members.

¹ This is not the real name of the town. Unless otherwise noted, for the sake of peoples' privacy I have used pseudonyms when referring to individuals, local organizations, and to local place names.

Soon after, in the spring of 2006, I introduced myself to that member of the New York chapter of the Bethlehem Past Students Association as a graduate student in cultural anthropology at CUNY. I said that I was compelled by the little I knew about Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festival, and that I had contacted her to ask the favor of some help learning more about it. When she invited me to the group's upcoming meeting, I jumped at the chance, and soon I was knocking on the door of a good-looking brick house in Queens and making the acquaintance of the dozen or so members who were in attendance that evening.

That meeting and subsequent conversations I had with members of the past students group were encouraging, and I traveled to Jamaica that summer. I spent most of my time that trip in the nearby parish capital, but I got to visit Middle Rock several times, including for the town's 2006 Emancipation Day festival. Through the help of the past students association, I met more members of the community, including several of the individuals in the town's chief civic organization and the central committee for organizing the yearly festival, the Middle Rock Community Council. I returned home to the U.S. and started making plans in earnest to return to Middle Rock for a longer stay.

When I got back to Middle Rock in the summer of 2008, I moved into a second-story apartment on the town square. An offer to rent it had come from a local man who had migrated, and who, like the past students' group, had not lost touch with the happenings in Middle Rock. I soon met a few members of the community in the shops and on the square, and met a few more while taking walks along the road that extended west from the square, and the north/south road that ran through it.

Throughout the time I spent living in Middle Rock I repeatedly identified myself as a student. When I explained my research I tried to consistently say that I was interested in learning

anything anybody wanted to tell me but that my plan was to write my thesis about some combination of details about Middle Rock's local history, about how people there were making a living in the early twenty-first century, and about the Emancipation Day festivals that townspeople had been putting on. I also told people that, for privacy's sake, in whatever I wrote based on my research in Middle Rock, I would avoid using proper names and mask other details that would clearly identify the town or any of its residents.

This brings me to two important points, after which I will turn my attention to setting the stage for the discussion that follows. Like any other town, the nuance of the community's evolution cannot be captured in words. It is important for me to state at the outset that this dissertation is not intended to stand as a complete description of Middle Rock's evolution across the two centuries it had been settled before I started writing.²

Along similar lines, I don't intend at any point here to represent the whole spectrum of local feeling or opinion as they related to any one topic. While I have attempted to accurately represent events that I witnessed in and around town, and to recount with fidelity some of what I heard and some of what people there told me, I have left out more than I have included. And

² The information needed to write a proper history of Middle Rock is outside the scope of the research I have done so far. I am sure the many current and past residents whom I have not consulted directly on this subject would agree. Three recently published books about Jamaican communities serve as illustrative examples of the level of historiographic focus that I do not reach here: Erna Brodber's *The People of My Jamaican Village* and *Woodside, Pear Tree Grove P.O.*, and Jean Besson's *Martha Brae's Two Histories*. In addition to their factual content, each provided instructive examples of what sorts of questions I could ask about Middle Rock, each alerted me to published sources and archival collections where I might find answers, and each demonstrated an inspiring respect for the archive of popular memory that in turn affected my approach to learning about Middle Rock and my approach to learning from who people I met there. However, each also displays a comprehensiveness and continuity of historical narrative—tracing the genealogy of the local population, for instance—that I don't presume to approximate here. [See Brodber, Erna. *The People of My Jamaican Village: 1817-1948*. Woodside: Blackspace, 1999; ———. *Woodside, Pear Tree Grove P.O.* Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 2004; Besson, Jean. *Martha Brae's Two Histories: European Expansion and Caribbean Culture-Building in Jamaica*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.]

more to the point, even had I found a way to render the fullness of my experiences and lessons, this dissertation represents only one vantage point—mine—among those of everyone with whom I shared time in the town I’m referring to as Middle Rock. It should not be read as a portrayal of what everyone thought or even of what everyone agreed was most important, but rather as a discussion of some topics I came to regard as important by virtue of spending time in the town.

Let me turn now toward setting the stage more explicitly. In the next few pages I will begin by outlining a comparative route that might bring a reader closer to having an accurate conception of Middle Rock during the time I lived there. After that I will describe my chief concerns and objectives in the dissertation, and define some of the terms of my analysis. I will close with an outline of the chapters that follow.

The dissertation as a whole is scattered with details that I hope are helpful for following the discussion but also for the reader trying to conjure an image of Middle Rock. Still, it’s worthwhile to commit a few early pages to considering what makes Middle Rock a distinct place.³ Instead of attempting to describe the town through a set of unique demographic statistics or through a dose of poetic realism, I will plot a route to Middle Rock through two previous studies of rural Jamaican towns. One, Edith Clarke’s *My Mother Who Fathered Me: A Study of the Families in Three Selected Communities of Jamaica*, is an academic study. The other, Claude McKay’s novel, *Banana Bottom*, is a narrative study.

I don’t believe these are the only examples from either category that work, but each is a recognized classic that, having remained in print for over half a century, is therefore likelier

³ My use of this term is informed by my reading of Feld’s “Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea.” See Feld, Steven and Keith Basso, eds. *Senses of Place*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996: 91-136.

available to the reader of the present study. The reader will also notice that both texts were published more than half a century before I conducted research. As I intend to demonstrate, important differences and continuities emerge by way of this historical distance, and productively contribute to the reader's imagining of Middle Rock as it was when I lived there in the early twenty-first century.⁴

Let us begin with the academic study. *My Mother Who Fathered Me* is a widely known and foundational text in the field of scholarship investigating forms of kinship and family as recognized and practiced by people in Caribbean societies. The discussion primarily focuses on providing evidence-based insights concerning the constitution and organization of households,

⁴ Other studies of both kinds offer their own advantages, whether as alternatives to these two, or as additions. Michael Thelwell's novelization of *The Harder They Come* (1980) is a different narrative study with a good deal of use in this context, particularly when paired with, academic studies of Jamaican urbanization such as (to name examples currently at the front of my consciousness) Robotham's "How Kingston was Wounded" and Thomas's two books drawn from research in a Jamaican town near, but as yet not "in," Kingston.

Along similar lines John Berger's *Into Their Labours* trilogy, particularly *Pig Earth* (1979) captures some of the ineffables that help define Middle Rock as I have experienced it, namely the ambivalence between mastery and reliance that characterizes the ways Berger's characters constantly interface with worldly forces like weather, flora, and fauna. Likewise, Anthropologists Gerald Creed and Barbara Ching also offer some illustrative terms for imagining Middle Rock in their meditations on the quality of "rusticity."

[See Thelwell, Michael. *The Harder They Come*. New York: Grove, 1980; Robotham, Donald. "How Kingston was Wounded" in Schneider, Jane and Ida Susser, eds. *Wounded Cities: Destruction and Reconstruction in a Globalized World*. New York: Berg Publishers, 2003: pp. 111-128; Thomas, Deborah. *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004, and *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica*. Durham: Duke UP, 2011; Berger, John. *Into Their Labours: Pig Earth, Once in Europa, Lilac & Flag*. New York: Pantheon, 1991 [1979, 1983, 1990]; Ching & Creed, "Recognizing Rusticity: Identity and the Power of Place" in Ching, Barbara & Gerald W. Creed, eds. *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural Hierarchy*. New York: Routledge, 1997 (pp. 1-38).]. A reader looking for more along similar lines might also find rewards in the works of Earl Lovelace (*The Wine of Astonishment* (1982)); Ernest J. Gaines (esp. *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993)); Rick Bass (esp. *The Book of Yaak* (1996)); Annie Proulx (esp. *Close Range: Wyoming Stories* (1999)); Wendell Berry (cf. *A Place on Earth* (1967)); and Scott Russell Sanders (esp. *The Paradise of Bombs* (1993), *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World* (1993) and *The Force of Spirit* (2000)).]

different approaches to heterosexual marriage, and developments in the intersection of gender, kinship, and parental role. For our purposes here, however, Clarke's contribution to the study of the conditions of rural Jamaican life is what occupies the spotlight.

As the title of her book tells us, Clarke built latitude into her research by gathering and comparing the different sets of answers that she produced by asking the same questions in three separate communities in the Jamaican countryside. Taken together the three establish a typological assortment that is helpful for conjuring an image of Middle Rock by a process of comparison. My reading of Clarke's study alongside the details that I gleaned from interviews, conversations, and archival materials, suggests that Middle Rock bears most resonance with the district she refers to throughout the text as "Orange Grove."⁵

In her "Comparative Description of Centres Studied," Clarke outlined the characteristic and relative details distinguishing the communities she called "Sugartown," "Mocca," and "Orange Grove." The first of the three, she wrote, "centres about the [sugar] factory, surrounded by thousands of acres of cane" (1957: 22). Many local people there work in the sowing, harvesting, and processing of sugarcane, and every year, "much larger numbers than can be absorbed begin to pour into Sugartown from the beginning of 'crop' as the busy season is called, both from the neighbouring villages and from other parts of the island" (1957: 24).

In contrast to Sugartown, in Mocca "there is neither a source of employment nor land for mixed farming."

[In Mocca] there is no mobility of population. No one comes into the village; only a few of the younger folk move out.... Houses in Mocca are built on family land and family and kindred cling together, united in the struggle to find a means of livelihood in a hostile

⁵ Clarke, Edith. *My Mother Who Fathered Me: A Study of the Families in Three Selected Communities of Jamaica*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1957: 12.

environment where the process of mechanization and changing industrial conditions have passed them by. (1957: 25)

And finally, with respect to Orange Grove,

[Residents] are subject to the vicissitudes of farmers everywhere; but their mixed farming is competent, their orange groves well-cared, the soil is fertile, the climate healthy and temperate, and they have a market at satisfactory prices for whatever they produce. Levels of income are relatively high [in Orange Grove] and there are no violent fluctuations as in Sugartown. This Centre is larger than Mocca, but the community sense is highly developed and there are recurrent occasions...when the community can exchange views on matters which concern them all. (1957: 26)

In other words, in the same ways it differed from Clarke's portrait of Orange Grove, the conditions according to which people made life in Sugartown (and places like it) would have significantly differed from Middle Rock during the same period, primarily stemming from the latter's linkage to the crop after which it is named. The dramatic seasonal fluctuations in the local population, and related phenomena like wide wealth disparity and shortage of housing that Clarke found in early post-World War II Sugartown are all likely features that distinguished it from Middle Rock.

Also like Orange Grove, Middle Rock probably stood apart from Mocca. In Clarke's rendering social life there featured a comparative lack of wealth disparity, but while many individuals there hovered around the median socioeconomic level, that median was lowest by comparison across the three towns. Mocca's greater local wealth equality and widespread and consistent impoverishment, distinguish it from Orange Grove and, as I am suggesting, from Middle Rock in the same period.

Moving further, one of the key topics in *My Mother Who Fathered Me* is the relative prevalence of conjugal union in cohabitation between unrelated, unmarried men and women. In other words, this is the question of what ratio of the men and women in the community who live

together and otherwise act as though married, are doing so under legal and religious approval. Clarke refers to such arrangements as “marriage” and “concubinage,” and notes that in all three contexts, people whom she surveyed viewed the two in deep contrast, where marriage “is regarded as a serious step,” and “cannot be considered at all unless the conditions proper to it are fulfilled or appear capable of fulfillment.” However, “Orange Grove was the only [town of the three] where the majority of the population had the necessary social and economic security to satisfy these expectations.” Thus, Clarke wrote, “it is no accident that marriage was the rule [in Orange Grove] as it was the exception in Sugartown and Mocca” (1957: 79).

Over sixty years after the research that produced the citations undergirding *My Mother Who Fathered Me*, my conversations with townspeople and announcements I heard in church indicated that marriage had also been the rule in Middle Rock during the same period. Among a cross-generational sample of local people with whom I spoke, members of both married and unmarried “cohabitating and conjugal” couples expressed the opinion that the frequency of marriage was locally on the decline, but it was nevertheless evidently still the rule at the time I lived there.

Moreover, when I lived there Middle Rock retained a reputation, among residents as well as among some who lived in neighboring communities, as a community where cohabitating couples of unrelated, unmarried men and women were not welcome, regardless of age, education, or profession. “I live over in the next town down the road,” one man told me soon after we had first met in a shop in Middle Rock. At the time he was in his fifties, and living with a woman who taught at an elementary school in the region and whom I understood to be just a bit younger than him. I learned later that he had studied in the life sciences field and that he had done part of his education abroad, in South America. We had a number of conversations about

my own research, including several that began with him mentioning articles my academic advisor had published in the *Gleaner*.

“And we’re happy there,” he was telling me in that early meeting. “Right there in a nice little place; you should come and visit sometime. But you know some of these [Middle Rock] people give us trouble because we didn’t go officially get married in church.”

“Really?” I said. People in Middle Rock heard me say that word a lot.

“Yes, man! And some even say ‘it is not right because Cynthia is a teacher and it gives the wrong impression to the children.’ But that’s ok.” I remember he looked at Suzette who ran the shop as he switched into patois. “Meeee no worry about *that*,” he said emphatically, and Suzette smiled. “We just go about our business and don’t let that bother us. I pass through Middle Rock and see my friends, but if the other thing is a problem that’s okay because I am very happy where I am now.”

In fact my own lack of precise, community-wide figures on the matter partially reflects something of the local prejudice in favor of marriage, as due to testimonies like this one I opted to make a practice of not inquiring or even speaking about peoples’ marital status unless they broached the topic themselves. For example once when I asked a thirty-something resident whether she and her partner were married she responded with sharp indignation, “well of course we are married!” Also, an influence on my thinking was the way that, in the few times Middle Rock residents spoke to me about residents who were unmarried-but-living-together male/female couples, these statements included some caveat about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the topic. For instance, “they don’t like people to talk about it, but I don’t judge them, and anyway it is a fact.”

In this way I have limited the strength of my findings regarding this particular issue, yet the point here is less about the precise figures of married and unmarried “cohabitating and conjugal” couples than it is about drawing a substantial comparison between Middle Rock in the twenty-first century, and the typology Clarke established in her report over half a century earlier. With respect to pressures to marry, however, and regarding the numbers of those who followed this precept in practice, the research I conducted in Middle Rock strongly suggests that it both resembled Orange Grove at the time of Clarke’s research, *and* that this correspondence may also be applied to the period in which I conducted my research for the present study.⁶

A similar characteristic of note here is a customary land tenure system, known as “family land,” that Clarke found in practice to some degree in all three communities where she conducted research. In the early twenty-first century, I met individuals in Middle Rock who volunteered to me details about land they lived on—and didn’t live on—which fit this system’s general criteria as described by Clarke and elaborated by Besson: people who claimed ownership of a piece of land 1) that they had acquired through an inheritance, 2) to which they shared right to usufruct with male and female kin, and 3) their share of which they could not sell.⁷ In at least one case

⁶ This trend likely owes in large part to the historical influence of the Moravian missionary church, and also likely reflects something of its continued sway. I elaborate on this topic in chapters one and two, below. On the emphasis with which Moravian missionaries in Jamaica, in particular, discouraged cohabitation out of wedlock, see Warner-Lewis, Maureen. *Archibald Monteath: Igbo, Jamaican, Moravian*. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2007, especially ch.10, “Shaping Identities,” pp. 233-249. See also Austin-Broos, Diane J. “Redefining the Moral Order: Interpretations of Christianity in Postemancipation Jamaica” in McGlynn & Drescher, eds. *The Meaning of Freedom: Economics, Politics, and Culture After Slavery*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992 (pp. 221-243).

⁷ Specifically, Besson has averred from “Clarke’s Africanist thesis” that posits an Ashanti origin to the “family land” form of land tenure, a position she summarized in 1992: “Rather than a mosaic of inert survivals from colonial or ancestral cultures, family land emerged as a dynamic Caribbean cultural creation forged by the peasantries themselves in resistant response to the plantation system.” (Besson, Jean. “Freedom and Community: The British West Indies” in McGlynn & Drescher, eds. *The Meaning of Freedom* (p. 202)). Besson’s contributions to the

the list of past and present owners of a piece of land indicated that it had been treated as “family land” for multiple generations. As such this indicates a preservation of conditions that would, at the time of Clarke’s study, have linked Middle Rock with Orange Grove, and to Sugartown and Mocca as well.⁸

discourse on the topic Besson has played a central role in the field of scholarship investigating the institution of “family land,” and her published work is notable for the breadth of its engagement with other work in the field. For a useful introduction to her work, see chapter one of Besson 2002, cited above, “Caribbean Controversies and Anthropological Theory” pp. 5-36.⁸ How far back did this go? Approaching Middle Rock through Orange Grove, we find Clarke’s distinction of “original” and “created” family land. Is there—or was there ever—“original family land” in Middle Rock? On this issue, two channels of public discourse about Middle Rock’s history diverge. One channel suggests that in some cases family lands were, in Clarke’s distinction, “original.” Another suggests that all Middle Rock family land is “created.”

The issue breaks down as follows: Clarke wrote that the people she spoke with recognized two different types of family land: 1) those plots originally acquired as gifts from plantation owners to those they had enslaved, and 2) those plots purchased since slavery was abolished. Unlike in Sugartown and Mocca, in Orange Grove Clarke found no cases of the former, where family land had originated in a gift from a slaveholder. But in Orange Grove, Clarke wrote, “the process of *creation* of family land in the present day was observable... where the land had been purchased within the last half century either by our informants or their fathers or elder brothers” (1957: 46).

Testimonies I gathered—instances where Middle Rock residents told me they lived on land passed down by fore-parents “since slavery,” for example—suggest the plots of land Middle Rock residents had inherited over generations do fit Clarke’s first definition of family land, where an erstwhile planter had granted title “at no cost,” as it were, to a former captive. However, publicity for Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day festivities has typically included a reference to the town’s origin, and in all cases that reference has called out the town’s resettlement in 1840, after the Moravian mission bought, subdivided, and resold the acreage of the Middle Rock Coffee Estate.

Thus the real issue concerns the number of people whom the Moravians displaced from land that had been gifted to them (or to a fore-parent) by an erstwhile slaveholder.

One final point about “family land”: The publicity for Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day festival tends to underscore the significance of Middle Rock’s reconstitution by settlers who bought land in the Moravians’ free village scheme, but in making no mention of these two years it tends to encourage the contrary notion that the free village of Middle Rock was resettled immediately after abolition. This draws attention away from the actual conditions of emancipation, and has the additional effect of emphasizing the Moravians’ free village project as a sacrifice of potential rents in the future, while ignoring the probable reality that the Moravians had bought land out from under people who had made homes there while enslaved, and then resold it to them.

Third, and finally, Clarke also compares the relative proportion and different nature of what she calls “economic co-operation” among the three rural towns in her study. In all three towns Clarke reports finding standardized procedures through which people crossed family lines to exchange labor without exchanging money, but Orange Grove stood out for its relatively active community calendar, which as Clarke describes it, operated as an additional dimension of labor cooperation. “In Orange Grove alone,” she wrote, “was there co-operation for community services” (1957: 183-184).

The three varieties of work-sharing that Clarke identified as occurring in Orange Grove include 1) occasional collaboration for a large or urgent project, 2) a “regular agreement between a group of small famers to assist one another,” and 3) “the system of ‘working days’ whereby one farmer gives another a day’s work on the understanding that it will be ‘given back.’” Beyond that, Clarke also noted that during the period when she conducted her research there was a monthly town meeting in Orange Grove. In her words, every month that meeting:

...was attended by the entire adult community, farmers and their wives, as well as by most of the young people.... It combined the regular meeting of all the co-operative organizations in the community: the Savings Union, the Agricultural Society, the Egg Co-operative, the organization for the supply of milk from the Condensary, the Building Committee for the community hall and the Cricket Club. (1957: 185)

One sees that in addition to being regularly held and well-attended, the composite character of these meetings reflects some substantial formally organized cooperative activity on the intermediate level. But Clarke’s additional point is that Orange Grove’s monthly community meetings played a role directly related to the boosting the town’s economic condition. This took

So far in my research, though, I have not yet come across a narrative of Middle Rock in the two years between abolition and the land’s resettlement as a free village, but this is a valuable issue for some future pursuit.

place both through intra-community exchange of ideas, and also through activity as a unity of constituents within the Jamaican body politic.

On these occasions advice was often given by the more experienced farmers in answer to questions and information passed on in regard to experiments in agricultural and horticultural techniques. All the discussions turned on the functions of the several organizations—to increase the output of the farm by improved techniques by utilizing what national services were available. (1957: 185)

Again Orange Grove has some correspondence to Middle Rock, both in the past and present. As I will discuss in more detail in chapter three, Middle Rock's institutional development at mid-century bore similarities to that of Orange Grove in the same era. There was a local People's Cooperative (PC) bank, there were farming cooperatives, and a community council which began operating in the early 1930s. Though the fullness of Orange Grove's variety of community institutions may not have been matched at the time, in both cases these would have distinguished Middle Rock, along with Orange Grove, from Sugartown and Mocca.

Similarly, regarding cooperative labor, I learned from conversations and interviews with men and women above the age of forty that “day-for-day” work such as Clarke described had been routine and widespread in that era. I learned also that the other two forms of work-sharing that Clarke found in Orange Grove—occasional collaboration for big projects, and agreements among small groups to regularly work together—had likewise been regular practice.

At the time of my research in Middle Rock, these practices appeared to have been sustained. I witnessed a number of instances of cooperative labor, including collaborative work to address deteriorating conditions on public roads, and cases of regular exchange of favors within a larger and regular field of reciprocity (e.g. “she spends the day helping me to get

something done with my house or my ground; later I in turn spend a day helping her to get something done with her house or her ground.”)

Also in the period when I lived in Middle Rock there was a community council operating in Middle Rock during the time I was there, as well as an active calendar of community events. This included Harvest fundraisers at the Moravian and the Pentecostal church, two privately-sponsored street dances, “Sport Day” (an organized track and field competition for school children), and of course the Emancipation Day festival which I have mentioned above.

Still, however, all whom I asked about it contended that such collaborative activity was on the decline, and it was impossible to ignore the frequency with which those whom I asked lamented that in days past cooperative labor traditions were more consistently and more widely used in Middle Rock. One man in his forties told me about the decline of day-for-day work as we rode in his pick-up truck along a road that passed by an industrial quarry. I had asked what he knew about whether day-for-day work was common in his parents’ era. “Oh yes that used to happen a lot in those times,” he said. “But you don’t see too much of that around now. It is tougher now, and the area’s gotten economically depressed. There’s been a turn for the worse.” He waited a beat, then said “you’d think that would be a reason for cooperating more, but people have changed too.”

These laments and more generally the question of a vibrant and inclusive latticework of community institutions and structures for collaboration, strikes at the heart of my concern in this dissertation. As a commentary on the relative degree that cross-family group effort defines local labor practices in Middle Rock, it speaks to a local valorization of a collective ethic even as it identifies the sense that quality of life is perceived to have fallen as collectivism has declined.

There will be more to say about this below, but for now let us bring this part of the comparative trip to a close.

In these ways, my research and experiences lead me to conclude that at the time that Clark conducted research for *My Mother Who Fathered Me*, Middle Rock tended to resemble Orange Grove, and furthermore that Clarke's study affords the interested reader with a set of useful details with which to conjure a faint image of the town in the post-war era, and a somewhat more bold image of the town in the period when I conducted research for the present study. Yet still Clarke's study is of a particular sort, and while it carries the advantage of quantitative rigor and firm structural integrity, it is less useful for imagining other aspects of Middle Rock's social dimension. Clarke's study helps a reader to place Middle Rock among the minority of rural Jamaican towns with a highly developed sense and practice of community, but its strength is in tracking but not dramatizing that unfolding process. In the hope that it will do more toward the latter objective let us now turn to approach Middle Rock through a narrative, rather than an academic study, Claude McKay's 1933 novel, *Banana Bottom*.

McKay published *Banana Bottom* in the early 1930s, and the story he tells takes place around a century before my research, but the rural Jamaican district where much of the action occurs, bears key structural similarities to Middle Rock in the corresponding era. Like Middle Rock, the novel's eponymous mountain village of Banana Bottom originated as a plantation that was owned by an absentee European and populated by men and women whom he held in slavery. Like Middle Rock, McKay's fictional district was reconstituted from its plantation origins in the first half of the 19th century through a two-step process: first the full area of plantation land sold from an absentee to a local member of Jamaica's European elite, and second

the new landholder subdivided and sold the plantation land piecemeal, for the purchase and settlement by African-descended men and women who had until recently been enslaved there or on other territories in the area.⁹

The missionary presence in the town of Banana Bottom gives McKay's book particular use for a reader of this study to conjure an image of Middle Rock. Here as with the other examples this correspondence has its limits, but the motivations, methods, and outlook that McKay attributes to the Reverends Malcolm and Priscilla Craig nevertheless harkens to a portrait of the aims and subjects of the mission that Moravian clergy published in official accounts of their struggle to govern the evolution of Middle Rock throughout most of the nineteenth century.¹⁰

⁹ Archaeologist James A. Delle (1998) approached material traces of the early Jamaican coffee industry as evidence of a trend in the production of space that was brought on by a crisis of overaccumulation in the early 19th century global sugar market. Citing Harvey (1982) he identified these traces as developments of the built environment that signal capitalism's evolution in action: getting its "spatial fix," and thereby temporarily solving internally generated crises of overaccumulation by way of (uneven) geographical expansion and restructuring. This reading of Jamaican historical events has influenced my thinking regarding the conversion of Middle Rock from plantation to "Free Village." However convinced they may have been of the divine inspiration behind their mission, the Moravian clergy's subdivision of Middle Rock as well as the broader free village initiative are best explored in the context of realization of capitalism's internal contradictions. As has been made clear elsewhere (and as I discuss below in chapter 2), other pivotal aspects of missionaries' ostensibly divine project vis-à-vis free village settlers also worked hand-in-glove not just with the expansion of capitalism but on the side of that portion of society with control over the means of production. At the time free villages were the means by which missionaries played their most central role in support of the capitalist class. Through them missionaries encouraged the conversion of Jamaica's formerly enslaved population into a proletariat class available to help keep the plantation economy afloat as wage laborers. (For more see Delle, James A. *An Archaeology of Social Space: Analyzing Coffee Plantations in Jamaica's Blue Mountains*. New York: Plenum, 1998. Aside from Delle's application I base my sense of this on an interpretation of Harvey, David. *The Limits to Capital*. New York: Verso, 1999 [1982] and Harvey, David. "Globalization and the 'Spatial Fix'" *Geographische Review* 2(2001): 23-30.)

¹⁰ A more sustained discussion of the relationship between the population of Middle Rock and the Moravian mission to Jamaica may be found in chapter two, below.

Consider, for instance, the following two samples. First is McKay's narrator describing the feelings of a missionary couple upon the return to Jamaica of Tabitha (Bita) Plant, a young woman for whom they had arranged seven years of education in Europe.

Bita was one precious flowering of a great work. Not only the work of Malcolm and Priscilla Craig. But of the pioneers who had precede them in that field and whose tradition was the living breath of their work. In that glorious epoch that marks the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century a band of zealous non-conformists went forth to the famous and fertile slave belt of the New World to preach the Word to the Quashees. To bring to the jungle creatures Light.... Generally they were called missionaries. (1961 [1933]: 11-12)¹¹

Now here is Reverend J.H. Buchner, author of a history of the Moravian mission "to the Negroes in the Island of Jamaica," on what his experience as a participant in the immediate post-abolition period suggests should be the primary aims and objectives for the Moravian mission from 1854 onward.

From my long acquaintance with the Negroes of this island, I have every reason to believe that they are neither cruel nor vindictive. They have always appeared to me remarkably good natured, peaceable, and of docile disposition....

However, good natured and forgiving as the Negroes undoubtedly are, still they are deficient in those qualities which make a people strong and prosperous. There is a want of energy, of perseverance, of aspiration, which amounts justly to the charge of levity.¹²

It is possible that McKay had Buchner's lines in mind when he wrote his own, but it is more likely he took some inspiration from experience. Regardless, though, through his portrayal of missionary paternalism in the characters of the Reverends Craig, McKay makes a suggestion about its breadth and persistence.

¹¹ McKay, Claude. *Banana Bottom*. New York: Harvest, 1961 [1933].

¹² Buchner, J.H. *The Moravians in Jamaica: History of the Mission of the United Brethren's Church to the Negroes in the Island of Jamaica, From the Year 1754 to 1854*. London: Longman, Brown, & Co. 1854: 126.

Similarly, some aspects of McKay's turn-of-the-century town evoke life in Middle Rock in the more recent past. Banana Bottom is a small community some distance from the cities in the coastal plains, but its size is considerable compared to the "tiny country town of Jubilee" which exists nearby, and over whose residents Banana Bottom exerts certain gravitational force. Likewise, when I lived there Middle Rock was the end point of two taxi routes, each terminating at the other end in a larger town, one around five miles distant and the other around ten miles away. Within the constellation of towns dotting the space between those two centers, Middle Rock was a medium-to-large-sized star.

Different social institutions that appear in McKay's story also evoke Middle Rock during the time I lived there. In both Middle Rock and Banana Bottom, most residents make their living by farming with minimal machinery. The premium placed upon learned attention to propriety and uprightness that appears common among residents of McKay's fictional town, as well as the community's intimate economy of rumor, both strike harmonies with encounters and experiences that I had in Middle Rock. Likewise the knotted entanglement of physical features, sexuality, gender, and social stratification that McKay rendered in the novel evokes a subscript of being in the world that materialized in some way every day I spent in Middle Rock. One last point of comparison helps describe that subscript in better detail.

As did Middle Rock during the time I lived there, the fictional town of Banana Bottom plays host to a white foreigner who is introduced as a researcher. McKay based the character of Squire Gensir at least partially upon the English folklorist, Walter Jekyll, compiler of the book *Jamaica Song and Story* (1907) and an early supporter who particularly encouraged McKay's

use of dialect in his writing.¹³ The Squire Gensir character had “made a collection” of stories from local peoples’ myths and folklore. “The peasants were his hobby,” the narrative goes. “Now he was engaged in writing down their songs, jammass, shey-sheys and breakdowns. Songs of the fields, draymen’s songs, love songs, satiric ditties of rustic victims of elemental passions” were among his interests (1961: 71).

As above there are limits to this correspondence between McKay’s novel and Middle Rock. Among the more obvious differences, at the time of the dramatic action, Squire Gensir is in his sixties; I was in my early thirties throughout the time I spent in Middle Rock researching this study. We learn from the narrator that he “was held in high esteem everywhere and enjoyed an honourable reputation among all classes” (1961: 92); though I might aspire to it, I don’t claim equivalent distinction for myself.

Nevertheless, what has not changed is the stratification of Jamaican society by racial categories, and thus approaching the present study of Middle Rock through a look at McKay’s Squire Gensir character opens up the field of questions through which a reader might add dimension to his or her knowledge of life in Middle Rock during the period when I stayed there as a visitor. It might be said in the first place, for example, that putting the present study in the context of McKay’s novel clarifies the fact that what you are reading now is the product of one among a history of similar visits to Jamaican towns.

McKay’s description of the sociology of Jamaica at the turn of the twentieth century corresponds to the triumvirate division of society that one finds noted and described in countless other studies ranging throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century, up through the time of my research. It constitutes an imprecise, often challenged, but almost universally recognized

¹³ See Cooper, Wayne F. *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996: 22-63.

division of humankind into three categories—black, brown (or “coloured”), and white—persisting as a legacy of plantation slavery.

For the island colony was divided into three main groups in a political and social way,” McKay’s narrator explains. “The descendants of the slaves were about three-fourths of the population and classified as black or dark brown. The descendants of Europeans and slaves were about one-fifth of the population and classified as coloured or light brown. The rest were a few thousand East Indians and Chinese and perhaps the same number of pure European descent” (1933: 4). The narrator continues:

The demarcations were not as real as they seemed. East Indian and Chinese blood were mingled in the dark-brown group and obviously there were thousands who were drawn in from European stock. One could easily pick out individuals by texture of hair, contour of face, shape of nose. But a strong transfusion of black African blood had determined their pigmentation and group. In the coloured group were many of a light complexion distinguished by Sudanese features and hair, while others of original coloured stock had approximated to and turned white.

But the social life of the colony was finely balanced by the divisions. The “coloured” group stood between the mass and the wealthy and governing classes and all the white-collar jobs of business and government were reserved for it. (1933: 4-5)

These divisions remaining largely the same at the time of my research, a consideration of McKay’s novel encourages the reader of this study to keep in the front of his or her mind the question of how the substance herein reflects its belonging in this wave of visits by foreign whites, coming from positions of economic privilege relative to the average local person, and claiming a particular interest in “research,” “learning” or “collecting.” Without exception my position in this triumvirate was marked for me at least one time every day I lived in Middle Rock. There are a variety of examples to draw from in order to illustrate this. Most commonly, though, my position was simply recognized by friends and strangers alike who hailed or greeted

me as “white man,” “white boy,” or simply “whitey.”¹⁴ Thus, my visit to Middle Rock, like Squire Gensir’s stay in Banana Bottom, is one of many examples of not just foreigners visiting Jamaican towns, but *white* foreigners, understood according to this islandwide sociological order.

Along similar lines, this approach incites the question of the impact a student of society has within the social space he or she presumes to write about with a modicum of objectivity. When first encountering him in the narrative—about a third of the way into the book—the reader gets his or her only explicit reference to how Squire Gensir positioned himself as a researcher, and there he appears not as an inquisitor but as an eager auditor, blessed occasionally by resident who shares a snippet of local knowledge or expression. “Any new turn of speech,” the narrator tells us, “any original manner of turning English to fit peasant ways of thinking and speaking, could make him as happy as a child” (1961: 71).

Thus to the reader of McKay’s novel Squire Gensir appears in one sense as the image of the ethnographer who is never officious or meddlesome, but despite the narrator’s description, Squire Gensir’s role in the development of the plot belies his neutrality. As a key character his action unsettles his appearance of childlike innocence and, as Belinda Edmondson points out, only at one’s peril may one subsequently ignore the place of Squire Gensir in the wider context of power relations. For even as he may ultimately be understood as a facilitator for the protagonist, he nonetheless makes this contribution backed by the weight of his whiteness, his maleness, his Englishness, his wealth, and his education. In other words, Edmondson notes, Squire Gensir might credibly be understood as a pivotal figure in Bitá’s struggle to reconcile her Jamaican (and humble) roots with her European (and elite) education, and by extension.

¹⁴ Once after I had lived in Middle Rock for over six months, I asked a local acquaintance, “why do you suppose that [mutual acquaintance] just called me ‘White-o’?” I had been curious why he had ended the word with an “o,” but she—a mother of two in her middle forties, with whom I shared copies of the daily *Jamaica Observer*—answered simply, “because you are white!”

Through his role in Bitá's decision to return to the soil to make a life in rural Jamaica, Squire Gensir might even signify the existence of a potential role to be played by white foreigners in the unification of Jamaican society through the enshrinement of the folk. But, Edmondson points out,

Bitá's decision to "plant" herself back into the soil cannot be dissociated from her enlightenment on these revolutionary folk concepts by Squire Gensir. . . . It is *his* authority, *his* status, *his* linkage of West Indian peasant traditions to the European folk traditions, that allow her to "couple" herself with the land again. Squire Gensir in effect "translates" Bitá for the reader (and indeed for Bitá herself), defines her role and her space—marks her. As such, Squire Gensir is the necessary masculine authorial figure, the English gentleman scholar, who illuminates the text or body of the West Indian space in Bitá. (1999: 73 emphasis in original)¹⁵

Thus taking an approach that includes a consideration of Squire Gensir provides a palpable reminder to a reader of the present study 1) that I was never purely a gatherer of information and 2) that the research on which the present study is based—like all ethnographic research—was particularly imbricated within the wider context of power relations, in which I enjoyed certain privilege as a white English-speaking male with a U.S. passport and a college education.

To close this section on a related note, here is a piece of advice one Middle Rock resident told me of having heard from an older man in the community. "Ted acts like he can't mash ants," he had said. "But there is more to him than that, so watch out."

I have attempted to show some ways that a route through these two other studies of rural Jamaican towns could help readers conjure an image of Middle Rock during the time I lived there. Let me now turn toward outlining my goals and objectives in this dissertation—a study

¹⁵ Edmondson, Belinda. *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative*. Durham: Duke UP, 1999.

more academic than narrative—and then in conclusion turn toward to defining some of the terms of my analysis.

In this dissertation I explore the impact of hegemonic neoliberalism on Jamaica's independent farming sector. The main focus of the discussion concerns the outcomes that reforms of the state's role in the reproduction of Jamaican society, largely imposed under pressure from transnational players in the global financial market, have produced in one particular farmtown with respect to the locally prevalent understanding of how responsibility for reproducing society should be distributed. In other words I am aiming to draw some conclusions about what form of "creative destruction" occurred within the zone of Middle Rock residents' widest agreement about how each individual person ought to practice the pursuit of personal interest so as to generate the greatest benefits for the greatest number of people.

Getting to those conclusions means identifying changes that took place in the prevailing sense of ethical behavior between the onset of the hegemonic neoliberalism—its rise to dominance as the model of better living through globalization—and the period when I conducted research there. I want to know how much play neoliberal theory got within the context of the local conventions about "how to act" or "how a person is supposed to act" that predominated during the period of my research, and what has been the history of that relationship. To that end I will outline testimonies and lessons shared with me by Middle Rock residents and explore what they suggest about the terms that townspeople most broadly agree are relevant for evaluating an individual's behavior.

Do those terms form a framework that tends to favor or to frustrate the realization of a neoliberal model for reproducing society? What do they reflect about the influence of three previous decades of neoliberal reforms? In order to grasp the distinctiveness of life in the

ascendancy of neoliberalism, I contextualize my findings from ethnographic research by locating the ethical sensibilities prevalent in early twenty-first century Middle Rock within a history of tense moments in the relationship between changes in the institutional framework of island governance and the locally accepted parameters of ethical behavior.

Further, given its coincidence with the immediate aftermath of the 2008 crisis of the global economy, I will consider what my research in Middle Rock indicates about existing resources for modeling a course of better living through globalization. Subsequent that rupture neoliberalism has died only to remain dominant.¹⁶ I close the discussion by outlining some of those resources as they manifest in the musical program of Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day festival.

Ultimately, in the course of the dissertation I hope to provide useful conclusions for interpreting and building upon current research to generate new knowledge about the options that obtain in the wake of hegemonic neoliberalism. Apropos to that goal, a strong case has been made for the necessity of exploring processes of creative destruction brought about by neoliberalization in urban contexts, and particularly in global megacities like New York, London, Singapore, Johannesburg, Mexico City, and Rio de Janeiro.¹⁷ Why then focus here on the impact of neoliberalism on Jamaica's small farming sector? What are the relative benefits of pursuing research of this sort in such contexts? Let me briefly identify just three of them.

¹⁶ Smith, Neil. "Neo-liberalism—Dominant but Dead," *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 51 (2008): 155–57. See also Harvey, David. "Is this Really the End of Neoliberalism? The Crisis and the Consolidation of Class Power." *Counterpunch*. Online weekend edition, 13-15 March 2009. [<http://www.counterpunch.org/2009/03/13/is-this-really-the-end-of-neoliberalism> (accessed 10/20/12 6:05pm)]

¹⁷ See for instance Brenner, Neil and Nik Theodore. "Cities and Geographies of 'Actually Existing Neoliberalism.'" *Antipode* 34: 3 (2002): 349-379.

In the first place, one recalls that Jamaica's national economy was an early testing ground for policies modeled upon neoliberal doctrine, and Jamaica's population had been caught in the current of that doctrine going back nearly as far as the latter's rise to hegemony in the 1970s. As such people in Jamaica have had a uniquely close vantage point regarding the uses and limitations—in a real life sense—of that common sense as it has been applied, and it is hoped that the present study does justice to that sharp angle of experience-based insight.

Furthermore, though, the impact of neoliberalism on life in Middle Rock is also of particular concern given that since the consolidation of Jamaican nationalism, the small farming sector has been a pivotal set of the population from the point of view of the Jamaican political leadership. Since Jamaica's independence in 1962, successive governments have staked significant portions of their legitimacy to lead on how well they represent the needs and desires of the small farming sector. But the latter's continued faith in the fitness of the political class to govern stands to wither if the way the state moves to distribute responsibility for the reproduction of national society doesn't correspond to the view of the same subject among small farmers.

Thirdly the roots of the Jamaican small farming sector in the rise and fall of the institution of plantation slavery contribute to making Jamaican small farmers' perspectives a valuable and necessary contribution to the discourse about the financial crisis and for that matter the broader discourse regarding the development of global capitalism. Drawing inspiration from scholars who have uncovered and analyzed both the positive, producing and negative, eradicating thrust of nineteenth-century slavery abolitions, I took note of the central role that plantation slavery and the post-abolition problem of how to produce subjects of freedom each

played in the formation of nineteenth-century liberalism, and particularly in shaping the contours of classical liberal ethics.¹⁸

Extending on that insight I follow Thomas C. Holt (1991) in wondering about how the legacy of that relationship figures in the productive thrust of neoliberalism. In light of that connection, and given the small farming sector's distinction for being a repository of the lifeways and traditions of "first time" Jamaicans, my focus on their interface with hegemonic neoliberalism affords unique access to traces of a model of social reproduction coeval with, but appositional to that which neoliberalism resuscitates from classical liberal thought.¹⁹ In this I also follow the route Fred Moten (2003) drew after Saidiya Hartman's important work (1997), to approach Middle Rock residents' expressions about freedom with an attention to their significance as expressions within a tradition pioneered by people who as commodities who could speak, embodied a contradiction at the core of that very system.²⁰ In the closing chapter of the dissertation I will explore how that appositional theory of social reproduction resounds through a focused discussion of the musical program featured as part of Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day festival.

¹⁸ Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death* (1982) is an important reference point here, given the author's rigorous insistence that freedom be regarded as a dialectical antithesis emerging out of slavery. Similarly, Edmund Morgan's *American Slavery, American Freedom* (1975) encourages a reading of liberal and other theories of American freedom as each in significant part born out of the practice of enslavement. Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* (1997) contributes substantially to my thinking about post-abolition liberalism and the production of free subjecthood ("the transubstantiation of the will for the whip.")

¹⁹ See in particular Holt, Thomas C. *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991. Also see Cooper, Fred, et al. *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002;

²⁰ Moten, Fred. "Resistance of the Object: Aunt Hester's Scream" in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002: 1-24. [See also Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997.]

Finally, however, it is worth mentioning that the entanglement of Middle Rock heritage with the legacies of slavery and abolition lends special significance to prevailing opinion regarding the hegemonic model of globalization because advocates of the latter have so consistently promoted it in terms of freedom. Here, then, is one way of expressing the goal of this dissertation in simple terms: to identify and interpret the relationship between these two approaches to the definition of freedom. On one hand, advocates promote the expansion of global capitalism through the discourse of freedom, and on the other hand residents of Middle Rock draw on a legacy of enslavement and emancipation to stake claims within and against the conditions of that expansion. The work of this dissertation is to suss out the consonance and dissonance between the two, and to propose some historically contextualized ideas about what that relationship indicates.

This brings us to a good point to turn toward the definition of some key terms.

Following David Harvey's formulation of the concept I am using the word "neoliberalism" here to refer to a specific theory and strategy of political economic practices. I also find convincing Harvey's contention that neoliberalism represents a class project, and so I want to state at the outset that I mean for my references to neoliberalism throughout this discussion to be taken as denotations of its class character.

Neoliberalism, as the name indicates, is a theoretical position that places the issue of freedom (liberty) in the immediate foreground, repackaging ideas from the tradition of classical European liberalism to present a case for a new model of social reproduction geared for the era of globalization and of the state superpower. Its advocates draw on liberal theory as it developed in Europe between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, with the express intention of rolling

back the changes (or the “corruption”) that crystallized in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s innovation of “embedded liberalism.”

As a theory of political economic practices, neoliberalism proposes that the greatest benefits for the largest populations will be generated through the expansion of individuated entrepreneurialism, provided an institutional framework that features strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. Its proponents are apt to cite John Locke (1690) on the sanctity of private property rights, Adam Smith (1776) on the internal tendencies of an unfettered global marketplace, David Ricardo (1817) on the benefits to be derived from free trade, and John Stuart Mill (1859) on the importance of protection from the tyranny of the majority.²¹ When I use the phrase “neoliberal reforms,” I will be referring to policies that encourage these conditions, including broadly all of those laws and changes in the character of governance that distribute an increase in responsibility for the reproduction of society into the hands of individuals. But, bearing in mind the point above, when I refer to “neoliberal reforms” I also mean to denote instances of policy reform implemented in the service of a class project.

This brings the discussion back to the issue of the definition of freedom, which as I indicated is a theme that runs throughout the chapters that follow. Neoliberalism engages the discourse of freedom to assert the conditional priority of the individual’s practice of the pursuit of self-interest in the market economy. Milton Friedman made this point pivotal to his argument in *Capitalism and Freedom*. “Economic arrangements,” he wrote, “play a dual role in the promotion of a free society. On the one hand, freedom in economic arrangements is itself a

²¹ Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. C.B. Macpherson, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1980 [1690]; Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations: Books 1-3*. New York: Penguin Classics Press, 1982 [1776]; Ricardo, David. *Principles Of Political Economy And Taxation*. New York: Penguin, 1972 [1817]; Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty and Utilitarianism*. New York: Bantam Books, 1993 [1859].

component of freedom broadly understood, so economic freedom is an end in itself. In the second place, economic freedom is also an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom (2002: 8).²²

In other words, neoliberalism engages the discourse of freedom from two directions. One may be thought of as the pitch—neoliberalism’s promise for the common good. The other may be thought of as the prescription—neoliberalism’s proposed model for practicing freedom in the interest of the greatest common good.

In the first instance, neoliberalism presents freedom as a state of human being. As a strategy of political and economic practices it promises an outcome not unlike the “realm of freedom” that Karl Marx defined in counterpoint to the realm of necessity.²³ “The chief characteristic of progress and development over the past century,” Friedman wrote in 1962, “is that it has freed the masses from backbreaking toil and made available to them products and services that were formerly the monopoly of the upper classes, without in any corresponding way expanding the products and services available to the wealthy” (170). And that, he noted, was by virtue of only the involvement of a few countries. Expansion of neoliberalism represented further such “progress and development.” This is the pitch.

In the second instance, neoliberalism engages freedom as a practice, and specifically the realization of a particular human capacity that, according to neoliberalism’s model of social reproduction, sits apart on its own as the indispensable condition of the rest. This is the conditional priority of what Friedman referred to in the above citation as “economic freedom.” The achievement of economic freedom as both an end in itself and a vital means for achieving

²² Friedman, Milton. *Capitalism and Freedom*. 40th Anniversary Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002 [1962].

²³ Marx, Karl. *Capital Vol. 3*. New York: Penguin, 1991 [1894]: 958-959.

other ends, namely the reproduction of society as a “free society” and humankind’s transcendence of the realm of necessity.

So the argument goes, through the practice of individuated persons’ pursuit of self-interest in the market economy, other freedoms—which Friedman fits into the categories of “political freedom” and “civic freedom”—become accessible to all. Without economic freedom so defined, neoliberalism holds, some other freedoms can’t be exercised, much less guaranteed. Yet more importantly in any case, Friedman argued, without economic freedom humankind can’t occupy the realm of freedom that lies beyond the realm of necessity. Economic freedom takes priority because its realization is a means—if not the sole means—for making progress in bringing the species into the realm of freedom.

In this view, a free society calls for economic freedom to be guaranteed, and that involves not only the expansion of freedom in a negative sense but in a positive sense too; remove obstructions but, just as importantly, encourage the proliferation of individuated entrepreneurial activity. Capacities and capabilities must have all surrounding barriers removed, but since in this scheme the benefits ultimately derive from actual *practices* and not just *capabilities*, realizing neoliberalism’s model for practicing freedom means not just enabling (such as through institutions, for example copyright law), but sometimes provoking, stimulating, and expanding that practice. This is the prescription.

So what is the ethical content of neoliberalism? Following Michel Foucault (1984), I regard ethics not as a universal set of norms but as the variable practice of care for the self, and the object of ethics to be the practice of freedom. Based on that understanding when I use the phrase “neoliberal ethic” or refer to “a neoliberal orientation to ethical behavior,” I mean to refer

to an injunction to practice freedom in pursuit of individual interest as often as possible, in as many ways as possible, and in competition with as many other individuals as possible.²⁴

Neoliberalism champions the popular sovereignty of humankind as a whole, but its prescriptive thrust targets the individual and regards all other horizons of popular sovereignty as obstructions. Thus I refer to the neoliberal ethic as an ethic of individualism. I will argue in some cases below that trends in the intensity of individualism in a given social context reflect an ethical orientation that is more or less consonant with neoliberalism and the neoliberal model of social reproduction. But two things must be clarified about the ethic of individualism as it relates to the neoliberal ethic.

First, whereas the neoliberal ethic promotes the practice of freedom in entrepreneurialism, as an ethic of individualism it must be understood as an injunction to maximize the frequency, variety, and competitive stakes of practicing freedom entrepreneurially. The neoliberal ethic therefore prescribes for a practice of freedom not only centered resolutely on the pursuit of self-interest, but for a practice of freedom where each individual follows the additional ethical imperative to maximize the scope and duration of that pursuit. In historical practice the neoliberal ethic promotes atomization except in cases of trade or exchange, the “monetizing” of every social interaction, and accompanying that the total commodification of the social world.

Second, although the neoliberal ethic valorizes individualism, this characteristic alone doesn’t distinguish it. Rather neoliberalism proposes an ethic of individualism *to the exclusion of* collectivist practices of freedom. As I will show in some detail, while the valorization of an

²⁴ “The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault, January 1984.” In Rabinow, Paul, and Robert Hurley, eds. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth (Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 1)*. New York: The New Press, 1998: 281-302.

ethic of individualism constitutes in certain cases a point of articulation for the work of neoliberalization, the former may coincide with an ethic of self-sacrifice that takes equal or even greater precedent. Thus when I refer to an ethic of individualism—such as in chapter two—I am referring to the more general category of prescriptions for living a virtuous life that require a remove from sociality or, which require distinction by individual achievement within a social context.

As I will discuss below, at the time of my research I encountered a commitment to collectivism operating in Middle Rock that does not carry forth in contrast to individualism but rather in contrast to the outlook that advocates that the former be pursued solely by way of the latter. That is to say that while this example shows that an ethic of cooperative action exists among Middle Rock residents it is not embraced as a rejection of individualism.

