Blackness of a different color: the complexities of identity of Haitian migrants and their descendants in the Bahamas

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BLACKNESS OF A DIFFERENT COLOR: THE COMPLEXITIES
OF IDENTITY OF HAITIAN MIGRANTS AND THEIR
DESCENDANTS IN THE BAHAMAS

by

Katiuscia Pelerin

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Katiuscia Pelerin

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“Blackness of a Different Color: The Complexities of Identity of Haitian Migrants and their Descendants in the Bahamas” is the first book-length study of its kind, and the first since 1978 to examine the Haitian experience in the Bahamas. It establishes that the Haitian diaspora is as worthy a topic of academic attention as other diasporas, not just as an appendage of the African diaspora. It examines how Haitians experience a complex, but by no means unique, form of black on black racism in which Bahamians have internalized racism from their oppressors, and in turn are oppressing and discriminating against Haitians. In the Bahamas, racism disguises itself under nationalism, education, language, and immigrant status. This study describes the racial dynamics (within African-Diasporic populations) rooted in European colonialism. The Bay Street elite represented European colonialism in the Bahamas as late as the 1970s and transformed the Bahamas into a liberalized economy that relies primarily on tourism. The tourist industry began in the late 1950s, when the Bay Street elite recruited Haitian workers as Cuba denounced tourism at the beginning of the Castro regime. As the profits from the tourist industry declined during the 1970s, Bahamians accused Haitian migrants of being a threat to national security rather than a necessary source of cheap labor. Bahamian print media is the main vehicle for the practices of discrimination against Haitians. This study examines editorials, articles, letters to the editors, and cartoon images from 1959 to 2012 to understand how Bahamians marginalize Haitians and their descendants. This study concluded that similar forms of discrimination that were practiced by British colonizers
are now being imposed on Haitians. This dissertation study will contribute to the missing gaps between Haiti and the Caribbean community especially on the multiple perspectives of blackness and identity formation within the African diaspora of the Caribbean.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in Haitian identity began when I was only ten years old and in the fifth grade. When I told my classmates about my Haitian background, I was asked if I had “HBO.” Naively, I thought they meant the cable network, Home Box Office, and I proudly boasted: “Yes, I have HBO!” My classmates laughed at my response. Near the end of the school year, I found out that “HBO” meant “Haitian Body Odor.” That embarrassing experience in fifth grade was the first step in my intellectual journey to understanding Haiti.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor and dissertation chair, Professor Colbert I. Nepaulsingh. I appreciate his guidance, patience, dedication, and his sharing the same passions about Haiti and the resilience of the Haitian Diaspora. My dissertation would not have been completed without his unwavering support and faith in my work. I am also thankful to my committee members, Professor Patricia Pinho and Professor Glyne Griffith. I am grateful to Professor Pinho for helping me grasp the diversity and incongruities of Blackness and for her efforts to refine my theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding black identities. I also appreciate Professor Griffith’s insight on national discourse in the formation of Bahamian identity.

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Blackness of a Different Color: The Complexities of Identity of Haitian Migrants and their Descendants in the Bahamas

Introduction:

“For those Bahamians who wish to understand white supremacy -- the conceit that whites are inherently superior to blacks -- they might better understand that mindset by observing the manner in which many Bahamians automatically see themselves as inherently superior to Haitians.” (Nassau-Guardian Jan 19, 2010)

This dissertation is the first of its kind in Haitian-Caribbean Studies. The only book-length study about Haitians in the Bahamas is Dawn Marshall's The Haitian Problem: Illegal Migration to the Bahamas, which was published in 1978. Despite several articles about Haitian migrants in the Bahamas, there has been no book-length study about Haitians in the Bahamas since 1978. Marshall conducted a thorough study of migration and population trends of Haitian migrants in the Bahamas, which is essential in explaining the historical background of Haitians in the Bahamas. What distinguishes my work from Marshall’s is that I examine the role of identity and black on black racism between Bahamians and Haitians. Following Jacobson’s work on whiteness, I document that “scholarship on immigration has generally conflated race and color”, in this case blackness and color (Jacobson 6). Most scientists now agree that race does not exist, scientifically speaking, but is “fabricated” (Jacobson 1-12). Yet, although race does not exist, many people, perhaps even a majority, continue to believe in traditional views of racism, especially with respect to phenotype. Since race does not exist scientifically, this study examines these traditional views, and it defines a “racist” as someone who continues to believe in phenotype and race, despite the scientific evidence. The role of media is crucial in understanding how representation of Haitians informs Bahamians, as
well as the recent trends regarding Haitian-Bahamians in forming their identities, a cultural factor that fills the gap in Marshall’s work.

In the traditional view of racism, one group of people feels superior over another group, based on skin color. This conventional meaning of racism is thought to be an idea implemented only in the past. Racism has been treated as a “static phenomenon” that never changes or was more prevalent in the past (Bonilla-Silva 467). Racism is still prevalent today and has manifested itself in different forms that are imposed by different segments of society. One form is black on black racism in which an individual or group internalizes racism from their oppressors, and in turn oppresses and discriminates against other people like themselves. In the Bahamas, racism reveals itself in connection with other social reasons such as nationalism, education, language, and immigrant status. “Blackness of a different color” exposes the racial nuances within African-Diasporic populations rooted in European colonialism. This thesis will attempt to examine intra-racial discrimination, a subject that is not sufficiently studied even though it is an issue in the Bahamas, especially in the current context of globalization.

The current liberalized economy of the Bahamas is closely linked to migration patterns. Tourism is a component of globalization, and the rise of this service sector industry has led to the influx of Haitian workers in the Bahamas. As profits from this industry declined in the Bahamas starting in the 1970s, Haitians were viewed as a problem rather than a necessary labor resource. As a migration-state, the Bahamas is caught in a conflict between economic actors involved in international commerce, and political figures involved in nationalist movements geared to restricting migration. The
rise of angry national sentiment in the Bahamas is mostly directly towards Haitians among Bahamians. Native Bahamians see themselves in a “struggle for national survival” because they believe that Haitians are “invading” their nation and creating what they refer to as the “Haitian Problem” (Thomas 2).

National identities are social constructs based on the ethnic boundaries and complex social behaviors that define a group. The politics of representation can also determine whether an individual shares the same nationality or not. Boundaries develop a “dichotomization” of members who do not share the same nationality or belong to the same ethnic group (Barth 15). These boundaries include language, religion, class, and physical appearances. Bahamian representations of Haitians are disseminated through media and print. Print media play a large role in shaping national identity and in assessing that identity in contrast with that of other nations. In the case of Haitian migrants in the Bahamas, newspapers provide readers with a strong impression of national boundaries and values.

In addition to print media, the roots of nation building in the Bahamas contributed to the way Bahamians view the Haitians among them. As a former British colony, the Bahamas inherited European values, promoting ethnic homogeneity, ethnic difference, and xenophobia, factors linked to practices of racism against Haitians. Psychiatrist and Social Philosopher Frantz Fanon had written about the effort of colonization on the “black psyche” and the different modes of interaction among whites and blacks:

The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question… (Fanon 17).
Fanon approaches black self-hatred from a psychoanalytic perspective on the first dimension of interaction with whites. Fanon discusses how some black individuals want to prove their worth and “equal value of intellect” to whites (Fanon 10). The second dimension involves the shame and inferiority complex of black individuals in their interaction with other blacks. How does the perception of blackness play itself out between two black neighboring nations that were colonized by two different European entities, especially when there is an influx of migrants from one neighboring country into the other?

The goal of this study is not to single out the Bahamas as a nation that has not accepted or reconciled itself with its blackness or black identity. The aim of this dissertation is to examine the discursive practices of nation-state building in the Bahamas. The approach is to explore the construction of Bahamian and Haitian identities, and then consider specifically how nationhood and ethnicity are construed, defined, and promoted among Bahamians. The study will also look at how Haitians are perceived as shifting or uprooting Bahamian identity, and how this perception is rooted within European institutions with racist elements, or how “colonialist subjugation,” as Fanon describes it, plays a role in this perception.

The complexities of Bahamian identity are also tied to the role of migration policy. The Bahamas is a convenient destination for Haitians to supply Bahamas’s demand for cheap labor, but restrictions on Haitian migrants change often in the Bahamas. The constant round up of migrants and harassment by the Bahamian police in Haitian communities have led some Haitians to leave the Bahamas for the United States.
The case of Haitians in the Dominican Republic has been a familiar migration policy issue in the Caribbean. The total population of the Dominican Republic is 9.5 million, and Haitians consist of about 5 to 6 percent of the total population in the Dominican Republic (Organization of American States). The total population of the Bahamas is 300,000, yet Haitians and Haitian–Bahamians comprise about 20 to 25 percent of the Bahamian population (U.S. State Department). This population ratio illustrates the potential dilemmas of national identity and migration in the Bahamas as much as in the Dominican Republic. The larger percentage of Haitians in the Bahamas compared to those who settle in the Dominican Republic indicates how the struggle for Bahamian identity is viewed as a national crisis. Yet, studies about Haitians in the Bahamas are not as comprehensive as those about Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic.

No long-term solutions to the problem of undocumented Haitians in the Bahamas have been evidenced particularly after the recent tragedy in Haiti. The 2010 earthquake in Haiti has prompted nations such as the United States and the Bahamas to send aid as well as provide temporary status to undocumented Haitians. In the wake of Haiti’s catastrophic disaster, the Prime Minister of the Bahamas released one hundred “illegal” Haitian detainees and granted them temporary status, which triggered negative reactions in the Bahamian media (Nassau-Guardian Jan 14, 2010). The Prime Minister’s attempt to provide temporary status has met with some opposition that his decision, would contradict the Department of Immigration’s “zero-tolerance policy on illegal immigration” (Bahamas Tribune Jan 16, 2010). Disagreements over the temporary status of undocumented Haitians also sparked tension between opposing political parties in the
Bahamas. Political contenders used the opportunity to challenge the Prime Minister’s decision, claiming that his decision will increase the influx of Haitians. Opposing the Prime Minister’s decision was also an effective political tactic to stoke the fear of Bahamians. Providing assistance and showing compassion to Haitians increased the feeling of anxiety of Bahamians that another large influx of Haitians will “illegally “enter the Bahamas.

This research integrates key theories in the field of post-colonial and cultural studies. These theoretical frameworks include perspectives on identity and culture. Additionally, different trends in migration theory will be examined, specifically literature which discusses migration beyond a neoclassical approach. Several media reports and editorials reference the “Haitian Problem” in the Bahamas and describe the number of Haitians drowned at sea, or how the presence of undocumented Haitians continues to affect the quality of life. News reports, editorials, and government documents will be examined to better understand how Haitians are portrayed in public discourse and the media. The analysis of newspaper reports indicates a struggle for control, order, and to maintain the values of modernity. The articles narrate how Bahamians present themselves as a strong, stable, and modern Caribbean nation, yet claim that this standard is being eroded as a result of the presence of undocumented Haitians, thus increasing anti-Haitian sentiment. The quote in the editorial below goes at the heart of this research and exposes the issue of evading the topic of racism, particularly when evasion is used to hide non-traditional forms of racism:
It was as if the topic of race is one that has been nationally agreed as taboo and how dare I approach them on such a topic. This sentiment is summed up in the words of a twenty-six-year-old Bahamian female living in Virginia, Beuy Edwards, "I aint for that-I aint even going down that road!" (Nassau-Guardian Jan 28, 2006).

One of the main objectives of this study is to examine the problem of evading the topic of racism. The theoretical framework for this study is based on concepts of identity and nationalist discourse. My theoretical framework also includes Benedict Anderson’s explanation of print media as one of the linkages of an imagined community. Media is a tool used to communicate with Bahamian readers about Haitians. Stuart Hall’s constructionist approach to representation will be integral in analyzing how Haitians are represented in the Bahamas. Paul Gilroy’s concept of “cultural insiderism” reveals how Haitians are viewed as a threat to the national existence of the Bahamas. And Homi Bhabha’s idea of hybridity reflects the identity and reality of Haitian Bahamians. These theoretical concepts will shed light on the meanings of representation and multiple layers of black identities that divides black Bahamians and black Haitians.

During the summer of 2011, I traveled to Nassau, Bahamas for archival research. A total of ninety-nine media sources: twenty editorials, fifty-eight news articles, thirteen letters to the editors, and eight cartoon images were collected and examined. These sources were articles from the Bahamas’ most popular and widely circulated newspapers: Nassau-Guardian, Bahamas-Tribune, and Freeport News. These media sources were collected from a time span from 1959 to 2012. The older news articles were collected at the Bahamas Department of National Archives and the Harry C. Moore Library at the College of Bahamas.
I analyzed each media source based on how meaning, language, and identity play a role within the text or image. For example, what reaction does the author of the text or artist of an image expect from the reader? How do the authors identify themselves? What is the goal of the text or the image in conveying the message to the reader? What are the operative words within the text that attract the reader? And how are these words significant? (Gee 17 & Johnstone 9). I also examined each image based on the physical appearance of the characters and how these appearances inform the viewer. In addition to Stuart Hall’s hall construction of representation, I have also applied John J. Johnson’s study, *Latin America in Caricature* in analyzing the images, because it outlines the advantages and pitfalls of reading political cartoons.

The title of this dissertation, “Blackness of a Different Color”, was inspired by Matthew Frye Jacobson’s *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Jacobson examined how Celts and Italian immigrants were discriminated against by Anglo-Saxon whites in the United States from 1790 to 1965. For 200 years, Haiti has been stereotypically depicted as a place of instability, cannibalism, zombies, poverty, and the source of the AIDS virus (Farmer 286-87). The U.S. media has been quite instrumental in imposing these negative meanings on Haiti. These stereotypical representations had carried on to Haiti’s neighboring countries like the Bahamas. It is no surprise that Haiti has been considered an “Island among Islands” and is even excluded from the black Caribbean community (Smith 2005 187). The articles and documents reveals why Haitians are mistreated not only based on class, nationality, or language, but on the meaning and differences within blackness a link that is missing in
Haitian-Caribbean scholarship. Analyzing these sources illustrates that appearance and phenotype is also a factor in understanding the divisions between Bahamians and Haitians.

Chapter one focuses on the geographical setting and early migration patterns of the Bahamas. The first chapter will also discuss the history of relations between the Bahamas and Haiti during the Haitian revolution. Additionally, it examines the participation of early “refugees” from St. Domingue in the emerging “colored” movement in the Bahamas. This first chapter will also look at the large-scale emigration of Bahamian workers to Miami and Central America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. During that period, there was little economic disparity between the Bahamas and Haiti. The rise of the Haitian middle class, as well as the migrations of Bahamians to Haiti will be discussed. The first chapter will look at the historical roots to illustrate the close economic and social relationship between Haiti and the Bahamas.

The second chapter covers the economic and social transformation of the Bahamas, specifically how the demand for labor increased drastically in the second half of the twentieth century. Like other Anglophone Caribbean Islands, the Bahamas experienced a boom in the tourism sector, and there was a high demand for workers. Simultaneously, Haiti experienced an economic decline under the Duvalier dictatorship. Haitian laborers, from the Northwest region of Haiti, traveled to the Bahamas to improve their economic situation and flee the political repression of Francois Duvalier. The economic transformation of the Bahamas sheds light on the benefits and consequences of economic development, which reshaped the Bahamians in every dimension, including
their national identity. The Bahamas has committed itself to international refugee agreements enacted by the United Nations, but Haitian refugees are mistreated due to Bahamas’s bias against Haitians. The Bahamian government has taken aggressive approaches by detaining Haitians and deporting Haitian-Bahamians born in the Bahamas to Haitian parents. The second chapter will also look at the issue of citizenship, immigration policy, and the dilemma of statelessness.

The third chapter examines the role of nation building, the different perceptions of nationalism, and blackness from the negritude movement in Haiti, to the Progressive Liberal Party of the Bahamas. Chapter three will illustrate how a powerful dichotomy was created, in which the Bahamas is represented as a modern, developed Caribbean nation, while Haiti is seen as a poor nation with a history of political instability. More importantly the third chapter will look at the roots of conflict within blackness between the Bahamas and Haiti.

The fourth chapter, “Constructing the Haitian Problem” will examine how print media can produce boundaries. Bahamian newspapers, political cartoons, and public documents will be analyzed to show how Haitians are represented in the media. This chapter will illustrate how the media created certain boundaries based on Language, Religion, Aesthetics, hygiene, and race.

The final chapter will examine the contributions of Haitians and Haitian-Bahamians as well as post-earthquake politics in the Bahamas. This final section will further examine the role of neoliberalism, contemporary racism, transnational migration, and list the conclusions to the research findings and methodologies. Chapter five will
address intra-racial discrimination and challenge post-racial rhetoric that ignores how certain groups are still being discriminated against. A more positive dialogue is needed to go beyond the confines of traditional racism and better grapple with the underhanded tactics of contemporary racism.
Chapter 1: Early history of migration patterns to the Bahamas

The history of Bahamian-Haitian relations is not included within the standard education curriculums, despite the presence of Haitian/ Haitian-Bahamian students in public schools throughout the Bahamas. Bahamian anthropologist, Nicolette Bethel explained her experience teaching a classroom to students who knew very little about Black Bahamian history:

In 2002, I met this class who were bright and curious and almost completely ignorant about their own heritage. They were conversant enough with the heritage of other people to be able to talk knowledgeably about Dr. King and Malcolm, even about Nelson Mandela and Marcus Garvey, but they did not know very much at all about Stephen Dillet or Alfred Adderley or Randol Fawkes (New Black Magazine).

What led to the lack of knowledge on black Bahamian history is that history courses are not a major requirement for graduation and that the most affordable and accessible history books are U.S. textbooks (New Black Magazine). If black Bahamian history is not as accessible, it is even more of a challenge teaching Haitian-Bahamian history within Bahamian public schools. Many Bahamian students do not know about Stephen Dillet, John Goodman or the Haitian revolution. Instead, Bahamian students are exposed to negative depictions and stereotypes about Haitians, which fuel even more animosity towards fellow Haitian students. The early history of migration labor patterns is essential in understanding the foundations of how Haiti and the Bahamas are linked. These early migration patterns occurred before the presence of Europeans. The first native inhabitants of the Bahamas originated from present-day Haiti. As the Europeans and American Loyalists settled in the Bahamas, regulating slavery had become an issue after
the Haitian slave revolt of 1791. Free blacks, white refugees, along with their slaves escaped Saint Domingue to neighboring islands including the Bahamas. Stephen Dillet was a free black of Haitian descent and was instrumental in the free black movement in the Bahamas.

Migration patterns of Bahamian laborers share some similarities with Haitian laborers. Black Bahamian laborers were exploited under what was called the truck and credit system. Many Bahamians had no choice, but to leave the Bahamas in search of work. During the early twentieth century, many black Bahamians worked in Miami and transformed the small southern town into a bustling tourist city. By the mid twentieth century, Haitians laborers were recruited to the Bahamas and built Nassau into the tourist haven of the islands. These migration trends are important in examining the formation of Haitian migrants.

**The Geographic setting of the Bahamas**

Bahamas’ geographic location and physical features reveals a great deal about its migration history. The Bahamas is composed of coralline limestone that is “razor-sharp” by the coast. The Bahamas does not have rivers, and therefore no sediments are carried into the sea. Thus, the Bahamas has the clearest and most shallow waters in the world (Craton 13-14 1962). The word Bahamas is from the Spanish words of “baja mar” meaning shallow sea (Craton 5 1992). However, there are also a number of sandbanks and rocks, around the Bahamas, which made maritime navigation difficult and dangerous.
Before the 19th century, the natural coral reefs and hurricanes were the cause of shipwrecks (Morse & Morse 141). During the 19th century, Bahamians used different tricks to lure vessels onto the coral reefs, and the shipwrecking and salvaging industry affected the migration patterns of the Bahamas (Neely 33).

One other characteristic is that the Bahamas is an archipelago extending across a large area of the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea. Considering its close proximity to the United States and to other Caribbean states, the Bahamian archipelago provides important shipping lanes to neighboring nations. One of the challenges of the Bahamian archipelago is that its borders are porous and therefore smuggling, migration, and “territorial jurisdiction” become a major problem for the Bahamas (Lewis 136).

Throughout Bahamian history, different groups of people migrated in and out of the Bahamas.

The Bahamian archipelago stretches from southeast Florida to northeast Cuba. The southernmost island, Great Inagua, is only fifty miles from Cuba and from Mole St. Nicholas in Haiti (Lewis 137) (Craton 1962. 11). The Bahamas is made up of 700 islands and uninhabited cays. Its total land area is approximately 5,382 square miles. The islands range in size from a small Cay about a mile wide to the Andros Island, the largest Island in the Bahamas (Hagget 455) (Barlas 7). Most of the population lives in less than twenty of the islands. The most populated islands are New Providence, where the capital Nassau, is located, and the Island of Grand Bahama (Barlas 7).
Origins of the Lucayan Tainos

The location of the Bahamas also tells a great deal about the lives of the indigenous population before the arrival of European explorers. The Lucayans were Tainos who lived in the Bahamas as well as the Turk & Caicos Islands. Taino ancestry can be traced to Venezuela and the Guianas, from where they migrated north to escape from the “more aggressive” Caribs (Craton 1992. 8). The Lucayans were also related to the Tainos in the Greater Antilles (Craton 1962. 18), but the exact area in the Greater Antilles is disputed among archeologists.

Some archeologists have claimed that the first migrants to the Bahamas were Tainos from present day Haiti. Archeologist Theodoor De Booy made the case that Haiti was the “original homeland” of the Lucayans. De Booy explained that the “constant persecution” of the Tainos by the Caribs pushed the Tainos of present day Haiti to the Bahamas (Berman & Gnivecki 427). The origins and migration patterns illustrate a significant connection between the Lucayans and Tainos in Haiti before the presence of Europeans. Ironically, the first native inhabitants of the Bahamas were from present-day Haiti, the same migration routes once traversed by the Tainos of present-day Haiti are now followed by another arrival of people from the same region.

The Spanish Conquistadors were attracted to the riches of Hispaniola more than the Bahamas, which provided a bit of temporary relief for the Lucayans. The land of Hispaniola was more fertile and the native population was much larger than the Bahamas (Craton & Saunders 51). Columbus and his men took the opportunity to control and pacify the natives of Hispaniola by enslavement and demanding tributes of gold.
Governor Ovando continued Columbus’s campaign against the natives, and turned the island of Hispaniola into a slave economy, which, together with disease, resulted in the drastic decline of the native population. The population decline also led to a diminishing work force and Governor Ovando had no choice but to petition the king about the need to transport the Lucayans of the Bahamas to Hispaniola (Riley & Peters 18). Ovando appealed to the Spanish king under false pretences by claiming that the Lucayans would be better accommodated if they were Europeanized and converted to Christianity. Eventually, King Ferdinand allowed Ovando’s request (Riley & Peters 18).

Despite their ingenious traits, the Lucayans were vulnerable at the hands of the Spaniards. Most of the Lucayans were forced to go to their ancestral land, Hispaniola, as slaves. By 1520, not a single Lucayan could be found in the Bahamas (Saunders 2005. 170). Craton described them as a “too fragile people in a too fragile environment”(59). At the time of conquest, Hispaniola (including today’s Haiti and the Bahamas) were both regions that fallen prey to economic exploitation and conflict. The exploitation continued as the Bahamas attracted new people and established new settlements. As colonial forces imposed economic and labor systems, new links developed between the Bahamas and present day Haiti, particularly between the black population of both territories.

*European Settlements in the Bahamas and the Role of Slavery*

After the demise of the Lucayans, the Spanish had little interest in the Bahamas and focused more on the other islands in the Greater Antilles as well as on the riches they acquired in Mexico and South America. The Spanish officially gave up the Bahamian
archipelago under the treaty of Versailles in 1783 (Johnson 3). The first permanent settlements in the Bahamas were British immigrants from the island of Bermuda. These immigrants were puritans interested in living in a new colony where they could attain religious and political liberties. Most of these Bermudan immigrants settled in the island of Eleuthera. Eventually, the population increased with the influx of slaves, free blacks, and coloreds who were labeled as “socially undesirable” in Bermuda (Johnson 3-4).

In 1783, the American Loyalists moved to the Bahamas. They were “refugees” from Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. The Loyalists already had experience in agricultural production and many of them moved to the Bahamas for lucrative land grants provided by the British government (Johnson 11). Many Loyalists moved with their slaves and established cotton plantations leading to a thriving cotton industry that attracted merchants involved in the slave trade. These merchants brought in slaves from West Africa or from other colonies in the Caribbean. The merchants as well as the loyalists believed that slaves and a plantation agricultural sector were integral to “economic success” (Johnson 13-14).

The Loyalists transformed the dynamics of slavery in the Bahamas. The slaves in the Bahamas were bound to the provisions of the 1767 act which provided guidelines for “governing” blacks, mulattoes, and Indians (Craton & Saunders 152). The 1767 act was not as severe as other slave acts in other British colonies. Free “coloreds” and blacks were treated with “relative harshness” because they were viewed as a “socioeconomic and political threat” (Craton & Saunders 154). The influx of the Loyalists and their slaves exacerbated the problem with the number of free blacks and slaves. For example, out of
100,000 loyalist refugees from the United States, only 1,600 whites, 5,700 slaves, and free blacks permanently migrated to the Bahamas (Craton & Saunders 178). Although a modest increase in the general population of the Bahamas, the proportion of blacks went from one-half to three quarters by the late eighteenth century (Craton & Saunders 178). In response to the large influx of blacks, the Governor of the Bahamas added tougher restrictions to the 1767 act (Craton & Saunders 190).

In addition to the number of plantations established by the Loyalists, the town of Nassau in the island of New Providence was rapidly changing from a small “frontier” town to a commercial center. The population of New Providence doubled in five years (Craton & Saunders 194). The biggest concern for wealthy slave owners was that most of Nassau’s population were black slaves and poor free blacks who believed they were set free in the United States (Craton & Saunders 195). The issue of free blacks would remain pervasive particularly during the slave rebellion in Saint Domingue.

**The Impact of the Haitian Revolution and Free Blacks in the Bahamas**

The Haitian Revolution as well as the free colored movement in the British colony played a huge role in the black population of the Bahamas. The relationship between the British colony and the French colony were linked once more in terms of migration trends, economic, and social influence:

It is the belief of one school of thought that the aboriginal people of the Bahamas came from Haiti (Espanola). There was a conflict between the migrants to the Bahamas and their relatives in Haiti. Despite this conflict, there was active trading between the two groups. The relationship between the Bahamas and Haiti was revived when Europeans, which included buccaneers, freebooters and pirates of
Tortuga and New Providence inhabited both countries. During the French and Haitian revolutions, the Bahamas and Haiti’s people’s fates were once again connected (McCartney 25).

In the late eighteenth century, the Bahamian colonialists wanted to have a tighter grip in the Bahamas, especially on matters pertaining to the status of free blacks. Craton describes the anxieties of the white residents of the Bahamas about the perceived menace of the free blacks and tensions with the Governor of the Bahamas:

Inevitably, there was a renewal of competition, tension, and conflict. But these no longer stemmed chiefly from differences between old and new inhabitants, or even (as in Jamaica and other West Indian Colonies) between merchants and planters. Instead, they followed from the formation of the reconstituted oligarchy, flexing its muscles in the enlarged assembly and eager to assert its authority, its seasonal interests, in confrontation with an arrogant, aristocratic, and imperialistic governor and against a troublesome majority of urban slaves and ambitious free coloreds (199).

Complaints were sent to the governor that there were rebellious runaway slaves claiming freedom and causing mayhem upon the white inhabitants of the Bahamas. Yet, these complaints came from whites who attempted to round up free blacks and enslave them (Craton & Saunders 200). By 1790, the Bahamas was in the midst of a social and racial dilemma. The Bahamas had to develop legislation pertaining to the rising number of free blacks and slaves in which to find strategies to “deflect and diffuse” the potential threat of the Revolution in Haiti (Craton & Saunders 205). White Bahamians were concerned when the 1791 slave revolt occurred in Saint Domingue. The initial reaction was that the slave revolt could not have spread to the Bahamas because the conditions of slaves seemed harsher under the French than in the Bahamas. The white Bahamians were also assured that a revolution could be prevented by simply cutting off communications with
Saint Domingue (Craton & Saunders 207). Bahamian planters viewed the crisis in Saint Domingue as an international issue more than a race and class issue. The planters assumed that their own slaves would fight to defend their British masters against the French (Craton & Saunders 207).

**Isolating the Haitian Revolution: Early Immigration Policy of the Bahamas**

The Bahamas never became the main destination of French Refugees who wanted to flee Saint Domingue. What led to the large influx of French refugees and their slaves in the Bahamas was the lucrative role of privateering, which became a nuisance for Bahamian planters and the Colonial government. The sea-lanes were filled with Bahamian privateers who seized enemy and neutral ships based on the accusation that they were enemy vessels or that they carried contraband items (McWeeney 2). The ships filled with refugees from Saint Domingue were often targets for privateers.

These privateers were considered an informal “privatized navy” for the Bahamas. They would provide protection for the British colony, particularly since Britain was at war with France. However, patriotism and security was not a priority. Privateering was a highly competitive and profitable commerce for these maritime adventurers and the business sector of the Bahamas (McWeeney 2). Although the Bahamas benefitted from privateering, the colonial government dealt with an unforeseeable dilemma:

The dimensions of the resultant maritime traffic and the concomitant boom to the privateering industry were attested to by the Governor of the Bahamas, The Earl of Dunmore, when in June of 1793 he informed the Colonial Office that about twenty prizes had been brought into New Providence and then, a mere three weeks later, observed with growing alarm that the figure had since climbed to fifty, the mass exodus of the French from Le Cap almost certainly accounting for most, if not all, of this sharp and sudden increase (McWeeney 2).
The Bahamas did not want the émigrés, but they happened to carry important cargo on their boats. However, there were short-term incentives for the local Bahamian population. These incentives include hiring the white émigrés for cheap labor while they waited for deportation hearings (McWeeney 3). Nonetheless, there was no strategy for dealing with refugees after their possessions were confiscated. Reeling from the consequences of privateering, the colonial Governor and assembly had to devise ways to regulate the flow of refugees and slaves from Saint Domingue.

In 1793, Governor Lord Dunmore of the Bahamas implemented a tax restriction policy prohibiting the number of “French mulattoes and Free Blacks from Saint Domingue” (Craton & Saunders 208). The 1793 act imposed a thirty pound tax on French slaves and a more expensive one hundred pound tax on free French blacks; a “crippling” tax fee to pull free French blacks back to slavery (McWeeney 4). If the taxes were not paid, free French blacks were arrested and deported (McWeeney 4). Meanwhile, the white refugees from Saint Domingue were allowed to stay. In some circumstances, white refugees were given provisions and were permitted to sail to America (WB Johnson 4).

Despite the strict regulation of the 1793 act, pressure remained from Bahamian planters to impose tighter rules to restrict the number of black slaves and free blacks from Saint Domingue. For example, the Bahamian planters in Long Island (an island that is in closer proximity to Saint Domingue than to Nassau) were fearful that the Revolution would “infect” their island, and demanded that the Governor and the assembly provide more protection for them (Craton & Saunders 208). Some of these free blacks and slaves were to be detained on prison vessels in the Nassau Harbor (WB Johnson 4).
In response to the request of the planters, the Bahamian assembly enacted the 1795 and 1797 acts that gave power to British subjects to arrest any Haitian slave at large. These acts also gave Bahamian blacks the power to capture Haitian slaves as well (McWeeney 4). Bahamian slaves were paid five pounds and given a British army blue coat with a red cross stitched on the right shoulder if they caught Haitian slaves, particularly rebel slaves (Craton & Saunders 211).

These laws were certainly geared to divide the Bahamian black population from the Black population of Saint Domingue. A number of alleged plots and conspiracies were reported that Haitian free blacks would rebel and destabilize the British colony. In 1797, a Bahamian slave informed British militia officers that Blacks from Saint Domingue were going to attack and kill garrison guards at a military fort, have their weapons seized, set fire to a nearby town, and sail off in a captured boat (Craton & Saunders 212). Based on the slave’s testimony, the accused conspirators were captured and put on trial for the “high crimes of treason and sedition” (McWeeney 6). The conspirators were not willing to confess to the crime. Although there was no hard evidence, the conspirators were found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. Their bodies were chained up and suspended in mid-air for public display to instill fear into other Haitian free blacks or slaves who attempted to plot a rebellion (McWeeney 6). The Bahamian slave who provided the testimony was rewarded with money and the coat as stipulated in the law (Craton & Saunders 212). The advocates of these laws argued that the harsh restrictions were necessary. The potential influence of Haitian slaves and free
blacks on the Bahamian black population was a real threat. Bahamian slaves were also instructed to be fearful of slaves from Haiti based on religious and cultural stereotypes:

In an effort to discourage the participation of Bahamian slaves in any act of rebellion or revolution orchestrated by L'Ouverture or his agents, slave owners kept their slaves in line by telling them that if they had anything to do with Haitians, they would be taken to Haiti and turned into zombies. They were also told that they would be taken in the mountains and made to work in the coffee plantations, never to be seen again. Slaves in the Bahamas were led to believe that Haitians had the power to turn their heads around their backs (McCartney 25).

A distinction between the English-colonized blacks and French blacks from Saint Domingue clearly materialized. The Governor as well as the Assembly claimed that the planned rebellions and plots were limited to Blacks from Saint Domingue, while the English slaves were thought to be “loyal” and “quiescent” (Craton & Saunders 212).

The effort to continue enforcing these laws proved to be a complete failure because privateering worked against immigration restrictions in colonial Bahamas. The economic lure of privateering turned into a social problem for the Bahamas. Bahamian colonial officials desired to impose an “immigration embargo” permanently against Haitians. However, colonial officials did not resist the economic seduction of privateering. The last important factor was the geographical layout of the Bahamas, an archipelago with many “entry points.” The Bahamas did not have that many resources to police its porous borders (McWeeney 4), (McWeeney 7).

One interesting aspect about these immigration policies was that they were harsher on Haitian free blacks than on Haitian slaves. These policies about free blacks illustrate the “compensating mechanism” of social control and racism in the Bahamas
The treatment of free blacks from Haiti was the basis for how Haitians would be represented in the next two centuries. When the number of Haitians entering the Bahamas declined in the nineteenth century, the perception of Haitians was still a political tool of fear to maintain control of the English colony.

In 1801, Governor Hunt of the Bahamas still maintained that fear of the influx of “French negroes” and that the Bahamas would be another Saint Domingue (WB Johnson 80). After the arrival of black troops to reinforce a local defense establishment, Governor Hunt “anxiously reported” to London. It was rumored that some of the black troops were from Saint Domingue (McWeeney 7), (WB Johnson 80). The Governor claimed that they might cause a “panic” in Nassau and attempted to convince the white residents and the Colonial Office how potentially dangerous these black troops were:

As he described the excited crowd that gathered at the port where the black troops arrived, Hunt attempted to make his argument more compelling by injecting the name of the dreaded Toussaint L’Ouverture, writing that “the public mind could not have been greater had Toussaint himself come with all his force (WB Johnson 80).

However, Governor Hunt failed to include that unlike Toussaint’s republic army, white officers led the black troops in the Bahamas. Governor Hunt’s exaggeration was shared by the majority of white Bahamians concerned about the “disparity between the white and black population” of the Bahamas (WB Johnson 80-81).

Privateers benefited from confiscating high value items from the White émigrés of Saint Domingue, while hiring them for cheap labor practices. This profitable scheme led to high influx of slaves from Saint Domingue. Ironically, the Bahamian entrepreneurs would utilize this short-term incentive of hiring Haitians for cheap labor
and consequently the Bahamian government had to deal with large influx of Haitians in the Bahamas into the twentieth century.

**Stephen Dillet and the Free Colored Movement**

Despite the ongoing fear of the influx of Haitian blacks and how they were represented in the Bahamas, prominent free blacks of Haitian descent made important contributions to the rights of free blacks in the Bahamas. The most notable free black in the Bahamas was Stephen Dillet, the child of a French military officer and a native Haitian mother. Dillet left Haiti with his parents when he was six years old, and on their way to Cuba aboard a schooner, they were captured by a British privateer and were taken to Nassau (Johnson 2000. 3). Despite having their assets confiscated, Dillet’s family fared well in the Bahamas and remained in Nassau. Stephen Dillet became a tailor for the English garrison stationed in Nassau (Johnson 2000. 3).

Before the British abolished slavery in 1833, there was an emerging free colored movement in the British colonies. In the Bahamas, there were a number of protests, debates, and petitions in the parliament regarding the rights of free persons of color. Sometimes these petitions were ignored, and other times there was some progress from the assembly or by royal proclamation (Wesley 161). Progress was due to various free colored organizations in the British colonies. One of these organizations was the “The Committee of the Free People of Colour” (CFPC), which was established in New Providence Island, Bahamas (WB Johnson 174). One of the members of this committee was Stephen Dillet. Dillet and other members of CFPC appealed to the assembly to
remove the “civil disabilities” which prevented free coloreds from attaining full citizenship privileges as whites (W.B Johnson 174).

Due to the educational opportunities that were available to them as well as support from their churches, free blacks and persons of color from New Providence had a reputation for being the most organized (WB Johnson 174). One of the most important acts passed during the 1820s to 1830s was the repeal of the “civil disabilities” act on free colored and black subjects in the Bahamas (WB Johnson 174, 178). There were further improvements in 1835, when laws that restricted free blacks from attaining political positions were removed. Dillet left the tailor business and entered politics. He was elected as member of the House of Assembly and remained in the Assembly for thirty years (Johnson 2000.3). Dillet was also appointed chief inspector of police and postmaster of Nassau (Johnson 2000. 3). Later, he was made “Deputy Adjutant General of Militia” and was an associate of the Governor’s staff (Johnson 2000. 4).

Stephen Dillet was an integral part of the Free Colored movement in the Bahamas and was the first colored political official in the history of the Bahamas. Dillet’s brothers Edward Laroda and John Goodman were also successful. Laroda briefly served as a representative in the House of the Assembly, while Goodman was a wealthy merchant and landowner (McWeeney 8). The popular public beach near Nassau, Goodman’s Bay, was named after John Goodman. Stephen Dillet is also the grandfather of famous writer and civil rights activist in the United States, James Weldon Johnson (McCartney 26). Dillet's contribution to Bahamas' free colored movement indicates how Haitians-Bahamians are integral to the formation of the Black Bahamian nation today.
Most of the French émigrés who were stranded in the Bahamas, moved on to the United States. However, those who remained were involved in important trades such as “tailors, goldsmiths, and shopkeepers” (McWeeney 8).

**Themes of Coping and Resourcefulness: The Struggle of Black Bahamian Workers**

Haitians who migrated to the Bahamas were from Northwest Haiti, an isolated area in which agricultural production was poor and Haitians had to shift to other industries for income. 19th century Bahamas was somewhat similar to Northwest Haiti. At that time, the Bahamas was portrayed mostly as a colony that relied only on black market activities such as piracy, smuggling, and wrecking. Very little was written about the contribution of Black Bahamian migrants and about their African heritage. Historian Peter Dalleo challenged both the general portrayal of nineteenth century Bahamas as a colony of “peddlers” who were only interested in get-rich-quick schemes as well as the lack of research on black migrant workers:

Researchers must also contend with the assessment of the Bahamas as a nation of “scufflers.” Bahamas certainly combined a variety of economic functions but not necessarily because they were lazy. Rather they had to find a means of coping with the sometime stark and depressed conditions that characterized the Bahamian economy (Dalleo 300).

Research on regional interaction among black Bahamian migrant workers deserves “special attention” particularly because these migration trends are similar among migrant workers in Africa (Dalleo 300). Only the mercantile class in Nassau benefited from the success of short-term industries, while little of the profits “trickled down” to the black majority population (Dalleo 296). Due to the lack of any permanent or sustainable
industries, most Bahamians had to find temporary work and migrate in response to labor shortages elsewhere. Looking at these short-term industries gives insight about the plight of black Bahamians beyond the plundering hype and to examine the “dynamics of interisland connections” particularly among the black populations of the Bahamas (Dalleo 297).

The first example of short-term industries was wrecking. Reaching its peak between the late 1840s to mid 1850s, it was a popular livelihood for many Bahamians. Wrecking was beneficial to the Bahamas because wrecked goods were taxed and the colonial government would license wreckers. During the 1850s, wrecking made up two-thirds of exports from the Bahamas (Storr 48). However, by the end of the 1850s, wrecking was no longer attractive as new industries became more lucrative. The Confederate states did not have factories to produce important manufactured goods and the Bahamas smuggled in goods such as guns, ammunition, medicine, and clothing from European factories. In exchange for these goods, the Confederate states provided the Bahamas with cotton. This important but illegal form of trade was called “blockade running” (McCartney 10). Vessels that carried these goods were built for faster speed, particularly after Union forces tightened the blockade on the southern ports (McCartney 10). However, the end of the civil war in 1865 halted the blockade running boom (McCartney 10).

In 1861, salt was the “longest established” industry in the Bahamas (Saunders 85) (Craton & Saunders 39). The salt industry was also known to exploit its laborers and keep them in harsh conditions similar to slavery. In order to avoid paying cash wages,
employers used a “truck system” of credit (Craton & Saunders 39). For example, black salt workers were supplied with land and food in exchange for labor. In one instance, workers would only receive a paper with the employer’s name. This stamped paper could be exchanged only for liquor and tobacco (Craton & Saunders 40). One other factor is how the rainy season can affect salt production. Solar evaporation is a method that produces more salt, and heavy rains cut production short.

The rainy season frequently left salt rakers unemployed, forcing them to accept credit or advances from their employers. Due to the harsh conditions, merchants in the salt industry had a difficult time in recruiting laborers to work in the salt ponds. The one effective method in controlling the labor force was to make the salt rakers dependent on credit (Johnson 1986 738-39). The credit or truck system was useful for employers to avoid paying high cash wages to laborers. The workers’ indebtedness was a form of “labor compulsion” after emancipation in the Bahamas. The truck system was necessary for the merchants to keep as much of their labor force as possible (Johnson 1986. 739).

The credit and truck system was well entrenched in the Bahamas by the late nineteenth century. It spread to other industries such as sponging and pineapple production. Sponging was another option for poor out-islanders in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many poor men from Andros and New Providence Islands signed up for sponging voyages on boats that were owned by wealthy merchants from Nassau (Saunders 64) (Dalleo 300). Before the voyage, a sponger had to obtain credit for maintaining the boat and to provide for his family while he was away between six to twelve weeks. Items purchased on credit were clothing and food that was more expensive
than when purchased in cash. Some of these goods were of low quality (Johnson 1986. 743). Spongers would sell these low quality goods for cash. The merchants were at an advantage, particularly since they monopolized credit services that were extremely profitable for them (Johnson 1986.743).

After the voyage, the spongers were in debt to the merchants and continued applying for advances from their employers. Such debt also meant signing up for more voyages, keeping the sponger at work on a “regular basis” (Johnson 1986. 744). The truck and credit system was another example of how merchants were able to control their workers through debt and poverty.

The truck system was extended to the pineapple industry, and the mercantile class were interested in large–scale farming. The mercantile class saw the opportunity for investing in pineapples despite the fact that the climate and soil in the Bahamas are not suited for producing pineapples. The purpose of producing pineapples was to handle the distribution and export of pineapples, while providing advances of credit as a way to control poor small farmers (Craton 1997. 398). Pineapple production was based in the island of Eleuthera, where the mercantile class monopolized land ownership. However, pineapple production declined by the mid 1880s, due to the lack of fertilizers and overuse of the soil.

A second factor was that the Bahamas could not compete with pineapple production in the United States. After the U.S. acquisition of Hawaii and the passage of American protectorate trade policies, Bahamian pineapples were almost barred from the U.S. market (Craton and Saunders 44). In response to the protectorate policies, wealthy
merchants from Nassau began establishing canning factories in the island of Eleuthera and Abaco. The purpose of these canning factories was to process and preserve excess pineapple to attract a “wider and longer-term market” (Craton and Saunders 44-45).

Unfortunately as a consequence of the declining pineapple industry, workers were further abused under the truck system:

First the credit and truck systems stabilized the labour force for pineapple production on land owned by the merchants and guaranteed steady supplies of fruit for export. Second the merchants profited from assuming the middlemen role in supplying merchandise to the rural producers and marketing their produce. For the cultivators, however, there was usually no surplus to save or reinvest. By the beginning of the twentieth century, payment in truck had been extended to encompass workers employed in the pineapple-canning factory at Governor’s harbour, Eleuthera. Wages were paid in the form of tokens and later exclusively at the company store (Johnson. 1986.742)

This form of credit exploitation has led poor workers, mostly black Bahamians, to migrate to other areas in search of wage labor. The theme of coping and resourcefulness is also an issue for Haitians who attempted to create income and find labor in Northwest Haiti. Like Bahamians, Haitians would later migrate to other areas in search of wage labor.

**Bahamian Migrants in Central America and Miami**

The case of the Bahamas reflects much of the theme of “livelihood migration” patterns in the West Indies (Mohl 296). Due to the few and short industries available during the late nineteenth century, Bahamians responded to the “familiar” push/pull factors such as the working conditions in the pineapple industry (Albuquerque & McElroy 195). Bahamians were attracted to work opportunities including “guaranteed
employment” and high wages that were available in nearby Florida and Central America. Bahamians were interested in wages that were “paid in cash” not in truck credit, which was one of the most important factors that pushed Bahamians to work abroad (Albuquerque & McElroy 195) (Johnson 88).

The state of Florida was the main destination for many Bahamian migrants, due to its close location and the development of its agricultural sector. Farmers in Florida needed workers to pick crops, clear out the land, and Black Bahamians fit that niche (Reimers 75). There was also a high demand for workers in construction and other industries in Florida. Bahamians also worked abroad in South Carolina, Central America, Mexico, and Dominican Republic.

Bahamian laborers were in high demand to work in the fruit and lumber industry in Central America (Mohl 217). Steamships from U.S. ports arrived in the Southern Bahamian Islands, such as Inagua, Mayaguana, and Long Cay, to recruit Bahamians to work as stevedores and deck hands. These steamships would travel to ports in Panama, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, in which Bahamians loaded and unloaded bananas and lumber to U.S. ports, before returning back to their islands (Mohl 217). Eventually labor opportunities expanded in Central America. The first destination for Bahamians was Colón, Panama, where they worked on the canal. As labor recruitment was at full capacity at the canal, many Bahamians worked for United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala, or they worked on the railroads in Panama and Mexico (McElroy & Albequerque 179) (Mohl 278).
The U.S. Consulate department in Inagua arranged labor contracts for Bahamians to work for private companies such as United Fruit and Atlantic Fruit Company (Mohl 278). However, Bahamian laborers were exploited and cheated out of their wages through fines and no overtime pay. Company storekeepers charged heavy fees for food, leaving these workers in debt. Bahamians would often return home released from their work contracts with little or no money, while others would work more than their required contract period (Mohl 278-279). In addition, Bahamian men returned in poor physical condition and suffered injuries from the harsh work conditions and climate in Central America. They also contracted tuberculosis and venereal diseases (Albequerque & McElroy 187). The abuses of Bahamian workers were such a problem that laws were enacted in 1907 to protect the rights of contract laborers. However, by the early twentieth century, Bahamian migration shifted to the United States and the number of contract workers to Central America dwindled (Mohl 278-279).

A substantial number of Bahamians migrated to Dominican Republic to work as cane cutters in areas such as San Pedro de Macoris, Puerto Plata, and Sanchez, during the harvest season. Between 1900 and 1930, sugar plantation agents recruited migrants from the Bahamas, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Antigua to cut cane. These migrants were called “cocolos” or “ingleses.” (McElroy & Albequerque 179) (Martinez 39). Dominican elites were concerned with the influx of these migrants into sugar producing areas and that the presence of these migrants was dividing the nation. In 1912, an immigration law was put into place to restrict the number of migrants from the British Colonies as well as migrants from “Asia, Africa, and Oceania” from entering the Dominican Republic
(Pichardo 173). Only Caucasians were exempt from these restrictive clauses. Sugar producers generally ignored this law and continued to recruit migrants to cut cane. By 1913, the number of West Indian migrants entering the Dominican Republic declined (Martinez 39).

Migration to Florida from the Bahamas peaked in the late seventeenth century, when there was a trend of “reverse migration” among the American Loyalists. The white inhabitants of Abaco Island migrated back to Florida and settled in Key West. In 1870, Key West became the prime area for sponging, and many of those white Bahamians became spongers and fishermen (Johnson 85). In 1892, many free Bahamian blacks began to migrate to Key West, Florida, in search of better economic opportunities. At the same time, a second flow of Bahamians traveled near Miami as seasonal workers in the agricultural industry (Mohl 273). Bahamian workers were extremely useful to White planters, because Southeast Florida has the same “limestone topography” as the Bahamas. Bahamians developed the agricultural industry in Florida, by growing crops in what was thought to be barren or unfertile land (Mohl 273).

In 1896, American industrialist Henry Flagler had already begun developing the Florida East Coast Railway extending from Jacksonville to Miami. Flagler’s railroad project generated a high demand for Bahamian laborers, which “sparsely populated” Florida could not supply (Johnson 89). Aside from agriculture and railroad construction, unskilled Bahamians migrated to Miami to build hotels. Bahamians contributed also to the building boom that made Miami a tourist resort center. Most Bahamian migrants were men, but Bahamian women also worked in Miami’s new hotels as maids and cooks.
Bahamians were attracted to the higher wages in Florida, and for the first two decades of the twentieth century, Bahamian migrants transformed the character of Miami from a sleepy southern town to a growing booming city:

Over the next twenty years, the Bahamian influx helped to swell the population. By 1920, when Miami’s population stood at 29,571, the foreign-born made up one quarter of the total population. More than sixty-five percent of Miami’s foreign-born residents were Blacks from the West Indies. Black Islanders, almost all from the Bahamas, totaled 4,815. They comprised fifty-two percent of all Miami’s blacks and 16.3 percent of the city’s entire population. By 1920, Miami had a larger population of black immigrants than any other city in the United States except New York (Mohl 271-272).

The first migrant workers to Miami were young men who left their families in the Bahamas. These workers stayed for a period of six months to one year, and they sent remittances to their family before returning home. It was common for these migrants to go “back and forth” as a consequence of Florida’s proximity to the Bahamas (Johnson 93). However by 1911, migration patterns changed as the workers brought along their families and settled permanently in Miami (Johnson 95). As the Bahamian population grew in Miami, racial discrimination and segregation became a widespread problem. Although Bahamians were able to take advantage of the economic opportunities in Florida, they dealt with a form of racism that was unfamiliar to them. Bahamians were likely to fight more aggressively against white police officers and citizens than native blacks in Miami. The white population viewed Bahamians as “troublemakers” (Mohl 288). The local media denigrated Bahamian migrants as rebellious, indolent, suspicious, and, among the common people, as “Nassau niggers” (Mohl 287).
The city of Miami was known for segregating areas for blacks, Jews, and those who did not fit the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant paradigm. Most police officers were racist whites who harassed Bahamian immigrants and other blacks. As the demand for black labor increased in Miami, blacks were designated to reside in “colored districts.” One area restricted to blacks northwest of Miami was once called “Colored town,” but was renamed Overtown (Nijman 30-31). Overtown was located near the Florida east coast railroads and was one of the earliest settlements for Bahamian immigrants. Overtown had several black Bahamian owned business establishments such as barbershops, dressmaking shops, grocery stores, and restaurants (Shell-Weiss 87).

Coconut-Grove was another community mostly made up of Bahamian immigrants. Bahamians built and established churches, such as “Christ Episcopal church,” which were commonly called “Nassau” churches as opposed to Baptist or Episcopal (Shell-Weiss 87). Several Community organizations were formed by Bahamians to confront racial discrimination in Miami. One prominent organization was the Miami chapter of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The UNIA’s main purpose was to empower and invest in black owned business establishments. Marcus Garvey established the UNIA in Jamaica in 1914. The UNIA created the Black Star Line, a shipping company that fostered economic links between the United States, Caribbean, and West Africa (Shell-Weiss 92). There was some interest for the Black Star Line to include a shipping route between Nassau and Florida. The UNIA also created the “Bahamian Rejuvenation League” to invest in more education opportunities in the Bahamas (Shell-Weiss 92).
Despite the number of organizations that attempted to fight racism, there were several reports of racial violence aimed at Bahamian immigrants. In 1917, a black community center was bombed by a group of whites in Coconut Grove. No one was arrested for the bombing (Nijman 31). The Ku Klux Klan formed its Miami chapter a few years later and many members of the Klan were linked with officers from Miami’s Police force, known to harass Bahamians (Nijman 31). The Klan was known to terrorize Bahamian immigrant community and religious leaders. In one case, the Klan kidnapped a Bahamian minister because he campaigned for racial equality and he was only released after he promised to return to the Bahamas (Nijman 31).

City leaders and planners also practiced racial discrimination, with repeated efforts to segregate blacks away from the Miami’s city center. Real estate developer, George Merrick, created the “exclusive community” of Coral Gables and wanted to sell his community as a tropical haven for Northern whites (Rath 166). Merrick credited the Bahamians for their labor and skills in constructing Coral Gables. Merrick referred to the Bahamians as “way showers,” because they “showed him the way” to value the subtropical climate and landscape of South Florida (Parks 8-9). The early settlers of Coral Gables were Bahamian migrants who constructed their own style of homes made out of pine. Indeed, it was Bahamian migrants who inspired white planters to produce on “coral rocky country” (Miami Herald 4/22/11). They were also construction workers who built Miami’s famous landmarks such as the Biltmore Hotel and the City Hall (McCartney. 2007. 160).
Unfortunately, developers like Merrick wanted to maintain Miami’s tourist image of the ‘Magic City’. White Northerners were able to enjoy the sun, while Bahamian blacks were forcibly “confined” to areas where homes were of poor quality and no municipal services were available (Rath 166-167). The legacy of Jim Crow laws in Miami and the displacement of Bahamian blacks revealed what was done to maintain segregation while creating planned communities:

The exclusion of blacks from Miami’s designs in this era became painfully evident with the discovery of a historic cemetery in April 2009. The site, at N.W. 71st street and 4th avenue, dates to around 1920. Located outside the emerging town of the time, it served as the final resting place of black Bahamian immigrants, most of whom were construction workers. But its existence was subsequently erased from the records and the site was not marked on any known maps—until ninety years later when a construction crew working on a housing project stumbled upon human bones (Nijman 31-32).

In addition to racism in Miami, Bahamian immigrants were concerned about federal immigration laws that were put in place in 1924. These laws were in response to reports about bootleggers during the prohibition-era also involved in human smuggling (Mohl 290). The news of these laws also affected the families of Bahamian migrants who received remittances that helped the business economy in Nassau. Labor agents and employers were worried that these immigration laws would affect the agricultural industry because a labor shortage would drive down production and increase wages (Mohl 290-291). However, there was a loophole in the immigration law. Bahamians were subjects of Great Britain and they were included under the generous quota for Great Britain. As a result, this law had very little impact on the influx of Bahamians to Florida (Mohl 292).
Bahamian immigrants in South Florida contributed to Miami’s transformation from a sleepy town in the Deep South to a thriving and popular tourist destination. Due to racism in the United States, Bahamian immigrants never received the proper recognition in their vital role in Miami’s boom. Bahamian migration to South Florida had a slight resemblance to Haitian migrants in the Bahamas. First, there was high demand for cheap labor for migrant workers in the tourist and agricultural sectors in both Florida and the Bahamas. Second, Bahamians experienced discrimination and were disparaged in the media in Florida in ways similar to how Haitians were treated in the Bahamas. When immigration laws were thought to restrict the number of Bahamian migrant workers, labor recruiters feared that the lack of cheap labor would affect the economy. Finally, the Bahamas developed an economic dependency through remittances. Out-migration helped close the gap on the availability of jobs and high unemployment just like emigration from Haiti eased pressures on the Haitian economy.

The interesting dynamics of international labor based on foreign investment and demand show similar patterns in Haiti and in the Bahamas. These patterns occurred when the Bahamas developed their industries, and like South Florida, needed cheap labor. The case of Haitian migrants in the Bahamas produced ironic outcomes that will be examined in the next chapter.

**Haitian-Bahamian Relations from the late Nineteenth-Century to Mid-Twentieth Century**

The close linkage between Haiti and the Bahamas continued into the 19th century, particularly between northern Haiti and the southern Bahamian islands. Inagua and Long Cay, Bahamas’s southernmost islands, are less than sixty miles from northwest Haiti
(Tinker 92). From the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the island of Tortuga, off the coast of Haiti was an important trading center that provided the Southern Bahamian islands with goods for shipbuilding and “maritime commerce” (Tinker 92).

In northern Haiti, port towns such as Port de Paix and Cap-Haïtien were important and reputable “shipbuilding centers” that provided fishing boats for the Southern Bahamas. Northern Haiti also sold fruits, vegetables, rum, handcraft goods, and livestock to islands such as Inagua and Long Cay. In return, the southern Bahamian island provided Haiti with salt, fish, American, and British manufactured goods (Craton & Saunders 452) (Tinker 92). Since the late nineteenth century, a small but steady stream of Haitians migrated to nearby islands such as Inagua for trade and other economic prospects. At the same time, Haitian port towns were closer and easily accessible for southern Bahamians than the main capital city, Nassau (Tinker 92-93).

Some southern Bahamians also went to Northern Haiti to work as stevedores. While working and residing in Haiti, Bahamian men fostered intimate relationships with Haitian women and a small but steady population of children were born in northern Haiti to Bahamian fathers. Some of these Bahamians created important business establishments in Haiti (Tinker 93) (McCartney 27). One example is how a few Bahamian migrants took the opportunity to serve American soldiers during the U.S occupation of Haiti. Another example is a Bahamian who opened a tailor shop in Haiti. Since he spoke English, it was easier for him to negotiate contracts to make military uniforms for American soldiers in Haiti (Tinker 94).
Southern Bahamians traveled to Haiti not only for trade and commerce, but also for medical reasons. During the U.S occupation of Haiti, the American Navy Medical Corps along with the Red Cross completely transformed the medical institution and practices of Haiti (Schmidt 69). The Navy medical corps was in complete control of the inner workings and logistics of the medical structure in Haiti. The “Service d’ Hygiene”, a medical agency controlled by American administrators and naval physicians had ultimate authority on how hospitals should be built, how to train nurses and doctors, and the distribution of medicine (Brodwin 1996. 50). The “Service d’ Hygiene” also developed a national campaign to vaccinate school children in Haiti, as well to clean polluted swamps and sanitize Haiti’s water supplies. The Service d’ Hygiene was geared to serve poor children and peasants in poor isolated rural areas of Haiti. Despite the agency’s achievements, critics of the occupation expressed that it was the most “intrusive” project during that era. During the 1920s, Bahamians regularly visited Haiti to seek medical treatment and take advantage of the “better medical facilities” during the American occupation (Brodwin 1996. 50) (Tinker 96).

During the first half of the twentieth century, not many Haitians migrated to the Bahamas. In fact, there was not much of an economic difference between Haiti and the Bahamas:

In those simpler days, when there was comparatively little disparity of wealth or development between Haiti and the Bahamas, almost as few Haitians aimed to settle in the Bahamas as Bahamians in Haiti, while the fortunate few nonwhite Bahamians who visited as tourists came back enthused by the vitality and authenticity of Haitian popular culture and with an admiration bordering on envy for the Parisian elegance and political power of the Haitian brown elite (Craton and Saunders 452).
During the 1940s, young Bahamian women from Inagua traveled to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to attend convent schools (McCartney 27). The years between the American occupation and the rise of Francois Duvalier became a period of continued resistance against American imperialism, which ignited the black ethnological and literary movement in Haiti.

National rhetoric has been a consistent theme in Bahamian media and there is an attempt to ignore or erase these historical linkages between Haiti and the Bahamas, but Haiti has been apart of Bahamian history. One article expresses the problem of ignoring or being ill informed about Bahamian-Haitian relations:

There is now a firestorm in the country about this issue. The refusal of the country to come to terms with the Haitian influence in this country. The dire predictions of people that the Haitians are taking over. The fact is in our history they are already a part of us. Stephen Dillet was a Haitian. He was the first black Member of Parliament in The Bahamas. A school is named after him. In Government House Sir Arthur Foulkes, the Governor General had a Haitian mother. So one asks: what are we talking about when we say that the Haitians are taking over? (Bahamas Uncensored 2/13/2012).

Bahamians of Haitian decent have been involved in the formation of the Bahamian nation and have been involved in the national narrative of the Bahamas.

The Bahamian archipelago has close ties with Haiti and the United States, yet conflicts arose through the influx of migrants and free blacks. The origins and migration patterns of the Lucayans can be traced to present-day Haiti. The Lucayans and Tainos of present-day Haiti traded salt and other goods. The establishment of European settlements and arrival of American Loyalists led to conflicts between the whites, slaves, and free blacks that accompanied the Loyalists. The Bahamian archipelago is a convenient
shipping lane between the Caribbean and the United States. Yet, the borders are porous, and vulnerable to smuggling. Bahamian whites feared that free blacks entering the islands, could organize slave rebellions and cause disorder to the British colony, like St. Domingue.

The 1767, 1793, and 1795 acts were all laws restricting the number of free blacks, but these acts shaped how black Haitians were different from black Bahamians. The negative representation of slaves and free blacks from present-day Haiti began since the Haitian slave revolt. Binary oppositions were formed in which Bahamian blacks were labeled as docile and loyal, while Haitians were violent, rebellious, and unchristian. Despite these differences, Haitian-Bahamians, like Stephen Dillet, contributed to the rights of all free blacks in the Bahamas.

In the mid nineteenth century, black Bahamians migrated to Central America and Florida because of the unstable economy in the Bahamas. Ironically, Bahamians contributed to Miami’s boom as a tourist spot in the same manner as Haitians contributed to the tourist industry of Nassau. Past conflicts are linked with current conflicts between Bahamians and Haitian migrants. Yet, certain ties still remained between Haiti and the Bahamas. The southern Bahamian Islands and northern towns of Haiti traded salt and fish. Haiti supplied fishing boats to southern Bahamas.

Bahamians traveled and resided in northern Haiti during the U.S. occupation and “golden era” of Haiti, before François Duvalier. Nonetheless, migration patterns changed again when Duvalier took power in Haiti, and the fear of Haitian migrants in the Bahamas rekindled as it did during the Haitian revolution.
Chapter 2: “It’s Better in the Bahamas:” Haitian Contemporary Migration to the Bahamas

“The irony of Bahamian economic history is that although Caribbean tourism is the offspring of the plantation economy, the plantation economy never flourished in the Bahamas until tourism” (Strachan 94).

Unlike the other British Caribbean colonies, the Bahamas was not entirely successful in agricultural production. Numerous attempts to invest and produce agricultural commodities failed due to environmental and labor problems. The Bahamas underwent several different illegal enterprises and boom periods throughout the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In response to the poor economy, Bahamians emigrated to other areas of the Caribbean, but mostly settled in Florida. In the 1930s, the influx of Bahamians entering the United States slowed down due to a law that removed the Bahamas from Great Britain’s quota (Crowley 10). Nonetheless, Bahamians continued to enter the United States as contract workers, particularly during World War II. Bahamians were sent to different regions of the United States to pick fruits and vegetables in New Jersey, Wisconsin, Oregon, and South Florida (Crowley 10). There was still a great incentive for Bahamians to leave their home in search of better economic opportunities. But as the tourism industry flourished in the Bahamas, migration and labor patterns changed dramatically. The world geopolitical system positioned the Bahamas as a “peripheral paradise” that relied on U.S. and European tourists and expatriates.
The Inevitable Shift and the History of Tourism in the Bahamas

The Bahamas continued experiencing economic difficulties. Before prohibition in the United States ended in 1933, bootlegging declined and the colonial government lost revenue. After World War I, the Bahamas had a prohibition boom. Liquor was plentiful and available while it was banned in the United States. The prohibition boom complemented the tourist industry and U.S. Citizens flocked to nearby Bahamas to purchase and consume liquor (Alexander & Parker 116). Bootlegging was another enterprise that was successful, but temporary. The prohibition boom collapsed by the 1930s.

The Bahamas also relied on another foreign exchange earner, natural sponges. Sponging provided half of the Bahamas’s income and employed 3,000 workers. However, a widespread fungus destroyed the sponge beds and the industry ended by the late 1930s (Alexander & Parker 117). In addition to sponges, the Bahamas exported a number of craftwork goods such as jewelry, hats, and baskets made from sisal and other ornaments made from seashells and turtle shells. The craftwork sector also complemented the tourist industry (Alexander & Parker 117). Despite attempts to revive and invest in a number of industries, the Bahamas was losing money. In response, there were cuts in public services and salaries among state workers (Craton & Saunders 263). The shift from an agricultural economy to a service sector economy was inevitable. One Bahamian resource that was certain was its warm climate and blue shallow waters. Tourism played a significant and permanent role in the Bahamas. Tourism transformed a “rural society to
a tourist economy,” based in Nassau and the man-made city of Freeport on the island of Grand Bahamas (Strachan 94) (Eneas 15).

The Bahamas underwent a visual transformation from a Caribbean colony inadequate in agricultural production, to a “tropicalized” paradise that is ideal for tourist consumption (Thompson 5-6). Economic developers, hoteliers and colonial administrators were determined to visually represent the Bahamas to foreign tourists as “orderly, picturesque, and tropical” (Thompson 10).

The Bahamas attempted to attract tourists since 1851, when the House of Assembly passed an act that gave entrepreneurs or companies one thousand pounds per year to provide steamship service between New York City and Nassau. In 1859, the Bahamas paid three thousand pounds to contractors for monthly steamship service. In that same year, the Royal Victoria Hotel was constructed, and it was completed in 1861. The Royal Victoria was a popular hotel for foreign visitors and was known to fill up to capacity when tourists would escape the cold during the winter season (Strachan 95).

While the second war of independence in Cuba broke out in 1895, there was another boost in Bahamian tourism. U.S. tourists preferred to visit the Bahamas instead of Cuba (Taylor 4). Florida tycoon, Henry Flagler, was also interested in investing in the Bahamas, and he built the “Colonial Hotel” in 1900. In addition, steamship service was available in 1929, and Pan American Airlines launched its seaplane service from Miami (Strachan 95-96).

In the first fifty years of the twentieth century, the number of tourists to the Bahamas reached its peak during the four month winter season. However, there were
entrepreneurs who wanted tourism in the Bahamas to be a yearlong industry (Strachan 95-96). These entrepreneurs were the wealthy white minority that controlled the economy and had political power in the Bahamas. The business establishments of the white minority were located in the main street of downtown Nassau; they were nicknamed the “Bay Street Boys”, and they determined how economic policies were implemented in the Bahamas (Eneas 16-17). The Bay Street boys dominated a series of public boards within the Bahamian government, particularly the Development Board, which became the Ministry of Tourism in 1964 (Eneas 17).

Governor Bede Clifford of the Bahamas wanted to implement a new economic model based in Nassau. Clifford also wanted to continue investing in agricultural projects in the Out Islands. Governor Clifford worked closely with the Development Board to concentrate on transportation, accommodations, and entertainment for incoming tourists. Clifford and the Development Board negotiated for more subsidies on steamship services from New York to Nassau, and for more facilities for seaplanes (Craton & Saunders 264).

In 1949, one of the Bay Street Boys, Sir Stafford Sands, was a member of the House of Assembly. Sands wanted to transform the Bahamas into a “new mecca of the world’s rich” and “a place to play” (Eneas 18; Rommen 84). His objective was to make tourism a year-round industry and to lure more visitors to the Bahamas (Strachan 96). Sands and the Development Board created a massive promotional campaign that invested in print advertising abroad. They focused on public relations in the United States and
formed sales offices in major U.S. cities. Government expenditures on the project were expensive, but increasing profits from the tourist sector covered the costs (Rommen 84).

The Bahamas had a laissez-faire approach on the tourist sector. For example, they provided tax exemptions for hotel developers. In 1949, the Bahamas passed the Hotel Encouragement Act, which gave “duty-free concessions” for building hotels (Eneas 18) (Ramsaran 81). Throughout the 1950s, several hotels and resorts were constructed, including the Pilot House club in 1950, the Coral Harbour Club in 1956, Emerald Beach hotel in 1953, the Dolphin hotel in 1956, the Mayfair hotel in 1957, and the Nassau Beach hotel in 1959 (Rommen 84-85). Stafford Sands calculated the spending from the Development Board and revenues from the tourist sector. Sands was confident that tourism would provide the sustainable growth that the Bahamas needed (Rommen 84-85). Sands’s tourism campaign was successful and by 1961, the number of tourists who visited the Bahamas increased from 30,000 in 1949 to 365,000 (Pattullo 34). The tourism boom also affected the visitor/resident ratio. In 1950, the ratio was one to one, and by 1961, the ratio was almost three visitors to one resident. The Bahamas is one of the few areas in the world where the number of tourists is higher than the local population (Ramasaran 85).

Tourism also had a great impact on Grand Bahama Island. In 1955, the Hawksbill Creek Agreement was signed and the artificial city of Freeport was constructed (Eneas 18-19). The population increased from 156 in 1956 to 15,000 in 1970. The number of visitors drastically increased from 13,000 in 1962 to over 450,000 in 1970, which comprised about 35 percent of total visitors to the Bahamas (Ramsaran 84). The growth
of Nassau and Freeport exceeded the population residing in the Out-Islands and the Bahamas was transformed into an urban society (Eneas 18-19).

Sir Stafford Sands had such a huge influence on the transformation of the Bahamas that he became known as the “creator” or the “father” of modern tourism. Sands was chairman of the Development Board from 1949 to 1964 and Minister of Tourism and Finance from 1964 to 1967 (Eneas 17). After Black Bahamians gained majority rule, Sands’s political party, the United Bahamian Party was defeated. Sands left the Bahamas, went into exile in Great Britain, and died of cancer in 1972. After the independence of the Bahamas, Sands’s tourism and economic model continues to be copied and implemented (Eneas 18).

The Bottom of the Tourist Boom: The Role of Labor in the Bahamas

The former Minister of Tourism and Prime Minister of the Bahamas, Perry Christie, summed up the ambivalent outcomes of tourism: “Possibly the best summary to describe tourism [is] as a good and useful servant and a harsh and insensitive Master” (Christie 39). Despite the success of the tourist industry, the disturbing downside to tourism slightly resembles “plantation style economics” (Strachan 91). The problems within the tourist industry, particularly in the Caribbean islands are seasonal layoffs. Workers are laid off during the low season from June to November (Beekhuis 329-330). Low seasons are a cause of concern among resort and hotel managers, because there are not many tourists. As a result, income and tax revenues dwindle. Since the Caribbean islands are under a subtropical or tropical climate, the region is known to be a “winter
destination” where visitors from the United States, Canada, and Europe visit during the winter months (high season for the Caribbean) (Timothy & Teve 53).

When tourism was first growing during the 1920s and 1930s, many laborers in the Bahamas worked only three to four months out of the year. During the winter months, wages were very low (Saunders 1997.29). In addition, the influx of American entrepreneurs, tourists, expatriates, and real estate developers increased the cost of living in the Bahamas. Food was expensive and locally grown fruits and vegetables were scarce. The laborers also could not afford imported food. Lack of work and low wages led to increased vagrancy and crime (Saunders 1997.29).

The second problem with tourism functioning as the mainstay of the economy is overdependence on other nations. Although the nationalities and citizenship of visitors have become more diverse, the Bahamas ultimately relies on US, Canadian, and European markets (Beekhuis 329-330). Aside from the demand and composition of visitors, the role of labor has been the fundamental challenge to the tourist sector. Tourism is ideally known to generate job growth, however hotel owners and foreign residents “imported most of their staff” (Saunders 1997 28).

In the attempt to attract white tourists and ex-patriots, tourist developers and the white elite in the Bahamas utilized the method of visual representation, in which the Bahamas was a stable colony and Bahamian blacks were portrayed as docile, “perfectly managed,” and domesticated:

In addition to their (intended) role in whitening the Caribbean, picturesque images and tropicalized spaces would play a role in black protest. Precisely because touristic photographs frequently portrayed the success of colonialism in civilizing black subjects (Thompson 23).
Black Bahamians were excluded from any decision making process within the tourist sector or any policy that might affect the entire colony. During the early 1920s, Black Bahamians did not have access to even low grade jobs and many protested these racist measures. Bahamian black cab drivers and boatmen demonstrated against “hotel-sponsored transportation” that took guests to nearby Hog Island (presently Paradise Island) from Nassau. Black cab drivers and locals were finally hired to transport guests, and until 1925, black bellboys were employed (Saunders 1997.28). The governor opened a civic center to train black Bahamians to serve as waiters, cooks, and domestic servants, only low paid jobs that would be available to blacks. In essence, blacks were relegated to low-level or unskilled positions with little pay (Saunders 1997.28).

Black Bahamians had little opportunity to participate in the management sector (Beekhuis 329-330). Arguably, the majority of the labor force in small Caribbean islands only had a primary education. Due to the lack of vocational facilities, the labor force had no “formal” experience in proper vocational training (Bryden 21-22). The highly educated are among the wealthy, but small, elite population in the Bahamas. The managerial and skilled positions that require higher pay were for expatriates. The tourist boom in the Bahamas required a high demand of skilled professionals and the Port Authority of the Bahamian government brought in managers, administrators, technicians, and supervisors, as well as foreign bankers, doctors, lawyers, architects and engineers (Patrick-McCarthy 134). A “moderate” number of skilled black Bahamians managed to earn professional positions, but expatriates filled up most of the positions (Patrick-
McCarthy 134). By 1968, over half of those employed in high paying and skilled professional jobs were expatriates (Bryden 20). Although national income was increasing in the Bahamas, it benefitted the expatriate worker more than the unskilled Bahamian worker (Patrick-McCarthy 134).

Most of these unskilled workers within the tourist sector were Bahamians from the Out Islands who migrated to Nassau for better employment opportunities. Some were “carpenters, masons, fisherman, and custodians” (Patrick-McCarthy 134). In the hotels, Bahamians were hired as “room attendants,” “deckchair attendants,” gardeners, barmen, and “watersport officers” (Patullo 54). The discriminatory labor practices and importation of foreign workers led to a growing restlessness and dissatisfaction among black Bahamians, which escalated to numerous riots:

In July 1935, when businessman and politician Roland Symonette was building the Prince George Hotel 300 to 400 men sought employment. A near riot broke out when they realized that most of them would not be hired. Later that year 800 unemployed men turned to Fort Charlotte for forty available jobs. Unable to find work, many unashamedly took to begging, loitering, arson and theft. In the late summer of 1937, the Nassau and Montagu theaters both of which practiced segregation mysteriously burnt down (Saunders. 1997 29).

In 1942, black construction workers along with foreign workers were hired to build an air base (presently the Nassau International Airport) contracted by an American corporation for US allies during World War II. Bahamian laborers thought the construction project was a good opportunity for them, since they worked for rates that were comparable to the United States (Craton and Saunders 286). However, black construction workers were enraged when they were paid lower wages than foreign workers. The workers organized and created a “federation of Labor” and demanded that the local government raise their
wages from $.80 to $1.60, an amount that was still lower than the salary of American workers. In response, the local government chose an advisory committee to address the wage issue. However, this committee delayed the issue instead of working to meet their demands (Alexander & Parker 121). Workers lost patience with the lack of action from the government and marched through Bay Street, the business district of Nassau. The district was looted, burned, and the resulting damaged totaled about $40,000. The riot continued in other areas of Nassau for two days (Alexander & Parker 121).

The governor of the Bahamas ordered an investigation of the 1942 riot and appointed a chief justice to lead the investigation. Based on the investigation, the riot stemmed from economic and political hardships that Bahamians suffered. Fundamental changes needed to be implemented such as passing an income and inheritance tax law. The Bay Street boys did not want to pass any law paying “direct taxes,” yet passed a law on legalizing labor unions. As a result of the 1942 riot, Bahamians were recruited to work as agricultural laborers or factory workers in the United States as late as the 1960s (Alexander & Parker 121). Even before the 1942 riots, another movement was growing: the labor movement.

In 1935, Union leader Charles Rhodriguez led the first labor organization in the Bahamas and fought to pass the minimum wage act in 1936 (Alexander & Parker 123) (Craton 2002. 48). Before and during the 1942 riot, the labor organization under Rhodriguez had 800 members. However, a more powerful and broader labor union emerged in the 1950s. Assemblyman Randol Fawkes founded the Bahamas Federation of Labor in 1955, two years after the Black Majority Progressive Liberal Party was
established. Fawkes and the Federation of Labor struggled on a number of issues with the “Bay Street oligarchy,” including a 1958 labor dispute involving transporting passengers to and from Nassau’s new international airport (Alexander and Parker 124). Wealthy merchants provided “tour car services” to passengers, monopolizing the transport network as well as destroying the livelihood of local cab drivers. In response, the cab drivers protested by blocking entry to the airport. The Federation of Labor supported the cab drivers and organized a general strike among hotel and construction workers. The general strike managed to close hotels and suspend hotel construction for nineteen days (Alexander & Parker 124).

The general strike of 1958 was very effective and had the support of the Progressive Liberal Party, becoming a challenging force to the Bay Street elite within the Assembly. However, the elite responded by passing laws that would weaken the labor movement. They passed legislation that banned general labor unions and restricted labor activity to workers in a specific craft or industry (Alexander & Parker 126). Yet, this did not stop the labor movement, and more unions were established, such as the Hotel and Caterers Union that gained a collective agreement with several hotels in Nassau and Freeport. The Airport Workers Union was another significant union, representing workers in the airline industry and workers in tourist agencies (Alexander & Parker 125).

There were unions that represented musicians, entertainers, brewery, and distillery workers. However, one challenge to the Bahamian union workers was that the Bay Street elite continued to be more interested in hiring foreign workers. One current example is a
researcher’s analysis of local native musicians and entertainers and how they were affected by the foreign influx and “Americanization” of Bahamian culture:

Throughout the two-decade period between 1945 and 1965, the nightclubs, restaurants, and taxi drivers of Nassau were doing booming business. By the end of the 1960’s, however, many of the Over-the-Hill nightclubs were beginning to struggle and fail, and by the middle of the 1970s it was clear that the foundation for sustaining live entertainment was on the decline throughout the Bahamas. My own fieldwork beginning in 1997 and continuing to 2010, provided ample evidence for the difficult circumstances under which contemporary musicians labor to secure any kind of performance opportunities at all. Today there are only two clubs that feature live bands in anything resembling regular appearances (Da Tambrin Tree, since 2010 closed for relocation, and the Backyard Club), though a few do feature individual artists singing to tracks when they are not employing deejays to spin entertainment. Hotels employ only a very few local musicians to perform in public areas, and the best concerts are high-priced affairs at the hotels for which major international artists such as Barbara Streisand are contracted (Rommen 20).

Both highly paid, skilled foreign workers and non-union foreign workers were available for cheap labor. Aside from musicians and entertainers, other Bahamian union workers as well as farmers were affected.

*Expatriates hiring Expatriates: Wallace Groves and the Role of the Bahamas Port Authority*

The labor shortage during the early 1960s and the role of the Port authority in the Bahamas had transformed the island colony into a “receiving society for expatriates” (Alburquerque & McElroy 1986. 168). Before the 1960s, there was very little gambling and no casinos in the Bahamas as a result of the penal code banning gambling in the colony, but this law was not strictly implemented. Sir Stafford Sands was instrumental in building casinos in the Bahamas (Thompson 15). However, the Cuban Revolution swiftly expedited the process of establishing gambling facilities in the Bahamas. Gambling
investors and managers shifted their interests to the Bahamas. Some of them were infamous individuals of organized crime:

As is well known, Meyer Lansky and other American organized crime figures including Santo Trafficante, Sam Giacana, and John Rosselli had substantial interests in Cuban casinos that probably reached back into the 1930s. Their operations and investments faced severe problems as Castro’s revolution gained power. The far-sighted appear to have prepared themselves for this contingency by moving some of their activities to the Bahamas. No one was better prepared or more far-sighted than Meyer Lansky” (Block & Klausner 91-92).

Allegedly, Meyer Lansky approached Sands with an offer of two million dollars to acquire rights to manage casinos in the Bahamas. Sands did not accept Lansky’s offer, but several of Lansky’s associates landed management positions in one of the first casinos in the Bahamas (Thompson 15; Block & Klausner 92). While he declined Lansky’s offer, Sands was in a business “partnership” with Florida land developer Louis Chesler and Virginia native Wallace Groves.

Wallace Groves was a Wall Street “financier” who served a two-year term in a federal penitentiary for mail fraud involving stock securities. After serving his sentence, Groves wanted to leave the U.S. for better profitable opportunities in the Bahamas (Life Magazine 2/3/1967) (Craton & Saunders 323-324). Groves invested in the small logging industry of the Bahamas and purchased logging leases from the Abaco Lumber Company. Groves wanted to develop and industrialize Grand Bahama Island. In 1955, the Hawksbill Creek Agreement allowed Groves to purchase more land on Grand Bahama Island. Based on this agreement, Groves and Sands created the Bahamas Port Authority Company.
The Port Authority had the right to own and develop the port area of Grand Bahama and to allow other businesses and hotel resorts to be established on the island. The Port Authority wielded a great deal of power and was exempt from any type of regulation from the government. The Port Authority and businesses licensed by them could hire foreign workers as much as they wanted without any regulation from the immigration authorities of the Bahamas (Craton & Saunders 324; Block & Klausner 90). At one point all casino employees were required to be non-residents. Local residents of the islands were not allowed to play in the casinos or they would be fined with a $500 penalty (Thompson 15). The Port Authority also was exempt from property taxes, taxes on earnings, and export duties (Craton and Saunders 324).

The exemption from immigration regulations was a way to address the labor shortage in the Bahamas and also attract cheap labor as opposed to Bahamian union workers. In response, migrant workers went to the Bahamas because they heard of companies hiring several unskilled workers (Craton 1995. 273). By the late 1950s and early 1960s, many unskilled laborers were Haitians who worked as gardeners, servants, cooks, or construction laborers at Hotel sites (Arthur &Dash 179). Some Haitians worked in the petty commerce sector, selling goods to tourists outside hotels and resorts (Wah 55). Haitian workers benefitted the employers because they were able to drastically lower wages and were not responsible for providing any service for “surplus migrants” (Craton 1995. 273).
The mass influx of unskilled foreign workers in Grand Bahama Island has transformed the social composition of the island as well as reinforced a segregated society, as described by Michael Craton and Gail Saunders:

The unfortunate class situation moreover was exacerbated because nearly all those living in Freeport-Lucaya were wealthy or well-paid whites, whereas the workers living outside the boundaries were almost exclusively blacks. Most dangerous of all was that many of the more skilled laborers and white-collar workers employed by the Port Authority and Development Company and living within the concession area—whether American southerners or white Bahamians drawn by the opportunities offered—needed no encouragement to use the advantages that their color brought or to exercise an inbred racism. Long practice had made the more educated whites adept at smoothing over racial inequalities, but there were ignorant American “rednecks” who were far more cruder. Most irksome of all to proud nonwhite Bahamians (and to the West Indians employed in some numbers by the Port Authority) was the way such persons conflated all nonwhites as “nigras” or provoking a more subtle annoyance, called all manual workers, even the Anglophones, “Haitians” (335).

Racial hostility and discrimination among black Bahamians, white foreigners, and white Bahamians existed as well as divisions between black Bahamians and Haitians.

Black Bahamians criticized the Port Authority and their “right” to hire foreign workers instead of local Bahamians. The Progressive Liberal Party, representing Black Bahamians, called for greater “Bahamianization” of labor. The Progressive Liberal Party was also instrumental in adding a key amendment to Bahamas’s immigration law that required business establishments and corporations to hire Bahamian-born workers, if available (Patrick-McCarthy 135-136). In 1968, a report created by a U.S. consulting firm surveyed laborers in Freeport, Grand Bahamas. Based on their findings, Bahamian-born workers did not reach at least 50 percent of any occupation group within the labor force.
The Bahamian government and the Progressive Liberal Party were concerned with the report’s findings.

The Port Authority was eager to hire experienced and educated Bahamians in principle, but used the report to their advantage and claimed there were not enough skilled Bahamians or individuals of Bahamian status. The Port Authority argued that in order to meet labor requirements and demands, it would still be essential to hire non-Bahamians (Patrick-McCarthy 136). The head of the Chamber of Commerce in Grand Bahama explained that Bahamians refused to work in jobs that Haitians were willing to do, and Haitians were essential to the economy of Grand Bahama:

Mr. Charles Coakley, President of the Grand Bahama Chamber of Commerce, disclosed, relative to Freeport, that Haitians supply the labor for most jobs in the lower end of the economy which Bahamas, because of a false sense of values, do not want. He revealed that Haitians are good consumers, patronizing Bahamian businesses, and that Haitians constitute the major labour pool for agricultural production, construction, domestic and support service in hotel industries. Moreover, Mr. Coakley observed that the barbering and tailoring trades in Grand Bahama are almost exclusively supplied. He concluded that the Haitians came and made a cheaper product with competitive quality and that the constant raids are disrupting the local economy of the island, as Bahamians have not come forward to fill vacancies of deported Haitians (Sears 18).

The Port Authority’s hiring policies, particularly the mass recruitment of Haitian workers would be a recurring problem for the Bahamas after its independence.

**The Role of Offshore Banking and the influx of “Taxpatriates” in the Bahamas**

One other industry that transformed the Bahamas is the offshore banking sector. Offshore banking is the second largest industry after tourism, and it has made the Bahamas the largest financial center in the Caribbean (Khambata 95). The offshore banking industry took off in the late 1960s, at a time when the United States Federal
Reserve Board limited capital exports to adjust the balance of payment deficit (Francis 92-93). These regulation measures had led some banks to set up their branches in the Bahamas, which was viewed as a stable deregulated “tax free” environment. The offshore financial sector has given foreign bankers, investors, and businessmen the loophole to go to the Bahamas and have the opportunity to engage in “illicit” acts by concealing profits or laundering schemes:

In many respects, then, offshore banking is just another piratical Bahamian industry. Like blockade-running and rum smuggling, offshore banking gives non-Bahamians an opportunity to use the Bahamas to skirt foreign law and so avoid foreign legal prohibitions (Storr 114-115).

The Bahamas took advantage of the regulation laws in the United States to attract investors to its location close to the United States, sharing the same time zone as New York (Khambata 95). The offshore banking system in the Bahamas is similar to British common law, which requires little regulations and no daily supervision. There are no exchange controls, and like Swiss accounts, they are numbered to maintain privacy. Non-Bahamians are permitted to use and deposit foreign currency outside the Bahamas (Khambata 95-96).