To the contrary, my ethnographic and historical research indicates that there is not, as one recent commentator claimed besets Nigerian society, an “entrepreneurial crisis,” in Middle Rock. The “passion” identified there as a condition of entrepreneurial success is not lacking in Middle Rock, rather more accurately if an entrepreneurial crisis exists there it is in the absence of adequate channels for people to apply the entrepreneurial spirit coursing through the population.²⁵ Neoliberalism holds that virtue belongs to those who not only prioritize self-interest, or who pursue unlimited accumulation of personal wealth, but in particular to those who figure out how to expand and exploit the opportunities to practice pursuing it. As I will attempt to show in the chapters that follow the value of individual self-determination healthily persists in Middle Rock as it has since the formation of the community two centuries ago. But most

²⁵ Aliyu, Aliyu Bala. “Our PhD Drivers and the Entrepreneurial Crisis.” *Sahara Reporters*. Commentary. Posted November 12, 2012. <http://saharareporters.com/article/our-phd-drivers-and-entrepreneurial-crisis-aliyu-bala-aliyu> (accessed 8:15pm 11/12/2012)

accurately, I believe, it is a matter of balancing between the two ethics—both regarded as valuable—rather than the rejection of one or the other that predominates in Middle Rock. As I will discuss in greater detail in chapter four, that equilibrium, I argue, presents a useful path forward.

Let me now conclude this introduction with an outline of the chapters that follows.

First, here is the substance of the argument I present based on my interpretation of the details and lessons I gathered from residents and other people I encountered in Middle Rock. In the period before neoliberalism achieved hegemony in the discourse and practice of globalization, the locally dominant prescription for the practice of freedom in Middle Rock included injunctions for both collectivist self-sacrifice and individual achievement. This expresses a local continuity stretching back in time through the moment when the first population of captives arrived on the Middle Rock Coffee Plantation in the late 18th or early 19th century.

Primary and secondary sources suggest that this first population of captives arrived in Jamaica as children or young adults, representing some combination of ethnic Igbos and Bakongo. As such two important characteristics obtained. First, those persons are likely to have shared a view of social reproduction where people were expected to practice their individual freedom in strict self-interest while also were expected to practice their freedom in the immediate service of the common good. And second, the first population of Africans settled in Middle Rock likely shared a relationship to new ethical points of view—namely liberalism—

characterized by what Jack Goody called “limited skepticism,”²⁶ through which the influence of the new ideology manifested in peoples’ openness to alternatives given the desirability of their contemporaneous material conditions.

Prior to abolition as well as after, then, men and women selected from among the ethical prescriptions they had brought with them into captivity those that best served for survival in a context designed to limit and discourage collectivism. They refined the prescriptions that worked best under the circumstances, and as they developed, implemented, and exchanged those ideas they fashioned a distinct ethic—a prescription for the practice of freedom designed for use under the conditions of enslavement. This ethical orientation, over the course of that experience, passed through a period of profound pressure to compete individually for resources, and emerged in a broader application to a new, shared *ethnic* sensibility that may be seen to have characterized the collective in ethical question.

Upon the abolition of slavery a new period of pressure to individuate fell upon the people of Middle Rock courtesy of the artificial scarcity of resources produced by planters struggling for profits whose lack of cash only added further incentive to suppress wages and charge exorbitant rents on the plantation lands former captives had been placed on while enslaved. During a four year Apprenticeship period (1834-1838), these conditions intensified, and planters turned to embrace the island’s population of Protestant missionaries from Europe and the U.S. The missionaries, led by the Baptists, pioneered a resettlement program where recently released captives were given the chance to purchase small plots of land to build homes nearby plantations and thereby provide concentrations of laborers positioned favorably for planters to tap into. Documentary evidence from the Moravian mission in Middle Rock, including records located in

²⁶ Goody, Jack. “Religion, social change and the sociology of conversion” in *Changing Social Structure in Ghana*. Jack Goody, ed. London: International African Institute, 1975.

Jamaica's National Archive as well as recently digitized publications of the Moravian church, sketch a chronicle of the process through which the Moravian mission set the terms for the post-abolition resettlement of Middle Rock as one such "free village." They show how the ethic that I identified above contrasted with the Moravians' "civilizing" mission, which stressed the primacy of the individual in relation to the divine and, then by extension, to fellow human beings, but in its "open" character, that ethic provided the people living in Middle Rock at the time with tools for navigating the changing current without surrendering what made their ethic distinctive.

Britain passed reforms in favor of free trade in the 1840s, encouraging people living in Middle Rock to remain on their land and further develop their role as domestic agricultural producers in the internal market economy described in detail by Verene Shepherd (2001). Then in the 1880s opportunities for socio-economic mobility were tightened further when colonial officials began reclaiming lands last officially held by planters and again, people in Middle Rock were compelled to maintain solid relations with Moravian missionaries and remain on the land and apply their labor to cash crop production and small-scale livestock rearing.

The early twentieth century brought the emergence of Jamaica's banana export industry with the entry of the Boston Fruit Company, and a corresponding rebound of the sugar economy. Plantations were active, and Middle Rock continued in its connection to them by virtue of its role as a food producer in island markets. This period also brought the emergence of Jamaica's first social welfare program, organized in conjunction with the banana producers union and designed to benefit small farming communities like Middle Rock. Middle Rock residents demonstrated a readiness to respond the development programs initiated in the 1940s by Jamaica Welfare, Ltd which suggests the ongoing survival of the ethical standpoint identified above—people kept land and farmed for markets, participating as individuals in the circulation of capital, yet expressing a

keen interest in community service and some collective responsibility for the reproduction of society.

Skipping forward, following independence in 1962 this same ethic persisted as evidenced by the community's early and consistently strong support for the People's National Party (PNP), which would extend the legacy of its commitment to rural economic development programs from the 1940s through the independence era. In the 1970s, when the PNP plotted a course of Democratic Socialism, the townspeople of Middle Rock embraced it further, and held on in the years after the Jamaica Labour Party assumed power and rolled back rural development spending, and argue that this likewise demonstrates a persistence regarding Middle Rock's both/and ethical regard for individualism and collectivism.

Finally, since neoliberalism's ethical thrust, as I outlined above, is to subordinate all other ways of practicing freedom to maximizing the pursuit of personal interest, from early on the local effects of hegemonic neoliberalism included the friction of the two ethics. However in the context of this friction, the collectivist side of the Middle Rock ethic has been under unprecedented duress, and though it appeared to remain intact at the time of my research, there was widespread and substantial opinion that collectivism has been displaced in the local ethical system.

Bringing the argument to a close I consider the state of affairs after three decades of hegemonic neoliberalism in the global economy, citing testimonies of people with whom I spoke in Middle Rock, about how they conceived of the practice of freedom, and particularly the degree to which a person's responsibilities to the broader collective were best directed toward only toward the pursuit of personal interest. I conclude by performing an interpretation of Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festivities as an annual activity through which townspeople

expressed and negotiated their differences with respect to the ideal response to the corrosiveness neoliberalism has proven in the context of local ethical sensibilities. Focusing with particular intent on the festival's musical program, I argue that, taken together, the variety of genres included in this "something for everybody" program operates iconographically to suggest to participants the uses and pleasures of that still-hanging-on ethical orientation.

As I observe, the festival in this sense was partly successful in 2010. First this is so in the sense that the event drew together community members who lived in different neighborhood enclaves of the community, who did not attend the same (or any) church, and who otherwise seldom crossed paths. Secondly this maneuver succeeded in asserting the still-prevalent "open" ethic by drawing local people across generations together for the recognition and reassertion of the Middle Rock "community" as a tangible and valuable social entity, in contradistinction with the thrust of encroaching neoliberalism. However the successes remained within certain limits, as the economic squeeze placed on Jamaican small farmers has not been stalled by government support, and a sustainable future in cash crop farming has become less and less viable as an option.

A brief sketch of the dissertation elucidates how the chapters proceed:

The five chapters below follow a roughly chronological sequence, tracing a portion of Jamaican socio-economic history from the era of plantation slavery when Middle Rock was founded, through the early twenty-first century when I conducted research for this study. Each chapter situates Middle Rock in the context of developments in the Jamaican economy, and based on an analysis of findings from ethnographic research, archival documentation, and secondary sources, each chapter arrives at a conclusion about the impact of those developments on the locally dominant model of the ideal practice of freedom.

The first chapter of the dissertation begins with the town's contemporary Emancipation Day festivities and after introducing the event it zooms backward in time to investigate the era Emancipation Day commemorates. It describes the foundation and conditions of life for those enslaved on the Middle Rock plantation, and lays out the broad contours of a shared orientation to the practice of freedom to describe a general balance of pressures toward individualism and collectivism inherent prior to the abolition of slavery.

The dissertation's second chapter describes the impact of abolition on the lives of enslaved persons, both in relation to the material character of emancipation and the ideological commitment to individualism encouraged by British and Jamaican legislators and by Moravian clergy who assumed a powerful role in the community by purchasing and distributing parcels of former plantation lands in order to establish a "free village" of church-going landholders out of the recently emancipated population.

In the third chapter I describe how Middle Rock grew distinct from other Jamaican locales over its first century after abolition, as the plantation economy collapsed further in the wake of Britain's early-mid-century adoption of free trade, and residents held onto their lands and worked to eke out a living while facing limited chance for upward social mobility. Toward the end of the century the plantation economy rebounded while the British Crown claimed the vast expanse of property on the island and removed "squatters" in order to produce space and direct labor power toward the banana industry. And skipping forward, I describe how in the first decades of the twentieth century, nationalist activists initiated a social and economic development program geared toward Jamaica's small farming population. I focus particular attention there on the nature and effects of Community Development Initiatives mandated by the British colonial apparatus in the 1930s. Analyzing meeting minutes of a local citizens'

organization I examine the stratification and further encouragement of individualist senses of freedom borne out of the Middle Rock Citizen's Improvement Association.

Chapter four brings lessons learned through ethnography back into the foreground, and describes a selection of the instances I witnessed and experienced wherein Middle Rock residents expressed particular definitions of the concept of freedom. Taking definitions of freedom as iconic formulations of what it means for an individual to exercise ethical behavior, I consider the definitions of freedom Middle Rock residents shared with me in order to bring their positions into focus as expressions of a model of distributing responsibility for social reproduction.

Finally, building on the conclusions of chapter four in the final chapter I return to Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festivities in search of a coherent message about the definition of freedom expressed therein. Based on the centrality of music to the official schedule and to the lived experience of attending, I engage the festival as a sonic event, concluding with a discussion of music as a means and metaphor through which people negotiate the relationship between individualism and collectivism, and use these observations to more fully render the definitions of freedom gleaned from archival and contemporary sources.

Chapter 1

Middle Rock Under Coffee

At about noon on an overcast day in 2006 a compact drumline paraded down the hill on Middle Rock's main road, past a row of parked cars and vans and through the chain-link gate onto the Bethlehem All-Age School's playing common. Led by a trio of girls shaking bright pom-poms the dozen students from a high school in the parish capital marched out toward the center of the playing field, and after making a left turn at one end of the cricket pitch they doubled back with an ensemble of bass drums, snares, measured steps, and crashing cymbals. Around the perimeter of the playing field people were setting up wood and tarpaulin booths and preparing cooked food and cold drinks to sell to the thousand or so expected visitors. A striped awning stretched across the northern third of the field and underneath it some were putting out fresh produce for sale. Others chose against pumpkin, tomato and yam and put out clothing, artwork, sweets, frozen bottles of water, cigarettes, phone cards, or some blend of all. A couple of twelve-wheeler trucks were parked in the middle of the grass, and a handful of men—watched by several teenaged would be assistants—checked and rechecked a braid of cords connecting the mixing board to tall stacks of speakers at either side of the stage. As the procession approached, a member of the mento band hired from fifty miles away noodled on an electric keyboard, tip-toeing through the PA system around the drumline's loop: **ONE**-ah-two-ah/**ONE**-ah-two-ah.

The playing field was still damp and patches of orange dirt stood out against a thick of mist that had been rolling in, and although the real rain had stopped a few hours before, most of the crowd took in these opening events from underneath grey or blue awnings where they had set up shop. A small handful of people stood between the sound mixer and the stage, but so far

attendance was sparse, and nearly everyone inside the gate was a vendor, organizer, or a participant in putting on the show. A few members of the youth choir from a local church wondered out loud whether there would be a big enough audience by the time their turn came to perform, but as the procession approached, the Master of Ceremonies (and school principal) announced that in the interest of punctuality, and in order to include the full schedule of acts, the program must immediately begin. The pom-pon majorettes took the stage from the side with the drummers in tow, and forming a line the group kept up the rhythm for a minute, standing all but two in bright white t-shirts and dark blue jeans, and backed by the mento band vamping playfully along on electric guitar, bass, keys, and a trap drum set. With a crescendo and crisp finish the high schoolers stopped the music and filed off the platform. The MC took center stage with a microphone and greeted those of us gathered on and around the field—raising his voice he spoke as though to be heard in the houses over the next hill. “On this day in the year 1838 people across the island of Jamaica celebrated the end of slavery, and every year we gather here in Middle Rock on August first to commemorate that day when the slaves were set free. With our Emancipation Day festivities we celebrate as our forefathers and foremothers did on that first day of freedom, and to remember the great significance of emancipation to the members of this community and to all Jamaicans.”

Days before, in his capacity as the Chair of the Middle Rock Community Council, Principal Hart appeared on television with the Council Secretary, Ms. Carter, to publicize the event on a nationally broadcast morning news program. Mr. Harriot acknowledged several individual and institutional supporters, including the directors of national and parish-level cultural development commissions and Middle Rock’s representative in Parliament. After notifying viewers of the program of events and the entrance fee, he elaborated on the connection

between Middle Rock's festival and the legacy of slavery, sketching out an origin narrative of the town, founded in the aftermath of abolition. "There is direct proof that slavery existed there," he said. The camera zoomed in on artifacts of Middle Rock's history he and Ms. Carter had brought to display including a woven basket, wood shingles fashioned in the style of previous generations, and a set of wrought irons that Mr. Hart said were used "to brand the slaves." Then Mr. Hart described Middle Rock's transformation from a coffee plantation into a "free village," established after the abolition of slavery when European missionaries purchased and subdivided the land, and sold parcels to former captives whose descendants—including both he and Ms. Carter—still populate the area. The program's host wrapped up the three-minute feature before moving on to a segment about the life of recently deceased folk culture icon, Louise Bennett. "Thanks Middle Rock," she said, "for preserving our history...as we celebrate our rich heritage and where we are as a people."

Although local people have kept up a weft of the town's history over the years, national media had until recently spent little time featuring Middle Rock as a repository of Jamaican heritage, or for any other reason. The Community Council's promotional brochure for the festival describes a chronology of events starting in 1987 that together emphasized Middle Rock's past as an object of interest to persons outside of the community. After the Jamaica National Heritage Trust recognized Middle Rock's Bethlehem Moravian Church as "one of the best kept historic churches in Jamaica," a government official from the same area of the parish began an initiative to "sensitize" people—residents included—to aspects of the town's emancipation-era past.

According to the story he told me, before he retired from his position at the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC) this official began to research the region and share

his findings with others after he heard a Jamaican academic declare that “rural Northwest Manchester has no history.” After retiring, the government representative conducted seminars with the Principal and staff of Middle Rock’s elementary school in the mid 1990s, and in 1993 he led an informational tour of the area to commemorate Jamaica National Heritage Week. Indeed one resident born in Middle Rock in the 1960s volunteered that “before the government made Emancipation Day a holiday I’d never known the history of the town. I never knew there was so much history here.”

The Middle Rock Community Council’s promotional brochure also points out that thirty-five years of postcolonial self-rule passed before the Jamaican state made Emancipation Day a national holiday. In 1997, the Jamaican government selected Bethlehem Moravian Church as one of several venues from which to broadcast the first national celebration of Emancipation Day on islandwide TV, and in 2000 the Middle Rock Community Council held its festival for the first time. By commemorating August 1st 1838 the government enshrined the passage from slavery in the official national narrative and moved the sanctioned definition of Jamaican freedom from its anchorage in multicultural state sovereignty signified by the motto, “Out of Many, One.” In doing so the government “blackened” the Jamaican nation, modifying the multicultural image previously held to officially represent the Jamaican body politic, and reorienting the government’s efforts toward racial majoritarianism (Robotham 2001; Thomas 2004). Thus, out of the combination of peoples’ local historical awareness, the lessons featured in the workshops the JCDC official organized, and changes made in the relationship between the Jamaican state and its constituents, Middle Rock’s commemoration of Emancipation Day conjures a specific relationship of necessity between the past and the present. The commemoration brings together a group to “make history,” and as sectors of the community negotiate differences in the futures

they wish that history to serve, certain details of Middle Rock's past have risen to relative prominence over others.²⁷

Kenneth Bilby's *True-Born Maroons* (2006) reminds us that shifting the officially accepted foundation of Jamaican freedom into a relationship with Abolition still excludes many Afro-Jamaicans from the body politic, namely the descendants of those who had forced the British to officially recognize their independence a century earlier. Moreover, drawing on fieldwork in a Jamaican town more like Middle Rock, Deborah Thomas described a community whose members expressed a variety of intended outcomes for their Emancipation Day festivities, and whose *ex post facto* evaluations of the event fell along lines of local racial and economic stratification (2004: 159-191). These perspectives insist on a connection between people's local social position and how they defined freedom; Thomas found that the members of "the poorer sets" she spoke with shared a desire to improve their position in the stratified economy through the commemoration, while members of "the upper sets" stressed knowledge building and pride in Afro-Jamaican heritage as the event's intended outcomes. Similarly, in Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festival residents pose a relationship between past, present, and future using

²⁷ Two brief references clarify the point. Claude Levi-Strauss wrote that "In so far as history aspires to meaning, it is doomed to select regions, periods, groups of men and individuals in these groups and to make them stand out, as discontinuous figures, against a continuity barely good enough to be used as a backdrop" (1966: 257). Building on that observation, Richard Price described his objective in writing about historical vision among Saramaka Maroons in Suriname: "All history is thus: a radical selection from the immensely rich swirl of past human activity. The uniqueness of this book lies in its taking seriously the selection that is made" (1983: 5). In one sense the present study seeks to understand Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festivities both in terms of "those distant people and those long-ago events [townspeople] today choose to think about, talk about, and act upon" and also how people "transform the general past (everything that happened) into the significant past" as history—as a "fountainhead of collective identity" and a realm of knowledge that "permits some measure of control over the vagaries of the unpredictable present" (1983: 5-7). For a more contemporary discussion of contested histories in Jamaica see Anita M. Waters, *Planning the Past: Heritage Tourism and Post-Colonial Politics at Port Royal*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2006.

freedom as a theme, only to express an array of definitions for that theme, tempered according to a diversity of perspectives of the present and a corresponding multiplicity of claims on the past and future. Taking it as one variation on that same theme, how did the definition of freedom driving the dominant forces of globalization resonate in Middle Rock in 2008-2009, as residents prepared to commemorate Emancipation Day in the midst of a severe crisis in the world economy?

As a first step this chapter considers the foundation of Middle Rock and the development of a shared local ethic that gives clues to how its mostly-enslaved population imagined and exercised freedom. What follows is spurred forward by Orlando Patterson's contention that since its early formulations in Ancient Greece, the notion of freedom has evolved in relation to the practice of slavery (1991)—a condition Patterson writes that he first recognized by virtue of his research into the sociology of plantation-era Jamaica. Additionally Thomas C. Holt's important work (1992) informs the work at hand, in particular his assertion that while "slavery abolition forced British policymakers to be explicit about the meaning of freedom...focusing specifically on Jamaica as their model," "it is from ex-slaves that we may well learn much of what it means to be free." Abolition was vital to the formation of the value systems undergirding the contemporary policies governing relations between the global economy and people living in Jamaica. Thus I begin in a mode informed by David Scott's (1999: 70-90) own extension of Holt's position, noting that Holt wrote in deliberate counterpoint to transnational actors whom he saw waving the torch of liberty in the early 1990s as they intensified their engagement with the Jamaican government and Jamaican people. Scott wrote that in the ten years after the Soviet Union's collapse, "one of the questions that has acquired a new cognitive-political resonance and a new ideological salience for the present is the question of freedom." That "new discourse of

freedom,” he acknowledged, “has reorganized the very context of cultural-historical and ethical-political debate, and in doing so has reorganized the old distinction between conservatives and radicals, between progressives and reactionaries.” Turning to Holt’s work as an achievement in “mak[ing] it impossible for us to buy the seeming transparency of contemporary liberalism’s self-congratulatory story of freedom,” Scott asked whether in the late 1990s one has to embrace the dominant definition of freedom as normal, “even if we have to acknowledge the force of the historical claim that neoliberalism’s freedom has hegemonized contemporary global politics” (71-72).

Pursuing an answer Scott engaged the concerns and strategies animating Michel Foucault’s work in order to direct readers through and beyond Holt’s *The Problem of Freedom* by foregrounding “the emergence of freedom as a central element in practices of rule” (1999: 83). Scott was careful *not* to dismiss the 19th century emancipation of enslaved Africans—nor the definition of freedom borne out of that process—as a “sham” (84). Instead he encouraged its investigation according to terms that recall Saidiya Hartman’s evocative description of Emancipation in the United States as the transubstantiation of the will for the whip (1997).

Writing at the close of the first post-Cold War decade, Scott urged that readers take seriously the “conditions within which certain practices of freedom have been possible...that have to do with the shaping and regulation of autonomy and free choice [and] with the emergence of a ‘responsibilized’ liberty.” Another decade past these questions remained relevant, only a series of catastrophic failures in the world economy provoked widespread reconsideration of the universal ideals and sense of human behavior that made up the common sense undergirding the geo-economic status quo. What follows here is meant to address the interregnum opened by crisis, supported by Hartman and Scott and taking as given the enduring

vitality and truth of Holt's point of departure: "the emancipation of slaves helps to frame freedom as a problematic for us all" (1992: 8-9).

As it was initially established as a commercial venture, Middle Rock's principal crop offers the first clues to understanding how people who settled there after emancipation would have defined freedom as a social value. The majority of Jamaica's plantation economy was devoted to the cultivation and processing of sugar but Middle Rock's product was coffee, and its size (population and acreage), geographical location, ethnic and gendered composition, and organization of labor fit separate characteristics which distinguished daily life. Michel-Rolph Trouillot identifies a set of features typical to eighteenth and nineteenth-century coffee plantations in the Caribbean, and he provides some valuable conclusions about their effects on local social life (1993: 124-137). Trouillot begins by identifying coffee as a secondary crop for most of the Caribbean region, and how as such the industry's "underdog" status created an opening for would-be planters of different class and ethnic extraction from the owners of the sugar estates. Subsequently, the timing of coffee's emergence as a secondary crop had effects on the ethnic and gendered composition of the population of enslaved laborers. Trouillot also argues that as an underdog crop coffee's cultivation involved greater risk, translating for enslaved persons into a hard-driven pressure to produce, exacerbated by the looming threat of displacement were commercial failure to lead a planter to redistribute people as so many assets. Coffee plantations in the Caribbean were by nature smaller than sugar plantations, both in terms of acreage and number of captives, and so they were usually located in highland, sparsely settled regions, disconnected from the proto-urban industrial developments underway on sugar

plantations. Lastly, Trouillot points out that the organization and nature of the coffee plantation's labor regime offers valuable insight into how people enslaved on coffee plantations might likely have been encouraged to relate freedom with individualized work and participation in a capitalist economy. How did this all play out in Middle Rock?

In the first years of the nineteenth century, a man named Thomas Frith purchased a stretch of land in Jamaica's Don Figueroa mountains, and there he organized an agricultural enterprise for producing coffee with enslaved labor, which he christened the Middle Rock Coffee Estate. Export markets for sending Jamaican coffee beans to the UK and the United States had emerged late in the history of slavery-based production, and compared to coffee cultivation throughout the Antilles, Jamaica's boom took place after the close of the so-called "golden age" of Caribbean export production, which lasted roughly from the 1763 Peace of Paris to the 1791 revolution in Saint Domingue. Unlike places like Dominica where coffee was the dominant crop from the 1730s through the 1830s, Jamaican coffee production as a whole was insignificant to the island's total exports until the last decade of the eighteenth century. Thereafter, enclaves of rural Jamaica were saturated by mass cultivation of coffee trees and the Jamaican coffee industry grew in the gaps of the sugar industry to resemble that of Antillean economies like Guadeloupe and pre-revolution Saint Domingue. Nonetheless, throughout this period the majority of Jamaican properties in the early 19th century concentrated on cultivating and milling sugar cane. One estimate, forged in an effort to recognize the *diversity* of production during King Sugar's reign over Jamaica, holds that by 1832 still almost fifty percent of the people enslaved there worked exclusively in the cultivation of sugar (Higman 1976: 16).

By contrast even though no more than seventeen percent of Jamaica's enslaved population worked on coffee plantations, at the time Thomas Frith founded Middle Rock, coffee

had taken solid root as Jamaica's second most capitalized crop.²⁸ I use the last term advisedly, and with awareness of unsettled debates over whether Caribbean slaveholders in the plantation economy were, as Mullin put it, "capitalists or medieval seigneurs, that is, forward or backward looking" (1992: 115).

In Jamaica as elsewhere, coffee enticed would-be planters with comparatively low overhead, and this attracted a separate population of entrepreneurs from those who dominated the sugar industry. It is unclear whether or not Thomas Frith lived in Jamaica, but one may speculate from his surname that he was probably a Scotsman—Frith derives from "firth," a Lowland Scottish word used to denote coastal waters otherwise known as fjords. Moreover, as the first few generations of local planter elite had sent their children "back" to England to inherit and run the family business from the metropole, it would not be surprising if Frith were a member of the Scottish and Irish classes who by the 1760s had risen to take over Jamaica's local leadership. As Patterson writes:

By the 1760s the society had been finally moulded and the class structure [Edward] Long described [in his 1774 *The History of Jamaica*] remained unchanged for the rest of the period of slavery. The original Scottish and Irish servants, and their descendants were already dominating the senior positions of the community, more and more so as the wealthy English planters left the island to become absentee owners. Thus by this time Jamaica had a dual élite system: one, an absentee élite, predominantly English, who lived in splendor in England and who formed there a part of the powerful West India interest; and the other a resident plantocratic élite which was predominantly Celtic in origin. (1967: 48)

Further supporting the likelihood that Frith belonged to that resident plantocratic tier of white Jamaican society, Middle Rock's 1805 plan denotes a "Great House" in the northeastern quadrant of the property, and this rendering roughly corresponds with the location of a now-

²⁸ Higman (1976) finds that in 1832 fourteen percent of Jamaica's enslaved population worked on coffee plantations. For the period spanning 1810-1832, Trouillot puts the number between 15 and 17 percent. (Berlin & Morgan, 1993: 125)

ruinate building that some contemporary residents identified by the same name.²⁹ Middle Rock also appears to be the only plantation property Frith owned in Jamaica³⁰. Thus it seems Middle Rock was founded by a late-comer to the ranks of the Jamaican plantocracy who came from the lower echelons of white society, and if he resided on the Estate, he had a relatively direct connection to his enterprise in contrast to the financiers who remained physically removed from the majority of Jamaica's plantations.

However, by 1820 Thomas Frith had died and the Middle Rock Estate had fallen under the control of his Executor, an Attorney named George Harriott. "Slave Registers," discussed further below, provide documentary evidence that in 1826 Harriott filed papers in London stating that he shared executorial possession of Frith's Middle Rock property—i.e. the ownership of land and laborers on the estate. The same documentary archive indicates that, by 1829 Middle Rock and all the people enslaved there had been sold to two brothers, Hymen and Judah Cohen, London-based merchants who owned twelve plantation properties in Manchester and neighboring St. Elizabeth, totaling nearly 8500 acres—over 13 square miles—of land.^{31,32}

²⁹ Local testimony clarifies the meaning of the great house in Middle Rock: "that was where the slave-master lived."

³⁰ See *The Jamaica Almanac* 1816, list of property owners. Frith is also listed as owning a property called "Chatham," but based on the total number of persons he is said to have owned (102) minus the number of enslaved people registered for the Middle Rock property in 1817 (96), Chatham was not a plantation enterprise. Today there is a town called Chatham in St. James parish, on Jamaica's north coast and near Montego Bay. Could Frith have lived there?

³¹ The two brothers, who lived in the Goodman's Field neighborhood of London, owned between them the following plantations in Manchester: Isle, Heathfield, Apropos, Middle Rock, Bath, Chatham, Albion, and Berwick. Their four St. Elizabeth properties were Potsdam, Cosby-Castle, Twickenham, and Berlin. See *The Jamaica Almanac* 1840; Jamaican Family Search Genealogy Research Library [<http://jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Samples/Manchest.htm> (accessed August 12th, 2010m, 5:26pm.)]

³² The archives consulted for this study don't offer any suggestion regarding the full duration of time that the Cohens retained ownership of Middle Rock. However, one collection of records does indicate that Judah Cohen claimed ownership of the land and captive population as late as 1836. Unfortunately the trail deteriorates there, only to pick up again four years later, when

Trouillot also points out that the working population of eighteenth and nineteenth century Caribbean coffee plantations often included a larger percentage of African-born captives than properties organized around sugar production in the same colonies. It has been noted that from the middle of the eighteenth century Jamaican planters did not encourage reproduction among the enslaved population but generally opted to maintain or increase their stock in labor simply by purchasing more Africans. Thus, Britain's abolition of the slave trade in 1807³³ provoked a rush on the importation of captives to the West Indies that was coincident with the expansion of the coffee industry. As coffee regions were settled later in time there generally resulted on those plantations a higher ratio of persons born in Africa in contrast to long-settled areas such as sugar plantations or urban centers. "There was a steady increase in the annual average number of slaves brought from Africa to Jamaica during the eighteenth century, the rate rising from about 2,000 in 1700 to 8,000 by 1790. Between 1792 and 1807 the rate rose to 10,700," and between 1800 and 1807 approximately 86,821 people were imported to the island to work as slaves, or an average of 12,403 per year (1976: 75-76).

Britain outlawed the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, and in 1811 forbade the importation of enslaved Africans to its colonies from other islands and foreign countries outside

Moravian missionaries purchased the Middle Rock plantation land from a party who went unnamed in the Moravians' announcement of the purchase in their official history of the mission's first hundred years in Jamaica. That archive, made publicly accessible via internet by the University College London in early 2013, traces the claims that estate-owners filed seeking their portions of twenty million pounds Britain's Parliament had made available as reparations for planters' losses accrued due to being stripped of their ownership rights over their captives. According to a February 8th, 1836, claim, Judah Cohen sought £1576 19S 11D for the ninety-one people he would no longer be allowed to keep enslaved. Following the historical change in the retail price index and assuming zero reinvestment, one estimate holds that in 2000 that amount would be equivalent to £88,200.00 (US\$142,602.00).

[<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/23888> (accessed March 3rd, 2013, 7:05pm);

<http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/> (accessed March 3rd, 2013, 7:10pm)].

³³ This law applied to diverse Caribbean territories in the Caribbean region. In the same year the United States Congress passed a similar law with the Act Prohibiting Import of Slaves.

of Africa. To combat the persistent illicit trade, and to buttress the lobby that planters be compensated for lost property should slavery be abolished, the colonial government in Trinidad passed an act in 1812 requiring that all slaveholders register their stock in people and submit regular reports accounting for additions and subtractions. The British House of Commons passed a slave registration bill in 1815, and soon after the Jamaica Assembly passed an act requiring that all enslaved people be accounted for, and that no unregistered person could be bought or sold.³⁴ The Slave Registers were first collected in 1817, and the protocol in Jamaica was to list the name of the slaveholder and date of registry, and a catalog listing each enslaved person in possession by name, “colour,” age, and “country of birth.” First names were only rarely accompanied by a surname, and a person’s color designation asserted whether he or she had at least a European parent, grandparent, or great grandparent. The frequency of round numbers in the first round of returns suggest that age was frequently an estimate, and those who were born on one side of the Middle Passage were identified as “African,” while those born on the other were marked “Creole.” Jamaican planters were to submit registries every three years, and to note and explain increases and decreases in the return (births, deaths, sales, and escapes); sometimes as in British Honduras and Trinidad, birth reports included mother’s names. From these reports Barry Higman deduced that “in 1817 Africans approached the majority in the newly

³⁴ A report published in 1820 by the abolitionist and anti-slavery group The African Institution, reviewed the process of registering enslaved people in the colonies, and concluded that in Jamaica planters subverted registration’s potential “effectually to exclude the Slave Trade and to prevent unlawful slavery by the identification of those who are the legitimate subjects of [slavery].” To demonstrate, the report highlighted the apparent contradiction in the planters’ position, noting how their refusal to index enslaved people according to identifying marks on their bodies contrasted with the general practice in Jamaica of branding people “in the face or other conspicuous parts of their bodies...as a safeguard of the owner’s property.” (Board of Directors, *A review of the colonial slave registration acts: in a report of a committee of the Board of Directors of the African Institution, made on the 22d of February, 1820, and published by order of that board.* London: Fullerton & Henderson, 1820: 41)

settled coffee parishes of Port Royal and Manchester, whereas in the sugar and [livestock] pen parishes they accounted for about one-third of the slave populations, reaching a minimum in the mature sugar parish of Vere” (1976: 77).

Slave registers for the Middle Rock plantation indicate that in 1817 the proportion of African-born people enslaved there exceeded the parish average. Islandwide, thirty-seven percent of the captive population had been born in Africa, while in Manchester African-born people accounted for approximately forty-nine percent of those enslaved. The register Thomas Frith submitted in 1817 stated that sixty-four of the ninety-six people (66%) held captive on the Middle Rock plantation were “African,” not “Creole,” the youngest of whom were eighteen. Only two members of Middle Rock’s Creole population were eighteen or older, while twenty-seven were children below the age of eleven, and therefore born after the slave trade was outlawed. Thus in the absence of other records to indicate when Middle Rock went into operation—in any case, before the registry was required—it appears likely that whatever time passed after the property was surveyed in 1805, those who cleared the land and produced Middle Rock’s first crop were nearly all born in Africa and taken across the Atlantic ocean to Jamaica as children or young adults.³⁵

Of certain relevance to the local development of an Afro-Jamaican culture are the ethnic origins most likely represented in Middle Rock’s African-born population. From Britain’s takeover of Jamaica from Spain in 1655, until the trade was abolished in 1807, an estimated 747,500 people arrived in captivity from Africa. The vast majority were taken from homes to ports in one of seven regions: Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast, the Gold Coast,

³⁵Paul Lovejoy (“Impact of the African Slave Trade on Africa” *Journal of African History* 30 (1989) found that in the eighteenth century prepubescent children constituted over thirty percent of the Africans taken by the British to the Americas from the Bight of Biafra (Igbos) and West Central Africa (Kongos).

the Bight of Benin, the Bight of Biafra, and Central Africa. As mentioned above, given that the Estate was founded in or after 1805, those enslaved at Middle Rock who were born in Africa would have been brought to Jamaica in the closing decades of the British trade, and judging from the slave registers they would have been born in the 1750s or 1760s at the very earliest; as of the 1817 register the oldest African living in Middle Rock was a woman named Sukey, listed as fifty-five years old. Patterson determined that “the largest single group of slaves in the island during the crucial first twenty years of its British occupation when the creole society was being laid down” were of Akan, Ga, and Andangme ethnicity (largely Coromantin, and Ashanti) and transported from present-day Ghana through Barbados and on to Jamaica; they were closely followed in number by Bakongo people from several hundred miles south in Angola (1967: 135). At the beginning of the eighteenth century, subsequent a rapid decline in people being brought from the southwest coast and interior, the ranks of Africans enslaved in Jamaica swelled with people taken aboard at the so-called “Slave Coast” ports at the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra, and from the Kingdom of Dahomey in present-day Benin. In the period approaching Frith’s foundation of Middle Rock, there was a rapid shift in the trade and the number of captives brought from Dahomey dwindled while the proportion and number of Akan, Ga, and Andangme people rose again to equal forty percent of those transported to Jamaica.

Although this second influx of people from Ghana (approximately 1730-1790) reinforced what Patterson calls “the Akan and Ga-Andangme bias which the young creole slave community would already have had,” there was also significant growth in the proportion of Igbos brought from the Niger and Cross River Deltas. Patterson remarks that although Jamaican planters were averse to purchasing people from this ethnic group, by the last quarter of the 1700s, they constituted upwards of forty percent of those brought to Jamaica, outpacing those brought from

the Gold Coast. In the closing decades of the British slave trade, the number of people from the latter region was eclipsed by what Patterson calls “a striking reappearance” of Bakongo from southwestern Africa, particularly from the northern interior of the Congo, or present-day Congo and D.C.R. As the Africans who made up the majority of Middle Rock’s enslaved population had to have arrived in Jamaica in the final two or three decades of the British trade, they came during a time when most of those being transported were from Bakongo or Igbo societies; and based on Patterson’s conclusions they are therefore likeliest to have counted themselves among one or the other of these.

Philip Curtin corroborates the above conclusion in what he acknowledges to be a “speculative approximation” of the numbers of people brought to Jamaica from various regions of Africa. He suggests that between the U.S. and the Haitian revolutions, a nearly equal number of people arrived in Jamaica from the Gold Coast (Akan, Ga) and from the Niger & Cross River Delta (Igbo). While from 1792 the former declined and the fraction of incoming Igbo captives rose to almost fifty percent of the total, the number of people from central African ports increased tenfold to comprise just under thirty-five percent of the total (1969: 160). By way of this useful summary, Higman drives the point home:

...it appears that the slave population must have become as heavily Africanized in 1790-1807 as in any other period, with the exception of the late seventeenth century. This has important implications for an understanding of the process of ‘creolization,’ as does the fact that in the period 1792-1807 approximately 83 per cent of the slaves came from the Bight of Biafra (Ibos) and Central Africa (Congos), compared to 46 per cent over the entire history of the slave trade to Jamaica. (1976: 76)

Based on these assertions, and the scant but telling details recorded in the Moravians' Baptismal Registers, one can imagine that Middle Rock's African-born population was most probably some combination of Igbos and Bakongo.³⁶

Further, as was the case throughout the Caribbean, the high proportion among those enslaved on Middle Rock who were born in Africa correlates with the balance of that population by sex. Trouillot points out that in enslaved populations where Africans predominated, males did too; "thus, inventories of 'young' coffee plantations may show a smaller proportion of women than those of long-established units." (1993: 130) The slave register Frith filed for Middle Rock indicates that in 1817 fifty-seven of the ninety-six people enslaved there were male (59%), and thirty-nine were female (41%). Of those enslaved at Middle Rock in 1817 who were born in Africa, the ratio was in fact slightly more evenly balanced at 57% male and 43% female, but without more information about the captive population prior to the introduction of the registration system it is not possible to say whether Middle Rock's African-born population was more proportionately male in the first few years it was in operation. However, according to the 1832 register this trend carried forward, and by that time Middle Rock's captive population had grown to ninety-eight, of whom fifty-eight were males, yielding the same proportion by percentage.

³⁶ A look at the register of baptisms kept by the Moravian Brotherhood (*Unitas Fratrum*) in Jamaica shows that while an overwhelming majority of those baptized at Bethlehem church in Middle Rock were born in Jamaica—"Creole"—and therefore probably infants or youths, a few cases identify persons according to African ethnicity. Only during the first few years did the Moravians record ethnicity in the Baptismal Register, and therein appear two Congos, one Eboe, one Mandingo, and two persons listed simply "African." As of 1840, one of these persons is seen to reside at Middle Rock: Catherine Mulgrave, who was baptized in June, 1840, is listed as Congo. (Bethlehem Church Register – Baptism Register, Jamaica National Archives, Moravian Collection, Bethlehem A1)

Trouillot suggests that coffee plantations in this era carried with them a higher risk to planters compared to involvement in the long developed sugar trade, which meant a potentially greater threat of instability for the enslaved population. This characterized slavery for coffee throughout the Antilles including in Cuba, Martinique, Guadeloupe, British Guiana, Dominica, and Saint Domingue, where after commercial failures people were sold with other chattel and forcibly transported in property liquidations. In Jamaica “as many as four thousand slaves from about seventy plantations were moved from coffee to sugarcane production between 1805 and 1815” (Trouillot 1993: 130). Considering slave registers filed for Middle Rock between 1817 and 1832 it appears the demographics of the captives remained largely unchanged with the exception of increases and decreases owing to births and deaths. Although it says nothing about the anxiety of possible displacement that would have no doubt taken its toll, Middle Rock’s population escaped this predicament, and in the years approaching Emancipation no one enslaved on the property was sent elsewhere by sale, nor was the population of people enslaved at Middle Rock increased by way of purchase. Ironically this could be due to the fact that after Frith died in 1820, his Executor wasn’t able to sell the property for at least six years, and then the plantation went to the absentee Cohens who appear to have left Middle Rock’s population unaltered. Nonetheless, we can speculate with some security that upon Emancipation Middle Rock’s inhabitants had lived there for the majority of their lives.

Three features common to coffee plantations had special bearing on how people enslaved on the Middle Rock Estate were encouraged to define freedom: geographical isolation, population size, and the organization of plantation labor. Located in the rocky hills sixty miles northwest of Kingston, Middle Rock was one of a cluster of plantations geographically and socially isolated from the sugar plantation complex that dominated Jamaica in the eighteenth and

the first half of the nineteenth century. Most sugar properties were located in the coastal flatlands along the island's perimeter, especially in the west and northwest near Montego Bay, with the exception of the southwestern coast. In the east sugar properties formed an arc into the interior, surrounding the capital and port city, Kingston, and stretched into the parish of Clarendon in the southern center of the island. On the other hand, coffee plantations were concentrated almost exclusively in one of two highland regions: in the Blue Mountains east and northeast of Kingston, and in St. Elizabeth parish in the limestone hills ranging between Jamaica's central and westernmost thirds. Unlike the Blue Mountain area, the western coffee-producing region was almost completely absent of enterprises cultivating sugar, and in fact was "still being settled at the beginning of the nineteenth century" (1976: 21). Soon, the area was in fact so concentrated in coffee cultivation that in the same year as production peaked (1814) a new parish, Manchester, was carved out of that part of St. Elizabeth, and by 1832 the annual record of Accounts Produce shows that two-thirds of Jamaica's coffee plantations were located there, Middle Rock included (Higman 1976). The same record shows only three sugar operations in the same parish. Then, six years before abolition, the majority of the approximately 45,000 people enslaved on coffee plantations were located in Manchester (1976: 14).

Aside from its place in the late-settled and mountainous parish of Manchester, Middle Rock's constitution as a coffee plantation would have also impacted the lives of people enslaved there by virtue of its population size, small in comparison to the sprawling sugar estates of the coastal regions. With a captive population of nearly a hundred from 1817 to 1832, Middle Rock had a larger labor force than in many Antillean coffee plantations of the same time, as for example those of pre-revolutionary Saint Domingue (averaging fewer than forty captives) or

Dominica (averaging thirty in 1827). Middle Rock's captive population was slightly below the mean for Jamaican coffee plantations (averaging 128), but it nonetheless fit the regional trend in that it was far below the average population captive on Jamaican sugar estates of the same period (223 in 1832). Thus Trouillot concludes that with their geographical isolation, the less populated coffee estates would likely have been social spaces of comparatively greater intimacy within the Caribbean Plantation system as a whole.

Size and isolation generally increased cultural exchange, both between masters and slaves and within the slave population, thereby influencing the socialization of children, the institutionalization of religion, and the development of languages.... First, given the relatively small size of the labor force, the social and cultural resources available in situ were restricted.... Second, given the highland location of most units and the frontier character of many coffee parishes, spouses—and, for that matter, priests, friends, economic partners, teachers, and playmates—were also hard to find across plantation boundaries. (1993: 133)

While this meant that people enslaved on coffee plantations “had fewer ready-made choices in the creolization process,” this likely intensified the interchange of beliefs and behaviors among them. “Coffee slaves were no better or worse off culturally than others. Rather, the particular characteristics of the labor force within a given plantation—ethnicity, age, sex ratios, language, and religion of origins—mattered more on coffee units than on the larger sugar plantations” (1993: 134).

Finally, within these conditions of rich socio-cultural interaction, one of the most significant conditions governing the lives of people enslaved on coffee plantations like Middle Rock was the organization and form of work required for the planting, harvest, and preparation of coffee for export. Higman writes that in Jamaica “the coffee plantation was less ‘industrialized’ than the sugar estate....the organization of labour was less strictly regimented—especially as a result of the widespread use of the task system—and that occupational allocations

were more flexible.... Similarly, slaves on coffee plantations were less subject to a seasonal regime, and a prolonged crop period, than their fellows on sugar estates” (1976: 24).

Addressing the Antillean coffee plantation more generally, Trouillot corroborates Higman’s assertion with greater details, noting first that the clearing of woodlands and planting of coffee trees was a unique and particularly arduous aspect distinguishing it from sugarcane cultivation, and further explaining that crop time (harvest) on coffee plantations was intensely laborious, but less urgent given the relative perishability of harvested sugar cane. “Once a coffee plantation was settled,” he writes, “the work regimen was much less exhausting than that on a sugar estate.... Even with the increased hours during crop time, the annual average hours that coffee slaves worked for their masters were generally lower than those of slaves working on sugar plantations” (1993: 135). However, “underdog” planters like Thomas Frith were likely driven by a heightened desire for wealth in pursuit of greater social status, and it is not improbable that he drove his captives to maximize production. “Owners and managers of small plantations often sidestepped seasonal variations in the use of the labor force by putting their slaves to other tasks,” Trouillot writes. “Indeed, placing increased pressure on the slave was often the most expedient means for the owner to shed his underdog status” (1993: 128). In any case, once Frith had died and Middle Rock fell under absentee ownership it is perhaps more likely that like most coffee plantations productivity was measured periodically and in gross output, rather than under the scrutiny and imposition of micro-management.

Regardless of its intensity, the form of work was also an important determinant of the unique character of enslavement on coffee plantations like Middle Rock. Higman points out that in comparison to sugar estates, “the occupations were relatively standardized, and that the slave living on a coffee plantation had less opportunities to learn trades and skills” (1976: 24), and

likewise Trouillot characterizes work on a coffee plantation as “rather monotonous, requiring few skills and little differentiation of the work force” (1993: 135). However, as he elaborates on the task system—wherein captives were assigned chores to be completed within a window of time (“sometimes a week, more often a workday”)—Trouillot gets to perhaps the most crucial aspect of the plantation labor regime. As the task system shifted the focus of a captive’s productivity to the completion of a chore—picking coffee berries to fill a volume quota, for example—this tempered the need for oversight by an overseer or a slave driver. As a result Middle Rock’s early population can be distinguished by the fact that, while enslaved, its members were with some frequency charged with dividing the work among themselves. “The prevalence of the task system meant that slaves could control some of their labor time and share in the decision-making process.... More significant, slaves routinely used the task system to shorten the length of the time spent in their masters’ fields” (1993: 136-7).

What is important about Trouillot’s insights here has less to do with whether the people enslaved on Middle Rock were subjected to greater or lesser toil than their contemporaries on the sugar estates, but rather how that work related to the daily subjectivity of enslavement. The task system patterned a form of coerced, unpaid labor in such a way that it “permitted slaves great latitude for activities of their choice within the confines of the plantation” (137). Trouillot’s conclusion is of particular relevance to the imagination of freedom as shared by Middle Rock’s early, emancipated population, and it is thus worth quoting at length. Considering a how-to book one planter wrote with advice for cultivating coffee with enslaved labor, he writes:

Laborie’s observation that coffee slaves tended to prefer a single break may have reflected not just the planter’s self-serving wishes but also the slaves’ inclination to complete the masters’ tasks as fast as possible in order to be free for activities of their choice. Time not taken up with plantation work was time available to weed provision grounds, to raise fowls for barter or sale to neighbors and master alike, to care for family

members, to carve a drum, to share a tale, or to plan for a holiday.... Such time was to some extent “free,” inasmuch as, within the confines of slavery, it was time in which to exercise one’s capacities to one’s own benefit.... Coffee plantations left some room for slaves to express individuality—and notably more than was true for slaves on sugarcane units. (1993: 137)

Coffee cultivation may have afforded additional overall opportunity for captives to pursue leisure and enterprise, but even more importantly the prevalence of the task system on coffee plantations allowed them some direct control over the relationship between jobs mandated by planter-overseers and pursuit of benefits not immediately acquired by the plantation owner. Thus in a way that was seldom afforded under the sharp supervision characteristic of sugar plantations, people enslaved at Middle Rock and on nearby estates might have traded on cooperative or individual exertion to create breaks of “unslavery” in that seemingly endless ostinato of duress. In Isaiah Berlin’s terminology, for people enslaved on coffee plantations work would have presented a means to “negative liberty” (freedom *from*) and consequently a way to open spaces for exercising “positive liberty” (freedom *to*), which was not shared by their counterparts on the sugar plantations (Berlin 1958). This relationship between work and freedom distinguished Middle Rock’s captive population—and impelled them to distinguish themselves—from the majority of people enslaved in Jamaica.

Although we can safely assume that enslavement, writ-large, constituted the greatest object of captive’s efforts for negative liberation, how they imagined and exercised freedom in its positive iterations remains largely obscured. For instance, it is impossible in absence of direct accounts to provide examples of how any particular individual enslaved at Middle Rock envisioned freedom as a social good, nor any examples of how one or more persons managed to create or utilize some freedom in the context of slavery. However, given tentative conclusions about the origins of Middle Rock’s captive population, it is possible to draw on information

about the societies from which its members were uprooted to sketch the contours of an economy of moral action—a local moral economy—that would have coalesced in the plantation context, and borne fruit in a sense of how freedom should (ethically) manifest in practice.

Whatever moral economy pervaded in pre-abolition Middle Rock would have formed over decades of social interaction amongst the people enslaved there and those tethered to nearby estates. It would have developed out of the societies from which those persons were extracted and it would have proceeded in relation to the social geography of plantation production.