Bankers and investors praised the offshore banking sector, particularly when the Bahamas was undergoing major political and constitutional changes including independence from Great Britain. Offshore banking was not affected by all these changes in the Bahamas. Offshore banking officials claim that it was the confidence of the banking community in ensuring that the Bahamas reaffirms its “democratic principles” and maintain its political stability (Francis 94). There are estimated to be about 400 “non-
resident” banks in the Bahamas, including affiliates and subsidiaries of the top international banks such as JP Morgan, Credit Suisse, HSBC, and Santander (Khambata 95-96; Oxford Business Group 33).

The offshore banking industry employs a fair number of Bahamians in middle and upper management positions. Although most employees in offshore banking are foreign workers or expatriates, Bahamians occupy over one thousand high paying jobs (Khambata 95; Storr 115). In addition, offshore banking workers benefit from direct foreign conversion currency to Bahamian dollars. Bahamians are paid the same salaries as Americans or Europeans (Francis 98-99).

In order to maintain financial stability, the offshore banks are managed by the Central Bank of the Bahamas, which reviews licenses and tries to promote a positive reputation for offshore banks. However, the United States is not certain that some offshore banks are reputable. The U.S. Federal government is concerned that offshore banks in the Bahamas are used as “depots for drug money” and other illegal funds (Khambata 96). Because of its highly secret banking provisions, the Bahamas has been listed as “non-cooperative” and a “harmful tax haven” by financial governmental organizations. It is estimated that six billion dollars of laundered money is hidden in Bahamas’s offshore banks each year (Storr 115) (Khambata 96).

The tourist and offshore banking industries have changed the demographics of the Bahamas by hiring workers not only from the bottom of the tourist boom but also many American and European expatriates. Taxes are often the reason why wealthy Americans leave the United States and renounce their citizenship. Although renouncing one’s
citizenship to avoid taxes is illegal, consulting firms advise wealthy Americans on saving their money from taxes legally. Wealthy American expatriates, such as mutual fund director John Templeton, give up their U.S. citizenship and move to the Bahamas. In 1962, Templeton’s move to the Bahamas saved him over $100 million in U.S. taxes, while he continued to invest in American companies (Wennersten 40). Mark Mobius, a wealthy mutual fund expert and philanthropist, saved money from taxes by renouncing his U.S. Citizenship. Templeton and Mobius were part of a growing trend of prominent entrepreneurs who viewed expatriation as the “ultimate tax-planning tool” (Wennersten 40). Since 1994, about 4,415 wealthy Americans have renounced their citizenship. In response, there has been additional legislation from the United States Congress to restrict the number of expatriated Americans, by enforcing a ten-year tax, and by barring expatriates from visiting the United States again. However, these laws have not stemmed the flow of “tax fugitives” who reject their U.S citizenship and live lavishly in the Bahamas (Wennersten 41).

The influx of wealthy expatriates is the result of the transformation that the Bahamas experienced between the 1940s and 1960s. The Bahamas underwent a process of “migration transition” caused when a rapid pace of economic development occurs throughout a brief period of time. During this period of rapid development, trends shift towards “new streams” of migration attracted to better economic opportunities (Ghosh 130). The Bahamas has drastically shifted from a “net exporter of labor to a net importer of labor” (McElroy & Alburquerque 1988. 32-33). There are three categories in the stages of economic development: (1) primary, which involves the agricultural sector. (2)
secondary, which involves manufacturing and construction. (3) and tertiary which
involves service sector industries. The development of tourism and banking has moved
the Bahamas rapidly from a primary to a tertiary stage of economic activity (Christie 36).
The economic disparity between the Bahamas and Haiti increased and the Bahamas
became the ideal destination for Haitian workers. The Bahamas exhibited most of the pull
factors of what attract migrants: the flexible and confidential convenience of offshore
banking, its tax haven status, and the high demand for labor from nearby Caribbean
islands, particularly Haiti.

“Prezidan pour La Vie:” The Rise of “Papa Doc” Duvalier in Haiti

During the same period that the Bahamas experienced its tourist boom, Haiti
underwent serious economic and political decline when François Duvalier came into
power. Duvalier was born into a middle class family in 1907. His father was a teacher
and journalist, and his mother was a baker. Duvalier attended the prestigious Lycée
Pétion in Port-au-Prince and studied Public Health at the University of Michigan. He
worked in a number of hospitals and was the assistant to the United States Army Medical
mission to eliminate yaws in rural Haiti between 1943 and 1946 (Juang & Morrissette
391; Nicholls 168).

In addition to his medical career, Duvalier was interested in Haitian politics and
culture. He was involved in the noiriste movement and was one of the middle class
blacks who believed they should “act on behalf” of the poor black masses, since they
share the same “basic interests” (Bryan 52). The noiristes were against French
colonialism, embraced Haitian Creole, and were interested in vodou. Duvalier was one of the founders of the Griot writers in 1938, and believed that vodou played an important role in Haiti gaining its independence. Duvalier was considered a black nationalist and claimed to represent the “authentic” people and culture of Haiti (Bryan 52; Juang & Morissette 391). Duvalier believed in a cultural revolution in which the black middle class would “wrest power” from the traditional mulatto elite (Danner 62).

Duvalier first entered politics in 1946 during his involvement in the peasant movement in Haiti, and he was appointed Director of Public Health by Durmarsais Estimé. In 1948, Duvalier served as Undersecretary of State of Labor and a year later, Duvalier was Minister of Public Health and Labor. In 1950, Duvalier resigned and went into hiding after Magloire became president and began to centralize his power (Lundahl 224). After the fall of Magloire in 1956, Duvalier returned to politics and ran for President of Haiti.

During his campaign, Duvalier presented himself as someone who would continue Estimé’s social reforms. In a campaign program, he promised to change the economic conditions of the poor black majority, particularly the Haitian peasantry. Duvalier traveled throughout rural Haiti and pledged to serve the needs of poor peasants (Lundhal 1979, 345). He reached out to every sector during his campaign and promoted his economic program to voters, which included building more roads, investing and producing in domestic raw materials, increasing health services, more schools, and providing credits to poor peasants. Despite his vague economic program, it was enough to win the support of the black middle class in Port-au-Prince, of powerful members of
the Haitian military, as well as of peasants from the Artibonite valley and Northern Haiti. On September 1957, Duvalier was elected President (Lundahl 225-226).

It was first assumed that Duvalier, a quiet, “soft-spoken,” and timid “country doctor”, would revitalize Haiti and return it to the Golden Age. Instead, Duvalier consolidated his power by taking over all “apparatuses of the state” (Dupuy 33-34). First he eliminated every political opponent within the Assembly and Parliament. Six months after he was elected, Duvalier ordered the National Assembly to grant him the power to “rule by decree”, and he mandated curfews and martial law against the population (Lundahl 233). He suspended parliamentary immunity, dissolved the senate chamber, impeached and arrested senators. Additionally, Duvalier created a unicameral parliament, to which he nominated members who supported him. Duvalier also appointed civil and criminal judges, and many Haitian citizens were forced to endure unconstitutional military tribunals (Lundahl 233).

Haitian media was affected by Duvalier’s iron hand. Foreign journalists were forced to leave Haiti, and others were tortured and killed if they denounced his policies. Media offices were damaged, and electricity was cut at television studios, to prevent broadcasters from reporting the news. Haitian newspapers were closed down or were forced to hire editors who promoted pro-Duvalier propaganda. Censorship was practiced in all forms of public communication, including mail letters. Cables were read and phone calls were tapped. One of Haiti’s biggest unions, L’Union Intersyndicale d’Haiti was dissolved, many union activists were arrested, and union strikes were banned (Dupuy 34; Lundhal 232). Duvalier also went after the church by expelling several foreign priests,
mostly from France and Quebec. He regarded them as an extension of French colonialism allied with the light-skinned elite in Haiti who opposed his regime. “Duvalieriste” priests replaced those who were expelled (Danner 77; Lundahl 232).

The most challenging sector for Duvalier to control was the light-skinned business community. He knew that the wealthy and powerful class was instrumental in overthrowing former President Magloire. Traditionally, the light-skinned business elite was influential in pulling the strings within the Haitian government and disliked Duvalier’s noiriste philosophy. The elite supported his political rival during the campaign and there were attempts by exiled light-skinned military officers to remove him from power (Zephir 49). Duvalier had all the ammunition to put an end to the elite powerbase. First, Duvalier dismissed several light-skinned officers and those who served the army for over twenty years. He replaced them with younger black cadets who swore an “oath of allegiance” to Duvalier (Dupuy 35).

Duvalier also weakened the political force of the business class by passing an anti-striking law. The police were allowed to break into business establishments, confiscate their goods, and distribute them free to Duvalier supporters. Business owners were not permitted to declare bankruptcy without government consent, and wealthy members of the light-skinned business class were frequently victims of extortion by the government (Lundahl 231). Several families from the light-skinned elite were slaughtered under Duvalier, and some of the mutilated bodies were displayed to the public, to send a message to other potential enemies (Zephir 49).
Duvalier not only wanted to transform the hierarchy of the military with his supporters, but he also needed another armed unit that would maintain his grip over the Haitian population. Duvalier created his own civilian militia, appointed by him. The civilian militia was renamed the Volunteers for National Security (VSN) in 1962, but it was more popularly known as the Tonton Macoutes, referring to the Haitian stories about a boogyman who carried a sack and attacked children at night (Farmer 92). Indeed, the Macoutes were known to attack and terrorize the Haitian civilians. The Macoutes were made up of mostly lower middle class men from urban areas and some from among the rural peasantry. There were about 10,000 members of the Macoute force, twice the number of Haitian police (Dupuy 35).

The Macoutes were well armed and had the authority to arrest or kill any civilian they deemed “suspicious.” They were rewarded immunity as long as they obeyed Duvalier without question (Crassweller 318). Haitians were detained or simply disappeared without any explanation or through suspicious associations, as one Haitian political prisoner explained:

You can also be arrested because of some argument with a friend of a member of the government or even a friend of a friend because all those who are connected, whether closely or not, with Duvalier’s government, can exercise their own justice by sending their enemies to Fort Dimanche as political prisoners. One citizen died there because he had killed a dog belonging to his neighbor, the brother of a Macoute. The father or husband of an attractive daughter or pretty wife who refuses to play the game can become a political prisoner. Haitians returning from abroad are arrested at Port-au-Prince airport, in front of their horrified relatives and friends, on the basis of nothing more than some suspicion (Romulus 63-64).
Fort Dimanche was the infamous prison, outside of Port-au-Prince, where detainees were beaten while interrogated, tortured, and executed. The execution took place at midnight and the bodies were buried in unmarked graves (Americas Watch Committee 72).

Duvalier imposed psychological terror on Haitians by creating and empowering the Macoutes. It was an effective method to remain in power as long as he wanted.

Duvalier was successful in eliminating all of his enemies, and the Macoutes infiltrated every state and civil institution, including schools, and they even worked undercover as bartenders or taxi drivers (Danner 72). There was very little international criticism, particularly from the United States. Duvalier was well experienced with the cold war policy formula. By claiming to be anti-communist, he attempted to “protect himself” from U.S. aggression, and he created strict laws against communist activity in Haiti (Farmer 94). As long as Duvalier stopped communism and protected U.S. interests, the American government turned a blind eye to his atrocities against the Haitian people. This gave Duvalier the mandate to make the National Assembly revise the constitution to elect him “President for Life” (Raphael 33). The only option for many Haitians was to leave their homeland.

Francois Duvalier transformed Haití’s political methods and structure. Presidents before Duvalier were at the mercy of the military, an institution that monopolized power in Haiti. Duvalier ended the praetorian structure of the state in order to remain in power as long as possible (Lundahl 228). During his fourteen years in power, the number of Haitians who emigrated drastically increased. The first wave of migrants were intellectuals, professionals, and skilled workers pushed out of the state by Duvalier. In
fact, Duvalier encouraged the “intelligentsia” to leave Haiti. In turn, he invited the United Nations to Port-au-Prince to open offices to offer visas to doctors and other professionals to Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo) and other newly independent African states that needed nurses, teachers, engineers, and lawyers (Pierre, Jean-Jean 196). For example, during a teacher and student strike in 1963, more than five thousand skilled workers and graduate students received exit visas to Zaire. Other professionals migrated to North American cities such as New York City, Miami, or Montreal.

Emigration was another tactic that Duvalier used to get rid of his enemies and other potential activists. Between 1961 and 1970, during the height of François Duvalier’s regime, an estimated 34,499 Haitians migrated legally to the United States (Zephir 49). Haiti was and still is listed within the top 30 nations that have the highest emigration rates in the world. It is estimated that about 80 percent of Haiti’s highly skilled workers and professionals left Haiti. There are more Haitian doctors in New York City and Montreal, than in Haiti (Dufoort & Rogers 309; Zephir 49). Meanwhile, the number of Haitians leaving went up from 1,000 in 1957 to 10,000 in 1962 (McCartney 27). Haiti not only experienced a “brain drain”, but many poor peasants in rural areas, not able to afford a plane ticket, traveled by boat instead. The Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba have been the destination for poor Haitian peasants for several years (Haines 178). Haitians who traveled to the Bahamas were originally from Northwest Haiti.
“La République de Port-au-Prince:” Urban/Rural Divisions of Haiti and the neglect of the Northwest Department

Despite Haiti’s dramatic increase in urbanization rate during the last seventy years, it remains mostly an agrarian nation. In 1950, 88 percent of Haiti’s population resided in rural areas; it had declined to 70 percent in the 1990’s (Coupeau 85; Garcia 416). The land tenure system in Haiti is different than in most other countries in Latin America. During the colonial era, Haiti had the traditional plantation system, where white sugar and coffee growers owned much of the lands. After Haiti’s independence, the plantation system was dismantled, land was broken up, and taken by former black slaves. The Haitian elite had abandoned the rural land tenure system, as they found more economic opportunities in Port-au-Prince. As the black rural population increased, a high demand for land and a land system based on owning small individual plots emerged (Arthur &Dash 80). The average number of Haitians living in one square kilometer is 254 people, making it one of the most densely populated areas in Latin America.

Rural Haiti has not developed much since the nation gained its independence, and most of the peasant’s basic farming tools are not sufficient for the rugged terrain. Additionally, much of the land is too small and not suitable for farming and agricultural production. Land is passed on from a parent to a number of children, and the land is divided even further where the plots are not suitable for any harvest. The demand and pressure for fertile land has led to a number of environmental problems in Haiti’s countryside (Arthur & Dash 83). In addition, peasants are exploited by land speculators
or military officers who attempt to confiscate any little arable land that they have.

Confiscation of peasant land was very common during the Duvalier era:

This phenomenon was particularly pronounced under the Duvaliers when large amounts of peasant land were taken over by Tonton Macoutes, section chiefs, and other supporters of the dictatorships. In areas where land is particularly productive, as on the fertile plains and gentler mountain slopes, disputes over land ownership are frequent and sometimes violent (Arthur & Dash 83).

The Section Chief or “Chef de Section” was in charge of upholding the law protecting property, and supervising projects such as building canals or ditches, in his rural district. The Chef de Section was usually nominated by the army chief of staff, but this all changed when François Duvalier came into power. Duvalier nominated the Chef de Sections himself (Lundahl 1979. 351). The only requirement was that the Chef de Section swore allegiance to Duvalier, and in exchange he was granted more power over the rural district; the Chef de Section represented the government (Lundahl 1979, 351). The Chef de Section took advantage of his powers to control and intimidate peasants. It was common for the Chef de Section to abuse peasants by demanding a portion of their harvest and making them work without pay. He would also accept “bribes or tributes” to resolve land or farming disputes to his advantage. The Chef de Section could imprison or kill any peasant at will (Lundahl 1979 351).

The powerful role of the Chef de Section served as the “final word” on the fate of peasants within the rural district. Peasants had no means to express their demands above the Chef de Section’s authority. Duvalier did not attempt to improve the lives of peasants as he once promised in his campaign. Instead, he distanced himself from the peasantry,
and he centralized his power by personally appointing his own network of rural Section Chiefs to prevent any rebellions outside of Port-au-Prince (Brinkerhoff & Zamour 156).

The only form of agricultural policy under the Duvalier regime was a reliance on U.S foreign aid to revitalize the Artibonite valley and the Northern province of Haiti. The United States funded the “Operation Poté,” an agricultural program that aimed at investing in and integrating Haiti’s north province by increasing its production rate (Lundahl 1979, 309). The program provided rural credit, co-operatives, road improvement, as well as education and health services. But much of the funds that were used to develop the Northern Province were mismanaged under the Duvalier regime. Most foreign aid to agricultural projects was eventually suspended (Lundahl 1979, 309-310). In addition, Duvalier made concessions to U.S. corporations to survey the land for any resources such as oil. The Reynolds Mining Company extracted bauxite in Miragoane, Haiti. American corporations such as Reynolds created segregated facilities and wages for their workers, an action that would supposedly be against Duvalier’s national “noiriste” principles, but Duvalier had no interest to change the “semi-feudal” structure in Haiti, and he was concerned only with maintaining National security in rural Haiti (Remy 59).

Duvalier continued the traditional role of governance. Peasant representation was non-existent. Peasants felt isolated and excluded from the government, especially because there is a division between Port-au-Prince and the rest of Haiti:

The countryside, andeyò to rural and city folk alike lies “outside” spheres of national political-economic power: La République de Port-au Prince and other cities or towns rural livelihood systems undergo a cycle of chronic and acute crisis or fail to sustain efforts to assist rural populations to break the cycle. As a
result, rural livelihood systems no longer provide many localities, households, and individuals with appropriate and adequate food (Baro 1).

Food security and income are some of the major problems throughout Haiti, but they are more “pronounced” in rural areas. A majority of Haitians in rural areas earn less income than those who live in Port-au-Prince (Lundahl 1996, 111).

One of the most neglected and poorest regions in Haiti is the northwest department. The northwest region takes up most of Haiti’s northern peninsula and has a diverse landscape. The far-west area, west of the town of Port-de-Paix, is dry and has less rainfall than east of Port-de-Paix (Marshall 14). Other rural regions such as the hinterlands south of Cap-Haïtien, the southern plains that surround Léogane, Jacmel, and Les Cayes and the more fertile Artibonite valley are densely populated (Tata 24). However, Northwest Haiti is the least densely populated region in Haiti, due to its arid climate.

Environmental problems affecting the region such as deforestation, soil, and water erosion make the northwest region in Haiti comparable to the African Sahel, a region that receives only 400 millimeters of rain every year (Brinkerhoff & Garcia-Zamor 154). Peasants cut down trees to clear the land or to make and sell charcoal, which many Haitians rely on to cook food. The topsoil becomes dry under the hot Haitian sun, producing fewer crops, and when tropical rainstorms occur, they wash away the remaining fertile topsoil (Girard 110). Due to the environmental degradation, the region has experienced severe floods and drought, and drought means that many Haitians in the Northwest suffer from malnutrition (Baro 6-7). The conditions in the Northwest region
have also affected livestock. Much of the animals are unfed and die due to weather, predators, or disease. All of these factors have crippled agricultural production, and rural peasants are forced to shift to other smaller industries such as fishing, salt, mining, or selling hand made crafts (Brinkeroff & Garcia-Zamor 154).

The Northwest is further isolated because industrial production as well as agricultural exports are centered in Port-au-Prince. In addition, the roads are in poor condition, and after floods during the rainy season they remain in dire need of repair (Marshall 18). Most imported goods arrive at Port-au-Prince, and about sixty percent of these goods are be distributed to rural areas, but these goods often have difficulty reaching rural areas because of the country’s roads (Marshall 19). Income inequality is also an issue between urban and rural areas. Ninety percent earn less than $240 U.S. a year in rural areas, while less than 60 percent in Port-au-Prince earn that amount (Lundahl 1996. 111). In the Northwest, the drop out rate is as high as 60 percent and merely 18 to 19 percent of children in the Northwest attend primary school (Marshall 15). The only reliable strategy that Northwest Haitians can attempt is permanent or temporary migration. The 1960s, the height of the Duvalier regime, brought yet another burden for Haitians in Northwest Haiti. The most tempting and desperate solution for Haitians was to board some wooden boat from Northwest Haiti and sail through the rough Windward Passage to the Bahamas (Kurlansky 228).

One other essential source of income for some Haitians in the Northwest is remittances from relatives in the Bahamas. In 1960s, the “net flow” of remittances accounted for five percent of Haiti’s exports of goods and services. The flow of
remittances benefitted not only banks in Haiti and the Bahamas, but also financial courier services from the Bahamas (Fass 48). Sea captains and boaters in Haiti also profited from undocumented migration to the Bahamas:

As the flow persisted, as remittances and stories of success circulated in Haiti, Entrepreneurs saw the opportunity for successful free enterprise. Captains began to solicit passengers and eventually a whole network developed fanning out from all the port cities, but especially those in the northwest. The trade increased and so did the level of organization. Freighters that could only produce a marginal profit with inanimate cargo could make a small fortune with refugees (Stepick 137).

In order to prevent their ships from being confiscated, captains paid a hefty portion of their profit to local and government officials in Port-au-Prince.

Smugglers demanded money to transport Haitians to the United States or the Bahamas (Marshall 117). An employment agency was also a frontage for a refugee smuggling ring. This “agency” advertised on the radio to entice potential migrants to buy or trade their land, and any precious items that they had, to work in the United States. Many had to give up their land or borrow money from “crooked” lenders who raised the interest rate up to 100% (Stepick 137). The Duvalier regime never took any steps to control illegal migration out of Haiti because the Haitian government benefitted financially from Haitian emigrants (Marshall 117).

Remittances from the Bahamas to Haiti, estimated from 1.6 million to 3 million from a population of 10,000 Haitian migrants, played an important role in Northwest Haiti. It was reported that a bank in Port-de-Paix received $100,000 a month worth of remittances, totaling a yearly amount of $1,200,000 received through banks (Marshall 117). Haitian migrants returning from the Bahamas had a huge impact in the Northwest.
They invested in building better homes and commerce. Cement walls and zinc metal roofing as well as extensions for shops were indicators of prosperity for many Haitians in the Northwest. Returning migrants also brought in appliances and furnishings from the Bahamas, such as refrigerators, kerosene stoves, and bed mattresses to improve life in their homes (Marshall 16-17).

Returning migrants also used their savings to build shops to sell items such as candy, clothing, and liquor. However, these returning migrants found themselves disappointed because the people in the North department could not afford to purchase the goods they wanted to sell. Returning migrants who built homes for rent could not find tenants because only other returning migrants could afford to rent (Marshall 18). Some of those migrants lost a great deal of their financial savings and had to migrate to Nassau again to earn more money. Realizing that they could not maintain a sustainable life in Northwest Haiti, migrants opted to change their patterns of temporary migration to the Bahamas, and emigration eventually became permanent.

*The Uncontrollable Pull: The New Faces of Economic Development and its Consequences*

Since the late nineteenth century, different groups have migrated and settled in the Bahamas. Greek families residing in the Bahamas have worked in the sponge industry. Many Greeks also participated in the restaurant business, and there are a number of Greek-owned restaurants in Nassau (McCartney 28). A small influx of Lebanese migrants resided in the Bahamas since the 1890s. Many started off selling textiles and
food. A small number of them have become important business leaders in the Bahamas. For example, the Ouwade family from Lebanon changed their last name to “Baker”. The Baker family was part of the Bay Street Business establishment, and two of the Baker brothers were members of the House of Assembly (McCartney 28). A small handful of Chinese migrants also arrived in the Bahamas during the 1920s. Some of them landed in the Bahamas from Cuba. The Chinese in the Bahamas established their own grocery shops, restaurants, and laundromats (McCartney 29). Bahamas’s drastic economic transformation attracted a disproportionate number of migrants, like Greeks, Lebanese, and Chinese Cubans in proportion to their population.

The export and foreign investment oriented model in the Bahamas led to dependence on tourists, expatriates, and migrant workers. Advocates of the tourist industry touted that tourism would bring more jobs for black Bahamians, but the tourism industries did not hire black Bahamians because of “management discriminatory policy” and profit increases. Tourist industries also avoided spending some of their profits on training Bahamians workers (Saunders 28). Recruiting unskilled Haitians to the Bahamas for cheap labor became a more profitable alternative than hiring black Bahaminas. Some of the Haitian migrant workers had difficulty finding stable employment. In addition, the Bahamas also experienced its share of rural/urban divisions. Many Bahamians from the Out Islands migrated to Nassau, where the population of New Providence Island increased during Bahamas’s tourist boom (Saunders 28). The Bay Street Boys benefitted from the tourist industry and most of the profits went into their hands. They also profited from real estate as well, and tourism increased the value of land. The Bay Street
elite controlled approximately 80 percent of “untaxable real estate” on New Providence Island (Block & Klausner 89).

The Bay Street elite not only had economic and political power in the Bahamas, but also managed to redefine its image at the height of its tourist boom. The tourist fantasy image drowned out the voices of struggling black Bahamians. Derek Walcott has described the tourist fantasy about the native Islander who is portrayed as “light-minded, happy, and indifferent” (Hirsh78). The perception of “paradise” has dominated much of the national narrative of the Bahamas. The famous slogan “It’s Better in the Bahamas” has gone beyond tourist consumption and has infiltrated the national consciousness of the Bahamas:

The battle cry of tourism in the 1970’s and 1980’s was “It’s Better in the Bahamas.” At the close of the 1980’s this was changed slightly to “It’s Better in our Country.” In 1996 the slogan became “The Bahamas: It just keeps getting better.” These slogans have served not only to captivate the attention of tourists but to tug at the imaginations of Bahamians. As slogans are apt to do, these quips claim to explain all of reality while proving nothing at all. Clearly, before desegregation in 1956, the winning of women’s right to vote in 1962, and majority rule in 1967, many Bahamians would have rejected the notion that they lived in paradise. But each of the factors we have mentioned—from historiography to the overriding presence of the industry in so many facets of Bahamian life—has conspired to convince Bahamians that on some level they do live in paradise (Strachan 135).

Many Bahamians have absorbed the representation of paradise as part of their process of defining themselves. Somehow, despite their economic and political limitations, Some Bahamians may seem to think they have it better. This attitude affects how Bahamians compare themselves to other blacks in the islands. It has also become an obstacle in addressing and challenging the real social and economic dilemmas of black Bahamians.
The paradise image has also become a problem in how Bahamians view and handle the influx of Haitian migrants. The paradise image constructed by the tourist ministry and Bay street elite set the stage for conflict between black Bahamians and the white wealthy class. Additionally, this conflict became more visible between black Bahamians and Haitians that worked and reside in the Bahamas.

The interaction between the Bahamas and Haiti changed because of economic and political trends between the 1940s and 1950s. By 1955, a considerable number of Haitians in the Bahamas were viewed negatively or were considered “unwelcome” among Bahamians. Immigration authorities considered rounding up and deporting Haitians as a response to the political instability following the ouster of former President Paul Magloire in December 1956 (Marshall 98-99). There were six different provisional regimes until Francois Duvalier came into power in 1957 (Loescher & Scanlan 315).

Before late 1956, the influx of Haitians in the Bahamas increased more than usual. These Haitians were young men in their twenties, while others were farmers or fishermen. The average number of Haitians entering the Bahamas during the late 50s and early 60s was about 5,000 per year (Craton 1995, 270). Many poor Haitians from Northwest Haiti could not afford to purchase a passport, pay exit travel fees, or buy airline tickets to the United States. These Haitians sought alternative or informal ways to leave Haiti illegally (Loescher & Scanlan 319).
“Traveling through “Teledjol:” The Methods and Mechanisms of Informal Emigration among Haitians

“There is a great kreyol word, teledjol, which refers to word-of-mouth networks, what we might call the grapevine in colloquial English. Teledjol is a best source for alternative viewpoints on Haitian society, and in many cases it provides critical insights about the United States as well...”(Meehan 152).

Details about the voyage to the Bahamas is usually spread by word of mouth, known in Haitian culture as “teledjol.” The cost of the voyage to the Bahamas was more than three times what a poor Haitian earned per year. Haitians borrowed money from lenders and agreed to pay back double the amount using their home as security. Others paid the sea captain a deposit and agreed to pay the rest of the fee once they earned money in the Bahamas (Craton 1995 271). The conditions on the vessels were poor with little supplies and no safety equipment. The vessels were usually overcrowded way above their capacity. The voyage from Northwest Haiti to Nassau would last three to four days by motorized vessels. Sailing boats would take about two weeks, depending on the wind and currents (Craton 1995 271).

Haitians also heard through word of mouth about companies that hired Haitian workers. Haitian migrants sometimes brought their families along with them. In the interest of promoting certain industries, there was very little regulation on the part of the Bahamian government. For example, Bahamian authorities did not frequently inspect labor camps to investigate the working conditions and the number of workers (Craton & Saunders 456). One of the first mass labor projects hired Haitians to cut lumber in the island of Abaco in the mid-1940s. Due to Wallace Grove’s development project, many
Haitians heard of the labor opportunities in Grand Bahama. Again, many Haitians were lured to work in Freeport without any regulation from the Bahamian government and Department of Immigration (Craton & Saunders 456).

Offshore companies that specialized in agriculture, salt production, and lumber moved to the Bahamas. Large scale farming by U.S. operators began in Abaco since 1952. These operators were interested in hiring Haitians without issuing work permits or attaining any permission from the Bahamas Department of Immigration. Haitians were allowed to work only in the labor camps. By 1957, one thousand Haitians were recruited to work in these labor camps (Marshall 71) (Craton.1995.273). American offshore company, Owen-Illinois, purchased “exclusive rights” to the pine forests in the island of Abaco and the island of Grand Bahama (Marshall 131). Bahamian pulpwood was used to produce paper in Jacksonville, Florida. At first, Owen-Illinois hired migrants from the Turks and Caicos. Later, Owen-Illinois began hiring Haitians in 1960 because Haitians worked for lower wages than native Bahamians or migrants from Turks and Caicos (Marshall 131).

During the early 1960s, twenty percent of Abaco’s population was Haitian. Most of these large-scale farms were based in the Abaco town of Marsh Harbour, a region where 44 percent of the population was Haitian (Childs, Reaser & Wolfram 5). Haitians from Abaco moved to the pine forests of Bahamas’s largest island, Andros, in search of work after Owens-Illinois transferred their investments and services to North Andros. Haitians also worked menial jobs in the island of Eleuthera, particularly in “prosperous” areas such as Spanish Wells, Eleuthera. Spanish Wells was mostly made up of wealthy
White Bahamians. Black Bahamians were discouraged from settling in Spanish Wells, however Haitians were the first blacks to settle in that area, specifically to work and live in the “extensive” citrus groves near Spanish Wells (Tinker 162). Several years later the Haitian population expanded to neighboring areas of Spanish Wells. The availability of land has become a dispute between the Haitian immigrant community and the residents of Spanish Wells (Tinker 162).

After 1963, the population surged in Grand Bahama, due to the influx of professional foreigners attracted to the combination of tourism and industrial development in Freeport (Boswell 116). While professional foreigners attained jobs in the managerial, administrative, and technical sector, Haitian migrants occupied low-level menial jobs. Aside from tourism and forestry, Haitians were in high demand as landscapers for homes and business establishments, particularly if they worked more for a “nominal” wage without any objection (Tinker 159). However, the largest number of Haitian migrants is concentrated in New Providence Island, where Nassau is located. Haitians entered Nassau through its harbor on the eastern end of the city called Potter’s Cay. The sloops would arrive at Potter’s Cay in the middle of the night before immigration authorities. Haitian residents in New Providence would hear through “teledjol” about Haitian relatives or close friends scheduled to arrive. These Haitians in Potter’s Cay would serve as lookouts waiting to whisk their relatives and friends away before immigration authorities could show up (Craton. 1995. 276; Marshall 1981, 117).

Most Haitians live in a district in the Bahamas with a history rooted in slavery and racial segregation. Founded in 1836, Over-the-Hill is a district outside of downtown
Nassau that was deeded to freed black slaves through grants from the British crown. Over-the-Hill was “intentionally designed” to segregate and place slaves, free blacks, and indentured servants in one location not far from Nassau. It was the place where blacks reside after working in Nassau, and it was designated as the “major ghetto” for Bahamian blacks (Tinker 157). Over-the-Hill expanded rapidly after World War II as poor black Bahamians from the out islands migrated to Nassau. However, as urban employment within the tourism and construction increased, so did the number of Haitian laborers, and Over-the-Hill became the prime location for Haitian migrants (Doran & Landis 190). Over-the-Hill also became an ideal community for undocumented Haitians who desired anonymity from immigration authorities and low rental accommodation, while working in low-paying but “clandestine” jobs (Tinker 157) (Doran & Landis 191).

Over-the-Hill experienced another transformation based not only on race and social class but also on immigrant status. The designation of Over-the-Hill being as a “major ghetto” was reinforced. Local black Bahamians moved to outlying suburbs as a means of climbing the social ladder out of Over-the-Hill. The influx of black foreign ethnics had given local Bahamian blacks an opportunity for social and economic mobility (Doran & Landis 191). Black Bahamians rented homes or units to undocumented Haitian migrants. Sometimes owners would increase rent at “exorbitant rates” and if Haitian tenants did not comply, they would be threatened with eviction, or the owner would inform immigration authorities.

In response to sharp increases in rent, Haitians had to sublet to other fellow Haitians to pay the rent, and rental units became overcrowded. Conditions in Over-the-
Hill were poor: clean water was a “rare commodity,” trash collection and sanitation were limited, while residents paid expensive rates to obtain electricity from the Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC) (Craton 1995, 277).

In 1956, the Bahamian government was again concerned with the influx of Haitians. Raids organized by the immigration ministry, rounding up and deporting Haitians had not stopped Haitians from “illegally” entering the Bahamas (Sears 11). The failure to stem immigration was due mainly to the fact that many black Bahamians depended on Haitians to do a variety of laborious tasks. Simultaneously, local black Bahamian landlords, who once were poor residents of Over-the-Hill, made a profit by renting to Haitians and moving to more accommodating suburbs. The relationship between Haitians and Bahamians is one of exploitation, convenience, and dependence:

Scarcely a Bahamian of any substance but had their ‘own’ Haitian, on whom they were to a degree dependent, but who in turn depended on them for protection, in the form of help with the authorities or documentation as well as for wages. This delicately reciprocal relationship though virtually institutionalized throughout New Providence and in Freeport-Lucaya, ironically perhaps, was most clearly developed in the formerly all-white communities of the family islands (Craton. 1995,275).

Controlling immigration also failed because “Teledjol” is a powerful cultural characteristic in Haitian culture, circulating information about politics, news, and building impenetrable social ties among the Haitian migrant community in the Bahamas (Stone 144).
“Operation Clean Up:” Bahamas’ shift on Immigration

In 1956, the Bahamian views on Haitians changed drastically as Bahamians from the outer islands migrated to Nassau in search of work, and as Bahamian laborers returned from Florida. Bahamians expressed their frustration when they arrived at Nassau and could not find work. Haitians filled up all available positions. In 1961, a minor recession led to increased “competition and hostility” between Haitian and Bahamian laborers, particularly within the tourist industry (Marshall 1981, 108-109). Immigration officials were alarmed at the “flood” of Haitians illegally entering the Bahamas. In December 1956, the Immigration Department began rounding up and deporting Haitians, while enacting “harsh criminal penalties” (Bahamas Tribune 7/19/89). In the same month, 140 undocumented migrants were picked up and deported. By late 1957, Colonial Immigration Customs and Police estimated that approximately 1,000 undocumented Haitians entered the Bahamas (Tinker 97-98).

The Immigration Department in the Bahamas who had to contend with the constant arrival of Haitian migrants complained that they were not prepared to control the influx of migrants due to the lack of resources and equipment. The Immigration Department did not have enough patrol and detention facilities to track down undocumented migrants. Also, the colonial government in the Bahamas had to tackle the “existing legal apparatus” in which old immigration laws, enacted earlier in the twentieth century, were ineffective in monitoring the flow of Haitian migrants (Marshall 1981, 108-109).
Laws in effect during the late 1950s were the immigration act of 1928 and 1939. These laws were enacted in response to immigrants who arrived in the Bahamas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Greek, Lebanese, and Chinese immigrants stayed in the Bahamas and “ventured” into commercial activities in “direct competition with the wealthy White Bahamian elite (Johnson.1986.7). The “middleman” immigrants, as they were called, were tolerated at first but as these immigrant groups were successful in trade and commerce the white Bahamian elite felt threatened by their success. In order to protect their economic power and dominance, the white elite supported immigration restriction regulations aimed against foreign immigrants (Johnson 1986. 23). However, these outdated laws did not regulate the influx of Haitians.

Based on these immigration laws, ship captains and passengers were required to follow certain regulations while traveling to the Bahamas by sea. Passengers had to provide the ship captain a medical certificate, a “certificate of Character,” a fee of twenty pounds, and a landing card (Marshall 99). The ship captains gave the immigration officer a complete list of passengers on the vessel as well as an additional duty fee of one pound for each passenger. Migrants who violated these laws were fined twenty-five pounds (Marshall 99). However, ship captains and foremen did not follow these laws, because there was still a high demand for Haitians to perform tasks Bahamians would not do. For example, Haitians would pay foremen and their employers one pound a week to keep their jobs in the lumber camps of Abaco or in the saltpans of Inagua (Marshall 100). The Bahamian colonial government attempted to tackle the problem of illegal immigration and politicians expressed their concern about the attempts of Haitians to seek political
asylum. In 1959, during parliamentary debates, the Secretary of State for the colonies was asked how many Haitian refugees arrived in the Bahamas during the previous twelve months: “None. From time to time illegal immigrants seeking manual labor have been smuggled into the colony and these are deported when traced; but no person seeking political asylum has been refused admittance” (Hansard Nov 19, 1959).

The immigration Department had also attempted to “strengthen” its laws by raising the fine and adding a prison term of six months for first time offenders and one year for offenders who violated the law a second time (Marshall 100).

In October 1959, the Bahamian police and customs stopped an immigration scheme in which passengers from Haiti were transferred to another vessel to avoid patrol boats. All passengers were caught. When officials investigated the illegal immigration racket, it was disclosed that Haitian passengers were charged more than double the rate that immigration customs normally charge, and the conditions on the boat were dangerous (Marshall 101). Haitians continued to migrate to the Bahamas under unsafe conditions particularly during the 1959 drought in Northwest Haiti, when forty-five thousand lives were threatened with famine and 200 Haitians died of hunger (Jet Magazine 4/9/59). The drought encouraged more Haitians to leave for the Bahamas, and more Haitian immigrants caught by immigration officials highlighted the lack of detention facilities for Haitians. The main police station was overcrowded with Haitian detainees (Marshall 101).

The Immigrant Department’s inadequacy and the growing public sentiment against the influx of undocumented Haitians led the colonial government to appoint a
committee that included the police commissioner, the chief immigration officer, and the superintendent of prisons (Tinker 105). In response to an economic recession in 1961 and growing antagonism between Bahamians and Haitians, the committee developed a “comprehensive” plan to control the influx of “illegal” Haitians (Marshall 1981, 108-109; Tinker 105). In 1963, the committee created “Operation clean up” which intended to repatriate 10,000 “illegal” Haitians who resided and worked in the Bahamas. Additional restrictions included that Haitians be questioned, searched, and arrested by an Immigration Officer without warrant (Tinker 106).

On December 1963, the Bahamian government passed an immigration act which offered “belonger status” to immigrants pending a series of requirements for permanent residency (Thompson 69). The vessel restriction act accommodated the 1963 immigration act, which imposed strict regulations on passengers traveling to the Bahamas by sea. Sea captains were once more required to have a detailed list of passengers. Cargo had to be signed and certified by officials from the British consul in Haiti. The vessel had to be cleared once more by customs and immigration in the southern Bahamian Island of Inagua. Ship crews that violated this law were fined 1,000 pounds (Tinker 106). But these new laws and restrictions did not stop ship captains from smuggling Haitians into the Bahamas. After a few months, Operation Clean Up was terminated due to tensions between Haiti and Dominican Republic.

Tensions rose when dissent against François Duvalier was at an all time high, and one of Duvalier’s close associates defected and conspired to kidnap Duvalier’s children on their way to school. Duvalier’s children escaped unharmed, but two bodyguards were
killed by gunmen (Dubois 338). Duvalier suspected an army rifleman named Lieutenant François Benoit. Benoit was hiding and seeking asylum in the Dominican embassy in Port-au-Prince. Duvalier’s militia broke into the Dominican embassy and “roughed-up” the ambassador’s secretary as they searched for Benoit. Next, the militia moved on to the Dominican Ambassador’s more secured residence (Danner 78; Dubois 338). The Haitian militia surrounded the residence and set up “machine gun positions” to make sure no one left or entered the property (Danner 78). The President of Dominican Republic at the time, Juan Bosch, was angry at President Duvalier and offered an ultimatum that Duvalier remove his militia from the Dominican embassy or face an invasion from Dominican tanks (Danner 78-79).

The United States was concerned about tensions between Dominican Republic and Haiti. The Organization of American States sent a delegation to Haiti to mediate the tensions between Duvalier and Bosch. It seemed that Duvalier’s reign was about to come to an end. The United States planned to place naval ships around Haiti’s coastline and created a contingency for a new provisional government (Dubois 340). But Duvalier managed to survive the crisis with Dominican Republic in spite of pressure from the United States. In September 1963, Bosch was overthrown by the Dominican military, and John F. Kennedy was assassinated two months later (Dubois 340). Duvalier then had full presidential mandate, and he boasted that he was destined to stay in power for life:

Once again, Duvalier had won. Soon a pro-government newspaper ran a curious montage on its front page: a picture of Jesus Christ with His hands placed on the shoulders of François Duvalier, above the caption “I have chosen him.” An electrical sign began to flash on and off over the often blacked out capital, bearing the message “I AM THE HAITIAN FLAG, ONE AND INDIVISIBLE, FRANÇOIS DUVALIER.” Finally the dictator-bowing he said, to “popular
“demand”—declared himself President for Life, and was pleased to see his selection confirmed by a plebiscite, in which Haitians were generously allowed to cast as many ballots as they wanted (Danner 79-80)

There were several plots against Duvalier as well as dissent against him abroad, and these plots had an impact in the Bahamas. Anti-Duvalierist forces in the Bahamas criticized the deportation policies, such as Operation Clean up. Diplomats in the Bahamas condemned the brutal actions of Duvalier. One Haitian diplomat made a speech denouncing the Duvalier regime, voicing that Duvalier’s dictatorship was driving Haitians abroad to the Bahamas. The diplomat was deported:

Dr. Clement Benoit, former Haitian Consul in Nassau and now a leader of anti-Duvalier forces here, was ordered today by the Immigration Department to leave this British colony by Wednesday. Dr. Benoit resigned as consul shortly after Dr. François Duvalier took over as President of Haiti. The Haitian Consul here, Nestor Chavannes, protested Tuesday to the Bahamas Government about statements by Dr. Benoit in a speech to the Nassau Kiwanis Club on Aug 23. In his speech Dr. Benoit said that because of the “tragic condition” of his country Haitians of all classes were seeking haven abroad, especially in the Bahamas (NY Times 9/7/1963).

After the failure of Operation Clean-up, the Bahamas continued to carry out more immigration policies. In 1967, the Bahamas initiated the “crackdown campaign,” through which 2,500 Haitians were forcibly deported. There were reports of violence from police and immigration officers who used dogs that were “used to hunt out Haitians” in heavily wooded and isolated areas (Tribune 7/19/89). These deportation activities continued to be a major problem, particularly as violations of the human rights of Haitian refugees in the Bahamas. A Bahamian lawyer and former President of the Grand Bahama Human Rights Association described the deportation activities sponsored by the government:
The barbaric round-ups often at gun point in the still of the night, often with dogs, the reports of women being raped, the raids, the inhuman and degrading detention facilities, the depravation of property, the unceremonious deportations, the separation of families have all, over the years contributed to the Bahamas government having an appallingly bad record on human rights towards the Haitians (Tribune 7/19/89).

The round ups of Haitians in the Bahamas became an international human rights issue.

The United Nations High Commission of Refugees was involved in the controversy, advising the Bahamian government to halt the deportation and implement other initiatives. In addition, these round ups were not successful, because Haitians continued to enter the island. They were “lured” by sea captains who promised them jobs in the Bahamas. One report uncovered a scheme of Haitians tricked and lied to by other Haitian sea captains about an imaginary bridge:

Immigration officers said they had been told by deportees that the Haitian captains of small vessels had enticed them that the new Government would welcome them and provide them with jobs. The immigrants paid $100 to $250 for passage. Some immigrants were told that jobs were available on a bridge being constructed between New Providence Island and Grand Bahama Island, more than 100 miles to the north across the open sea. No such bridge is planned (NY Times 7/12/1967).

These schemes continued among sea captains who profited from the expensive travel fees. Employers in the Bahamas still wanted to recruit cheap labor.

*Rise of the Progressive Liberal Party: Immigration Policy under a Black Majority*

The immigration act became an issue of discontent in Bahamian politics. The two main political parties of the Bahamas were competing for power. In 1953, the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) was founded, and most of its members were mixed raced
professional Bahamians. Lynden O. Pindling, a black lawyer, broke the tradition of light-skinned leadership within the party and eventually became head of the PLP (Wilson 108). The PLP had its roots in the labor movement, advocating for the rights of poor Bahamian workers. Its party platform focused on economic equity, racial equality, and reforming the immigration policy that operated to the advantage of the white Bahamian elites. In response, the white elite formed their own political party called the United Bahamian Party (Wilson 108).

In 1967, the PLP won majority rule over the United Bahamian Party. When the PLP was in power, immigration became the first issue they wanted to tackle. Unlike the United Bahamian Party, the PLP wanted to take a “diplomatic approach” to the Haitian problem. They wanted to develop a more “humane and realistic” immigration policy (Sears 11-12). However, immigration officers continued the raids on Haitian migrants, and reports of violence and abuse persisted. The PLP attempted to resolve the matter through a diplomatic agreement with the Haitian government, but no such agreement was signed (Sears 11-12). The PLP was also faced with the rise of anti-Duvalierist forces in the Bahamas.

A small group of Haitian “political émigrés” felt optimistic about overthrowing Duvalier after the PLP electoral victory. Some of these émigrés were involved in secret military training in Grand Bahama and Abaco Islands in the hopes of invading and getting rid of Duvalier (Craton 1995 272). The Haitian Vice-Consul of Abaco, personally appointed by François Duvalier, was assassinated by anti-Duvalierist forces in Freeport (Craton 1995. 272). Duvalier was well aware that there were Haitian exiles in
the Bahamas who wanted him eliminated. The situation worsened when the Duvalier government arrested a British official who visited Haiti from the Bahamas. David Knox was the Information Director of the Bahamas and the Haitian government claimed that he was involved with a small group of Haitian exiles in a plot to invade and overthrow Duvalier.

Well-Informed sources said Mr. Knox would be accused of helping to plan the raid, which ended in disaster for a small band of exiled Haitian rebels. A semi official Haitian newspaper has referred to Mr. Knox as a member of the British Intelligence. Ten rebels are standing trial in Port-au-Prince at the moment and Duvalier has already ordered the arrest of several leading residents... including the Jamaican Consul and Vice Consul. Mr. Knox, the Bahamas Director of Information is alleged by Haitians to have arrived there originally under a false name on May 15 in relation to the invasion, which took place five days later (Tribune 6/24/1968).

Mr. Knox and his lawyers argued that he arrived in Haiti to have a plastic surgical procedure and denied that he was part of the British Intelligence Service. The Bahamas had requested the Haitian government to release Mr. Knox, but Haitian investigators were not “satisfied” with the Bahamian explanation for Mr. Knox’s presence in Haiti (Tribune 6/24/68).

Mr. Knox remained in Haiti for his trial and was found guilty of six charges of espionage. He was sentenced to death, but Duvalier decided to review the verdict and commute the sentence to a “brief period in prison” (NY Times 8/29/68). Eventually, David Knox was freed from jail and was allowed to leave Haiti. In the end, the Knox controversy made it difficult for the PLP to construct a diplomatic agreement with the Duvalier government. Instead, seventy-seven Haitian “freedom fighters” that resided in Grand Bahamas were deported to Haiti, to ease tensions between the Bahamas and the
Duvalier regime. The release of Knox and the deportation caused anti-Duvalier activists to go underground in the Bahamas, and many of them migrated and organized in North American cities such as Miami, New York City, Washington D.C., and Montreal (Craton 1995, 272).

The PLP was concerned about the term “belonger status” in the immigration act. They were also concerned about the exemption of this act in Freeport, where the Bay Street Boys were allowed to employ any foreigner, particularly white foreigners. The PLP claimed that the Bay Street boys and the United Bahamian Party were not interested in protecting “Bahamian Identity,” but rather in increasing and advancing the white expatriate community and population, while marginalizing all blacks in the Bahamas including Haitians (Craton & Saunders 339-340).

In 1969, the PLP called for a new constitution to change the “concept of belongingship” as stated in the immigration act to “Bahamian status” (McCartney 55). But the change of name in the act did not also change conditions for the Haitian immigrant community in the Bahamas. The raids continued against the Haitians, and the Haitian government continued to fail at controlling immigration (Sears 12). The Bahamian government alleged that the Haitian consul did not comply by providing visas to Haitian citizens that Bahamians wanted to repatriate (Sears 12). The Haitian government was reluctant issue the visas to Haitian nationals, because some of these nationals threatened the power of François Duvalier, particularly after the Knox controversy. There were more attempts by Haitian exiles in the Bahamas wanting to overthrow Duvalier. While the Bahamas needed Duvalier’s cooperation to repatriate Haitian nationals, the Haitian
government was indifferent to the plight of Haitians in the Bahamas unless it would benefit the Duvalier regime (Sears 12) (Marshall 116).

The PLP had a nationalist platform to protect Bahamian workers, and as Haitians were entering the Bahamas and willing to work in jobs for much lower wages, the PLP became increasingly concerned about the nation’s strained resources such as education, health, and social services that were “wasted” on undocumented Haitian migrants (Marshall 110). These immigration issues and the national construct of the new independent Bahamas under the PLP were widely discussed in the media. More restrictions were enacted under the PLP to curtail immigration, making it more difficult for the Haitians, for “lower class,” and for poor immigrants who were not able to attain proper documentation (Craton & Saunders 435). Ironically, the new PLP policies did not stop the white expatriate community who possessed the financial means to go through the immigration process successfully.

“Jus Sanguinis vs. Jus Soli:” The Dilemmas of Citizenship and Statelessness among Haitian–Bahamians

The road to independence for the Bahamas began in 1964, when the Bahamas received a premier and a cabinet to replace the power of former colonial governors. In 1969, the Bahamas had gained the right to handle their own internal affairs that Great Britain used to handle (Robbers 69). The Bahamas was officially an independent state in July 1973, with a new constitution and established commonwealth that included a Governor-General, and a Prime Minister chosen by the majority of members within the assembly. Lynden O. Pindling, leader of the PLP, became the first black Prime Minister
of the Bahamas (Dupont 194) (Roberts 69). The PLP had the political mandate and clout to implement their policies including defining who is eligible for citizenship.

Bahamian citizenship is acquired in two ways: *jus soli* (the law of the soil), that is, citizenship conferred from birth, or *jus sanguinis* (law of blood), citizenship conferred by descent or ancestry (Ohlinger 342). The origins of *jus soli* were traced to feudal England and were implemented in France under feudalism as well. Citizenship was determined when one was born “within the king’s allegiance” (Alexandrowicz 3). *Jus Sanguinis* was practiced by the Roman Empire, where citizenship was only reserved for free and upstanding individuals. Slaves were not allowed citizenship or additional rights (Alexandrowicz 4). *Jus Sanguinis* was also implemented in France as part of the Napoleonic code during the early nineteenth century. It was considered a viable approach to attain citizenship as opposed to the feudal or monarchical system (Weil 75).

More European nations adopted the *jus sanguinis* approach. One of the main challenges of this approach is whether one would receive citizenship among those born within a disputed territory? Or, what are the specific criteria for disputed territories?

Most nations that adopt *Jus Sanguinis* also declare at a certain time that foreign-born residents and their offspring born within a territory are automatically given citizenship called “zero-option.” After the independence of a nation, those who are born within a territory must register or apply for citizenship (Ohlinger 345). Zero-option gives nations the opportunity to develop a “diversity of composition” because certain segments of the nation’s population and their offspring are diverse and heterogeneous (Shachar 121). On the other hand, the process of attaining citizenship can lead to excluding certain
groups born and raised within a territory. Members of excluded populations are denied the “rights and benefits of full citizenship” on the basis that they are children of foreign-born parents (Shachar 121). One other consequence of exclusion is that this segment of the population is branded as being stateless due to their heredity (Weiss 162).

In the case of the Bahamas, the PLP emphasized nationalism and preserving the identity of Bahamians. Defining the process of citizenship under *jus sanguinis* fit the Bahamian nationalist ideal:

The emergence of citizenship laws based on *jus sanguinis* or (*jus soli*) usually mirrors deeply rooted cultural and historical patterns of nation-states as well as images of the self and the other. Of crucial importance is thus the genesis of the nation, nationhood, and the nation-state. *Jus sanguinis* can only be understood and explained within specific historical contexts and constellations (Ohlinger 343).

In addition to the 1973 constitution, the PLP enacted the nationality act that same year, which added restrictions to distinguish permanent residents from native Bahamian citizens. The nationality act followed the process of *jus sanguinis* as opposed to *jus soli*. The act called for certain requirements and provisions in order to be eligible for citizenship. Section 6 and 7 of the Bahamas Nationality act states the following criteria to register a minor of foreign-born parents as well as adults for citizenship:

6. (1) The Minister may at his discretion cause the minor child of a citizen of The Bahamas to be registered as a citizen of The Bahamas upon application made in the prescribed manner by the parent or guardian of such child.
   (2) The Minister may at his discretion, in such special circumstances as he may think fit, cause any minor to be registered as a citizen of The Bahamas.
7. Any person claiming to be entitled to be registered as a citizen of The Bahamas under the provisions of Article 5, 7, 9 or 10 of the Constitution, may make application to the Minister in the prescribed manner and, in any such case, if it appears to the Minister that the applicant is entitled to such registration and that all relevant provisions of the Constitution have been
complied with, he shall cause the applicant to be registered as a citizen of The Bahamas:
Provided that, in any case to which those provisions of the Constitution apply, the Minister may refuse the application for registration if he is satisfied that the applicant —
(a) has within the period of five years immediately preceding the date of such application been sentenced upon his conviction of a criminal offence in any country to death or to imprisonment for a term of not less than twelve months and has not received a free pardon in respect of that offence; or
(b) is not of good behaviour; or
(c) has engaged in activities whether within or outside of The Bahamas which are prejudicial to the safety of The Bahamas or to the maintenance of law and public order in The Bahamas; or
(d) has been adjudged or otherwise declared bankrupt under the law in force in any country and has not been discharged; or
(e) not being the dependant of a citizen of The Bahamas, has not sufficient means to maintain himself and is likely to become a public charge, or if for any other sufficient reason of public policy, he is satisfied that it is not conducive to the public good that the applicant should become a citizen of The Bahamas (Statute Law of the Bahamas)\(^1\)

The Bahamas upheld the zero-option declaring in its independence constitution that all individuals born in the Bahamas to foreign parents before July 10, 1973, are given citizenship. Also the zero-option policy recognized as citizens those born outside of the Bahamas if the individual’s father is Bahamian. In addition, those who were citizens of the United Kingdom, registered for citizenship under the British Nationality act, or had resided in the Bahamas after 1972, would be granted citizenship (Craton &Saunders 436). However, those born in the Bahamas to foreign parents after July 9, 1973, would not be granted automatic citizenship. They would have to register for citizenship by the time the

\(^1\) Nationality Act, Office of the Attorney General & Ministry of Legal Affairs.  

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minor reaches eighteen years of age and bring the proper documentation such as the birth certificate of their parents (Craton & Saunders 436).

Unfortunately, the process took several years because of a slow response from the government. Human rights advocates have argued that the long wait and the difficulty in attaining documents have led to a generation of stateless minors who have no citizenship (2007 Congressional Country Report)\(^2\). There were instances in which a Bahamian-born Haitian complied by providing the correct documents, but still had difficulty attaining citizenship due to corrupt or biased immigration officers. One Bahamian-born Haitian expressed her frustration, despite her following legal immigration procedures:

For this process to commence, we have to prepare documents such as birth certificates and affidavits, which must be processed by The Department of Immigration. Months after the application has been processed, there is an interview with an immigration officer to determine whether or not the applicant is eligible for citizenship. This entire process is a thief of time and extremely tedious. It is ironic for a person to be born in a country, yet treated like a foreigner in his or her homeland. Oftentimes, the immigration officers abuse the system and claim that it’s the law (Nassau-Guardian 2/5/2004).

These common examples illustrate the flaws and corruption of the legal immigration process in the Bahamas.

In Haiti, the process of attaining citizenship is \textit{jus soli}. However, there are accommodations in granting citizenship to children born outside of Haiti as long as their parents are Haitian nationals. Based on article 11 of the Haitian constitution, children born outside of Haiti can be granted citizenship. As they reach adult age, these children

can file a “declaration” of nationality (Floumoy & Hudson 329). There were additional accommodations for declaring and granting Haitian citizenship. After the Duvalier regime, under article 286, Haitians reclaimed their citizenship after renouncing it during the reign of Duvalier (Inter-American Yearbook on Human Rights). Based on these constitutional articles, Bahamian immigration officials and diplomats often argue that those born in the Bahamas to Haitian parents are not exactly stateless. However, there are cultural, linguistic, and economic ramifications. A Haitian ambassador explained how stateless status could be remedied. Nonetheless those born in the Bahamas do not want a Haitian passport:

“…Haitian Ambassador to the Bahamas, Louis Joseph, said statelessness could be remedied easily and it is not a condition that one has to accept. He rejected the idea that Haitians born in the Bahamas to Haitian parents would remain stateless for nearly two decades of their life. He said once the parents of a “stateless” child came to him, he could register that child in Haiti enabling him/her to get a Haitian passport in a matter of weeks, usually the time required to complete the paperwork. “But they do not come, most of them I believe prefer to stay here because of the economic situation in Haiti,” he said. The average income in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, is about 300 U.S. dollars per year, compared to $16,000 per year in the Bahamas (Nassau-Guardian 8/26/04).

The ambassador further explained that Haitians would rather remain in the Bahamas because they are more likely to find jobs there than in Haiti. The unemployment rate in the Bahamas is at 10.8 percent. The unemployment rate among the poor black majority in Haiti is 70 percent (Nassau-Guardian 8/26/04).

The status of Bahamian-Born Haitians is usually under the category of de facto statelessness. They have a “formal nationality” but do not possess any official citizenship
(Ferris 53). The consequences of being “stateless” reveal a number of human right dilemmas. A stateless individual who does not possess the proper documentation cannot travel outside or return to the country they currently reside in. The stateless individuals who purchase property, invest in a business, get married, open a bank account, or enroll at a private school or university, are more likely to experience discrimination because of their status (Ferris 53). There is also the lingering possibility of getting detained or deported. In essence, one who is stateless is vulnerable, and stigmatized, particularly children.

Nations that created laws within their states are obliged to follow international treaties regarding child exploitation and abuse. However, when children are rendered stateless they are more likely to be exposed to exploitation, and are usually labeled as a threat to the state, instead of being protected by the state. They are a threat due to issues such as immigration control or xenophobic sentiment (J. Bhabha 22). It is as though stateless children are invisible or hidden, because there is no official documentation for them. Yet, stateless children and young adults are visible within the detention facilities or juvenile centers. Ironically, the only option for stateless individuals to attain any status within the nation-state is through the criminal system:

As a criminal, the stateless person had a status and was treated like a normal, national criminal, with rights to a lawyer and protection from arbitrary police brutality. However without committing a crime, she could be detained just for trying to work, that is, because of her presence in the world and her lack of rights. In a sense, as criminals the stateless were granted the privileges of citizenship (Parekh 20).

The stateless individual can seek another status slightly better than statelessness by becoming a criminal (Arendt 286).
In the Bahamas, young stateless individuals of Haitian descent are perceived as threats or potential criminals, and there are no protections for them. But if some Bahamian-born Haitians avoid criminality through education, they are viewed as wasting the nation’s resources. It is also assumed that many Bahamian-born Haitians do not have any connection to the Bahamas. As described by a bishop and former chairman of Bahamas’s Crime Advisory Panel: “such persons are not legally – and therefore not socially or psychologically attached to any community” (Bahamas-Tribune 12/15/09). A typical observation from Bahamian officials is that the root causes in the upsurge of gangs within public schools are usually Bahamian-born Haitians who feel that they do not belong anywhere, particularly if the state does not recognize them. If there is “no sense of belonging” among them, they are more likely to “gravitate” towards gangs who can provide that “sense of belonging” as well as protection (Bahamas-Tribune 2/8/10) (Bahamas-Tribune 12/31/09).

The Bahamas provides free public primary and secondary education to students regardless of immigration status. However, Bahamian-born Haitians still encountered certain forms of discrimination or obstacles from the educational opportunities to which they are entitled. Administrators have lied to Haitian parents of stateless children about registration deadlines. Haitian parents were told that the deadline to register was three weeks away, and when the parents arrived after three weeks, they were actually three weeks late. This was a usual tactic to prevent stateless children the right of obtaining an education (Belton 2010 39-40). One other challenge for stateless young adults is their attempt to go on to college. Bahamian-born Haitians are not eligible for financial aid, and
they have to pay international tuition rates at the College of the Bahamas; tuition rates are twice the amount that Bahamians usually pay (Nassau-Guardian 2/5/2004; Bahamas-Tribune 2/8/2010). Education administrators advocated the barring of undocumented or stateless Haitians from schools and required children of foreigners to apply for residency status (Bahamas-Tribune 7/7/11).

Stateless Haitian children who need medical attention are accused in the Bahamian media of putting a strain on the Bahamian health system. Consequently, in addition to banning stateless and undocumented Haitians from public schools, there was also discussion about denying them medical services. However, the Minister of Immigration expressed fears that drastic moves to deny medical services could lead to potentially risky consequences:

Many vocal Bahamians want Haitian children not only removed from the schools, but all undocumented residents—mostly Haitians—to be banned from the hospitals and clinics. This is a most shortsighted and dangerous position, and the fastest way to fan an epidemic that could affect us all. Let these people fear seeking medical help for a disease that could be contagious, and rather than be arrested, stay at home, they could infect their family, their neighbors, their community and eventually all of New Providence (Bahamas-Tribune 7/7/11).

Haitian migrants and their children use a variety of health services available in the Bahamas, including seeking a Haitian doctor through teledjol from other Haitians in the community, or seeking traditional or natural treatment for certain ailments. Overall, Haitians and their stateless children born in the country utilized the public Bahamian health system, especially Princess Margaret Hospital, the largest and most popular medical institution in the Bahamas. The medical reasons range from birth deliveries to
“communicable diseases.” As a result, the rate of HIV infection has decreased among Haitian migrants and Haitian Bahamians (Intl Organization for Migration Report 87). Birthrates are also a concern within the public health system of the Bahamas. In Haiti, there is a high birthrate particularly in the Northwest region. For example, one of the main towns in northwest Haiti, Jean Rabel, has one of the highest birthrates in the world, with an average of “7.1 births per mother” (Schwartz 39), even while Haiti has a low demand for children due to poverty, malnutrition, and a high infant mortality rate (Maternowski 22; Cross 58). Recently, in the Bahamas the birthrate among non-Bahamian women has decreased in the last four decades due to family planning services available in public hospitals and clinics that provide forms of contraception and birth contraceptives (Bullough 304; Stange, Oyster & Sloan 121). By contrast, the birthrate among Haitian women in the Bahamas doubled over the last 40 years from 7.2 percent in 1970 to 13.7 percent in 2010 (Nassau-Guardian 2/20/12). Every year at Princess Margaret Hospital, 600 babies are born to Haitian mothers out of 5,000 babies born each year (Nassau-Guardian 7/4/11). The media cover the number of unplanned pregnancies among “illegal” Haitians and highlight how Haitians are taxing the Bahamian public health system at great expense to the state.

When Bahamian-born Haitians are picked up during immigration raids, their Bahamian-accented English would indicate to immigration officers that they are from the Bahamas, but despite their accent, their name and status indicate that are of Haitian origin. Some are held in detention centers because the Bahamas does not recognize them as citizens (Bahamas-Tribune 9/17/2010). A stateless child’s human right to security,
adult guidance, and non-separation from family is threatened when undocumented parents are taken away from their children and deported back to Haiti (Belton 2010:39). One incident involved an immigration raid where 165 Haitians were detained. Officers used violence and brandished their guns as they separated the parents from the children. These children were forced to “bid farewell” to their parents and relatives, some of whom had lived and worked in the Bahamas for decades (Bahamas-Tribune 9/17/2009).

Bahamian-born Haitians have also experienced a more terrifying predicament when they are deported to a country (Haiti) where they have never lived, visited, or spoken the language. The only connection these deportees have is that one or both of their parents are from Haiti. One Bahamian-born Haitian describes what would be the fate if individuals like him, are deported to Haiti:

> When the boat lands, Immigration [department] usually comes looking, rounding up everyone from Haiti unless they have their papers in their hands. There are people who have been here for 25 to 30 years and have been shipped home. If they collect the young kids like us and send us to Haiti, they might as well kill us one time because we don’t know anyone, only the Bahamas. There are people from Haiti running here, so how is we gonna survive? (Bahamas-Tribune 9/17/2010).

An eleven-year old Bahamian-born schoolgirl endured the horrifying possibility of being forced to leave her birthplace where she thrived as a high-achieving “well-grounded student”, for a nation about which she knows nothing (Bahamas-Tribune 4/13/11). The young girl and her mother were arrested in their home by immigration authorities and were held at the Carmichael Detention Center outside of Nassau where many undocumented Haitians and their stateless children are detained. The young girl’s teacher described the young girl and her mother as distraught. The teacher feared that this
horrible experience will “stigmatize the bright child” (Bahamas-Tribune 4/13/11).

Despite the obvious cruelty of deportations like this, the Director of Immigration explained that if migrants do not have legal documentation to prove that they work and reside in the Bahamas, they would be deported along with their children born in the Bahamas (Bahamas-Tribune 4/13/11).

Due to immigration restrictions and policies that stateless children and Haitian parents encounter, some leave the Bahamas for the United States to seek legal residence and better economic opportunities for their children. However, stateless status still follows children of Haitian parents in the United States. In 1996, the United States Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. The act states that any legal or undocumented resident who commits a criminal offense that includes “aggravated felony” will be deported (Page 112). Aggravated felony can involve firearm offences, selling or consuming controlled substances, burglary or fraud etc; a felony that leads to a one-year sentence imposed by the court can result in possible deportation (Page 112; Borjas 367). However, even misdemeanors such as shoplifting can result into “harsher consequences” for legal residents than for U.S citizens, and U.S. Immigration can “retroactively reclassify” these minor offensives as felonies (Decesare. NACLA 1998). Some residents have even languished in immigration detention centers after serving jail time before they are deported to their country of origin (Decesare NACLA 1998). There are cases where some are deported to a country where they never had been before.
The 1996 U.S. law had a devastating effect on Bahamian-born children of Haitian parents, who went to the United States. The U.S. has deported immigrants born in the Bahamas, to Haiti. In Dominican Republic, “Dominico-Haitians” (Dominicans of Haitian origin) are routinely deported to Haiti despite the fact that Dominico-Haitians have the constitutional right to Dominican citizenship; there is a loophole that immigration officials use to deny citizenship (Henckaerts 75). The right to grant citizenship does not include “aliens in transit,” a category that is usually reserved for foreign travelers in Dominican Republic. Haitian migrant workers who reside in the Dominican Republic are labeled as “aliens in transit,” and therefore not able to claim citizenship for their children born on Dominican soil (Henckaerts 75). Despite attempts by Haitian parents who applied for proper documentation for their Dominican-born children, immigration authorities sometimes subjectively reject them, and corrupt immigrant officials intentionally destroy their documents during round-ups (Henckaerts 75-76). The unfortunate outcome for some Dominico-Haitians is deportation to a country they have never visited, and whose language they do not speak. Bahamian-born Haitians who have never set foot on the island of Hispaniola, have also been deported to a country that is unknown to them.

Since 1996, Bahamian-born residents of Haitian descent raised in the United States were deported to Haiti, because, according to the Immigrant Responsibility Act, they committed a crime. In 2001, lawyers for the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center petitioned for two young Bahamian-born Haitians who legally resided in the United States, Gertha Clairville and Kervance Carry, to be returned to the United States. Both
were deported to Haiti in early January, and neither had been to Haiti nor spoke Haitian Kreyol (Knight Ridder/Tribune 1/31/01). Ms. Clairville was to be deported based on the 1996 immigration law for an unspecified “minor crime.” Immigration officials never informed her that she was being deported to Haiti instead of the Bahamas (Associated Press 2/28/01).

Lawyers claim that the policy of deporting Bahamian-born Haitians to Haiti is illegal, particularly if immigration judges ordered them to return to their place of birth. The U.S Immigration and Naturalization Service, presently the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), assert that nothing can be done since the Bahamas do not recognize these two individuals as Bahamian citizens, despite the fact that they were born in the Bahamas (Knight Ridder/Tribune 1/31/2001). A spokesperson for the Bahamian Consul in Florida stated that Ms. Clairville does not have a Bahamian parent and was born after July 1973. Both Ms. Clairville and Mr. Carry were denied re-entry to the Bahamas, and they were sent to the country of their parent’s birth, Haiti. Once the Bahamian-born deportees arrived in Haiti, they were held in prison until a family member claimed them. Since it is assumed that deportees might commit crimes in Haiti, the deportees were held in “filthy” jail cells where they are forced to sleep on the floor and given little food and no clothing (Associated Press 2/28/01).

The stigma of Haitian deportees, particularly Bahamian-born deportees in Haiti can take its psychological toll. Following the earthquake catastrophe in Haiti in January, 2010, the United States suspended the deportation of Haitians. However, the deportations resumed just recently in February, 2011. One of the first groups deported to
Haiti after deportations resumed was a Bahamian-born Haitian named Patrick Escarment. Escarment’s mother was from Haiti, and she arrived in the United States from the Bahamas. She lived in Florida since Escarment was four years old. Escarment was charged with selling small amounts of cocaine and was sentenced to 18 months probation. When Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) authorities realized that his resident paperwork declared he was Haitian, he was sent on an overnight flight to Port-au-Prince, Haiti (Los Angeles Times 4/24/11). Escarment was deported along with twenty-six Haitian, some of whom had not been to Haiti since they were babies or small children. Escarment arrived in Haiti for the first time in his life. He was sent directly to the Direction Centrale de la Police Judiciaire (DCPJ), Port-au-Prince’s central jail. Escarment was placed in a jail cell where he describes the conditions as “hellish” (Los Angeles Times 4/24/11).

The Inter-American Commission, the Center for Constitutional Rights, and other human rights organizations describe the deportations to Haiti as a “death sentence,” due to the horrible conditions and treatment of deportees in Haiti. Seventeen deportees were in a small cell of about three by fifteen feet. The floors and walls were covered with dirt, feces, vomit, trash, and infested with mosquitoes (Inter-American Report 3/26/11)3. Police officers at the DCPJ did not provide deportees with essentials such as food, portable water, hygienic products, and medical care. Some deportees were “physically and verbally harassed” by police officers. Deportees often fell ill, because health services

were not easily accessible in Haiti (Inter-American Report 3/26/11). One of the men who accompanied Escarment to Haiti died of cholera soon after being released from the holding cell (Los Angeles Times 4/24/11). The Center for Constitutional Rights petitioned Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to halt deportations to Haiti. An International human rights law forbids deporting individuals to a country where the deportee might be unsafe or subject to inhumane treatment. Shockingly ironic, ICE resumed deporting Haitians less than a year after the earthquake while the U.S State department issued a travel warning “discouraging” non-essential traveling to Haiti, due to the cholera outbreak, crime, and the lack of medical care in Haiti (Inter-American Report 3/26/11).

The deportees also experienced social stigma in Haiti. Deportees are viewed as bringing more violence and crime into Haiti:

Some people have the assumption that deportees are coming back to do mishaps, to steal and destroy and rob people,” said Moise William, a 38 year old deportee with three children in the United States (Los Angeles Times 4/24/11).

Once released from jail, deportees cannot find work because of the high unemployment rate, and lack of identification. Birth certificates were confiscated during the deportation process and never returned to the deportees (Inter-American Report 3/26/11). Deportees are disheartened not to see their family back in the United States, particularly their children. The deportee’s family members sometimes experience financial hardship, particularly if they relied on the deportee for financial support while in the United States (Inter-American Report 3/26/11). The conditions in Haiti take an emotional and psychological toll on individuals like Bahamian-born Escarment. Escarment
contemplated suicide and became devastated after being deported to a country he never knew.

The International Organization of Migration attempted a pilot reintegration program for deportees which was not successful because many Haitians reject deportees whom they regard as criminals. Deportees from the United States and Bahamas experienced scorn and ridicule from Haitians because of the criminal “bandit” stereotype attached to the deportee. The program also failed and ceased operations because of a lack of communication between deportees and their families (Inter-American Report 3/26/11).

Small organizations like Alternative Chance, a peer-counseling program founded in 1996, provide very few support services for deportees. Alternative Chance offers job counseling, job training involving micro-funding and enterprise, family mediation, emergency, and health services. But these activities are expensive because they pay for medical services and food. Deportees from the Bahamas need the most financial assistance because many of them cannot rely on family members to assist them in Haiti.

Statelessness among those of Haitian descent remains a problem because U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement and Bahamian Immigration still routinely deport individuals who are not born in Haiti. The pervasive problem of statelessness stems from the clash between the right of individual man and the rights of people within a territory. The individual right of man was a term promoted in the French Revolution, which emphasized Universal Human rights. However the rise of the nation-state has weakened the idea of universal human rights (Beiner 139-140). Political theorist Hannah Arendt
explains the dilemma of nation-states over the role of universal rights regarding those who are deemed stateless:

The reason why highly developed political communities, such as the ancient city-states or modern nation-states, so often insist on ethnic homogeneity is that they hope to eliminate as far as possible those natural and always present differences and differentiations which by themselves arouse dumb hatred, mistrust, and discrimination because they indicate all too clearly those spheres where men cannot act and change at will i.e. the limitations of the human artifice. The “alien” is a frightening symbol of the fact of difference as such, of individuality as such, and indicates those realms in which man cannot change and cannot act and in which, therefore, he has a distinct tendency to destroy (Arendt 301).

The stateless individual challenges the nation-state by claiming inalienable human rights, rights that should be available to citizens within a territory. Yet individual rights are controlled at the discretion of the state, but discretions and “demarcations” can be determined not only by territorial space, but “ideologically, racially, economically, and politically” (Hayden 82). National sovereignty can be used to determine who belongs in the nation-state. In the Bahamas, stateless Bahamian-born children have no basic rights and are not recognized within the nation-state, as legal residents are in the United States and elsewhere. In Haiti where their parents were born, Bahamian-born children are marginalized with few economic opportunities. Nation-building in post-independent Bahamas emphasized the demarcations and divisions between Bahamians and Haitian migrants, and Haitian migrants were targeted as the complete opposite of the Bahamians and as a threat to the Bahamian state.
Refugee Rights in the Bahamas

The Bahamas signed the 1951 convention that regulates the status of Refugees and Protocol. The purpose of this convention is for nations to be committed to the rights of refugees and to ensure their safety from persecution based on “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” However, due to the mistreatment of Haitians, particularly of stateless persons and refugees, the United Nations, Amnesty International, and other human rights groups have conducted numerous investigations and interviews of detainees in the Bahamas. Based on their investigations, these organizations hold the Bahamian government responsible for failing to ensure the rights of refugees and to fulfill its obligations to the 1951 convention.

In 1994, Yale University’s “Human Rights Delegation Report” concluded that the Bahamian government violated international law when hundreds of Haitians were detained for long periods of time at the Carmichael Detention Center outside of Nassau. Long-time Haitian residents were arrested without due process and some were forcibly repatriated despite political persecution in Haiti (Human Rights delegation report 1994).

In 2004, Amnesty International investigated reports of “excessive force” by officials at the Carmichael Detention Center. There was a fire in the facility and officials prevented the detainees from leaving to escape the fire. Some of these detainees, including women and children, were “severely beaten” with batons (Amnesty Int’l Report 2004). In 2009, Amnesty International once again reported abuse at the Carmichael

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Detention Center. One detainee was beaten and lost several toenails and fingernails. Detainees were forced to march three times a day while officials hit and push them with the butts of their rifles. The facility was overcrowded and detainees slept on concrete floors (Amnesty Int’l report 2009).

There were also reports that Haitians with legitimate cases for refugee status were repatriated to Haiti without any “opportunity” to claim political asylum. In addition, the processes for filing for asylum were “inadequate” (UNHCR/minority rights group 2008). Haitians also claimed that there was rampant discrimination in the job market. Employers controlled their work permits and identification papers while threatening to deport them. Employers were able to use their documents as “employment leverage” while exploiting Haitian workers. (UNHCR/minority rights group 2008).

In 2004, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination created an international convention ratified by 169 states including the Bahamas. The purpose of the convention is to build a “normative basis” for global efforts to eliminate racial discrimination (U.N. Racial Discrimination Report 2004). In its 2004 report, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,” recommended that the Bahamian government develop a comprehensive census to collect data on the demographics of the Bahamas, and it also encouraged the government to follow one of the articles of the convention about “racial motivation” as a criminal offense.

The committee also encouraged investigating job and housing discrimination under the Bahamianization policy enacted in 1967 under the Lynden Pindling
administration. The purpose of this policy was to ensure that Bahamians had access to their own resources, education, business, and land. In addition, the availability of work permits to foreigners was not to affect Bahamians in the job market and any profits from Bahamian-owned businesses (Craton & Saunders 435). However, the Pindling administration continued to open the Bahamas to foreign investment. White merchants still dominated the economic sector (Strachan 139-140). This policy was used as an excuse to deny Haitians work or housing. The committee also mentioned the role of the media with respect to Haitian migrants: “The Committee is concerned at reports of statements and press articles inciting racial discrimination against migrants, Haitians in particular, and actual discrimination against migrants in fields such as education and employment. It is disturbed to hear that the State party says it has not been told of such allegations” (UN Racial Discrimination Report 2004). The report mentioned the importance of guaranteeing asylum-seekers an interpreter, legal assistance, and curtailment of the detention time of asylum seekers during the asylum process. The committee also calls on the Bahamian government to apply the 1951 refugee convention and 1967 protocol to “domestic law” in the Bahamas (UN Racial Discrimination Report 2004).

In 2011, the UN Refugee Agency and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have called on nations with high Haitian migrant populations, including the Bahamas, to stop repatriations to Haiti until conditions there improve. Although Haiti had its recent election and reconstruction efforts after the earthquake, the country lacks the proper resources to accommodate or guarantee the safety of unaccompanied minors and
disabled Haitian nationals abroad (Nassau-Guardian 6/23/2011). The proper treatment of refugees has been a major human rights issue. Some Bahamians see refugees as a national issue and claim that the island cannot accommodate Haitian migrants, as one editorial argued:

However, The Bahamas cannot and should not follow the UN suggestion. The Bahamas is a developing country struggling to escape recession after the 2008 financial crisis. In 2009, the unemployment rates in New Providence and Grand Bahama exceeded 14 percent and 17 percent, respectively. It is likely that high rates of unemployment persist. It would be unwise for a developing country such as The Bahamas to allow a large number of uneducated and unskilled people to remain in the country at this time (Freeport News 7/2/2011).

Recently, several organizations have investigated and reported negatively about the conditions and treatment of detainees at the Carmichael facility.

Economic and political transformations have drastically changed the nature of Bahamian-Haitian relations. Once again, the world geopolitical system positioned Bahamas as a “peripheral paradise” within the world-system. The Bahamas formed a structure that is dependent on foreign investments, tourists, and expatriates by establishing itself as a tax-free haven. As black Bahamians begin to acquire political power, they desired the need to restrict the number of Haitians, yet still maintained the same economic policies implemented by the Bay Street elite. Immigration policies and media have contributed to the construction of ethnic boundaries between Bahamians and Haitians, and the “Haitian Problem” has become a contentious matter within the national discourse of the Bahamas.
Chapter 3: Representing the Bahamian Nation vs. Haitian Blackness

They all speak, not of ‘individuals’ but of ‘subjects’; that is, recognizing that culture comes into play precisely at the point where biological individuals become subjects, and that what lies between the two is not some automatically constituted ‘natural’ process of socialization but much more complex processes of formation. These constitute ‘subjectivity’ historically, in different periods, and rarely deliver a completed or normatively secured end point (Hall 1999. 312)

Cultural studies scholar, Stuart Hall, explains the constructionist approach to representation that focuses more on language to represent concepts to the audience (Hall 15). One of the notions of representation is that it gives meaning to images that are depicted. Hall argues that the old literal approach to representation is when an object appears to have one true meaning, yet media representation of the object distort its meaning and can result in measuring the gap between the so-called true meaning and its distortion (Hall). However, there is no one true or fixed meaning. Meaning does not exist until it goes through the representation process or as Hall states “representation is constitutive of the event” or object (Hall). Hall express how “culture is the way we make sense of, give meaning to the world” (Hall). Meaning occurs because of “shared conceptual maps” that members of a society share together. (Hall). Bahamian representation of Haitians influence or informs Bahamians’ behavior or perception towards them.

Print media and images can express meaning about the world to those who understand these “conceptual” and “linguistic” systems of their culture (Hall 25). There is a “conceptual map” of symbols, words, and images. For example, Hall discusses how colors can be distinguished, classified, arranged, and what can represent certain ideas or
functions (Hall 26-27). A system of classification used in society is learned and internalized (Hall). The constructionist approach focuses not only on the meaning of these symbols, words, and images, but also on the idea that they can be different from each other. The constructionist approach emphasizes the difference between symbols and colors as a way to understand meaning (Hall 27). Influenced by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure’s ideas about the mechanisms and relations between signifier and signified, Hall maintains that meanings are determined by certain cultural codes (Hall 32). The practices of signification are the “practices that produce meaning,” a method that has been used and circulated by the media (Hall).

Usually, social actors or hegemonic forces create conceptual systems to mark the lines of difference (Hall 25). Hall explains that meanings are not innate or part of nature, but they emerge through “social conventions” (Hall 29). Hall was influenced by Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and by Michel Foucault’s work on power/knowledge, according to which power is implemented through an “institutional apparatus” (Hall 47). Institutional apparatuses are powerful sectors that transmit knowledge to the subject population. Instead of any absolute truth about knowledge, the implementation and imposition of knowledge on a subject population is an important factor in the practice of representation (Hall 49). The dynamics of discursive practices allow knowledge to be accepted and believed as the truth, particularly within a “specific historical context” (Hall 46). Discursive national practices in the Bahamas construct knowledge and truth about race and about differences between Bahamians and Haitians, and those discourses gradually become accepted as the “truth”.

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Stuart Hall asks this interesting question: “Why is otherness so compelling in an object of representation?” Hall’s reasons are based on the need for difference. Hall explains that difference matters because order is the fundamental basis to maintain culture. Difference is viewed as a necessity yet precarious (Hall 236). French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss developed the concept of binary opposition in which meaning relies on different oppositional concepts. For example, Black vs. White and Civilized vs. Barbaric are binary oppositions (Hall 235). Mary Douglas discusses the nature of institutions and their need to classify symbols and groups:

When institutions make classifications for us, we seem to lose some independence that we might conceivably have otherwise had. This thought is one that we have every reason, as individuals, to resist. Living together, we take individual responsibility, and we lay it upon one another. We take responsibility for our deeds, but even more voluntarily for our thoughts. Our social interaction consists very much in telling each other what right thinking is, and passing blame on wrong thinking. This is indeed how we build institutions, squeezing each other’s ideas into a common shape, so that we can prove rightness by sheer numbers of independent assent (Douglas 1986 91-92).

As Hall and Douglas explain, institutional apparatuses construct and maintain classification systems and are some of the most important constructs of nationalism. Hall also argues that ideology and power attempts to fix or stop the flow of interpreting meanings. Meanings cannot always remain fixed it can change or as Hall describes “loosen and fray” (Hall). The goal of ideology is to “naturalize” or fix the meaning of images and objects to the extent where society might not question it. However the practice of fixing meanings will always be challenged or “subverted” (Hall). Media is an institution or apparatus that has the “technologies” to coordinate and apply power,
ideology, and therefore binary dichotomies as knowledge. Hall presents questions exposing and opening the process of representation:

“Where do images come from?”
“Who produces images?
“How is meaning closed down in representation?
“Who is “silenced in the production of images?” (Hall).

These are the same questions on how Bahamian media portray Haitian migrants. The role of media plays an important part in the process of representation and how it plays in the minds of the public. Mass communication attempts to achieve their objective to influence public opinion by reflecting the “realities, beliefs, and psychological needs of the cultures of which they are a part” (Johnson 1980. 3).

Hall explains that media constructs meaning that can be “conceptualized” in a very “reductive way”, and the media delivers content to a national audience in a form of “one-way communication” (Hall 1986, 310). Culture versus nature is another binary opposition according to which white culture is viewed to be against the nature of blacks (Hall 244). People of African descent in the West and in the former colonies were portrayed as primitive and incapable of being civilized. Even after slavery, blacks were considered as being “childish, simple, and dependent” as Hall explains (Hall 249). For example, U.S. media has shaped respondents perception and preferences of Latin American populations into the 20th century:

If dark-skinned and religious (read Catholic) can be considered negative images, as they unquestionably were in pre-World War II United States, then the respondents showed preference for eight unfavorable terms—dark-skinned, quick-tempered, emotional, religious. Backward, lazy, ignorant, suspicious-- as descriptive of Latin America before recording a favorable one—friendly—and returning to a negative one dirty—as their tenth choice. It is no less significant that
the lowest score was registered for “efficient”, which figures so prominently in the protestant ethic (Johnson 1980. 19).

Images or other forms of visual representations are a bit “ambiguous” in that the viewer represents his or herself, while responding to the representation of others within the image (Gleach 53). Editorial cartoons in newspapers and news journals were quite effective in “reinforcing impressions in the public mind” (Johnson 1980. 21). Editorial cartoons was successful in essentializing the characters within the image to present a closed meaning to viewers:

They are of course, drawn by artists who make no pretense of presenting the whole truth. On the contrary, cartoonists have a reputation for taking liberties with or oversimplifying the facts in order to make their intent evident. Once at their drawing boards they become first and foremost advocates who invite their viewers to join them in acceptance of their favor. The essence of cartooning is an attack to the point where heroes are glorified by denouncing their adversaries. As a consequence, a cartoon can be and often is a fundamental distortion of a reality (Johnson 1980 21-22).