Michael Gomez (1998) observed that in the U.S. South and in the Caribbean the context of plantation slavery constituted at least two interrelated “realms of acculturation” for people of African descent: one realm was of “intra-African and African—African American” exchange, and that was distinguishable from another realm that inhered in exchange between people of African descent and members of “the host society—the white world—both slaveholding and nonslaveholding” (8). Citing Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (1976), Gomez emphasized the special unevenness of the latter realm and labeled it the “coercive realm of acculturation, “where all social interplay was distorted by one group’s determination to exercise power over the other. The former domain Gomez labels, by contrast, the “volitional realm of acculturation” where expressive, material, and interpretive traditions were “voluntarily negotiated and subsequently adopted by the slaves themselves” (9). Indeed, as exemplified by the task system, plantation labor organization introduced interpersonal relations that were sometimes consonant with and sometimes dissonant to those that African people carried with them into Jamaica, but they were always meant to foster a social order oriented toward profitable production. The trends within each realm of acculturation provide valuable clues for imagining the economy of moral action

within which people put freedom into practice, but the unevenness of relations between the two realms gives us our start.

In Jamaica the process of culture-building during the era of slavery effectively amounted to ethnic unification from above, as the European “host society” forced the players in Gomez’s volitional realm into new contact with one another. There during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries planters operated under the (correct) assumption that gathering captives who shared interpretive and expressive traditions—and moreover who in many cases had fought on the same side in military conflicts—increased the likelihood of insurrection (Higman 1976). To discourage alliance-building among the people enslaved on their plantations, Jamaican planters pursued a mixed labor force and accordingly refused to purchase at auction too great a proportion of people from any particular ethnic group.

At the Middle Rock estate, then, it is safe to assume that the sixty-four African-born people enslaved there were sold and purchased in a marketplace by traders who not only possessed a cognizance of Africa’s social diversity but who also pursued an anthropological interest in the languages, kinship dynamics, state and political histories, violent conflicts, and other ways through which Africans either separated themselves or were separable. Accordingly, the captives pulled together to live and work in the service of Frith’s enterprise probably included members of at least two mutually distinct groups. Shipping records mentioned above provide the preliminary conclusion that the greatest number of people taken to Jamaica in the late eighteenth century were extracted from societies either inland from ports like Bonny and New Calabar on the Bight of Biafra, or from those in the central interior of the sub-Saharan, taken by traders to ports south of Biafra, such as Loango, Cabinda, and Luanda. Thus if the people listed in Middle Rock’s slave registers represented the most likely mixture of West and West

Central Africans to be aggregated into a realm of acculturation, the formation of a new economy of moral action would have borrowed heavily on social values prevalent among ethnic Igbos and the Bantu-speaking ethnic groups from the state and village network linked to the Kingdom of Kongo. To discuss “Igbos” and “Kongos” as distinct collectivities of people is to set aside the fact that each of these groups was actually composed of an intricate variety of communities, each self-governing to some degree. It should be kept in mind that the characteristics attributed here to Igbo or to Kongo life are abstractions brought to the present discussion as suggestive rather than definitive. At that level, what can be said about how each might have contributed to the ways people enslaved at Middle Rock defined positive freedom?

Out of the diversity of polities linked in the West Central African branch of the slave trade, captives taken from there tended to share a view of the universe that some have identified as having been instrumental to enslaved Africans’ formation of a new collective in the Americas. Robert Farris Thompson (1983: 101-160) found that the “classical religion of the Bakongo”—particularly its cruciform rendering of the sun’s cycle through the physical and metaphysical planes of the cosmos—offered a point of coalescence so resonant as to have persisted into the African-American present. Sterling Stuckey (1987: 3-97) placed the Kongo ideogram and cosmology in the context of “slave culture” in the United States South and found its portrayal of counterclockwise cycling refigured in the rituals of counter-clockwise ringed movement and vocal sounding—ring shouts—that were not only prevalent before and after abolition, but that are in Stuckey’s view a primary means by which people of African descent negotiated a consolidated ethnicity in the New World. For his part, Gomez encourages further investigation along the same lines and concludes that Stuckey’s thesis “is enough to suggest that West Central

Africa played a crucial role in shaping African American culture and society” (1998: 149). That role, as he described it, was to facilitate the consolidation of an African American culture.

Particularly relevant to the present study, Theophus H. Smith’s *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America* described Kongo-Angolan pharmacology as one of several “magical-cosmological traditions” by way of which Africans enslaved in the U.S. “conjured” not only a social unity but also sought to direct that coalition in the service of collective liberation. In Smith’s terms “conjuring culture” operated within the context of enslavement in the U.S. to first summon a deity for the sake of collective worship and then to engage that deity for the sake of freedom; it is “religious expression intending to induce, summon, or conjure the divine for the realization of some emancipatory future” (1994: 59). Following the points made by Thompson, Stuckey, Gomez, and Smith, if a significant portion of Middle Rock’s enslaved population were indeed abducted from West Central Africa, then the influence they carried into the inter-African/African—African American realm of acculturation would appear to have pushed the local economy of moral action in the direction of communitarianism and social belonging. Accordingly an expectation seems likely to have emerged that positive freedom ought to be exercised to the benefit of the group.

Regarding the likely counterpart within Middle Rock’s “volitive” realm of acculturation, Gomez wrote that Igbo societies from which captives were taken and carried across the Atlantic were suffused with an acute valorization of individualism. How could this have affected Middle Rock’s pre-abolition moral economy? Contemporaneous Igbo cosmology featured a key concept, *chi*, according to which persons were individuated by personal fates that ascribed their status before birth. Explicating one famous account of 18th-century life as an Igbo caught in the Atlantic Slave Trade, Paul Lovejoy commented that Olaudah Equiano “would have learned that

the relationship of an individual with the supernatural was special, depending on a personal *chi*” (2006: 322). Edwards and Shaw defined *chi* as “a spiritual entity which personifies the words spoken to the creator deity by the individual before birth when choosing his or her life-course, and as such is equivalent to the Yoruba *ori*, the Kalabari *so*, the Ashanti *nkrabea* and the Tallensi *nuor-yin*” (1989: 149). Similarly they describe *chi* as an index of social position, writing that Equiano’s “sense of a destined life is stressed by his italics on the opening page of his *Narrative*, where he writes ‘I regard myself as a *particular favorite of Heaven*.’”

In his *Narrative*, Equiano also described the facial cicatrization by which *ichi* marks indicative of his *chi* would have been inscribed on his body had he not been kidnapped before reaching the right age. Warner-Lewis notes that Archibald Monteath (né Aniaso), an Igbo man enslaved and taken to Jamaica, also identified himself through this system of status distinction: “Aniaso’s enthusiasm with regard to taking *ichi* marks is an index of how keenly he was aware of his social standing in his home community; he recognized that he was born into leadership” (2007: 33). Gomez also refers to Equiano’s account to support his conclusion that that “many of the country marks in America were actually ‘marks of grandeur’ in Africa” (1998: 131).

Complimenting the preordained social position manifest in a person’s *chi* was *ikenga*, or “the cult of the right hand,” which Gomez, citing Uchendu (1965), refers to as an “achievement orientation” through which “an individual could rise both economically and socially despite most circumstances of birth” (1998: 131). In fact, as it was a step in a repeating process of reincarnation the promise of a subsequent negotiation—after death and before rebirth—over his or her *chi* impelled the individual to, in Uchendu’s words, “make a success of his [or her] social position.” That is, by way of *ikenga*, Igbo men and women were expected in the mortal world to distinguish themselves and pursue an achieved status relative to the status ascribed by their *chi*.

John Boston (1977), also cited by Gomez, relates *chi* and *ikenga* to this effect where the latter “symbolizes the person as a particular individual, contrasting his own personal achievements with those which can be ascribed to hereditary qualities or to some external source” (Boston 1977: 14).

Interestingly, Gomez concludes that it “remains to be seen whether the Igbo concept of *ikenga* could have survived in the New World, and if it could have possibly provided the basis for a work ethic among Igbo slaves. It must be pointed out, however, that material conditions were so altered that it may have been impossible to reconcile the principles of *ikenga* with the consequences of a perpetual ‘social death’” (152). In this picture, while Igbos enslaved and carried to Middle Rock and elsewhere in the Americas would have ascribed to a moral economy that balanced “achieved status” (*ikenga*) with a system of “ascribed status” (*chi*), that relationship had been rooted in the experiences of persons in the physical proximity to ancestral lands and social proximity to a stratified system of village democracy. Displaced across the Atlantic and forced to live as captives, whatever emphasis those persons placed on individual achievement would no doubt have faced significant obstacles (to say the least) in the face of their new circumstance. According to Gomez, removal from their sociocultural and political context constituted a “transition involving the cauterization of relations with the land and the ancestors” which “militated against the integrity of Igbo life and culture,” and challenged at its roots the potential for individual social mobility (130-131). Thus it appears that the members of the local population who had been brought from ports along the Bight of Biafra would likely have imagined and encouraged others (and each other) to apply what freedom they could generate in a similar direction to their counterparts from West Central Africa. For Gomez, if Igbos and Kongos were in fact the two dominant groups that made up Middle Rock’s enslaved population,

then based on the descriptions cited above their exchanges in this realm of acculturation would likely have produced a local economy of moral action that placed great value on exercising freedom in concert with a “very strong sense of community...with regard to identity, land, economic activity, and social responsibility” (1998: 130).

This sensibility, although far from universal, has been shown to be fairly widespread in throughout the geographic region where Middle Rock’s Igbo population would have likely originated. Karin Barber (1981) identified a similar, partly individualistic, partly collectivist ethical orientation among Yoruba communities in the region of Southeastern Nigeria where she did research in the 1980s. Similar to my earlier reading of Edith Clarke’s typology of rural Jamaican towns, Barber draws a three-part typology through which I can clarify what I mean about Middle Rock by virtue of comparison.

Barber engages the issue of individualism and collectivism by way of the different devotional positions shared among three West African ethnic groups with respect to individual peoples’ relationship to divine forces and ancestor spirits. Of the three groups Barber discusses, I am arguing that Middle Rock’s earliest population of African captives most resembles the case of the Yoruba, to the exclusion of the respective cases of the Tallensi and of the Kalabari.

In Barber’s framework, the latter two represent polar opposites with regard to the creator/subject relationship between human beings and the spiritual world. Drawing on Meyer Fortes’s work (1945, 1949, 1959) she describes Tallensi society as ascriptive and authoritarian” with “very little scope for an individual to enrich himself at the expense of his fellow men” (1981: 725).³⁷ Corresponding to this, she pointed out, Fortes wrote that in a Tallensi social

³⁷ Barber, Karin. “How Man Makes God in West Africa: Yoruba Attitudes Towards the *Orisa*.” *Africa* 51:3 (1981): 724-745; Fortes, Meyer. *The Dynamics of Clanship Among the Tallensi*.

context, “the individual...was not regarded as having any power to alter the course of this life by aligning in his support the help of spiritual beings” (1981: 726). Thus Barber summarizes regarding the case of the Tallensi, “in a highly ascriptive society like that of the Tallensi, where everybody's role is defined and limited by powerful social norms, spiritual beings are conceived of as authoritarian and unaffected by what humans think of them. It is a one-way relationship in which the Ancestors are a ‘given’ that the living can only accept and passively submit to” (1981: 740). In other words, according to information provided by Fortes, a Tallensi outlook may be described as one where, without room for negotiation, gods make man.

On the other side of the spectrum Barber sets up, she notes that that a typical Kalabari social context has been described as open and achievement-oriented, with examples of great wealth and enrichment of key individuals existing in trading states like New Calabar. Corresponding to this, Barber notes, citing Robin Horton (1970), “Kalabari say that it was they who gave the spirits power in the first place by making offerings and uttering praises and invocations.” “Here the notion that men make gods,” she concludes, “and the social model from which the notion is derived, is completely explicit” (1981: 740-741).³⁸

Finally, returning to the one of Barber’s three cases I am arguing matches most closely to the predominant ethic in the pre and early plantation period of Middle Rock, the Yoruba devotional relation connotes the operative position here. By contrast to the ascriptive and conservative Tallensi context, Barber wrote that

In a Yoruba town like Òkukù, on the other hand, the social structure, though hierarchical, is open and relatively fluid. Instead of prescribing roles, it enjoins men (and women too)

London: Oxford UP, 1945; ———. *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*. London: Oxford UP, 1949; *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1959.

³⁸ Horton, Robin. “A hundred years of change in Kalabari religion.” in John Middleton, ed., *Black Africa*. London: Macmillan, 1970: 192-221. [cited in Barber 1981]

to make themselves into whatever they can, and places no limits on what they can achieve; instead it encourages the impulse of ambition to take any route it can find and go as far as it can. (1981: 740)

And in relation, with respect to the devotional relationship, “unlike the Tallensi devotee, the Yoruba one has a degree of choice as to which *òrìsà* [among many such deities] she pays special attention to” (1981: 731). “The [Yoruba] devotee is free, within limits, to attach herself to a new *òrìsà* if her first one fails her” (1981: 741). Thus where in Fortes’s account, a Tallensi outlook holds that “god makes man,” and in Horton’s account, a Kalabari outlook holds that “man makes god,” in Barber’s account the Yoruba outlook is something like “man makes relationships to god.” “If one *òrìsà* fails,” she wrote, “the devotee is free to experiment with another, and thus there is room for a gradual adjustment and introduction of new norms” (1981: 741). Thus rather than a context where the individual is comparatively powerless to guide her own life (as characterizes Fortes’s description of Tallensi), yet also rather than a context where an individual is assumed to have complete control over guiding her life (as characterizes Horton’s description of Kalabari), in Barber’s description the convention for Yoruba was a varying relation where a person might practice freedom toward individual interests or desires, or rather might practice freedom in selfless social service. My argument, in a nutshell, is that a similar outlook obtained in plantation era Middle Rock and persisted at the time of my research.

Let us address one last point and then move to a conclusion of this chapter. By comparison to the other (coercive) realm the forms of exchange among African-descended people in Middle Rock were “volitive,” but it would be inaccurate and a misreading of Gomez’s dialectics of acculturation to imagine that exchange among captives at Middle Rock was some pure function of every person realizing his or her will, or that the actual interactions in that realm were absent moments of coercion. This domain of social exchange may have tended to privilege

a communitarian ethic of freedom but that says nothing about whether relations among members of Middle Rock's enslaved population were harmonious. In early nineteenth century Jamaica, as in the U.S. South, interaction between Africans and Europeans was governed by the latter's efforts to exploit the former; that it was a coercive realm of acculturation affirms both Gomez's framework and terminology. However, there is a danger of misreading his identification of two acculturative realms as a distinction of kind and not of degree.

This may be due to the fact that Gomez made his observations in order to examine "the means by which Africans and their descendants attempted to fashion a collective identity." By contrast, Robotham's account of the "development of a black ethnicity in Jamaica" described the eroding boundaries of ethnic particularism and also the likelihood and nature of anomie as an aspect of captive Africans' New World acculturation. Acknowledging the "underlying unity to the broad Niger-Congo grouping...from which the people in the main originated," he maintained that given Jamaican planters' efforts to assemble a labor force already divided by unfamiliarity or hostility, "the historical enmities from Africa were not only carried over but intensified" and "recrimination and individualism rather than solidarity and co-operation was thus what characterized the initial phase of enslavement" (1991: 25). Moreover, drawing on Higman's detailing of plantation labor organization, Robotham pointed out that the plantation imposed new terms of stratification on enslaved groups that "had nothing at all to do with traditional ethnicities or with the traditional economic culture" (27). Rather, through a combination of "calculated doses of terror and bribery" planters continually stoked the flames of animosity among enslaved populations by selecting leaders "on a basis related to the occupational and socio-ethnic hierarchy of the plantation system" (33; 27). "The values of 'success' and respect articulated by such a system of leadership were radically different from the basis on

which...village elders were chosen in Africa. Thus the aspirations of the people and their sense of themselves were transformed accordingly” (27).

As registers of slaves record no population changes there other than births and deaths from 1817 through 1832, one can assume that the people enslaved at Middle Rock negotiated these countervailing streams of moral economy with little divergence over many years. Then in 1833 British lawmakers passed the Abolition Act and announced that slavery would become illegal after August 1st 1840. In Gomez’s terms, this constituted a profound if not absolute shift in the coercive domain of social exchange. What were the implications of this shift for Middle Rock’s economy of moral action? The next chapter discusses how and in what direction British lawmakers, Jamaican planters, and European Missionaries encouraged people to make their emancipation manifest. What influence did abolition—and abolitionists—have on how people in Middle Rock defined freedom?

Chapter 2

The Impact of Abolition

The previous chapter began by introducing the rural Jamaican town of Middle Rock and the festival residents hosted in 2007 to observe the anniversary of the day slavery ended there and throughout the British Caribbean. After a sketch of the commemoration, I followed the event's historical arc and shifted to foreground the Middle Rock coffee plantation and the population who were held captive there in the early nineteenth century. In some part, the aim of the first chapter was to identify features that distinguished local life from elsewhere in the Atlantic plantation economy, and in doing so to more broadly outline how Middle Rock first became a “place” (Basso 1996).

But the main purpose of chapter one was to set some coordinates for exploring the impact of neoliberalism on how people in Middle Rock confronted the “Great Recession” of the early 2000s. This meant establishing a foundation for understanding how local expressions about freedom changed in the face of pressure to accept one particular definition of the term—individualized entrepreneurialism—as the primary condition of better living. As I shall discuss in greater detail in chapters three and four, since the mid-1970s government policies affecting Middle Rock residents have followed an economic development strategy that emphasizes free enterprise and competitive capitalism in an open global marketplace, and which has minimized the state's role in social reproduction and shifted responsibility for Jamaicans' well-being onto the shoulders of individual citizens. Thus in chapter one my concern was to get a grasp of how the neoliberal definition of freedom might have resonated among Middle Rock's earliest population.

To that end, chapter one discussed demographic and other social features borne out of the conditions of life in Middle Rock when the community there was made up entirely of captives. I began with the suggestion that antecedent theories of social reproduction and/or the conditions of captivity marked the value systems of Africans enslaved in the Americas as communitarian and constituted the dominance of a collectivist and socio-centric ethic.³⁹ Were this true, I argued, it would suggest with high probability that people enslaved in Middle Rock defined freedom as a collective noun, and moreover it would mean that Middle Rock's earliest inhabitants would have rejected the tenets of neoliberalism. But it is not true, rather early Middle Rock society bears evidence suggesting that both antecedent views of social reproduction and the conditions of enslavement on the Middle Rock plantation each promoted cooperative contribution *and* individual achievement as imperatives of scrupulous behavior. This is an important difference, I argued, because despite both being incompatible with the neoliberal theory of social reproduction, the latter demonstrates the crucial fact that within this incompatibility was nonetheless a consonance with the key term of neoliberal ethics. People in plantation Middle Rock were not likely opposed to individualism, I argued, nor to individualistic definitions of freedom; they just are likely to have opposed the enshrinement of individualism above other orientations to social behavior. In their view social reproduction necessitated some individuated pursuit of self-interest as well as some mutual aid.

Now I want to briefly turn our attention back to the early 1800s when Middle Rock's earliest population was first brought together. We recall that by this time plantation slavery had operated in Jamaica for well over a century, that the majority of Jamaica's population were enslaved, and that the minority of slaveholders persisted in playing up inter-ethnic heterogeneity

³⁹ Miers, Suzanne, and Igor Kopytoff, eds. *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977.

and otherwise maintaining their position atop the social hierarchy through divide and rule. Nevertheless a rising wave of organized rebellions indicate that the heterogeneity was unsustainable and as time went on the instruments of fracture provided terms for new and more broad-reaching affinities among the enslaved population. As it also did among people held captive elsewhere in the colonial Atlantic, a community of interest developed among people enslaved in Jamaica, and in their collective opposition to enslavement, those communities which developed out of a manufactured social heterogeneity articulated a sense of freedom that could not be dissolved into the pursuit of self-interest (Robotham 1988: 31; Hartman 1997: 59).

The same process was at work within the boundaries of Middle Rock's developing social environment, and on the scale of the plantation internal division produced the conditions for new affiliation. Although no record I found indicates when any one person arrived there, the plantation's registers of slaves tell us that between 1817 and 1832, the population went unchanged except for a handful of births and deaths. Living together for at least fifteen years and legally bound to work in the interest of the plantation's profitability the people at Middle Rock must have taken from the elements they found in the traditions that had initially distinguished them from each another the elements of common identification and for collective action. Over that time the population enslaved at Middle Rock built a local community increasingly based on a mutual interest in making concrete change in the conditions they shared.

But if it is true that the development of this community and its shared values figured around an opposition to enslavement, what was to happen when the object of collective effort was evacuated from the scene? In this chapter I will explore the event that Middle Rock residents hold their festival to commemorate. What was its transformative character and what were its local effects? Together what do they reveal about the relationship nearly two centuries

later, between the notion of freedom elite reformers promoted as the paramount social virtue and the things Middle Rock residents talked about when they talked about freedom?

There is a wealth of literature on the ending of British slavery, but it is possible to separate scholarship on the subject into a branch concerning abolition and a branch concerning emancipation. The former addresses itself most directly to the problem of explaining the timing of slavery's end; what set of factors motivated legislators to rule against the previously protected right to enslave people? Why was this law passed when it was? Why not sooner, or indeed why not later?

The alternate current of research investigates the nature of emancipation; what post-slavery worlds were designed and what were created? This latter trend of scholarship features a pronounced concern with the meaning of freedom as a value forged in the crucible of Atlantic slavery, and it is from there that I have drawn the bulk of the information and ideas for this chapter. However the abolition-oriented approach is generally regarded as antecedent, and as such the interplay of debate within it sheds some light on the turn toward what for function and definitely not for style I will call an "emancipation-oriented" approach. I will begin with three of the most enduring interpretive positions born out of the "abolition-oriented" approach, and then after briefly discussing how they gave way to a shift in focus from abolition to emancipation, I will use examples of the "emancipation oriented" approach to facilitate a look at life in the aftermath of slavery as it took shape in Middle Rock.

One subset of the abolition-oriented scholarship investigates the outlawing of slavery as the outcome of an internal shift in the moral sentiment of British society. This narrative dominated for over a century after slavery ended, and in spite of a wave of critique that arose in

between the World Wars, strong arguments continue to draw attention to the role of “moral suasion” and its agents. One early (and oft-quoted) example of this point of view comes from W.E.H. Lecky’s *History of European Morals*, published in 1869: “The unweary, unostentatious, and inglorious crusade of England against slavery may probably be regarded as among the three or four perfectly virtuous pages comprised in the history of nations” (2003 [1869]: 153). For the most part this branch of literature emphasizes the influence of free abolitionists like Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and William Wilberforce. More recent work concerns the unevenness with which slavery enriched Britain, and addresses class stratification in London to spotlight the how the struggle of the British working classes against dispossession by the captains of blossoming industry provided a stake in antislavery debates (Drescher 1986).

Two alternative approaches to investigating the timing of British abolition both split from this thesis in the early twentieth century, each challenging the underlying significance of humanitarianism as a transformative factor and arguing that self-interest provoked the British to outlaw slavery. Departing in one direction, scholarship has emphasized enslaved peoples’ insurrections and what they accomplished toward convincing free populations in the colonies and in metropolitan Britain that they postponed abolition at their peril. C.L.R. James’s *The Black Jacobins* (1938), for instance, leaves no doubt of the shock that the Haitian Revolution sent through Atlantic slaveholding society. Herbert Aptheker’s *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943) lent further to the sense of their transformative role by asserting that such insurgencies were more numerous and frequent than previously recognized by historians. W.E.B. Du Bois maintained that uprisings throughout the Americas had set the stage for the Haitian Revolution and that in turn the latter “drove England out of the slave trade (1965: 60-61). And more recently William A. Green argued that in the British colonies “the fear that emancipation might

provoke bloodshed was only exceeded by the conviction that a withholding of freedom would probably produce even greater bloodshed” (1991: 116).

Moreover we see in fact that although anti-slavery advocates in the U.S. celebrated British abolition as a moral bellwether, they took pains to point out the relative peacefulness of the transition so as to advertise legal manumission as a safe alternative to otherwise inevitable violence as occurred in French Saint Domingue (Kerr-Ritchie 2007: 54). But it is a third interpretive position within the abolition-orientation that has proven the most durable critique of the initial orthodoxy, which has brought the most decisive closure to the problem of explaining the timing of slavery’s demise, and in turn which led to the turn in the scholarship from the abolition-orientation toward historiographical investigation more concerned with the substance of emancipation.

Like the works discussed immediately above, this subset of scholarship has splintered from the “victorious humanitarianism” thesis, and approaches the outlawing of slavery as an act of self-interest on the part of free Britons. However, the key difference lies in this perspective’s focus on the comparative profitability of a wage-labor economy over plantation slavery. Eric Williams is the most well known expositor of this position. With *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), he attacked the basis of the humanitarian interpretation, and situating abolition within the expansion of global capitalism he argued that as profits from plantation slavery had financed the industrial revolution, they in turn gave rise to a mode of production that made slavery obsolete. Put simply, Williams argued, there is not only no adequate proof that the British ended slavery *in spite of* their economic best interests, but to the contrary a materialist approach to the event lends evidence to suggest that abolition was ultimately a decision taken by British legislators bent precisely on maximizing the economic interests of the empire.

Others before Williams, including Adam Smith (1776), Karl Marx (1867), and W.E.B. Du Bois (1896), had cited the formative role the plantation economy played in the development of industrial capitalism in metropolitan England and the (post-) Revolutionary United States, as well as the wage labor's relative attractiveness to the capitalist classes. Indeed an editorial footnote to a 1901 edition of *The Wealth of Nations* actually credited Adam Smith for pointing out "the moral, in advance, of the Negro Emancipation movement and its success," and proceeded to annotate the text with what amounts to a thumbnail sketch of the thesis Williams made clear.

Slavery came to be recognized as less profitable than wage labor, and hence it was given up. 'Philanthropy' got the credit of what was at bottom a purely economic revolution.... Had economic conditions not favored them, the eloquence of a Fox or a Wilberforce would have been expended in vain. (1902: 82)

However, in spite of a small but insistent chorus of voices accenting the economic and not exclusively moral factors at work in British slavery abolition, the tone of victorious humanitarianism that Lecky had struck eighty years earlier still dominated the historiography when Williams published *Capitalism and Slavery* near the tail end of World War II.

One of the most consistent critics of Williams's work provides a strong claim for *Capitalism and Slavery's* role to shape scholarship on the end of British slavery. In the late 1970s Seymour Drescher lodged a cutting reassessment of Williams's thesis arguing that in the early nineteenth century Britain's plantation economy in fact showed no signs of decline in productivity or in share of British imports and exports (1977). Drescher produced data to show that by ending slavery Britain had committed what he termed "econocide."

Having worked to discredit Williams's text on empirical grounds, Drescher nonetheless credited *Capitalism and Slavery* for unsettling the prevalent mode through which historians had

investigated the end of slavery for the previous hundred years. As he explored that impact in a number of articles after *Econocide* (1977) Drescher offered up a useful explanation for how *Capitalism and Slavery* not only unhitched scholarship from the standard approach, but also how the text refocused the line of inquiry from the nature of abolition to the nature of emancipation. On at least three occasions (1985; 1987; 1992) Drescher elaborated on the book's impact, each time illustrating his point with reference to a conference of academics that convened in 1983 on the sesquicentennial of the British Abolition Act. In the paper published with the rest of the proceedings from the 1983 conference, he contrasted the works on that program from those presented a similar event city fifty years earlier (Drescher 1985: 3-26):

The centenary of 1933 was solemnly celebrated as a national and imperial triumph. The City of Hull, as the home-town of William Wilberforce, was the designated centre of the event. The commemoration focused on the life of the 'liberator' who had died just as the emancipation bill cleared its last parliamentary hurdles. [But looking at the 1983 conference] a casual observer might note that both the principal scene of the centenary and its leading actors have virtually vanished. There are no papers devoted specifically to British abolitionism, nor to its statesmen, nor to its Saints, not even a single paper on Hull's own hero. (1985: 4)

Drescher later observed that by focusing "almost exclusively upon abolition as an epic struggle of metropolitan saints and heroes," scholarship had "left the colonial slaves themselves to enter and exit from the story at the moment of apotheosis." By contrast in 1983 "scholars were less inclined to leave the scene of action at the moment of redemption" (1992: 4). For Drescher the sesquicentennial proceedings had registered "perhaps the most dramatic evidence" of a shift in the mainstream historical interpretation of slavery's end in British territories. "What happened in the intervening fifty years between the two commemorations," he wrote, "is in no small measure because of *Capitalism and Slavery*" (1987: 181-182).

It should not come as a surprise that Drescher distils Williams's influence to a polemical intervention, nor is it remarkable that Drescher argues Williams didn't open but rather exploited a self-inflicted breach in European hegemony (after all Drescher's sharpest point was that Williams got his facts wrong). But it is nonetheless interesting that he credited *Capitalism and Slavery* for destabilizing the traditional narrative of British slavery abolition, and also for securing a position from which to interrogate what British and Colonial authorities had built on the basis of that narrative. "It is dubious whether *Capitalism and Slavery* could have entered Anglo-American historiography as a dominant paradigm before the World Wars and the Great Depression had shattered the ideology of European moral progress," Drescher wrote. "The achievement of *Capitalism and Slavery* is that Williams made it impossible for historians ever to return to the posture of splendid moral isolation which characterized the story of British slave emancipation for more than a century (1987: 186, 196).

A determined critic, Drescher nonetheless granted Williams a momentous achievement. After *Capitalism and Slavery* scholars could no longer approach Britain's suppression of slavery as a social correction—as a righting of the ship carrying society toward a better future for all. Abolition could no longer be interpreted only as an end; for historians abolition should also constitute a beginning.

With emancipation recast as both a production and a negation, the standpoint of the historian changed, kindling a new interest in the substance of the event. Early pioneers of this interpretive orientation include Edmund Morgan (1975) and Orlando Patterson (1982), each of whom asserted the social construction of freedom. Morgan's book emphasizes the fact that free colonials in Virginia defined liberty in juxtaposition to their own practice of trading and holding people as slaves; Patterson asked "must we esteem slavery for what it has wrought?" Other

studies have followed, interrogating the terms by which people enslaved on plantations in the Americas were supposed to be reintegrated into colonial society. It is this branch that concerns me in this chapter. Following Cooper, Holt, and Scott (2000) my interest is to find explanations for “the ultimate fate of the freedpeople and their descendants” in Middle Rock not only in the legacies of slavery or pre-slavery conditions, but in the constitution of freedom itself.

One of the legacies of Williams’s work is to chart a route beyond the question of timing toward that of the substance of abolition as an act of social production. Implicated in that interpretive shift, however, is Williams’s enduring refusal to disconnect the moral factors in abolition from the material ones. Bearing that connection in mind I turn to the specifics of slavery abolition in Jamaica and in Middle Rock in particular.

As legislation, the Abolition Act represents—that is to say, it records—the application of a specific ethical orientation. The Abolition Act stipulates how not to behave British officials crafted the terms of freedom according to assumptions about human behavior that were in important ways different from the sensibilities described above as likely having prevailed among people enslaved at Middle Rock and the plantations surrounding it. Tracing a history of European moral philosophy, Alisdair MacIntyre writes that the philosophies dominant among the British of the era emerged “from within a society in which individualism has conquered. Hence they present the social order not as a framework within which the individual has to live out his moral life, but as the mere sum of individual wills and interests” (1966: 267). Whereas people enslaved at Middle Rock were likely to venerate a balanced relation between personal achievement and social obligation, British lawmakers saw the world as an individualist economy of moral action and thus tended to frame personal achievement as the paramount imperative for

ensuring the fulfillment of one's responsibility to the human race. This conclusion led the British, as it later would Tocqueville (1835) and J.S. Mill (1859), to imagine freedom as a middle point between the tyranny of a despotic minority on one hand, and the tyranny of the majority on the other. They found affirmation and direction in Adam Smith's theory of political economy, and reasoned accordingly that promoting capitalist expansion was their best strategy as lawmakers to effectively protect against both threats to the social system. Thus Holt notes, "while historians might conclude retrospectively that slavery was logically compatible with capitalism, the men who fashioned the emancipation law completely rejected such a notion" (1992: 50). Rather, "for British policymakers the problem of abolition was, at its root, a labor problem: how safely to transform a dependent laborer into a self-motivated free worker" (33-34) consistent with the developing logic of the global marketplace. Of the various abolition proposals presented to Parliament in 1833, all "were designed to transform slaves into free laborers, and slaveholders into employers, equal before the law, their social relations mediated by the market" (42).

This perspective put the legislators at odds with a fraternity of slaveholders who saw no advantage in converting to a wage labor system. "Although the planters were full participants in a capitalist economy producing for the world market, their accustomed methods of commanding labor were not congruent with the evolving liberal democratic ideology; their social system was not amenable to liberal ethics; their mores and values were in many ways as alien from the British as were those of the blacks" (1992: 79). British officials explained the divergence of perspective by excusing colonial planters for being debased by lives focused on coercion, but they were even more firmly convinced that enslaved people did not share their point of view; if in fact New World Africans and their descendants were *not* inherently deviant examples of

undeveloped human potential, then enslavement had likely despoiled their character as well. Reflecting that position, the authors of the 1833 Abolition Act established a period of “Apprenticeship” to commence on August 1st 1834, during which slaveholders throughout the colonies were to be taught the virtue of paying wages, and captives were to be conditioned for life after enslavement.

Under the ruling of the Abolition Act, children under age six were immediately declared free from slavery. Older children and adults were classified in one of three groups: praedial apprenticed laborers who worked “Lands belonging to their Owners,” those who did agricultural work only on lands belonging to persons other than those who owned them, and most of the remainder of the enslaved population were put to work in urban environments. As they were not part of the colonies’ agricultural systems nor the “manufacture of colonial produce otherwise,” the third category of apprentices were mandated by the Act to be “absolutely and forever manumitted” no later than August 1st, 1838, while the remaining majority were to remain under private control until the same date in 1840. All the while, the new social order would be gradually brought to bear on British Colonial societies in Jamaica, Trinidad, and elsewhere, by way of policies which set limits on the number of hours an apprentice could work (45 hours/week) and promised £20 million in reparations to the slave-owners as compensation for their loss of assets.

With the bulk of the reparations earmarked for absentee plantation owners living in London, the resident Jamaican planters were unswayed in their opposition to recreating the colonies as spaces of free labor production. Advocates of abolition reasoned that free labor would prove less costly to the planters given that it would eliminate the requirement of feeding, clothing, and giving medical care to workers. In rebuttal, planters argued that their need for

continually accessible labor would push wage commitments far beyond whatever gains might come from not having to provide for the people they held captive. The division of authority between the British and colonial legislatures only exacerbated the rift. In late 1833, after the passage of the Abolition Act, the colonial Jamaica Assembly (representing the planters' interests) conceded to pass an Act-in-Aid of the Abolition Act, but their law left vague a number of crucial details regarding how it would be carried out, including the limits of prosecuting criminal offenses by apprentices, and what particular obligations the "employers" were required to satisfy with regard to the subsistence of "their" apprentices. The Assembly subsequently struggled with the British government in an effort to retain direct control over the terms of apprenticeship and the apprentices themselves, as meanwhile sugar and coffee production—and prices in the world market—continued to fall.

Nonetheless, the period of apprenticeship was a key era for the definition of freedom in Middle Rock, as the British worked hard to shape the terms of emancipation and its aftermath. As a process that traditionally applied to the social and vocational training of children, apprenticeship aptly captures the legislators' view that members of the colonies' enslaved population were unprepared to conduct themselves appropriately as free persons. Holt elaborates the portrait around which British policymakers drew the terms of post-abolition emancipation and freedom:

They would be free, but only after being resocialized to accept the internal discipline that ensured the survival of the existing social order. They would be free to bargain in the marketplace but not free to ignore the market. They would be free to pursue their own self-interest but not free to reject the cultural conditioning that defined what that self-interest should be. They would have opportunities for social mobility, but only after they learned their proper place. (Holt 1992: 53)

The task at hand was to (re)educate the masses of people enslaved in the colonies and to prepare them to be self-motivated workers. The year after the Abolition Act went into effect Charles Grant was appointed Secretary of State for the colonies, and during his time in office he advocated for a government-financed education program that would serve by teaching ex-slaves to ascribe to an individualist economy of morals and corresponding ethic of freedom. To this end, the British government requested funds to finance education for bondspersons.

Grant, having received the title of Lord Glenelg of Inverness, wrote in the last year of Apprenticeship, “the great cardinal principle of the law for the abolition of slavery is, that the apprenticeship of the emancipated slaves is to be immediately succeeded by personal freedom, in that full and unlimited sense of the term in which it is used in reference to the other subjects of the British Crown” (Glenelg 1836 qtd. in Holt 1992: 72). Glenelg saw in the Apprenticeship system a means for the British state to close gaps between those who had and those who had never been enslaved before abolition would take place, and he initially advocated that funds go to the colonies to finance education for apprentices and their children. In Jamaica and elsewhere, however, as visiting preachers had made the most substantial gains toward establishing teaching centers for enslaved people, Glenelg’s plan failed due to acrimony between planters and missionaries, and opponents were able to successfully argue that parents of freed children would reject compulsory education as simply one more imposition. Subsequently the endeavor was retailored from a promise of financing to a plan to build one new school building and to appoint one inspector of schools in each of the British colonies. After the change of plans, the Lord modified his focus on Apprenticeship as a period of state-led training, and turned his attention to ushering apprentices toward emancipation by discouraging them from collapsing into idleness after their release from forced labor.

As Holt points out, one hears in this reasoning the idea of a sanctifying power of work that was famously described in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic*. While, as suggested above the task organization of enslavement would likely have familiarized those captive on coffee plantations like Middle Rock with the idea of labor as a means to freedom, Glenelg was concerned that slavery had conditioned colonial captives to envision an end to the endeavor of working for freedom. He concluded that unless deterred significant numbers of colonial apprentices would see in the end of slavery the final achievement of that goal, and would as though reflexively suffer a rapid deterioration of initiative. Since there would be no mandate for universal childhood education, teacher training therefore required supplemental legislative devices in order to correct for this moral deviation and to drive home the lesson that on earth there was no end to the labor for—or accumulation of—freedom.

In the absence of compulsory schooling, Lord Glenelg instituted what could be generously called a meta-vocational curriculum for the apprentices to foreclose the possibility of an imminent regression to minimal work. In order to prevent them from producing too little, he recommended that people without land title (i.e. all apprentices) be prohibited from purchasing or living on lands owned by the Crown, and that land prices be kept inflated out of reach. After applying squatter removal programs in Canada and Australia, he moved to institute them in the Caribbean colonies, and recommended a minimum price, restriction of sale to the highest bidder, and a ten percent down-payment required for any purchase of Crown land (Glenelg 1836 qtd. in Holt 1992: 74-76). Even if doing so also constrained peoples' potential for private enterprise, for Lord Glenelg the protection against the onset of sloth was the paramount concern. "Some security should if possible be taken, that all the territory which is cultivated at all shall be cultivated well," Glenelg wrote in a letter to the governors of the West Indian colonies. "The

minimum price of land, therefore, should be high enough to leave a considerable portion of the population unable to buy it until they have saved some capital out of the wages of their industry, and at the same time low enough to encourage such savings by making the possession of land a reasonable object of ambition to all.” (Glenelg 1836 qtd. in Holt 1992: 75).

Although he remained dedicated to instituting a sort of state-led social development program prior to abolition, Grant/Lord Glenelg’s commitment to education nonetheless demonstrates his preoccupation with the problem of how to steer British society toward prosperity in the developing context of the global trade. Ostensibly an effort to benefit people held captive in the colonies, his land policies ultimately propped up Jamaica’s plantation-based export economy and repaired a breach between British government and the Jamaican planters by conceding to their contempt for missionary clergy, and protecting their interest in accessible labor. The result was to force people into modern serfdom with no choice but to rent from—and work for—those who owned the plantations where they had been held captive. Under these modified conditions, freedpersons were expected to slowly accumulate money working for wages in the very places where they had been enslaved, all while paying rent to their employers to remain in their homes on plantation properties. Only those who escaped falling into debt to their employers/landlords would eventually have the chance to buy land for themselves or their families. Until that time the several hundred thousand people legally emancipated in Jamaica in 1838 were to remain bonded subjects of the planter class.⁴⁰

The first large-scale land reform scheme in Jamaica owed primarily to the efforts of Baptist Missionaries who had returned to the island after having been expelled in the wake of the 1831-32 Christmas Rebellion. By contrast the Missionaries with the most significant impact on

⁴⁰ Patterson (1982) estimates Jamaica’s 1834 population: Total 376,200; Whites 20,000; Enslaved Nonwhites 310,000; Unenslaved Nonwhites 46,200

life in Middle Rock were representatives of the Moravian Church or *Unitas Fratrum*, and although the Moravians were in some important ways different in their approach to the people enslaved in Jamaica, it was the Baptists who pioneered the “free village” schemes. Thus, before turning to the Moravian church and their specific activities among the population at Middle Rock, a brief look at the Baptist programs provides important context and helps highlight some key features of the Moravian mission to Jamaica, and particularly the contours of the moral economy the Moravian clergy sought to foster among the Middle Rock population in the immediate post-abolition era.

Under their former subjection, the majority of captured Africans and their enslaved descendants lived on estate properties, but with abolition arose the question of where they would—and could—settle. Radical abolitionists, gradualists, and pro-slavery advocates were united in their concern for maintaining an active plantation economy in Jamaica, and to that end they argued over how to avoid the seeming inevitability that either freed persons would claim estate lands as their own, or that labor might become scarce if ex-slaves bought and cultivated land far away from the plantations (Green 1991 [1976]: 115). But the Emancipation Act came without any clear land distribution scheme except for what amounted to a grace period during which Parliament and the Jamaica Assembly would construct a plan.

“It had not been anticipated that emancipation would involve a general exodus of the former slaves from the estates,” writes Hugh Paget, citing a well-known description of Afro-Caribbean life on the eve of abolition (1949: 8). In that account⁴¹, Joseph Sturge and Thomas

⁴¹ Sturge, J, & Harvey T. *The West Indies in 1837: being the journal of a visit to Antigua, Monsterrat, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbadoes, and Jamaica; undertaken for the purpose of*

Harvey had predicted that “the people when free, will be too unwilling to leave their cottages and gardens, and fruit trees, the heirlooms handed down to them from their ancestors, to be likely to forsake the estates. Humane proprietors will have every advantage in procuring the labor of their free peasantry on the most advantageous terms” (1838: 187). As it turned out people left the plantations by the thousands. There is some debate over how many among the recently emancipated population hastily deserted estate lands, and how many held on as long as they could,⁴² but one account from that time estimates that in the first two years after abolition the number of freeholds nearly tripled island-wide, ranging across the twenty parishes from a minimum increase of 25% in one to 700% in another (Higginson 1840 qtd. in Paget 1949 [1945]: 18).

Holt writes that in many cases adults who remained on plantation lands sent their children to stay with friends or relatives elsewhere, but that it is clear that movement/migration began right away. The Act had allowed for ex-slaves to stay in their homes on plantation lands for three months after August 1st 1838, but “it was not made clear that this occupation was to be rent free” (9). Jamaica’s Attorney General ruled that plantation-owners could begin charging immediately and though the Attorney and Solicitor General of Britain soon overturned the decision, most planters had already turned into rentiers. Paget highlights reports that suggest widespread rent-gouging and capricious willingness to eject people from estate boundaries, all of which would likely have at least strained a person’s conviction to stay put. In a May 1839 letter to then-Governor Sir Lionel Smith, Sir Charles Darling (later Governor himself) reported,

ascertaining the actual condition of the Negro population of those islands. 2nd ed. Boston: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1838.

⁴² Hall, Douglas. “The Flight from the Estates Reconsidered: The British West Indies, 1838-1842.” *Journal of Caribbean History*. 10-11 (1978): 7-24. Also Besson provides a useful overview of this debate. (2002: 81-90)

“notices to quit were served in great numbers very soon after the 1st August” (qtd in Paget 1949: 9).

Through high rents and ejections planters fought the threat of losing capital to squatters, but if they encouraged migration from the estates they risked losing the availability of cheap and consistent labor. In July 1839, nearing the first anniversary of “full freedom,” John Daughtery, a Special Magistrate presiding over rural St. Elizabeth, predicted that “the large body who have been induced to provide homes of their own” would eventually find entrepreneurial farming unprofitable, and he argued that with emancipation the majority of Jamaica’s population could still be transitioned from enslaved workers to members of an independent landless proletariat, laboring on “neighbouring estates where they shall be best treated and best paid” (Paget 1949 [1945]: 19).

Where planters failed to make company housing a more attractive option than independent land ownership, Baptist Minister James Phillippo founded Sligoville, anticipating a coming need for “such establishments in the incipient operations of freedom, both as a refuge for the peasantry, and for the general advantage of the country” (Phillippo 1843: 221-222). In 1835 he bought 25 acres of land on behalf of the Baptist church, organized the construction of a building to serve as a missionary chapel and schoolhouse, and subdivided the remaining land into plots for settlement by free(d) people of African descent. Three years later, when a man named Henry Lunan bought the first plot in Sligoville, the settlement had a new, larger, church and school building, and had expanded to 50 acres of land, all in proximity to already-existing plantations and about 10 miles from the former colonial capital, Spanish Town. After two more years, in 1840, 100 families lived in the township, and by the time all the plots were sold and

settled, the Secretary of England's Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) estimated 200 families were living in Sligoville (1881: 184).

Phillippo's first church-founded free village represented a missed opportunity for planters to gain tenant-workers; but it didn't overturn the status quo. Stewart notes that Baptist missionizing, "contained adjustments that could be useful for the preservation of plantation society.... The free-village system, even though it contributed to the independence of the ex-slave peasantry, was not a revolutionary groundwork for a new society. In many ways, the system was meant to shore up the plantation system."⁴³ Phillippo articulated the reformist character of the church founded free village movement in *Jamaica, its past and present state*, where he concluded that, while the free village system was designed to provide against planters who charged high rent and paid low wages, it also "rendered labour more available for the properties near which such settlements were located" (1843: 430). Four decades later, BMS Secretary Underhill described Sligoville as a success on these terms: "though surrounded with many difficulties incident to the first settlement of such a spot there was every prospect of a prosperity as conducive to the interests of the colony as to those of the labourers and artisans themselves all of whom gradually found employment at moderate wages on the properties around" (1881: 184). Nevertheless, as Mintz (1958) wrote, when compared to the broad population of formerly enslaved people, "the Jamaican freedman got his clearest opportunity to become a peasant cultivator" (159) in the free village system. A look at the relational geography of the free-villages, and the size of the plots that people bought and settled, clarifies the limits of that opportunity.

⁴³ Stewart, Robert J. *Religion and Society in Post-Emancipation Jamaica*. Knoxville: U of TN Press, 1992: 37-38.

Phillippo founded four more free villages on or near sugar estates close to Spanish Town, and Underhill mentions another “several villages or townships, the formation of which, more or less, [Phillippo] directed or superintended” all during the four years after Emancipation. His primary strategy was to establish free villages near plantation lands where possible, in order to provide a middle position for people otherwise destined to become either wage-earning renters or small-hold subsistence farmers. While most people had accumulated some capital while enslaved,⁴⁴ prices were set too high for the majority to buy any portion of land outright, let alone a large-enough piece to allow competition with the still heavily-entrenched planter class (Mintz and Hall 1960; Patterson 1967: 216-230). Along with Revs. Thomas Burchell and William Knibb, Phillippo had campaigned against slavery, and after Emancipation the three began soliciting benefactors and settlers for free villages. Burchell returned to the northwest coast and bought land at Sandy Bay to expand the mission station into a free village. Knibb, who championed the cause so vigorously that he is said to have initiated the system island-wide (Besson 2002: 103), founded settlements for ex-slaves across the island from Phillippo, on the north coast in the sugar parish of Trelawny. There, between 1838 and his death in 1845, he founded the towns of Piedmont, Hoby Town, Unity, Granville (aka Grumble Pen), Kettering, and, according to Besson, New Birmingham (aka The Alps) and Wilberforce (aka Refuge) as well (2002: 106).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ On production and exchange among enslaved people see Mintz, Sidney W. “The Origins of The Jamaican Market System” in *Caribbean Transformations*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989 [1974].

⁴⁵ In 1881 Edward Bean Underhill attributed the founding of Wilberforce to Rev. John Clark, and in 1862 he connected The Alps to “Mr. Dexter” and “Rev. B.B. Dexter,” respectively. He is likely referring to Knibb’s cousin Rev. Benjamin Dexter, a Baptist missionary stationed at Stewart Town also in Trelawny and referred to more recently in Besson 2002: 105). [See Underhill, EB. *The West Indies: Their Social and Religious Condition*. London: Jackson,

On average plots were too small to permit farming for profit that would provide for class mobility. Knibb, like Phillippo, anticipated that after Emancipation estate and plantation owners would evict ex-slaves from their lands, and after the Act was passed he railed against high rents, ejections, low wages, and delinquent pay. Knibb saw that in general those recently freed from slavery faced a scarcity of lands available for settlement, and also like Phillippo he designed free villages that would reform, but not end the dominance of the plantation economy in Jamaica. Underhill estimated that in the first five or six years after Emancipation, “a hundred thousand acres of land must have passed into the hands of the people...and a very large number of labourers were thus *permanently withdrawn* from sugar cultivation on the estates” (1881: 188 *emph. original*), but like Phillippo and also Burchell, Knibb founded settlements at some proximity to plantations, usually subdivided into small plots. In 1840 Knibb estimated there were nearly 8000 houses in 200 church-founded free villages around the island; in other words, he suggested that on average each Baptist free village included at least 40 pieces of land⁴⁶ that had been sold to formerly enslaved men and women. In 1843, Phillippo wrote “the villages can scarcely be estimated at fewer than 150 to 200, or the number of acres of land purchased at less than 100,000” (228), thus apparently placing their average size between 500 and 700 acres,

Walford, and Hodder, 1862 (360-361); Underhill, EB. *Life of James Mursell Phillippo, Missionary in Jamaica*. London: Yates & Alexander, 1881 (esp. 188).]