The interest in visual media increased in the late nineteenth century as newspapers become more “commercially driven.” Not only U.S. political parties funded newspapers, but also the press sought advertising revenue. Editors viewed readers as consumers as well as “potential voters” (Miller 14). In the last decades of the nineteenth century, steam powered printing presses improved the quality of visual works. Political cartoons were a “key feature” in newspapers and magazines (Miller 17). Several mass-circulated newspapers offered political cartoons daily on the front page, to entice readers. Political cartoons were even more popular during the Spanish-American War and graphic artists or cartoonists would even earn higher salaries than journalists (Miller 17). Cultural
productions attempt to maintain national unity and media coverage of the Spanish-American war shaped the views of American readers:

Creators of war-related cultural productions made strategic efforts to meet the needs of a nation coping with the economic and social turbulence of the 1890s. Their efforts addressed the cultural longing to heal the residential wounds of the civil war, reaffirmed notions of masculine vigor, and built patriotic unity and national pride. They hit on the right ingredients to mobilize and maintain support for U.S. actions abroad (Miller 17).

During the Spanish-American war, racial and ethnic caricature in political cartoons and comic strips were popular. Cultural producers (the media) have “embedded messages” of imperialist and racial rhetoric that was shaped within a framework that was “widely recognized and had mass appeal” to the audience (Miller 189). The imperialist and racial theme within these visual sources played a role in fixing meanings in the portrayal of foreign subjects during the Spanish-American War:

Merging popular visual conceptions of “domestic” and “foreign” stereotypes helped to integrate imperial ways of thinking and feeling into everyday cultural life (Miller 228).

In Haiti, old binary oppositions have persisted into the 21st century. Haiti is perceived as a failed nation-state that is never stable. During the U.S. occupation of Haiti, Westerners emphasized that Haiti cannot be a civilized nation because its people are uncivilized and are like children. Figure 1 pertains to U.S. foreign policy towards Haiti, which correlates with Hall’s description of how people of African descent are represented.
This political cartoon illustrates a black child dropping and breaking a cup, which represents the government, spilling its contents, while Uncle Sam comes to the rescue with a fistful of dollars to save Haiti. The child has exaggerated features such as big round eyes reminiscent of the minstrel shows in the U.S. The big feet and toes emphasize the stereotypical image of a poor Haitian peasant. In Haitian Kreyol, “Big Toes” is a derogatory phrase for a Haitian peasant, and the figure is dressed in the ragged clothes of a poor peasant. The artist of the political cartoon is meant to draw out a feeling of frustration for the reader. The artist defines the situation in which the United States is the parent and Haiti is the irresponsible child. The child that supposedly represents Haiti looks quite surprised at the broken cup, as if the child was not aware or responsible for

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the broken cup. The childish subject is away from the mess and makes sure to step his feet away from the puddle. The particular body language indicates that maybe the childish figure (supposedly representing the Haitian people) did not break the cup. Nonetheless, only two subjects are in the image and the only suspect is the childish figure.

The cartoon was a racist depiction of Haiti as an immature society incapable of governing itself and justifying American reasons for occupying Haiti in 1915. The image reflects what historian, John J. Johnson describes as “mythologizing the world of international relations by physiognomizing it” (22). Uncle Sam emerged as a powerful patriotic symbol drawn up by cartoonists in the nineteenth century. The image of Uncle Sam first appeared in a lithograph in 1832. During and after the civil war, Uncle Sam was redrawn almost similar to the tall and “lanky” physical shape of Abraham Lincoln. Uncle Sam was created to represent national unity, “manly resolve,” patriotism courage and power (Neumann 468). As a masculine entity, Uncle Sam represented a paternal disciplinarian who was obligated to instruct foreign subjects on being civilized. Figure 1 illustrates a binary form of representation in which one symbol is more powerful or dominant than the other symbol.

In the Bahamas, binary dichotomies were developed between Bahamians and Haitians in the Bahamas print and visual media, particularly when a political crisis occurred in Haiti. The following images are from news reports about immigration policies, specifically about Haitian migrants, about Haiti’s political crisis, and about the Bahamian response to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.
Figure 2 is entitled “AND STILL THEY CAME.”, taken in 1994 while Haiti was under a vicious military regime, shows a disabled boat of about 300 Haitians that drifted to Arawak Cay, near Nassau. The image and title convey the idea of Haitians “determined” to invade the Bahamas if they fail to reach Miami. Again, there are concerns about foreigners, particularly Haitians, who will come and waste Bahamian resources. Figure 2 is another example of how meaning is “naturalized” and stereotypes are reinforced. The targets (Haitian refugees) are silenced and have no voice. The wording is also significant “AND STILL THEY CAME hundreds of boat people.” The title is written in capital letters to emphasize the constant influx of Haitians. “Boat

6 Figure 2: “And Still they Came” Nassau Guardian pg 9. July 8 1994.
“people” is a frequent term used to designate Haitian refugees in the media. Stuart Hall states “the viewer is implicated in the production of meaning” (Hall 1997). The reduced and exaggerated image and title of several Haitians crammed in a boat can influence or trigger strong reactions from Bahamians viewers. The objective of figure 2 is to restrict or close down the process of representation.

In figure 3, two characters are contradicting each other. A man in a tie and jacket with military helmet confidently proclaims “Look Out Haiti, Here We Come!!”

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7 “Figure 3: Look Out Haiti here we come” SIP SIP cartoon (Editorial). Nassau-Guardian Feb 9th 1993
intending to take over Haiti. The other smaller subject does not share his confidence and expressed how “Haiti Gat’er Million Man Army.” In response to a military coup in Haiti, Bahamian Senator Fred Mitchell (in figure 3) proposed that the Bahamas should invade Haiti in order to impose democracy there: “Is the government not satisfied that it is time for The Bahamas to change its foreign policy with regard to Haiti and consider mounting an invasion of Haiti to replace its government so as to allow for democratic reforms in that country?” (Nassau-Guardian 2/3/1993). In this example of a binary opposition, Mitchell claims that the Bahamas, like its U.S. neighbors, would be justified for invading Haiti because democracy in the Bahamas is superior to the political instability in Haiti. However, the image mocks Fred Mitchell for not considering the population of Haiti and the size of the Haitian army. Again, the target Haiti or Haitians are excluded or silenced in the production of this image. Senator Fred Mitchell symbolizes the dominant figure that wants to assert control by invading Haiti. Although the image also illustrates that invading Haiti is unrealistic, difference and power plays a role. Ideology fixes the meaning in which the binary structure of a civilized democracy vs. corrupt dictatorship defines the imbalanced relationship between the Bahamas and Haiti. Senator Mitchell’s recommendation is quite similar to Uncle Sam’s need to occupy and spread democracy to so-called uncivilized territories.
Figure 4 is an image mocking the late human rights lawyer, Elezier Regnier, in response to the Spanish Wells Incident. Regnier is portrayed as a race baiter who is exaggerating the situation in Spanish Wells by comparing the incident to the Mississippi Burning tragedy made into a dramatic film in 1988. Despite the fact that there is a history of white Bahamians discriminating against Black Bahamians at Spanish Wells, that history is ignored or avoided. When Regnier mentioned the same form of discrimination against Bahamians in Spanish Wells, he was accused of dividing black

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8 “Figure 4: Mississippi Burning” SIP SIP cartoon (Editorial). Nassau Guardian. Sept 8, 1989
and white Bahamians. The Spanish Wells Incident was seen more as a national issue rather than racial discrimination. The message in the following image also illustrates the dilemma of avoiding racism in the Bahamas. The meaning of the image is an attempt to shut down any new perspectives on race and identity. Hall argues that ideology informs readers and viewers what the meaning is and that meaning will not change:

Whenever you see that, you will think that whenever you see that, you will think that whenever you see those people, you will assume that they have those characteristics. Whenever you see that event, you will assume it has that political consequence. That’s what ideology tries to do, that’s what power in signification is intended to do: to close language, to close meaning, to stop the flow (Hall 1997).

The idea behind the image is to close the meaning that Haitians at the Spanish Wells School is only a national issue, while disparaging or repressing any other meanings on the issue. The image portrays Regnier wearing clown shoes, as a way to depict him as a clown. Regnier is seen as an individual who should not be taken seriously for mentioning racism against Haitians. The objective of figure 8 is certainly geared to bring about political consequences from the particular event and Regnier was a major target. The image also portrays Regnier picketing and carrying a banner, while the other banner that reads “Big Row between Local Spanish Wells Residents and Residing Haitians” is on fire. The title on top: “Every time me tink of situation in Spanish Wells, Me tink I watchin’ Mississippi Burning.” Again, the wording is significant in how it illustrates how racism is reduced to a conventional meaning between only Black and whites, or how the operative word, “Mississippi Burning” shows how racism is imagined in the Southern United States, not in the Bahamas.
In figure 5, “Shack Rat” is a sideburns character and working class black Bahamian who designs costumes for the Junkanoo festivities. This image was published after the earthquake in Haiti. Although “Shack Rat” is usually frustrated with Haitians, he is holding up a character that represents Haiti who wears ripped clothing, is barefoot,

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9 “Figure 5: Please Donate to the Cash Relief Effort” Sideburns Cartoon. (Editorial) Nassau-Guardian Jan 14th 2010
and has a look of anguish on his face. Shack Rat is concerned, yet, with a sigh, he feels overwhelmed. This image sends a message about a need to help mixed with a sigh that might be interpreted as a resigned anxiety and uncertainty about how the Bahamas will deal with the heavy burden of Haitians escaping to the Bahamas from the catastrophe as well as about those Haitians who already reside in the Bahamas. Figure 5 shows a marked difference between the characters: Shack Rat, though of modest means, is well dressed, while his Haitian “brudder” is ragged and barefooted. The act of stereotyping is “part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order” (Hall 258). Figure 5 portrays Shack Rat as the adult, while Haiti is the helpless child. Despite the 2010 earthquake disaster in Haiti, the binary structures remain in place:

Since the binaries remain in place, meaning continues to be framed by them. The strategy challenges the binaries but it does not undermine them. The peace-loving, child-caring Rastafarian can still appear, in the following day’s newspaper, as an exotic and violent black stereotype…(Hall 1997. 274).

Although the saying “my brudder” indicates a closeness and relation with Haiti, the image is far from undermining the “dominant regime of representation” (Hall 1997. 274).

The image relationship between the two subjects and identity play a role. The Haitian figure facial expression is clear, while Shack Rat’s hat cover his eyes and his facial expression is slightly hidden. The reader cannot exactly tell if he’s well intentioned to help his “brudder” or annoyed, which further adds to the ambiguous relationship between the two figures.
Figure 6 illustrates the “devious” Haitian and the “gullible” former Prime Minister of the Bahamas, Hubert Ingraham. In response to the earthquake in Haiti, Ingraham released one hundred Haitian detainees and granted them temporary protected status. Critics argued that Ingraham was contradicting Bahamas’s zero-tolerance immigration policy which might lead to a new influx of Haitians to the Bahamas. The

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10 Figure 6: “Temporary Status” Sideburns cartoon. (Editorial). Nassau-Guardian. Jan 18th 2010.
image portrayed Ingraham as a naïve leader being duped and taken advantage of by Haitian detainees. Ingraham’s temporary protected status policy stipulated that Haitians granted temporary status must check in with immigration authorities after three months. Critics and Ingraham’s political opponents argued that the detainees would not return within the three-month time frame and would stay “illegally” in the Bahamas. The image portrays the Haitian character as a dishonest cunning individual who would abuse the immigration policy, while Ingraham is portrayed as weak and inept. Figure 6 is another example of how ideology and power can close meanings and reduce certain groups into simple yet exaggerated characteristics. In figure 6 Haitians are reduced to people who disobey immigration policies, and can be deemed a threat to national identity and social order of the Bahamas. Once again, Hall echoes Mary Douglas’ argument on how objects being in the “wrong category” disrupt cultural orders:

Stable cultures require things to stay in their appointed place. Symbolic boundaries keep the categories ‘pure’, giving cultures their unique meaning and identity. What unsettles culture is ‘matter out of place’ – the breaking of out unwritten rules and codes (Hall 236)

Undocumented Haitians that are labeled as “illegal” are now given temporary, but yet legal status. The presence of undocumented Haitian within the legal arena is perceived to disturb the national and social order and therefore breaking the symbolic boundaries between citizen and undocumented foreigner.
Religious officials including Anglican Bishop Laish Boyd of the Bahamas advised compassion towards Haitians after the Earthquake and condemned those who made xenophobic comments against them. Both former Prime Minister Ingraham and Bishop Boyd commented on those who attend church and yet make unchristian anti-Haitian comments on the radio and other media outlets. Figure 7 portrays the religious hypocrisy of those who felt repressed to express their anger over the influx of Haitians. The character running away from the bishop is sweating has his hair standing on end.

11 Figure 7: “Talkin Fool is a serious thing” Sideburns cartoon (Editorial) Nassau-Guardian Jan 25th 2010
while he is being whipped by a Christian bishop who is advocating compassion for Haitian “brudders & sisters.” Figure 7 illustrates how “difference is ambivalent” and complex (Hall 238). The image displays a reflection on the moral consciousness of helping Haitians and yet a duality of expressions: feelings of guilt and repression when expressing one’s negative opinion on Haitians and second, an obligation as Christians to express compassion to the others in times of distress. Hall explains the “divided legacy” of difference in which it can be both positive and negative:

It is both necessary for the production of meaning, the formation of language and culture, for social identities and a subjective sense of the self as a sexed object—and at the same time, it is threatening, a site of danger, of negative feelings, of splitting, hostility and aggression towards the ‘Other’ (Hall 1997. 238)

The 2010 earthquake in Haiti ignited an ambivalent sentiment of Bahamians wanting to provide assistance to Haitians after the earthquake, yet feelings of anxiety and hostility was still apparent, particularly when undocumented Haitians were granted temporary status in the Bahamas.
Figure 8 refers to the 2004 ouster of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and to the Caribbean Community’s (CARICOM) call for an investigation into his forced departure. CARICOM created a plan for a government-sharing agreement while Aristide was in power. The Bush Administration never disputed the plan, but instead did not follow through with CARICOM. There was suspicion that the Bush administration was behind the 2004 coup against Aristide. In the cartoon, former President of the United States, George W. Bush, is dancing and singing a song called “You get Swing,” a

12 Figure 8: “You Get Swing” Sideburns carton (Editorial) Nassau-Guardian, March 12, 2004.
Bahamian song about being duped and deceived. The other character is former Jamaican
Prime Minister P.J Patterson, the Chairman of CARICOM. Despite his more serious
demeanor, he is smoking what look likes a marijuana joint, reinforcing stereotypes about
Jamaicans. The image diminishes Patterson’s professional role as a regional leader in
foreign affairs duped into thinking that he could be on “der same page in Haiti” with the
U.S. President. The binary opposition is clear: a clever white president deceives or
“swings” a glassy-eyed pot-smoking black Prime Minister. The depiction of the Prime
Minister in figure 8 also conveys a meaning that Jamaica is not as efficient in regional
affairs in dealing with the United States. Bahamian representation of Jamaica also
shaped Bahamians’ behavior or perception towards them.

From 1920s to 1930s, undocumented Jamaicans migrated to the Bahamas in
search for work. Unskilled Jamaican laborers had filled up the local labor market in the
Bahamas, resulting in black Bahamian workers protesting the “illegal” influx of
Jamaicans (Tinker 60). Despite the small number of undocumented Jamaicans, they along
with Haitians were routinely deported. It was not until the late 1960s, that professional
Jamaicans were recruited for employment in teaching and civil service sector. However,
Jamaicans were perceived as being “troublesome” or “potentially disruptive” (Tinker 73).
Figure 8 illustrates another binary structure in which Jamaica appear to be incapable of
solving the political crisis in Haiti, resulting in the U.S. not following CARICOM
government-sharing agreement that Jamaica proposed.

The most influential and “prominent figures in the Bahamian visual art world” is
Stan Burnside, the creator of sideburns cartoon featured in Bahamas’ Nassau-Guardian
newspaper (Nassau-Guardian 10/31/2011). The editorial political cartoon series, “Sideburns,” (an inversion of his Burnside’s last name) was created in 1979. Since that year, Burnside has drawn over 10,000 editorial pieces for both the Nassau-Guardian and Bahamas-Tribune (Nassau-Guardian 10/31/2011). The editorial cartoon series is described as having its “finger firmly on the pulse of the Bahamian spirit” (Nassau-Guardian 10/31/2011). Burnside explains his vision and inspiration in creating the images to viewers:

I consider myself a historian in the loosest of terms,” he says. “I think some of what I chose to highlight might not always be what is the issue of the day to everyone, but I like to think what I do makes a positive experience. If the cartoon can be one of the vices for good in this country, I would be very grateful because I hope that by presenting everything in this form that certain people would get a clearer understanding of an issue (Nassau-Guardian 10/31/2011)

During the Spanish-American War, political cartons attempted to “meet the needs of a nation” particularly during an economic or political crisis. The purpose of these cartoons was to create, deliver, and circulate meanings that would enforce national unity and pride among readers and viewers (Miller 17). These cartoons intend to mobilize the reading audience whether they accept or criticize the meaning of the image. Burnside has been successful by taking a small snapshot and “conveys in a glance the exact reality of the times” (Nassau-Guardian 10/31/2011). The attempt to convey the meaning is part of the process of representation. Hall explains that there is no real or fixed meaning until it has been represented. Events and objects become a reality once it goes through the process of representation (Hall). It is that very process that shapes Bahamian attitudes towards Haitians.
Negritude and the “Golden Era” in Haiti

Before the large influx of Haitian migrants to the Bahamas, there was a political and cultural movement that embraced Haiti’s African roots. The Négritude movement began in France among a group of black francophone writers against French colonialism and racism. Writers such as Aimé Cesaire noted that negritude actually began in Haiti, yet the writers of that movement emphasized the need for international solidarity and black empowerment at a global level (Smith 57). In response to American imperialism, and against the light-skinned elite in Haiti, there was a call for a movement that catered to poor peasants and the dark-skinned majority of Haitians. In 1932, the “noiriste griot group” was founded in Haiti by Louis Diaquoi, Lorimer Denis, and the young Francois Duvalier. In that same year, the Haitian journal “Les Griots” was created (Smith 57). The journal advocated a new national black consciousness:

Griot writers called for the development of a conscience nationale which would involve the acceptance of new values and a rejection of the old individualism and of the colonial authority which was still a powerful factor in Haiti. This national consciousness could be achieved only by reform in the educational system (Nicholls 196).

Part of noiriste reform was also embracing Haitian Kreyòl and using it as a language of instruction within the education curriculum. The years between 1940 and 1956 became a literary renaissance of negritude and political reform to empower poor and middle class black Haitians. This period, right before the rise of Francois Duvalier in 1957, was called the Golden age, particularly in Haiti’s tourist industry (Polyné 138).

In 1946, a young generation of Haitian activists and intellectuals inspired by noiriste writers and revolutionary political ideology, demonstrated the need to change the
political structure in Haiti (Dash 91-92). Known as the “generation of ’46”, they were largely responsible for overthrowing President Elie Lescot, an ambassador to the United States, and a member of Haiti’s elite. Most of Lescot’s administration was made up of members from the mulatto elite. Black Haitians were excluded from key positions of power (Ballard 30). President Lescot was known to repress his political opponents and to censor the media. Lescot’s administration imprisoned the editors of a Marxist Haitian journal called “La ruche” or “The Beehive” (Laudun 197). Jailing the editors ignited several student-led demonstrations and strikes among teachers, government workers, and shopkeepers. Lescot had alienated the black soldiers within the Garde D’Haiti (the Haitian army), which led to his resignation in January 1946 (Laudin 197).

After the fall of Elie Lescot, Dumarsais Estimé was elected to the presidency by the legislature. He was a populist who had a great deal of support from the Black population and was a favorite among the noiristes (Laudun 199). Estimé’s slogan was “a black man in power” meaning that positions within his administration would be open to blacks (Ballard 31). Estimé implemented a number of progressive policies and reforms such as creating more rural cooperatives, increasing the wages of government workers, and empowering labor unions. Estimé also enacted the nation’s first income tax and social security laws (Laudun 199). Estimé’s attempt was to build a stable black middle class in Haiti. However, the Haitian elite disliked him, and they conducted “clandestine” methods to get him out of power. The elite and the military forced Estimé out of power through a coup. Like Estimé, Magloire was elected as President of Haiti through the legislature.
Magloire was a military officer trained by U.S marines during the American occupation. His presidential regime was viewed as a “relatively moderate dictatorship” (Ballard 32). Unlike Estimé, Magloire ruled with a strong hand and favored the mulatto elite to fill positions within his administration. He focused on creating a modernization project that included expanding medical projects, construction, and investing in new industries such as tourism (Ballard 32) (Smith 163). Tourism experienced a sudden surge throughout most of the 1950s and attracted celebrities, intellectuals, and journalists such as Bernard Diederich. Diederich claimed that Magloire’s presidency was a period of a “Golden Age” (Diederich 9). During the early 1950s, Magloire was fortunate to rule Haiti during a worldwide economic boom. However, Magloire continued to be power hungry and spent Haiti’s profits on his lavish lifestyle. He also continued to restrict the civil liberties of Haitians leading to a number of demonstrations. Magloire was forced to resign in December 1956, due to public disorder and a national strike. It was the end of the golden era (Lea, Milward & Rowe 144).

Haitians who had to endure the Duvalier dictatorship look back to the presidency of Estimé and Magloire with nostalgia, despite the fact that Magloire was corrupt and imprisoned his political opponents. One major outcome of the noiriste movement and the golden era was strengthening the black middle class in Haiti in response to the U.S. occupation, and challenging the mulatto elite’s grip on political power.

The economic and social policy advocated by the noiristes of the post-1946 period was termed ‘equilibrium’ which was ascribed to the mulatto elite politicians. In fact the term ‘equilibrium’ was little more than a euphemism for black power…this ‘equilibrium’ or ‘social balance’ can be achieved only by destroying the economic basis of elite power (Nicholls 203).
Despite some progress for the black middle class in Haiti, not all Haitians benefited. However, foreign investors and tourists benefitted from Magloire’s modernization project. Writers and journalists enjoyed the Caribbean sun intrigued by Haiti’s cultural mystique, as explained by Bernard Diederich:

The beginning of 1955 saw some of the world’s most famous people visiting Haiti. Charles Addams, the New Yorker Magazine cartoonist famed for his macabre humor, saw his first zombie in the Grand Hotel Oloffson gardens during carnival, or at least an individual covered with a white bed sheet. Actor Noel Coward, a drooping cigarette permanently in his mouth, with actress Claudette Colbert on his arm, opted for the upscale El Rancho Hotel while John Gielgud preferred the Bohemian Greenwich Village atmosphere of the Oloffson created by Roger Coster and wife Laura who finally took over the gingerbread palace at the end of 1954. The Costers renovated the Oloffson, using 600 gallons of paint but being careful to preserve its ghosts. Pretty Laura Coster, who had been secretary to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, sent a clipping of a feature story on the Grand Hotel Oloffson published in the Haiti Sun to Charles Addams telling him, “I believe this is your kind of hotel; we invite you to visit.” He did. Paris-born Roger Coster, a well-known magazine photographer, offered foreign correspondents a ten-percent discount and the Oloffson quickly became a favorite of foreign newsmen. (Diederich 147).

Haiti was once a haven for the “liberal middle class” vacationers from North America and Europe who were interested in Haiti’s primitive art, folkloric dance, and vodou religion (Polyné 138). Black American artists and intellectuals such as Langston Hughes, Katherine Dunham, Lavinia Williams, Zora Neale Hurston, and Paul Robeson traveled to Haiti to promote its history and culture among blacks in the U.S. These prominent figures wanted to “envision” Haiti as a “center of black cultural production” for the black diaspora (Polyné 151). Cultural exchange proved to be an effective tool in shaping tourism in Haiti during the “golden age,” and it was not unusual for middle class Bahamians to travel to Haiti to enjoy its cultural richness.
After the fall of Magloire, Haiti experienced several months of political instability. A popular labor leader named Daniel Fignolé was installed as a provisional president. Fignolé promised to create a “true democratic government” in his inaugural address and attempted to “reassign” officers from the high military command. Nineteen days later, Fignolé was forced out of power by the military. The military conducted another election and François Duvalier was the frontrunner. All of Duvalier’s political opponents were intimidated, and went into hiding, or went into exile. Duvalier easily won the election in 1957 (Alexander 188) (Pezzullo 82). Under the reign of Duvalier, the “little disparity” between Haiti and the Bahamas as Craton and Saunders described, was quickly transformed into a large economic gap.

*The Cultural Renaissance of the Golden Era and Lavalas Transnationalism: The Role of Haitian Nationalism*

Haiti is the second oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere. Haitian nationalism has had a long struggling history since the Haitian revolution. After the Haitian revolution, a series of nationalist movements emerged in Haiti. Two prominent “waves” of nationalism were the Noiriste movement and the Lavalas movement in post-Duvalier Haiti. The 1946 revolution under Durmarsais Estimé brought political and economic reforms and transformed the composition of the political elite once dominated by wealthy light-skinned Haitians. Most of Estimé’s cabinet was comprised of black middle class ministers; black men who attained important government posts under Estimé were called the “authentiques” (Smith 108). The authentiques proclaimed to be the “real inheritors of Dessalines”, and they pulled away from Eurocentric beliefs. They were
fierce black nationalists who believed in an inclusive political culture and system under black leadership. The authentiques were in conflict with the light-skinned elite in Haiti and also against foreign interference in Haiti’s economy. The authentiques attempted to reverse economic policies implemented under President Lescot. The United States had imposed tax controls and was meddling in Haiti’s national budget (Smith 113). Estimé and the authentiques in his administration called for “financial liberation” and attempted to restrict U.S. control of Haiti’s economy (Smith 114).

Estimé and the authentiques attempted to establish a powerful black middle class and encouraged a cultural movement influenced by Haitian writers and members of the Haitian Indigenous Movement such as Jean Price-Mars and Jacques Roumain. There was a nationalist response against the light skinned elite and against the U.S occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934. The indigenous movement focused on “reevaluating” and reiterating Haiti’s connection with Africa, while articulating Haiti’s national cultural identity (Largey 23).

Estimé’s legacy has been tied to Black Nationalist consciousness because he sponsored Haiti’s cultural renaissance. Estimé supported the development of indigenous culture, literature, and the performing arts in Haiti. For example, the government sponsored the Bureau of Ethnology, a vodou aesthetics project, and promoted vodou music and drums as part of Haiti’s national identity (Smith 106-107). Estimé also created and organized the Port-au-Prince bicentennial Exposition, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of Port-au-Prince. The government invested in a massive project by creating a Department of Tourism that initiated a public relations campaign in
the United States and in neighboring countries in the Caribbean and Latin America. The government spent a huge portion of Haiti’s budget to clean and “restructure” Port-au-Prince, while building hotels to accommodate visitors (Smith 107). The exposition included art, folkloric dances, and ethnological exhibits. The exposition attracted thousands of tourists from different parts of the world, and Estimé and the Noiristes thought it was a way to promote Haiti’s indigenous culture and Black Nationalism to the world. The Noiriste movement and exposition created a bond between prominent Haitian intellectuals and African-American organizers. The African Americans assisted in Haiti’s public relations campaign by dispelling negative stereotypes about Haitians (Smith 108).

Despite Estimé’s success with Haiti’s cultural awakening and with efforts at building a powerful black majority, he and the authentiques were not strong enough to resist their adversaries outside or within his administration. Haiti’s light-skinned elite were determined to put Estimé and his authentiques out of power. Haiti’s light-skinned bourgeoisie were still economically powerful. They opposed Estimé and his authentiques for excluding them from the cabinet and members of the Haitian elite were denied every key position under the presidency of Estimé (Smith 118).

Officials within the Catholic Church were against President Estimé’s policy to include more Haitian priests instead of foreign priests to teach at a Catholic school. The director of the school was a foreign priest who told the U.S. Ambassador in Haiti that President Estimé was a communist and was planning to establish the first communist nation in the Caribbean (Smith 117). Father Joseph Foisset, a French priest in Haiti, was one of the leading organizers of the Catholic anti-vodou campaign. Foisset criticized
Estimé and the noiristes for giving vodou “national prominence” (Smith 117). During the cold war, U.S. officials had a black and white approach to labeling nations as communist, and Haiti was labeled communist. Although President Estimé banned communist activity in Haiti, the American press, as well as a number of U.S. officials, quickly labeled Estimé and the noiristes as communists because of their nationalist policies (Smith 130). However, internal divisions and the military, not the Catholic Church or the U.S., brought the Estimé presidency to an end.

Estimé promoted many military officers to high powerful positions in the military, but these promotions were not enough to heal the fragile alliance between the presidency and the military. Reports of corruption and financial abuse affected the reputation of Estimé and the authentiques (Smith 116-117). The light-skinned elite managed to convince the military to get rid of Estimé, and once the military stopped supporting Estimé, the end came soon for Estimé and the authentiques, especially since Estimé and the authentiques could not connect with the poor Haitian majority. The late Haitian scholar, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, said about the Lescot regime before Estimé that a “class of men born with silver spoons in their mouths would do anything to maintain its privileges” (167).

Most of the noiristes were from the small black middle class and held occupations such as teachers, doctors, and lawyers. The noiristes believed that they were the ones who could represent the needs of the poor black masses, but ironically, the middle class noiristes were not able to connect with the black majority they wanted to represent.
Historian Matthew J. Smith explained clearly the contradictions of black power and Black Nationalism among the noiristes and authentiques in Haiti:

On the one hand, black power meant a rearrangement of the political order and an opportunity to advance desperately needed reforms seldom achieved under milat [mulatto] rule. On the other, it was an extension of the black middle class into the economic sphere and was quite often used to justify nepotism, corruption, and political opportunism. The change in the political fortunes of black politicians encouraged several of them to exploit their new positions in order to feather their own nests (116).

As the middle class noiristes gained their new prestige and attained political power from the light-skinned elite, they did not attempt to change the political structure that members of the elite benefit from. Corrupt methods practiced among the light-skinned elite under the Lescot regime continued under President Estimé. The failure of the Estimé presidency to raise the quality of life for the poor black majority and the lack of political transparency further divided the role of the state and civil society (Smith 148).

Nonetheless, President Estimé left a legacy in which Haitian indigenist culture blossomed and became the basis of nationalism in Haiti. Haiti had succumbed to domination by the light-skinned elite and occupation from the United States. Estimé and the noiristes “fashioned” Haiti’s self image in the world (Averill 70). By sponsoring and investing in Haitian culture, many Haitians began to embrace vodou music, art, and Haitian folklore. During the mid-twentieth century, Haitian nationalism was a cultural advancement, but the traditional political institutions remained intact and continued to alienate and exclude the poor Haitian majority.

The struggle to transform the political system in Haiti continued after the fall of the Duvalier regime in 1986. Several civil-society associations were created after Jean-
Claude Duvalier left for France. New political parties emerged, but they benefitted only individual politicians without including the majority of Haitians in the political process and without serving their needs (NCHR.1993 3). In rural areas, popular organizations such as farming cooperatives and literary programs were supported by Catholic churches. In urban areas, trade unions, student and community associations were formed to meet the needs of their local population (NCHR 1993 3). Civil Societies in Haiti were quite active and diverse. Political parties were not democratic or diverse as these civil societies and continued to exclude the poor Haitian majority. It was not until the formation of the Lavalas party headed by Jean-Bertrand Aristide that civil society associations were fused with the Lavalas political party. The inclusion of civil society groups in electoral politics helped Lavalas to win their landslide victory in Haiti’s democratic election in 1990 (NCHR 1993. 4).

The second wave of nationalism and the emergence of the Lavalas Party began with the “Ti legliz” movement. Established in the mid-1970s, the Ti-Legliz movement is based on the ideals of Liberation Theology, focusing on empowering or providing a “preferential option for the poor” (Dupuy 72). The Ti-Legliz movement organized an important link between catechists, peasants, students, and workers against the repressive Duvalier regime. The popular radio station, “Radyo Soleil” strengthened or “fortified” the Ti Legliz movement (Aristide & Richardson 192). The Ti-Legliz movement became a popular, nationalist movement aimed at ending “macoutisme”, state violence, repression, and class exploitation, from the military and from the Ton Ton Macoutes of

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the Duvalier regime. The demands of the Ti-Legliz movement were for complete economic, social, and political change (Fatton 59).

The unofficial leader of the Ti-Legliz movement, Jean Bertrand Aristide, had “charismatic authority” as a leader, and he understood how social and economic circumstances affected the marginalized Haitian majority (Dupuy 72). Aristide was born to a poor family in the small coastal southern town of Port Salut, Haiti. Aristide’s father passed away when he was three months old. His mother was a “commercante,” a market woman who bought and sold fabric, food, and other items (Robinson 28). He was part of the poor Haitian majority and knew how to connect with them. Aristide’s popular slogan, “tout moun se moun” (everybody is somebody), was a nationalist declaration that every Haitian regardless of class or skin color had rights as a full citizen, including the right to participate in the political process. The popular slogan challenged not only the corrupt political system but also the traditional hierarchical structure of Haitian society (Fatton 28). Lavalas in the Kreyòl language means a strong torrent. The strong torrent symbolized a cleansing or eliminating of the remnants of the Duvalier regime (Dupuy 86).

When Aristide ran for the presidency in 1990, he won 67.48% of the vote; this was the first democratic election in the history of Haiti. This victory gave Aristide a popular mandate to rule the nation under a new vision for the Haitian majority. Aristide and the Lavalas party developed a nationalist approach to economic development and created a model based on “basic needs” or “growth with equity”, an alternative to the free-market model approach (Dupuy 95). The basic needs approach focused on the needs
of the disadvantaged majority, promoted economic opportunity, and extended economic investment to marginalized sectors of society. This approach complements the ideals of Liberation Theology in which the needs of the majority poor is the first priority (Dupuy 95). The Lavalas economic development model emphasized a redistribution of resources to the poor majority while respecting the existence of private ownership of the Haitian elite under an international capitalist system (Dupuy 101-102). However, the Haitian elite saw Aristide not as a man who emphasized social equality and peace but as a man who wanted to “rectify past injustices” and was more interested in the poor majority than in the wealthy minority (Dupuy 104).

One conflicting issue between Aristide’s Lavalas government and the elite was raising the minimum wage. The business sectors considered the small increase of $1.80 (from $3 to $ 4.80) “anti-economic and antinational” (Dupuy 122). The conflict between Aristide and the Haitian elite worsened and Aristide criticized the Haitian bourgeoisie for their necessity to “learn new human values and respect society as a whole” (Dupuy 124). In September 1991, Aristide was the victim of a coup d’état by the Haitian military, and he fled to Venezuela. Eventually, Aristide arrived in the U.S. as an exile. Haitians resisted the 1991 military coup in Haiti and abroad, because Aristide and the Lavalas movement empowered Haitians at a transnational level by organizing marginalized Haitians in the Haitian Diaspora. The Lavalas party believed that political power should be in the hands of the Haitian people regardless of where they are located.

Aristide attempted to redefine the traditional perspective of a nation-state and used a “deterritorialized” approach to nationalism. Aristide included Haitian emigrants in
attaining political power in Haiti (Smith & Guarnizo 135-136). In Haiti, there are nine “geographical and political” departments, and Aristide called the Haitians abroad the “tenth department” (Smith & Guarnizo 136). The tenth department was effective in raising funds for the newly elected Aristide government. Radio stations and organizations in New York City, Boston, and Miami raised money for the new democratic government. Haitian professionals abroad returned to Haiti and volunteered to work with the government. Other organizations based in the United States sponsored volunteers to assist the poor in anti-literacy campaigns and anti-poverty projects (Smith & Guarnizo 136).

The tenth department was instrumental in supporting Aristide’s return to power after the 1991 military coup. Aristide had built a close link with Haitian emigrants during his three years in exile in the United States. Aristide and the Lavalas movement forged an important alliance between Haitians and the Haitian Diaspora. The transnationalist experience gave Haitian immigrants the opportunity to be politically empowered not only in Haiti, but also within the United States. These transnationalist practices are an important feature in what Paul Gilroy describes as a “playful Diasporic intimacy”: “In opposition to both of these nationalist or ethnically absolute approaches, I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective” (Gilroy 1993. 15).

In Nations Unbound, Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Blanc explain how transnational practices are not a “unitary phenomenon” or routine “flows of items and ideas,” but “social relations constructed by subordinated populations” (315).
Haitian immigrants resist their marginal state by simultaneously fighting against racism, police brutality, AIDS discrimination, and refugee rights, while fighting for democracy in Haiti. Haitians in the Bahamas were also fighting for political stability in Haiti while advocating for visibility, full citizenship, cultural pride, and embracing a hybrid identity; a notion that threatens the ethnic absolutist mindset within Bahamian nationalism.

Haitian nationalism became a transnational cultural phenomenon that did not adopt an ethnic absolutist approach, which maintains boundaries and reifies cultural differences, but attempts to open up to the African Diaspora to attain solidarity while promoting nationalism within Haiti. Paul Gilroy asserts how the idea of Diaspora is “a ready alternative to the stern discipline of primordial kinship and rooted belonging” (Gilroy 2000 123). The idea of Diaspora creates new forms of solidarity and disrupts the strict boundaries of nation-states. This cultural phenomenon can be traced to the Haitian revolution. Despite the ongoing tension between the poor dark-skinned rural majority and the light skinned elite in Haiti, the Haitian revolution has always been a symbol of national unity that represents black pride and dignity. The Haitian revolution had defeated the idea that blackness equates with inferiority. Regardless of one’s skin color and economic background, Haiti has been since its revolution a proud Black Republic that looks out to the world to share a “redefined concept of blackness” with other black populations (Basch et al 202). But since the Haitian revolution, the Haitian state has been differentiated from the Haitian nation.

The state is designated as a political entity that organizes within a territory. Antonio Gramsci defines the state as being intertwined with political society and civil
society, "that is, hegemony protected by the armor of coercion" (Gramsci 75). The state is a coercive organization or as Gramsci describes as a "gendarme-night watchman" (Gramsci 75). The role of the state implements and enforces law and order. Benedict Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined community” (Anderson 6). What entails a nation includes a “bounded community” that defines citizenship and “relate to issues of power” (Cedermann 410, Trouillot 25). The late Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot explain the “disjuncture” between the Haitian nation and the role of the state:

The historical evolution that led to the peripheral state contributed to an increase in the stresses on that state. The peripheral capitalist state is often a colonial legacy, the result of a political “independence” built upon the remains of a power structure imposed from outside. The ultimate moral and political justification of decolonization notwithstanding, the replacement of a European-led apparatus with a “native” bureaucracy creates as many problems as it solves. The “national” state so created never inherited a blank state because the preceding colonial entity, as well as the conditions of its demise, limited both the new ruler’ possibilities and those of their successors (Trouillot 23).

What shaped the character of Haiti’s peripheral capitalist state was based on “social relations of production” and how production was organized (Trouillot 27). Since the first half of the nineteenth century, the state facilitated what Trouillot describes a “disequilibrium,” in which the Haitian peasantry was exploited by the import-export bourgeoisie dominated by foreign nationals (Trouillot 16). The import-export bourgeoisie was able to function within the state apparatus and use it to their advantage. Although, the Haitian peasantry were the “economic backbone” of Haiti and produced the bulk of the country’s agricultural commodities, they were excluded from the state (Trouillot 16). The Duvalier regime continued to exclude and exploit the Haitian peasantry. The rural population even referred to the state as the Republique de Port-au-Prince because of how
the government in the urban capital has neglected the rural regions and ignored the concerns of Haitian peasants.

The Lavalas movement attempted to transform the political institution by advocating the inclusion of the poor black Haitian majority; and although the movement failed to transform the corrupt political system in Haiti after the second coup in 2004. Lavalas was successful at transforming the traditional role of the nation-state and at extending political participation to the Haitian Diaspora.

“Bahamians First” The Role of Nationalism in the Bahamas

Unlike Haitian nationalism, Bahamian nationalism is focused within the nation-state, not outside the Bahamas. The state played an influential role in facilitating the island’s black national movement, but Bahamian nationalism was more a political phenomenon than a cultural one. “Bahamians First” was once a popular slogan of the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) of the Bahamas. The PLP focused not only on immigration issues but it also campaigned under a Black Nationalist platform. The aim of the PLP was to include more Bahamian blacks in a political process that had been dominated by an overwhelming white traditional Bahamian political establishment. The PLP started as a mixed-race political party that believed that the party should be “transracial.” But some second-rank black officials within the PLP disagreed with the “transracial” stance (Craton & Saunders 308).

Two figures emerged as important leaders within the PLP Sir Milo Butler and Lynden O Pindling. Butler was a black shopkeeper who became the first Governor-General of the Bahamas, and Pindling was a lawyer. Butler and Pindling were influenced
by the black power movement in the United States, and they campaigned on policies to empower the black population in the Bahamas (Craton & Saunders 308). While studying law and economics in London, Pindling was inspired by the United States Civil Rights Movement and by the non-violent philosophy of Martin Luther King. In an interview with Ebony magazine in 1967, Pindling explained his experience as an apolitical young black man in the Bahamas and how his intellectual development in London transformed him:

It was difficult if not impossible for black Bahamian to think politically in the early days because black Bahamians did not exist politically. In the 1940’s, there was no self-expression here. In those days life was dull, there was no real political organization. If the government did something, that was that. While I was a student I wondered why certain things were done, but I didn’t know why and my studies did not enlighten me. I didn’t really become aware of the political dimensions of my life until I went to London (Ebony magazine, June 1967).

Pindling returned to the Bahamas, established a law practice and became involved in politics. He helped form the Progressive Liberal Party and became its minority leader. The PLP challenged the United Bahamian Party (UBP), which represented the white Bahamian business elite.

The PLP managed to gain “political capital” and support despite the UBP’s powerful influence and gerrymandering tactics and despite the UBP’s ability to find new constituencies to broaden their support and tighten their grip on power. Tension arose in what was called Black Tuesday, April 27, 1965 (Craton & Saunders 340). During a debate on the constituencies committee, two parliamentary members including Milo Butler refused to follow the call to order from the speaker, the son of the Premier Roland Symonette of the UBP. Policemen entered the parliament building and violently forced
the two members out of the parliamentary house. In response, there were daily
demonstrations by PLP supporters outside parliament house (Craton & Saunders 340).

On Black Tuesday, the PLP attempted to pass a national registration program to
ensure an accurate voter distribution in the Bahamas, but the motion was defeated. In
response, Pindling took hold of the speaker’s mace, the symbol of people’s authority, and
accused the UBP of forging a dictatorship. As he flung the mace, he yelled, “This is the
symbol of authority and authority on these islands belongs to the people” (Craton &
Saunders 340; Strachan 121). In August 1965, Pindling and other representatives of the
PLP petitioned the United Nations Committee on Colonialism and claimed that the
United Bahamian Party was destroying the labor movement, controlling the influx of
migrants to their advantage, weakening the education system, and neglecting the social
welfare of the majority of Bahamians (McCartney 54). It was the beginning of what the
first female cabinet minister, Doris Johnson, called the “quiet revolution”.

The quiet revolution transformed the political landscape of the Bahamas when the
PLP won a majority of seats in the 1967 election and the Bahamas was under black
majority rule. The PLP gained support of key figures in the civil rights movement such as
Martin Luther King, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Bahamian actor Sidney Poitier, as well as
of black leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Norman Manley (Iton 227). Five years after
the historic 1967 election, the PLP called for the Bahamas to be an independent nation.
During the 1972 election, a referendum was held asking Bahamians to decide if they
wanted to an independent country by 1973 (McCartney 58). The PLP won the general
election in 1972, and on July 1973, the Bahamas gained its independence.
The quiet revolution ended the control of the traditional political establishment, the Bay Street boys. Pindling created policies geared at building the black middle class and expanding educational opportunities for black Bahamians. Aside from implementing immigration restrictions, the PLP platform also promised to provide affordable housing, equal employment, investment in agriculture, improved social services, and more political representation in the House of Assembly (Craton & Saunders 308). The idea of “Bahamians first” or Bahamianization was for black Bahamians to control the political and economic destiny of the Bahamas. However, the PLP experienced economic challenges, particularly from the Bay Street elite.

One year before independence, the PLP government wanted to implement an economic project for diversification, because the Bahamas depended too much on the tourist sector. At first, the PLP promoted other alternative industries such as agriculture and fishing. Nonetheless, Pindling expanded the tourist sector more than other industries (Strachan 141), and some of Pindling’s nationalist policies continued the same economic policies of the UBP. Pindling was also accused of taking payoffs from drug traffickers and of corruption within his cabinet. Pindling was pressured by his political opponents to conduct an investigation that led to the resignation of a number of his cabinet ministers (Nadelmann 17-18).

In 1992, Pindling and the PLP were defeated by the Free National Movement, a party made up of members from the former UBP. Nonetheless, Pindling remained an important figure in the emergence of the Bahamas as an independent nation-state. Pindling was nicknamed “Father of the Nation” or the “Black Moses,” since he linked
Bahamian independence with Israel. The 1967 election that led to black majority rule was held on the tenth day of the first month, the day, according to the bible, that God liberated the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Strachan 121).

Before it came to power, the PLP used black nationalist rhetoric against the white oligarchy of the Bahamas, but in power, the PLP shifted its nationalist rhetoric from the white Bahamian elite to Haitian migrants. Because it was concerned about the influx of Haitians who “wasted” health and education resources in the Bahamas, the PLP implemented policies that made it difficult for Haitians to apply for documentation. Pindling declared that “if Bahamians are not prepared to stand up and defend their own Bahamas, then ya don’t deserve to have it.”

14 Although his national rhetoric was aimed mainly at U.S. foreign policy during the 1980s, Pindling’s statement, compounded by media articles about the destiny of the Bahamas, brought a sense of fear and uncertainty among Haitians in the Bahamas.

Media articles that cover crime in the Bahamas are sometimes linked with national fervor and with the fear that the Bahamas is losing its national identity. One editorial discussed the crime rate in the Bahamas and described what the island nation will be transformed into if there are no efforts to combat crime:

Our police have the power, our politicians can provide the pressure. Do something before it’s too late. It worked before. What are they waiting for? Perhaps Jamaica and Haiti are not good enough examples of what The Bahamas can become (Nassau-Guardian 9/18/89).

In this editorial, Haiti and Jamaica are viewed as the opposite of what the Bahamas represents as a nation. Crime and unruly behavior are associated negatively with those two nations, and a binary opposition is constructed between a Bahamian nation that struggles to represent itself as a stable nation versus places portrayed as unstable and violent, like “Jamaica and Haiti.

Another editorial discusses the characteristics of Haitian and Bahamian schoolchildren by constructing a binary opposition between civilized and uncivilized nations:

*I feel that our Bahamian children are better in any way—not so! We are all God’s children, flesh and blood wise, but the fact must be faced that these children do come each day from an entirely different environment and culture, coping with civilization [from] the beginning; not only does it present a problem for themselves, but for all involved* (*Bahamas-Tribune* 7/22/1989).

The struggle over maintaining Bahamian national values and characteristics is an ongoing theme in the media, particularly in relation to Haiti. The former leader of the Bahamian Party Free National Movement (FNM), Tommy Turnquest, expressed the need to focus on the domestic issues of the Bahamas instead of on “Haiti’s problems:”

*I believe that the solution to this problem should include maintaining our Bahamian sovereignty, and protecting our way of life as we know it; and at the same time, we should attempt to ameliorate the very sad plight of a nation and its people in deep social, economic and political distress* (*Nassau-Guardian* 2/6/2004).

Fears that Bahamians are being disempowered and that the Bahamian “way of life” is being threatened are expressed in the media with language protesting the use of Kreyòl in public institutions and in public spaces:

Although “Haitianization” is viewed in the media as a viable threat and danger to the Bahamas as a nation, the purpose of Bahamianization was to prevent the white elite of the Bahamas from hiring skilled educated foreigners from the United States and Asia to work in the tourist sector; American and Asian foreigners were not as threatening to the Bahamas as black Haitians. Unskilled Haitians were recruited for jobs, particularly in the agricultural sector that black Bahamians refused. Bahaminization was supposed to protect black Bahamians and ensure them employment, economic opportunities, and political participation and power. But the policies of the PLP government favored foreign investors instead of black Bahamians, especially in the tourist and banking sectors (Nassau Guardian 6/7/2012).

The process of nationalism implemented by the Progressive Liberal Party was transformed into what Paul Gilroy calls “cultural insiderism,” focusing on ethnic difference: “Regardless of their affiliation to the right, left or centre, groups have fallen back on the idea of cultural nationalism, on the overintegrated conceptions of culture which present immutable, ethnic differences as an absolute break in the histories and experiences of ‘black and white’ people” (Gilroy 1993 2). Cultural insiderism encourages an ethnically homogenous nation-state that distinguishes Bahamians from others. The national characteristics Bahamians share take priority over “dimensions of their social and historical experience, cultures, and identities” (Gilroy 1993 3). Despite
the discrimination and political exclusion practiced by whites in Bahamian history, nationality now takes precedence over race or class in a Bahamas ruled by blacks, and that nationality is reflected most forcefully in nationalist rhetoric against Haitians. In Giroy’s terms, Bahamians are cultural insiders intent on excluding Haitians from Bahamian national identity.

Pindling and other black Bahamians who went to school in London were influenced by British black nationalism which has inherited features of European ultra nationalist values rooted in fascism. As a result, the language of contemporary racism has infiltrated both movements. Fascist xenophobia, nationalism, and cultural values are all features of contemporary racism towards Haitian immigrants in the Bahamas. After the rise of the Progressive Liberal Party and the quiet revolution, the relationship between nationhood and racism has been transformed in the Bahamas. The contemporary racism described by Paul Gilroy is varied and discreet and now hides behind nationalist rhetoric and patriotic sentiment. The new racism has shifted from ideas of biological difference and inferiority to the idea of a “united cultural community” (Gilroy 1992, 53). The new racism emphasizes cultural difference and an “absolutist conception of ethnicity,” that has transcended beyond black and white populations. The new racism has entered between different black ethnic groups, which are perceived to facilitate a “unified black community;”

The potentially unifying effects of their different but complementary experiences of racism are dismissed, while the inclusive and openly politicized definitions of ‘race’ which were a notable feature of the late seventies have been fragmented into their ethnic components, first into Afro-Caribbean and Asian and then into Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Bajan, Jamaican and Guyanese in a spiral (Gilroy 1992 56).
Racial difference is defined in the new racism through cultural ideas that have been disputed among conservative, liberal and radical political parties. Culture is reproduced in schools, family, the media and other national institutions, and the new racism that Gilroy describes emphasizes the institutional “mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion” of groups that are included as legitimate parts of the nation or excluded as other (Gilroy 1987, 45). The definition of racism as a cultural phenomenon is applied by the political left and right, and also by black nationalist and anti-racist movements (Gilroy 1987, 64). Gilroy’s examples illustrate how the cultural view of race can be articulated by conservative hardliners as well as by black nationalists. One example is the dismissal of a headmaster who believed that the presence of “alien children” hindered the education of white children and that the incorporation of multiculturalism into the curriculum would teach school children to defame the British Empire (Gilroy 1987, 60). A second example was about a group of black social workers who believed that black children should not be placed in white homes. These social workers argued that placing a black foster child at a white home can lead to “identity confusion,” and they recommended that black children should be placed in black families where they can develop a “positive black identity” (Gilroy 1987, 65). These two examples are expressions of cultural homogeneity, or as Gilroy states “the definition of ‘race’ which informs these arguments elides the realms of culture and biology in the same way as the volkish new-right preoccupation with ‘kith and kin’” (Gilroy 1987 65).

Gilroy’s examples apply in the Bahamas where Bahamian parents are fearful that the presence of Haitian students and instruction in Haitian Kreyól as opposed to English
might have an affect on the teaching methods and curriculum of the Bahamian education system. Black nationalism in the Bahamas has “fragmented” into what Gilroy describes as “multiple varieties” of cultural beliefs, with each variety focused on its own “ethnic particularity” (Gilroy 1992, 59). Gilroy explains that the meaning of racism is never one-dimensional:

The plural is important here for there can be no single or homogeneous strategy against racism because racism itself is never homogenous. It varies, it changes and it is always uneven. The recent history of our struggles has shown how people can shrink the world to the size of their communities and act politically on that basis, expressing their dissent in the symbolism of disorderly protest while demanding control over their immediate conditions (Gilroy 1992 60-61).

Racism has been refitted, redefined, or as Gilroy states, “reconstituted” into a new form of conflict. Racism still flourishes because there is a refusal to acknowledge that racism still exists, particularly within the state system. Ignoring forms of contemporary racism is common among right-wing conservatives, and they are not the only ones following this trend. This lack of acknowledgement has been a factor within the black political culture of the Bahamas: “Refusing race as a critical category would not do anything to undermine or interrupt these racisms, many of which can operate quite effectively without resort to it” (Gilroy 1993, 14).

Gilroy criticizes essentialist concepts of cultural, racial identities and difference, but he also criticizes anti-essentialist perceptions of black identities, which are “complacent about the continuing affects of racism” (Gilroy 1993 14). These continuing affects of racism still occur today in the Bahamas, and they influence how Haitians are represented in the media. As Gilroy clearly states, racism can be reformed, redefined, and
hidden behind the rhetoric of nationalism. The problem is not only ignoring racism, but also not grasping how it can consistently transform and conceal itself in devious ways. Nationalist ideals within the black Bahamian political culture include ignoring full and open discussion of race, which appears to be another form of new racism.

“Indirect” or “subtle” forms of prejudice have been called aversive racism, a theory developed by psychologists Samuel L. Gaertner and John F. Dovidio, according to those who practice aversive racism develop ambivalent or conflicting attitudes. For example, an individual who lives in an “egalitarian value system,” might also have racist beliefs towards another group that conflict with egalitarianism (Gaertner 17). Aversive racism avoids appearing racist or being biased, while practicing discrimination without seeming to be prejudiced (Dion 512). According to Gaertner and Dovidio, the motives behind aversive racism are based on fear and discomfort: “Among the several factors involved in the etiology of aversive racism, we considered the cognitive and motivational processes associated with social categorization of people into ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Gaertner 18).

In the Bahamas, the social categorizations or binary oppositions between who is Bahamian and who is Haitian are further compounded by national rhetoric from media outlets. Aversive racism is not only practiced by whites against blacks but also by some blacks against other blacks.

Avoidance of race in the Bahamas has been used as a political strategy to cover up and ignore the treatment of Haitians and to disregard examining intra-racial discrimination. The recognition of racism in the Bahamas has been reduced to the
traditional institutional racism that was implemented by the Bay Street Boys and white Bahamian elite against the black Bahamian majority. Institutional racism remains an ongoing factor because the average black Bahamian can be denied business loans and top job positions in offshore banking firms (Nassau-Guardian 1/28/2006). But attempts to expand the definition of racism beyond the traditional white prejudice against blacks are met almost automatically with responses to the effect that Bahamians have progressed “beyond that”, meaning beyond the history of the prejudiced domination of white Bahamians over black Bahamians. These automatic responses conceal and ignore Bahamian discrimination against the Haitians living among them.

Another article examines the responses of young black Bahamians who were interviewed on what defines racism. They are reluctant to view racism beyond its traditional boundaries in Bahamian history:

Another young lady in Nassau stopped me right away and stated, “We need to talk about this racism issue and it needs to be properly defined before we can answer any questions.” Her comment was akin to saying that unless placed in its proper institutional context that such a conversation could be dangerous (Nassau-Guardian 1/28/2006).

…whenever the word racism is brought up in a public setting, it is highly politicized (and) treated as a national “sweep under the rug” by certain sectors of Bahamian society (Nassau-Guardian 1/28/2006)

…we still haven't gone far enough, as the topic itself is still very taboo and if you start to recount the history you’re called a racist (Nassau-Guardian 1/28/2006).

Another manifestation of contemporary racism occurs when evidence of racial discrimination is viewed as an obstacle to national stability. Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has labeled a form of new racism he calls “color-blind racism.” For example, Blacks and Latinos in the United States still experience racial inequality, but
their skin color and background is no longer a major factor (Bonilla-Silva 2). In addition, those who raise the question of racism are quickly accused of “playing the race card” or of practicing “reverse racism” (Bonilla-Silva 4). During the Spanish Wells Incident, Eleizer Regnier was accused of being racist not only because he stated that Haitian students were victims of racial discrimination, but also because he exposed the hypocrisy of black Bahamians who encountered the same racial discrimination but proceeded to practice it on others. Revealing this form of intra-racial discrimination is treated as a taboo in itself. The defensive response was to accuse Regnier of “playing the race card.”

The preservation of Bahamian national identity and maintaining the “Bahamian way of life” is an ongoing theme in the Bahamian media. But the roots of Bahamian identity have also been a contentious issue. One editorial examines the “mythology” of Bahamian national identity:

The basis of the Bahamian national identity is the political framework established by the constitution. This legal document, inherited from the colonial era, defines who is and who is not a Bahamian. The Bahamian national identity, in this sense, is a political identity that emerged by necessity, along with all other post-colonial nation-state identities, as a pragmatic way to construct modern constitutional democracies (Bahamas-Tribune 2/8/2010).

The editorial suggests that Bahamian national identity is more of a modern political construct than a cultural phenomenon; but this political construct is accepted as cultural identity. This particular political construct derives from the concept of modernity, which Gilroy defines as the “interpenetration of capitalism, industrialization, and democracy” (Gilroy 2000. 54). The structure of government and nation-states emerged from the idea of modernity:
The development of territorial and the cultural and communicative apparatuses that correspond to it stand out amid this flux. They, too, were bound up with the struggle to consolidate the transparent working of the national state and governmental powers to which the term modernity refers. That community, and what we are now able to call “identity” (Gilroy 2000.55).

Like other commonwealth Caribbean nations, the Bahamas is governed under the Westminster model, practiced by the British, and continued after independence. The Westminster model has a reputation for upholding stable democratic political culture, and in the Bahamas it measured against and contrasted with to the political culture in Haiti. Whereas democratic movements in Haiti were excluded or repressed under Duvalier and under various military regimes following the Duvalier dictatorship, the political culture of the Bahamas has been stable. Media articles in the Bahamas cover the political instability in Haiti as well as the failure of the Haitian government to cooperate with repatriation efforts of Haitians who reside in the Bahamas:

It is a fact that Bahamian authorities have been frustrated over and over by their Haitian counterparts in the process of repatriation. We understand that the Haitian Government prefers us to keep the illegal Haitians because they represent a constant source of revenue for that impoverished nation. The lack of cooperation on the part of certain Haitian authorities are well documented. It got so bad at one point that a particular Haitian envoy was considered an undesirable by many Bahamians, and rightly so. It was a good day when he left this country (Nassau-Guardian 5/23/1989).

Haiti is portrayed in the Bahamian media as a broken state incapable of repatriating its own nationals, and incapable, as well, of progressing beyond dependence on remittances from its nationals abroad. Haiti’s national identity is based on a cultural phenomenon that is not intertwined with the state, but with the rural Kreyól–speaking
Haitian majority. Black Bahamians were integrated into the post-independent state, while the poor Haitian majority is marginalized from the Haitian state.

Ignoring and denying racism also avoids historical narratives that illustrate the strengths, contributions, links, and accomplishments of the society that is labeled “Other”. Below is one editorial commenting on the difference between the Bahamas and Haiti as a nation-state. The historical references are inaccurate and incomplete, but the editorial emphasizes the need for Bahamian control of its own national destiny:

We are a young nation, Haiti is the oldest nation in the hemisphere. Her behaviour in this regards is certainly taxing our resources to the limit. And I include our intelligent minds as well. How do we measure up to the task will determine our destiny. We say it is better in The Bahamas, and indeed it is. This land was given to us. We did not have to fight for it, we did not have to kill for it neither did any of us die to obtain it. God blessed us with it. And He blessed us that others may be blessed through us (Nassau-Guardian 9/18/1989).

There is no mention of the Haitian revolution or of why Haitians had to fight for their freedom; nor is there any indication of how black Bahamians had to fight its white elite for political and economic representation. In other words, the editorial does not acknowledge that black Haitians and black Bahamians, in their separate contexts, both had to fight against white supremacy and European colonialism. Instead, the Bahamas was simply “given” to black Bahamians by God.

Other editorial comments, like the one cited below argue clearly that a broken Haitian state does not break the pride of a “talented” Haitian people. In fact, the comment makes the Bahamas silently complicit in the Haitian struggle against poverty and “squalor” under dictatorial regimes:
We Bahamians sat by for decades while a series of Haitian dictators ran down the country and enriched themselves. Indeed we traded with them and had cordial meetings with them. We have co-operated in the poverty that is Haiti. There was a time when we even laughed at the first independent black country in the western hemisphere and their squalor, but despite their poverty, Haitians are a proud and strong talented people (Bahamas-Tribune 1/7/2004).

Another editorial argues that despite the different political situations in Haiti and other Anglophone Islands, a common African heritage should be embraced:

…Africans were brought during that disgraceful period in world history when slavery was a successful commercial venture. Those countries certainly include Haiti, and although its historical journey has not mirrored the democratic routes taken by countries like The Bahamas, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and other established island democracies in the region, we are all one people with a shared background of a rich African culture (Bahamas-Tribune 11/22/2002).

Although the statement repeats a favorite binary opposition about the Westminster model of democracy versus the dictatorships in Haiti, it also acknowledges the similar historical “routes” among all the Islands, and it includes the African cultural phenomenon that usually goes unnoticed in discussions that help form Bahamian national identity.

Despite the constant print media coverage of Bahamian-Haitian divisions, occasionally there are self-reflective and critical commentaries about racism in the Bahamas and about the way in which Bahamians ignore their African roots. One comment explained that the Bahamas is focused on exuding a “mythological” modern political identity which seems to make the African cultural identity of black Bahamians invisible:

At some point along the way, being African became irreconcilable with being Bahamian in the psyche of Bahamians of African descent. The mythological Bahamian identity was all they now accepted. This came at the expense of being disconnected from the deeply rooted cultural and genealogical connections to
Africans across the colonial empire in the West and on the African continent (Bahamas-Tribune 2/8/2010).

But there is a strong Yoruba influence on Afro-Bahamian culture. Some black Bahamians are descended from the Yoruba people of West Africa. In 1807, the British parliament abolished the slave trade and some Africans rescued from slave ships resettled in the British colonies including the Bahamas (Turner 141). These free Africans settled in different towns throughout New Providence Island of the Bahamas. Grant’s Town and Bain Hill are settlements where many free Africans resided. Bahamian Dr. Cleveland Eneas conducted research in his native Bain Town, and he interviewed residents who were descendants of the Yoruba who had lived in Bain Town from 1890 to 1970. Eneas explains how these residents still preserve certain aspects of Yoruba cultural traditions and practices. Small-scale farming methods, distribution of land plots, certain elements of languages, “endogamous marriages,” and the roots of Junkanoo are all traced to the Yoruba (Eneas 3; Falola & Childs 69).

Junkanoo is the annual Bahamian carnival celebration that takes place on Boxing Day, December 26th. Junkanoo is named after an eighteenth-century West African chief named John Connu (Bethel & Bethel 11). The celebration emerged because slaves were permitted to leave the plantations from Boxing Day to New Year’s Day. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Junkanoo festival was frowned upon by the middle and upper class, and the government also implemented ordinances to stop the festivities (Rommen 1999, 75). At first, the symbol or image of John Connu was not part of the tourist image of the Bahamas:
John Canoe became so contested because competing visions of the island clashed with its occurrence: touristic ideals of order, British conduct, and whiteness went head to head with a black-Bahamian tradition long denounced precisely for its disorder, its “Africanness,” and its transgression of racially segregated Bay Street (Thompson 148).

In the 1930’s the Tourist Development board of the Bahamas transformed or assimilated John Connu into “Nassau’s touristic image, which is less rebellious and once again, “ordered, cleaned up, and made picturesque” (Thompson 150). It was not until the mid-twentieth century that Junkanoo was accepted, mainly because, like many other island carnivals, it attracted tourists. The perception of Junkanoo was transformed, especially after the Bahamas gained its independence, due to the efforts of the Pindling administration and the Ministry of Tourism. Even merchants on Bay Street sponsored the festivities and offered prize money for the best costumes (Rommen 1999, 75-76). The transformation process of Junkanoo reflects the complexities of colonialism, black nationalism, and “African Diasporic consciousness” (Thompson 153).

Because Junkanoo is now a popular annual festival for tourists, it has become a powerful national symbol for Bahamians. Junkanoo in the Bahamas is represented in the tourist sector, but its African cultural heritage that links it to Ra-Ra celebrations in Haiti is excluded. Nationalist rhetoric against Haitians is based on European political structures as well as on the promotion of strong Christian beliefs in opposition to Haitian vodou. In the Bahamas, the Black Nationalist movement preferred European models. As Gilroy states, “European romanticism and cultural nationalism contributed directly to the development of modern black nationalism” (Gilroy 1993 97). The Bahamas had a Black Nationalist movement that fought for black majority rule and independence, but the
island nation attempted to distinguish itself from Haiti by promoting a European-inspired modern political entity viewed as superior to Haiti.

**The Meanings of Blackness**

Perceptions of blackness are diverse, de-centered, and not restricted. Gilroy explains that the history and experience of black people is multi-dimensional. The “black Atlantic” has engaged in movements that have shaped or re-examined the dilemmas of “nationality, location, identity, and historical memory” (Gilroy 1993, 16). Blackness and other shared identities are constructed in different ways in different locations among different groups. In a *Long Way from Home*, Jamaican writer Claude McKay described his experiences of his blackness while living in the United States. While working on the Pennsylvania Railroad, McKay was suspected as being a draft-dodger and was arrested by a black and white detective. After spending one night in a crowded jail cell, he was arraigned by the judge. The judge gave the other black men five to ten day sentences, but when McKay opened his mouth, the judge noticed his Jamaican accent. The judge spoke of his love of Jamaica, the tropical climate, and the natives. The judges dismissed the charges and reprimanded the black detective for arresting McKay (McKay 7-8). Even in during the early twentieth century, Black Immigrants from the Anglo-Caribbean islands were treated better than African-Americans in the United States and it a point to cultivate their native West-Indian accents (Sacks 29).

One group might reinterpret how they identify themselves in relation to another group, despite sharing the same struggles or sharing several linkages. There are several
studies that indicate how identities, particularly black identities can be contextual or relational. One example is how two neighboring groups in rural Northeast Brazil have the same phenotypes, shared histories and experienced the same struggles with land tenure against wealthy landowners. One identifies as being indigenous and the other identified as being Quilombo (black).

Anthropologist Jan Hoffman French explains how each group experienced a complete transformation in their “self-representation and self-experience” (French 43). This transformation reflects Fredrik’s Barth approach to ethnicity, in which boundaries and identification in relation to other groups is key to understanding how ethnic groups are constructed (French 68). The transformation of ethnoracial identification between both groups led to new boundaries between them. It is the same case of how there are different interpretations of blackness among Bahamians and Haitians, as oppose to primordialist or essentialized approaches to blackness.

Different perspectives are quite apparent between Latino groups in the United States. Despite the adoption of pan-Latino identity or “Latinidad” among different Latino groups in the United States, there are certainly divisions and boundaries between different Latin groups. Anthropologists Nicholas de Genova and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas examined the divisions and boundaries between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. One of the main boundaries between the two groups was citizenship status. U.S. citizenship of Puerto Ricans were stereotypically viewed as “lazy,” lacking a good work ethic, or dependent on welfare, while Mexicans distinguish themselves as hard workers with “good immigrant values” (De Genova & Ramos 57). Mexicans were viewed as
“opportunist illegal aliens” who are violating immigration laws, while Puerto Ricans distinguish themselves as modern, “savvy”, and “sophisticated” (De Genova & Ramos 57, 82).

The theme of hard-working immigration values is also an issue in constructing boundaries between Black ethnic immigrants and African-Americans in the United States. Sociologist, Mary C. Waters conducted interviews of West Indian immigrants that view themselves as “disciplined hard workers,” while perceiving African-Americans as “lazy” (Waters 130). Ethnic boundaries and different perspectives on blackness are clearly evident between Haitian immigrants and African Americans in the U.S. Haitian sociolinguist Flore Zéphir examined the perceptions of Haitian immigrants towards African-Americans. Aside from the constructed boundary of work ethics, there are other differences on how Haitian immigrants perceive themselves in relation to U.S. blacks i.e. etiquette, appearance, perceptions on racism, and blackness in the United States. There were responses that African-Americans view Haitians as "stuck up" or "acting white" (Zéphir 83-84). On the other hand, some Haitian immigrants hold a meaning of blackness that is deemed "superior" to U.S. blacks:

One explanation given has to do with the fact that Haitians tend to have a marked complex of superiority resulting from early nationhood status, and from being the first Black independent country in the Western Hemisphere. Haitians derive a certain arrogance from having been free from White domination for almost two hundred years, and they believe that every other Black, regardless of historical circumstances, should think like a Haitian. Because of this superiority complex, they do not think that they have much to learn from Black Americans" (Zéphir 94).
These situations and circumstances illustrate a diversity among different groups and nationalities of the Black Diaspora, a perspective that Stuart Hall argues continually should be recognized:

What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category 'black'; that is, the recognition that 'black' is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature. What this brings into play is the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experience of black subjects (Hall 1996.443).

The multi-varied and conflicting meanings of blackness comes into play in the case of how Bahamians view themselves and Haitians. In an article called “What Does It Mean To You To be Black?” a writer asked a black Bahamian politician, what seems to be a difficult question about his racial identity. The journalist also described why she felt troubled about his response:

He fumbled for a response, claiming that regretfully, he had not done the research to know which tribe in Africa he came from. He said if he were asked the same question by one of his children, he would say, let us go and research it together. Being perturbed by my unbridled dissatisfaction, he gave it another go. This time, he responded with the politically correct answer, speaking to Africa's wealth, in terms of her beautiful and bountiful natural resources and the many venerable world leaders she has given birth to. The reason I was perturbed by his response was not because I felt he gave a poor answer initially, which he did, or that I was unsatisfied with his answer in the second instance, which I was not. It was because he seemed not to have understood the question. What does Africa mean in the context of your identity? The question completely went over his head. I was not totally surprised, because when it comes to questions of identity and the study of meaning, many Bahamians seem to be uninterested or simply clueless (Nassau-Guardian 4/3/2012).

The writer observes how blackness is reduced when racial discrimination occurs or is an instrument of oppression. Blackness and black majority rule in the Bahamas are more a
political accomplishment and a convenient form of political organization rather than a cultural statement about national identity. As the article’s writer explains, there is no indication among Bahamians of blackness as something that identifies them, or something that gives them pride in their African ancestry (Nassau-Guardian 4/3/2012). For example, the Minister of Education was asked why Bahamian students do not learn about African history and black history, and the minister responded that he “did not want to teach racism” (Nassau-Guardian 4/3/2012). The attempt to teach or address the history and culture of black identity beyond the political organization of black Bahamians, is ignored, excluded, or deemed “racist.”

According to the article “What Does it Mean to You to Be Black?” in the Bahamas, there is mainstream reluctance to examine and affirm blackness as a cultural identity and to relate to Africa and to the black Diaspora as a reason for pride and solidarity. Blackness is associated only with “oppression” and with the achievement of political independence. The history of fighting discrimination and of gaining political power over the white elite of the Bahamas is the main point of reference for the perception of blackness. Any perception of blackness beyond this political context is almost invisible, particularly because the Bahamas has adopted a “post-racial” nationalist concept of “One Bahamas” (Nassau-Guardian 4/3/2012).

Since the Bahamas has maintained black-majority rule, there is no need to affirm blackness under the idea of “One Bahamas.” The struggle for political control is over. Because blackness has been reduced to past political struggles, examining and affirming black identity in a cultural context seems unnecessary, which is why the article concluded
that many black Bahamians have difficulty responding to the question, “What does it mean to be black?” (Nassau-Guardian 4/3/2012).

In Haiti, the meaning of blackness has evolved in multi-dimensional and varied semantic cultural fields. The Haitian revolution was both a cultural and a political phenomenon. In the “new state-apparatus”, the educated, and “free colored” minority were well represented, and although they were allies in the Haitian revolution, they also rejected the cultural aspects of “African-derived” Haitian culture (Geggus 209). The state did not recognize vodou as a legitimate religion, like Christianity. There was also no indication of the state recognizing the Kreyòl language, even though Dessalines did not speak fluent French. Yet, Haitians within the state-apparatus, including Dessalines, asserted that all Haitians were black, regardless of the color of their skin (Geggus 209).

In 1805, Jean-Jacques Dessalines drafted the Haitian constitution that included an article calling all Haitians black not only to “invalidate” phenotypic and skin color traits reinforced by the French colonialists, but also to impose a characteristic “trait of Haitian nationality” (Garraway 82). The nationalist agenda of the Haitian revolution was to eliminate any form of white supremacy and to replace it with blackness as a defining form of political power and collectivity (Garraway 82). However, after the revolution, light-skinned Haitian allies of the Haitian Revolution claimed that they were mixed-race instead of black. The article claiming that all Haitians were black was taken out of the constitution after the assassination of Dessalines in 1806 (Geggus 209). Nonetheless, the Haitian revolution was the foundation of Haitian national unity, and it even expanded to become a symbol of dignity and liberty for all people of African descent.
During the Haitian revolution, there were great concerns among slave-owners and powerful whites throughout the Americas who feared that the revolution would spread to engulf them. The spread of violent revolts created fear, and so did the rise of solidarity movements among blacks who viewed themselves as “linked and interlinked” with Haitian revolutionaries (Nwankwo 91). There were attempts by neighboring colonies to restrict or keep track of “foreign blacks” suspected as “troublemakers” conspiring against colonial governments. Blacks from St. Domingue were usually the prime targets. The British colony of the Bahamas implemented laws and fines to restrict the rights of free blacks from St. Domingue. The British colony also convinced black Bahamians that slaves and free blacks from St. Domingue were dangerous and unchristian.

Despite the diversity and multiple perspectives of black identities, creating alliances or solidarity movements with other black identities showed how the meaning of blackness is flexible enough to be divisive, yet intertwined. The Haitian Revolution inspired other blacks to develop a relationship with Haiti and created a new “transnational conception of community”, an imagined community of blacks beyond territories and nation-states (Nwankwo 92). The Haitian revolution was an important historical event that created new and multiple variations of blackness. It ignited what Nwankwo describes “disparities, similarities, and interactions between the varied approaches to identity and Blackness in particular” (Nwankwo 2005 6).

Texts written by prominent black writers expressed a “deep horizontal comradeship” with Haiti in the fight for liberation of blacks throughout the Americas. Afro-studies scholar Ifoema Nwankwo mentioned the concept of cosmopolitanism as the
“definition of oneself through or in relation to the world,” which was quite useful in how Europe defined themselves in relation to others:

As a crucial element of modernity, cosmopolitanism was part of the ideology that drove the dehumanization of people of African descent. Imperialism and Orientalism were, in fact, forms of European cosmopolitanism—ways in which Europeans constructed their definitions of self and community in relation to and through their relationship to the world. As part of this historical and ideological context, people of African descent evaluated the usefulness of cosmopolitanism for their own struggle to be recognized as human and equal (and modern) (Nwankwo 94).

Black cosmopolitanism was a response to how people of African descent were dehumanized by expressing their desire to be equal and to be seen as modern (Nwankwo 2005 9). The Haitian revolution ignited the fears of whites in what Nwankwo describes as “transnationally oriented notions of black community,” that would expand to a massive revolution throughout the Americas (Nwankwo 2005 7).

Prominent writers and public figures of African descent reinvented their own cosmopolitanism as a way to fight racial discrimination and slavery, while fighting also for equality (Nwankwo 94). The Haitian revolution gave blacks an opportunity to construct their own transnational community or, as Nwankwo describes it, to imagine “new visions [of] intra-racial relationality” (Nwankwo 93).

There are different meanings and notions of blackness throughout the “Black Atlantic.” Blackness and nationalism in Haiti meant black pride and liberation for Haitian people. This meaning was also shared by other populations of African descent. The cultural renaissance of the golden era in Haiti meant both national pride in Haiti and the promotion and vindication of Haiti’s indigenous culture across the African Diaspora. Despite cultural differences within the African Diaspora, Haiti is still the first black
republic in the Western hemisphere, and its legacy is still one of facilitating a “broad-based racial community” among blacks worldwide (Nwankwo 109).

Despite the fact that the civil rights movement abroad influenced Lynden O. Pindling, the Bahamas has opted not to participate in a transnational community with the African Diaspora:

This explains why Bahamians feel no sense of kinship with Haitians, Jamaicans, Cubans or Africans; they are completely identified with their modern political identity and have little depth of character when it comes to cultural heritage. The perceived threat Haitians pose to the Bahamian identity is a farce, because culturally speaking the two countries share the same African heritage, even though the colonial experience produced diverse cultural expressions. Yoruba in the Bahamas, Santeria in Cuba and Voodoo in Haiti - all Afro-religious retentions are expressed differently, but the parallelism is unmistakable (Bahamas-Tribune 2/8/2012)

Any inclusion of “intra-racial relationality” seemed limited. As a result, a missing link emerges in Bahamian black identity between its relationship to the African Diaspora and their own African heritage. However, the desire for modernity was instrumental in constructing blackness in the Bahamas.

At the dawn of the 20th century, writers also viewed the Haitian revolution and the independent Haitian republic as a symbol of modernity, and an independent nation of blacks that were able to govern themselves:

The rise of Black modernity, for example, has been a central concern in the discussions of twentieth-century texts. It stands to reason, though, that this would mean even greater concern in texts produced at the very moment in which the people of African descent in the Americas were seeking to be freed from the bonds of slavery. They also sought to free themselves from the concomitant understanding of them as uncivilized beings, and to prove themselves part of the civilized (aka modern) world" (Nwankwo 19).
Ninety-six years after the Haitian revolution, writers were still examining the different routes to freedom, equality, and modernity, yet depended on whether the role of “racial community” or “national affinity” was what Nwankwo described an “effective means to their desired end” (20). In the mid twentieth century, nationalism played a major role among black Bahamians to fight for equality and develop their own brand of modernity. The Bahamian nationalist movement empowered blacks to gain political power, while inheriting the British Westminster system and continuing service sector industries in tourism and offshore banking. “Bahamians First” was more of a national affinity as a means to achieve equality and establish a political modern nation:

The structure of Black Cosmopolitanism, therefore, is based on the ways in which these two referents [race and nation] were used in tandem, separately, and dialogically by a range of individuals of African descent in order to prove their status as equal, human, and modern” (Nwankwo 20).

The on going process of nation-building and constructing black identity among the Black Diaspora is complex, conflicting, yet diverse. The Bahamas took a different approach in constructing their blackness, which focused on the Bahamas being a stable, viable, and modern nation of the Caribbean.
Chapter 4: Constructing the “Haitian Problem”

“I feel like we are sailing for Africa. Maybe we will go to Guinin, to live with the spirits, to be with everyone who has come and has died before us. They would probably turn us away from there too. Someone has a transistor and sometimes we listen to radio from the Bahamas. They treat Haitians like dogs in the Bahamas, a woman says. To them, we are not human. Even though their music sounds like ours. Their people look like ours. Even though we had the same African fathers who probably crossed these same seas together”
—Children of the sea by Edwidge Danticat

THE POWER OF PRINT IN THE IMAGINATION OF THE NATION

Benedict Anderson examined the complexities and contradictions of nationalism and concluded that the multi-dimensions of nationalism are “cultural artefacts of a particular kind” (Anderson 4). Anderson developed a conceptual framework that defines a nation as an “imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson 5-6). In Anderson’s imagined community the nation is viewed as a society connected through a “deep horizontal comradeship,” “regardless of the actual inequality or exploitation that may prevail” in it (Anderson 7). This “deep horizontal comradeship” is apparent in how the Haitian revolution unites everyone in Haiti, despite conflicts between the light-skinned elite and dark-skinned Haitians. Anderson’s “deep horizontal relationship” is also evident in the Bahamas, particularly as nationalist rhetoric and identity are formed around a common reaction towards Haitian immigrants and their descendants.
Anderson explains that one of the linkages that led to the creation and representation of an imagined community was the rise of print capitalism including the role of printing shops during the Middle Ages and the number of books produced in Europe. He argues that books were the first modern “mass produced industrial commodity” (Anderson 34). The newspaper, according to Anderson, is a more concentrated version of a book. Anderson explains that reading a newspaper is a daily ceremony in which each reader not only consumes the information, but also is also aware of other readers who are sharing the same experience. When readers observe or imagine other readers in public places, such as the subway or the barbershop, they are assured that their imaginary community is rooted in daily life (Anderson 35). For Anderson, therefore, newspapers and “print-capitalism” helped create imagined communities:

No surprise then that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together. Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways (Anderson 36).

Print media was also responsible for the spread of vernacular languages beyond Latin; it united speakers of French, Spanish, and other European languages who were able to understand one another through printed sources. It also gave those speakers visibility, which is the core of creating a national imagined community. Print capitalism provided a “new fixity” to languages, which is essential to the idea of a nation (Anderson 44). Anderson mentions the new nation-states that emerged after World War II, the “last wave” of new nations that were once colonies, and the process from those colonial states
to nation-states facilitated by new forms of transport such as railways, motor transport, and aviation. Efficient transportation made it easier for travelers from the colonial state to go to the metropolitan nation (Anderson 115).

Because the Bahamas experienced a great economic transformation in the tourist sector after World War II, the increase in hotel construction at Nassau, the construction of Freeport, and the increase in steamship and aviation services all made for easier and increased access between the Bahamas and its imperial ruler, England; easier transport also attracted U.S tourists. Print advertising in the United States encouraged the Bahamas to identify itself as paradise for U.S. tourists, and consequently print media played a defining role in how the Bahamian nation opted to construct its national identity. Meanwhile, as cultural values and beliefs were disseminated through Bahamian print media, particularly newspapers, the portrayal of Haitian migrants helped construct clear national boundaries. Every Bahamian who reads the newspapers feel some connection to an imagined community of Bahamian readers.

The International Organization for Migration’s report on print media coverage of Haitians in the Bahamas concluded that most Bahamian print media consisted of “hard news” about the “arrest detention and return of Haitian nationals” (IOM 2005 Report). There were also articles from politicians, religious and public officials expressing their opinions and concerns about accommodating Haitian nationals in housing, education, and health. Other articles criticized the Bahamian government on their handling of Haitian migrants or blamed the Bahamian public at large for creating economic conditions that attracted Haitians in the first place. The report found that most of these news sources
were negative. Positive articles about the plight of Haitian migrants were rare (IOM 2005 Report).

The IOM report highlighted the question of the citizenship of Bahamian-born children of Haitian nationals and the reaction of Bahamians to Haitian migration after natural disasters such as a flood or a hurricane. The report noted that Haitian nationals do not have much of a voice in Bahamian media and that the Bahamian media portrays Haitians in a manner that can increase the “public’s perceived threat” from Haitians, which exacerbates the perceived “Haitian Problem” (IOM 2005 Report). The perceived threat that Haitians will “take over” and erase Bahamian identity is a constant theme in newspaper editorials. The ongoing concern is about the future of the Bahamas as a nation. One title in the popular newspaper, Nassau-Guardian asks readers, “Aren’t Jamaica and Haiti good enough as examples of what Bahamas can become?” The title creates a binary opposition between bad societies like Jamaica and Haiti, where crime and political instability prevail, and better stable societies like the Bahamas at present, while also arousing fears that the good Bahamian identity at present is being erased.

In the Bahamas-Tribune, titles like “Illegal Immigrants ‘becoming factor’ in crime issue” can generate the idea to readers that the rise in crime is associated only with illegal immigrants, mainly Haitians. Even Haitian-Bahamians are portrayed as “disgruntled” individuals “overlooked by society” and therefore more likely to form gangs in schools (Bahamas-Tribune 12/31/2009). The word “illegal” as opposed to “undocumented” is used quite frequently in print media to refer to Haitian migrants. Even legal Haitian residents can be mistaken or labeled as illegal. The International
Organization for Migration also made an observation that Haitian nationals who live legally in the Bahamas are never referred to as “expatriates”, a term that is reserved for U.S., European, and Asian nationals, but not for Black Haitians (IOM 2005 Report).

Birthrate is another media topic that adds to the perceived uncertainty about what will happen in the Bahamas. A Nassau-Guardian article entitled “National Review / Born in the Bahamas,” claims that births by foreign women had decreased, yet what was considered an “unavoidable fact” was that the birthrate among Haitian women almost doubled in the last forty years (Nassau-Guardian 2/20/12). One editorial used the stereotypical claim that family planning in the Haitian community is “non-existent”, and it generates the fear that some Bahamians are already minorities in their home communities:

In fact, in some family island settlements Bahamians are already in the minority. Just look at any Haitian car and it is full of children, and Haitian women have babies in hand and in their stomachs at the same time, whereas Bahamians are having two or three children on an average. Today Government is placing emphasis on family planning and rightfully so. Why should Bahamians sit back and plan their families while illegal Haitians clutter our land with children they breed uninhibitedly and boast –their “Bahamians”? (Bahamas-Tribune 8/14/1989).

This quote is under the title called “Haitian Invasion Causing Problems.” Other panic-ridden titles about Haitians taking over and eroding Bahamian identities include the following: “Gov’t braces for Haitian Influx,” “Heavy Haitian Burden,” “Problem of Haitians in Schools,” or “Bahamians laid back attitude has them paying for illegal Immigrants.” These titles can further ignite tensions between Bahamians and Haitians, and they spread the belief that the Bahamian nation is disappearing.
The “deep horizontal comradeship” among Bahamians against Haitians is quite apparent in the article on Spanish Wells entitled “Black, White Bahamians have same view of illegal Haitians.” Despite the history of racism and political exclusion of Black Bahamians by white Bahamians, print media clearly portray all Bahamians, regardless of skin color or class, as opposing the presence of so-called “illegal Haitians.” By contrast, racism against Haitians by Bahamians is quite a taboo topic. The title “The Myth of Identity and Our Dirty Little Secret” explores the role of racism between black Bahamians and black Haitians, yet, as the article states, this form of intra-racial conflict is ignored or “swept under the national rug” (Nassau-Guardian 1/28/06).

A majority of quotes from the newspaper articles studied were negative against Haitians, and they also emphasize differences or boundaries between Bahamians and Haitians in terms of language, nationality, religion, and appearance. Bahamian print media, particularly newspapers, is used as what Anderson calls the “basis of national consciousness” (Anderson 44). The two most popular English-language newspapers in the Bahamas, the Nassau-Guardian and the Bahamas-Tribune contained articles, hard news, and editorials that shape national identity and become what Anderson describes as “the embryo of the national imagined community (Anderson 44).