⁴⁶ Given that people bought land before building and not the other way around, Knibb’s estimated number of houses suggests the total number of plots purchased was greater than 8000, and therefore that each village had more than 40 freeholds. Taken this way, Knibb’s later claim that Trelawny had 23 such villages with nearly 1600 houses in them (= average 70 houses/village), might reflect a more accurate average number of free holds in each settlement. Regardless, it is important to take care in this averaging to not silence variations among the villages. In the first decade after full abolition, the distribution of free-village dwellers from settlement to settlement was hardly uniform. Further complicating the picture, the number of houses grew unevenly over time, and the villages’ distribution from parish to parish was also uneven, following as it did the contours of the plantation system out of which the church founded free village movement emerged. While in 1845, Knibb counted 23 Baptist free villages in Trelawny, at the same time he counted 43 in the parish of St. Ann (Underhill 1881: 328).

which divided by 40 suggests the plots averaged between 12.5 and 17.5 acres per household. Although this is imprecise and it likely overstates the size of the average plot (e.g. it makes no account for lands occupied by the village churches and schools), even at such a level the fact remains that church founded free villages offered diminutive land holdings compared to the sprawling estates still concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority. The 200 families who settled Sligoville, we recall, had at most 50 acres to split among themselves, for a maximum average plot-size of only $\frac{1}{4}$ acre. The free village of Sturge Town in St. Ann's parish, Mintz reports, was 126 acres of land subdivided into seventy-four "individual agricultural holdings," or an average of less than $1\frac{3}{4}$ acre each (1989 [1958]: 162). Wright (1973: 167) quotes a letter Knibb wrote several months after emancipation, in which he presented his plans to purchase and resell land "to families, in lots of from two to four acres each."

To be sure, the problem of scarcity—artificial in any sense—affected the size of free village shares that missionaries plotted and which people purchased. That Knibb et al operated on behalf of the Baptist church and purchased lands with philanthropists' money likely mandated that the ministers document success in the evangelical quest to save souls, and also a tangible income from fees charged for baptisms, marriages, and subscription to the congregation in good standing. To the extent that their achievement measured in conversions, missionary planners were encouraged to subdivide free village lands into many pieces in order to count greater numbers under their roof. At the same time there was the imperative to keep the mission station from financial loss, and missionaries sold land to free village settlers at prices that recouped part of the cost of the aggregate tract. It is worth noting, also, that if the price of free village land also forced settlers into a prolonged sequence of partial payments, this helped the church sustain a local population base.

However, at the same time that free village plots changed hands within the sphere of capitalist property markets, a judgment of “merit” on the part of the Baptists, factored in their sale. Citing a proposal Knibb outlined in a letter to Dr. Hoby of England’s Baptist Committee, Besson points to the emphasis he placed on the opportunities for Baptist missionary work free villages would offer. The aforementioned “lots of 2-4 acres each,” Knibb wrote, “would enable the *worthy* members of [his] church, with others who are fearfully oppressed, to settle” (Besson: 104 qting Wright 1973: 167 my emphasis). Mintz, who conducted research in Sturge Town in the early 1950s, helps clarify our understanding of how the interests of the Mission interacted with the real circumstances of recently emancipated settlers. On one hand, Mintz writes,

The size of the purchasable landholding may have been based on the size of the purchaser’s family. Or the holdings may have been staked out with regard for variations in soil quality, topography, and the like—though this last seems unlikely, given the small overall size of the property. Lastly, some favoritism may have been shown. It is at least possible, in any case, that the original settlers varied in their economic status from the first....

however, on the other hand,

Every such free village—at least every such village founded under church sponsorship—was composed at the start of practicing coreligionists in good standing. (1989 [1958]: 165, 172)

Indeed in addition to family size, a settler’s devotion to the church—which could be demonstrated through some combination of tributary giving (money, labor, produce, social influence), and observance of behavioral strictures (monogamy, temperance, profession of exclusive faith in the Christian Trinity, adherence to a calendar of congregational worship and festivity)—was a powerful variable measured by church leadership acting in their role of “faith-based” real estate brokers, and based on this calculus of worthiness, as they enclosed free village lands into new commodity parcels, the Baptist missionaries mapped an uneven order of value

over the area of the property. A settler's wealth made him or her an attractive buyer even when fealty to the church was less clear, and prospective buyers with particular skills like sewing, weaving, masonry, tailoring, or midwifery had those as capital to allocate to the deal.⁴⁷ People also settled in free village communities according to the push and pull of interpersonal relationships they forged while captive in slavery, or even beforehand, and while church membership collected many settlers under a canopy before the villages were established, obligations, attractions, disagreements, and status hierarchies are likely to have motivated and enabled some people to buy plots while discouraging and prohibiting others. Ultimately the authority of the church leadership over who purchased free village lands was concentrated and powerful, but it brought with it the logic of the capitalist commodity market, and upon settlement the earliest residents entered a social space that was stratified according to the monetary wealth each had accumulated while enslaved.

Diane Austin-Broos has observed that “to understand the cultural legacies of the slave plantation period [in Jamaica], Christianity cannot be ignored.” In the plantation period the majority of the population—those persons who had been enslaved—experienced shifting conditions wherein “the ideology of the planters would perforce be replaced, albeit gradually and almost over a century, by the ideology of the mission” (1992: 223-225). Thus, while “free villages provided the basis for some political power, which was tied to freehold land rights, as well as a limited economic independence from the plantations and a bargaining position for

⁴⁷ Hall (1993) cites the Baptist *Missionary Herald* for a description of Sligoville in 1840: “One hundred families were settled, and eventually it was expected that there would be two hundred. The majority of the inhabitants were described as agricultural labourers, but there was also a schoolmaster and mistress, a shopkeeper, two butchers, four masons, one blacksmith, one straw-hat manufacturer, two gardeners, one tailor, four carpenters, one farrier and two sawyers” (105). It is likely that cultural capital played a key role for some free village settlers as they negotiated for plots.

higher wages when working on them” (Besson 2002: 106), the Jamaican church-founded free village movement played a key role in the constitution of post-slavery Jamaican society. And the thrust of that influence—following Baptist missionary activities as a bellwether—encouraged neither the cultivation of a socially mobile capitalist farming class nor of a landless proletariat out of the population of ex-slaves. Rather, missionaries like Phillippo and Knibb sought to impose onto former captives a model of behavior that would encourage each of them to “become a viable, independent economic unit within a cash economy” and “the Baptist free village system was the concrete embodiment of this alternative social environment that would realize a moral and religious vision” (Austin-Broos 1992: 225-226). Through sale of small plots in communities with some proximity to sugar estates and coffee plantations, the free village movement was an early means by which was produced a post-slavery Jamaican workforce, independent from tributary responsibilities to its employers, yet tethered to Christian churches, internally stratified according to their power to purchase land in a cash economy, and finally still socially and spatially oriented toward plantation labor. Here is Reverend William Knibb himself, addressing a gathering of former captives about their new condition: “To be free you must be independent. Receive your money for your work; come to market with money; purchase from whom you please; and be accountable to no one but the Being above, whom I trust will watch over you and protect you” (Hinton 1847: 289 qtd in Austin-Broos 1992: 224).

In 1838 the colonials wrenched back some control over Jamaica by abolishing slavery themselves, two years ahead of schedule. In the absence of production accounts or further business records it is not possible to say when the Middle Rock estate slowed or even ceased coffee production after the Abolition Act, nor can we determine how long after 1832 the property originally assembled by Thomas Frith had remained in the hands of the Londoners who

purchased Middle Rock after Frith's death in or shortly before 1820. However, by 1840, Missionary preacher Jacob Zorn had purchased the Middle Rock lands on behalf of Moravian Brotherhood and on Christmas Day that year he and others on the Moravian Mission to Jamaica began selling parcels of the Middle Rock lands to people who had been enslaved on the plantation and on other properties in the area.

Although the Moravian church was the first Mission to arrive in Jamaica (1754) and thus the first church to offer an alternative to the Anglican diocese that was the church of the Planter class, the impact of the Moravian mission was less extensive in the Abolition-era than that of the Baptists, owing predominantly to the minimal opposition the Moravians showed to the colonial establishment. As a result, the Moravian Mission to Jamaica has received comparatively little attention in the literature discussing the role of Christian missionizing on the island during the period of slavery and abolition. However, a look at the Moravians' activities and their accounts of what could and ought to be their role vis-à-vis the Jamaican population demonstrates important parallels and discontinuities that mark the ways they sought to shape the people of Middle Rock as free subjects. Having sketched the broad terms of the free village movement of which Middle Rock was a part, I will now turn the discussion back toward the conversion of the plantation into a free settlement. First I will give a brief overview of the history of the Moravian mission to Jamaica, and finally closing with an account of how a Moravian idea of freedom was made manifest in the practices of the church in ushering Middle Rock into the post-slavery era. The free village movement demonstrates clear contours that illustrate the Baptist mandate for defining freedom as—first and foremost—a question of individuated will and the personal responsibility to pursue a virtuous life through worldly labor without complaint. How did this compare to the sentiments fostered by the Moravian church in Middle Rock?

Due to the relative scarcity of coverage that the Moravians have received in scholarship on Jamaican history it is worth retracing briefly the origins of the church. In his account of the Moravian Mission to North Carolina in the 18th and 19th centuries, historian Jon F. Sensbach provides a useful summary of the church's growth from its origins in Medieval Europe, through its revival in the 18th century, and to the commencement and early period of the Moravian evangelical missionizing to people enslaved in the plantation Caribbean. For our purposes here I shall distill Sensbach's account in order to describe something of the church's arc of development up until representatives of the church first arrived in Jamaica. Sensbach's text is particularly useful as it traces within the history of the Moravians an unfolding view of social inequality and a sense of the expectations Moravian missionaries placed upon people who found themselves in adverse or oppressive conditions, namely people who were enslaved.⁴⁸

As a denomination the Moravian church descends from a fellowship of radical Christians who advocated reform of the Catholic church prior to the Lutheran Reformation. Based in the region of Europe we now call the Czech Republic, the group early on cleaved to the teachings of the scholar and social reformer, Jan Hus. After Hus was executed in 1415 under accusations of heresy, followers of his ideas staged a rebellion against the Catholic church, and following the Hussite Revolution the group split into a moderate branch called the Utraquists and a more militant branch, the Taborites, the latter of whom endeavored to establish an egalitarian society spread across several communities in the Bohemia and Moravia regions of Eastern Europe.

⁴⁸ Sensbach, Jon F. *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1762-1840*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. Esp. 19-48.

In the aftermath of the revolution, a religious scholar named Peter Chelcice emerged to prominence within the Taborite wing and in 1457 he led a group to a village called Kunwald, north of Prague, where together they founded a community which they called the *Unitas Fratrum*, or the Unity of Brethren. Following the Taborite tradition, Chelcice exhorted his followers to renounce personal wealth and to embrace the possibility of a society without class distinctions, free of violence, and free of oppression by any mortal authority. Chelcice's vision attracted new congregants over the 1460s and 1470s, but as the community grew the members faced regular harassment and persecution for their separatist position and particularly for their pacifist refusal to participate in armed military campaigns when solicited by organs of power. By the 1490s, with many of the Brethren having resettled as refugees on the estates of local nobility, the Kunwald settlement was dominated by newcomers who rejected Chelcice's philosophy that personal wealth and feudal class inequality were violations of divine law. The new guard cut a more accommodating stance toward the prevailing authorities, preached the preservation rather than reform of the social order, and followed a view that reversed Chelcice's position and viewed material wealth as a manifestation of God's blessing. In 1495 those who remained followers of Chelcice's pacifism, radical egalitarianism, and rejection of worldly institutions of authority split from the larger group and were eventually eclipsed as the Unity ballooned under its less militant guise during the 1500s. "By the early seventeenth century," Sensbach observes, "more than half of all Protestants in Bohemia and Moravia were members of the Unity" (1998: 23).

With the prosecution of the Thirty Years' War, however, the Catholic church reclaimed its dominance over the region, and members of the Unity retreated to Poland and to other German states, where they maintained the sect through a clandestine network connecting places

like Saxony, Moravia, and Austria. In 1722 a carpenter named Christian David—a German who had been raised in the Chelcice tradition—negotiated a settlement pact with a German count named Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, and drawing together the far-flung population of Brethren who had kept up their practice, David led the group to reconvene as asylum seekers on Zinzendorf’s estate in Berthelsdorf, east of Dresden. As Zinzendorf’s patrons this surviving group of adherents called their new settlement “Herrnhut,” or “in the care of the Lord.”

By 1725 around ninety people had assembled at the new community of the United Brethren, and on Zinzendorf’s lands they had built an orphanage, a school, and a meeting-house. As patron, the Count initially maintained a distance from the development of what had become the Renewed Unity of Brethren, but when disaccord threatened the solidity of the community gathered on his property, he assumed a definitive position of authority. He appointed a council of a dozen elders and charged them with the responsibility of keeping order in accordance with a set of precepts that reflected a blend of the Unity’s early philosophy and his own views cultivated as a student and advocate of the Lutheran Pietist revival movement. On the one hand, his influence corresponded with the Moravians’ commitment to the creation of a society of believers united in Brotherhood around the communal observance and celebration of the sacrifices made by Jesus Christ on behalf of humanity. On the other hand, Zinzendorf’s Pietism reflected its roots in the teachings of Martin Luther, who unlike Chelcice had viewed social hierarchy among mortals as divinely ordained, and through his council of appointees the Count institutionalized social hierarchy within the Herrnhut community.

By normalizing the unevenness of worldly power and wealth—and interpreting scripture as justification for a world where some are rich and some are poor—Zinzendorf positioned the revitalized Moravian church in resolute opposition to the radical reformism that characterized the

Unity of Brethren in the 15th century. This would play a significant role in the subsequent development of the Moravian church, when under Zinzendorf's encouragement its representatives undertook the proselytizing mission and proceeded to carry the tenets of their faith to populations stratified not just by feudal class relations but by the productive apparatus of plantation slavery.

In 1731, while traveling to visit members of the royal court of Denmark, Zinzendorf and a Herrnhut Moravian named David Nitschmann met Anton Ulrich, an African-descended man born into captivity in the Danish Eastern Caribbean colony of St. Thomas, and who was then living in Denmark as the servant of the Director of the Danish West India Company. Ulrich had been enslaved on St. Thomas before he was taken to Copenhagen and where he was baptized a Christian. He related the story of his captivity on the Danish sugar island and told Zinzendorf that not only had his own conversion to Christianity long been a personal wish, but moreover that many Africans enslaved in the West Indies shared the same desire. It was only owing to the conditions of their bondage, he reportedly said, that they were unable to do so.

Evidently having found an excited audience, Anton accompanied Zinzendorf and Nitschmann to Herrnhut that July, where he retold his story of having hoped for baptism while enslaved in the Caribbean. The next year, Nitschmann and another of the Brethren, Leonard Dober, traveled to St. Thomas, and arriving in December 1732 they settled as guests of a planter and began the first mission of the Moravian church.

As Sensbach points out, the two Missionaries arrived at a time of "increasing restiveness" among the people enslaved in the Danish colonies St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John (1998: 33). In 1733 a large number of the captive population revolted in St. John, followed by three months of war between the African insurrectionists and colonial military. In this context, as

outsiders to the plantation scene, having broken convention by ministering to the enslaved Africans, Nitschmann and Dober fell under scrutiny of the local authorities. Eight years after they had arrived, a number of planters filed a petition with the Colonial government to have the missionaries deported from the island on the grounds that their preaching encouraged sedition. Nitschmann and Dober defended their mission and insisted that not only had they no intention of challenging the terms of organization of labor and society, but that furthermore their efforts were a palliative to the tension between slaveholders and captives. Christian missionizing, they maintained, shored up the integrity of the institution because it “tended to convert formerly rebellious, disobedient, and wild slaves into benevolent, faithful, and genuinely devoted people.”⁴⁹

Nevertheless when Zinzendorf himself traveled to St. Thomas in early 1739, he found that after the petition for deportation hadn’t been carried through, Danish planters’ animus toward the missionaries remained high, and Moravian Brethren had been arrested and jailed on dubious charges of robbery. In their defense the Count not only made appeals to the colonial governor, but going a step further to smooth things over he arranged a gathering of several hundred African captives who had been regular attendants at Moravian services, and told them that the official position of the church was that their enslavement was Divine ordinance. God “made everything himself—kings, masters, servants, and slaves,” he said. “And as long as we live in this world, everyone must gladly endure the state into which God has placed him.” Zinzendorf told his audience that they carried the curse of God’s punishment of Ham and his early offspring—the “first Negroes”—and that by committing their lives to Christianity they

⁴⁹ C.G.A. Oldendorp, *History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John*, ed. and trans. Arnold R. Highfield and Vladimir Barac (1770; reprint, Ann Arbor, Mich., 1987: 335). (Qtd in Sensbach 1998 p. 34.)

would shed “all evil thoughts, deceit, laziness, faithlessness, and everything that makes [their shared] condition of slavery burdensome.” Thus it was their duty to accept the Holy Sacrament, but on the mortal plane their having done so would merely make enslavement bearable; emancipation would come after death, and any hope or activity toward bringing it about any sooner was in contravention to God’s divine will.

It is worth noting, following Sensbach, that this official position marked the Moravian mission in distinction to other historical and contemporary branches of Protestant evangelism, as the dominant trend had been to regard Africans as outside of the bounds of Christian salvation and as such undeserving of missionary efforts. However, Zinzendorf’s denunciation of the captives on the basis of their African heritage and his consignment of their descendants to perpetual enslavement held fast in the thrust of Moravian missionizing for much of the following century, including the Moravian Mission to Jamaica.

The Moravian evangelical mission to Jamaica began on December 9th, 1754 when Zecharias Caries, Thomas Shallcross, and Gotlieb Haberecht came to the island on an invitation from two plantation-owners who called on them to preach the gospel to the people they held captive on four sugar plantations in St. Elizabeth: Elim, Lancaster, Two-mile-wood, and Bogue. For the first two years the missionaries took up residence on plantation lands and ministered weekly to gathered groups of enslaved persons, and sometimes visited people during the week in their homes. At first they relied almost completely upon their Planter hosts for material support, then in 1755 they acquired 700 acres of land—it is not known whether by gift or by purchase—and built a dwelling house and a station house about ten miles from the Bogue Estate. There at

the eastern edge of St. Elizabeth's central plain they established the first Moravian Mission station, Carmel.

An account published to commemorate the first hundred years of the mission notes that in those early years "the [central] church had, as yet, made no provision for the maintenance of the missionaries," and explains that since the patronage payments allotted to them by their Planter hosts "were by no means sufficient to sustain them," the missionaries set out to "procure a maintenance by the labour of their own hands." In St. Thomas in 1737 the United Brethren had bought a plantation of their own, including between thirty and forty captives. According to the centenary account, "in order to provide for their necessary wants" the Moravian mission to Jamaica determined that they must cultivate as much of their available land as was arable, but that "to do this, at that time, without slave labour was impossible" and shortly after they moved onto their own land they too bought into the economy of human chattel (Buchner 1854: 38). Thus, the Moravian mission in Jamaica followed initially in the path Zinzendorf had established with his sermon in St. Thomas, endeavoring to turn the souls of captives toward liberty after death while in the meantime neither opposing nor even abstaining from the system that held people in bondage while living their mortal lives.

In addition to making the case that the Brethren were pulled unavoidably into slaveholding, the centenary history of the mission describes the Moravians' slaveholding with some evident shame, and after offering the tepid caveat that as slaveholders they were less vicious than was the norm, that account proceeds to indict slavery as "a consummate evil." Written a few decades after British slavery abolition, but still years before abolition in the U.S., it is significant that the official position of the United Brethren in Jamaica was at this time resolutely opposed to slavery. However, with that sentiment there came a reluctance to dwell on

just for how long that representatives of the church had actively participated in the institution—Moravians in Jamaica were slaveholders until 1832.⁵⁰

The Brethrens' eventual condemnation of the institution comes across mainly on the grounds of slavery's interference with the spread of the gospel and its disruption of the trappings of a pious life, most notably the prohibition of captives from attending services and receiving rites of baptism, and from entering into monogamous marriage sanctified by Christian ritual. "It is beyond the power of the missionary," wrote the historian J.H. Buchner, "to remove the chief obstacles to the free course of God's word in a slave country." He continued:

No system could be invented more effectually to hinder and oppose the spread of the gospel than slavery. The slaves had little time to hear the word, except when worn out in body and mind by their cruel bondage; and their souls injured by a system which overthrows all morality, and sets at defiance the plainest commands of scripture. How can there be morality where marriage is illegal? where overseers, bookkeepers, and drivers know no bounds, no obstacles to their evil lusts? How is the debased ignorant heathen to be taught the fear of God, and the heinousness of sin, when he finds himself the victim of evil passions, and the most unblushing immorality, in those who profess to be his superiors, and when he sees his equals treated as the beasts in the field?⁵¹

However, what is perhaps more important for this discussion is the fact that this post-abolition account voices little regret over the missionaries' tacit support of the institution itself. To the contrary, unlike the scant discussion about the Moravians' slaveholding, it discusses at some length the Moravians' repeated attempts to reassure the Planter class that they were continuing to follow Zinzendorf's doctrine, placating their enslaved congregants, inuring them to their position at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and working to preserve rather than upset the status quo.

⁵⁰ The minutes of the July 1832 Mission Conference at New Carmel report a decision to manumit the remaining six captives held enslaved by the church at Fairfield. Qtd in Warner-Lewis 2007: 177.

⁵¹ Buchner 1854: 42.

As had been the case in St. Thomas, the Planters' rule over plantation Jamaica was less a matter of solid and unbroken dominance than an unfolding series of reassertions of power, and shortly after the Moravian missionaries first arrived, the planters ferociously put down what is now known as Tacky's Rebellion, an uprising that had lasted three months. Buchner wrote that "as proof of the good influence [the missionaries] exercised over the Negroes it is stated, that on the rebellion of the slaves in 1760, none of their converts joined the rebels" (1854: 36). And much later, when a similar instance took place following another large-scale rebellion beginning around Christmas 1831, the Moravian missionaries were again harassed by suspicious Planters bent on retaliation against any member of society who could be implicated in fomenting the revolt. Again the Moravians firmly cleaved to the conservative line, and following an investigation of the rebellion conducted by the Jamaica Assembly the United Brethren released a written retort asking rhetorically, "Do we, indeed, preach that a slave cannot serve his earthly and his heavenly master at the same time?" To the contrary, the response went on to remind the Colonial government, "we not only teach submission and obedience to the powers that be, as unto magistrates, but we likewise faithfully inculcate the Apostolic precept... 'Servants, be obedient to your masters, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward, for Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example to follow His steps'" (1854: 100). For his part, twenty-three years later Buchner described the 1831-32 rebellion as "a premature struggle" on the part of the enslaved, "to set themselves free" (1854: 84).

Moreover the response cited examples of the Moravian mission's *support* of the Planters' position against the rebellion, not only pointing out how few of the Moravian congregants joined the uprising, but also claiming that their influence as missionaries had emboldened captives to resist their rebel compatriots and act in defense of those who held them enslaved.

Whole properties, where the Brethren have been favoured to sow the seed of the gospel without restraint, remained perfectly quiet, while fires were blazing within a few miles of them, and no military were in the vicinity for several days! On one estate, which was left entirely deserted by the proprietor removing to the town with his family, the negroes guarded his house and effects, and were determined to defend it to the last, though the rebels burned several houses within a mile of them; and the proprietor declared on his return, that he had not lost the smallest trifle. Indeed, we have been credibly informed, that the rebels declared they could make no progress, when they came into Moravian congregations! Many instances of individual fidelity might also be mentioned, from which we select a few. The two negroes belonging to Mesopotamia estate in Westmoreland, whose names are registered among those who are to receive public rewards from the Colonial Government, with three others who helped to secure two armed rebels, are members of our Church.... One [congregant] was left in charge of his master's house and effects all the time he was absent on military duty; and he maintained his post manfully and faithfully, although there was no military force for several miles round, and the rebels, who were within a mile of him, had, it is affirmed, offered a reward of thirty dollars for his head!⁵²

Individual Moravian missionaries may well have included in their lessons and sermons a sentiment that enslavement could and perhaps even should have been abrogated; in at least one case the mission paid to buy a congregant the title to his own life.⁵³ However for the most part the missionaries maintained a conservative position vis-à-vis the Planter class and the institution of slavery writ large. When slavery was finally abolished, the Moravians cheered the development in the *Periodical Accounts* that were distributed to stations in the U.S., Canada, and elsewhere. But up until that point, it appears that their mission had little to do with overturning plantation slavery or even freeing their congregations from worldly captivity. Thus it should not come as a surprise to find that when they established free villages Moravians remained chiefly concerned with fashioning a particular kind of subject, and in that sense they simply replaced the planters as figures of disciplinary authority.

⁵² Buchner 1854: 103-104

⁵³ Under the supervision of Br. John Lang, head of the Moravian Mission at Carmel from 1805 – 1817 [?], the congregation raised one hundred dollars for an enslaved congregant named George Lewis—who would become one of the Mission's "Native Helpers"—and, giving it to him, insured his legal release from captivity. (Buchner 1854: 48)

Before the outbreak of the 1831-1832 “Christmas Rebellion,” the Moravian Brethren had sold their land in the St. Elizabeth plains at Carmel⁵⁴ and relocated east up into the Don Figueroa mountains to a plantation called Fairfield, which they re-christened New Eden. Buchner writes that

Fairfield had been a coffee plantation. The Brethren found there a dwelling house much out of repair, and likewise a storehouse, which was afterwards converted into a school-room. It had formerly been the property of Brother F. Russel, who, having come from Europe to labour as a missionary, abandoned his proper call, and purchased this small coffee plantation, in the pursuit of unrighteous mammon.... After his decease, the property fell again into the hands of its former proprietor, Mr. Powel, from whom the Brethren purchased it on behalf of the mission.⁵⁵

The mission’s move was partly motivated by a desire to establish operations closer to the estates whose populations had provided substantial growth to the Carmel congregation. At the time of the move the majority of the Carmel congregation was made up of people enslaved on the mountain estates, including those in the neighborhood of Fairfield and ranging as far north as Mile Gully and Devon, each over 8 miles away.⁵⁶ Lying between the station at Carmel and the plantations at Devon, Middle Rock was directly in the path that congregants would have traveled to attend Sunday services, and it is thus almost certain that members of the population enslaved

⁵⁴ Buchner 1854: 70 notes that the Carmel property was sold in 1823 for £612. Another account asserts that the same year “after they after they broke with planters and landowners, the Moravian missionaries liberated their slaves” and “were able to break completely from the system of slavery,” though in the absence of further evidence it is not possible to determine whether the sale of Carmel included human property or only land. Tucker, Jimmy. *The Story of the Moravians (A Jamaican-Caribbean Perspective)*, 2nd Edition. Kingston: Reliance Educational Productions, 2006 [1995]: 79-81.

⁵⁵ 1854: 73-74.

⁵⁶ Referring to the year of the move to Fairfield, Buchner writes that “At this time the greater part of the congregation at [Old] Carmel lived in the neighbourhood of Fairfield.” (70) Further on he notes that after 1825 “the congregation at New Eden likewise continued to increase and prosper. Many slaves from the mountains came to hear the gospel, and were in turn visited by the missionaries, who found among the owners of estates in the Mile-gully, many warm friends to encourage them in their labours.... The church at New Eden had soon to be enlarged, and still proved much too small to accommodate the crowds which attended” (1854: 75-76).

there were well aware of the Moravians' activities in the area, including their relocation to New Eden. Moreover, Fairfield/New Eden was situated along one of two main roads linking Middle Rock to Mandeville, where there was (and still is) a bustling market throughout the week and particularly on weekends.

By the end of 1831 the mission was counting over 4,000 persons "under the charge of the Brethren's Church in Jamaica, including children and candidates for baptism." There were only sixteen missionaries (including male preachers and their wives) at work on the island, but their influence was apparently on the rise; since the move to Fairfield the number of individuals they counted in their flock had risen by nearly eighty percent, up about 1,800 from 2,300).⁵⁷ In the wake of the rebellion the mission's influence waned as planters reasserted their domination of Jamaican society, but unlike the Baptist and Methodist missions the Moravians' presence in Jamaica did not so much decline as experience a period of quiet. "Hostilities subsided after two or three months," Buchner wrote, "and in April [1832] the chapels were again filled with overflowing auditories. The apprehensions of the Brethren were allayed, their zeal revived, and the very same year the labours of the missionaries were extended considerably" (1854: 112).

With the passage of the Abolition Act and the commencement of the apprenticeship period, missionary activities on the island rose again. After fleeing in the wake of the Christmas rebellion Baptist leaders like William Knibb and James Phillippo returned and, as outlined earlier in this chapter, they initiated their free villages program in 1835. The Moravian mission also experienced an uptick but their involvement in the free villages movement would not begin until after slavery was finally abolished after four years of apprenticeship. Rather the Moravians

⁵⁷ Buchner 1854: 83

focused their efforts on spreading their influence and educating as many people as they could reach.

In the 1820s, led by the female members of the mission, the Moravians had resolved to establish Sunday schools at all of their mission stations and as many day schools as could be operated. Women were not only central as teachers in the Moravians' education initiative but they supplied such a substantial portion of the funding that theirs are the only efforts noted in Buchner's history. "In this good work," he wrote, "[the missionaries] were liberally supported by the 'Ladies' Association, for Promoting the Education of the Black and Coloured Inhabitants of the West Indies,' of which several members resided in Jamaica" (1854: 81). A missionary identified as Sister Cooper established the first Moravian day school at a mission station called "the Cruze" in the westernmost parish of the island in 1826, and by 1828 three more Moravian day schools had opened nearby.

Before 1834 enslaved children were only allowed to attend Sunday school and for the first decade the number of students remained low at the Moravians' day schools. Matters changed in the Apprenticeship period and the Moravians redoubled their efforts to build chapels and schools in Jamaica. It was at this time that the mission established a foundation in the close vicinity of the population enslaved at Middle Rock. In 1835 the Moravians erected a chapel school-house they christened "Bethlehem," the ruins of which remain less than a mile from the present-day town square.

In the absence of further evidence regarding the Moravians' decision to establish a station near Middle Rock we may deduce that the church had been in contact with persons enslaved in the immediate area and that as a factor in their choice they probably counted captives held at Middle Rock among their congregation and perhaps even among their communicants. This is

supported by a report from Jamaica in the Moravians' *Periodical Accounts*, submitted by a Brother J. Renkewitz who reported that "the two or three hundred who attend once a fortnight, at Bethlehem, are, most of them, members of our church, and some are communicants; but many are too old and feeble to go to our other places." "All express themselves very thankful," he wrote, "that we have come so near to them."⁵⁸ Thus it would seem that the Moravians' decision to establish a more permanent out station near Middle Rock was in significant part made in order to set up a ministry in the midst of a population who had already for some time participated in church activities. Indeed, according to Renkewitz people living in the area were instrumental in constructing the building itself, and just one year after the chapel school-house was built there were large numbers of children enrolled in Sunday and day school.⁵⁹

In any event, the Moravian presence in the Middle Rock area reached a new zenith in 1840 when under the Jamaica mission was under the leadership of Reverend Jacob Zorn. Born to missionary parents in St. Thomas, Zorn arrived in Jamaica in 1828 and served as superintendent of the Moravian mission there until his death nine years later. As had Knibb and Phillippo, Zorn noted the tension arising after slavery was fully abolished, when planters began seeking rent payments from the recently manumitted people still living in cottages on plantation lands. In her detailed study of the Moravian mission to Jamaica, Maureen Warner-Lewis cites a letter from Zorn to his stepbrother, written after abolition at the end of 1838 and noting that among former captives "in our Parish, Manchester...things were going on very well, till in

⁵⁸ *Periodical accounts relating to the missions of the Church of the United Brethren established among the heathen*, Volume 14. Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel among the Heathen, 1836: 300-301.

⁵⁹ In his report, Renkewitz wrote, "There are upwards of 300 children who attend the [Bethlehem] Sunday-school, and 65 are regular attendants at the day-school,--12 of them can read the New Testament. Upon the whole, I must say, the people in this neighbourhood show their gratitude in deed as well as in word, having up to the present time, given, in labour, upwards of 100*l.* currency, towards the new building." (1837: 300-301)

November rent began to be enforced;—this rather unsettled [the peoples’] minds,” and that furthermore “Most of them having built their cottages themselves, think it very hard now to pay rent for them, and some ejectments have been the consequences.”⁶⁰ Undoubtedly aware of similar undertakings by Baptist and Methodist missionaries (described above), Zorn led the Moravian mission to attempt a solution to the problem of land availability and of planters’ avarice, and at the end of the 1830s the mission purchased the plot of land under what had been the Middle Rock coffee plantation and proceeded to go about creating a village of manumitted landholders, selling parcels of land to interested parties.

According to a Land Account ledger now housed in the Jamaica National Archives, the Moravian mission began selling parcels of Middle Rock land in March of 1840, valuing plots at four pounds, ten shillings per acre, and collecting initial down-payments from settlers over the next two years. Nearly one hundred settlers bought into the free village scheme, buying plots ranging from one to fifteen acres. In only a few cases does the ledger indicate a complete purchase outright—for example Mr. William Calliard, who bought a three-acre, two rood plot with a payment of nine pounds sterling on March 31st, 1840. More commonly individuals appear to have bought their land in installments, paying down the principal value of the parcel over a matter of years. Matthew Farquharson is listed as having bought one of the largest plots of Middle Rock land (twelve acres), with an initial cash payment of thirty-two pounds sterling in April 1840. The ledger records a subsequent payment the next January of just over two pounds, followed by another payment of sixteen pounds a year later, but whether he could not or was not

⁶⁰ Letter from Rev. Jacob Zorn to John Gottlob Kummer, December 21, 1838. Qtd. In Warner-Lewis 2007: 179-180).

pressured to, Farquharson apparently did not pay off the final portion of the cost of his land until December of 1851. Furthermore most settlers paid installments on their land in cash, although on occasion it appears that the mission accepted payments in bulk quantities of produce. William Baker, for instance, appears in the Moravians' accounts as having paid down a parcel of land "for his son Edward Baker" with a delivery of more than 200 pounds of coffee.⁶¹

It was obviously a period of great change for the people in the area, as it was throughout the British Caribbean colonies. In Middle Rock, not only were previously unoccupied lands settled under the Moravians' reconstitution of the place into a free village, but the population swelled as people who had been enslaved in the area—many probably parishioners at the Bethlehem chapel—moved to Middle Rock and set to work building cottages and cultivating new grounds. A map stored in the Moravian collection at the Jamaica National Archive corresponds to the Land Account ledger and depicts the Middle Rock property divided into the approximately 100 plots of land, including the area (acres, roods, perches) and names of the proprietors of each, but nevertheless from the available evidence it is not possible to be certain how the reconstituted Middle Rock population relates to the group of those held captive there until August, 1838.

One factor complicating the comparison of the population enslaved at Middle Rock and the population who settled there stems from the fact that the last Register of Slaves filed for the plantation (1832) provides a surname for only a small fraction of the individuals accounted for, while on the Land Account ledger and corresponding map each settler is listed with both first and last names. Further pushing the facts out of reach, the Moravians only sold land to males, and of those names on the Slave Registers that include accompanying surnames, just four are males and

⁶¹ Middle Rock Land Account. Moravian Collection, Jamaica National Archives, Bethlehem N - 1

while one name (Henry Sargeant) appears in both the 1832 Register of Slaves and the 1840 Land Account ledger, even in this case it is not clear that both Mssrs. Sargeant are the same person.

Finally, the absence of surnames on Middle Rock's Register points to the more general fact that people enslaved in Jamaica were not given any officially recognized surname. Conferring a surname onto an individual was at the time an act that most often took place along with that persons' baptism, and furthermore it was widely held practice for those baptized to receive a new *first* name, so that in cases of adults without wedded parents, or adults whose father had no surname, upon baptism a person would acquire a wholly new name. Thus while it is possible that the man listed in the Register as William (age 38 in 1832) is the same person as William Frith (who appears to have bought three acres of land in 1840), the correspondence between the two accounts does not firmly establish an example of a former captive settling lands at Middle Rock.

Still it is likely that while some individuals left the property and chose not to buy land from the Moravian mission, others who did buy plots in the free village were the selfsame individuals who had been enslaved there. What is more certain, however, is the fact that regardless of what fraction represents the persons who had lived on the property all along, when the Middle Rock estate was converted into a free village, the total population grew substantially. While the plantation's 1832 Register of Slaves indicates fifty-six of males (of all ages), held captive at Middle Rock, the Moravians' account of land sales indicates that approximately twice that number of plots were sold to male free village settlers. Taking into account the likelihood that many buyers settled lands with family members in tow, it would seem that between 1838 and 1840 the Middle Rock population more than doubled.

The central point of my concern here, however, is the substance and resonance of the Moravians' influence on the ideas about freedom prevalent in post-abolition Middle Rock. As described above (and in Holt (1992) in greater detail), British legislators were deeply concerned with how former captives would exercise their freedom, and the apprenticeship scheme stands as perhaps the most obvious reflection of the model they preferred people to emulate. While the planters and their local government representatives in the Jamaica Assembly had previously chafed at missionaries' work among the enslaved, with the apprenticeship period there came new conditions whereby missionary clergy achieved more leeway by the government as what one might call proxy civilizers. In their push to build more schools in the mid-1830s, for instance, the Moravian mission received funding from the Governor of Jamaica, Lord Glenelg, whose interest in building schools for former captives we discussed above.

We recall, furthermore, two additional conditions: First, four years into Apprenticeship, tensions flared between the Colonial government and lawmakers in Britain, first as the Assembly ruled to abolish slavery ahead of schedule (in order to force the home government into a caretaker role), and secondly as Planters began charging their former captives ground rent for occupying plantation lands they had lived on while enslaved. In this context the class of missionary clergy found a foothold in the disputed formation of a new Jamaican society by introducing the free village movement as a means of satisfying the Planters and home government's shared emphasis on keeping the plantation economy afloat.

Second, as metropolitan legislators like Lord Glenelg sought to fashion free Jamaican subjects according to an idealization of personal responsibility, industry, and possessive individualism, Protestant missionaries offered support in these efforts, promoting similar social values through an image of Christian piety that stressed industriousness as the earthly means for

each individual to find his or her place in the favor of the divine. In this sense the missionaries' evangelical mission dovetailed cleanly with the governments' civilizing imperative.

A few points may be made to illustrate more specifically how this process impacted the lives of people who settled at Middle Rock. Among their congregations missionaries often assumed the disciplinary position formerly held by plantation overseers and proprietors, vis-à-vis the former captives. As Robert J. Stewart observes about Baptist Minister James Phillippo,

Phillippo cannot be accused of biological racism. He considered the African, as a human being abstracted from all historical conditioning, to be equal physically, mentally, and emotionally to the European. Yet his bias against the inherited African culture of the Jamaican blacks was extreme. Their relationships were licentious; their music was rude and monotonous, and their singing consisted of hideous yells and discordant sounds; their dance was various contortions with strange and indecent attitudes; their religion consisted of barbarous customs, numberless incantations, and dark and magical rites; their funeral practices in particular were unnatural and revolting in a high degree.... The abolition of the slave trade had been fortunate for the Christian mission in Jamaica because the cutting off of the supply of Africans had also cut off the source of 'ignorance, superstition, and profligacy' in Jamaica.⁶²

By the same token, in 1841 Jacob Zorn published reports in the Moravian *Periodical Accounts* referring to "poor degraded Africa," and describing African-descended people he encountered near the mission station at Bethabara as "still very degraded.... [T]he midnight revelries and dancings of the people, accompanied with the most boisterous noise and heathenish yellings, are not uncommon."⁶³ A passage from Buchner's account further clarifies the Moravians' cultural and not biologically-oriented position: "We must take into account, that, though there are in men of every nation, fundamental features of character, it is by circumstances the character is formed,

⁶² Stewart, Robert J. *Religion and Society in Post-Emancipation Jamaica*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992: 92-93.

⁶³ Zorn qtd in Warner-Lewis 2007: 145

and the original disposition may be overlaid and perverted.... Just those qualities in man which ennoble him, slavery has opposed and uprooted.”⁶⁴

As Warner-Lewis notes, “the value system encouraged by the [Moravian] missionaries was presented as a slate of European recipes for raising the spiritual and also the cultural level of black people” (2007: 144). This meant prescriptions on peoples’ behavior that included but surpassed the moral imperative of each individual to be work diligently and productively while obeying the laws of the state, and in this sense the Moravians, like other missionaries, were at slight odds with the lawmakers’ image of the once-captive, now-freed Jamaican subject. Succeeding the plantocracy as Middle Rock’s most powerful local disciplinary force, the missionaries instated their own framework of proper conduct, according to which settlers were prodded to accept the tenets of possessive individualism yet exposed to a new structure of mutuality and belonging. Under the church’s authority, people living in Middle Rock were encouraged to claim their freedom through individuated labor and the pursuit of personal property in a market of commodities, but not beyond the limits imposed on every individual as a responsible member of the congregational community.

In his centenary account of the mission to Jamaica Buchner wrote that “in the opinion of almost every one” who witnessed the Apprenticeship system, “it is much to be regretted it was ever introduced.” As a legal step away from enslavement, apprenticeship was a good thing, because “by emancipating the slave from the caprice and tyranny of his master, this system was highly favourable to the cause of the mission.” Plantation owners and overseers were thereby no longer legally allowed to prevent people from attending church services and meeting with missionaries, and with new limits on the daily and weekly hours of work that could be extracted

⁶⁴ Buchner 1854: 127.

from them as apprentices, the people had more time to “attend the means of grace.” But, by the new rules “the laboring man was taught to consider eight hours work in a day, and five days in the week, as the standard of diligence. Sloth and indolence were thereby sanctioned and legalized.”⁶⁵

In the years following abolition, Buchner wrote, these new influences combined with the legacy of enslavement to create conditions compelling the Moravian missionaries to place particular stress in their evangelism upon the developmental rewards of physical labor. “[G]ood natured and forgiving as the Negroes undoubtedly are,” he wrote in 1854, “still they are deficient in those qualities which make a people strong and prosperous. There is a want of energy, of perseverance, of aspiration, which amounts justly to the charge of levity.... This disposition, unless counteracted by necessity, or continually opposed by those in authority, if allowed to work out its legitimate consequence, tends to lower and degrade a people.”⁶⁶ However, along with an account from Zorn this shows how the Moravian mission differed from the assessment common among Planters that people of African descent were in practice averse to hard work. Buchner wrote that “[a]t the time when liberty was proclaimed, the character which slavery had impressed upon the people was in its full strength, and they were judged by many accordingly. ‘They are naturally,’ so said the planters, ‘the most indolent people; all day long they will bask in the sun in listless idleness.’”⁶⁷ However, he countered,

The slave hates toil and exertion because he is not to reap the fruit of his labours. What can he care for distinction or knowledge, which would only cause him to be more hated, suspected, and persecuted? Even riches lose their attraction, for the slave is not allowed to display them. Slavery takes away every incentive to all higher pursuits; and what wonder, if, at least, a care-for-nothing levity overshadows and degrades the whole man....

⁶⁵ Buchner 1854: 114-115.

⁶⁶ Buchner 1854: 126.

⁶⁷ Buchner 1854: 129.

Though there is still the old slave population, it must be evident to all who have labored among them, that [as of the early 1850s] there is a decided improvement. And why may we not hope, yea confidently predict, that the farther they are removed from slavery, (when this and the coming generation will have passed away,) that these consequences will disappear also. And as inducements are now held out by honest industry to acquire temporal, mental, and spiritual treasures, there is good reason to believe that the Negro will gradually rise in the scale of society.⁶⁸

Likewise Zorn wrote that in his observation, the reality directly countered the notion that shiftlessness was a characteristic widespread among African-descended people in Jamaica. In a letter he sent in June 1841 he wrote that “as to the *industry* of free negros,—they are as other people, some lazy, some very industrious;—on the whole I should estimate the quantity of work performed as *greater* than in slavery.”⁶⁹

As to the means by which the Moravian missionaries might promote even broader acceptance of this moral mandate on industriousness, Zorn “advocated a gradual process of co-opting the workers into a commodity-based capitalist economy through wages, exchange and trade” (Warner-Lewis 2007: 180). “The way to induce them to work well,” he wrote, “is to increase their *wants*, to make them consider other things, besides yams and an osnaburg dress as *necessities*. The better clothing of their children, paying for their schooling, supporting their ministers, paying for doctor’s attendance, making their houses more comfortable etc.”⁷⁰

Judging from the number of persons who bought into the Middle Rock free village settlement scheme, and furthermore from the settlers’ near-universal success in eventually paying off the amounts owed for their lands, it may be confidently said that the earliest population of Middle Rock was characterized by a facility with commodity trade, the money form, and with that basic form of property, alienable land. Simply by virtue of their acquisition

⁶⁸ Buchner 1854: 128-129.

⁶⁹ Qtd in Warner-Lewis 2007: 179 (emphasis in original)

⁷⁰ Qtd. In Warner-Lewis 2007: 180 (emph in original).

of title to parcels of land, the settlers of free village Middle Rock distinguished themselves as some of the earliest propertied members of the former-captive masses in post-abolition Jamaica, and doing so they enacted an equivalence between land ownership and the meaning of freedom.

While this equation of freedom to property ownership—and particularly the commodification of land—marks a certain harmony between the Middle Rock settlers and the Liberalism ascendant at the time, we may push the metaphor to remark that the Middle Rock settlers are not to be understood as operating in *unison* to liberal ideology. Just because those persons invested a special significance in land ownership as a social value and symbol of freedom does not, of course, mean that they were converts or even expositors of Liberal values. Discussions of “family land” (Clarke 1957; Besson 2002) perhaps most clearly give lie to the inaccuracy of such a conclusion. However, the Moravians’ accounts of the free village settlement suggest that at the time the clergy worried that Middle Rock’s settler population had proven too apt to define freedom in terms of possessive individualism!

Buchner lamented the Moravians’ loss of leverage among the people in general, and among the Middle Rock settlers in particular. In the first place he described the missionary perspective of how the former captives exercised their freedom.

The social condition of the people has greatly changed since 1838.... Gradually the submission and servility of the slave began to give way to a feeling of independence. His character, as well as his outward circumstances, became changed.

When the heart is given to the Lord, a feeling of personal responsibility, independence, and self-respect, is highly favourable to the cause of Christ; being redeemed from all iniquity, these feelings, combined with love to the Saviour, will make his people zealous of good works; but where they are not hallowed by faith, independence leads men into pride and evil lusts, which soon become apparent. While the faithful members of the church became more decided and active, the worldly-minded did not suffer themselves to be restrained any longer. For some considerable time before the year 1838, and for some time after, the influence and authority of the missionaries were so paramount, that worldly amusements were almost entirely suppressed; there was no dancing, no revellings and the like, as formerly; but now the influence of the

missionaries over those who were not members of the church was insufficient to suppress these evils: they increased more and more.⁷¹

Indeed in the archives pertaining to Bethlehem Moravian church at Middle Rock one finds evidence detailing the early attempts by the church leadership to impose their terms of discipline on the local population. An “Exclusion List” kept by the presiding clergy documents the names of persons subjected to special disciplinary action, their offenses, the dates of their punishment and—in relevant cases—the date of their reacceptance into the good graces of the church. Of those listed as having returned to good standing in the congregation, only three of the seventy-one were brought back into the flock within the calendar year of their exclusion. The number of individuals who were eventually reaccepted within free village Middle Rock’s first decade (71 out of 127 or 56%) suggests that for many people the social stigma of exclusion held real consequences.

The types of offenses for which Bethlehem parishioners were apparently excluded demonstrates the similarity between the nature of the Moravians’ vigilance and Phillippo’s attitude about African debasement, cited above. The Bethlehem Exclusion List shows the missionaries doling out punishment for premarital sex, for unrelated men and women living together out of wedlock, for dancing, and for practicing Afro-Jamaican divination practices (*Obeah* or *Myal*). In November 1843 the Bethlehem leadership excluded a Middle Rock man named Darbin for “living with [a woman named] Bella before married;” he was readmitted half a decade later in April of 1849. A citation from October 1849 lists Alexander Johnston for exclusion because “Louisa his wife got a child 6 months after married.” In January 1846 the church excluded twelve men and women for “dancing at Christmas.” In April 1849 the church excluded Middle Rock resident George Johnston for “fanaticism—pretends to have a spirit of

⁷¹ Buchner 1854: (146-147)

prophecy,” along with Richard Palmer, “a disciple of George Johnston...he appears sometimes to be possessed of an evil spirit, it doth shake his whole body.”⁷²

However, comparing the exclusions to the Land Accounts ledger reveals a central problem for the Moravians’ attempts to hold settlers together within the congregational community. An individual’s punishment did not evidently include a threat of losing title to lands even partially paid for. According to the Exclusion List, Middle Rock land-owner Mathew Farquharson was cited in 1844 for adultery with one woman “for many years” and then “after her death” with another woman. Farquharson’s relation to the church leadership appears to have been particularly discordant—he was apparently never readmitted to the church, and in 1849 two other individuals were actually excluded “for having connection with” him. Yet the Land Accounts ledger notes that the church received final payment on his twelve-acre plot in 1851. This at least suggests that he remained in possession of his lands despite falling out with the church leadership, which in itself points to a certain and important limit to the church’s local authority. Whatever discretion the Moravians might have exercised regarding free village Middle Rock’s first settler population, it would seem that those who bought title to Middle Rock land enjoyed—and exercised—the right to dispose of their property at will. When people purchased plots in the free village of Middle Rock, they achieved a level of autonomy from the church leadership in addition to the autonomy that land ownership had afforded them the predations of those members of the planter class bent on extracting rents from former captives. From the point of view of the Moravians’ reports, this was a lamentable circumstance.

Our Brethren frequently consulted on the expediency of establishing Moravian settlements, or place congregations, as in Europe, and at the Cape of Good Hope, and

⁷² Jamaica National Archives, Moravian Collection, Bethlehem. “Exclusion List: 1843 – 1868.” Box B-54, folder 2.

some attempts were made to accomplish this. An estate—a coffee plantation, called Middle Rock, close to Bethlehem—was purchased; where a school-house, that served likewise as a chapel, had been built; but the ground being rocky and uneven, did not allow the formation of a settlement in regular streets and squares, but the land was parceled out and sold to the Negroes, who soon built a large, but irregular village. In 1848 the school-house at Bethlehem was removed to Middle Rock, and transformed into a regular chapel, though still used as a school-room. At Beaufort, likewise, the Brethren purchased some hundred acres of land, which were sold again in small lots to the people. *These attempts have not been successful, and the Brethren have often regretted that they ever entered upon such a plan. Many unprincipled persons got possession of the ground, and proved troublesome neighbours; and even when, in the first instance, pious persons settled upon the land, it frequently passed into bad hands after their departure, so that these villages are now inhabited by various characters, some good, others very indifferent.*⁷³

Settlers had transgressed the boundary holding them collectively under the church canopy and exercised their freedom in terms of individuation, diligence, and commodity exchange, only apparently without due attention to their responsibility as members of the local Moravian community nor of the worldwide Unity of Brethren. “It is a strange fact,” Buchner lamented in 1854, “one which has not been observed here only, that those who live nearest to the house of God, are frequently the most lukewarm, the most careless, and slothful in every good work, and generally the last in their attendance on the means of grace. While the candle lights up the room, it is dark round the candlestick.” It would appear that the settlers had proven good capitalists but too many were recalcitrant Christians. Less than fifteen years after it was founded, the Moravians adjudged the Middle Rock free village settlement project as a failure.