*Print Media producing identity boundaries*

Close social interactions between Bahamians and Haitians have occurred since the nineteenth century, but despite these interactions, strong ethnic boundaries have existed between Haitians and Bahamians, particularly during the post-independence period.
Social Anthropologist Fredrik Barth states that “cultural differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence” (Barth 10). Once the Bahamas gained its independence in 1973, Bahamian national identity became more defined and pronounced. The characteristics of Bahamian identity became articulated, especially when distinguished from Haitian identity in the Bahamas. According to Barth, ethnic groups are defined by sharing “fundamental cultural values” and establishing “a field of communication and interaction” (Barth 14). Differences or “ethnic dichotomies” emerge between ethnic groups through “overt signals or signs” of cultural features such as language, household, or way of life (Barth 14). The “value orientation” of one ethnic group is also measured or judged. The moral standards of an ethnic group and how they express or perform these beliefs also indicates who is part of that ethnic identity (Barth 14). Ethnic boundaries are developed through the dynamics of social interaction:

What is more, the ethnic boundary canalizes social life—it entails a frequently quite complex organization of behavior and social relations. The identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgment (Barth 15).

Maintaining these ethnic boundaries is the result of restricting shared understandings and “difference in criteria” in judging the values and performance between ethnic groups. It also restricts any interaction that involves common understandings, beliefs and “mutual interests” (Barth 15). Ethnic boundaries continue when cultural differences are standardized, especially if the cultural characteristics of an ethnic group are perceived to be fixed or stable. Barth explains the “ecologic interdependence” of ethnic groups and how interethnic relations can fall into certain types
of contact. For example, each ethnic group may dominate in certain areas or niches and compete for resources. Or one ethnic group may provide “goods or services” to another ethnic group, which illustrates how interdependence is a crucial factor between ethnic groups (Barth 19-20). These interdependent activities can also be a political and economic issue:

If they also compete and accommodate through differential monopolization of the means of production, this entails a close political and economic articulation, with open possibilities for other forms of interdependence as well (Barth 20).

Haitian migrants in the Bahamas have occupied a niche in the Bahamas as providing cheap labor within the tourism and agricultural sector. Haitians are recruited as landscapers, and domestic workers in Bahamian households. Bahamians rent homes to Haitians in immigrant neighborhoods such as Over-the-Hill outside of Nassau. Young Haitians enroll in schools along with black Bahamians. In addition to these close and interdependent activities, Haitian migrants were viewed as wasting or competing for resources such as health services, public education, and employment. The demand for cheap labor and access to social services involving an ethnic immigrant is closely linked to any political and economic expression or organization. Additionally, Barth explains how minority groups function within a social system:

Many minority situations have a trace of this active rejection by the host population. But the general feature of all minority situations lies in the organization of activities and interaction: In the total social system, all sectors of activity are organized by statuses open to members of the majority group, while the status system of the minority has only relevance to relations within the minority and only to some sectors of activity, and does not provide a basis for action in other sectors, equally valued in the minority culture. There is thus a disparity between values and organizational facilities: prized goals are outside the field organized by the minority’s culture and categories (Barth 32).
Haitian migrants are restricted within the social system of the Bahamas. Anti-Haitian discrimination and attaining citizenship is a challenge for some Haitian-Bahamians who are deemed stateless. Despite the influential role of Haitian-Bahamians and Haitian contributions to the Bahamas, any similarities are blurred. Barth explains the decline of cultural differences do not correlate with the reduction of “organizational relevance” in breaking down boundaries between ethnic groups (Barth 33). Insecurity is another factor that might affect inter-ethnic relations, particularly if a group has experienced violence outside their communities. Haitian migrants may resort to the security of their own community as a way to avoid discrimination, threats of violence, detention, and/or deportation from Bahamian authorities or public. Barth explains that these isolating environments will maintain barriers in understanding historical differences of culture between different ethnic groups, while not facilitating “any positive organizational basis” (Barth 36-37). The institutions i.e. state and citizenship laws have still marginalized Haitians and Haitian Bahamians in the Bahamas. The formation and maintenance of ethnic boundaries is based on interactions between ethnic groups:

Attention to these processes of boundary maintenance quickly showed that ethnic groups and their features are produced under particular interactional, historical, economic and political circumstances: they are highly situational, not primordial (Barth 1994 12).

The interaction between Bahamians and Haitians in the Bahamas has been under international and political circumstances in dealing with migration policies. It is also economic as Haitians are recruited for cheap labor.
These social and cultural behaviors determine whether an individual is a member of the group, and they cause a “dichotomization” between those who do and those who do not belong to an ethnic group (Barth 15). In the Bahamas, boundaries between Haitians and Bahamians are based upon (1) language, (2) religion, (3) aesthetics and hygiene; and (4) the taboo issue of race.

(1) Language: The Image and Stigma of Kreyòl

One ethnic boundary in the Bahamas is sociolinguistic. The official language in the Bahamas is English, and the second most popular and “widely-used” language is Haitian Kreyòl (Léger & Armbrister 30). Kreyòl creates a distinction between Bahamians and non-Bahamians, because individuals who speak Kreyòl or who speak English with a Kreyòl accent are easily labeled as Haitian (Fielding et al 40). But there are negative attitudes towards Kreyòl both in the Bahamas and in Haiti. In order to understand the stigmatization of Kreyòl, one should look at the colonial history of Haiti.

Kreyòl emerged from the interactions between African slaves and European slave owners. Some linguists consider Kreyòl as a recent “by product” of colonialism in the Caribbean, not as a fully developed language. These linguists argue that the formative years of Haitian Kreyòl during the 17th and 18th century are too brief, and that Kreyòl is not as fully developed and as complex as European languages. Kreyòl is described as “simple,” “lacking abstract terms” as well as not a viable language to use in fields such as science or philosophy (Schieffelin & Doucet 181-182). Many Haitian people, particularly members of the elite, view Kreyòl as a bastard dialect of a “standard European language.”
The terms used to describe Kreyòl are usually negative: “broken French,” “bastard French,” or “French Patois.” Monolingual speakers of Kreyòl are usually labeled as uneducated, poor, and illiterate (Schieffelin & Doucet 182). The Kreyòl language was also excluded from the school system, relegating monolingual Kreyòl speakers as “second-class citizens” (Degraff 139).

The perception of Kreyòl and bias against Haitians had an impact on the usage and instruction of the language in Bahamas’s educational system. It is also assumed among Bahamians that Kreyòl is not a fully viable language. A survey that was conducted on Bahamian students in public and private schools viewed Haitian Kreyòl as less standard than English. According to the survey, 80 percent of Bahamian students believed that Kreyòl is simply “broken French.” The response is a strong indication that the stigma on Kreyòl is not based only on anti-Haitian bias and on the socio-economic background of Kreyòl speakers, but also on the fact that students do not have any accurate enough knowledge about the language (Léger & Armbriester 23).

For example, the Foreign Language Department at the College of the Bahamas offers Spanish, French, and Haitian Kreyòl. Students must choose one course to fulfill their foreign language requirement. Usually, most students prefer French or Spanish because they are interested in learning and studying in French-speaking or Spanish-speaking nations or in working for French or Spanish corporations. Those who learn Haitian Kreyòl are Haitian-Bahamians who want to communicate with their Haitian relatives or with individuals who work with humanitarian organizations in Haiti (Léger &
However, there are Bahamians who want to learn Kreyòl as a communication tool to gather intelligence for enforcing Haitian immigration laws:

“When asked about their motivation for choosing HC (Haitian Creole), students responses often have something to do with controlling the large number of Haitians living in the Bahamas. Students usually say that they need to be aware of what is going on in their country. They often even say they do not feel comfortable living among so many Haitians who speak a language that they do not understand (Léger & Armbrister 30).

Bahamian Immigration services are usually overwhelmed with Haitian migrants and detainees who speak Kreyòl. Detained Haitians have difficulty in the interview process. Kreyòl speakers are not available as interpreters, and the lack of interpreters presents a huge challenge for the Bahamian Department of Immigration.

The Royal Bahamas Police Force does not have a sufficient number of Haitian Kreyòl speakers to combat gangs involved in narcotrafficking. Due to the close proximity of the Bahamas to the United States, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency has been concerned about the presence of “Haitian-Bahamian drug gangs.” According to the DEA’s International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, the Royal Police force does not have a sufficient amount of specialized personnel, particularly Kreyòl interpreters, to handle the rise of “Haitian and Haitian-Bahamian drug trafficking organizations.” The DEA believes that Haitian and Haitian-Bahamian gangs are behind the smuggling of cocaine “from Hispaniola through the Bahamas” and possibly into the United States (Nassau-Guardian 2/23/2009).

The lack of interpreters presented problems of due process in the judicial system in the Bahamas. Recently, a Haitian man who was charged with manslaughter had his
conviction overturned because he did not receive a fair trial. Hard evidence leading to his manslaughter conviction became his statement during an interrogation that was in English, instead of Kreyòl. The accused did not speak English and could not understand the questions and explanations during the interrogation. The Bahamian court dropped the conviction based on the fact that the accused should have the right to an interview and compose a statement in the language that he comprehends (Nassau-Guardian 3/16/2012).

Language also presents a dilemma in Bahamian public schools. Twenty four percent of the Bahamas’s national budget is allocated to the public school system. The Bahamian government allocated about 160.8 million dollars to the public school system for the 2011-2012-budget year (Recurrence Expenditure Report 2011). The teachers union, parents, and officials within the Education Ministry complain that resources are being wasted on children who do not have proper documentation or do not speak English. The Bahamian media have documented the struggle to maintain and deliver high quality education to all students given the presence of Haitian students who do not speak English fluently. Several editorials have described how unilingual, undocumented Haitian students fill schools, leaving little room for Bahamian students:

Our school here at Treasure Cay is located just outside of the resort on the Great Abaco Highway, it is a relatively new school, with three new classrooms being added just last year. It is a school that the PTA and the people of Treasure Cay worked very hard for, and one of the nicest Government schools you will find…filled to capacity with Haitian children, with each new school term more and more filling the classrooms, leaving limited space for our Bahamian children (Bahamas-Tribune 7/22/1989).

There were attempts to address the number of Haitian students who do not speak fluent English by instructing Haitian students in their native Kreyòl language at the primary level (IOM Report 2005), but those attempts were met with opposition, particularly from some Bahamian teachers, and they also increased tension between Haitian students and Bahamian students. Another editorial explained the frustration caused by Haitian students and the task of “civilizing” Haitian schoolchildren:

A new Haitian child upon entering our schools, first of all cannot speak the language. Our own children must sit aside and be neglected, while the Haitian children are being taught the language. We cannot forget the teachers, who in order to maintain their jobs, must suffer the frustration of not only trying to teach them the language and educate them, but must also try and civilize them to some extent (Bahamas-Tribune 7/22/1989)

More recently, the President of the Bahamas Union of Teachers recommended that Haitians students whose first language is Kreyòl, should be excluded from school because “non-English speaking, unregulated students negatively impact the strategies teachers in the Public School System use and pose “many problems for the day to day instruction, successful completion of lessons, examinations results, and more” (Nassau-Guardian 7/5/11). The President of the teacher’s union added that, although there has been success with second-generation Haitian-Bahamians in the public education system, the number of monolingual Kreyòl speakers is a big concern that is usually ignored (Nassau-Guardian 7/5/11).

Language diversity and representation also seems to be a challenge even within the media structure of the Bahamas. There are no Kreyòl language radio stations or newspapers in Haitian enclaves throughout the Bahamas. There are no Kreyòl programs
on television. In many Haitian households, the lack of electricity means that there are no televisions. The language barrier can endanger the lives of Haitians especially if there are evacuation warnings during hurricane season (IOM Report 2005) when the lack of Kreyòl speaking media outlets can further isolate Haitian migrants. The lack of computers within a Haitian household presents a disadvantage for Haitian children as education relies more on online instruction (IOM Report 2005).

Haitian Kreyòl is not the only language that is stigmatized. The 2009 survey by Léger and Armbrister indicates that Bahamian students also have a negative view of the native Bahamian Creole dialect. 59.1 percent of Bahamian students agree that Bahamian English Creole is “bad English.” The correlations between how 80% of Bahamian students view Haitian Kreyòl and how 59% of the same students view Bahamian English Creole are probably due to linguistic imperialism (Léger & Armbrister 32).

(2) Religion: Overlapping the Boundaries: The Role of Religion among Haitians in the Bahamas

Bahamians are known to be very religious. There are more “churches per capita” in the Bahamas than in any other nation in the world (Juang & Morissette 141). The most popular and largest Christian denomination is the Bahamian Baptist church. The largest and oldest church congregation is the Bethel Baptist Church, founded by a runaway slave named Sambo Scriven in 1801 (Frey 91). Other runaway slaves, like Frank Spence in 1780 and Prince Williams in 1790, began preaching and establishing Baptist churches. The London-based Baptist Missionary Society created Baptist schools, and temperance
and bible societies in the Bahamas (Brackney 46), and Baptist organizations had an overwhelming influence on the development of the Baptist church in the Bahamas.

The National Baptist convention of the United States, a large denomination of African-American followers, expanded their organization and services to the Bahamas with the support of the Southern Baptists of the U.S (Holland 273). The support of the national convention led to the formation of the Bahamas Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention in 1935. The Educational Convention established religious schools such as the Jordan-Prince Williams Baptist School, the Bahamas Baptist Bible Institute, and Bahamas Baptist College. The U.S. and Bahamian convention make up the largest Baptist group in the Caribbean Islands. Thirty-five percent of Bahamians identify as Baptist (Holland 270, 273). The Roman Catholic Church is the third largest denomination in the Bahamas after the Anglican Church. Although the Roman Catholic Church is not as influential as the Baptist Church, it has had some success in providing social outreach and educational programs, particularly in the medical arena. Lay Catholics in the medical field and nursing sisters provide health services to poor Bahamians (McCartney 21), and the Roman Catholic Church has been quite active in the Bahamas in issues including the human rights of poor Haitian migrants in the Bahamas. However, many Haitian migrants and Bahamian-Haitians who are traditionally perceived as Catholic or Vodouists are converting to the Baptist Church and to other Christian denominations in the Bahamas.

Haitians in the diaspora have participated in and converted to other Christian denominations, particularly evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Haitian migrants who
convert to Protestantism or Evangelicalism are viewed as more “respected or accepted” within mainstream society, particularly if mainstream society are non-Catholic Christians (Craton & Saunders 461). Converting to Pentecostalism became a method for Haitian migrants to uphold moral values and attempt to fit into Bahamian society. The image of the Haitian Pentecostal has become a source of humor among Bahamians as described in Craton & Saunders:

> There was thus, perhaps a moral in the Bahamian joke heard in the 1990’s that those Haitian Pedestrians not carrying a cutlass were to be seen carrying a bible, the good book being a symbol of civility, whereas the cutlass represented a potentially threatening weapon (461).

Pentecostalism seemed to provide a niche for Haitian migrants who have been discriminated against and excluded, and the doctrines of Pentecostalism project a “counter image” to constructed stereotypes about Haitian migrants (Brodwin 91). This counter image includes a “Pentecostalist code” that requires Haitian parishioners to maintain a clean and modest appearance while following biblical scripture (Brodwin 91).

Pentecostal churches also empowered Haitian migrants within a transnational space by assisting other Haitian migrants to send money and travel abroad to see relatives in Haiti and the United States (Louis 108-109; Brodwin 86). However, the assumption that all Haitian migrants convert to Protestantism from Catholicism is not entirely accurate. According to one dissertation study, several communities of Haitian migrants in the Bahamas never converted but were baptized as Protestants back in Haiti (Louis 38-39). Protestantism is not just a transnational experience for Haitian migrants because there is a strong historical presence of Protestantism in Haiti.
During the nineteenth century, non-Catholic Churches were established in Haiti. Under the presidency of Alexandre Pétion, there were attempts to attract the Protestant faith to Haiti. African-Americans who traveled to Haiti for missionary work founded the Haitian Union Methodist Episcopal Church in 1823. The Baptist Missionary Society of London did missionary work in the Bahamas and in Haiti. The abolitionist Baptists even created a church in Trou-du-Nord, Northern Haiti (Louis 2007.194). At the dawn of the 20th century and during the U.S. occupation of Haiti, many other American Christian missionaries arrived in Haiti, including the Seventh Day Adventists and other Methodists, Episcopalian, and Baptist missionaries. These missionaries created orphanages, schools, and hospitals throughout Haiti’s rural areas (Louis. 2007.194). By the mid 1960s, Protestant missionaries ran more than one third of schools in Haiti, and under the Duvalier regime evangelical churches increased. After Duvalier invited popular American televangelist, Oral Roberts, to the National Palace in 1969 they continued to increase (Richman 2012 275).

Since the 1970s, Pentecostal groups have increased throughout Haiti, targeting the poor. These Pentecostal groups were successful at promoting salvation in Haitian Kreyòl, while most Catholic churches held mass in French. The Protestants presented themselves as a solution for individuals who are in poverty or afflicted with a number of problems. Social mobility, “self-improvement,” advancement, entrepreneurship, hard work, and modesty became characteristics upheld by Protestant missionaries (Richman 2012, 275). U.S. based Protestant missions needed converts. They were willing to offer payment for conversion. Joining the clergy of Protestant churches was one of the few job
opportunities for Haitians living in rural areas. In addition, hired clergy or newly ordained Haitian pastors had the opportunity get a visa after successfully serving the American missionaries (Richman 172).

Due to efforts of U.S. protestant and evangelical missions in Haiti throughout the 20th century, fifteen percent of Haiti’s population identify as Protestant. Roman Catholicism was the official religion of Haiti until 1987 (Hall 221). Protestant religions, including evangelicalism, are certainly not foreign among Haitian migrants in the Bahamas. The Protestant ethic of hard work and self-reliance was already a growing trend in Haiti before Haitians emigrated elsewhere. However, the ideals of the Protestant ethic or Pentecostal code have been utilized by Haitian migrants who needed to “navigate the social landscape” of the Bahamas to function as viable individuals able to resist and counter the marginalization of them by Bahamians (Louis 109).

Regardless of the Protestant history in Haiti and the presence of Haitian Protestants in the Bahamas, the religious boundaries between vodou and other religions overlap in Haitian culture. The religion of Haitians is described with simple dichotomies such as the Protestant Bahamian and the Catholic Haitian with the slight vodou veneer. It is also argued among Haitians that Catholicism can co-exist with vodou, a position that Protestants vehemently reject. The strong opposition to vodou among Protestants draws a clearly defined boundary between these two religious practices (Hall 221).

Protestant pastors and followers reject vodou and Bahamian obeah, (another syncretic African religion practiced throughout all islands) as demonic, witchcraft, or black magic. Protestant pastors, particularly Evangelical preachers, use the concept of
“spiritual warfare” as a common method to encourage followers to fight any negative feelings or actions deemed as demonic (Butler 36). In Haiti and the Bahamas, the main target of all the Protestant negativity is the “lwa,” the vodou spirit considered dangerous and evil, and the only option offered to Protestants to get rid of these bad sprits is through healing, prayer, and total rejection of vodou and obeah (Butler 37).

Religious editorials and church advertisements are common in Bahamian print media. These editorials and advertisements were geared towards those experiencing unfortunate circumstances. One editorial written by a Bahamian minister examines how an individual became a victim of demonic manipulation due to vodou or obeah:

“Witchcraft, voodoo, obeah, hex, spells, curses, incantations, roots etc…are all modern day ingredients for manipulating relationships. Sad to say, folks who engage in such diabolical activity have absolutely no idea of the present and long term consequences that are associated with those evils (Freeport News 3/13/2012).

Vodou and obeah are also viewed as the root cause of criminal activities and disorder in the Bahamas. For example, a news article covered an individual found guilty of a criminal offence. The response was that forces beyond his control might have lured the individual to commit this act:

In other court news, an 18-year-old man that pleaded guilty to breaking into St. John’s College School on October 18th, 2004. Jerome Watkins told Magistrate Vera Wilkins that someone had “fixed” him with Voodoo when they borrowed his clothes causing him to not be able to resist temptation (Bahamas-Tribune 1/11/2004).

The line between disorder and civility is drawn through religious affiliation. The association of vodou and obeah with witchcraft has amplified fears that they harm
individuals. These associations included exaggerated rumors of black magic or Satan worship and were usually instigated by local pastors. One example is an editorial about rumors of witchcraft practiced in Nassau’s straw market, a popular area for tourists:

I would hate to believe that there are some that continue to nurture the practice of witchcraft/obeah while under the pretences of being a Christian. All vendors have a right to work in an environment where they do not have to worry about a fellow vendor setting out to intentionally make anyone else uncomfortable. This practice must die a natural death because, the ones who are guilty, if in fact these rumors are true, must be banished from being around civilized, sensible people (Bahamas-Tribune 12/7/2011).

The negative reputation surrounding vodou and obeah also plays a role in defining nationhood and morality in the Bahamas. On the front cover of the Bahamas-Tribune, a popular, yet controversial Bahamian Bishop claimed that three demons were “holding the Bahamas hostage.” The Bishop’s claim has attracted people to fill up his church and listen to him describe each of these three demons. The third demon, the Bishop referred to was vodou and obeah:

The last demon, he said, is widespread throughout the Bahamas, as many are operating in Obeah and Voodoo. It has been full blown in our country and it has been for some time. The demon of witchcraft, he said is designed to manipulate, intimidate, separate, segregate and control. It is not assigned to kill you. It is designed and assigned to terrorizing until it drives you insane” (Bahamas-Tribune 1/17/2012).

The statement clearly targets vodou and obeah in the Bahamas as a threat to the nation. The Bishop clearly designates himself as the moral guard of what the Bahamas should represent as a nation. This kind of social interaction based on religious affiliation is a classic example of boundaries that emerged between Haitians with the “slight vodou veneer” and the Protestant Bahamians:
We’re a Christian nation, after all! Unlike them and their voodoo, we believe in a compassionate loving Jesus. So send them home. They aren’t doing well by our country. They are more trouble then they’re worth so send ‘em home. I ain’t hearin nothing! (Bahamas-Tribune 8/4/2011).

Vodou is seen as an expanding, contagious practice, or, as the bishop described it, as “widespread.” The Bishop encourages people to fear that vodou is expanding and that vodou threatens not only Christianity but also the moral fiber of the Bahamas. The bishop and media perceive vodou as an epidemic caused and spread by the Haitians in the Bahamas.

(3) Aesthetics and Hygiene

“The blood of a history of colonial and anti-colonial violence, the blood of blood sacrifice, the blood in a test-tube marked HIV-Positive—all these bloods ran together in accounts that attributed Haiti’s political upheaval to “cultural” factors (Browning 98)

The process of drawing religious boundaries is quite similar to the discrimination against Haitians because of AIDS. Haitians have long been targeted as carriers of disease, as public health risks, and as “unhygienic.” For example, Barbara Browning has described perceived links between “voodoo and epidemia” (98). In the early 1980s, news articles and medical journals consistently reiterated the unfounded theory that vodou and AIDS were linked. These sources continuously claimed that blood rituals and even cannibalism in vodou rituals might have “triggered” the AIDS virus (Farmer 2006, 3). No evidence or proper research backed up these unfounded theories about the vodou-AIDS connection. However, these theories in medical journals and news sources were
based on “preexisting conceptions” of Haiti, because of what Farmer categorizes as the “North American Folk Model” about Haitians (4).

North American and European writings about Haiti’s folk culture portrayed vodou as an evil practice of cannibalism, and animal and human sacrifice. British diplomat Sir Spencer St. John filled his 1884 travelogue with racist rhetoric, including a chapter called “Vaudoux-Worship and Cannibalism,” describing the unfounded and false accounts of sacrificing children and cannibalism in vodou (St John 206-107) (Dubois 162). Although St. John’s book documented no “firsthand experience” of such rituals to substantiate these accounts about cannibalism and human sacrifice, his book became a bestseller in the U.S. (Dubois 163).

During the U.S. occupation of Haiti, books such as Black Bagdad by John Craige, Voodoo fire in Haiti by Richard Loederer, and The Magic Island by William Seabrook repeatedly claimed that sacrifice, cannibalism, and blood rituals were common in vodou. Seabrook describes vodou rituals as “writhing black bodies, blood-maddened” (42). The Magic Island was a popular book praised in literary circles and was selected as a featured book by the U.S literary guild in January 1929. Seabrook’s Magic Island encouraged others to write imaginary and “fanciful” tales about vodou for the U.S. audience (Renda 5-6). Folk imperialist literature about Haiti proved to be as influential as work published about Haitians in medical journals during the 1980s. In the “Annals of Internal Medicine,” physicians claimed that vodou blood rituals were the root cause of the AIDS virus (Farmer 2006 36). A renowned doctor from the Downstate Medical
Center in New York also suggested that there was a link between vodou and AIDS (Lawless 12).

Even in the United States, hysteria about AIDS caused the disease to be portrayed as one brought from foreign populations or from those who commit “deviant practices” (Yardley 141). This portrayal was compounded not only in medical journals but also in the media. Popular media blamed AIDS on the “4H club:” Hemophiliacs, Heroin users, Homosexuals, and Haitians (Reilly 363). The U.S. Center for Disease Control labeled the 4H club as a high-risk group for AIDS. In 1982, the CDC published an article based on a study of 34 cases of AIDS in Haitian patients. Thirty out of thirty-four of these patients denied contracting AIDS through a homosexual relationship or drug use, but had heterosexual sex. The CDC determined that Haitians were a high-risk group (Satpathy 35). However, in that same study, Haitians represented only 6 percent of over 1,200 AIDS cases. No other nationality or ethnic group was singled out in the study, despite the fact that almost any other group would have had a greater percentage of patients than Haitians. Many Haitian-American organizations asked why Haitians alone were being selected as a high-risk group (Satpathy 35).

Critics of this study, including Haitian-American physicians, claimed that doctors at the CDC did not examine how sensitive the issue of homosexuality is among Haitian patients. Homosexuality is known to be taboo within Haitian culture and Haitian men were not willing to disclose their sexuality. In 1983, the CDC never acknowledged other “risk factors.” Seventy-nine percent of the Haitian patients had AIDS through blood transfusion and bisexual relationships, not because they were from Haiti (Satpathy 36).
Haitian doctors and Haitian organizations argued that naming a particular nationality with other high-risk groups for AIDS was not only a “serious error” but also made the study appear to be biased (Satpathy 36). In addition, none of the doctors at the CDC spoke Kreyòl, and they could not communicate properly with Haitian patients.

The CDC removed Haitians as a high-risk group of AIDS in April 1985, but the damage was done. That same year the United States Public Health service advised restricting Haitian-Americans from donating blood. School blood drives also openly rejected Haitian volunteers. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration initiated a policy affecting Haitians entering the United States after 1977 by prohibiting their blood donation (Farmer 2006 214, 218). During the early 1980s, an unchallenged “assumption” arose that AIDS might have originated in Haiti (as well as in sub-Saharan Africa) and spread to the United States (Satpathy 36). One unfounded theory claimed that AIDS began with the outbreak of African swine fever in Haitian hogs and that Haitian homosexuals contracted AIDS by eating “undercooked” pork meat (New Scientist 8/18/1988). No evidence was provided to back up that theory.

The CDC study and FDA blood ban led to the stigma and discrimination of Haitian immigrants in Canada, the United States, and the Bahamas. Haitian immigrants had difficulty finding jobs because employers thought it was unsafe to hire Haitians. A local labor agency had difficulty securing job placements for Haitian clients (Farmer 2006.214). Local Haitian-owned business establishments lost customers and were forced to shut down. The unemployment rate was twice as high among Haitian immigrants in
the United States compared to other segments of the black population (New Scientist 8/18/1988). Although a majority of Haitians did not have AIDS, some were fired from their jobs because they were stereotyped as AIDS carriers. Students and teachers harassed Haitian school children. Haitian Community organizers and advocates explained how Haitian immigrants were routinely fired, bullied, and denigrated:

Haitian domestic workers in the New York City suburbs have been summarily dismissed, said Joseph Etienne, executive director of the Haitian Centers Council in Brooklyn, a coalition of eight groups. “In a public high school in Brooklyn, after a 10-year old Haitian girl used a telephone, they sprayed it,” he said (NY Times 3/14/1990).

Louis Germain, assistant director of the Haitian-American Community Association of Dade County, said: "People have lost their jobs, and Haitian students are being stereotyped. Last week a teacher in a class on AIDS told the students if they don't want to get AIDS they have to remain free from drugs and homosexuality and stay away from Haitians" (NY Times 3/14/1990).

In 1985, a twenty-nine year old social worker from Haiti named Marcelle Fortune was denied a place to live when a Miami landlord refused to rent to her on the grounds that his tenants feared a Haitian immigrant would spread AIDS throughout the building. Fortune, an employee of Florida’s Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, did not have AIDS (Kraut 3).

The tourist industry in Haiti took a hard hit. In the early 1980s, the number of tourists decreased from 70,000 between 1981 and 1982, to only 10,000 in 1983 (New Scientist 8/18/1988). Although cruise ships arrived at Labadie beach in Northern Haiti, passengers were not informed that Haiti would be part of their cruise itinerary. Haiti was omitted from vacation brochures, and passengers who got off the ships were not told that they had arrived in Haiti (Smallman 25-26).
Although medical experts informed officials that AIDS is not transmitted casually, reports of discrimination by government officials still occurred. A non-Haitian U.S. Citizen who resided in Haiti, arrived at New York’s Kennedy airport and said that when he presented his passport to a U.S customs official, the official responded, “Open your passport, I’m not touching it” (NY Times 11/29/1983). A shipment of dresses was returned to Haiti from New York because garment retailers did not want any piece of clothing with a “Made in Haiti” label (NY Times 11/29/1983).

Anti-AIDS hysteria in the United States had xenophobic, homophobic, and certainly racist roots, and the methods used to confront AIDS created boundaries between those deemed moral vs. deviant, or native vs. foreign. These constructed boundaries can be traced to the 19th century when public health officials assumed that epidemics arose due to “environmental changes or human movements” (Marks & Worboys 7). For example, Irish immigrants were singled out and associated with the cholera outbreak in the United States. The Irish were viewed as unhygienic or dirty by so called “nativists.” By the end of the nineteenth century, public health officials focused on risk-populations as a way to prevent epidemic diseases (Marks & Worboys 8-9). In the twentieth-century, AIDS became another convenient tool for moralists, xenophobes, and politicians to justify stigmatizing other groups of people. As a foreign epidemic, AIDS was viewed as threatening to the stability of nation-states: “The medical representation of AIDS in terms of ‘otherness’ went beyond making the link to a single out-group and to its deviant practices. It was compounded by the association made with additional out-groups, practices, and foreign peoples” (Yardley 141).
The treatment of Haitians in the U.S. affected the boundaries in the Bahamas between Bahamians and Haitians. Associating Haitians with AIDS further exacerbated ethnic divisions in the Bahamas. AIDS became another instrument within national discourse through which a foreign disease became linked with a foreign population. Another boundary was created between Bahamians and those perceived as “unhygienic, “disease carrying,” Haitians. In the Bahamas, the outbreak of AIDS was traced to sharing infected drug needles for crack cocaine use among Bahamians (Gomez et al 404).

Bahamians were aware of U.S. reports that gay men were the primary recipients of the AIDS virus. In the early 1980s, the perception of Bahamians was that AIDS was an illness that affected so-called “deviant” populations like drug addicts and gays (Craton & Saunders 425). However by the end of the 1980s, those who were HIV-positive were heterosexuals, and the new foreign scapegoat became Haitian immigrants in the Bahamas.

Haitians were also blamed for spreading tuberculosis, and malaria (IOM Migration report 2005). The boundary materialized in terms of health and public hygiene between Haitians and Bahamians:

Bahamians used to be a healthy people. For instance tuberculosis (TB) was stamped out of the Bahamas in the early 1960’s…However, with the influx of so many illegal Haitians, we have an influx of diseases almost unheard of in the Bahamas, eg, malaria, tuberculosis, strange venereal diseases and AIDS (Bahamas-Tribune 8/14/1989).

Dengue fever is “historically endemic” to the Bahamas, yet Haitians were usually targeted as the source of the outbreak (Bain 70). One article explains that Over-the-Hill, a
predominantly poor and Haitian immigrant community contributed to spreading dengue fever rapidly (Nassau-Guardian 12/28/2011).

The “reciprocal influence” between public health and immigration has resulted in discriminating against individuals who do not have any contagious diseases but who happen to be targeted because of their ethnicity and their status as immigrants (Kraut 2). The targeted immigrant group is criticized for not maintaining clean habits or is labeled as being incapable of proper hygiene. Haitian students in the Bahamas were bullied based on how they dressed or smelled. In Miami and New York City schools, “HBO” or Haitian Body Odor was a term used to tease Haitian students. According to the International Organization of Migration Report on “Haitian Migrants in the Bahamas”, the most frequent use of offensive words directed at Haitian Migrants were “filthy,” “smell bad,” “stinky” and “nasty” (IOM Migration report 2005). Haitians students in Bahamian schools were also mocked or criticized about hygiene and misusing public facilities, as described in this editorial:

“When these children enter our school, at first…it is not uncommon to find all the toilets plugged because they damaged some object into it...not knowing what the toilets are used for anyway, while they can be seen using the school grounds for the bathroom, (something they are accustomed to anyway) (Bahamas-Tribune 7/22/1989).

Haitian nationals living in poverty in the Bahamas occupy poorly built or maintained homes without electricity, and even if they had electricity, they cannot afford electrical appliances such as refrigerators or electrical stoves. Many Haitian homes have no running water, which can present challenges to healthy personal hygiene. Lack of running water means limited access to toilet facilities. 38.5% of 6,457 Haitian households
in the Bahamas do not have personal toilets, compared to 4.8 percent of 80,123 households of non-Haitians (Fielding et al 46). Safety is also a dilemma, because electricity stolen through rewiring can cause house fires. The following editorial addresses the situation of shantytowns and possible dangers of electrical fires:

When proper sanitation and safety protocols are not followed; mass tragedy could ensue from fire or disease. Sunday’s fire could have led to the death of hundreds. For the Bahamans who live near shantytowns, their property values are reduced because of the unsanitary communities next door. This is unfair to hardworking, honest citizens of the country (Nassau-Guardian 12/29/2010).

The editorial acknowledges the state’s role in implementing safety regulations. The perceived character differences between Haitians and “honest [Bahamian] citizens” are clear. Despite the fact that economic conditions and the marginal state of Haitian migrant enclaves make it extremely difficult for them to adhere to normal standards of cleanliness, Haitians are still stereotyped as typically unclean and incapable of maintaining a safe and sanitary community.

Creating boundaries between those who value cleanliness and those who are labeled as unhygienic is linked to colonialism. The British viewed their colonies as dirty places full of disease, while European metropolitan nations were portrayed as ideal areas of cleanliness and order. European travelers feared that disease could be “circulated” to Europe from the colonies (Pennycook 64). Religious principles were also implemented to demarcate the boundaries between cleanliness and dirt. Filth was viewed as a sign of spiritual impurity or sinfulness, and Christianity was instrumental in domesticating and educating the colonial masses that cleanliness was next to godliness (Heneghan 133).

The religious protestant ethic promoted by British and American missionaries advocated
maintaining clean, organized, Christian homes. It was essential to convert and develop self-disciplined colonials for the purpose of expanding Christian civilizations beyond Europe.

The commoditization of hygiene was an economic incentive for the British Empire, and it included feeding the “Victorian obsession” and aesthetics of clean white bodies (McClintock 280). One popular hygienic commodity, “Pears soap,” was promoted by imperialist businessmen as a symbol of domestication for cleaning the impurities of the colonial world (Hall 241). Soap was advertised as a tool for teaching the “virtues of cleanliness” to non-white populations in the colonies (Hall 242). The consumption of soap and the promotion of hygiene habits became another “demarcation of body boundaries” and a method of maintaining the racial hierarchy by “domesticating” the colonial world (McClintock 280; Hall 241). The imperialist concept of cleanliness created boundaries based on skin color, in which spiritual purity also translated into racial purity. Black or Blackness was viewed as a threat tainting the purity of whiteness (Heneghan 133-134).

Religion, race, and Victorian elements of hygiene still influence the Bahamas. Recently, Bahamian officials were concerned about the cholera epidemic in Haiti after the 2010 Earthquake. There was fear that the epidemic would spread to the Bahamas from Haitian sloops that might have passengers infected with cholera. There were proposals to intercept Haitian vessels from coming into Bahamian shores. But a religious editorial advocated the power of cleanliness to withstand even the Haitian threat:

So, we can do our part to prevent another Cholera outbreak in our community by obeying the simple rules of hygiene taught you by your parents in childhood—
washing your hands before eating. Brushing your teeth and hair, getting your daily bath etc. Concisely, observing the basic rules of cleanliness is the best way to prevent the spread of this deadly disease! We prevent Cholera not by intercepting Haitian sloops coming here but simply by keeping clean!!! (Freeport News 11/16/2010).

The editorial concluded with the old proverb coined by John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” The argument for cleanliness against disease was quite similar to the claims of Christian missionaries in the colonial period that dirty, non-Christian and pagan homes were more prone to disease than a clean, pristine Christian home.

Several publications in the colonial period associated cleanliness closely with civilization. The famous brand B.T. Babbitt’s best soap advertisement slogan was “Soap for all Nations, Cleanliness is the Scale of Civilization. 1) The “Annals of Hygiene” states that cleanliness is an “intimate acquaintance and companion of civilization,” while a “dirty person cannot be a refined person”(Edwards149).

Cleanliness is used to determine whether a person or place is civilized or not. Cleanliness is also a reflection of what is considered a modern nation and a constructed trait in expressing patriotism or national pride. In various media reports, the Bahamas has always represented itself as a clean nation. The Bahamas promoted the island to foreign tourists as a clean paradise. However, the clean paradise image is threatened if it includes Haiti and how Haitians residing in the Bahamas are perceived. A local government official in Spanish Wells, Eleuthera, describes the cleanliness and reflects that perceived quality on the residents of Spanish Wells:

1) “Soap for all Nations: Cleanliness is the Scale of Civilization” B.T. Babbitt Firm. Hatch Lith Company. 1870
It’s pride, P-R-I-D-E. And that does not start later in a person’s life. It starts when children are in school. People here care about keeping things up and keeping it nice. If you don’t have pride in yourself, you are a hopeless individual. You can’t help a person if they don’t have pride in themselves (Cirillo 80-81).

The association of cleanliness with pride ignores the fact that many Haitians are routinely hired as landscapers and street cleaners to maintain the pride of Spanish Wells.

Tourist developers presented the city of Nassau as a clean, organized, “aestheticized and ordered display of nature,” to attract visitors (Thompson 120). Early 20th century photographs of Nassau’s white limestone streets gave the city its reputation as being white and pristine. The visual representation of Nassau was also a testimony to maintaining its colonial social order in controlling and segregating black Bahamian inhabitants, while appeasing the concerns of white tourists (Thompson 120-121).

The concern over the conditions of shantytowns or piles of trash in business areas is linked with national image and representation, especially in the tourist sector. In the early twentieth century, white tourists feared the presence of black Bahamians and viewed them as disease-carriers. There were concerns that the “contaminating winds” of black communities would be blown in the direction of hotels and resorts in Nassau (Thompson 113). Ironically, black Bahamians view black Haitians as spreading disease in the Bahamas. One local worker commented on the problem of trash and how a dirty image affects how the Bahamas is represented as a country:

“No one wants to shop with trash all over the place she said. [They] could represent The Bahamas better because we had a couple tourists come in to shop. For myself, I will not shop in a place that is dirty” (Nassau-Guardian 12/28/2011).

One editorial defends the concern of mostly white foreign residents and investors about the conditions of Haitian shantytowns throughout the Bahamas. The need to
accommodate these foreign investors and tourists is quite critical in representing the Bahamas as an aesthetically pleasing, economically stable, and civilized paradise. Once again the Haitians are labeled as having unclean habits:

> It is quite clear that these foreigners feel the situation is a discouraging element for prospective investors. Indeed the Haitians with their unsanitary ways and their penchant to just throw up shacks, are not only reducing the market value of the areas they occupy but they are a major threat to potential investment business (Nassau Guardian 3/24/1993).

The stereotypes about Haitians as dirty, unclean, or unhygienic can imply something deeper about the state of the Bahamas. In Mary Douglas’ book *Purity and Danger*, dirt and pollution are symbols of disorder in a nation-state and in national identity:

> It is not difficult to see how pollution beliefs can be used in a dialogue of claims and counter-claims to status. But as we examine pollution beliefs we find that the kind of contacts which are thought dangerous also carry a symbolic load. This is a more interesting level at which pollution ideas relate to social life. I believe that some pollutions are used as analogies for expressing a general view of the social order (3)

This symbol of pollution can be seen as demolishing the social order or image of a nation-state. Fears and feelings of uncertainty increase, particularly when the presence of Haitian-Bahamians shatter the stereotypical boundaries that many cling to in defense of the Bahamian nation. Once these boundaries are shattered, there is a sense of disorder or “formlessness” that Douglas describes as the perception of dirt and pollution.

Despite the fact that Haitians, as any other people, traditionally maintain clean hygienic habits, they are stereotyped as unclean. Ironically, the stereotypes used by Bahamians against the Haitians among them are the same stereotypes that were applied to
most blacks, including Bahamians, during the late nineteenth century. Scientific journals were written about the “inherent odor” of blacks as well as images of blacks in “gaudy” clothes (Michael-Smith 71). In other words, Bahamians are perpetuating the same prejudices against Haitians as whites perpetrated against Bahamians in the nineteenth century and after.

(4) Race in the Bahamas: Facing Racial Realities

The very act of walking under the hot sun or riding a bicycle already marks the person as other because this is seen as very un-Bahamian, particularly if it involves working under the hot sun. These are all logical characteristics derived from experience. They help lead to a conclusion, then, that the Haitian is poor as compared to the Bahamian and black as compared to the Bahamian. Therefore, ‘Haitian’ is an insult that is saved for dark-skinned individuals and considered particularly demeaning (Bethell-Bennett 9-10).

Several media sources cover discrimination against Haitians in the Bahamas. Structural discrimination such as the marginalization of Haitian or Haitian-Bahamian children within the education system are discussed as well as incidents that have routinely occurred distinguishing Haitians from other Bahamians. Examples of these incidents include humiliation, taunts, extortion, vandalism, and police harassment. A Bahamian bus driver nearly ran over a female Haitian passenger while hurling “derogatory insults” about her nationality. A Bahamian cashier humiliated a Haitian woman at a grocery store because she could not come with the correct change to purchase items (Bahamas-Tribune 10/27/2008; Bahama Press 7/5/2009). The examples below show how Haitians are routinely discriminated against by some Bahamians.

There are reports of Haitian workers as victims of extortion, sometimes by Bahamian Police officials. According to Yale University’s, “Human Rights Delegation Report,” Bahamian security officials threatened to deport Haitians or to detain them
unless they paid money. Corrupt security officials extorted money illegally from vulnerable Haitians. Haitians were also victims of vigilante violence, particularly in the Out Islands. In Pigeon Pea, a mostly Haitian community in Abaco Island, homes of Haitians were vandalized, burglarized, or demolished (Human Rights Delegation Report 1994). The media has served as an outlet for expressing anger towards Haitians, viewing them as a threat to the Bahamas, and encouraging intolerance towards them:

Bahamas wake up! Do not tolerate these illegal immigrants in your neighborhood. Let them know they are not wanted here. Do not tolerate their continued presence in your schools. Your children’s future is being sacrificed to accommodate illegal immigrants. The bottom line is YOU are paying for their comfort (Nassau-Guardian 9/11/1989).