Having taken the opportunity to acquire land title the settlers of free village Middle Rock demonstrated that they found individuated property ownership to be a pivotal component of freedom both as an activity whose proscription had been a key function of their captivity, and as

⁷³ Buchner 1854: 130-131 (emphasis mine)

a promising means of guaranteeing the exercise of freedom in the future. From the Moravians' perspective this seemed to mark a resolute turn away from an ethic of mutual responsibility, yet from their worried accounts of widespread "backsliding" it would appear that in fact people were forging an alternative community to the Protestant congregational one through a revival of African-derived practices in music and dance, kinship systems, funerary rites, divination, and pharmacopoeia. In fact as the missionaries struggled in the following years to plant and cultivate their own values among Middle Rock residents, one may imagine there formed a social environment where peoples' daily activities might align them with one or another of two main opposing collectivities: On one hand there was the community trend described at the beginning of this chapter, born out of the shared experience of enslavement to mitigate the Plantocracy's manufactured social division, and which continued after abolition in the face of a racialized hierarchy that was the legacy of slavery. On the other hand there was the sphere of belonging introduced by the Moravian church and which perhaps reached its apex in the reconstitution of the community as a free village.

However as a product of these opposing forces of social centrifuge there also are likely to have emerged new lines of perforation in the Middle Rock society. Warner-Lewis provides a good summary of how this process probably took place, citing by way of illustration an 1840 report from the Moravian *Periodical Accounts*:

Feelings of superiority were thereby implanted in church congregations, taking root particularly among Jamaica-born Creoles and even among Africans who had been dislodged at an early age from their native environments. Such deprecation and resulting snobbery also translated into disparaging social attitudes on the part of educated and Christian Jamaicans towards other Jamaicans, as reflected in the complaint [reported by Moravian missionary Brother J. Elliott] of the 'old untaught Negroes...that those who knew *de book* look down upon them, and, however young or inexperienced they may be, will take no counsel or advice at their hand'.... One way or another, if black, you were depreaved. While this was the opinion of Europeans, Christianized blacks imbibed this

point of view, which coloured their intra-ethnic relations, and this attitude was compounded when the Christianized also happened to be educated as well.⁷⁴

Thus in its first few decades the prevailing conditions in free village Middle Rock featured an active ethic of collectivism—going in at least two central directions—with a simultaneous trend enlivened in the space opened in the clash between competing frames of mutuality.

According to the missionaries' accounts of the period, their influence was on the wane. Yet over a century later it would appear that the Moravian church managed to hold on to its position of local authority. Moving toward a conclusion of this discussion of significant post-abolition trends in the local ethical sphere, with a brief look at the *Periodical Accounts* the Moravians published in the late nineteenth century, alongside a more recent study of changes in the Jamaican legal landscape in the same period, we may flesh out the story a bit further.

Although their reports from the middle nineteenth century regretfully chronicle a revival of African-derived spiritual practices among their parishioners and would-be converts in the free village of Middle Rock, the Moravian mission to Jamaica nevertheless evidently soldiered on with their evangelizing efforts. A plan to erect a new church in Middle Rock had been under discussion since the middle 1850s, when the popularity of *Obeah*, *Myalism*, and other practices the Moravians deemed “superstitious” were on the rise, but nothing had been put into action. Then in 1888 a cornerstone was laid for a new edifice, larger and by all accounts more substantial than the original. In the early twenty-first century, that building remains at the summit of one of Middle Rock's highest hills, where it hosts choir rehearsals, Men's and Women's fellowship meetings, and vacation bible school all in addition to weekly services.

What might explain the late-nineteenth century revitalization of the Moravian mission at Bethlehem? Whereas in 1854 Buchner had used the metaphor of a candle's burning wick to

⁷⁴ Elliott, *Periodical Accounts* 15: 287 25 May 1840. (qtd in Warner-Lewis 2007: 145-146.

lament the disinterest among those in closest proximity to the Bethlehem church—“when the candle lights up the room, it is dark around the candlestick”—a quarter century later Furstenberg used the same metaphor to exhort Moravians in Germany, England, and the United States to send money to fund the building of a new, larger church building in Middle Rock.

Christian churches are a great bulwark against the spread of superstition, and against the influence of all kinds of evil.... [A]s long as religion is a shining light, of which the House of God is the candlestick, sending the rays into the districts around, open sin, vice, and law-breaking dare not come to the front.... In order to keep this light burning, we again ask Christian friends abroad to come to our help in building our new sanctuary for the honour and glory of God.⁷⁵

In short, where Buchner had graded the Middle Rock free village project a failure due to insufficient local commitment to the mandates of Christian piety, Furstenberg’s call to action indicates that the Moravians had continued and perhaps even made more firm their sense of African-derived divination practices as the chief obstacle to the mission. This continuity highlights the fact that the Moravian evangelizing mission had never simply been to raise the spiritual heights of Jamaica’s African-descended population. Rather the Moravian project had always also involved the displacement and replacement of ideas already held by the Missionaries’ would-be converts.

I have suggested above that the presence and revival of African-derived divination practices that Buchner identified in the 1850s can be read as preliminary evidence of a nascent “congregational community” operating in opposition to the Moravians’ attempts to form their own Christian one. Following this, Furstenberg’s letter suggests likewise that whatever revitalization the Moravian church was undergoing at the Bethlehem mission station in the end of the nineteenth century, that Moravian revival nevertheless took place in the context of

⁷⁵ Furstenberg, *Periodical Accounts: Bethlehem* Volume 34, June 1888: 278.

enduring collectivist currents of Afro-Jamaican revivalism. The question, then, is the degree to which an image of mutual exclusivity between competing trends of community adequately captures the reality that inhered in late-nineteenth century Middle Rock. Does evidence of a local Moravian revival reflect the wane of African revivalism and a decline in local inclination toward building community on that framework? Considering the metaphor both Buchner and Furstenberg used, the Moravians evidently saw things this way. Their message was the light, and their mission was to shine it into the dark.

In the broader conditions of post-abolition Jamaica we find another set of forces that help to explain the Middle Rock community's apparent turn toward the Moravian church in the late nineteenth century, and by considering those we may also bring to a close our discussion of the impact abolition had on the local population. We recall that the interest in land distribution and consequently the interest in the constitution of the Jamaican economy was split between the subsistence farming and laboring class descended from enslaved Africans and the class in control of the means of production, dominated by people of European descent. The former sector of the island population gravitated toward reorganizing the Jamaican economy into one—at least in the short term—dominated by small-acreage agriculture. The latter, as we have seen, sought to revive and sustain the plantation economy, and in their efforts the British home government supported them. For the first quarter century the planter class was unsuccessful: “Immediately after emancipation the ex-slaves began to purchase land...to the extent that by 1845 it was estimated that there were 19,397 holdings under 10 acres and in 1841 holdings between 10 and

50 acres numbered 7,919. By 1860 holdings under 50 acres increased to 50,000.”⁷⁶ However, in his analysis of land transactions in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Veront Satchell demonstrates that after this initial boom in the smallholding sector, British legislators in the metropole intervened more strongly than before and, taking back control from the colonial Jamaica Assembly, they moved to revitalize the Jamaican plantation economy.

In the summer of 1866 Crown Colony government replaced Jamaica’s representative system of government. What had been a bicameral administration elected by Jamaican colonists transformed into a government with a single chamber, the Legislative Council of Jamaica, all of whose members were appointed in England, and led by a Governor who held exclusive power over enacting new laws. Crown Colony government lasted until 1884 when a provision was passed turning nine of the fourteen Council seats into elected positions, and in 1895 the Jamaican government opened further back toward local representation when the number of elected Council seats increased to fourteen. Notwithstanding these changes, however, ultimate power remained in the hands of the Governor as a proxy of the British home government. Noting that even after 1895 the Governor could still force through any legislation in spite of opposition from the Council, Satchell summarized the situation as “a despotic form of government, which gave autocratic powers to the Governor, who took instructions only from the Colonial Office [in Britain].”⁷⁷

The new government had a difficult task in rejuvenating the Jamaican plantation economy and it set out to attract both domestic and foreign investors by making it easy for them to purchase large tracts of land. In one angle of maneuver the Legislative Council amended laws

⁷⁶ Satchell, Veront. *From Plots to Plantations: Land Transactions in Jamaica, 1866-1900*. Kingston: ISER, 1990: 27.

⁷⁷ Satchell, 1990: 62.

governing property transactions in Jamaica to open the market in land to a wider group of potential buyers. In 1871 the Legislative Council passed The Aliens Law Amendment, opening the door to foreign individuals (many from Cuba, as Satchell notes) and multinational corporations like the Boston Fruit Company. And in 1886 the Council widened the market further with the Married Women's Property Rights Law, making it possible for women to obtain and sell land without having to appoint a male trustee. Although one may only speculate the degree to which the opportunity to own property may have compelled local people to enter into a legally recognized matrimonial contract, we may expect that the Married Women's Property Rights Law created a new stake in marriage in Middle Rock, particularly of course among women. The Moravian mission representing the strongest local body capable of consecrating weddings, the 1886 law provided a catalyst for drawing local residents into harmony with the church and may partly explain its resurgence in the same period.

From another angle the Crown government strove to attract large land buyers by simplifying the actual process of buying and selling land, removing technical encumbrances and reorganizing the bureaucratic structure of public record keeping. In 1879 the Island Secretary's Office was shuttered, restructured, and re-opened as the Island Records Office, with one central outcome being that buyers and sellers had much less time to wait for official approval of title deeds to parcels of land. Then with the Registration of Titles Law (1888) the Legislative Council further streamlined the process of exchange by offering provisions to landholders whose titles were, as documents, not up to legal standing and thus not alienable within the scope of Jamaican law. Having received documentation attesting to their legal purchase of lands from the Moravian church, settlers of the free village of Middle Rock are also likely to have been aware of these changes. In the absence of evidence that tells whether Middle Rock residents did or

needed to make use of the restructuring and new legislation to bring their titles up to legal credence, we may assume at least that some are likely to have recognized the church as a valuable institution to have around—a potential guarantor of the validity of their property ownership in the event of a challenge from outside.

In the second half of the nineteenth century legislators moved not only to open and expedite the local market in landed property from a buyer's perspective, but also to increase the supply of large land tracts available for purchase. Indeed one of the first land tenure laws enacted by the Crown government in Jamaica targeted the masses of people who had no legal proof of ownership, increasing the aggregate of marketable land through population removal. The District Court Land Law of 1867 was a one-two punch through which the state empowered documented (or even reputed) owners of a piece of land to forcibly eject squatters, and through which the state assumed the power to take control of lands for which no one could prove ownership through titles or conveyance deeds. Satchell points out that, by contrast, "in Trinidad, where a similar problem of squatting existed during the 1860s, the government did not indiscriminately eject these squatters but rather issued prescriptive titles to them for the land they held." In fact the government in Trinidad went so far as to develop a program similar to the church-founded free village schemes in Jamaica, yet on a larger scale, "selling Crown lands in small lots to facilitate the settlement of small settlers on the land."⁷⁸ In Jamaica, however, the District Court law alone served to displace hundreds of people. Though some wealthy persons were found to be holding lands without title the law primarily affected members of the most deeply impoverished classes. In the first short period the Surveyor General's Reports to the Legislative Council indicate that the Crown government made the largest surge to reclaim lands

⁷⁸ Satchell, 1990: 71.

for redistribution as concentrated acreages fit for plantation cultivation. Then, between 1869 and 1874, the Crown officially dispossessed 896 people to claim a total of 23,349¾ acres of land. This constituted over 70% of the total acreage the government captured from “squatters” between 1869 and 1900, but one can safely imagine that the opening salvo of its late nineteenth century land grab made a deep and widely felt impression among the whole of the island’s population. Furthermore the government’s land redistribution scheme is certain to have been a disturbing development to those sectors of the Jamaican population with the most tenuous connection to legally sanctioned force, regardless of their claim to property. At most two generations removed from enslavement, it is not unreasonable to count the people living at Middle Rock among those who felt the tremor.⁷⁹

“By 1900,” Satchell concludes, “all unrepresented and unclaimed lands...were now placed under the trusteeship of the Crown. Thus, the Crown came in possession of thousands of acres of land which was redistributed through sales, leases and grants to private individuals and companies” (1990: 81). What effect could this have had on the prevailing moral order in Middle Rock in the decades following the abolition of slavery? Let us review the path taken thus far.

I began this chapter with a recapitulation of the conclusions reached in chapter one, namely that in contrast to a more or less simplistic picture of the social values of Africans enslaved in the Americas (Kopytoff & Miers 1977), there is certain likelihood that prior to the abolition of slavery the population at Middle Rock shared notions of the “good” that assessed not only mutualism but also individual achievement as morally necessary. Judging from the high

⁷⁹ *Surveyor Generals’ Reports 1869-1900, Legislative Council Minutes 1869-1900*. Qtd. In Satchell, 1990: 74.

number of African-born persons identified among the plantation owners' Registry of Slaves and the most heavily traveled passageways of the Atlantic trade in the contemporaneous period, I deduced that the Middle Rock population was statistically most likely to have been constituted of people abducted from Igbo and/or Bakongo societies. Chapter one cited corresponding ethnological evidence to suggest that those Africans enslaved at Middle Rock would have been pulled from social contexts where neither individualistic nor collectivistic behavior was the single ethical priority.

However, the first chapter noted, the customary technique of enslavement among British plantation entrepreneurs in Jamaica was by design opposed to social bonding and antagonistic to any collective behavior among captives except for cooperative labor in the service of commodity production. Across the British Caribbean slaveholders sought to rule through division and deliberately assembled captive populations of a variety of ethnicities. And in particular, the organization of labor on Caribbean coffee plantations like Middle Rock individuated the people enslaved there in ways unlike the labor regime characteristic of sugar plantations. Relative to sugar slavery, enslavement on coffee estates placed people closer to the center of the island's domestic agriculture economy, and as transporters and market sellers they traveled more frequently off of the plantation property and beyond its geographic and social boundaries. Moreover daily labor on the property was allocated to adults individually by tasks and quotas, rather than as demands pressed on large groups as "work gangs." Thus in the second place, the conditions of enslavement may be recognized as a force that obstructed and discouraged people from following an ethic of collectivism, and which offered opportunity and encouragement for the pursuit of self-interest and the realization of an ethic of individuality.

After reviewing the conclusions reached in Chapter one, the present chapter introduced a third aspect of the moral current in pre-abolition Middle Rock. Over the months and years that the Middle Rock plantation operated in the service of the proprietor's bank account, a social world would have developed in spite of the conditions imposed by the force of the slaveholder—both in the sense of contrast and in opposition—as the shared experience of subjectivity bore fruit in broader relations of affinity among the people held there as chattel. In effect the labor regime's influence on how people there evaluated ethical behavior would also have turned back against the slaveholders' intentions, encouraging not self-interest and acrimony but mutuality in the face of enslavement. To borrow again terms used by Michael Gomez, not only the “volitive” realm but also the “coercive” realm of local society featured conditions encouraging *both* an ethic of we *and* an ethic of me, and thereby fostering an orientation to the virtue of freedom where neither individualism nor collectivism was dominant.

As the present chapter has attempted to show, upon the abolition of slavery in 1834 there arose new forces relevant to the development of the local moral order and the corresponding substance people would have attributed to the concept of freedom. In the initial post-abolition period the British government sought to inure among Jamaican captives a certain definition of freedom by way of the Apprenticeship system. Then following the expiration of Apprenticeship Protestant Missionaries initiated a scheme for settling former captives into “free villages,” and by virtue of the establishment of free villages all over the island the missionaries introduced a subsequent and likewise widely influential prescription for what freedom should mean for the Jamaican masses. In an effort to discern the impact of these two channels of moral advocacy on the Middle Rock population I moved from the general to the particular, first by reviewing

scholarship on the Apprenticeship and free village systems, and then shifting the focus of the discussion toward Middle Rock's reconstitution and resettlement as one such free village.

Within the scholarship concerning the Jamaican free village system is a general agreement that free villages represented an extension of Apprenticeship's moral thrust. Both the legislators behind the state-led program and the leading proponents of the church-founded free village system shared a goal of revitalizing the Jamaican plantation economy by transforming the formerly enslaved population into wage laborers. Accordingly, each sought to position the virtue of freedom in relation to an ethic of individuated self-interest, and equated the pursuit and the enjoyment of freedom with the production and consumption of commodities.

After noting that a majority of the literature concerning Jamaican free villages focuses on the Baptist Mission to Jamaica while tending not to discuss the role of the Moravian church whose representatives brokered Middle Rock's resettlement, I attempted to bridge the gap with a brief sketch of the history of the Moravian church prior to the commencement of its Mission to Jamaica, followed by a more detailed description of the Mission's activities before and after abolition. From the published accounts of the Moravian mission as well as documentary evidence concerning the settlement of free village Middle Rock I concluded that although the Moravian church branches away from the Baptists in important ways—specifically away from the priority of reason over emotion—at least in the Jamaican Mission and the Bethlehem station at Middle Rock, the Moravians nonetheless advocated a similar ethic of industry and self-interest as key to the realization of freedom. In this sense, as was the case with the Baptists in Jamaica, the thrust of the Moravians' moral advocacy corresponded to that of the Liberal state; as a player in the development of post-abolition Middle Rock's ethical character, the Moravian church encouraged people to embrace individualism as ethically sound. That they literally “bought what

the Missionaries were selling” seems the most incontrovertible evidence of the Moravians’ role in promoting possessive individualism as a prescription for ethical life. Indeed, I argued, the very fact that single settlers of free village Middle Rock bought parcels of land constitutes their broad endorsement of an individualist ethic.

However, being of Protestant Missionary design the Jamaican church-founded free village system also constituted a project of collective belonging. The evangelical mission was, after all, an endeavor to bring people under the tent of Christian fellowship, and as denominational differences went so each free village constituted a spheres of congregational community, with Missionaries driving the centrifuge. Accounts from the Moravian Mission to Jamaica in fact bemoan the number of Middle Rock settlers who did not follow prescriptions for participating in Christian fellowship, let alone the Bethlehem congregational community, and above I read these lamentations as evidence indicating that the Moravians’ impact on the local moral order included also a central proscription against the limitless pursuit of self-interest. A Moravian Missionary historian writing from Jamaica in the middle nineteenth century actually identified the Middle Rock free village as a failed project for this very reason: the formerly enslaved settlers had proven *too* willing to equate freedom with autonomy and enterprise.

Finally, in the above chapter I discussed how in the latter decades of the nineteenth century there appears to have been a revival of interest and commitment to the Moravian congregation at Middle Rock. With money and labor, residents contributed to the construction of a new, larger and sturdier church building, completed in 1890 [**confirm this**], indicating at least from the Moravians’ perspective a resolution of the aforementioned problem of individualism’s predominance in the local moral order. Returning to their indictments of lapsed parishioners and non-congregants alike, I noted however that in their accounts published in the

United States as well as in the records of the Bethlehem church itself, Moravian Missionaries faced off against not purely a prevalence of self-interested behavior but more accurately that their collectivist efforts were challenged by settlers embracing an alternative congregational community centered around a revival of African-derived cosmology and custom. Never mind whether it represents a consolidation of collectivisms, did the Moravian revival at Bethlehem indicate a rejection of individualism?

As colonial authorities sought to revitalize the Jamaican plantation economy by consolidating swaths of territory for sale to agro-industrialists, the looming threat of dispossession made conditions increasingly precarious for smallholders across the island. In this context, in church-founded free villages like Middle Rock missionary clergy assumed special significance as guarantors of settlers' land rights. As long as they were around, representatives of the global *Unitas Fratrum* could provide certain backing against predatory audits. Moravian missionaries might offer reinforcement as record-keepers and vouch for settlers' payments and purchases, and more plainly they could be valuable collaborators in the context of the racialized social hierarchy carried forward from the pre-abolition period.

While in the first few decades the church's influence appears to have been on the wane, over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, circumstances changed for the Jamaican proto-peasantry as laws were passed with the express goal of consolidating swaths of Jamaican land in order to revitalize the plantation economy. As record-keepers capable of vouching for the legality of the transactions by which settlers had purchased lands, as Europeans and thus persons enjoying certain prestige in Jamaica's racial hierarchy, the Moravian clergy in Middle Rock assumed special significance as guarantors of settlers' right to land. Thus in a context where Jamaican smallholders were placed in an increasingly precarious position relative

to their claim to their property in land, people living in Middle Rock maintained and strengthened their relationship to the church. Though not a wholly predictable outcome, it comes as no small surprise that the mission was able to solicit funds and labor to build a new, larger church building in the last quarter of the century.

Middle Rock's late nineteenth century Moravian revival announces the existence of a locally prevalent ethical orientation wherein a person's duty to serve the community and pursuit of self-interest were in fact intertwined. The upswing of support toward the Moravian congregational community represents, not only an example of how self-interest and community interest could be complimentary but furthermore an expression of a balance between individualism and mutual aid that would characterize the prevailing moral economy in Middle Rock for years to come.

Chapter 3

Beyond Selfishness

As we saw in the preceding chapter, thirty years after the Moravian leadership in Jamaica had declared the Middle Rock free village a failure, a local revival took place that found residents contributing labor and money to reinforce the presence of the missionary church. Noting that this occurred in the context of efforts by the British colonial government to reclaim lands from ex-slave settlers islandwide, I argued above that the upswing of support toward the Moravian congregational community expressed a view of good social behavior that valorized both individualism and mutual aid.

This chapter builds on that conclusion. After showing that a similar view persisted in Middle Rock during the period just before the efflorescence of anti-colonial nationalism across Jamaica, it traces changes in colonial and post-independence policies toward small-plot farming populations like Middle Rock, and makes a case for how the shifting orientation of the state has impacted the way people there assess a person's proper responsibility to others.

I begin with a discussion of meeting minutes from a 1930s community organization, the Middle Rock Citizens' Improvement Association. Then I review some recently published analysis of changes in Jamaica's national development policy with respect to rural land based working people. Finally, I cite a variety of testimonies from people living in Middle Rock in the twenty-first century in order to tie together two eras characterized by global economic depression and to chart an arc from the consolidation of a Jamaican state welfare apparatus to more recent reforms by the Jamaican political class. In this turn to contemporary developments I revisit prevailing attitudes about ethical behavior as they resonate in a context where the government's adopted development strategy has proven deeply problematic on multiple scales. In 2009, after

decades of policy reforms designed to shift responsibility for social welfare away from the state and onto the shoulders of individual Jamaicans, had the local realm of common sense been transformed so that people agreed the best thing to do was to look out for oneself?

In a large, lined notebook now kept around forty miles from Middle Rock in Jamaica's national archive, a sequence of elected Secretaries recorded minutes from monthly meetings of the Middle Rock Citizens Improvement Association (MCIA). A half dozen variations of neat cursive handwriting detail the Association's programs, events, attendance, and resolutions between its inauguration in 1931 through October 1940.

The next to last line of the February 1932 minutes reports that the President of the Association proposed to invite Mr. S.H. "of Calabar, Africa" to attend and address the next meeting.⁸⁰ Their guest speaker having accepted, the following month the MCIA recorded the largest turnout of members and visitors for the year, and one of the most well attended events the Association held that decade.

The minutes of that meeting describe those assembled there diligently keeping to the Rules of Order and proceeding according to the Association's standard outline: begin with Christian prayer, move on to review and approval of the previous meeting's minutes, discuss new and outstanding issues, and adjourn immediately after singing "God Save the Queen." Here is a typescript of that entry as it appears in the collection filed in the Moravian Section of the Jamaica Archive⁸¹:

⁸⁰ I have abbreviated personal and surnames cited in the minutes in the interest of preserving anonymity.

⁸¹ Here as above I have abbreviated names in the interest of preserving anonymity. Where edits appear on the page—presumably made prior to approving the minutes in May 1932—I have

The regular monthly meeting of the [Middle Rock] Citizen's Improvement Association was held on Friday 4th March, 1932.

There were present Rev. J.A. B. president in the chair, Mr. J.R. R. vice president, Mr. O.B. A. secretary fourteen other members and a large ~~amount~~^{number} of visitors.

The meeting began as usual with prayer by the president.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The president made a few corrections in the minutes and suggested that the following be understood, two members were excluded instead of one, as only one was ~~mentioned~~^{named}.

The secretary was asked to get the ^{constitution and} bye-laws printed in 100 copies instead of 50.

The treasurer's report was called for, but he was absent. He sent his apology and promised ~~his~~^{which will be} the report for the next meeting. (~~this is~~^{of the quarter ending December 31st.})

At roll call ~~fourteen~~^{seventeen} members were present. The subscriptions amounted to four shillings. Three new members were enrolled. Mr. B.A. A. who was formerly one of our distinguished visitors, Mr. ^{H.S.} W. Sanitary Inspector and Mr. M. D., our well known D.C.

The social part of the meeting was as follows,

1. A duet by Misses R. and W.
2. A recitation by teacher Alexander entitled the "African Chief" which was splendidly recited.
3. A Solo and quartette by Mrs. B. & Misses R. & M. and Mr. E. S., and
4. ^{A lecture by} Mr. H.'s ~~lecture~~.

Mr. H. was introduced into the meeting after the Solo & Quartette took place. He was welcomed and enthusiastically received by all present. He gave a brief oration before his lecture and congratulated us on our achievement. He ~~took~~^{told} us about different classes of people of Africa, the "Shimikes" who built the Pyramids, the "Hamtic" who are very dignified, the "Bantoos," who have attained great positions ~~being~~^{being} of great mental powers, ^{and many others}. He also mentioned several negroes who have excelled greatly as judges, lawyers, doctors, barristers, musicians and rulers of vast areas. Some of the most distinguished are Nada Sir Ore Auta, Sagre to le Asa Woolhouse Bensen, Jibo and Henry Carr who (he said) prepared the key of several notable books, and bears the titles of I.S.O. M.A. & B.C.L. Mr. H. also told us of the people of Calabar whose motto is "Beyond Selfishness." In closing, he crowned his lecture in advising us to live for others, to be patriots and altruists, whereby we will better our environment, our parish and our island.

The president commented on the above lecture after which teacher A. very ably proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. H. This was ~~seconded~~^{supported} by Messrs O.B. A. and J.R. R. respectively.

The president again thanked Mr. H. for his lecture, and mentioned some facts about some of the people of Africa. He also ~~mentioned~~^{described} Africa as a circle with regards to civilization and mentioned that the history of Africa is not yet written by an African only by aliens, hence the glowing figures may not be given.

Being proposed by teacher A., the members stood up in honour of their thankfulness to Mr. H. who also returned thanks.

This done, the president proposed that a lecture be given at the coming meeting by the chairman. It was suggested also, that the members get up contributions and tender them in time for the next meeting. These were agreed to.

The National Anthem was then sung and the meeting adjourned.

Signed J. B. & E. S. 6.5.32

indicated deletions with a ~~striethrough~~ and text ^{this way, in superscript.} Otherwise I have preserved original spelling and punctuation throughout.

The minutes tell us that the MCIA President opened the March 1932 meeting by leading a prayer and reviewing the previous meeting's minutes. Misses R. and W. sang a duet, and one of the teachers from Middle Rock's Bethlehem Moravian School gave a recitation entitled "The African Chief." Following that the Pastor's wife Mrs. B. performed a vocal solo and afterward joined Misses R. and M. and Mr. S. in a quartet. Afterward Mr. H. was introduced and after being "welcomed and enthusiastically received by all present," he took those gathered on a sort of anthropological tour of the peoples of Africa, highlighting the achievements of "negroes who have excelled greatly as judges, lawyers, doctors, barristers, musicians and rulers of vast areas." "He told us," the minutes read, "about different classes of people in Africa, the 'Shimikes' who built the Pyramids, the 'Hamtic' who are very dignified, the 'Bantoos,' who have attained great positions being of great mental powers, and many others." One notes the Secretary's mention, at the start of the entry, of the event's large turnout. Yet this only lends further significance to a line near the end, where the minutes relate that Mr. H. received a standing ovation from the crowd who had come to hear him speak in Middle Rock.

In the first place this marks a departure from the disparagement of "things African." We recall that in the seventeenth and eighteenth century European missionaries had pursued Moravian evangelism in the Caribbean as a project of turning African-descended people from a "backwardness" that owed from the supposed deficiency of sub-Saharan civilization combined with the "debasing" experience of enslavement. In colonial Jamaica in the 1930s this remained a widely accepted sentiment among the local elite, through which they justified their reign as a racial minority. But with these minutes from the MCIA in the same era, one finds a local organization having invited a man from Calabar to speak, and enthusiastically receiving his lecture about the accomplishments of different groups of African people in the past and present.

However of perhaps greater importance to the present discussion, Mr. H. capped off his description of Africans' achievements throughout history by encouraging those present to follow a collective ethos that he located as originating in Africa. "Mr. H. also told us of the people of Calabar whose motto is "Beyond Selfishness," the Secretary noted. "In closing, he crowned his lecture in advising us to live for others, to be patriots and altruists, whereby we will better our environment, our parish and our island."

As the speaker linked African heritage with mutual aid, his address to the Middle Rock Citizens' Improvement Association brings back to the foreground earlier moments in a trend by which local people conceived of interpersonal affinity. As I outlined in the chapter above, directly in spite of the best efforts by slavetraders to exercise power through practices of divide and rule, there emerged a framework for collective identification among people enslaved in Jamaica. As I argued, in the years following Middle Rock's resettlement as a Moravian free village, this still-existing framework not only provided for a cohesiveness like that which Sidney Mintz attributed to other free village communities in Jamaica.⁸² It also served as the basis for the development of a distinct communal sensibility, one that not only contradicted the mandate on individuated industriousness imposed by the colonial state but also the congregational community created by the Moravian missionaries. The content of Mr. H.'s address, the uncharacteristically large turnout, and the enthusiasm with which his remarks were received all suggest that many local people understood the ethic of collectivism and duty to others in similar terms.

⁸² Mintz, Sidney. "The Historical Sociology of the Jamaican Church-Founded Free Village System." *De West-Indische Gids*, Volume 38 (1958): pp. 46 - 70.

It is particularly interesting that the leader of the Moravian church (acting as President of the MCIA) placed himself squarely within this image of African affinity as a term along which persons should exercise their duty to the larger collective. Indeed we read that he celebrated following Mr. H.'s remarks on the grounds that they stood to correct the dominant historical record. The most "glowing figures" of African history, he pointed out, remain buried because "the history of Africa is not yet written by an African only by aliens." In contrast to missionaries who occupied similar local leadership roles in generations past, here church clergy appear to have reconciled their commitment to fostering a Moravian congregational community with the affinity of African descent that existed among the townspeople. At the very least the Pastor's response to Mr. H.'s lecture shows the church itself urging residents of Middle Rock toward an ethic of collectivism where a person's duty was not simply to "all god's children," but additionally to one's fellows in the African diaspora.

Returning to the archive of minutes it is clear that members of the Middle Rock Citizens' Improvement Association understood that their conditions were shaped by widely held prejudices against African lineage. Although they praised the reigning monarch and sang the British national anthem at each meeting, the Association's warm response to news of achievements by Africans amounted to a subversion of the means by which colonial elites legitimated their superiority. And moreover, it is particularly significant that the Secretary's minutes do not just refer to the subjects of Mr. H.'s talk as Africans, but as "negroes." Mr. H. evidently spoke about Shemites, Hamites, and Bantus, each as having distinctive qualities—building the pyramids, showing special dignity, and being of great mental powers—but together these groups each appear as part of a greater category of "negroes," within which the residents of

Middle Rock would likely have identified themselves in distinction to the most powerful representatives of the British Empire, namely the European-descended monarchy.

The self-identification as “negroes” paired with the assertion of a need to follow an African edict to go “beyond selfishness” and to “live for others” speaks to a commonality with a worldwide anti-colonial movement that had originated with a Jamaican and had by the 1920s amassed a following estimated at over four million persons, Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).⁸³ In the early 1930s Garvey had returned to Jamaica having been deported from the United States in a sensationalized mail fraud trial orchestrated by the United States government, and although in hindsight we can see that his organization was on the wane and its vitality beginning to contract, it is plausible if not likely to envision the Middle Rock Citizens’ Improvement Association as a partial product of his influence and of the twin movements of anti-colonialism and global black nationalism.

In the absence of explicit reference to Garvey in the minutes of the Association it is not possible to declare the UNIA as a progenitor of the Middle Rock organization. But enough evidence exists to locate within its efforts a relationship to pro-black anti-racist trends awakened by Garvey among African-descended people in the Americas, Europe, and on the African continent, and the fact that Garvey was perhaps the most internationally famous Jamaican alive at the time does make for a compelling case. For only one example of the parallels between Garvey’s rhetoric and the position taken by the President of the MCIA, one may consider Garvey’s critical attention to how Europeans’ historiography of Africa functioned as an instrument of domination. In a collection of Garvey’s writings compiled in 1923 one finds a brief article probably published in the UNIA’s newspaper *The Negro World*. Entitled “White

⁸³ See for instance, Lewis, Rupert. *Marcus Garvey: Anti-colonial Champion*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1988.

Propaganda About Africa” the article begins with a paragraph that asserts a position strikingly similar to the President’s remarks in Middle Rock in 1932, and which more generally speaks in seemingly direct terms to the issues arising in the meeting with Mr. H. Garvey wrote:

This propaganda of dis-associating Western Negroes from Africa is not a new one. For many years white propagandists have been printing tons of literature to impress scattered Ethiopia, especially that portion within their civilization, with the idea that Africa is a despised place, inhabited by savages, and cannibals, where no civilized human being should go, especially black civilized human beings. This propaganda is promulgated for the cause that is being realized today. That cause is COLONIAL EXPANSION for the white nations of the world.⁸⁴

In addition to the local turnout for Mr. H.’s address, and given its content the support he received by the Association’s leadership, there is of course the link one finds between the name of his organization and the name of the organization in Middle Rock. Furthermore, however, the Association’s link to Garveyism and anti-colonialism is underscored by an account in the MCIA minutes from the group’s subsequent meeting.

For the MCIA’s first meeting after Mr. H.’s visit, the turnout was, apparently, substantially smaller. Where fourteen members had attended in addition to the executive leadership and a “large” number of visitors, this time including the President, Vice President, and Secretary there were eight members present and apparently no visitors. In the review of the minutes from the preceding meeting the President clarified the record of remarks he had given after Mr. H.’s lecture, where in addition to his remarks about the as-yet unwritten history of Africa it had been simply recorded that he described Africa as “a circle with regards to civilization.” In particular, he asked that the minutes be corrected so that his statement was

⁸⁴ Jacques Garvey, Amy. Ed. *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey. Or, Africa for the Africans*. Centennial Edition, Dover: Majority Press, 1987 [1923]: 54.

“represented as describing Africa as the region where civilization is considered to have started and from where it spreads and will continue till it probably ends with Africa.”

That he reiterated an African-centered image of human civilization comes as a resounding echo of Garvey’s philosophy, but of further interest here is the fact that after the Association addressed other administrative concerns the minutes report that “the social part of the meeting consisted of a reading by Mr. J.R.R.,” a member whom the minutes from throughout the year show was in regular attendance and was a frequent participant. For his part, Mr. R. read from the life of Booker T. Washington, whose autobiography *Up From Slavery* along with his activist and organizing efforts made him a renowned spokesman for African-descended people in the United States and elsewhere. The minutes indicate that Mr. R. pointed out Washington’s account of having “obtained an employment” by performing a menial task well—sweeping the floor of an office—and that Mr. R. had remarked that “whatsoever [Washington] did, he did well” and that “success...is measured by the difficulties overcome.”

It is not just that the Middle Rock Citizens’ Improvement Association was again discussing the experiences of a prominent African-descended person, but particularly that they chose Washington that is important, for Washington and his Tuskegee Institute were early and significant inspirations for Marcus Garvey’s efforts. Before traveling to the United States it was Washington whom Garvey had reached out for assistance, and it was Washington’s emphasis of self-reliance and self-sufficiency on which Garvey modeled his program for internally-generated uplift for all people of African descent, by people of African descent. Garvey had in fact intended to establish a school in Jamaica modeled upon Tuskegee, and despite having not reached the United States in time to meet Washington before his death in late 1915, Garvey retained the example of Washington as a pillar of his later efforts. The fact that not only

Washington's life story but also his philosophy figured centrally in the Middle Rock Association's meeting only further suggests that the latter's ties to Garveyism were substantial.

In these ways the organization and activities of the Middle Rock Citizens' Improvement Association suggest certain development and continuity between prevailing local trends in what constitutes ethical behavior in the 1930s and those operating in the previous century. Both individual achievement and collectivism were recognized as components of moral living, but the parameters of mutuality were in flux. After slavery abolition, the church-founded free village movement had been among the first wave of large-scale efforts to provide for the collective material interests of Jamaica's rural working people. Now nearly a century later, with major changes on the horizon and anti-colonial nationalism bearing fruit, a second wave arrived, insinuating a new object of communitarianism into the lives of Middle Rock residents in the form of the independent Jamaican state.

Between 1866 and 1900 the British Crown passed a variety of laws in the interest of reconsolidating swaths of land in its former slave territories to attract investment in a burgeoning agricultural export industry centered around large-scale banana cultivation. As noted in the previous chapter the government mandated the redistribution of land in a general shift "from plots to plantations," in order to attract local and foreign entrepreneurs. While the plan succeeded in growing the Jamaican banana trade, the consequences for the Jamaican masses were dire and the vast majority of the population—ex-slaves and their descendants—were dispossessed of their land and left in poor conditions with little promise of betterment. In 1925 the Jamaica Producers Association was formed as an umbrella organization under which separate cooperatives were set up for agricultural cultivators, each according to the crops they mainly

produced. Four years later in 1929, four Jamaicans, Sir Arthur Farquharson, Charles E. Johnson, Richard Williams, and R.F. Robertson led the formation of a discrete organization for workers in the new monoculture export industry, The Jamaica Banana Producers Association, Limited (JBPA).

With the benefit of an early contract with one large acreage banana producer, the JBPA functioned as a cooperatively owned shipping company, controlled by an initial shareholding membership of over six thousand agricultural workers, and operating in competition with the two controlling banana export companies, the United Fruit Company (UFC) and the Standard Fruit Company (SFC), both of which were—in the terms more recently used on the business pages of the Jamaica *Gleaner*—“United States-domiciled” companies.⁸⁵ In 1931 a grant from the Jamaican Colonial government provided funding for the JBPA to purchase four steamships in order to conduct its own traffic in fingers, hands, and bunches of banana, but, facing staunch competition, by the middle of the 1930s the locally owned shipping company had fallen on hard times and appeals were made to British Colonial administrators for support. In 1936 the Jamaica Banana Commission was formed to mediate in the context of an intensifying price war, and leaders of the three competing corporations appeared before the Commission to argue their sides. Acting as advisor for the JBPA, Norman Manley successfully negotiated for its survival, and moreover won a key concession from the presidents of United Fruit and Standard Fruit by which the two companies would donate one U.S. penny for each stem of bananas they shipped from Jamaica. The proceeds would be earmarked for a new organization called Jamaica Welfare Limited (JWL), charged with redistributing them toward the benefit of Jamaica’s rural small landholders.

⁸⁵ Jackson, Steven. “Jamaica squanders \$500m ginger export prospect,” *The Gleaner* Friday, 2 December, 2011.

Thus, drawing on a line of funding conceded by foreign corporations who were otherwise invested in the pursuit of surplus value generated by the efforts of Jamaican laborers, in 1937 JWL commenced a series of programs designed “to promote, manage and control schemes for and to do any act or thing which may directly or indirectly serve the general interests and the social or economic betterment and aid of the agricultural or working people of and in Jamaica.” Specifically JWL was to “engage in any work or activity directly or indirectly relating to the finances, trade, justice and morals of or for the people described.”⁸⁶

In an article she wrote for *Caribbean Quarterly*, former JWL officer Sybil Francis, clarified that “it was agreed that no attempt should be made [by JWL] to embark on purely economic or commercial ventures except in special circumstances where a scheme could be developed on co-operative lines or might lead to the development of an industry in a depressed area.”⁸⁷ Thus while a number of efforts were launched to promote economic development—including cottage industries like a tomato growing initiative in the parish of St. Elizabeth—the initial thrust of Jamaica Welfare was the construction of Community Centers, in which appointed representatives of JWL would organize educational and recreational schemes including handicrafts, adult literacy programs, family planning, debating and literary groups, and social events for people living in the area. In 1938 the JWL assisted residents of Guy’s Hill, St. Catherine in erecting a new building, and likewise the townspeople of Porus in the parish of Manchester, each with one male and one female appointed by the JWL Board of Directors to serve as Officers—Evan Donaldson and Miss Haggith Moore assigned to the Guy’s Hill Community Center, and Eddie Burke and Miss Fleurette Case assigned to the Center at Porus.

⁸⁶ Qtd in Francis, Sybil. “The Evolution of Community Development in Jamaica (1937-1962),” *Caribbean Quarterly* 15 no. 2/3 (June/Sept. 1969): 40-58.

⁸⁷ Francis, 44.

Shortly thereafter, the Community Center approach proved unsuccessful. According to how Francis later summarized the situation, the primary issue arose from a lack of collaboration with locals in the organizing phases of the program that led residents of the surrounding towns to recognize the scheme as a top-down initiative and in turn soured their interest in contributing. “Welfare officers came to be regarded by the community as ‘people paid to do things for them,’ and the Centres as belonging to the [JWL] Company and not to themselves.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, Francis pointed out, since “the initial source of funding which gave birth to the process was basically the cost which expatriate companies paid for the continuing financial viability of their operations by appeasing local demands,” the JWL’s income was pegged to the volume of bananas exported, and with the outbreak of World War II the tightening of the international fruit market brought full and direct consequences to the resource stream for funding JWL operations; where in 1937 the shipping companies contributed £25,000, by 1942 that would diminish to £1,314.⁸⁹

In spite of these setbacks relations continued to develop between the rootwork of the proto-independent Jamaican state and small farming communities like Middle Rock, and in 1938 conditions emerged that encouraged this interdigitation further. That year a wave of popular uprisings and labor strikes had swept through Jamaica and in response Parliament launched an investigation into the prevailing social and economic conditions that had provoked the disturbances and to make recommendations based upon an analysis of the situation existing in their wake. Not surprisingly, this West Indian Royal Commission—popularly known as the Moyne Commission—found that a demand for better living conditions by the majorities of the

⁸⁸ Francis, 46.

⁸⁹ Johnson, Clinton. “The Historical Background to Community Councils in Jamaica,” *Community Development Journal*, 17 no. 3 (Oct. 1982): 250-255.

populations sat firmly at the root of the uprisings, and following the publication of its report the government formed the West Indies Development and Welfare Organization (WIDWO) in 1940 and passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Act mandating for an allocation of spending to be directed at contributing to the uplift of the island's poorest classes.

Professor T.S. Simey, special adviser to the Comptroller of the WIDWO, recommended that Jamaica Welfare receive grants-in-aid to cover costs of operation, and in 1943 Jamaica Welfare became for the first time a government-sponsored organization.⁹⁰ Simey's attention to JWL owed in part to his regard for a development strategy introduced shortly beforehand by JWL's newly-appointed Co-operative Development Officer, D.T.M. Girvan. Girvan reframed the idea of building Community Centers into an ideal outcome rather than a catalyst for social and economic development efforts, and instead advocated placing priority on "securing the cooperation of existing community leaders, gathering and analyzing information about local conditions, building organization and cooperation at the community level, encouraging character and leadership formation, catering to the humblest members of the community, and using existing facilities wherever possible."⁹¹ As he outlined in his proposal, subsequently adopted by the JWL Board:

Building better villages depends first and foremost on the desire of the villagers for self-improvement. This desire may be found in most villages in varying degrees. In all, it can be roused and stimulated. Care must, however, be taken before arousing this desire in any community to secure the cooperation of the local 'key' people, and to gather basic information about the community....

If a temporary Community Committee can be immediately formed from amongst these leaders, this would be an excellent start, as the objective is to have all community

⁹⁰ Further, on Simey's recommendation, Girvan's Better Community Approach became the boilerplate for social welfare initiatives throughout the British West Indies, and the newly revitalized Jamaica Welfare Limited hosted a series of training programs for professional welfare officers bound for other British West Indian territories.

⁹¹ Norman Girvan, ed., *Working Together for Development: D.T.M. Girvan on Cooperatives and Community Development, 1939-1968* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica Publications, 1993), 25.

activities planned and coordinated by a Community Council comprised of representatives from existing community groups with coopted members from amongst the citizens....

Local leadership may be developed by means of personal contact, and provision of literature and training. There should be visits by trained organizers to new groups at intervals of two to four weeks (depending on the quality of local leadership) until the group is 'on its legs.'

All this leads up, as a natural development, to a permanent Community Centre, which will be run by the Community Council.... In short, use the existing facilities until more or better facilities become available.⁹²

In an illustration of his plan, Girvan rendered the Better Community Approach as a gateway, presumably under which we might imagine a visitor passing were she to enter a Jamaican village that had successfully implemented the method he proposed. Where "community action: social, educational, economic" constitutes the structure's foundation, and its twin pillars represent the distinct roles of male and female townspeople, in Girvan's "Archway Diagram" the Community Council appears as the keystone, situated at once in its center and at its highest point.

Impressed with Girvan's reformulated plan, and having learned that Jamaica Welfare had all but lost its funding stream, D.T.M. Girvan later observed that with support from the Colonial Welfare and Development Fund, Jamaica Welfare's activities grew quickly and officers were able to introduce the Better Communities Approach to a large number of local publics. "From work in four districts in 1944 the programme extended to 13 districts with a Budget of £30,000 per annum" and "the programme of Jamaica Welfare in 1948/49 embraced some 236 villages. There were 77 Village Committees and 51 constituted Village Community Councils, together co-ordinating the activities of 343 groups."⁹³

Above I have argued that over the first century following slavery abolition, as they incorporated the church into an idea of social reproduction informed by lasting vestiges of Igbo and Bakongo social mores and the legacies of racialized slavery, people living in Middle Rock

⁹² Qtd in Girvan, 27-28.

⁹³ Girvan, *Working Together for Development*, 229-230.

maintained an ethical orientation that valorized both individual achievement and mutual aid, and which recognized African-descent as a key term of affinity. Put differently, common sense assigned each person partial responsibility for him or herself and kin, and partial responsibility for the well-being of the social whole, and the latter was understood to be hierarchically constituted in terms established in the pre-abolition context of the plantation.

Like the free village program a hundred years before, Jamaica Welfare Ltd. comprised an effort to elevate the material condition of Jamaica's rural working people and also to shape them into self-sustaining followers of a certain arc of social reproduction. Only now rather than missionary leadership and a congregational model of community, in this case the initiative was sponsored by members of the native middle classes and as a branch of their anti-colonial project it presented a national model of community. As is clear from stated the goals and methods of JWL, the organization sought to "serve the general interests and the social or economic betterment and aid" of people like the residents of Middle Rock, while also stimulating among them a sense of connection between their own condition and the condition of the Jamaican population as a discrete whole. How did these efforts resonate in Middle Rock? What effects did the Jamaica Welfare project have on the prevailing local idea of social reproduction?

Within the realm of how local people envisioned the reproduction of society, the effective thrust of the Jamaica Welfare agency was threefold. First it shored up the already existing sense that some responsibility for Jamaican peoples' well being rested in the hands of state institutions. Second, it succeeded in shifting locally-understood terms of citizenship from the colonial to the national government. Thirdly, the state's assertion of itself as a representative body underscored for local people the significance of African descent as a position from which to make particular claims on the Jamaican government.

Unfortunately the collection I was able to access in the Jamaican National Archive includes no minutes for meetings of the Middle Rock Citizens' Improvement Association dated after 1939, thus cutting off two years before the initiative launched. It is likely that people in Middle Rock were aware of the two Community Centers erected in the late 1930s at Guys Hill and Porus, but no mention is made of them nor is there mention of Jamaica Welfare in the minutes from the MCIA's March and April 1939 meetings. Moreover as I was unsuccessful in my efforts to get any oral accounts of how, if, or when representatives from Jamaica Welfare Ltd. undertook any connection with the Association the exact nature of JW activities in Middle Rock remains unclear. By several accounts including one from a woman who proudly told me her father had worked there, one of the programs introduced around the island as part of the Better Communities Approach—a Peoples' Cooperative Bank—did come into operation in Middle Rock in the 1940s, thus indicating that at some point Middle Rock was one of the nearly 230 towns to incorporate JW programs into local society. Considering that the MCIA seems to be have been a prime example of the sort of community-level organization that Girvan's Better Communities Approach targeted for introducing its influence, even if the Association was not the literal contact point for Jamaica Welfare's outreach, it is most likely that its members—the Pastor and/or teachers at the Bethlehem All-Age School, for instance—were identified by JW officers as key local individuals, and subsequently involved in the interface between Middle Rock residents and the islandwide agency.

Despite the absence of more details one may still make some preliminary comments about the encounter by considering the points of commonality and divergence between Jamaica Welfare's nation-building project and the orientation to social reproduction expressed in the Association's activities. Michaeline Crichlow provides an extensive analysis of the relationship

between anti-colonial nationalists in the Jamaican middle class and the rural working classes, and her account serves as an important and useful outline of the changing conditions faced by people living in communities like Middle Rock.

Crichlow's 2005 study locates in Jamaica Welfare Ltd. the starting point of a lasting historical process wherein the development policies of the Jamaican state have remained deeply implicated in the living conditions in rural smallholding towns like Middle Rock.⁹⁴ Employing an analytical approach informed by Michel Foucault's critique of modernity, Crichlow extends a channel of scholarship traveled in the 1990s by Arturo Escobar and James Ferguson. Building on their insights she aims to reveal something of the extent to which the poverty and hardship that characterize the lives of small-scale agricultural workers stem from the *successes* and not merely the failures of state development projects.⁹⁵

To that end she observed that "during the period 1938 to 1972, the height of decolonization and nationalism, one witnesses the insinuation of a nationalist state agenda onto the polity" and Jamaica Welfare Ltd. in particular demonstrates the depth to which middle-class advocates of decolonization were able to engage rural working people in that era.⁹⁶ "To the

⁹⁴ Michaeline Crichlow, *Negotiating Caribbean Freedom: Peasants and the State in Development* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005).

⁹⁵ See Foucault, Michel. "What is Enlightenment?" in Rabinow, Ed. *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon, 1984: 32-50. Also see Escobar, Arturo. "Anthropology and the development encounter: The making and marketing of development anthropology" *American Ethnologist* 18, 4 (1991): 658-681; *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995; and Ferguson, James. *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

⁹⁶ Crichlow, 2005: 68.

extent that the Jamaican populace was sold on ideas of decolonization and development,” she explained, “this period represents a hegemonic phase of nationalists’ rule.”⁹⁷

The driving thrust of the initiatives of the late 1930s and 40s had “assumed the state’s importance in transforming Jamaican society and the Jamaican economy from agriculture to industry.”⁹⁸ Thus, Crichlow asserts, through programs linked to the Better Community Approach, Jamaica Welfare advanced among rural small landholders the notion that their individual well-being and that of their respective communities were together intertwined with the prosperity of Jamaica as a whole. To the agency’s leadership and officers, “rural Jamaica needed many things before the colony could ‘call itself civilized’ and, as a precondition for the island’s modern national status, [workers in] Jamaica Welfare hoped to instill a national pride among Jamaicans and create a positive attitude toward development as conceptualized by the decolonizing elites.”⁹⁹ The organization promoted the improvement of peoples’ material conditions while introducing a new framework for understanding citizenship. Thus were people in towns like Middle Rock encouraged to, in the words of James Scott, “see like the state.”

Judging from Jamaica Welfare’s rapid expansion—from ten to over two hundred villages between 1938 and 1949—rural populations showed widespread support, and as Crichlow argues, this “success” included the triumph in communities like Middle Rock of a view of the state as the primary guarantor of reciprocity between an individual’s pursuit of a better future and the prosperity of the Jamaican population writ large. “It is apparent that large numbers of rural working people (in the context of an emerging, politically independent state) supported the ruling

⁹⁷ Ibid: 98.

⁹⁸ Ibid: 65.

⁹⁹ ibid: 73.

elites, shifting later much of this support to the state (from roughly 1938 into the 1950s) as part of an informal contract in the search for better socioeconomic conditions.”¹⁰⁰

It is possible that after an initial correspondence of local interest with the interests of anti-colonial nationalist leaders, changes in Jamaica Welfare’s structure and activities caused a tempering in the strength of the link people in Middle Rock felt to the proto-independent state, even as the latter became institutionally more concrete. One notes that in 1949 Jamaica Welfare Ltd. shifted out from under the control of Jamaican middle classes and was incorporated into the state apparatus. The agency was renamed the Jamaica Social Welfare Commission (JSWC), its board was reordered to include a majority of state appointees and ex officio government representatives, and the Governor of Jamaica was given veto power over its policies. Then in 1958, following the emergence of a Ministerial system of government, the agency came further under the direct control of the state as the Minister of Development and Social Welfare assumed the responsibility of appointing the JSWC board of directors. This brought about what Crichlow identifies as “a severe decline” in many of the agency’s central initiatives, as “both the agency’s functions and methods veered sharply away from its predecessor, Jamaica Welfare.”¹⁰¹ Where JW had prioritized the role of local leadership in steering projects, once it was incorporated into the state those controlling the agency adopted a top-down approach that paid less concern to drawing and responding to input from the communities it served. By the coming of independence, control over the domain that had been carved out by Jamaica Welfare was state centralized. “In short,” Crichlow concludes, “it was believed that citizens could not be counted on to reform themselves, but had to be led directly by right-thinking state officials. In a way the

¹⁰⁰ Crichlow, 2005: 68.

¹⁰¹ *ibid*: 76-77.

early postcolonial state itself was actively inviting a dependency that marginalized the individual and community initiatives that marked the nationalists' strategy."¹⁰²

Still, it is not difficult to imagine that officers from Jamaica Welfare, *as well as* their successors in the Jamaica Social Welfare Commission would have indeed had some of the "success" to which Crichlow draws our attention, particularly as regards the insinuation of the state into the lives of rural small farmers. One need only consider that people had evidently already utilized the Middle Rock Citizens' Improvement Association as a means to organize and lobby government for community services; furthermore as mentioned at the beginning of this subsection, during that initial period Jamaica Welfare Ltd. had reached out to the Middle Rock community and established at least one of its programs there, the People's Cooperative Bank. With local leaders already engaging colonial officials as constituents the matter would have likely been less an issue of introducing the state/citizen relationship than of shifting the terms of citizenship from the British to a Jamaican state. Following from what I have identified as a current of Garveyism alive within the Middle Rock Association, the tendency for local people to identify as subjects of the Crown appears in the 1930s to have been less than fully stable. In particular as they evidently recognized how African-descent figured as a term of displacement within the constitution of the British body politic, an influential group of people in Middle Rock seem to have been amenable to appeals that they support the anti-colonial nationalist movement.

However as that movement rose further toward constitutional decolonization, it would have become more difficult to reconcile whatever black nationalist sentiment locals held with Jamaican nationalism. The anti-colonial nationalists developed a rhetoric of inclusivity reflected in the motto of independent Jamaica, "Out of Many, One," and through this maneuver the

¹⁰² Crichlow, 2005: 78.

emergent political class managed to exploit a number of the various points of disconnect between the British government and the people it purported to represent in Jamaica. Deborah Thomas points out a “subtly racial blueprint for independent development” that figured in the genealogy of the Jamaican anti-colonial nationalism as early as 1888, and which by the late 1930s had been reinvigorated in Garveyism and Ethiopianism. That element, she shows, was displaced along the road to Jamaican independence, by a creole multiracial nationalism, as successive generations of leaders negotiated the “precarious position of proving, to local and international publics, both their equality and their difference.”¹⁰³ The dominant current of nationalism as it developed between the 1938 uprisings and political independence in 1962 did celebrate aspects of indigenous Jamaican culture, in particular the folk heritage of rural people like those living in Middle Rock. However, as Thomas argues it “was founded on a concept of common history and culture rather than race,” and consequently “forms of racially, class-, or gender-based affirmation and mobilization were marginalized within a public sphere dominated by the projection of a territorially based multiracial harmony.”¹⁰⁴

The problem was that, even as the independence government celebrated aspects of Jamaica’s African heritage through the promotion and preservation of folk culture, the political class—led by Minister of Development and Welfare, Edward Seaga—cleaved to a notion of the equality of all racial groups that served to obfuscate the persistent connection of class positions to racial categories. From beneath the veneer of multiculturalism, people around the island nonetheless saw the continuity of stratification that obtained from the colonial to the independence era, and state officials grew increasingly concerned to suppress the forms of black

¹⁰³ Thomas, Deborah A. *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004: 48.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*: 55-57.

nationalist expression that continued to occupy the country's poorer masses, both urban and rural. In the late 1960s towards the end of the tenure of the first independent Jamaican government, widespread unrest flourished in the rise of the Rastafari movement and more generally the emergence of black power politics across the island. Following Crichlow's analysis, rural smallholding communities like Middle Rock remained in a tightened relationship to the state as guarantor of the well-being of all Jamaicans, but simmering discontent was on the rise, particularly as concerned the state's posture toward persistent racial minoritarianism in the division of political and economic power.

Perhaps the best demonstration of how people in Middle Rock in that era had come to envision the role of the state as a functionary in the reproduction of society appears in local voting patterns in the 1972, 1976, and 1980 elections. Since Jamaica held its first national election based on universal adult suffrage, two major political parties have alternately held representative political office. After emerging out of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union, the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) has maintained an image of being the representative faction of conservative reform, and has cleaved to the tradition of policymaking that prioritizes the free enterprise system. Its counterpart, the People's National Party (PNP), was also founded within the structure of trade union organizing but it emerged out of a constellation of workers' groups—the Trade Union Council—and thereafter projected itself as a party in the tradition of Democratic Socialist reform. After the JLP carried the first two elections it held power for the first decade of Jamaica's political independence from Britain.

In 1972 the PNP took the helm following a landslide victory wherein the party won an unprecedented 36-17 majority in Parliament and garnered over 56% of the popular vote.¹⁰⁵ In contrast to the JLP's conservative populism, the PNP had established its credentials among the Jamaican intelligentsia as a middle-class party committed to a left-leaning policy advocating structural changes in economy and society. With the 1972 election, the division became further polarized as the new PNP leader more actively courted the working masses and took a firm anti-capitalist and anti-imperial stance and cultivating ties of solidarity with governments and peoples of the global South.

After independence, the JLP had deprioritized community development as a feature of the government portfolio by altering the structure and functions of the state's national development agency, shrinking the number of board members, and removing its policy-making autonomy.¹⁰⁶ However, upon taking power for the first time in 1972, the PNP tacked in the opposite direction, setting out a bundle of economic policies that included an expanded role for the state in the national economy, including nationalization of industry. It supported significant investments in social expenditures, food and utility subsidies, a government-controlled exchange rate, and meaningful tariffs and other regulations on foreign imports.¹⁰⁷ While in 1972 the party ran with under slogan "better must come," by 1976 the PNP had officially embraced the path of Democratic Socialism and changed its campaign slogan to "socialism is love." Prime Minister Michael Manley made it clear that "it was the government's intention to have a mixed economy

¹⁰⁵ Stone, Carl. "Regional Party Voting in Jamaica (1959-1976)," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 20, no. 4 (1978): 397.

¹⁰⁶ Francis, 1969: 51.

¹⁰⁷ Wilson, Bruce M. "From Democratic Socialism to Neoliberalism: The Metamorphoses of the People's National Party in Jamaica," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 31, no. 2 (1996): 61.

with a ‘responsible private sector’... in which the ‘commanding heights’ would be run by an expanding public sector.”¹⁰⁸

As outlined in this chapter, residents of Middle Rock have demonstrated a historical commitment to an ethic of mutual aid, and through the emergence of an independent Jamaican state that institution has presented itself to the island’s small farming sector as guarantor of a definitive social contract, engineered to locate and play off of pre-existing orientations toward communitarianism. Indeed, election results from polling stations in Middle Rock in both 1972 and 1976 reported voters supported the PNP candidate over his JLP competitor by a factor of nearly 9 to 1.¹⁰⁹

In 2008 and 2009 Middle Rock was a still a PNP stronghold. This was evident in things like the way one man, a thirty-something farmer who is well-respected throughout town despite neither wearing his hair short nor regularly attending church, smiled through a rare moment when he was made the butt of a joke. Hear his friend: “This man used to always drink Heineken. If he had a drink at a bar, he was drinking a bokkle of Heineken; it didn’t matter, hot or cold. Then one day smaddy seh ‘oh I see you is a Labourite; you drink the Labourite beer, eh? With the green bokkle?’ and from right then—from that time *there*—he’ll only drink a Red Stripe. No more green. Ask any of the younger people if they ever seen him drink a Heineken.”

It was commonplace for people to make references to the two parties using their representative colors—green for the JLP and orange for the PNP—and the talk of political

¹⁰⁸ Henke, Holger. *Between Self-Determination and Dependency: Jamaica’s Foreign Relations, 1972-1989* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2000): 17.

¹⁰⁹ Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, General Election 1972. Page 219; Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, General Election 1976. Page 279.

allegiance also came through in talk on the road when a new free-standing bathroom facility was built on the grounds of the All-Age School. For my own part, only after hearing a number of people grumbling about the fact that the addition was painted green did I notice that the larger school building itself was painted orange. Yet this turn of events also stands as a certain representation of the fact that Middle Rock is not an uncompromisingly PNP community. Indeed after building back up to match their peak fraction of the vote (89%) in the 1997 general election, the party's dominance at the ballot box has waned.¹¹⁰

Middle Rock vote counts in national elections in 1976 indicate strong local support for Democratic Socialism. However, "after the landslide election victory of 1976 on a distinctly socialist platform, with the economy slipping deeper into a recession, the government decided to approach the International Monetary Fund and began to pass some neoliberal economic reforms."¹¹¹ With the "Nixon Shock" of 1971, the United States had abandoned the gold standard and withdrawn from the Bretton Woods system of international monetary policy, leading to the collapse of the latter and in its place the establishment of a new international economic order governed by the imperative of a free world marketplace. Within this new context and burdened by increasing debt, the Jamaican government finally instituted a rapid and jarring program of economic liberalization whereby the state recused itself from the position it had occupied since independence and abandoned its position as guarantor of popular economic and social welfare.

This "Manley Shock" of 1989-1991 pushed upon the citizens of Jamaica a responsibility for their respective fortunes not seen the 1930s, leaving both the wealthy minority and the impoverished majority to fend for themselves as actors in the global marketplace. The turn to

¹¹⁰ Report of the Chief Electoral Officer. General Election 1997. Page 184.

¹¹¹ Wilson, "From Democratic Socialism," 65.

liberalization has not been without its upside, and deflating the Jamaican economy brought about a reduction in the nation's overall poverty level.¹¹² But there have been great costs attending to this benefit, namely the intensification of wealth inequality and the returning salience of the “two Jamaicas” paradigm: the haves and the have-nots. Moreover, that turn marked the initial shift of official policy orientation that would remain persistent at the end of the first decade of the 2000s, institutionalizing the view that responsibility for social welfare lies in the hands of individuals and not government agencies.

Concurrently, in Middle Rock local peoples' conviction that any party—and the PNP in particular—deserved local support, had softened. One man, an experienced contractor and skilled craftsman in his middle 40s, told me he still supported the PNP, but when pressed by his wife—one of the town's outspoken supporters of the JLP—he admitted that this wasn't based on current programs but rather that fact that, as he put it, “the PNP was the party of the poor.” *Was*. During my visit with another lifelong Middle Rock resident who farmed carrots and raised a handful of goats, she pointed to a picture hanging on the wall in the living room of the house where she lived with her mother. “Do you know who that is?” she asked me. It was a portrait of a young and healthy-looking Michael Manley, dressed in a Kariba suit. “That's Mr. Manley. Yes. *That* is my mother's Prime Minister. These others, since, she has no feelings for. She doesn't bother with them now. But *he*,” she said smiling, “Mr. *Manley* is my mother's Prime Minister.”

Taken at face value the slackening of support for political representatives among the residents of Middle Rock corresponds with more general findings that we see in polls by the

¹¹² Robotham, Don. “The Third Crisis: Jamaica in the Neoliberal Era,” in Horace Levy, ed., *The African-Caribbean Worldview and the Making of Caribbean Society* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2009): 236-237.

Centre for Leadership and Governance at the University of the West Indies.¹¹³ However the question is not only whether Jamaican people retain faith in the political classes to fulfill the state's responsibility to its constituents, but also what sense people retain of the state's direct responsibility for the reproduction of Jamaican society. Since the late 1970s government policies have steadily realigned the state's role in the nation's socioeconomic development. By way of approaching a close the final section of this chapter will briefly discuss how this change has taken place and then cite a few ethnographic examples to sketch an answer to the question of whether these reforms have consequently realigned the prevailing sense of ethical behavior in Middle Rock.

After having great success at the ballot box running on democratic socialism in the first two elections of the 1970s, global economic crisis and an ongoing recession in the Jamaican national economy prompted the PNP to change its tack and approach the International Monetary Fund for financial support. The move signaled a dramatic departure from the democratic socialist path on which the party had campaigned, and the decision resulted in factional infighting within the PNP leadership. After three years of attempting to meet the structural adjustments required as conditional to the IMF's loans, the Jamaican economy was still mired in recession and facing declining domestic support the PNP reinvigorated its socialist platform and striking an alliance with the leftist Workers Party of Jamaica the party entered the 1980 national election campaigning on a program of a complete break with the IMF.

¹¹³ Boxill, et. al. *The Political Culture of Democracy in Jamaica: 2006*. Nashville, Vanderbilt University, 2007.

The PNP lost the 1980 election and former Minister of Welfare and Development, Edward Seaga, was elected Prime Minister. Where the PNP's return to democratic socialist principles had proven unconvincing to the Jamaican electorate, the JLP won on an election manifesto that declared the party would endeavor to "create a market system of economics [and] to shift unnecessary public enterprises to the private sector...[and the] progressive liberalization of import restrictions leading eventually to the elimination of all licensing requirements."¹¹⁴ Put simply while the PNP had reaffirmed its commitment to state intervention in the national economy, the JLP affirmed its historic commitment to free market development strategies.

Wilson noted that in 1983 the *Economist* assessed the JLP platform as "very much the structural adjustment programme outlined by the IMF and World Bank," and that as such the JLP moved toward a neoliberal development strategy constituted of minimal state responsibility for the reproduction of Jamaican society. However, he clarified, under Seaga the JLP did not embrace a neoliberal path, particularly the declining significance of the state. Rolling back social programs was one thing but forfeiting control was another. Thus, while "Seaga's JLP government was elected on and committed to a program of reorienting Jamaica's economy in a neoliberal direction.... The Seaga government failed a number of IMF tests and, more importantly, periodically took deliberate steps to expand the role of the state in both economic planning and allocation of resources."¹¹⁵

Crichlow's analysis supports this view of the JLP's moderate neoliberalism, but underscores the fact that however impliable the Seaga administration proved in the face of structural adjustment mandates, the impact on the rural smallholding population of Jamaica was

¹¹⁴ Qtd in Wilson, Bruce M. "From Democratic Socialism to Neoliberalism: The Metamorphoses of the People's National Party in Jamaica. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Summer 1996, Vol. 31 (2): 71.

¹¹⁵ Wilson, 1996: 71.

decisive. The 1980s inaugurated “a new kind of government conduct designed to reconstitute its relationship with a smallholding stratum now considered backward enough to be left alone, and outside of the dominant policy of the period.”¹¹⁶ The segment of Jamaican society to which the people of Middle Rock belonged was thereby deeply affected by the state’s realignment such that “the sea change in economic policy [in the 1980s] set the stage for the entrenchment of an agenda that would underscore the demise of [smallholder] as critical to economic strategy on the island.” Through the state’s shift in policy toward large-scale private agroindustry and more generally away from agricultural and toward industrial sectors, “a new kind of agricultural policy became institutionalized making it possible to unhinged smallholder agriculture from the concept and practice of development and to redefine national development, more or less independent of their contributions” (145). If the Seaga government only partially adopted a neoliberal development strategy, even as it employed neoliberal reforms the state remained an active institution, not reduced to a merely regulatory role. Crichlow summarizes the impact of the JLP’s neoliberal on the Jamaican smallholding sector as follows:

Agrarian developments since the 1980s underscore significant transformation in the social relations obtaining in the agricultural sector specifically and within the Jamaican state generally. The transformation represents...the redefinition of the state’s role in light of the demands of multilateral agencies in pursuing a neoliberal economic agenda.... The shift in emphasis from the sort of worker/smallfarmer control of the 1970s to large-scale commercial farms supposedly better able to compete on the world market has led to the decentering of smallholder agricultural production.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, she notes, “such policies called for a repositioning of the place of the Jamaican working peoples in a reforming polity. A new level of intolerance began to pervade the Jamaican polity, one that delinked poverty from the sphere of collective concern back onto

¹¹⁶ Crichlow, 2005: 144.

¹¹⁷ Crichlow, 2005: 169.

the body and personal agenda of the individual.”¹¹⁸ Thus, the Jamaican government’s neoliberal turn marked the initial stage in a shift of official policy orientation that would remain persistent at the end of the first decade of the 2000s, and had the effect of institutionalizing the view that responsibility for social welfare lies in the hands of individuals and not government agencies. But did this also provoke a shift in Middle Rock’s local ethical currents toward a view that each individual ought to bear the cost of his or her own well-being?

For the remainder of this chapter I want to turn toward the relationship between the Jamaican government’s contemporary strategy for social and economic development and the terms of ethical behavior I found active in Middle Rock in the early twenty-first century. Since the mid-1970s successive parties-in-power have embraced a course of national policy that proposes to benefit the country by shifting increasing responsibility for the reproduction of Jamaican society from government agencies onto individual citizens themselves.

As I discussed in earlier chapters, this approach packages together a hierarchy of ethical behavior with a program of production and exchange to produce a model for getting the greatest benefits for the largest number of people. Its apparent beauty owes to its marriage of each individual’s respective interests and the interests of humankind writ large, and its contemporary proponents advocate for the creation of a world where society reproduces itself through each and every discrete member’s unhindered pursuit of his or her individual interests. However after almost forty years residents of Middle Rock simply did not in any widespread sense appear to accept the premise upon which the state’s development model is based: that the greatest benefits for all are to be obtained by each person simply pursuing his or her own self-interest.

¹¹⁸ *ibid*: 146.

In pursuing this issue I follow Tony Weis, who in the early 2000s published a series of articles arguing that such broader implications demand greater attention to the conditions faced by Jamaica's small farmers.¹¹⁹ A rich tradition of scholarship has explored the unique ways that the evolution of the social order presents itself as legible in rural communities where small plot farming predominates local industry. Recent scholarship concerning English-speaking Caribbean societies has followed up on these insights, offering valuable information concerning the effects of such reforms felt either by people living in or near cities or by rural agricultural producers involved in large-scale export production.¹²⁰ Overall, focus on the so-called "peasantry" has declined, but in contrast to the literatures addressing the effect of neoliberal reforms on small plot farmers in nearby Latin America, a smaller portion of the literature concerning the Anglophone Caribbean explores how these policy changes have impacted people in small farming communities like Middle Rock.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ I am thinking in particular of the following: "(Re-)Making the Case for Land Reform in Jamaica," *Social and Economic Studies* 53, no. 1 (2004): 35-72; "Restructuring and Redundancy: The Impacts and Illogic of Neoliberal Agricultural Reforms in Jamaica," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 4 no. 4 (2004): 461-491; "A precarious balance: Neoliberalism, crisis management, and the social implosion in Jamaica," *Capital & Class* 29, no. 1 (2005): 115-147; "The Rise, Fall and Future of the Jamaican Peasantry," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 33 no. 1 (2006): 61-88; and "Small farming and radical imaginations in the Caribbean today," *Race and Class* 49, no. 2 (2007): 112-117.

¹²⁰ Examples of this scholarship include Kevin A. Yelvington, *Producing Power: Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in a Caribbean Workplace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Carla Freeman, *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy: Women, Work, and Pink-Collar Identities in the Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Deborah A. Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); and Karla Slocum, *Free Trade and Freedom: Neoliberalism, Place, and Nation in the Caribbean* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

¹²¹ Weis (passim) and Crichlow, 2005 are, of course, exceptions to this. For a recent example of scholarship exploring the impact of neoliberal reforms on small farmers in Latin American contexts, see Marc Edelman, *Peasants Against Globalization: Rural Social Movements in Costa Rica*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Across the island from Middle Rock in the parish of St. Mary, Weis observed “widespread breakdown of mutual aid and cooperative labour traditions amongst the peasantry.”¹²² Based on that research he argued that the discontinuation of cooperative labor conditions constituted a key aspect of broader conditions that Michael Witter and Louis Lindsay had earlier described as Jamaica’s “social implosion.” Nevertheless, he concluded, there was a potential—a Brechtian “hope that is always latent in contradictions”—for reversing the trend and for staving off the impoverishment of small farmers and preventing the disintegration of Jamaican society.¹²³

What of this possibility remains today? In the interim a seizure has struck the world economy and issued a stern challenge to neoliberalism as the reigning paradigm of policymaking.

Writing in the pages of the *Guardian*, Stuart Hall recently pointed out that in spite of it all, rumors of the demise of neoliberalism are overstated and premature. “What sort of crisis is this?” he asked rhetorically. “Does it presage business as usual, the deepening of present trends, or the mobilisation of social forces for a radical change of direction? Is this the start of a new conjuncture?” To the latter question, he wrote, the answer is no, and after a survey of the post-crisis conditions prevailing in Britain, Hall concluded:

In ambition, depth, degree of break with the past, variety of sites being colonised, impact on common sense, shift in the social architecture, neoliberalism [constitutes] a hegemonic project. Today, popular thinking and the systems of calculation in daily life offer very little friction to the passage of its ideas. Delivery may be more difficult: new and old contradictions still haunt the edifice, in the very process of its reconstruction. Still, in

¹²² Weis, “A precarious balance,” 132. See also Michael Witter and Louis Lindsay, “Introduction,” in Kari Polanyi Levitt and Michael Witter, eds., *The Critical Tradition of Caribbean Political Economy: The Legacy of George Beckford* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996).

¹²³ Weis, “A precarious balance,” 139.

terms of laying foundations and staging the future on favourable ground, the neoliberal project is several stages further on.¹²⁴

As Hall observed, while history proceeds in a manner where “excluded social forces, whose consent has not been won, whose interests have not been taken into account, form the basis of counter-movements, resistance, alternative strategies and visions,” the economic crisis that arrived late last decade has not deterred the worldwide “march of the neoliberals.” Thus it would seem that the latent catalyst Weis held up as an inspiration for seeking means to reverse the immiseration of Jamaica’s small farmers—a hope that even then he carefully noted was “obscured”—could be even less viable in spite of a failure of the leading paradigm that has only intensified the urgent need for alternatives.

In conversations I had with Middle Rock residents in 2008 and 2009, people’s prognoses for the near future bore the weight of real reason for concern. The recent crisis of global capitalism struck a Jamaican population already faced with serious social and economic emergencies that had persisted in spite of national leaders adopting precisely the pathways of reform whose legitimacy was now under dispute. National adult unemployment hovered around 10%, and for those in the 15-24 year old age bracket it was three times as high. Since 2000 Jamaica had ranked in the top five per capita murder rates in the world; in 2006 it achieved the dubious title of the highest murder rate of any country on earth. Average yearly income per capita was well under US\$10,000. People occasionally asked what I thought about the fate of Lehman Brothers, or the industry bailouts issued by the U.S. government, and more often than not they had more answers for me than I had for them. At the onset of what is now referred to as the “Great Recession,” the popular practice of identifying means to alleviating these problems grew only more urgent.

¹²⁴ Hall, Stuart, “The march of the neoliberals,” *The Guardian*, Monday, 12 September, 2011.

Where was one to turn for a viable solution? Speaking to townspeople in Middle Rock I found individuals gravitating toward a familiar model, but sometimes the paths they charted included unexpected steps.

I was riding in a route taxi on the way to the parish capital a half hour's drive from Middle Rock when I heard on the radio that Michael Jackson had died. One passenger was answering the driver's questions about how his family was doing, when a woman crunched next to three others of us in the backseat heard the story come over the broadcast and she asked the driver to turn up the volume. There was the changing tone of the engine as the driver shifted gears around a turn, but otherwise only the announcer's voice. We waited to hear her run through her report again—fifty-year old performer...King of Pop...hospital...unconscious—and then erupted, talking all at once as much to each other as to ourselves.

For that summer in Jamaica the voice of the gloved one seemed to me to reverberate everywhere; it was as if his full catalog of recordings had been rereleased all at once. Once when I was at a bus park in Kingston songs from throughout his career filled the parking lot, different hit singles spilling all at once out of shop stalls on different walls of the perimeter. For months it was common to hear tinny snippets of his music piping out of a stranger's cellphone. Organizers of Reggae Sumfest—the “greatest reggae show on earth”—dedicated that year's concert to his memory, and invited Michael's brothers Tito and Jackie to Montego Bay as special guests and featured performers. Meanwhile in the hilly area around Middle Rock, every “country dance” I went to that July and August featured a block of Michael Jackson tunes back-to-back-to-back-to-back, each time bringing the crowd's hands into the air, many waving

lighters, many more singing along. “I Want You Back.” “ABC.” “Butterflies.” “Human Nature.” “The Love You Save.” “Off the Wall.” “Beat It.” “Thriller.”

One afternoon I was sitting on one of three wooden stools in a restaurant on the Middle Rock town square when a teacher from the local basic school came in. “I’m in mourning,” she said.

Lydia, the woman who owned the business, took a step behind the counter and gave the teacher a sad look. “I’m so sorry! What happened?”

“My brother. Michael. I can’t believe he’s gone. I’m in mourning.” She smiled when she said it again, turning up the theatrics in her voice.

Then Lydia laughed. “Ohhh,” she said. “Every single song Michael Jackson recorded was a hit. He could only record one song a year because they wouldn’t let him make more money than the Queen.”

“And people would *wait* for that one song,” said the teacher. “He visited Jamaica once in 1975. He visited Tivoli Gardens and Trenchtown. But there couldn’t have been a Michael Jackson *concert* here, because there’s no place that could house the crowd. The whole island would come, and people would fly over from Trinidad and Barbados to see it.”

“And how well he could sing? And dance!” She turned to me. “In Jamaica there are the old time dances; kumina, for instance. And *then* there is the dancing that developed *after* Michael Jackson. The way he moved? All that popping? It just makes me sad because I know he struggled his whole life and I feel like I could have been his friend. I always felt like I understood him.”

With that she shifted to a report that he had died of a drug overdose.

And of course he couldn’t sleep! He’s got the weight of the world on his shoulders. So if he’d smoked marijuana or they found him with cocaine, even, I wouldn’t have minded.

Because of course the man can't sleep! In fact I'm surprised he lived as long as he did. It must have been hard for him to struggle for so long. He was constantly bombarded by people from all sides. And you know some people will just suck you dry.

She shook her head and laughed. "Okay, I'm finished!" But the teacher's portrait of the artist, possessed of well-deserved success yet constantly harassed by leeches, stuck with me and returned to mind when another person from Middle Rock waxed elegiac about the departed star. He was a married man in his mid-30s, and he had experience as a selector at dances in the area along with the respect as a music head that comes with it. We were in a local dry goods shop watching video of MJ performing for a stadium of screaming fans in Bucharest, and what he told me I also heard him repeat to others. "The thing about Michael Jackson was he made a lot of money, but he shared it with people. He didn't keep it all to himself. He was successful, but he wasn't selfish."

These two informal eulogies draw attention to particulars of a collectivist ethic alive in Middle Rock that in closing here I want to examine in closer detail. As a visitor in Middle Rock I often heard and was told by residents about the virtue of hard work and the importance of being diligent in whatever labor a person chose. This figured closely in the individuals whose achievements people celebrated, whether a cricket bowler, a journalist, a cook, a teacher, or a farmer, but the question of selfishness always hovered in the background and when invoked it proved a powerful counterweight to whatever valor ascribable to someone for his or her personal accomplishment. To do for oneself was commended and to a significant degree expected. Yet to have success without in turn giving of oneself was reprehensible, and sure to draw private—and frequently enough, public—contempt.

This prohibition against selfishness resonating in Middle Rock at the end of the last decade was of course not unique to the townspeople there, but is interesting in its contrast with

the ethical framework underlying the neoliberal strategy of globalization that, as I described above, has played heavily on the lives of local people. Since the mid-1970s successive Jamaican governments have further and further embraced a course of economic policy reform designed to eliminate points of separation that hold the nation and its people at a remove from the developmental sphere of global capitalism, in each instance shifting increasing responsibility for the reproduction of society from the Jamaican state and onto the citizens themselves. The moral sentiments that I encountered there in 2009, however, serve as an indication that government's divestment from public spending commitments have not led people in the Middle Rock community to accept the ethical principle supposed to justify those reforms: that the greatest benefits for all are to be obtained by each individual simply pursuing his or her self-interest. In other words, people living in Middle Rock had not converted to a neoliberal outlook as regards the intersection of decency and prosperity.

Nevertheless, following Hall's language, the contradictions haunting the edifice of the neoliberal project mark the terms of an alternative pathway that I argue are worth careful attention. In the still-unfolding aftermath of last decade's world economic crisis, and with chief strategy of better living through globalization consequently thrown into doubt, the communitarian proclivities alive in Middle Rock—however battered or unsteady they may be—stand as a sign of the available terms for people in similar communities to forge a way forward.

More locally, as Witter and Lindsay, Weis, and others have noted, the persistence of a communitarian ethic in farm towns like Middle Rock has implications for the future of Jamaica as a whole. Such locales where for generations residents have made their livelihoods by cultivating cash crops on small plots of land are not only early subjects of the postcolonial state; they are in truth vital wellsprings of the indigenous cooperative traditions through which

Jamaican society is reproduced. It is in these communities that the broadest portion of Jamaica's population constituted itself after leaving the estates in the years following slavery abolition. Later, it was through rural smallholders' strategies for common survival that Jamaica's anti-colonial nationalists cultivated an islandwide independence movement a century later.

This returns us to the observation Weis made about the declining prevalence of cooperative labor traditions among small farmers in rural St. Mary. Lessons I received in Middle Rock corroborated that breakdown: "You should have seen it before, Ted," said one man in his middle forties. "People used to look out for each other more. Work used to be done on rotation with everybody helping everybody. You work on my ground one day and the next day we go to work your ground. Day-for-day it is called. But that doesn't happen any more. Everybody's just working for themselves nowadays."

If one takes such statements as rallying cries rather than lamentations, in what specific direction do they urge support? Given a prohibition against selfishness resonating in Middle Rock even while cooperative traditions fall out of actual practice, external forces demand particular attention as objects of reform.

In fact, the state's retreat from its role as a beacon of collective self-determination and as a resource of real material security, as well as its realignment vis-à-vis the Jamaican people and the world market were each powerful catalysts in the groundswell of individualism observed in the popular press, scholarly literature, and discourse of the townspeople of Middle Rock. Still, in this community where social responsibility has for so long included a prescription to contribute to collective efforts for survival and prosperity, the fact of its persistence suggests a sizable local return were funds to be gathered and allocated following the Better Communities model D.T.M. Girvan initiated in the early 1940s. The Middle Rock Citizen's Improvement Association exists

today in the form of what is now called the Middle Rock Community Council, but as before Jamaica Welfare Limited was even founded, the organization lacks the necessary leverage for attracting more townspeople to participate in its programming.

However while private sector funding of rural community councils promises benefits for the broader Jamaican population, this only underscores the primary necessity of involvement by the Jamaican state. Put differently, the disintegration of small farmers' collective customs means the disintegration of the state's legitimacy to govern, regardless of which party holds power. State support for rural community organizations, as it was in the 1930s and 40s, is just as crucial today.

Chapter 4

Departures from Neoliberal Freedom

In the first two chapters I outlined a number of features in the historical development of Middle Rock and how they impacted the terms for evaluating good social behavior likely prevailed in the first century after it was founded as a coffee plantation. Throughout my focus was the most widely shared viewpoint of the right relationship between a person's responsibility to his or her own well-being, and to the well-being of others. I wanted to say something about the prevailing idea of where the responsibility lies for social reproduction or, something close to Cindi Katz's concern for how people envisioned "both generationally and on a daily basis...the acquisition and distribution of the means of existence, including food, shelter, clothing, and health care."¹²⁵

In chapter one I concluded that it would be wrong to define the prevailing ethos in plantation-era Middle Rock as either individualist or collectivist, but rather a little bit of both. In chapter two I presented a late nineteenth-century revival of the Moravian church as an example of continuity in local prescriptions for good social behavior where neither individualism nor collectivism were prioritized nor discouraged. In chapter three I focused on the post-colonial pivot, beginning with Middle Rock in the 1930s and moving to lessons learned while living in Middle Rock in the early twenty-first century. Observing that at the onset of the ongoing Great

¹²⁵ Katz, Cindi. "Vagabond Capitalism and the Necessity of Social Reproduction." *Antipode*. 33 (4): September 2001: 709-728. Katz pays special—and calls for further—attention to the issue of social reproduction in studies of capitalist globalization and in particular to the impact of displacements of responsibility as felt by children. This dimension for the most part lies beyond my scope here, though it is a key direction for further exploration in revisions.

Recession, local people still regarded both individual and collectivist action as necessary for ethical living, I went on to make two slightly less simple conclusions.

For these final two chapters I want to refine the picture of Middle Rock residents' relation to the ethical thrust of neoliberalism, that powerful and ongoing trend to shifting responsibility for social reproduction to the realm of individuated peoples' pursuit of self-interest. Here I will begin by address more directly how townspeople in 2009 defined the key term through which neoliberalism asserts and rationalizes its dominance: freedom.

Perhaps more often than in any other context I was privy to, the concept of freedom arose in the course of worship services in Middle Rock's Bethlehem Moravian church. Although since the 1950s there has also been an active and well-attended (Pentecostal) Church of God in Middle Rock, I chose to attend services at Bethlehem Moravian most Sundays because of its historic and still widely-recognized centrality to the Middle Rock community. As a consequence this cost me the opportunity to spend time with certain members of the community as well as the chance to get comparative sense of the two churches. Still it bears noting at the outset that my understanding of the church as a space where freedom was alive in local discourse is limited and informed predominantly by my experiences at Bethlehem Moravian.

As discussed in more detail in chapter two, if Bethlehem Moravian church was not the first Christian institution established in the town it set the deepest footprint. In 2009 the connections between the Moravian church and the local schools were less robust than they had been in the past but still strong. A number of teachers at Bethlehem All-Age were not members of the Bethlehem Moravian congregation, one notable exception being a popular teacher with deep roots in Middle Rock but who attended Seventh Day Adventist services in a nearby district.

Still the connections remained. A head teacher at Bethlehem All-Age was a vital contributor to the Moravian choir. The previous Principal of the school—a picture of wit and elegance still referred to around town as “Teacher Donovan”—was a pillar of the congregation who attended Bethlehem church almost every week with her family, always worshiping from the same, unofficially reserved, pew. The current Principal was the organist and a regular substitute officiant at Bethlehem Moravian. And while not all teachers at the Bethlehem Basic School belonged, the Principal there was also an active member, and her husband was the lay-preacher there.

At Bethlehem Moravian the concept of freedom arose in the course of weekly services in liturgical recitation, in hymnody, and in weekly sermons. In this context, freedom figured as the delineating factor that defined the condition of humanity and the relationship of humankind to the divine. Fittingly the book of Genesis marks the first point of departure in this framing of freedom. Here, ever since Adam and Eve violated the proscription against eating from the tree of knowledge, their willful disobedience and subsequent fall from grace constituted 1) an unauthorized exercise of human freedom which 2) led to all of humanity’s assuming the burden of freedom of choice 3) through which only by willfully choosing a certain course may a person ensure his or her reclamation of a true state of freedom. Thus while in one sermon the Pastor reminded parishioners, “God gave you the freedom to choose between right and wrong,” he was on another occasion moved to speak woefully of the tendency among people to equate financial success with freedom. Here as part of a hypothetical example he was giving, he told the congregation:

“He gets a piece of money and he may be thinking ‘mi big man now. Mi free! But he is free only who is right with God.’”

An additional component to the discourse of freedom within the Moravian church stemmed more directly from the evangelical project that brought the Moravians to Middle Rock in the first place. This was a sense that being “right with God” included following a mandate to spread freedom by drawing others under the Moravian tent. For one example, a line from the book of Isaiah (42: 6-7) recited in the early portion of a service that began with the Pastor addressing God and stating the proper relationship between a person and the deity:

“Through you I will bring light to the nations. You will open the eyes of the blind and set free the oppressed.”

And further expressing this sense of the Moravians’ role as arbitrators between the divine and humankind, a line of hymnody from “God of Grace and God of Glory”:

“Gird our lives that they may be/Armoured with all Christlike graces/in the fight to set men free.”

One notes the overlap between the emancipation of persons on the mortal plane and the emancipation of humanity that can only occur after death—a sentiment driving the Moravian missionary project since their first arrival in the Caribbean in the mid-eighteenth century and in turn informing the sense of Christian responsibility nearly two hundred years later. Freedom is a domain of souls that is only attainable by following prescriptions for living on earth, and high up among those instructions is a requisite for bringing others onto the path by convincing them that all other freedom besides freedom in God is merely illusory.

Not everyone in Middle Rock attended church with regularity and many were not parishioners at either Bethlehem Moravian or the Middle Rock Church of God. Among those of this group whom I spoke with most frequently the rationale cited concerned divergence between the actions of church elders and congregants, and the prescriptions for proper behavior that they

espoused. Lawrence, a father of several children related to me that he had at one point attended Bethlehem Moravian with some regularity until a parishioner commented on the way he, his wife, and his child were dressed.

Lawrence: Some of these people, Ted, they waan tell you how fi act when as a *Christian* they're supposed to be giving you a welcome. Since dem a talk about how mi pickney dem come dress up for church, mi seh mi a never go back.

Ted: They didn't like what you all had on?

Lawrence: Not even, *that*. Once we had come to service after likkle while, some people start ask question like 'how come a fi him children always wear the same clothes every Sunday? They don't have but one set'a church clothes?'

On another occasion three members of the community whom I only saw at Bethlehem Moravian for funerals, and who by their own account did not attend Middle Rock Church of God, spoke critically of a resident and by proxy of others who presented themselves as Christians. One bright afternoon five of us stood near the front door of my apartment on the town square. Across the road and out of earshot a member of the community stood near a construction project connected with the Bethlehem All-Age School. He had been at the site every day that week; from what I had heard from several others he was a skilled laborer. A young woman had just walked by us, wearing fresh red dirt on her shirt and pants that showed she had been doing farmwork earlier in the day, and now she was stopped talking to him.

Ellis: See him stand up like a bloodclaat contractor t'raas. See'm deh? A lean pon di wall an' chat up a girl and still him get pay for di day while we cyaan get a work.

Thomas: And him a Christian too? See that?

Ellis: No, him naah Christian.

Dorothy [enunciating each syllable]: Him a hyp-o-crite.

Where in the first instance the object of criticism was the Moravian church—larger and better funded than the Bethlehem Church of God—here the man’s claim to Christianity in general was a basis for judging his behavior. In both cases though the charge of hypocrisy cut against the evangelical directive coming out of the Moravian church and challenged the authority that any Christian might assume in judging another person’s behavior as more or less on the path to the true freedom offered by salvation in Christ.

More broadly however, it expressed skepticism toward the church as a guarantor of freedom. The prescriptions for ultimately achieving a state of real freedom were guidelines for Christian behavior, not a description of how Christians actually comported themselves. The fact that these rules and the freedom promised for following them was recapitulated weekly of course shows that at least from the point of view of the clergy, skepticism toward the church’s promise as a guarantor of freedom was not limited to those who didn’t attend church. Taken with the examples above we can conclude that the Christian church figured centrally in the discourse of freedom in Middle Rock, but that its validity as a means to freedom was not fully accepted and in fact was under some challenge.

The socialization of children was another area where freedom came up in daily conversation while I was living in Middle Rock. In the first place limits to freedom—often referred to as “discipline”—figured in peoples’ words of approval for certain past and present schoolteachers. A number of times men and women spoke favorably about how the aforementioned Teacher Donovan had been known to send children home rather than allow them to attend school without wearing their school uniforms. One man, Mac, a resident in his early forties whose children now attended Bethlehem All-Age School told me that Teacher Donavan

was “a good teacher” because she had once sent him home from school for showing up with dirt under his fingernails.

Likewise, once as I played pool with a group of men in their twenties and thirties the subject arose of the legendary speed with which another former teacher had wielded his belt to mete out punishment upon them when they were his students. Minutes later the man in question—Mr. Clark—came walking by the bar where we were playing and as if to underscore that these memories were not bitter reminiscences one of the young men called Mr. Clark in and asked him to demonstrate his “quickness with the leather.” He obligingly stepped toward us as we circled around him, standing for a beat as though he wasn’t willing or hadn’t understood the request, then with fluid speed he unbuckled his belt with one hand and pulled it halfway from around his waist, and then smiled.

“What’d I tell you?” said Shawn, the thirty-something who had hailed Mr. Clark for the demonstration. “Don’t *ramp* with Mr. Clark, you hear? Dis’ya man don’t *play!*”

Finally, the importance of restricting children’s freedom came through in a number of discussions I had with present-day school teachers at Bethlehem All-Age, perhaps most clearly in a conversation I had with one woman who was completing a thesis for a Masters degree in education. She had chosen the topic “corporeal punishment” and was in the middle of producing what ended up a well-researched and thoughtful paper based on interviews with her colleagues and a sampling of parents with children enrolled at Bethlehem All-Age. Without recounting the full details of her findings, I note here that the general fact obtained that while some of her respondents identified benefits to a recent decision by the Jamaican Ministry of Education to forbid teachers from striking students, many (parents and teachers) saw this as a drawback and in many cases it was regarded by interviewees as crucial to a child’s healthy growth.

Still, the virtue of freedom as a means through which to appropriately socialize children came up in a few instances in conversations I had with residents while living in Middle Rock. On one occasion I was present while two women discussed the stage at which children begin walking on their own. On her way to see a friend who was putting in extra hours at Bethlehem Basic School—for children under kindergarten age—Adeline Weston had stopped to join Stephanie and I as we stood chatting on the corner. Mrs. Weston was carrying her son, Nathan, in one arm and held a bag over her opposite shoulder. She eased him to the ground feet-first and standing up she shifted her bag to the other side. The boy teetered on his tiny sneakers and held fast to his mother's leg.

“Look at little Nathan already standing up!” Stephanie said, smiling. “He'll soon be going to school up the road.”

I had recently learned the saying “bruk-foot baby,” which among other things was a reference to the expectation that a child would typically begin walking at approximately twelve months, and in spite of myself the term leapt immediately to mind. “He's not even a year yet, is he Ms. Adeline?” I asked.

“No not as yet,” she replied, reaching down to take his hand and draw him away from her leg. “And of course we will have to watch out because this means he'll be able to be getting into every little thing.”

Mrs. Weston steered Nathan toward Stephanie, who squatted down. She let go of his hand and with a few steps he reached the younger woman.

“It's true,” she said. “He looks good though Ms. Adeline.”

Mrs. Weston thanked her and for a second we all watched Nathan bob up and down bending his knees. Then Stephanie guided him back to his mother and stood back up.

“Yes, every little thing,” she said. “But to tell the truth I am happy.”

Stephanie, who also had children, nodded and said “of course!”

Mrs. Weston shifted her bag back again and hoisted the boy up. “Yes, soon it will be tougher to catch him and we’ll be running all over the place, but it is good for him—for his development. It’s good for children when they are independent, so they can learn things for themselves.”

“It’s true,” said Stephanie, stepping back so we were again about evenly spaced where we stood. “It is good for children to be free so they can learn. Right Nathan?”

During my stay in Middle Rock there were no instances when I was privy to any man’s or any woman’s explicit assessment of a gender differential of the meaning of freedom or of the relative freedom or freedoms that were or should be afforded women or men on account of their sex. However keeping loose track of the differences between how men and women invoked the idea of freedom I found that while there was some overlap (which I will discuss below) there was also an intriguing difference. While the definition of freedom as mobility never came up in any conversations I had or was privy to among men during my stay in Middle Rock, a few times women invoked the term to talk about physical mobility beyond Jamaica’s national boundaries. Here are two examples:

One of the many evenings I spent sitting in Suzette’s shop, the conversation had drifted to the different kinds of work that we had each had in the past, and she gave one of the clearest examples of differential treatment of women that I heard while I was there. The nightly news murmured from a twelve or fourteen-inch television mounted atop a refrigerator, but it was easily drowned out by the sounds of conversation and the clack of dice and game-pieces as

Suzette and two men played a brisk game of loodie¹²⁶ on a board set up on the glass counter that bisected the square space. The shop was around three doorways wide and about as deep, and with the counter in the middle, the fridge in the back, and shelves on the back wall there was just enough room for three people to stand or sit closely to one another just inside the doorway and another to stand aside the counter to the left. I was all the way inside to the right, and from her usual place behind the counter Suzette was playing against Lynval—a man who she had known since the late 1970s when they were both students at Bethlehem All-Age School—and Deeds, who was slightly older than the others of us. There were probably one or two people standing inside the doorway, watching the news and interjecting in the conversation.

It had just been established that the going rate for a day's work in Middle Rock was JA\$1500, which at the time converted to a little under US\$18, and that in the capital, Kingston, the going rate was JA\$2500 per day.¹²⁷ Suzette recalled that a number of years prior she had lived in Kingston when the going rate there was JA\$400 per day, and had gotten work at a construction site where as the only woman there her job was to come in after a crew of men had painted a room and to “clean things up after them.” This, she explained, mostly involved scratching blotches of paint off of windows with a razor blade.

Suzette said that she had wanted to try her hand at painting, and that once after she was finished with the clean-up she had taken a brush and touched up some areas of the room where the paint crew had done a sub-par job. Her boss had happened upon her doing this extra work

¹²⁶ Loodie is also called “Royal Ludo,” and it is a game where up to four participants roll dice to send their designated game pieces (“men”) from separate starting points (“houses”) around a board and into a center field colloquially called “heaven.”

¹²⁷ Although work was seldom so consistently available in Middle Rock, and moreover I often heard stories of the difficulty people had getting payment even after having done work, in the unlikely event that a person could find five days of work each week for every week of the year, this pay rate translates to an annual income of approximately US\$4680 in Middle Rock or US\$7800 in Kingston.

and after telling her that he approved of the job she had done he offered to increase her pay to JA\$1000 per day if she would paint the baseboards skirting the rooms.

Suzette smiled as she told the story, all while taking turns throwing dice and moving her men around the ludo board. After telling us how happy she had been when given this opportunity for painting work and better pay, she laughed and said that she later found out that the men were being paid for each foot they painted and that if she had been paid according to this scheme she would have earned “a whole lot more” than she got each day.

This story Suzette told of being on a separate path purely on account of her being a woman—amounting to less access to lucrative work and less pay for similar work—returned to mind when on another night the group of us stood and sat in the shop watching an action movie starring Steven Seagal, and a character appeared on screen with a large tattoo.

“You know I would like sometime to get a tattoo of a butterfly,” said Suzette. “Just a small one.”

“A green one?” said Dennis, teasing her. “You so much like di labourite ting that you want to put something green on your body that will stay forever?”¹²⁸

Sometimes Suzette punched back when one of her regulars made a joke at her expense but this was one of the times when she simply ignored it. “I look at butterflies,” she said, “and they just seem so free. They fly wherever they want.” Suzette’s comment pointed to a tendency in what I heard in Middle Rock for women to use the term freedom in relation to statements about physical mobility, and particularly travel abroad. Put differently, although on several occasions I heard women invoke freedom and mobility, I didn’t hear any men make this pairing.

128 This being a reference to the Jamaica Labour Party, whose official color is green.

On another occasion when I was chatting with two women at Bethlehem Moravian church the virtue of freedom of movement came up again. I, Shirley Walser, an elder in the church and early-forty-something parent, and Eva Ebanks, another regular parishioner, were talking about Barack Obama's inauguration to the U.S. presidency, at that time only a few months old.

"What do you think?" Ms. Walser said. She was sitting in the pew ahead of us. "Since Barack Obama became President I keep hearing people saying that things are going to change for everybody and not just people living in the U.S."

"Well one thing I kept hearing was that after the election he was going to free up the embassy," said Ms. Ebanks.

"Is that right?" Ms. Walser said. "I was hearing that too. Well there must be *some* limit to what the man can do!"

"It seems like people just think that because he is a black man that he would make it a priority to free things up so people could go back and forth with no trouble," Ms. Ebanks said.

Ms. Walser was shaking her head slowly. "Or even that he could do such a thing even if he wanted to!" she said.

"Even if he was a Jamaican he couldn't just do that," said Ms. Ebanks.

Again, by contrast to these examples, the definition of freedom as mobility never came up in any conversations I had or was privy to as they took place among men during my stay in Middle Rock. There were a number of times that I heard men talk about the travel outside of Jamaica either to live or simply to visit. In addition to a few instances where men who had never left the island told me of their interest or their disinterest in traveling outside of Jamaica, there

were stories about farmwork trips to the U.S. and Canada, there were stories of visits to those countries as well as to England for family visits; of trips to Puerto Rico for military training; to Guyana for post-secondary education; one story of life on the lam after quitting farmwork (the latter tellingly referred to as “running off”). But unlike the women cited above, in none of these instances did any men refer to past or future traveling off the island as a manifestation of freedom. This evidence of an apparent differentiation of the sexes is not definitive, but it highlights the significance of the view I often heard from men who had traveled abroad as farmworkers—though never from women: that I, as a U.S. citizen, was “more free in Jamaica” than I would be in my home country.

What might have simply been a friendly thing people said to make me feel welcome turned out to be the opening for some of the most informative conversations I had with Middle Rock townspeople about their conceptions of freedom. Indeed on at least two occasions the conversation took its turn with a person telling me, “welcome to Jamaica” and then “you are free here.” The first part was not always preceding, but in most if not all cases the person telling me I was free in Jamaica was a man who had traveled to the U.S. or Canada as a farmworker.

In one instance I was talking to William Swaby, a late forty-something husband, father, and farmer who had traveled to the U.S. on farmwork for a number of seasons but had not returned for over a decade. Mr. Swaby was a member of Middle Rock’s middle economic sector; a member of his family owned a car, he farmed a rockless slope of land just outside of town, and he owned the house near the town square where he lived with his spouse and children. “You are free here,” he had said.

Ted: I've heard people say that a few times since I have been here. What's that supposed to mean 'I am free here?'

Mr. Swaby: You are free here, in Jamaica. It's not like up-so where you have so much rules.

Ted: Uh huh.

Mr. Swaby: In Jamaica you are free to drink a beer on the road if you want to. In the U.S. if a man gets caught drinking on the road he's got trouble. You can't just do that there. When I was there you had to stay in a bar—you can't bring drinks outside.

Ted: This is when you were up on farmwork?

Mr. Swaby: Right. You had to drink your drink before you left any place or the police will throw you in jail and you lose your work. A whole lot of things different there.

Ted: But you were saying that I'm free here.

Mr. Swaby: Yes, here you can do want you want and nobody will trouble you.

Bruce Carter had also traveled to the U.S. on farmwork, and after one season ended he had chosen to remain in the U.S., living for a time in New York state and finally moving to the southwest before he was forced to return to Jamaica. He was younger than Mr. Swaby and unlike the other man he had spent only a fraction of his time abroad doing farmwork.

Bruce: Here in Jamaica you are free.

Ted: I'm free in Jamaica?

Bruce: Yes man. You're free in Jamaica because if you don't got no money to eat you can ask your neighbor for food and they'll give it to you. You can burn weed and walk along and not worry. But also you can own a house and all you have to pay is property taxes and the light bill. There you can't own a place because then you got to have property taxes and mortgage and house insurance. And you can't have a car without getting car insurance. You know if you got a house and don't have insurance for that, they can just come and take it right away from you.

Ted: You mean in the U.S.

Bruce: All *over* the U.S.

Other men from Middle Rock who had traveled to the U.S. on farmwork assessed the employment as a good opportunity to earn money but they spoke more directly about the restrictions that came with being a migrant contract employee. The common story went something like this: If after journeying to Kingston to apply for a job, one was given an interview, one went through a process designed to, among other things, assess his physical fitness for long stretches of uninterrupted labor. This included pinching the skin on a man's palms to determine whether his skin was calloused enough to indicate his having already done hard physical work and thus the likelihood he would endure the strenuousness of the labor ahead.

If selected, soon after a man would be flown with a group of others from Kingston to a major U.S. city, where the group would transfer from the plane to a Greyhound bus and ride to a destined work site. This part of the trip could take days—I learned that it was commonplace to fly from Kingston to Miami and then ride a bus from Miami to Maine—after which the workers were taken to living quarters where smaller groups were to share “barracks.” A number of men emphasized to me that only under extreme circumstances would a worker be granted leave for illness, and if a man was unable to work on more than one occasion his contract would be terminated and he would be sent back to Jamaica.

On at least one occasion a former farmworker likened the experience to slavery. Thus, the differentiation of the sexes—which I reiterate I am seizing on only as suggestive but absent further evidence must be considered only preliminary—may be attributable to the fact that of the portion of residents who had lived outside of Jamaica, the men were heavily represented by those who had traveled as part of international farmwork programs, and to qualities of that experience. In the absence of any parallel current of local women migrating for temporary work, statements like those cited above might suggest that the connection between freedom and mobility carried

unique significance for the women I spoke to because they had not experienced the strictures of the farmwork regime. If, in any case, farmwork ran counter to men's conceptions of freedom, this points to another area of locally expressed definitions of the term. How did freedom appear as a function of the organization of labor?¹²⁹

The image of freedom as a function of labor organization has been found resonating elsewhere in the region, where it has been identified as a regionally-prevalent legacy of the Caribbean plantation economy. In her study of agriculture workers in the St. Lucia banana export industry, Karla Slocum found a widely held sense that “freedom [is] the ability to organize a self-imposed workday” (2006: 97). In other words, St. Lucians who Slocum spoke with talked about freedom as a function of “being your own boss.” Moreover, Slocum observed, this tendency extends throughout what might be called the “post-plantation world,” where as the descendants of enslaved laborers, the masses of people talk about and shape their lives according to a notion of freedom related to the “social and cultural politics between freed Africans and European colonizers in the postemancipation period” (2006: 125).

¹²⁹ Another question might be “what can be said about how people in Middle Rock envisioned their proximity to a realm of true freedom where all of society is emancipated from labor?” Hannah Arendt observed that “The institution of slavery in antiquity, though not in later times, was not a device for cheap labor or an instrument of exploitation for profit but rather the attempt to exclude labor from the conditions of man's life” (1959: 84). This is important to me because in that text Arendt spends a good deal of time on the paradox that if Marx is right in the first place and labor is the activity through which humanity as a species constitutes itself, then he is wrong in the second place to argue that true freedom comes with the emancipation of humanity from labor. And I agree with Marx in spite of the contradiction but I suppose I can't explain why. I take this formulation as a bit tricky and able to be read at least two ways. In one sense Arendt is saying that slavery has been *either* a device for cheap labor and/or an instrument of exploitation for profit (as in modern times) *or* it has been the attempt to exclude labor from the conditions of man's life. Taken this way, freedom used to be the derivative of slavery but it no longer is.

Only one person who talked to me about his travels to the U.S. for farmwork described the experience in terms of slavery, but all agreed that a key drawback of the experience was that a person has no control over when, where, and for how long he was supposed to labor each day. In relation to this priority on being your own boss, the ethical orientation I have been discussing as prevalent in Middle Rock might appear difficult to reconcile. However, a conversation I had with a man who to my knowledge had never traveled abroad for farmwork (or for any other reason) illustrates how the equation of freedom with a self-determined workday could operate without undercutting the imperative of collectivism.

“I have heard this word ‘man free’ before but I still don’t think I know what it means,” I said to Ezra.

The two of us stood smoking cigarettes beside a strip of road on the outskirts of Middle Rock.

“That means slavery,” said Ezra. “But nobody really free, even after slavery.”

“Nobody’s free?”

“No. When you’re free people come and work together. When there is a job to be done people come and work together. Not like when there’s a job to be done and after it finish the person says they have something else for you to do.”

“Yeah?”

“Right.”

As Ezra put it, the importance of self-determination figured as a defining feature of freedom when it came to the kind and organization of a person’s labor. However there also remained in his definition of freedom a space where individual autonomy gave way to the

dictates of a job “to be done” that involves cooperation. That is to say, there was work that could be deemed socially necessary and thus which carried a certain requirement for individuals to contribute for the benefit of a collective, yet as such this work was reconciled with the expectation of each individual to decide the terms of and direction of his or her effort. As one sees in the first part of his answer Ezra defined freedom in terms of people coming and working together; cooperative activity wasn’t a break in freedom but rather one of its constitutive elements.

However, this definition of freedom primarily concerns only one side of the labor/emancipation dyad that I discussed in the first portion of this chapter. Returning to Mr. Gates and Mr. Carter’s statements cited above, one’s emancipation as a laborer was a requisite but insufficient component of a free life. There still remained the question of emancipation from labor, or put differently, emancipation from necessity. As one sees in the way each of those men spoke to me about the relative freedom of life in Jamaica versus the United States, the role of the government also figured into the realization of freedom. In those cases, when I followed up their statements and asked “are you free here in Jamaica,” both men answered in the affirmative, but in both conversations I was unable to steer the discussion away from the negative freedom—indeed the general absence of restrictions—afforded by life in Jamaica.

However, in those cases, the Jamaican state served as a foil to the U.S. government’s overreach. One of the fascinating parameters of Slocum’s St. Lucia research was how in their pursuit of self-determination and of being one’s own boss, the banana farmers she spoke to appeared from one angle to be submitting to the indirect yet powerful control of the transnational corporation, Geest. Slocum showed that in their willingness to take work for the transnational corporation, the banana growers were not succumbing to its interests but rather their employment

represented to many of them a means by which as banana growers they could pursue and achieve their own interests. Contrary to the notion that they were victims of an increasingly disinterested state, the agricultural workers in Slocum's study actually regarded the St. Lucian government as a problematic mediator and in the late 1990s they agitated to move themselves as a class out from under the purview of the state-controlled St. Lucia Banana Growers Association. Thus Slocum's research presents a case where neither unilateral control by transnational capital nor the "withering of the state" by virtue of its realignment away from workers were taking place, but rather an instance that finds workers themselves engaging the forces of the global marketplace and moreover attempting to remove the intervention of the state as a mediator so as to engage those forces more directly.

In my understanding of her ethnographic evidence, Slocum's text shows Caribbean agricultural workers working to emancipate their labor—and themselves as laborers—from the restriction of the government. In Middle Rock I found to the contrary that although people were concerned with the possibility of excess state intervention into their lives—where the U.S. figured as an example of how things should *not* be, and moreover where people worried about their own government's plans to impose taxes on staple food items—the state still figured as a guarantor of freedom. While people were critical, as I have described in chapter 3, of government officials and of the political class in general, this critique was not equivalent to an urge to dissolve or even categorically decrease the state's involvement in their lives. Rather, in my conversations with them people in Middle Rock described the Jamaican government as a failing guarantor of freedom, but a guarantor of freedom nevertheless. As a way of approaching a conclusion to the present discussion and in order to forge a path to the final chapter discussing the conceptions of freedom expressed in Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festival, three

examples will suffice to illustrate a position regarding freedom that was prevalent in residents' opinions about the performance and role of the Jamaican state.

I met Christopher Nelson in 2008 in the earliest days of my research stay in Middle Rock, and over the course of the year I spoke to him a number of times about the town's history as well as his experiences living abroad. He had lived in Canada for a number of years until he suffered an injury while working on a vegetable packing assembly line and decided to return home, where he farmed some but earned most of his money as a skilled tradesman.

Mr. Nelson was thus not unfamiliar with the limits national citizenship could pose to one's participation in the global market, and although he never said anything directly critical of Canada or his time there, on a few occasions he remarked simply that things were "different up there." However, as to the nature of his relationship to the Jamaican government, Mr. Nelson expressed a mixture of appreciation and dissatisfaction. As I will describe further in the subsequent chapter, Mr. Nelson was one of the Middle Rock residents who spoke openly of his happiness with government's early sponsorship of Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festivities. In this regard he was evidently not concerned about the state involvement as an exercise of the leadership's self-serving motives, rather he attested to his appreciation for the state's having provided a means for townspeople to know and celebrate their local history. However, in one instance he moved my question about freedom and the government from the topic of historiography to the zone of materiality, and was critical of government for its failure to provide for infrastructure.

I had approached him when I saw him taking a break from his work on a construction project at the Bethlehem All-Age School. Since Mr. Nelson had volunteered to me already his

view that Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day festival was an important way the government had participated in the life of the community, I was eager to know more of what he thought. After exchanging greetings and asking what part of the work they were doing that day—they were “blocking,” stacking cinder blocks on a steel frame and sealing them into walls with mortar—I asked if he felt that knowing this history changed how people thought about what freedom means.

“It is good to know your history,” he said, “but that alone doesn’t make a person free. Freedom is more like not having to do certain things in order to get what you need.”

As we talked we sat together on a short, white-washed stone wall on school driveway. He was wearing tan chinos as he often did, a polo shirt, and a baseball hat.

“From who?” I asked.

“From the government!”

“From the government?”

“Right,” he said, stretching the word out. “Freedom is not having to—like when the road needs fix?—not having to get out and scream and yell. Nowadays you’ve nearly got to have a *riot*. We’re not free when we still need to do that. Right now the government’s not doing its job.”

Recall briefly the story narrated by Michaeline Crichlow, cited in the previous chapter. From the middle 1930s through the first decades after independence, government bodies had directly engaged the Jamaican small farmer population to make a case for itself as a guarantor of a raft of social provisions, and although the list of provisions itself had changed the period marked an insinuation of the state—and particularly of the postcolonial state—into this sector of

the island society. Then in the late 1970s the Jamaican state realigned its relationship to its citizens, shifting its role in the reproduction of Jamaican society away from providing social services and restricting its efforts to the maintenance of the national economy through ensuring its interdigitation with the transnational flow of capital. Members of the Jamaican political class had spent years advancing the notion in communities like Middle Rock that the state was to be relied upon, and then after taking a neoliberal turn in its economic development strategy, the state had retreated from this position and for the most recent decades urged Jamaicans to assume greater responsibility for social reproduction as individuals. In 2009 Mr. Nelson spoke approvingly of the Jamaican state's support for Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festival, and although he was evidently unsatisfied with the government's fulfillment of its duties to promote the common welfare, he didn't advocate for the shrinking or dissolution of government, nor did he advocate for a return to colonial oversight by Britain. Rather more accurately he expressed a fairly direct critique of the turn in development strategy that Crichlow and others have illustrated. What is more, he expressed this critique in reference to freedom.

Of course Mr. Nelson wasn't alone in his critique, and in fact it I found that it was not at all extraordinary to hear people in Middle Rock asserting a similar position also making use of the concept of freedom to articulate their point. Other people in Middle Rock spoke to me about a diminished freedom shared by the rural Jamaican small farming population, manifest in relation to the government but not as a consequence of too much involvement of the state in peoples' lives. Wesley, for instance, spoke in clear terms about the need for the Jamaican government to carry a greater portion of the responsibility for social reproduction and, in doing so, for it to provide the conditions for individual Jamaicans to achieve unrealized freedom.

As a half dozen of us watched the evening news in Suzette's shop one evening, a story about a missing person sparked a conversation about "the crime problem" in Jamaica. Not long beforehand the government had launched a "Nationwide Child Abduction Alert System" called "Ananda Alert," named after a teen girl whose tragic disappearance and death had gripped the country for months. Now every so often a news flash would break into a radio or TV broadcast or appear in newspaper headlines, announcing an Ananda Alert and giving the name, age, and last seen location of a missing child. After hearing one such announcement Wesley, a retired police officer in the Jamaica Constabulary Force, said "This is a terrible problem that somebody must *fix*."

People stayed quiet while Wesley continued.

"That is government's job and they are not fulfilling what is required of them. What else is the government there for, except to provide for the people; give them security, freedom, and safety. They have a responsibility for solving this problem."

He was standing on one side of the glass display counter, and now he looked directly at Suzette. "Do you know what it means to be Prime Minister?" he asked. Then before she could answer he turned and asked two others, me last. We gave him just enough of a beat and he answered his own question.

"To minister is to serve, and that makes the Prime Minister the principal *servant*. The Prime Minister is the *servant* of the mass. That's everybody. That is the definition of the word. The Prime Minister is to serve *we*, to give us the things we need so we can survive and flourish."

No one there challenged Wesley on either the meaning of the term or the fact that some problems—like crime—are to be addressed by government, and that their persistence indicates something about the state's failure to fulfill terms of a social contract that constitutes the

state/citizen relationship. There were a few nods and then the conversation quickly changed. This fact at the time disappointed me but in hindsight I took it to illustrate general acceptance or even agreement with what Wesley had said. Still I wanted to know more of how freedom fit into his picture, and later that evening—emboldened by a few swigs of white rum and squash mix—I tried to get him to elaborate.

“What were you saying before about the Prime Minister and the government and people being free?”

Suzette had closed her shop for the night and now Wesley and I were sitting on stools in Middle Rock’s bar watching the late news report while behind us four twenty-something men played pool.

“The government is supposed to *serve* the people,” he said. “And the Prime Minister is the prime—the *principal*—servant. And the government must do its job for the people to be free. That means providing for the people so we can better provide for ourselves. But right now in Jamaica the party politics fracture the country and take up all of the politicians’ energy. So they are not doing their job.”

“Let me show you something,” he said. “Let’s say you are a foreigner who has come to make a business proposition for Jamaica. There is something you want to set up here, and you can’t come and talk to everybody so you come and talk to me, the Prime Minister.”

“Okay.”

“And so you come with your business proposition and you come and carry it to the Prime Minister, and then what am I supposed to do? I am supposed to listen to you and deal with you so that I get the best deal for the country. The Prime Minister is supposed to hear the proposition and then say to the people ‘this is what is going on’ and then find out how people think they

should respond, and then do that. It is a democracy; that is how it is supposed to work. The Prime Minister is the principal servant and that mean they have to represent the interest of *all* Jamaicans.”

Another night I was walking with two men to a pre-funeral set-up being held for an octogenarian farmer who had lived with his wife in a house about a fifteen minute walk from the town square. Most of the way to the Bates’s home was along an unlit asphalt road and a few times we passed groups of teenagers walking slowly toward the event. Occasionally cars passed by, causing outlines to jump out of the dark—houses, fences and walls, a ruminating cow, scrubs of plants between the road and the treeline—and each time we would step off the road into the grass, standing single file with our heads down as they sped past.

I was planning a trip to Kingston in the upcoming weeks and Ricardo—a farmer and skilled builder in his late 40s—and Clifton—a farmer about the same age—were taking turns suggesting how I should manage to get around the city, and weaving in snippets of reminiscence over the time each of them had respectively spent there.

I asked about Emancipation Park, an oasis of green opened in 2002 in a part of the city that is like a field of concrete. Located in the “New Kingston” district, Emancipation Park is near the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, the Liguanea Club, and the Kingston Hilton, and from an aerial perspective one might notice that it sits amid one of the city’s highest concentrations of tennis courts. The park is billed on its website as “a tribute to our freedom” and “a symbol of our Freedom to Hope, to Excel and to Be.”

“What about this big park they made, with the statues?” At one end of the landscaped oasis is what one newspaper called its “signature monument,” two larger-than-life bronze figures—a man and woman—facing one another as they stand in the center of a fountain.

“Emancipation Park,” said Ricardo. “Yeh. Emancipation Park. With the two statues.”

“That’s new though right?” I asked.

Ricardo made a sound.

“I mean, it’s kind of new, the park and the statues.”

“Ee hee,” he said. “Not so new anymore but yeah maybe.”

“They make a park to celebrate freedom when Jamaica isn’t free!” Clifton shouted from across the road. We had split up as a car passed and now we were falling back into a row as we walked.

Ricardo chuckled and quoted him back, “he said a park to celebrate freedom when Jamaica is not free.”

“How do you mean? Jamaica isn’t free?” I asked.

“You can’t be free when you are dependent,” said Clifton. I don’t remember exactly but the rubber from our shoes was probably squeaking with dew from the grass we had stood in to allow the car.

“Dependent?”

“Jamaica can’t be free because Jamaica is dependent. It has to be *in*dependent or else it is not free.”

“Jamaica is not free? But are Jamaicans free?”

“Jamaicans can’t be free because Jamaica depends too much on others. We have to get so much things from another place,” Ricardo said. We had turned up a hill in the final stretch to

the Bates house. On our left the hill went up more steeply, covered with grass and trees, while on the right the hill dipped down to a valley now shrouded save for moonlight and the lancing headlights of a passing car. In daylight looking down the slope was one of those views in Middle Rock with a combination of breathtaking beauty and quaint charm. There were a half dozen tidy houses each with a cement water catchment tank and around a tenth of an acre plot of cultivated land. One piece of ground was under a sizable battalion of yamsticks, and each plot was cut into rows of carrots, lettuce, or potato, and dotted by the broad leaves of the occasional coco plant.

“From one other place or lots of other places?” I asked Ricardo.

“Mostly from the country you’re from,” Clifton said, talking under Ricardo’s answer but getting the point in quicker.

“From America—from the U.S.” Ricardo was saying. “Right now most of the things di people dem want come from the United States. So as a Jamaican we have to be dependent on the U.S. if we want these things.”

“The government has not negotiated—or they have negotiated poorly—and by letting themself be dependent they make so the country is dependent,” said Clifton.

“It’s true they have to negotiate better,” Ricardo said. “Right here now the government is making it so we have to depend and we can’t be free.”

“I mean how that look to you, then Ted?” Clifton asked me. “The government is not doing the job they are supposed to. Can the country be free when they can’t be independent and they have to do as another country wants just so they can get what they need?”

“You mean if Jamaica had the money and the machines would it be better to produce those things here?”

“Of course!” exclaimed Ricardo.

“Of course” Clifton was saying as he led us off the road and on toward Mr. Bates’s set up.

The objective of this chapter has been to relate some of the fields of discourse in which local people invoked the concept of freedom, and to sketch out some of the particulars pertaining to the definitions that people attributed to freedom. I began with the distinction inhering around people’s affiliation with the Protestant church as a guarantor of freedom, I noted a distinction in what I heard from women living in Middle Rock but which I never heard from men, and I concluded with a brief discussion of the centrality that the Jamaican state held in the testimonies I heard from men about freedom. My suggestion is that this critique of the performance of government, and the fact that people often framed it as a condition of individual freedom, reflects an angle along which in 2009 Middle Rock residents parted ways with the Jamaican state, and by extension parted ways with the neoliberal strategy of economic development. In this it seems that Middle Rock residents would tend to agree with the assessment Aihwa Ong offered in an article from 2006, that “the new logics of market-driven individualism subvert the freedoms enshrined in citizenship by stripping away the old guarantees of citizenship protections” (2006: 237). In the cases cited above there resounds a sense that Middle Rock residents felt limited in their freedom, not liberated, by the shifting of responsibility for social reproduction onto their shoulders. Though hard work, personal achievement and “making something of oneself” held deep significance to a person’s proper functioning in society, the ethic of entrepreneurial individualism had not drowned out the coincidental mandate on mutual aid. In the following and final chapter I make an attempt to clarify how Middle Rock residents

conceived of freedom by considering the aesthetic underlying the musical program for the town's 2010 Emancipation Day festival. Much of the preceding chapter has rendered explanations from Middle Rock people for how and why they feel Jamaicans are not free. The next chapter considers how people from Middle Rock imagine freedom, in the face of powerful forces encouraging them to adopt a sense of the concept that privileges the pursuit of self-interest and the liberty of holding full responsibility for reproducing one's place in society.

Chapter 5

Freedom Sound(s): Emancipation Day and Meaningful Music

The previous chapter brought the discussion around to how men in contemporary Middle Rock envision the right distribution of responsibility for reproducing society. Through a selection of examples from the year I lived there I showed that in the course of daily life men and women in Middle Rock were apt to cite the value of freedom as an essential aspect of desirable life. Yet, as I noted, community members from a variety of age groups and across different economic strata expressed a contempt for selfishness that among other things indicates that Middle Rock residents did not embrace an unqualified sense of freedom as a social virtue. In other words, despite widespread agreement regarding the importance of human freedom for the constitution of a good society, it was quite a bit more rare to find a local adult who advocated simply for “more freedom” as a solution to existing social ills. Put even more simply, freedom’s virtue was regarded by many local people to be conditional; there are good freedoms and there are bad freedoms.

I noted that the prohibition against selfishness I found active in Middle Rock illustrated an ethos of mutuality that together with a strong ethos of individual initiative combined to effect a sense of personal responsibility that included yet extended beyond care for the self. We recall that a hallmark characteristic of capitalist utopianism is its self-justification on the grounds of its superiority as a means for providing the greatest benefits for the largest group. As such it is a reconciliation of the pursuit of self-interest and collective interest. What distinguishes it, as Milton Friedman would gladly tell us, is the individuation of risk. The virtue of this system is

that while individuated enterprise may yield discrete as well as widespread benefits, negative outcomes are contained as the individual bears the brunt of his or her enterprise's failure.

Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festivities are rooted in a commemorative tradition that came alive on August first 1839, the first anniversary of the full abolition of slavery after Apprenticeship, and the anniversary of the day every person enslaved in the British West Indies was manumitted by force of law. According to residents I spoke with, Emancipation Day commemorations persisted locally for decades only to taper and wane to a whisper in the second half of the twentieth century.

One man, whom residents had directed me toward as an authority on local history, maintained that Middle Rock had hosted Emancipation Day festivities from the first celebration of abolition in 1838, up past the halfway point of the next century. Furthermore, he explained, Middle Rock was historically the geographic and social center of a constellation of nearby communities, and that the town's celebration was included within a revolving circuit of public holiday celebrations, split up among five neighboring communities. "In December," he said, "we'd go to [names small farming town about five miles to the west], and the first of January we'd go to [names smaller town two miles north of Middle Rock].... But generally first of August was always here, center. So we'd revolve."

When I asked about past Emancipation Day celebrations, a resident in his late 60s recalled the excited anticipation surrounding the event when he was a child, as well as the fact that Middle Rock's festivities had drawn visitors from surrounding communities. "Every year we looked forward to coming out," he told me. "We'd always look forward to coming out when we were small boys.... When we were very young Middle Rock would have—as I said, you

know—they used to have a picnic. Then all the other districts [he named four area communities] would meet here.”

I asked him if he meant that Emancipation Day had been historically commemorated there where we were standing on the Bethlehem All-Age School playing common.

“Of all the districts around,” he said, “here was the center. You might have something at [community five miles south of Middle Rock], but the big one was—always was here. It was always a central point when it comes to the holiday, first of August.”

In addition, according to local testimony, Bethlehem Moravian church and Middle Rock’s local Pentecostal church have marked Emancipation Day with commemorative services with some historical consistency, Bethlehem Moravian since the 1838 and Middle Rock Church of God since its foundation in the 1950s. Although I was informed that a “Pocomania Church” had held also held gatherings in a location nearby Middle Rock since the 19th century, I was unable to get any confirmation from contemporary residents whether this or any other community of African Revivalist religious practice had commemorated Emancipation Day with any historical consistency. When I asked him about this one man who had lived in the Middle Rock community since the 1950s distinguished Middle Rock from communities elsewhere in the island, where “their festivals demonstrate quite pronounced African traditions.” By contrast, he said “we are more or less natural Christians. You go to other parishes, some parishes have voodoo, some Pocomania is there. But in Middle Rock we are strictly—most people are—believe in the Christian faith.”

The consistency of these Protestant church commemorations have no doubt played a role in keeping the Emancipation Day commemoration alive in Middle Rock, especially given their continuity while the non-ceremonial and more secular component of Middle Rock celebrations—

the picnic mentioned above—fell off the local calendar in the early 1960s. The picnic, one resident told me, “was one of the major attractions.” On this occasion people would eat cooked food, listen to music, and dance but, as he remembered, the most significant aspect of the Emancipation Day picnics in the first half of the twentieth century was a merry-go-round, notably accompanied by live music of a secular variety. “When you go on,” he recalled about the ride, “you would pay a penny. Then the fife man blows his fife and the rumba box man plays, and also there would be someone there singing a calypso or something. In Jamaica we call it folk songs. You’d go around for about two and a half minutes, as many times as you could until the money finish, and that’s it; they’re closing.”

Then, beginning in 1962, Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day picnics were absorbed into Jamaica’s national independence festivities, placed as they were on the Jamaican calendar five days after the anniversary of the passage of the Abolition Act. One resident noted that this was not merely a case of people losing interest in Emancipation Day, but also a likely result of the newly established national government to highlight and prioritize independence.

“Emancipation—first of August—was a very important day to us,” he said. “And when we had independence the government paid more attention to the sixth of August.”

Indeed, when Jamaica gained political independence from Great Britain in 1962, the architects of the new state had opted to promote an image of the country as an amalgamation of people with different backgrounds. This was epitomized by the independence government’s choice of motto to reflect the spirit and constitution of the nation—“out of many, one.” In following with this sentiment officials threw great weight behind independence day celebrations, while Emancipation Day was left off the calendar of national holidays. Moreover, although it could theoretically have been placed on any day of the year, Jamaica’s independent government

selected a day—August 6th—that was so close to Emancipation Day that by not recognizing the latter officials engineered a situation where commemorating emancipation was subsumed.

In practice, the distribution of political and economic power in Jamaica before *and after* independence had continued to follow what might be more accurately called a racial minoritarianism. That is to say that in spite of attempts to foster a national image of admixture—a sort of Anglophone *mestizaje*—the country’s wealth and political leadership was concentrated among the small fraction of Jamaicans who in local parlance were either “white” or “brown.” Then in the mid-1990s, officials began a series of moves that led in 1997 to a bicameral act of the Jamaican Parliament instituting Emancipation Day as a national holiday.

At that time, P.J. Patterson led the governing People’s National Party. As the first Prime Minister elected by Jamaicans who was *not* a member of the minority conventionally characterized as “brown” or “white,” Patterson embodied the arrival of a black political elite in the corridors of Jamaican power. Thus, the institution of Emancipation Day—and the related pomp and circumstance—represented not only an effort by the Patterson government to solidify its leadership by courting one part of the electorate, but also for some, as one Middle Rock resident pointed out to me, placing Emancipation Day on the national calendar marked a logical turn toward racial majoritarianism in the national image. “I think it was the Rastafarians who came up with the idea,” he told me. “They said, ‘look, we’re running away from our major history.’ And that’s why government looked into it, and they said ‘alright we’ll maintain our first of August.’” This assertion is supported by some of the earliest scholarship on the Rastafarian movement and its progressive and effective advocacy with respect to the evolution of Jamaican government policy. Rex Nettleford, who co-wrote the landmark “Report on the Rastafari Movement in Kingston, Jamaica” (1960), later observed that while Rastafarian urgings

for Jamaican social reform often provoked opposition from government leadership, those views have often been eventually adopted into the architecture of national policy, particularly as regards the intersection of race, class, and politics in Jamaican society.

The wider society's conception of a harmoniously multi-racial and stable nationalism is challenged fundamentally by the Rastafari. The movement was objectively to inform the wider society of the inherent incongruities of the Jamaican social system in which the poor grew poor and the rich more prosperous. By the late sixties these incongruities were to become the stock-in-trade of many commentators on the social system including those who ten years before would have regarded the stating of these as intolerable if not subversive.¹³⁰

The Rastafarian community's influence in Jamaican politics—and particularly the fact that this resident considered their influence active in the late 1990s—is a telling feature in the story of Emancipation Day's institutionalization as a national holiday, and it speaks to a continuity in Jamaica's evolving political sphere. Where since the 1970s the People's National Party has taken a lead in incorporating this historically anticolonial and Pan-African nationalist movement into the political mainstream, it is interesting to consider the institutionalization of the Emancipation Day holiday as the PNP's perpetuation of that strategy despite having adopted a neoliberal posture to economic development. More generally however, and more important to this discussion, whatever was the government's relationship to Rastafarianism in nationalizing the holiday, by placing the experience of enslavement firmly within the officially sanctioned Jamaican national narrative it targeted the contradiction that existed between multiracialist political rhetoric and the reality of a racialized hierarchy of power.

Thus, under PJ Patterson, in the late 1990s the Jamaican government sponsored events around the island to inaugurate Emancipation Day as a national holiday. Middle Rock was

¹³⁰ Nettleford, Rex. *Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica*. New York: William Morrow, 1972: 61. Qtd in Waters, Anita M. *Race, Class, and Political Symbols: Rastafari and Reggae in Jamaican Politics*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1985: 6-7.

included in the sponsored festivities, and from that period there has been a resurgence of activity in town each year toward commemorating Emancipation Day with a public event. How did this come to be? That government sponsored festivities in the national capital, Kingston, comes perhaps as no surprise. But Middle Rock, a town of about 250 people, a number of whose residents described their town to me as “remote,” was a less predictable star in the constellation of inaugural festivities. How did a remote and small farming community like Middle Rock get included in the government’s push to institutionalize a national holiday?

Middle Rock rose as a community of particular interest for the Jamaican government in 1987 when two things happened. First a 19th-century church in Middle Rock was recognized for a Jamaican Heritage in Architecture award and featured in a catalog of two dozen other historic Jamaican churches. Second, that same year the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission—which is affiliated with the National Heritage Trust—hosted a nationally-televised independence day commemoration from the Middle Rock church on August 6th.

Over the next decade, the founding director of the JCDC—himself a man with roots in the region—conducted research into the emancipation-era history of the area in an effort to identify and preserve aspects of a Jamaican folk culture that exemplified the nation’s heritage. When he recounted the early days of the project to me he said he took particular interest in Middle Rock because it was one of Jamaica’s “free villages”—that is, it was a town that was established shortly after the abolition of slavery by European missionaries and settled by people who had been enslaved in the area. As a former free village Middle Rock’s local culture could be linked to an early and uniquely Jamaican society, created out of a mixture of traditions, and for him, that continuity was not only relevant as a preserve of national character but for Middle Rock’s contemporary residents it was a point of local comparative advantage around which they

ought to rally as a source of pride and if possible as a resource that could be capitalized upon for economic development.

It was in this context that in 1998 the parish-level branch of the Cultural Development Commission selected Middle Rock as one of six towns in Manchester to receive sponsorship to host a commemoration of Emancipation Day on August first—Christiana, Alligator Pond, Mandeville, Cross Keys, Porus, and Middle Rock. Through the parish cultural development commission the government contributed around US\$1000, and with additional funds donated by community residents Middle Rock put on an outdoor concert featuring local gospel and reggae music performers and ending with a nighttime dance in the town square. The next year in 1999 the parish commission had a smaller budget and instead of six the organization sponsored only four festivals in Manchester, yet based on agreements between townspeople and government officials that the event had been a success there, Middle Rock was again selected to get financial support for putting on an event.

By 2000 state sponsorship for Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festival dwindled to around a quarter of what it had been, but nevertheless when the parish cultural development commission offered sponsorship to support only one town's festival, Middle Rock got the nod again. That year the commission allocated its full Emancipation Day budget to Middle Rock's festivities. In partnership with members of the community the 2000 festival was an effort that was consciously centered around Middle Rock's—and Jamaica's—folk heritage.

There were tours of the historic Moravian church and a set of still-standing structures that have been identified as a slave hospital. There were exhibitions of bygone building practices like Spanish wall (or wattle & daub) and artifacts generally centered around the emancipation era were on exhibit, including cut shingles, branding irons, and a large carved wooden bowl. There

was folk music and dance, including quadrille, maypole, and dinki mini. And to cap it all off the menu harkened to an “indigenous” Jamaican cuisine and included jerk chicken, ackee and saltfish, mackerel run down, pepper pot soup, corn pone, mannish water, and duckunoo.¹³¹

Middle Rock’s 2000 festival was considered a success by many members of the community, and people I talked to later recalled how well the event was attended, how it provided commercial opportunities for residents, it provided publicity to the town sometimes dismissed as “out in the bush,” and it created an opportunity for people who had migrated abroad and to other parts of the island to return for a reunion.

However much they agreed, officials from the national cultural development commission were not happy with the fact that all of the parish funding had been used for one event in one town, and besides that the Jamaican economy was contracting and the national debt was growing. So after 2000 the government couldn’t offer any substantial funding for the local project anymore.

Despite the absence of government funds and its withdrawal from offering logistical support, members of the Middle Rock community nevertheless hosted an Emancipation Day festival in 2001. They constructed a 10-foot-tall fence around the perimeter of the school common where the event was held, and began charging a small entry fee to offset costs. From that point forward, the local community council received a lot of funding and support from an

¹³¹ These foods were a topic of discussion among other places in a number of planning meetings I attended prior to Middle Rock’s 2006 and 2010 Emancipation Day festivals, and they were contrasted with “modern food,” a term I heard most often used in reference to fried chicken. Mackerel run down (aka “run dung” or “dip-and-fall-back) is a dish made with mackerel, coconut milk, onion, scallion, tomato, garlic, thyme, salt, and pepper. Mannish water is a soup made from the meat of a ram goat. Duckunoo (also called “tie-a-leaf” and “blue draws”) is a cassava cake cooked in a tied banana leaf.

organization of ex-pat former residents now living in the U.S. and Canada, and without government involvement Middle Rock hosted an Emancipation Day festival every year.

The first time I attended, in 2006, the event was covered on national television and radio, and Community Council members were featured on a morning TV talk show (*Smile Jamaica*) to advertise and discuss the event. There were hundreds of people there from other towns in Jamaica, former residents returning for a short stay, and some tourists. Not to mention of course the fact that the event had also drawn me—a university student raised in downstate Illinois and enrolled at a school in New York City. And I had read about the festival in a number of articles in online editions of Jamaican newspapers, reports from the Jamaica Information Service, and also in the 2003 and 2006 editions of *Lonely Planet* travel guidebooks.¹³²

2007 marked the 200th anniversary of the end of the Atlantic slave trade, and in the context of a push to commemorate that fact, the festival again received some funding from the government but the bulk of the funding still came from ex-pats who raised money among their communities abroad, and also arranged some private sponsorship from Jamaican corporations. In 2008 government support had again receded, and the show, as they say, still went on. In 2009 though, for the first time in over a decade, there was no Emancipation Day festival in Middle Rock. An initiative sparked by the government had been received and taken up by locals even after the government's money dried up. Then they stopped. What happened?

In 2009 the Middle Rock Community Council met and for three reasons they agreed that there should be no Emancipation Day festival in town that August. First, the global economic crisis had made private and public funding—including remittances from abroad—harder to come by. Second, a recent swine-flu outbreak in Manchester had closed schools a few weeks early and

¹³² For examples see *Jamaica Observer* March 5, 2006; Jamaica Information Service, June 8, 2005; *Jamaica Gleaner* July 29, 2000.

this made organizing performance groups of schoolchildren much more difficult. Third, that year August 1 would fall on a Saturday, and not only did that cut out support from the Seventh Day Adventist members of the community—who would not attend out of respect for the Sabbath—but since the following Sunday was first communion at Bethlehem Moravian, the Church leadership refused to participate in something that would occupy their time and the space of the school common—which was church property—late into the night, as Emancipation Day festivities usually did.

People outside of the council explained the cancellation differently. Local residents who were not on the Council—including farmers who I shared rum with as well as a number of church-going, tee-totalling members of the community—argued that the event was more likely being canceled due to mismanagement of money and general unreliability of the local leadership. Members of the expat group who had been involved in previous years told me that the event was cancelled due to a lack of funds and because they and local organizers were already stretched too thin and overcommitted.

The official in the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission—who had been involved in the project from so early on—argued that the event failed because its heritage emphasis had dwindled and residents had failed to capitalize on their comparative advantage and made the festival too much like other “fun fairs” and had insisted on including “pre-recorded, contemporary music” and “modern” foods like fried chicken.

But in reality, a number of odds were stacked against Middle Rock carrying on this project. Although the door had been finally forced open to include a black political elite, there remained the problem of more widespread uplift among the Jamaican masses, and as the state tried to solve Jamaica’s economic woes through mechanisms of the marketplace—including high

interest rates to encourage domestic borrowing—a mountain of bad domestic debt forced the government into a domestic banking bailout that resulted in social spending cuts. Already by the late 1990s public opinion had begun to swing against the PNP, itself having only recently been reelected by a landslide.

Yet in 2010, Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day festival was back up and running, complete with the exhibition of artifacts from the era of abolition, food like corn pone, run dung, duckunoo, and ackee and saltfish, and folk dances and music performances including maypole, and dinki mini. As it was described in a planning meeting in the days before the event, a “small amount” of funding from government (more on that below), and private sponsorship had been sought and arranged by locals and community expats. What is more, in the weeks afterward residents in Middle Rock told me that the event had been a success. Although this was a program sparked by a top-down government initiative it is difficult to know how much it carried some measure of crass political operating. Nevertheless the outcry in Middle Rock in 2009 when the festival failed to launch, and the fact that it was reinstated in 2010 suggests that there is vital interest at the local level in keeping the annual event alive.

But this spurs a return to consider just what it is that residents want to keep alive. I have already noted that residents do not measure its success in the same way as members of Jamaica’s political elite. People I spoke to in Middle Rock measured their contemporary Emancipation Day commemorations a success if there was “good music,” if the festival drew a crowd, if it had foods and activities that catered to the diverse interests of people of all ages, if it provided a chance for interaction with family and friends returning from abroad, and if it brought money into the community. But in contrast to the government’s original program, speakers on stage as

well as people I spoke to on the grounds did not figure their Emancipation Day festival's primary purpose to be economic development.

In the first place, there are the people in Middle Rock who volunteered to me—including one member of the community who told me “make sure to put this in your dissertation”—their opinion that neither Jamaica nor Jamaicans are “yet free.” Secondly, although when I lived there townspeople were apt to express to me their opinion about Middle Rock's desperate need for “skills training” and the diversification of local industries beyond farm-to-market agriculture, in this context Emancipation Day never entered the discussion unless I brought it up first. In those latter cases people acknowledged that Emancipation Day held certain potential for drawing tourists and returning migrants to Middle Rock but no one advocated it as a source of revenue as had the government official whose sponsorship had been such a catalyst to the annual event. Rather those I asked about economic development were quick to respond that they felt Middle Rock could benefit from skills training—ranging from carpentry to proficiency with internet and desktop publishing. In fact it was not Emancipation Day but a now-defunct cheese manufacturing operation (out of commission since damaged by a hurricane in 2004) that people specifically cited as an object of economic development that they wished to see at work in town. Cultural development was not without its support, yet in the parlance of a number of men and women with whom I spoke, “traditional industry” represented the priority.

One example of this in particular stood as a local reference point for many people symbolizing this other pathway to economic development. This was a cheese production and processing facility that originated out of the work of a non-profit non-governmental organization (which I will call “People's Projects”).

That NGO was founded in 1979 with initial logistical support from two non-profit development organizations, the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), the Social Action Centre, Jamaica. It was staffed by Jamaicans and expatriates but driven in particular by one individual born in a town near Middle Rock who, after earning college degrees in the United States, had dedicated himself to galvanizing economic development projects for rural Jamaica. The cheese project (which I will call “Manchester Cheese, Inc.”), extended to include a rotating loan scheme and a cattle and feed-raising component, employed several dozen individuals from Middle Rock as well as two other districts in the parish, provided management, bookkeeping, and cheese production training and experience, and supplied artisanal cheese to a network of groceries and hotels.

According to existing records from 1995 to 2000 Manchester Cheese produced and sold nearly 100,000 pounds of cheese, and between at least 2002 and 2004 the facilities processed approximately 1000 pounds of milk daily.¹³³ Initially workers produced Manchester Cheese in batches of orange and white cheddar, packaged for retail sale in seven and sixteen ounce portions, and for wholesale purchase in blocks of between two and four pounds. By 2002 the factory was producing at capacity of over 100 pounds of cheese daily, eighty percent of which had been committed to the two cheddars, while the remaining twenty percent capacity went to producing “jerk cheese,” either in mild or spicy flavor. Yet in spite of the efforts of many, and the factory’s success generating volumes of product, the project never outgrew the precarious position of insufficient returns to cover the costs of operation. A series of external events led to the closure of Manchester Cheese, Inc. in 2005 and at the time of this writing it has since never opened again. For brevity’s sake I will outline three here.

¹³³ Figures cited from a 2002 business plan for the project, with special note of thanks to Attorney Ghenete Wright Muir.

Firstly, as discussed in chapter three, above, courses of structural adjustment mandated by transnational lending organizations led to the removal of domestic agricultural subsidies, the elimination of import tariffs on foreign dairy products, and the reduction of the Jamaican government's oversight of agricultural produce markets (Reyes-Pacheco 1993: 21-22).¹³⁴ Economist Michael Witter has identified the latter development as pivotal, noting that although “the protection of domestic agriculture has been the last area of resistance to liberalization,” the contraction of the market for Jamaican milk products became particularly intense in 1991 “as a result of the deregulation of the dairy trade following the disbanding of the State-owned [Jamaica Commodity Trading Corporation]” (Witter 2005: 203).¹³⁵ These macroeconomic changes may have produced some space of favorable market conditions for locally-produced artisanal milk products, but its greatest impact on the Manchester Cheese was to steepen the angle of uphill struggle.

Second, without adequate revenue or outside funding to sustain the cheese factory in Middle Rock, its champions were under unrelenting pressure to seek outside funding from government and non-governmental organizations, leaving the enterprise vulnerable to sudden unanticipated costs. On September 9th, 2004 Hurricane Ivan struck Jamaica, stripped the roof off of the cheese processing facility in Middle Rock. The storm left the business out of commission, and left employees and organizers in a lurch with a new set of unavoidable re-ignition costs.

Finally, the Manchester Cheese project fell asunder after the project's coordinator and relentless champion passed away after a struggle to survive a prolonged illness. In his absence,

¹³⁴ Reyes-Pacheco, Armando. *The Structural Adjustment Process on Jamaica's Agricultural Sector*. Caracas: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, 1993.

¹³⁵ Witter, Michael. *Trade liberalization: The Jamaican Experience: Prepared for UNCTAD*. Mona: Department of Economics, University of the West Indies, 2005. [http://www.unctad.info/upload/TAB/docs/TechCooperation/jamaica_study.pdf (accessed 2/14/13 12pm)].

some of the key players have tried unsuccessfully to secure funding to get it running again, while at least one individual who had been a central cog in the operation took the lesson from the experience that dairy and dairy products constituted an unviable industry for Middle Rock.

A week after the 2010 festival had ended I was standing with a group of thirty and forty-something adults along the main road. “How did you all like Emancipation Day this year?” asked one of the organizers, a man in his fifties. “Good, no?” Several people—including me—nodded.

“You know what we want to see?” said one man, a farmer whose spouse lived in the United States. “Get that cheese plant back up and running so people can get some real skills,” he continued after a beat. “It’s *that* that’s going to help the community.”

“Yes, yes,” said the older man. “That *is* something we need. It’s going to take a lot of money to get it going again, and I’m afraid it’ll take a while.” He paused. “But yes we do need that to come back.”

And indeed the people whom had spoken up in favor of revitalizing the cheese factory were not alone. Two of the former employees at Manchester Cheese, Inc. whom I interviewed separately cited the value of the experience for those involved. One member of this group had since established herself as a stand-out success through farming, described the opportunity her involvement had afforded her to learn new skills, and also the opportunity to travel outside of Jamaica and gain exposure to the global community of agricultural producers, including a trip to India for a gathering of non-governmental organizations.

More importantly for this part of the discussion, however, is how these details point to an overarching motive behind residents’ efforts to hold the festival each year. The words of one individual are particularly illustrative. In May 2009 I interviewed Mark, a man in his mid-forties

with deep roots in Middle Rock who has continued to be an active member of the community since he and his wife and children relocated to the United States in the 1990s. When Middle Rock first began hosting Emancipation Day festivities in 2000, Mark was one of the key organizers of the event, acting as a liaison between official sponsors in the Jamaican government and the people living in town. After noting that I had seen fliers advertising the event as a “cultural development project” I asked him if this meant that the festival was a way to generate funds for the community by capitalizing on Middle Rock’s cultural distinctiveness. Was it equally accurate to refer to Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day festival as an economic development project?

Mark emphatically rejected this idea, explaining that with respect to Emancipation Day “cultural development” referred to the shaping of peoples’ minds through a heightening of their awareness of the role of slavery in Jamaican history. Regardless of whether the festival turned a profit, the main purpose of Middle Rock’s festival was, in Mark’s description, to provide a means for people to meditate on the fact that slavery had once been the dominant institution on the island, and to gather together in recognition that “slavery was something that we must never allow to happen again.”

Indeed any moderately attentive observer who would have seen in 2010 the prevalence of historical references—in ‘traditional cuisine,’ ‘folk music,’ and a display of historical ‘artifacts’ accompanied by brochures that highlight Middle Rock’s abolition-era past—would also have seen that Mark was not alone in his opinion. And furthermore the resonance of his sense of the driving intention behind the festival bore out in responses from others to whom I asked “what do people in Middle Rock celebrate today?” To this question I got some variety of responses, but all referred me to the ending of the institution of slavery.

Likewise suggestive is a contest that a group of expatriates had organized for local school children, wherein students from Bethlehem All-Age were encouraged to submit one-page essays on the topic of “what does Emancipation mean to you?” The top three essays to be selected by a team of local teachers would garner cash prizes and the opportunity for the respective winning authors to recite their work on stage at that year’s festival. For these reasons I suggest that for organizers and participants in Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day festivities, the outcome of slavery abolition and its role as a constitutive feature of the present, was the focal central purpose of the commemoration.

This fact places Middle Rock’s festival in square relation to commemorations of slavery abolition in the United States as discussed by William Wiggins, Jr..¹³⁶ In the early 1970s Wiggins gathered interview, documentary, and experiential information from emancipation celebrations he attended in Texas, Georgia, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania, and published a book from his research entitled *O Freedom!: African American* concluded that “a primary function of freedom celebrations is to keep the Afro-American saga alive in the minds of celebrants” (1987: 49). Across the events he attended Wiggins found a shared programmatic focus on telling a four-part epic chronicle of the African experience in the Americas, tied together by “one overriding theme of a quest for freedom.” As Wiggins found it in those events, what he called the “Afro-American saga” was broken down in to four epochs: the “glorious African past,” “slavery,” “emancipation,” and “the ongoing struggle for freedom that began for Afro-Americans, ironically with Emancipation” (49).

Wiggins noted that in the events he attended “the entire saga was best expressed as a unit in a series of historical pageants that were written especially for these observances,” but in

¹³⁶ Wiggins, Jr., William. *O Freedom! Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987.

neither Middle Rock’s 2010 commemoration nor the event I attended in 2007 was the drama enacted as such. Rather, the focus in Middle Rock upon making reference to the saga occurred within what Wiggins refers to as the “circus of symbols” through which he found “random bits of this four-epoch saga appear[ing] throughout the freedom celebrations” he attended. With remarkable sensitivity to experiential detail, Wiggins recounted aspects of that circus of symbols that by comparison further demonstrate similarity between the events he attended and Middle Rock’s 2010 Emancipation Day festival. Chief among these in Middle Rock, I want to suggest, is the musical program, and it is to this feature—and the means by which it articulates what one might call (following Wiggins) an “Afro-Jamaican saga”—to which I now turn.

As it had been every year of the commemoration, music was strongly tied to the “eventfulness” of Middle Rock’s 2010 Emancipation Day festival. Emancipation Day first stands out for the intensity with which it diverges from what it sounds like in Middle Rock at other times during the year. To document this I made a series of audio recordings around town using one of two portable digital recorders, and a stereo condenser microphone. In one of these recordings, on the Middle Rock town square in the early part of the afternoon, there is a passing car, the rush of the wind, a crying young goat, and the pulse of music playing from a shop on the square. Another recording I took on the square on a weekend night when there was often considerably more activity as residents—mostly men—gathered to socialize at one of the shops. There one hears some nondescript talking and a passing car, but both are easily drowned out by the force of the portable stereo playing in a shop on the square. Comparing this with recordings taken from the same place on the square while the Emancipation Day festival was going on, one can hear how the commemoration is tangibly “eventful” both by way of the intensity and high

volume with which sound drenches the space, and by way of the saturation of the soundscape by music.

Throughout the year I heard music in Middle Rock many times a day, often emanating different feeds of sound from two or more sources at once. During the week prerecorded music (from the radio, mp3s, or compact discs) began radiating in the early morning from shops on the square, from peoples' homes, from passing cars, and from people's cellphones. On Sundays strains of live music carried out from Bethlehem Moravian and Middle Rock Pentecostal church, filling the space vacated by the reduced auto traffic as taxi drivers took the day off. But during Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day festivities the number of streams of music filling the air grew dramatically larger, and the overall volume likewise elevated to levels only surpassed by two other events that occurred during the year—a "street dance" in December 2008 and another in July 2009. On Emancipation Day music spilled, rattled, pounded, reached, squealed, and soared out of shop fronts, parked and passing cars, and even more loudly than usual out of the house of a neighbor of mine. But the stream of music most firmly connected to Emancipation Day's eventfulness deserves the bulk of my focus here, and for a number of following reasons I argue that this is the music propelled into the space by the public address system set up on one side of the festival midway on the Bethlehem All-Age School playing common.

During Middle Rock's 2010 festival the stage set-up was the most powerful sound source operating, it represented one of the largest costs for organizers, it supplied the music people referred to when they talked about the festival at other times during the year, and it marked an official beginning and ending of the event. The PA system included twin stacks of speakers flanking a twenty-foot wide and three-foot high wooden stage, and this year it was set up on the northern side of the playing common so that the direct force of the sound passed across the flat

field toward the two-story school building, built into the side of a substantial hill. For the sake of clarity I will refer to this sound source as the “stage set-up,” from which it may be distinguished against the broader field of sounds audible in Middle Rock during the Emancipation Day festival.

In one piece of audio I recorded while the festival was underway one gets a sense of the power of the stage set-up, specifically its pervasiveness and the spatial breadth of its enveloping reach¹³⁷. From a vantage point across the road and out of the direct path of the PA speakers one hears the music from a stage performance present in the background even while it is drowned out periodically by sounds in the audible foreground. Throughout the day of the event the largest concentration of people occupied the space that included the playing common, the roads on three sides of its perimeter, and the strip of shops across one road from the common, and when not competing with other sounds the PA was clearly audible in all these areas. Only when one moved down a hill to the south or over a hill to the north could one begin to escape the sound of the stage set-up, and even then if a conversation, the roar of a passing car, or the sound of my sneakers on the gravel road fell quiet I found I could hear the stage sound, while I couldn’t for instance, make out the music and conversation coming from shops on the Middle Rock square.

Secondly, the centrality of the stage show to Middle Rock’s festival is reflected in the large portion of the event budget that it absorbed. From attending planning and wrap-up meetings in 2006, 2009, and 2010 I learned that allocations for expenditure fell into one of the following five categories:

Advertising & Publicity

¹³⁷ I borrow the metaphor of the envelope from the distinction John Collins draws between thinking of sound experience in this way versus conceiving of sound’s affect operating as from a girding structure. (Collins “Sound and Play in Salvador,” undated MS qtd in Birth 2008: 2).

Entertainment
 Food and drink for sale
 Site preparation, Cleanup, & Miscellany
 Support staff

The stage show dominated the entertainment category, far outstripping the additional costs of renting an inflated bounceabout trampoline, a mechanical bull, a train ride (with a riding lawn-mower as the locomotive), and hiring people to oversee them each the day. It required materials and construction of a physical stage with lighting, rental and operation of the amplification system (speakers, cables, amplifier, mixing board), hiring, feeding, and transporting out of town performers, and electricity, and while I was unable to get an estimate of the costs in 2010—much of this conversation took place outside of the meeting and I was not privy to the figures—a budget from a 2007 planning meeting provides an opportunity to consider the significance of the stage show in comparison to other expenditures.

First one notes from the 2007 budget that the sum of the expenses necessary for the stage show constitute over eighty percent of that year’s entertainment budget.¹³⁸ Moreover the stage show alone represented over thirty percent of the expenses for the four categories of advertising, entertainment, prep/clean-up, and support staff:

| Item | Amount JA | Amount US | Portion of total |
|--|---------------|------------|------------------|
| Advertising & Publicity | JA\$225,000 | US\$3,282 | 8.5% |
| Preparation/Cleanup/Misc. | JA\$485,100 | US\$7,076 | 18% |
| Support Staff | JA\$880,000 | US\$12,836 | 33% |
| Entertainment (stage only) | JA\$860,000 | US\$12,544 | 32.5% |
| Entertainment (not for stage) | JA\$200,000 | US\$2,917 | 8% |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Total (not incl. food/drink for sale) ¹³⁹ | JA\$2,650,100 | US\$38,654 | 100% |

¹³⁸ Minutes of Community Council Executive Meeting, Monday May 7, 2007.

¹³⁹ Based on data from the exchange rate tracker *gocurrency.com*, on August 1 2007, US\$1.00 = \$JA68.56. All fractions rounded to whole numbers.

I was not able to learn why food and drink for sale are left off of this budget, but it is clear that whatever the cost of food and drink for sale, organizers had earmarked major portions of the anticipated costs for the stage show.

As mentioned above, in 2010 a budget was never presented as it had been in 2007, and in 2010 cost-cutting and the scarcity of sponsorship were often remarked upon in planning and evaluation meetings, but it was clear that as a budgetary item the stage show remained central. Acting as co-organizers of the event, members of the Middle Rock Community Council worked to secure building materials and a backdrop to construct a stage, partially donated by the local Minister of Parliament, and partly coming from the proprietor of a farm supply and hardware store in a nearby district to the north. Although it had proven impossible to organize local groups to “deliver items” such as songs and recitations as they had in years past, Emancipation Day organizers hired musical groups from outside of the community.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, in spite of the fact that there was an operable PA system available in town—as well as experienced selectors and electricians available—that sound system was determined not substantially powerful enough for the festival, thus retaining the commitment to spending extra cash to hire an operator to bring his equipment from out of town.

Two final observations drive the point home and conclude the present digression into justification for focusing on the elements of the Emancipation Day soundscape originating from the stage. First, while music was often a point of reference volunteered by Middle Rock

¹⁴⁰ In the follow-up evaluation meeting this decision was challenged, though not on the basis of cost rather the challenger observed that it was unacceptable for Middle Rock’s festivities to include no single performing group representing the town.

residents whom I asked to evaluate Emancipation Day festivals,¹⁴¹ in every case where music came up in the course of conversations about the event (whether past or future celebrations) it was the music from the stage set-up that was the subject; it was never the case, for instance, that someone in such a conversation with me brought up the music played in one or another shop, or from this or that person's parked car. Simply put, unless I specifically inquired otherwise, questions, answers, and in general all references to "Emancipation Day music" referred to sounds coming from the stage set-up, leading me further toward focusing on that part of the festival experience for the present study.

Second, while plenty of activity went on before the stage set-up was operational, and a great deal went on long after the amplifier and speakers were turned off, the period between its activation and ending marked a widely-recognized beginning and end of the proceedings on Emancipation Day in Middle Rock. This was true on one order in the sense that the Master of Ceremonies who throughout the day announced the order of stage performers, took the stage in the morning to announce the beginning of the festival with a welcoming address, and once again late that night he used the Public Address system to announce the close of the festival and to give words of thanks and appreciation to participants and attendants. In addition, the sound from the stage set-up and the duration of the festival were even more firmly linked in the period *after* the MC announced that the festival was drawing to an end. After making his announcement the sound system controller transitioned into an hour-long set of pre-recorded music, during which time many from the younger age-groups gathered in front of the stage and danced. During this final period, all the while that the "dance" was going on, around the midway people began

¹⁴¹ e.g. "Would you say last year's Emancipation Day was better or worse than ones in years past?" or "What made last year's Emancipation Day better/worse than one's in years past?" or "What is going to make the difference in whether this year's Emancipation Day goes on good?"

shutting down their vending stations, food and drink were no longer for sale within the festival gates, and clean-up began. But only when *he* announced his set was finished, ceased the music, and began to pack up his equipment did the revelry on the playing field dwindle. Vendors and crews of helpers continued to dismantle the Emancipation Day festival's pop-up infrastructure, but most people exited the gates as though propelled by the evaporation of the sound. One experience I had provides an illustrative close to this part of the discussion: After the stage set-up had shut down I made my way across the road to find out how the festivities were being prolonged in the shops on the square. Greeting me as I stepped up to the counter, a friend asked simply, "Emancipation finish already?"

I have argued above that the musical program was not only dominant but was regarded as a central component of Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day festival, and that the stage set up constituted the source of this musical program. Furthermore while the main purpose of the festival was regarded as encouraging meditation on the contemporary legacies of slavery, the relative virtues of its different components were measured in one sense according to their contributions to realizing this goal.

Now I want to argue that the same general orientation to the practice of freedom resounds in Middle Rock's Emancipation Day musical program, as it has persistently characterized the local ethical currents on a broad basis since captives first arrived on the Middle Rock Coffee Estate. After a brief summary of the program as it unfolded, I'll proceed by discussing two interwoven issues: the sections of the composite program distinguished by participants according

to genre, and the formal similarity running across the different genres. Following that I will briefly discuss the successes of the festival in reasserting that “open” ethic in the face of its friction with the march of neoliberalism, and close the chapter with some proposals for subsequent research.

Middle Rock’s 2010 Emancipation Day festival included two different live sets by a visiting folk band, a live performance by a twenty-something female gospel-reggae vocalist (accompanied by a pre-recorded track of electronic beats and keyboard melodies), a brief, three-song appearance by a mainstream radio friendly dancehall DJ (performing his hit “festival tune” that had won honors at a recent annual government sponsored event), a series of interludes of recorded music fed directly into the soundboard, and in closing, an hour-long set of contemporary popular music that locals whom I asked referred to as “new music,” “new hits,” and “new r&b and dancehall.” There is much to discuss here about the program, including different types of instrumentation, different sectors of festival-goers who crowded the stage at different points, and the way people glossed numerous genres of folk music with the term “country music,” in the same way Kenneth Bilby previously noted.¹⁴² But what interests me foremost here is the variety of musical genres included in Middle Rock’s 2010 Emancipation Day program—a quality that both festival-goers and members of the organizing committee referred to as “something for everybody.”

One morning I was talking to a woman in her early sixties whom I had often seen on Bethlehem Moravian on Sundays. “How would you describe the music at Emancipation Day?” I asked. “They try to have something for everybody,” she said.

¹⁴² Bilby, Kenneth. “Jamaica” in Peter Manuel, ed. *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1995: 143-182.

In the days before the 2010 festival I was generously allowed to attend a planning meeting, as I had in 2006 and 2009. “It is important that the music have something for everybody,” said a member of the Middle Rock community council.

When she said so I remembered having brought the topic up with one of the small number of local men who wore his hair long, in dreadlocks. During the period I lived in Middle Rock I often saw him working on local construction jobs—home improvement projects throughout town as well as on the state-funded addition being attached to the All-Age school¹⁴³—but he was at the same time looking to revive a career as a DJ he had followed to Kingston around a decade before. He had kept up on the dancehall scene and at a number of dances I saw him reciting lyrics to newer artists like Bounty Killer, Lady Saw, Mavado, and Vybz Kartel.

This day though he was schooling me on the merits of Jamaican dancehall artists from the 1970s and 80s—Lone Ranger, Johnny Ringo, General Trees—and I said, “what about Emancipation Day? What kind of music is there?” “The music at Emancipation is supposed to have something for everybody,” he said. “It’s good that way.”

On the day of the event I stood on the All-Age school playing common, midway through my acquisition of a monumental sunburn. “There is something for everybody!” the program MC exclaimed from the stage.

After the event had ended I was talking to Tracy, had spent most of the event cooking and selling food on the midway. From all the smoke of charcoal and chopped pimento wood she had felt a burning in her eyes well into the next day, she said, but the experience didn’t sour her on the event. Rather she felt that the town of Middle Rock did not host enough things like festivals,

¹⁴³ Bethlehem All-Age school as an object of state funding is a topic that needs further development. It is at once a magnet, depository, and distribution apparatus.

and especially dances “so long as they don’t play so many *man* tunes, with all the *shooting* and *sex* talk and all of *those* ting deh.” “Did you not like the music at the Emancipation Day festival this year?” I asked. “This year that’s just gone?” she replied. “Well I guess there was something for everybody.”

What Tracy told me refined my sense of what people in Middle Rock meant when they said “something for everybody” about the Emancipation Day music program. Like many Tracy had little problem identifying examples of music that she liked more or less than others, or that in other words were or were not “for” her. With Emancipation Day music, by contrast, “there was something for everybody.” It was a program in part distinguishable according to its internal variety, one including a range of music that struck every person in attendance as a musical something for them. Thusly Emancipation Day music was known about town not as a program expected to include any one person’s favorite piece of music or to provide an extended set of any person’s most preferred type or genre of music, but as a set that catered to the broadest number of people’s respective tastes most broadly conceived.

Still it is important to stress the fact that among those I spoke with in and around the festival midway, there was firm disagreement regarding the high and low points of the music at Middle Rock’s 2010 Emancipation Day. Although the variety of the music program was for the most part an object of praise, something for everybody is a different thing from “the same amount of something for everybody,” and much less is it the same as “enough of what I like” or “not too much of what I don’t like.”

This is key because of how centrally popular music figures in Jamaican public discourse and furthermore because of the frequency with which people discuss music as reflecting and constituting the character of its audiences and particularly fans. Folk music, culture music, and

even live R&B music were all sanctioned by organizers without question, and in fact were commonly featured in publicity materials. Dancehall music, and its cousin, U.S. hip hop, were both also regular features of the Emancipation Day musical program, but they were often unmentioned on flyers, radio and newspaper advertisements, and televised publicity appearances.

Dancehall, as has been amply documented (for example see Cooper 1995; Stolzoff 2000; and Thomas 2004) strikes in much of the mainstream Jamaican imaginary as risqué, “vulgar,” or “uncouth” music, largely due to explicit references to sex and stylized portrayals of violence. Ostensibly for this reason, the music program at Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day festivities—being an event co-sponsored by the church—is firmly limited against including songs that include any such language or references unless coded.

As such, the inclusion of dancehall music in Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day festival represents a compromise by organizers that I want to recognize as a component of a broader attempt to express the ethic—the terms of an ideal practice of freedom—that had predominated for generations, but was at this point embattled. This was part of a move by organizers to foster connections across the boundaries of kinship, and by extension the boundaries along which the sections of town where people lived separated them socially. I will revisit this maneuver to evaluate its success in fulfilling this project of community building that, as I have argued, connects to a long historical trend in the local currents of ethical prescription and prohibition.

For now, though, I want to pursue the suggestion that, across genres, Middle Rock’s musical program features a formal coherence that operates, as it were, iconographically, as a potential means for encouraging participants to embrace the uses and pleasures of that still-hanging-on ethical orientation. Let us consider that formal continuity here, as an exercise in thinking through the ethical content of music an aesthetic practice.

Namely, I want to focus here on the way the musical program held together through its adherence from song-to-song to what composer and musicologist Olly Wilson calls “the heterogeneous sound ideal.” He elaborates on the term thusly:

By this term, I mean that there exists a common approach to music making in which a kaleidoscopic range of dramatically contrasting qualities of song (timbre) is sought after in both vocal and instrumental music. The desirable musical sound texture is one that contains a combination of diverse timbres. This fundamental bias for contrast of color—heterogeneity of sound rather than similarity of color or homogeneity of sound—is reflected in musical practice in at least two ways.

First, it is reflected in the nature of the ‘sound’ texture of musical ensembles. By sound texture, I mean the relationship of the resultant qualities of sound produced with several instruments perform simultaneously....

Secondly, the heterogeneous sound ideal is reflected in the common usage of a wide range of timbres within a single line. This is particularly true when the single line is the principal point of musical interest as, for example, in an unaccompanied part for voice or instrument, or a solo line of an accompanied piece.¹⁴⁴

Across the lines of distinction according to which people I spoke with differentiated the different styles of music, every piece of music played either by instrumentalists or out of pre-recorded tracks showed the kind of sonic heterogeneity that Wilson pointed out in his essay. When the visiting folk band played ring songs, work songs, brukins, and other styles, the strumming guitar, hand clapping, the beating of a low-pitched fundeh, and a smaller, higher-pitched ketch all corresponded in the music at easily discernible timbres and showed the ensemble heterogeneity of the sort Wilson described in the citation above. And when the visiting gospel singer performed her pre-recorded accompaniment likewise sounded an ensemble heterogeneity, while her voice exemplified the second type Wilson identified as she drenched her

¹⁴⁴ Wilson, Olly. “The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music,” in Owens & Cummings, eds. *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern*. Detroit Monographs in Musicology/Studies in Music, No. 18. Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1992: 327-38.

melodies in appoggiatura, glissandos, and shifts in her enunciation from soft falsetto to strident bursting notes, to frictive exhortations and back. In his brief appearance the Jamaica festival winner surfed the up-tempo popping and bouncing of electric drums and synthesized brass and string accents, cutting his voice against the rhythm by stretching out certain lyrics. The sound system's interludes of old hits and culture tunes were, as anyone who has ever heard Bob Marley's "Could This be Love" or Millie Small's "My Boy Lollipop" will tell you, shot through with sonic heterogeneity. And the closing hour of "new music" began with a sublime example of that feature, a then-just released smash hit song by Jamaican artist, Gyptian, called "Hold You."

There is more to be said about the heterogeneous sound ideal as it manifested in Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day festival music. In a pinch, it is illustrative to consider the difference between two versions of the theme song from the 1960 film, *Exodus*, written and arranged by composer Ernest Gold. The version for the movie, replete in swaying unison of an orchestra playing as one broad undulating ribbon, contrasts in an illustrative way against the version recorded by a group of Jamaican jazz musicians for the 1963 recording *Jazz Jamaican From the Workshop*. However, in the interest of bringing this chapter to a close, what imagination of freedom resonates therein?

In 1999, Wilson's essay was republished in a new collection, and given a prefacing paragraph by the editor, Gena Dagele Caponi. Caponi writes that "for Wilson, aesthetic practices reflect cultural values, and in addition to timbral nuances he sees a cultural tradition of relatedness and respect for the individual within the group....a mosaic in which separate

elements combine to form a whole, but the whole is not a unified blend of sound.”¹⁴⁵ While in fact nowhere in that following essay does Wilson write explicitly about what social values are referred to through and in music that corresponds to the heterogeneous sound ideal, when he alludes to the connection he makes reference to the music’s communal quality—“a communion of participants, not isolation between performer and audience,” he writes. Yet even here Wilson does not elaborate on the iconic or experiential function of the heterogeneous sound ideal as a relationship between music and, as I have been referring to throughout this dissertation, a “model of social reproduction.”

Yet I think that Caponi is on to something here, and although I do not know of a published account where Wilson addresses the issue, I want to follow her lead and extend her interpretation. In the first place when Caponi draws social theory from Wilson’s music theory she locates his work in a literature of—to apply Thomas Turino’s phrase—music as social life. This literature is great, but I propose that Ralph Ellison’s oft-cited explication of “jazz moments” serves as an effective touchstone. Writing in the *Saturday Review* in 1958, Ellison takes the lamentable lack of recognition and remuneration his friend, guitar player Charlie Christian, faced despite his greatness, and relates it directly—is it, following Feld, iconic in character?—to the field of social life, otherwise known as the realm of the un-musical. Elaborating, Ellison writes:

Some of the most brilliant of jazzmen made no records; their names appeared in print only in announcements of some local dance or remote ‘battles of music’ against equally uncelebrated bands. Being devoted to an art which traditionally thrives on improvisation, these unrecorded artists very often have their most original ideas enter the public domain almost as rapidly as they are conceived, to be quickly absorbed into the thought and technique of their fellows. Thus the riffs which swung the dancers and the band on some transcendent evening, and which inspired others to competitive flights of invention, became all too swiftly a part of the general style, leaving the originator as anonymous as the creators of the architecture called Gothic.

¹⁴⁵ Caponi, Gena Dage. *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin’, & Slam Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999: 157.

There is in this a cruel contradiction implicit in the art form itself, for true jazz is an art of individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment (as distinct from the uninspired commercial performance) springs from a contest in which each artist challenges all the rest; each solo flight, or improvisation represents (like the successive canvasses of a painter) a definition of his identity as individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition. Thus, because jazz finds its very life in an endless improvisation upon traditional materials, the jazzman must lose his identity even as he finds it; how often do we see even the most famous of jazz artists being devoured alive by their imitators, and, shamelessly, in the public spotlight?

So at best the musical contributions of these local, unrecorded heroes of jazz are enjoyed by a few fellow musicians and by a few dancers who admire them and afford them the meager economic return which allows them to keep playing. But often they live beyond the period of youthful dedication, hoping in vain that some visiting big-band leader will provide the opportunity to break through to the wider spheres of jazz. Indeed, to escape these fates the artists must be very talented, very individual, as restlessly inventive as Picasso, and very lucky.¹⁴⁶

I am interested in considering the extent to which Ellison “emplots” the jazz artist as a tragic figure in a way that compares to the tragic frame which David Scott identifies in C.L.R. James’s introduction to the second edition of *The Black Jacobins*.¹⁴⁷ For now though I simply want to spin out a little further his portrayal of the ensemble relationship of musicians and their musics that is the condition of a “true jazz moment.” “Each jazz moment springs from a contest,” Ellison writes, “in which each artist challenges all the rest; each solo flight, or improvisation represents...a definition of his identity as individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition.”

A short while after he published this essay about Charlie Christian, Ellison wrote a blistering review of the poet and playwright Leroi Jones’s study of “negro music in white

¹⁴⁶ Ellison, Ralph. “The Charlie Christian Story” in *The Saturday Review*. May 17th, 1958, pp 42-43. Also published in to collections of Ellison’s essays: *Shadow and Act* (1964) and Robert G. O’Meally, ed. *Living with Music: Ralph Ellison’s Jazz Writings* (2001).

¹⁴⁷ Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004.

America,” *Blues People*.¹⁴⁸ Possibly Ellison’s most stinging critique in that review, went like this:

“The tremendous burden of sociology which Jones would place upon this body of music is enough to give even the blues the blues.”¹⁴⁹

I note this critique to offer some nuance to Ellison’s own charting of a relationship between music and social life, cited previously, and also to underscore his caution regarding the subject. But in fact in reviewing *Blues People*, Ellison’s central critique turns out not to be the fact that Jones links music and social life but rather the way—and in fact the limited way—that he sees Jones doing so. The blues, Ellison argues, is not as Jones would have it, a musical art that more or less accurately resonates the “true” experience of African-descended people in the United States. Rather, “it is possible that any viable theory of Negro American culture obligates us to fashion a more adequate theory of American culture as a whole.” “The heel bone is,” he continues, “after all, connected through its various linkages to the head bone. Attempt a serious evaluation of our national morality, and up jumps the so-called Negro problem. Attempt to discuss jazz as a hermetic expression of Negro sensibility, and immediately we must consider what the ‘mainstream’ of American music really is” (2001: 127).

In a vivid passage that addresses directly Jones’s suggestion that some members of the group have stayed grounded while some members of the group have lost touch, Ellison writes:

One would get the impression that there was a rigid correlation between color, education, income and the Negro’s preference in music. But what are we to say of a white-skinned Negro with brown freckles who owns sixteen oil wells sunk in a piece of Texas land once farmed by his ex-slave parents who were a blue-eyed, white-skinned, redheaded (kinky)

¹⁴⁸ Baraka, Amiri (Leroi Jones). *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1999 [1964].

¹⁴⁹ Ellison, Ralph. “Blues People.” *The New York Review*, February 6, 1964. (republished in O’Meally, Robert G., ed. *Living With Music: Ralph Ellison’s Jazz Writings*. New York: Random House, 2001: 123).

Negro woman from Virginia and a blue-gummed, black-skinned, curly-haired Negro male from Mississippi, and who not only sang bass in a Holy Roller church, played the market and voted Republican, but collected blues recordings and was a walking repository of blues tradition? Jones's theory no more allows for the existence of such a Negro than it allows for himself, but that 'concord of sensibilities' which has been defined as the meaning of culture allows for much more variety than Jones would admit.¹⁵⁰

Thus while Ellison started his review of *Blues People* as though in a repudiation of his own foray into the anthropology of music, he turned by the end of that review to emphasize even more starkly than Jones, the relationship between the practice of music and the practice of social life. Where Jones asserted a functional—always already ritual feature—of music through which one can locate the authentic distinction of one sector of U.S. society (in Ellison's words, the "sociology of Negro American identity and attitude" (123)), Ellison countered that the significance of this music should not be—indeed cannot be—limited to only one sector of that society. In fact, in the closing paragraphs of his review Ellison clarified his accordance with Jones that "any effective study of the blues would treat them first as poetry and as ritual," and that based on this agreement the shortcoming of *Blues People* inhered in the fact that "[Jones's] version of the blues lacks a sense of the excitement and surprise of men living in the world—of enslaved and politically weak men successfully imposing their values upon a powerful society through song and dance." "The most authoritative rendering of America in music," he concluded, "is that of American Negroes" (129-130).

Having clarified the terms of Ellison's critique of *Blues People* I hope to have thus also emphasizing the seriousness with which Ellison regarded the anthropology of music, and may move on toward a conclusion of my discussion of the music of Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day festival. In that review, Ellison also gave perhaps the most concise account

¹⁵⁰ Ellison, Ralph. 2001 [1964]: 126.

of how he understood the process by which “the music of American Negroes” had come to constitute a more authoritative rendering of U.S. national character than the myriad other coeval musics practiced throughout the country’s diverse population over the past four centuries. “It was the African’s origin in cultures in which art was highly functional which gave him an edge in shaping the music and dance of this nation,” Ellison wrote.

Here, Ellison presaged two developments in the study of music within which I would argue he is not cited often enough. In the first place, Ellison describes in the U.S. context a theory that Christopher Small would extend through his lengthy 1987 study, *Music of the Common Tongue*, in which Small attempts to explain the thoroughness with which musics considered to have originated among Africans and African-descended people enslaved in the Americas had by the late twentieth century come to dominate the global—not just “American”—space of popular music.¹⁵¹ This is an interesting subject worth exploring further, particularly as concerns the striking and global resonance of music practice by African-descended people in “other Americas” and Jamaica in particular.

More germane to the present discussion, it is secondly worth noting Ellison’s contribution to the now more widely accepted approach to music not (simply) as a thing—where the meaning of music is encapsulated solely in form—but to music as a social act, broadly conceived. In the early 1960s ethnomusicologist Alan Merriam similarly urged scholars to loosen their focus on taxonomies of instrumentation and precise formal analysis, and rather to open their respective scopes of analysis to attend to what he called “music in culture” (1960) and “music as culture” (1964). John Blacking’s 1976 *How Musical is Man?* and subsequently Anthony Seeger’s *Why Suyà Sing* respectively engaged Merriam’s approach to explore social

¹⁵¹ Small, Christopher. *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music*. London: John Calder, 1987.

function in the practice of music, and drove home further points that would seem to be suggested in Ellison's 1958 review (and in the points of agreement he identifies between his thinking and Jones's thinking in *Blues People*):¹⁵² Blacking pointed out the distinctiveness of the modern Western notion of relative musicality—it is a socially constructed assumption that any human being could possibly be “not musical”—and thereby gestured at Ellison's sense of the breadth of a music tradition's social impact. Seeger's exposition was even more clearly related to Ellison. He is worth quoting at greater length.

Suyá singing was an essential part of social production and reproduction. It re-established the clarity of spatial domains, temporal durations, and certain forms of human relationships. Singing enabled individuals to create and express certain aspects of self, it established and sustained a feeling of euphoria characteristic of ceremonies, and it related the present to the powerful and transformative past. The Suyá would sing because through song they could both re-establish the good and beautiful in the world and also relate themselves to it.

Suyá would sing because through singing they could restore certain kinds of order in their world, and also create new kinds of order in it. Singing was an experience of the body and of the social person, and a means for reproducing society. Singing was also intimately linked to material production and social identity. Suyá sang because singing was an essential way of articulating the experiences of their lives with the processes of their society.¹⁵³

This brings us back to Christopher Small's work, and a suggestion best—if ineloquently—captured in the neologism he used to title his book, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*.¹⁵⁴ Small directs attention to the practice of music by extending the verb “to music” beyond performance to the realm of reception. Where Ellison's “jazz moments” are constituted in what one might call the socio-sonic relationships of a jazz ensemble, Small

¹⁵² Blacking, John. *How Musical is Man?* London: Faber and Faber, 1976. Seeger, Anthony. *Why Suyá Sing: A Musical Anthropology of an Amazonian People*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

¹⁵³ Seeger 1987: 128.

¹⁵⁴ Small, Christopher. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1998.

provides a means by which to return to Ellison's description of the jazz moment with a mind toward extending the boundaries of how we would perceive of the full ensemble of persons musicking at a given time.

Small employs the term to distinguish the form of musicking that takes place among people whom have paid to sit in auditorium seats while an orchestra rehearses a score written by Beethoven, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Schumann, or some other "great warhorse" of the Western classical tradition. The important point here is that Small insists on including every person present for the performance within the category of musicking. In this case, though, the success of the musical event depends upon a large fraction of those present remaining silent and for the most part still. Considering the set of people musicking at Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day festival in similar terms, the success of the musical event depended, rather, upon the greatest number of people participating by moving their bodies and, notably, by participating in the creation of the sonic tapestry as it unfolded.

Despite the formal physical separation of a stage and of the amplification of the sound only a small set of persons, throughout the course of the musical program the gulf between those musicking from the stage and those musicking from the festival midway manifested over and over as an object of transgression as persons off stage called out to elicit responses from those on stage, and vice versa, to the point that without overt transgression the erstwhile division between the two sections of the musicking group was a condition of successful musicking. In instances where reciprocity failed, as for instance when in response to one solo stage performer the greater group of persons assembled on the midway began behaving like the seated audience in Small's symphony concert (quietly observing but making no physical gestures in tune with the song), the significance was equivalent to a sudden evaporation of the musical content of the moment. It did

not matter how loudly his voice was projected or the quality of his physical poise. The musical event faltered as the “audience” diminished its contribution.

Thus building upon Seeger’s description of Suyà singing, and Ellison’s description of jazz ensemble playing, we might take Small’s description of musicking and ask what purpose there was in musicking on the midway for Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day festival? What did people either succeed or not succeed in doing by way of musicking?

Seeger wrote that Suyà singing was a “means of reproducing society,” while Ellison wrote that each jazz moment “springs from a contest in which each artist challenges all the rest” where “each solo flight, or improvisation represents (like the successive canvasses of a painter) a definition of his identity as individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition.” Small argued that through the dominance of the sonata form and the concerto form, classical symphonic works in the European tradition dramatized a relation between individual and society—either through the representation of a story with a dramatic or tragic protagonist (in this case Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony or Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony), or through the interplay between soloist and orchestra which characterizes a piece such as Dvorák’s Cello Concerto in B Minor. Like each of these Middle Rock’s Emancipation Day musical program constitutes a practice of social relation through sound.

Here is Christopher Small one last time:

Members of a certain social group at a particular point in its history are using sounds that have been brought into certain kinds of relationships with one another as the focus for a ceremony in which the values—which is to say, the concepts of what constitute right relationships—of that group are explored, affirmed, and celebrated.

And thus,

When we perform, we bring into existence, for the duration of the performance, a set of relationships, between the sounds and between the participants, that model ideal

relationships as we imagine them to be and allow us to learn about them by experiencing them. The modeling is reciprocal...in exploring we learn, from the sounds and from one another, the nature of the relationships; in affirming we teach one another about the relationships; and in celebrating we bring together the teaching and the learning in an act of social solidarity.¹⁵⁵

Finally, then, what does evidence of a heterogeneous sound ideal suggest about the relationship between Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day musical program and the practice of freedom? I suggest that the answer lies in its availability to the ongoing reconciliation of individual and collective interests, in the opportunities it constitutes for participants to negotiate subjectivities and intersubjectivities through which both the musical and non-musical social realms manifest. In a similar way to that which Kevin Birth has described with respect to a community of cocoa farmers in rural Trinidad, it would seem that the heterogeneous sound ideal of Middle Rock's Emancipation Day music operates in an embrace of spontaneity in counterpoint, where participants and witnesses were able to perform social relations, both familiar and unfamiliar, chosen and unchosen, exercising what Birth has called, in another Caribbean context, "bacchanalian sentiments."¹⁵⁶ In musicking where sonic heterogeneity constitutes an ideal, the distinction among individuals' voices, as well as that among voices that an individual might articulate, are not only necessary but contributing qualities. In circumstances where voices abound, the opportunity arises for an individual to pattern his or her participation so as to remain silent, seek unison, or sound out distinctly, all without either disrupting the collective *or* subordinating agency to the group.

By contrast to the reconciliation of individual and collective one hears in the sonata and concerto forms, the ultimate goal is not to stretch the limits of the broader unit's coherence nor of

¹⁵⁵ Small 1998: 183, 218

¹⁵⁶ Birth, Kevin K. *Bacchanalian Sentiments: Musical Experiences and Political Counterpoints in Trinidad*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008.

its tolerance, but this can and in fact must happen on a temporary basis. Likewise, by contrast to the reconciliation of individual and collective interests that is signified in the neoliberal model of social reproduction, individuation in a context of the heterogeneous sound ideal must *immediately* bring collective benefits or else its effects are immediately detrimental. Lay out and let others keep the beat or the tune, and in time the heterogeneity will diminish and, likely, eventually take the music with it. Prioritize one's own preference for timing or timbre or volume without respect to or even in spite of other voices, and the reproduction of the music—the musicking—ceases. Rather the model for social reproduction expressed in musicking that follows a heterogeneous sound ideal—musicking that has existed in many places, but among them in Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day festival—seems to me to advocate for a reconciliation of individual and society that encourages neither the subordination of the individual to the group nor the prioritization of individual interests as a means to satisfying collective ones.

The question remains whether this was a successful gambit, or whether on the other hand the interjection of dancehall music reflects simply an encroachment of a neoliberal ethic into Middle Rock's local social space. I will explore the limits of this success in a brief conclusion, but for now the my point is that in a key (albeit partial) sense, this maneuver was successful in that it drew together townspeople across socio-economic boundaries in a collective commemoration of shared history. The event drew community members who lived in different neighborhood enclaves of the community, who did not attend the same (or any) church, and who otherwise seldom crossed paths.

Yet also, I argue, this maneuver succeeded in asserting the still-prevalent “open” ethic by drawing local people across generations together for the recognition and reassertion of the

Middle Rock “community” as a tangible and valuable social entity, in contradistinction with the thrust of encroaching neoliberalism. This was encouraged, I am suggesting, by way of the formal character of the musical program, in its variety across locally-recognized genres, and furthermore in the formal continuity across genres of a heterogeneous sound ideal.

Conclusion

To review, it is my position that organizers of Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day festival asserted their continued fidelity to a long-held concept of the ideal practice of freedom, characterized by a context-specific openness to an exercise of freedom serving personal interest, while maintaining at the same time a prescription for a self-effacing contribution to the common good. This desire, I suggested, was partially satisfied in the variety of musical genres included, while at the same time iconographically presented the terms of that ideal practice of freedom for potential auditors and participants. In other words the social practice suggested in the sonic organization of the music is comparable to that ideal practice of freedom.

However the successes remained within certain limits, as the economic squeeze placed on Jamaican small farmers has not been stalled by government support, and a sustainable future in cash crop farming has become less and less viable as an option. This, I want to close by suggesting, was evident in the ways that dancehall music was injected throughout the day into the soundscape of the festival, often in a cacophonous clash.

As a genre dancehall has been identified as a flashpoint for debates to erupt in Jamaican public discourse regarding its supposed content of moral deviance or, alternately, its manifest lack of an altruistic impulse. To be certain, the prevalence within dancehall music of messages that celebrate an intemperate and self-centered aspirational mentality is a fact. It is not simply the distinction between dancehall and "culture music" that reveals the former's apparent lack of focus on collective political or economic change, but by itself the genre features a positively remarkable variety in the angles from which are expressed the priority of moneymaking and individual enrichment. One song in particular that was popular on Jamaican radio during the

time of my research, and which was included in the 2010 Emancipation Day musical program was Charly Black's "Rich This Year" (2009) the chorus of which goes:

If mi nuh rich dis year
Next year naah pass
'cause mi born as a hustler
If mi nuh rich dis year
Next year mi haffi step up mi hustlin'

If I'm not rich this year
Next year won't pass
'Cause I'm a born hustler
If I'm not rich this year
Next year I'll have to step up my hustling

And also illustrative of the thematic focus I mean to elucidate, here are lyrics from a more recent dancehall release, "Money Finger" by artists Gappy Ranks and Busy Signal (2012). Here again making a living is "hustling," personal wealth is again the goal (this time in the form of the dollar that makes one sing and also as the means to moving far), and the first person protagonist in the tune asserts his power via a reference to economic recession, specifically his imperviousness to it:

Time fi mek di paper di paper
Hustlers a mek di paper
Di paper
Wi a mek di paper
...
Whole heap a dolla lalalalalala
Mek beeya gal falalalalala
...
Recession never see me ca' mi never hold back

Time to make the paper, [money] the paper
Hustlers make the paper
The paper
We make the paper
...
A whole heap of dollars lalalalalala
Will make lots of girls follow lalalalalala
...
The Recession won't affect me because I never hold back

One can see in these examples where, at least in a preliminary sense, one would understand the embrace of dancehall as an expression of affinity with a neoliberal ethic. And indeed during Middle Rock's 2010 Emancipation Day festivities it was dancehall that constituted the outlying form, repeatedly asserted into a space where it was held in suspicion, and expressing the same

sort of self-centeredness in its rupture of the folk music soundscape as the genre was under suspicion of promoting in its most general sense.

In this way, I am arguing, dancehall music being injected into Middle Rock's Emancipation Day festivities does demonstrate a real and significant limit to the project of spreading and perpetuating the concept of the ideal practice of freedom that rejects neither individualism nor collectivism. However, rather than just leave the discussion to a question of whether future festivities ought to include more or less dancehall music, and also to avoid the trap of regarding the music as a problem rather than as a reflection of adaptations people have made in the face of changes in broader social forces, I want to close by suggesting that, as has been noted before (Thomas 2004), it is an error to presume that the burden of responsibility lies with dancehall musicians or their fans.

To the contrary, viewed in the context of that ideal concept of freedom I have discussed at length throughout the course of this dissertation, the embrace of dancehall and its evident correspondence to neoliberal ethical priorities is best viewed as an adaptive response to decreasing local opportunity to survive through traditional modes of cash crop farming. And, returning to the insights provided in Karin Barber's work (cited in chapter one), it is more likely the case that dancehall's focus on individual achievement in a mode of production characterized by the money form, reflects a logical turn of attention to new ways of navigating economic exigencies that compare favorably to old ones insofar as the latter engage realistically with the harsh realities of global capitalism, under circumstances where the stated commitment to a collectivist concept of the ideal practice of freedom appears only less and less viable to members of Jamaica's small farming sector.

The outlook is bleak, and as I have mentioned a number of times above, the core ethical system that has characterized Middle Rock for centuries is battered and embattled. But pessimism is inappropriate, and at any rate premature. As a sort of illustration of this, I close with a story of a community service project that I witnessed in Middle Rock, and I highlight it especially because it involves and was in fact initiated independently by members of Middle Rock's population of males under 40 whose public embrace of dancehall music included their having put on a street dance in the Middle Rock square which was criticized by some community members as embodying precisely the corrosive individualism threatening the local social fabric. I close with this story because of how well I believe it illustrates the persistence of Middle Rock's foundational ethic, to see these individuals who were seen by some as contributing to the erosion of the collectivist component of ethical behavior, contributing a day of labor (plus at least a few hours the previous night), unsolicited, to the common good of the community.

As I recall, Alton and I hadn't said anything to each other for a minute or two, not since we had left the place I was renting and walked across the Middle Rock town square. For the first few minutes after we reached where Cyril and Gordon stood scrutinizing a large rock, there was still no talking, only the wind and maybe a bleating goat. I didn't know what exactly was going on, having happily agreed when Alton stopped by and invited me to come along with him to "go and check Cyril."

The rock was bone-white and porous like a big piece of coral, and it sat in a patch of scorched ground. I saw that Alton had parked his pick-up truck by where Mr. and Mrs. Lennox lived, at the corner of the paved road and the turn-off. Alton told a joke—something about how the rock wasn't going to go easily—and Cyril followed him with another joke about how it

would have to, then he turned and moved toward the tools laid together on the other side of the road. “Let’s deal with this thing now,” he said. “We need to widen the road, Ted; you want to help?”

I said yes and was given a iron rake. Cyril had a long-handled hoe but watching for a second I guessed I was supposed to do the same as him: cutting the tendrils of overgrowing grass at the root, and bunch them on the blacktop so they could be lifted away. Alton and Gordon both took up shovels and began scooping piles of sticks and pebbles from the edge of the asphalt, chucking the cargo up onto the ridge a few feet away. I went in furiously, slashing down at the tangled groundcover.

The thicket was sturdier than I had expected. After striking and lurching for what felt like a few solid minutes I had wrenched out a single knot of shoots. I was sweating.

“Come Gordon, give Ted your shovel,” Cyril said after a while, and we all traded off; Alton took my rake, Gordon took up the hoe, and both Cyril and I began shoveling. Soon enough, the pile of bramble next to me was growing, a sign of how far I was falling behind Alton’s pace, and when I looked out of the corner of my eye, I sensed he was politely holding back. He slashed and raked steadily, and as I tried to lock into a rhythm I stuttered onto the off-beats, unable to manage the scoop / chuck / scoop / chuck ABAB with any consistent fluidity. My pattern was closer to ABAA BABAAaBAaB.

I paused and let out a short laugh at my own uselessness, but Alton only slowed to a near stop and asked “y’alright?”

“Yeah,” I said. And then the dizziness hit me. In a voice that I hoped didn’t betray my meek feeling I said “sorry, I’ll be right back,” and jogged slowly off the road and behind some bushes. As soon as I was satisfied that I was out of sight I bent over and heaved.

The morning fog was long gone but a breeze was pushing the heat away. As I returned to the group Alton laughed like we were sharing a joke and asked again if I was okay. I laughed too and picked the shovel back up, feeling rejuvenated. We had widened a ten-foot stretch of road by cutting the grass back about three feet.

A new-looking silver car came around the turn and rolled to a stop alongside us. Cyril called out a greeting and the driver responded through the rolled down window. I couldn't hear him, but after I heard a snippet of Cyril's response—"a'widen the road"—the driver stuck his head out the window and shot me a smile.

I had set back upon my pile and since neither Alton nor Gordon had stopped I kept shoveling, trying to focus keeping up the pace. "Hello? You've come to visit Jamaica?" the man in the car said to me. He looked to be in his early forties, with closely cropped hair and a collared shirt. "How do you like it?"

"Hello," I said back, standing upright and leaning on the shovel's handle. "Yes, definitely! It's real nice."

"You're a journalist? You're writing a book?" he asked. His eyes twinkled.

"University student," I said. "I came here to learn about Middle Rock for my thesis."

"Oh?" he said. "From U.S.? You came to learn how to shovel?"

Before I could seize upon a comeback he said, "Make sure you enjoy yourself here, and when you go back write in your book what a wonderful country this is."

"Of course!" I said, then watched as he exchanged a few more words with Cyril, shouted "later" to everyone and drove up the hill past the Lennox house.

I picked back up my stuttered pace, having decided that if I scooped instead of jabbing the spade I could go more smoothly and keep a better grip. A blister had bloomed at the base of

the fingers on my left hand, and both my left and my right were candy-red, as was I am sure, my face. “A blond tomato” a friend of mine had once said. Having changed how I was going about it, though, I managed to get better control over when and how I pressed and rubbed the blister against the wooden handle, only now I had the problem of scraping up more gravel, grass, and sticks than I could throw the full distance off the road. I bent my stance down further and reached my hand down toward the platter of the shovel so I could leverage the weight better. I worked myself back into dizziness, laid the shovel back down, and trotted to my hiding place to retch a second time.

When I returned again the strip of cleared road had grown and my pile had shrunk. Gordon had taken the hoe and as he worked, Alton and Cyril were standing back from the strip talking about whether we needed to gouge deeper and push the grass back more. I went to where the rake and the shovel were lying on the ground, picked up the rake, and started heading to the opposite end of the strip from Gordon.

“No man, here,” Cyril said. He had taken his wallet out his back pocket. He handed me a JA\$100 bill and said, “gwaan round the shop and pick up a pepsi.”

“Ok” I said. I thought Cyril was sending me to get drinks for him and the crew, but he was buying me a drink. “Cyril you want a pepsi; anybody else want a drink? Gordon you want a pepsi?”

“No rasta, that’s for you. We’re good. Go and get yourself a drinks.”

I protested, and then I walked back around the corner and down to the town square. I bought a plastic bottle of pepsi that had been in the freezer, and gave silent thanks when the man behind the counter asked me “what are they doing over there” and not “what are *you all* doing

over there.” I was glad to have the chance to give credit to the others without having to account for my own contribution.

“They’re widening the road,” I said. “Cyril and Gordon and Alton.”

“Yeah?” he said.

“Yeah.”

“Sun hot?”

I don’t remember if I smiled. “Not too bad,” I said. Blond tomato.

“Ha! You want a cigarette too?” After living in Middle Rock for the better part of a year I had achieved some local notoriety for my commitment to this habit.

“Naw, thanks” I said, and headed back. I noticed then that from the doorway I could see the other three across the school playing field, standing where we had been working. We were in plain view of anyone passing by the row of shops on the square. I prayed that no one had seen me running to take my breaks behind the bramble.

When I reached the others I had downed a third of the bottle and despite weariness tingling in my lower back the sugary drink had cleared my head. I tried to return Cyril his money and he wouldn’t take it, again passing the proposition off as irrational and nodding faintly when I promised again to return the favor as soon as I had the chance. I tried to give him his change back but he shifted the subject. “Gordon we need that hammer,” he said. “I think it’s up in the van.”

“Let me go and get it,” I volunteered. “It’s in the back?” I went up the hill to his pick-up truck and brought back a two-faced sledgehammer. Upon my return Cyril explained to me for the first time what the plan was.

“Since the holiday is coming there’s going to be a whole heap of visitors coming to town like that guy who stopped to hail you. They don’t know the road so well, so we make it wide along this part and that way people have room to pull off to the side with their rental cars instead of making accidents.”

“You do this every year?” I asked.

“No. But you see this year it needs to be done.”

“Did Rev. suggest it? Or somebody else?” I asked, wondering if Cyril was doing a favor or even a paid job for the Pastor at Bethlehem Moravian church or possibly for the Minister of Parliament who passed through town every few months.

“No man!” he said. “It’s just something that needs to be done and since nobody else’s done it we do it now. Sometimes you just do certain things to help out everybody.”

I followed his gaze over my shoulder and turned. Another two men approached us then, the younger of whom went by Iron—a nickname derived from a stage persona he had once taken as an aspiring dancehall performer crafted after the comic book superhero Ironman.

Iron and the other man, his older brother Mas Roderick, were both sons of the soil, and together they lived with another brother of theirs in a house that was nearby but off the beaten path. In my experience I knew Mas Roderick to be the more reserved of the three brothers, and so I wasn’t surprised when he stopped with us only a moment before heading up the road.

Cyril was taking swings at the stone, sending bursts of little shards into the air. Iron, who had stuck around, took a turn, climbing on top and swinging down from an oblique perch. He held the hammer with his hands spread out on the handle, and raising it above his head he slid them together to the bottom of the staff and swept the mallet into a broad face of the rock.

Memory recounts that everyone took a turn except me. The demolition work looked like fun, and in turn we all reached for the hammer with eagerness we hadn't shown for the rake, hoe, or shovel. Before I got a crack at it the rock gave way and big hunks fell onto the singed ground. "What happened to burn all the grass?" I asked nobody in particular.

"You burn it first," Iron said.

"You put grass and things on the rock to light and it burns all the moisture away," said Alton. "Once it's done you can break it apart."

"Mm hm," said Cyril. "Makes it so you can break it *easier*."

"So you burned it last night?" I asked.

"Last night," he said. Gordon was hammering away at the now-decimated heap, and Iron was pushing one of the larger pieces further off the road. "Hey," Cyril said suddenly, tilting his head back to look at me directly. "You have to promise you'll put all this inna di book."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. You have to put disyah story inna your book. How we widen the road and how you worked with us."

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