These opinions and arguments have been known to ignite anger and justify harassment of those perceived as Haitians by private citizens. A recent diplomatic cable from the U.S. Embassy in Nassau addressed the issue of undocumented Haitian migrants. The cable discussed the national stability of the Bahamas and claimed that Haitians are a “poorly-integrated ethnic minority” that can lead to a “potential risk to the political and social stability of the Bahamas” (Nassau Guardian 6/15/2011). Cables have characterized this situation as an inter-ethnic conflict, but discriminatory practices and rhetoric published in the print media and transmitted on the airwaves indicate that the taboo topic of racism also plays a significant role.

Physiognomy is also a measure in marking difference between who is Haitian or Bahamian. For example, from the 1840s to 1920s, the physiognomies of the Irish, Italians, and Jews were distinguished from the Anglo-Saxon identity in the United States. Racial difference entails how one sees or perceives others based on traditional or national
beliefs. In Matthew Frye Jacobson’s book, Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race, racism was also performed among those who were white, yet still different or inferior:

My interest in physicality here has primarily to do with the relationship between race as a conceptual category and race as a perceptual category. From a historical standpoint, looking Jewish (or Irish or Levantine or Italian or Cape Verdean) is not terribly interesting in and of itself. But there is a dynamic relationship between visible “difference” on the one hand, and deep social and political meaning on the other (Jacobson 173).

There was a high demand for cheap labor in the United States as it experienced a high rate of industrialization between the 1840s-1920s. Economic and political disruption throughout Europe, led to an influx of European migrants to the United States, particularly Irish, Italians, and Eastern Europeans. The increasing number of immigrants had ignited a “growing nativist perception” across the U.S. and immigrants were viewed as a threat to the country (Jacobson 41). U.S. nativism during the late nineteenth century through early twentieth century was based on the “fundamental revision of whiteness” and racial depictions of Celts, Italians, and Eastern Europeans (Jacobson 68).

Irish immigrants were described in media sources as “low-browsed,” “brutish” an “upturned nose” with a “black tint of the skin” (Jacobson 48). The Irish was also described as criminal and incapable of participating in the “governance of the nation” (Jacobson 48). Italian immigrants were also described in the media as having criminal tendencies and all being affiliated with the mafia. In 1891, a group of Italian immigrants were accused of conspiring to kill the police chief of New Orleans. During the trial, Italian immigrants were portrayed as “lawless” or “sneaky, and cowardly” (Jacobson 56).
Eleven Italians were brutally lynched. In the Jim Crow south, Italians immigrants were not only portrayed as not looking white, but not acting white. Italians were involved in farm labor and other economic activities as blacks. Italian immigrants were mocked and stigmatized if they “fraternized” and intermarried with blacks. Political officials described the Italians as being “as bad as Negroes” (Jacobson 57). Physical markers also applied to Jewish immigrants in the United States based on facial features, particularly nose shape, lips, and hair texture (Jacobson 174). The marginalization of Irish, Italian and Jews in the United States between the nineteenth and early twentieth century exposes the “changeable character of race” based on “various historic encounters” (Jacobson 138).

In the Bahamas, a stereotypical Haitian is short in height, dressed in “loud” or colorful polyester clothing. Also, a Haitian is viewed as never driving a vehicle, but riding a bicycle or walking under the hot sun with a cutlass (machete) used for agricultural or landscape labor (Craton & Saunders 459; Bethell-Bennett 9). The spaces Haitian communities occupy in the Bahamas are commonly considered dirty. In the book, How to be a true-true Bahamian, author Patricia Glinton-Mleicholas takes a humorous look at Bahamian culture and society, while exaggerating and mocking stereotypical characteristics of different ethnic groups on the island. She composes a checklist on how one can be “Hyshun” (Haitian pronounced in the Bahamian dialect):

You can be Hyshun if you:

✓ Are visibly black and under 5’7’’;
✓ Call yourself by a name that incorporates a reference to a divine being, e.g. ‘Dieu-merci’; or highlights some human virtue or vice, e.g. “Injustice”;
At the end of the checklist, an additional note explains who is qualified to claim “Hyshun” identity. Although the statement takes a humorous tone, it goes into Jacobson’s idea about racialized perceptions of ethnic groups:

Just being born in the country called ‘Haiti’ does not qualify you to be ‘hyshun’ in the eyes of the true-true Bahamian. You and all your forebears to the sixth generation could have been in Port au Prince, but if you are fair-skinned and tall or black and speak faultless English, true-true Bahamians will not allow you to claim your birthright (Glinton-Meicholas 120-121).

Although images may elicit many different meanings, Stuart Hall explains how stereotypical images “fixes the meanings” that are given to an audience and thus the limited images of Haitians can affect how Bahamians perceive them (Hall).

Haitians are stereotypically associated with dark-skin in the Bahamas. Haitians are often perceived to be more darker-skinned than black Bahamians because of constant exposure to sunlight. Although light-skinned Haitians exist, many Bahamians imagine Haitians in the Bahamas as of one dark shade (Bethell-Bennett 10). Bahamian scholar and playwright, Ian G. Strachan, discusses the open secret of black on black racism which inspired him to write the play Diary of Souls in 1999:

In the eyes of black Bahamians, the Haitian is too black, too ugly, too smelly, and too foolish to be considered an equal and a brother or sister. This is partially
about class, but is also evidence of a “free” people internalizing European ideals of beauty, even internalizing an essentialism that locates virtue and worth in all things white and makes the peasant of the north of Haiti—who is very “African looking”—ugly, filthy, devil worshiping, violent, and criminally minded (Strachan 2007 88-89).

Admitting this open secret and tracing the origins of this form of racism in the Bahamas exposes the insecurity of Bahamian identity in relation to race. Race then becomes another boundary to distinguish Haitians from Bahamians.

The play, Diary of Souls examines this boundary and illustrates the hypocrisy of “African slave descendants” who mistreat other “African slave descendants.” It was based on the true story of Haitians who died after Bahamian Defense Forces intercepted their overcrowded boat in 1990. Thirty-nine Haitians drowned when their 45-foot sloop capsized 70 miles off the coast of Nassau. All thirty-nine Haitians were buried in an isolated tiny island called Bitter Guana Cay (Sun-Sentinel 7/15/1990). Quickly after the tragedy, rumors swirled that the government covered up the number of Haitians that died. After the incident, there was very little “public outcry” over the lives of these Haitians due to the “anti-Haitian” sentiment in the island (Sun-Sentinel 7/15/1990). Based on this incident, Strachan examines the struggles of immigrants by creating the fictional character of a Bahamian marine who is filled with guilt after the tragedy. One of the intents of this play is to reflect on the consciousness and humanity of Bahamians in relation to racism (Strachan 2007 88-89).

Because of the boundaries Bahamians have created between themselves and their Haitian neighbors. Nicholette Bethel, explains the lack of knowledge about the intertwining of Haitian and Bahamian culture:
People are not conscious of this, Bahamians believe that Haitians are totally foreign, totally foreign, totally alien and totally unlike us, but that is a myth. Here in the Bahamas we have a big gap between the myths and reality, and we don’t have any mechanisms, which would enable us to integrate the two. With the fraternalism that whites had for black people in the past, black Bahamians don’t even have that for Haitians. We need to call this racism (Bahamas-Tribune 10/27/2008).

The “big gaps” between myth and reality are the result of many factors, including media representation of Haitians in the Bahamas as well as outside the Bahamas, primarily in the United States. Due to the negative representation and ongoing discrimination against Haitian migrants, the word “Haitian” has taken on a distinctly negative connotation. Haitian can be used as an epithet to insult others. For example, throughout urban public schools, the ultimate insult to a fellow classmate was to be called “Haitian,” which was akin to being “foreign, backward, dirty, unintelligent, and ignorant” (Portes & Stepick 191). In Dominican Republic, dark-skinned Dominicans were also teased by being called Haitian. Dominican poet, Blas Jiménez wrote “Haitiano” to illustrate the racist sentiment against blackness and its association with “Haitianness”. “Negro is bad” and bad is Haitian. Negro is ugly, Ugly is Haitian” (Howard 139).

In the Bahamas, the word Haitian or “hyshun” is viewed not only as negative but also as a term that is associated with patronizing ownership. One example is how Bahamians treat Haitian workers: “A large segment of Bahamians hold Haitian immigrants in low regard, referring to these employees as “my Haitian” or “the Haitian who works for me,” rather than by their first or last names” (Jenkins 215). This type of patronizing ownership was no different when black slaves mistreated other black slaves. C. L. R. James described how some black slaves “accommodated” themselves to the
mistreatment of other black slaves: “But when I do not work, I am beaten, when he does not work, I beat him—he is my negro.” (James 15).

Despite hostility towards Haitians, the need exists to recruit Haitians to perform labor tasks that Bahamians are not willing to do, including grueling landscaping and gardening work considered beneath Bahamians (Sun-Sentinel 7/15/1990). Upper class as well as middleclass Bahamians are willing to hire Haitians without the legal work permits. These permits allow employers to exploit Haitians even more (Fielding et al 47).

The “lack of fraternalism” that Bethel described was quite apparent during the Spanish Wells incident in 1989. Spanish Wells is a small town located on a small island off the northern end of Eleuthera. The town was “exclusively a white settlement”; blacks were not allowed to live there, and domestic servants were required to leave the settlement during the evening. Many of the white residents of Spanish Wells cloaked their practice of racial segregation by touting their dislike for enslaving blacks (Craton & Saunders 133). The Spanish Wells’ racist curfew was quite specific as described by Padma Hejmadi’s transcultural memoir Room to Fly:

People of color were allowed neither to build nor even spend a night on the island. Anyone who missed the last boat was locked up in the warehouse. The inhabitants themselves, descendants of American loyalists, so jealously guarded their attenuated bloodline that constant intermarriage down the generations seems to have led to an inevitable incidence of stunted growth both physical and mental, or afflictions like polydactylism and locomotor ataxia (103-104).

In the 1960s, Haitians were allowed to work in Spanish Wells while residing across the narrow water channel at nearby Russell Island. Spanish Wells remains a predominantly white area.
On September 1989, Bahamian white parents of Spanish Wells removed their children from the Spanish Wells All Age School in protest against the presence of twenty-five Haitian children enrolled at the school. The estimated number of enrolled students at the school ranges between 170 and 180; for seven Bahamian students there was one Haitian student (Nassau-Guardian 9/6/1989). The parents of Spanish Wells were gravely concerned not only about their possible illegal status, but also about the conditions in which the Haitians they lived in nearby Russell Island. At a parent-teacher meeting, one Spanish-Wells resident complained that these Haitian pupils were a health hazard, and that the Haitians who were angered by the protest were threatening residents of Spanish Wells:

They live on other people’s property, like 40 to 50 to a house. They have no running water, no toilet facilities…No mother or father wants their child among children exposed to those conditions. We have nothing against them, but now they have been making threats (against the Bahamian community). Spanish Wells is a fishing village. Our men are always at sea, out lobster fishing. It’s only the women and children just stuck here on our own. And they are threatening that they’re going to come over and take us over, making stupid threats of using guns, grenades, rape…They’re having babies like there’s no tomorrow (Nassau-Guardian 9/6/1989).

The conflict between white parents of Spanish Wells and Haitian students was reminiscent of past racial conflicts between white and black Bahamians. Attorney and Human Rights Activist, Eliezer Regnier, accused the white residents of Spanish Wells of being racist. Regnier’s accusation caused a stir in the media on the topic of racism. Despite Spanish Wells’s history of shunning and discriminating against black Bahamians, several black Bahamians defended the white residents of Spanish Wells. In response,
editorials accused Attorney Regnier of stirring racial tensions between black and white Bahamians:

We have no difficulty whatsoever in backing the Bahamians of Spanish Wells. Racial Prejudice is not a factor at all, because there are thousands of black Bahamians who feel just as strongly about the presence of illegal Haitians and their unhealthy habits as the white Bahamians of Spanish Wells (Nassau-Guardian 9/8/89).

I would like to inform Mr. Regnier that any racism that exists amongst Bahamians is our problem, and the only time the issue of racism is rekindled in The Bahamas is during elections when the governing party insists on using the issue to gain political mileage. His statement claiming the Haitians today, the Bahamian blacks tomorrow is irrelevant in this incident, in fact I do not feel that Bahamians need any outsiders to tell us of our history of racism against blacks in Spanish Wells (Nassau-Guardian 9/11/89).

Mr. Regnier’s accusation attempted to bring to light the discriminatory treatment against Haitians. Such treatment was no different to black Bahamians who worked as domestic servants in Spanish Wells. However, the racial tension that occurred between whites in Spanish Wells and black Bahamians was ignored and cloaked under national rhetoric against Haitian migrants. Instead, news editorials disparaged Mr. Regnier for making such an accusation. News editorials further suggested that he should go back to Haiti despite the fact that he has been living in the Bahamas since he was six years old.

Nonetheless, Mr. Regnier’s accusation exposed the awkwardness and irony of how some black Bahamians can defend a small, yet a privileged segment of their society that still segregates itself from most black Bahamians. Mr. Regnier’s remarks were attacked partly because he is of Haitian descent.

The discourse on racism has been quite challenging for the boundaries between Bahamians and Haitians and also for the boundaries between black and white Bahamians.
However, national identity has been the obstacle or distraction from the taboo issue of race. Greek-Bahamian scholar, Helen Klonaris, clearly expresses the tactic of nationalism as a smokescreen for racial dynamics in the Bahamas:

> It is too easy to use the word ‘Bahamian’ to excuse ourselves from having to talk about the differences between us, too easy to accuse others of seeing something ‘not really there’, so that anyone who brings up race is deemed fanatical, somehow suspicious as though they are seeing ghosts (And perhaps they are) (Bahamas-Tribune 2/3/06).

Avoiding racism is quite apparent among white Bahamians. Several common responses Klonaris describes includes “I don’t think about race” or “we’re over that.” At the same time, some white Bahamians claim accusations of reverse racism and feel repressed or marginalized by the black majority (Bahamas-Tribune 2/3/06). However, the pattern of avoiding racism is practiced among black Bahamians as well. Bahamian scholar, Felix Moss, fervently describes the “psychology of racism” in the Bahamas by referencing that some blacks do not want to face the fact that the island nation is still a “race-driven” and a “colour conscious” society (Bahamas-Tribune 12/13/05). Moss explains the economic imbalance that results when black Bahamians spend more money in white-owned business establishments and schools than in black-owned businesses and schools. White Bahamians do not invest enough in black owned businesses or predominantly black schools:

> “If white Bahamians make up less than 15 percent of the population but in 2005 control in excess of 85 percent of the wealth, then obviously many black Bahamians still feel that white is right and the lighter the better. That is why they run to City Lumber and JBR all week long and rush to Hanna’s and Cartwright’s on Sundays when the “real stores” are closed. That is why black Bahamians flock to Kentucky but whites stay clear of Bamboo Shack or Bertha’s. That is why blacks are dying for their children to go to St. Andrews but white Bahamians
hardly send their children to SAC [St. Augustine’s College] which has the best
passes in national exams (Bahamas-Tribune 12/13/05). Traditional social segregation,
or what Moss describes as “social apartheid”, is still a
racial reality in the Bahamas. However, discussing and addressing any racial discourse
has been challenging, especially when the topic is the so-called Haitian problem.

Avoiding any racial discourse, particularly within a national narrative, has been
one of Bahamas’s shortcomings as an island-nation in the era of globalization. Bahamian
writer Keith A. Russell discussed the dilemma of the Bahamas’s national narrative by
borrowing American poet C.K Williams’ “narrative dysfunction”, which refers to how
one “loses track of the story of ourselves” (Russell 2; Kittredge 59). Yet, how did race
going lost in the Bahamian national narrative? Certain institutional mechanisms emerged to
stifle any critical analysis of racial discourse. Nonetheless, the Bahamian approach to
race is to ignore it. It is obvious that racism is a social construct and has no biological
basis:

From a scientific point of view, the concept of race has failed to obtain any
consensus; none is likely, given the gradual variation in existence. It may be
objected that the racial stereotypes have a consistency that allows even the laymen
to classify individuals (Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi, and Piazza 19).

What is left are the Eurocentric notions of racism that is considered a thing of the past,
but these notions are applied towards Haitians in the Bahamas, particularly when it come
to phenotype. These racial notions are learned from hegemonic and colonial powers. For
example, the United States imposed their own form of racism during U.S. occupation of
Haiti and Dominican Republic. A high-ranking state department official reported to
Woodrow Wilson’s administration about the difference between Haitians and Dominicans:

It is well to distinguish at once between the Dominicans and the Haitians. The former, while in many ways not advanced far enough for the highest type of self-government, yet have a preponderance of white blood and culture. The Haitians on the other hand are negro for the most part, and, barring a very few highly educated politicians, are almost in a state of savagery and complete ignorance. The two situations thus demand different treatment (Knight 161).

A second example pertains to the “legacy of modernity” and how it goes hand in hand with racism and identity. Souffrant described that the country of Colombia issues a criteria for a list of nations (Haiti included), to prove that the individual must be in good health, financially secure, and have “legitimacy of invitation” to visit Colombia:

The countries whose citizens are directly targeted in the Colombian list are represented as more repugnant, as having qualities less consistent with Colombian national identity, than those nations who have traditionally, functioned as hegemonic global powers. A Haitian identity, for example, again if it were contingent on that list, might lead a member of Haitian society to self-doubt or worse to self-denigration (Souffrant 109).

Certainly countries like the United States, France, Germany, or most European nations are not on the list. Hegemonic powers that mistreat and discriminate against Haiti is learned from other so-called non-hegemonic nations, such as the Bahamas.

The four boundaries of language, religion, aesthetics, and race have always been used within the media as an “organizational vessel” to regulate or simplify complex social organizations and behavior (Barth 14-15). The media have been quite instrumental in representing the Haitian presence in the Bahamas as a threat to the social order and national structure of the Bahamas. Promoting these ethnic boundaries, even though they
are artificial and inaccurate, can exacerbate fear and further discrimination against Haitians.
Chapter 5: So Close and yet so Far: Contemporary Racism against Haitians in the Bahamas within the context of Neoliberalism

In the Bahamas there is a growing atmosphere of xenophobia—fear or hatred of strangers or foreigners. This comes at a time in our history when the world community is promoting globalization, a coming together of peoples, of ideas, of commerce and the shrinking of borders (Bahamas-tribune 2/14/2005).

The policies of neoliberalism complicated the ambivalent relationship between Haiti and the Bahamas. There is a huge economic disparity between the two neighboring Caribbean nations: in one the majority of the population lives in extreme poverty, and the other is considered a tourist island nation affected by global financial crises. Haiti and the Bahamas, once a place where Tainos and Lucayans traded, were linked during the Haitian Revolution and throughout the mid-twentieth century. Today, they are now linked again as two pawns in the age of neoliberalism. But now, each country has its own specialization or comparative advantage: the tourist sector in the Bahamas, and cheap textile labor in Haiti. The conflict over specific neoliberal policies in Haiti, specifically cheap labor, affects Haitian-Bahamian relations.

Under the regime of Jean-Claude “Baby-Doc”Duvalier, international financial institutions, like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), promoted a series of structural adjustment policies in Haiti. In exchange for military and economic aid from the United States, Canada, and France, Duvalier allowed these international financial institutions to formulate and implement neoliberal economic policies in Haiti (Dupuy 2012 23). The goal of these institutions was to make Haiti the biggest source of cheap labor in the
Western Hemisphere for export assembly industries, while being the biggest Caribbean importer of food from the United States. These structural adjustment policies include eliminating tariffs, providing tax incentives for manufacturing investors, privatizing public enterprises, and, most importantly, keeping wages as low as possible (Dupuy. 2012 24).

From the 1970s to the mid 1980s, the assembly manufacturing industry was the most successful sector and accounted for thirty percent of total manufacturing output in Haiti (Lundhal 346). USAID was instrumental in liberalizing Haiti’s economy by opening it to U.S. food imports and by drastically reducing tariffs on imported goods, which affected the local food market and Haitian farmers. USAID-funded programs created strategies to shift Haitian consumption patterns from locally grown food to imported food. USAID also created short-term, high wage job operation programs in rural areas during planting and harvest season that removed workers from local Haitian farms. Haitian farmers eventually had no initiative to grow local food and became dependent on U.S. imported food (Richardson ix).

USAID was approved eliminating the Haitian pig after claims that African swine fever might affect these native pigs. Known as the “peasants savings bank,” Haitian pigs were traded by peasants for land, debt, food, weddings, and funerals. USAID slaughtered more than one million pigs, and replaced them with U.S pigs that could not adjust to the tropical climate of Haiti. Many Haitian farmers viewed USAID as an “assault on their livelihood” (Richardson 5). USAID was also responsible for the mass importation of U.S. rice, known as “Miami rice.” Haiti was self-sufficient on locally grown rice, but in 1986,
the Haitian government subsidized “Miami rice,” which affected the price of Haitian rice. USAID structural adjustment policies transformed the Haitian diet, because Haitians preferred the taste of cheap Miami rice to more nutritious sorghum, yam, corn, millet, and manioc (Richardson 5). A nation that was once self-sufficient in essential food staples now depends on U.S. imported food.

USAID was the architect in expanding the assembly export sector. In 1986, USAID created a $7.7 million “Export and Investment Promotion Project” to recruit foreign investors and assembly contracts for Haiti (NLC Report 1993). The purpose of this project was to promote Haiti as a competitive cheap labor market available for foreign investors. USAID marketed the idea that Haitians were willing to work longer hours for extremely low wages. USAID recruited mainly females to work in the assembly factories. USAID administrators contended that women in urban areas would earn extra income, to improve the conditions of their children. But, USAID studies revealed the real reason for recruiting female workers. For example, women tended to be quiet, acquiescent, and would “adapt easily to industrial discipline” (NLC Report 1993).

Overall, the structural adjustment policies prevented Haiti from remaining self-sufficient. The country became dependent and simply “mere appendages of the U.S. economy” (Dupuy 43).

The demand for cheap labor goes beyond Haiti; foreign entrepreneurs were quite interested in recruiting Haitian workers. Sugar producers in Cuba and Dominican Republic were attracted to cheap Haitian labor (Plummer 111). In the Bahamas, unskilled Haitian laborers were recruited to work in the tourist and agricultural sectors; some
Haitians were recruited by American logging companies. Despite the fact that Haitians were routinely recruited to work in the Bahamas, they were still viewed as a target there. Whenever the Bahamas experienced an economic downturn, Haitians were the scapegoats. Like Haiti, the Bahamas is also dependent on the United States because tourism represents 60 percent of Bahamas’ Gross Domestic Product (Oxford Business Group 23). During the 1960s, the Bahamas experienced significant growth in tourism, which correlated with economic growth in the United States. But, when the United States experienced a recession by the 1970s, the Bahamas also suffered an economic decline. The 1990-92 economic recession in the United States affected the Bahamian tourist sector, because the Bahamas lost $50 million in revenues (O’Reilly 34). Economic growth in the Bahamas had always correlated with economic growth in the United States, particularly since 80 percent of tourists are from the United States (Oxford Business Group 30).

In the Bahamas, articles covered the consequences of globalization and concluded that the demand for cheap Haitian labor is the fault of the Bahamas, not the Haitians. One editorial explains clearly how Haitians took jobs Bahamians did not want, and how the “Haitian problem” is a problem that Bahamians created:

Bahamians and their government are to blame for the “Haitian problem”. There were essential jobs in this country that had to be done by someone. They were menial jobs—too menial for Bahamians whose prime minister, the late Sir Lynden Pindling, promised them that from henceforth with him as head of state they would never be “hewers of wood and drawers of water”. They took him at his word and so the chopping and the toting were left to the Haitians (Bahamas-Tribune 2/15/2005).
Black Bahamians identify menial jobs such as yard work, janitorial services, farm hands as “Haitian jobs” (Bahamas-Tribune 9/12/2007). One article explains how Bahamians should value hard work, change their work ethics, and should not identify work as just for Haitians, while employers should stop labeling Bahamians as lazy and unreliable workers. The article ends with the warning that Haitians will continue to arrive in the Bahamas (Bahamas-Tribune 9/12/2007). One editorial adds another perspective on the dilemmas of globalization and cheap labor:

No matter what the offending employers say, the real motivation for their hiring cheaper and more compliant and hungry migrants, rather than hiring and training professional Bahamians is an ingrained resistance to the natural movement away from labour intensive industries and business practices and toward capital-intensive (or, perhaps human-resource intensive) ones. This process naturally gets underway as a country’s per capita income rises (Bahamas-Tribune 2/14/2005).

The current gross per capita income of the Bahamas is $31,400, and the H+Bahamas is ranked as the 42\textsuperscript{nd} highest per capita nation in the world. Haiti is ranked 205\textsuperscript{th} in the world with a per capita income of only about $1,300.\textsuperscript{16}

The popular Lavalas Party and former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide knew the implications of globalization and its impact on Haitian workers. Aristide attempted to improve the lives of Haitian workers in Haiti by raising the minimum wage. But the Haitian elite, foreign investors, and USAID were against the wage increase. USAID argued that the wage increase was “detrimental” to Haiti’s economic growth and would drive Haiti’s low wage assembly industry right out of the market. In addition, they

claimed that any wage increase would shift to a capital-intensive market instead of a cheap labor-intensive market. USAID and other apparel investors did not want to see Haiti “turn into a Denmark or Switzerland” in the Caribbean (NLC Report 1993). Behind the globalist lens, the majority of poor Haitians were reduced to cheap labor. The business sector and international financial institutions such as USAID shunned progressive alternatives to cheap sweatshop labor. Moreover, Bahamians identified Haitians as being good in providing cheap labor, but the demand for cheap Haitian labor backfired against the Bahamians.

After the 1991 military coup, Haitians in the Bahamas demonstrated publicly, in the streets of Nassau, against the United States’ slow progress to “reinstate” Aristide to power. Activists such as the late Eleizer Regnier and other Haitian-Bahamian activists and lawyers called for rights for Haitian migrants and their children born in the Bahamas. Bahamian newspapers, particularly the Bahamas Tribune, began to write more objective articles on the situation in Haiti, as well as a weekly news column in Kreyòl. However, anti-Haitian editorials also claimed that Haitians were importing diseases and increasing the crime rate in the Bahamas (Craton 2005 282).

The Bahamian government supported the return of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. When he was back in power in 1994, the heated rhetoric and demonstrations cooled down slowly. A number of political refugees and other Haitian residents in the Bahamas took the opportunity to return back home in hopes that Aristide would improve the conditions in Haiti (Craton 2005 283). Three months after his return, Aristide signed an accord with the Bahamas, in which Haiti agreed to enforce repatriating eight hundred Haitians every
month for the entire year. In exchange, the Bahamian government agreed to ensure that Haitian nationals living in the Bahamas ten years or more would gain legal status. In addition, the Bahamas consented to enforce the rights and laws protecting children born in the Bahamas to Haitian parents (Craton & Saunders 465). As a result of this accord, the Bahamian government detained and repatriated fifty-six hundred Haitians. The Haitians were able to pack, sell their household goods, close their bank accounts, and to leave humanely without harsh treatment. Haitians were picked up by a chartered plane to return them back to Haiti. Once they arrived at Port-au Prince, they received food, clothing, a payment of 100 dollars, and free transportation to the place of origin, mostly the Northwest department of Haiti (Craton & Saunders 465).

The 1995 accords did not solve long-term issues between Haiti and the Bahamas, but there was a slight improvement a year after this accord was enacted. There were reports that the number of Haitian children in Bahamian schools decreased and that the number of Haitians at hospitals and clinics decreased as well. Bahamian employers complained of a labor shortage because fewer Haitians were available for work. There were attempts from large-scale employers to renew labor permits to attract more Haitians (Craton & Saunders 465). Once again, newspaper articles argued that employers who are desperate to recruit Haitians for cheap labor are responsible for the large influx of Haitians in the Bahamas. The attempt by employers in the Bahamas indicates the ongoing cycle of cheap labor, profit, and the pressures of globalization. Nonetheless, the influx of Haitians in the Bahamas can only be remedied depending on the political and economic situation in Haiti:
That these changes represented more than a temporary easing of the problem posed to the Bahamas by illegal Haitian migrants, however, depended mainly on a continuing improvement in economic, social, and political conditions in Haiti. Without such an improvement, the migration would surely be renewed and once more press on the ability of the Bahamas to accommodate it (Craton & Saunders 465-466).

The political climate had changed under Aristide. The poor Haitian majority was no longer excluded by the Haitian state. But the Bahamas was not entirely committed to the accord and failed to properly review Haitian nationals eligible for legal residency or repatriation. Like the accords signed between Haiti and the Bahamas in 1971 and 1985, the 1995 accord was not renewed, and it was allowed to expire (IOM Migration Report). Continued success of any bilateral agreement between Haiti and the Bahamas hinges upon how Haitians perceive the economic and political circumstances that are most advantageous to them.

In 2000, Jean-Bertrand Aristide ran for a second term in his party and in the presidential elections. Lavalas, won 80 percent of the vote. The landslide victory prompted a joyous celebration in Port-au Prince, and as Haitians cleaned up the streets and got rid of trash, many were excited about Aristide’s return to power once more (Hallward 81). The Bahamian government expected that once Aristide assumed the presidency again, the number of Haitians entering the Bahamas would decline. The Haitian Ambassador to the Bahamas indicated that migration trends could change due to Haitian confidence in a new administration under Aristide:

We know there will be an improvement in the number of Haitians leaving Haiti because they know over time Mr. Aristide will try to improve the country’s economic situation. It will not happen overnight but he will begin some economic endeavors in order to improve the economic situation of the masses (Bahamas-Tribune 1/10/01).

Before Aristide’s inauguration in 2001, the Haitian government was near bankruptcy and most of the Lavalas Party’s economic policies were severely compromised by the International Monetary Fund and other international financial institutions. The Haitian government was under constant paramilitary pressures leading to insecurity around the country. Finally, there was a consistent barrage of anti-Aristide and anti-Lavalas propaganda by Haiti’s wealthy elite and “U.S. funded media” (Hallward 131). All of these factors were challenging for the Lavalas government.

The Bahamas and Haiti attempted to create another immigration accord in 2003. Negotiations between Bahamas’s foreign minister Fred Mitchell and Aristide stalled because of disagreements on giving amnesty towards Haitians who already reside in the Bahamas “illegally.” The Bahamas was also under pressure from the United States Embassy to confront Aristide on democracy and human rights issues. However, the Bahamian government “made it clear” to the U.S Embassy that they would avoid any confrontation or tension with Aristide and preferred “continued engagement” with Aristide (Nassau-Guardian 6/27/2011).

Finally, the Bahamas and Haiti reached an agreement, but Aristide was not able to sign the 2003 accord. Haiti’s government was overwhelmed, constrained, and was unable to govern, due to a “campaign of destabilization” against the popular Lavalas Party and Aristide. The government had to deal with “forced structural adjustment”
policies, with small but powerful rightwing civil organizations supported by the United States, and with “systemic media manipulation”, all backed by a paramilitary force (Hallward 177). In February 2004, Aristide was forced out of power through a second coup. The Bahamian government attempted to engage with the newly installed Haitian government to sign a bilateral agreement, but the new government’s priority was to keep Haiti secure (Nassau-Guardian 4/6/2004). The 2003 bilateral agreement was not signed by Haiti after the coup. The success of Haitian-Bahamian immigration accords depends on the economic and political stability of both nations.

Despite, the flaws and weaknesses of Aristide, the Lavalas Party was the only political movement able to gain the confidence of the Haitian masses:

For the first time in its history, Haiti’s people were ruled by a government of their choosing, one that adopted their priorities as its own. There are good reasons why so many of it supporters remain unwilling to this day to abandon their calls for Aristide’s return, why they refuse US and NGO calls simply to “move forward” and “look ahead” to a future that the international community has chosen for it. More than its concrete achievements, perhaps the most important reason why a majority of the Haitian poor remains sympathetic to Lavalas in general and to Aristide in particular is the fact that, despite its limitations and mistakes, they could affirm them as vehicles for their own empowerment (Hallward 136).

The Haitian majority, particularly those from rural areas, were excluded from political institutions, especially under the Duvalier regime. Haiti was under economic and political pressures from globalist powers to mold itself into a cheap labor nation with limited civil and labor rights for most Haitian workers. Aristide attempted to change Haiti’s political institutions and provide alternatives for the poor Haitian majority beyond intensive cheap labor work. In addition, his “rapport with the Haitian masses”, from the
rural peasant to the urban slum dweller, was a huge threat to the forces of globalization (Hallward 174).

The relationship between migration trends and the global economy is further complicated when nations are “stuck in a liberal paradox” because they cannot implement their own laws to control migration. After World War II, nations have been trapped between the external forces that advocate opening up to the international economy and national political forces that advocate closing their borders to international migration (Portes and DeWind 7; Hollifield 63). Migration and trade are “inextricably linked.” Opening up to trade and liberalizing a nation’s economy also leads to the “rise of the migration state” that can escalate into a conflict between actors involved in international commerce and political figures involved in nationalist movements geared to restrict migration (Hollifield 65). States like the Bahamas encounter a daunting task when it comes to the “liberal paradox” because it is difficult for them to find the “appropriate equilibrium” between international trade and migration. The continual influx of migrants is a “cause and consequence” of a nation’s dependency on the neoliberal model. It is likely that nations will remain stuck in this “liberal paradox’ for years to come (Hollifield 82).

The economic policies that forced the Bahamas to recruit cheap labor and forced Haiti to be a Caribbean cheap labor hub have forced these two island nations to be at odds with each other once more. The neoliberal model has both affected Haiti and the Bahamas, as these nations opened up to global trade and investment. The result is that the Bahamas and Haiti are also stuck in a “liberal paradox” because they cannot control the
forces of globalization on their island. The pressures of financial globalist policies further exacerbated relations between Haiti and the Bahamas, and fueled even more xenophobic sentiment. During the early 20th century, the Bahamas was once a cheap labor-recruiting hub for Miami. Bahamians were discriminated against by whites in Miami who portrayed them in the local media as criminals and rebellious outsiders. Sadly, the repressive tactics that were used against Bahamian migrant workers who built Miami were used against Haitian migrant workers who built Nassau’s hotels and tourist sector.

Transnational Migration & Being “Bahaitian”: The challenges and complexities of Hybridity in the Bahamas

The nation is no longer the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized in the ‘horizontal’ view of society. The nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, an ethnography of its own claim to being the norm of social contemporaneity. ---Homi Bhabha

One other aspect of globalization is the transformative relationship between identity and the nation. Bahaitians or Haitian-Bahamians are Bahamians born to Haitian parents. Haitian-Bahamians had to navigate how to identify themselves in a nation that reaffirms cultural and national homogeneity for Bahamians. News articles called for Bahaitians born to undocumented Haitian parents to be expelled from the Bahamas, despite the fact that most Bahaitians have lived in the country their entire lives:

As a side point, I would like to take issue with those persons who have the twisted idea that someone born in The Bahamas of “illegal” foreign parents can suddenly—by birth become “legal” Bahamians. Illegal can’t beget legal—no way. Only Bahamian-born children of “legal” foreign parents have a right to even “apply” for citizenship (Nassau-Guardian 9/12/89)
Some Bahamians consider hyphenated hybrid identity as a threat to Bahamian nationalism and they insist that Bahamian-Haitians should be “deported” to a place they have never been before to languish in Haitian prisons:

Now, regarding the so-called “Haitian–Bahamian” week that was recently declared by the Prime Minister, let me only say that in my view the Bahamian nationality is not a hyphenated nationality. One is either a Bahamian or not a Bahamian. There is no such thing as a Haitian-Bahamian, a Jamaican-Bahamian, an American-Bahamian or any other kind of a “hyphenated Bahamian.” There are only Bahamians (Nassau Guardian 9/8/1989).

The media’s portrayal of Haitian-Bahamians as gang members and criminals and harsh treatment from classmates in schools have caused Haitian-Bahamians to hide their heritage; some have changed their names rather than expose their Haitian identity:

There is a stigma attached to Haitian origins; a social/ethnic blemish that many young people try to hide because of the stinging ridicule and contempt heaped on them through no fault of their own. I remember a young man at COB [College of the Bahamas] who insisted on Anglicizing his name in my class and others who tolerated all sorts of mispronunciations because they at least didn’t sound French (Nassau-Guardian 6/2/2011).

Anglicizing one’s name to make themselves indistinguishable from other Bahamians was common among second and third generation Haitian-Bahamians, and Haitian-Bahamian women married Bahamian men and took the name of their spouses (Tinker 165, 175). Yet, other Haitian-Bahamians were not ashamed of their Haitian background and, in fact, choose to fight the stigmatization of Haitian-Bahamians.

In response to the marginalization of Haitians and Haitian-Bahamians, organizations were formed to support them. The Haitian-Bahamian Society, established in 1987 in Freeport, Grand Bahama, was formed by young Bahamians of Haitian descent
to amend the law regarding children of Haitian parents who have to apply for citizenship by age 18, to eliminate stereotypes about Haitian-Bahamians, and to provide scholarships for high-achieving Haitian-Bahamians in higher education (Bahamas-Tribune 7/19/1989). The founder of the Haitian-Bahamian Society, Jetta Baptiste, expressed the need for this organization to properly represent other Haitian-Bahamians: “as a Bahamian born of Haitian descendants I think there is a vital need for people with similar backgrounds as myself to form an organization with a common goal: one which is to be the support system and a voice for our people” (Bahamas-Tribune 7/19/1989). Two years after the formation of the Haitian-Bahamian Society in 1987, Prime-Minister Lynden Pindling declared a week in July Haitian-Bahamian Society’s week, to build an understanding between Haitians and Bahamians and also to celebrate the cultural hybridity and contributions of Haitian-Bahamians. However, Haitian-Bahamians are still not integrated into the Bahamas, as they are not recognized as citizens. Haitian-Bahamians may sound and look like any Bahamian, yet the similarities disappear once a Haitian-Bahamian is required to provide the proper identification. Without sufficient identification, Haitian-Bahamians have difficulty landing a job or purchasing property.

During the last four and half years, the government of the Free National Movement party (FNM), Bahamas’ conservative party has granted citizenship to 2,600 people, but there was no information about how many of that number were Haitian or of Haitian descent (Nassau-Guardian 2/10/2012). Nonetheless, the idea of Haitian-Bahamians as a voting bloc has become a recent issue. When the current President of Haiti, Michel Martelly, visited the Bahamas in February, 2012, he visited a church filled
with thousands of Haitian-Bahamians and he advised them about empowering themselves in the Bahamas, particularly during an election year: “I told them to organize themselves and identify in the upcoming election who is on their side. That way they can become a force. By being [unified] in the elections they might have people taking care of them. This is the democratic way” (Nassau-Guardian 2/10/2012).

Political observers and members from the three leading political parties in the Bahamas expressed that the comments of the Haitian president were “inappropriate” and “ill-timed,” considering that the election in the Bahamas was near (Nassau-Guardian 2/10/2012). A former immigration minister and chairman of the Progressive Liberal Party, expressed his dismay at President Martelly’s comments, and expressed that “it was an insult to the Bahamian people that a foreigner would come here and instruct Bahamian citizens to vote one way or the other” (Nassau-Guardian 2/10/2012). A PLP Senator expressed his concern about how the President’s comment resort to political pandering:

> It was totally inappropriate for him to make those statements in the run-up to the next election because there were so many persons who just received citizenship by the FNM, and they may take that as [a cue to say] that’s who they should vote for (Nassau-Guardian 2/10/2012).

Political leaders and officials appeared quite defensive about the Haitian President’s comments, which they viewed as an imposition on Bahamas’ national affairs, but they did not acknowledge the struggles and challenges of Haitian-Bahamians applying for citizenship. Instead, Haitian-Bahamian voters were being urged now to vote according to the national needs of the Bahamas, but many documented Haitian-Bahamians remember that they are still foreigners because of their parents’ background.

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When Bahamians ignore the experiences, discrimination, and rejection of the hybrid identities of Haitian-Bahamians, they employ another evasive exclusionary tactic. However, Haitian-Bahamians are adding another dimension to the Bahamian national narrative by occupying in-between spaces.

Homi Bhabha argued for a move away from simple categories of class, gender, and specific subjectivities, and he advocates instead the importance of “in between spaces” in understanding identity: “It is the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference - that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationess, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated” (Bhabha 2). Bhabha uses the metaphor of a stairwell to symbolize liminal space as an interstitial path that connects one level of identity to the next. This interstitial path between fixed identities unlocks the possibilities of cultural hybridity (Bhabha 5). There are ambivalent facets of migration and nationalism and Bhabha explains that the role of the nation is also a transgressive and ambivalent phenomenon:

However, the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political projection is the effect of the ambivalence of the ‘nation’ as a narrative strategy. As an apparatus of symbolic power, it produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or ‘cultural difference’ in the act of writing the nation (Bhabha 201).

Bhabha advocates that narratives are multifaceted and disperse the homogeneous horizontal structure of society (Bhabha 202). He argues that culture is both “transnational and translational” (Bhabha 247). It is transnational because specific histories are from the postcolonial perspective, and culture is translational because, as in the Bahamas, “cultures is translational because such spatial histories of displacement-
now accompanied by the territorial ambitions of ‘global’ media technologies make the question of how culture signifies, or what is signified by culture, a rather complex issue” (Bhabha 247).

In the Bahamas, the media play a role in how national culture is being challenged, re-evaluated, and hybridized, particularly with the presence of Haitian-Bahamians. Bhabha mentions his own migration experience and how it inspired him to value the role of cultural hybridity. He believes that migrants, refugees, and the diaspora arrive to “change the history of the nation” (Bhabha 243). In defining the nation, there is no beginning or end. The meaning of the nation is consistently transgressive and multidimensional.

*Post Earthquake relations: An Entanglement between Charity and Anxiety*

The earthquake in Haiti has prompted several nations and international organizations all over the world to provide humanitarian aid. But, under the lens of the mainstream media, the U.S., Canada, France, and the UN Stabilization Mission appeared to be the main actors conducting a top-down approach in “reconstructing” Haiti. Except for recording reaction in the Dominican Republic, there was little media coverage about the reaction of Haiti’s neighboring Caribbean states and CARICOM’s role in the catastrophe. In the midst of providing help and showing compassion to Haitians, anxiety increased in the Bahamas about more Haitian migrants as a result of the earthquake.

In the wake of Haiti’s catastrophic disaster, organizations and churches in the Bahamas such as the Methodist church and Bahamas Christian Council “pooled their
resources and capabilities” to deliver emergency relief supplies (Bahamas Tribune 1/21/2010). The Bahamian Chamber of Commerce along with several different business associations organized a two-day telethon and concert to raise money for Haiti (Bahamas Tribune 1/21/2010). The Bahamian government established an emergency assistance fund for Bahamians to donate money to relief efforts. The government also coordinated their efforts with CARICOM’s Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management (Bahamas Tribune 1/15/2010). Political officials also expressed their “compassion” and the need to assist Haiti, but not without a little caution about the national security of the Bahamas and the possible influx of more Haitians entering the Bahamas. Perry Christie, leader of the opposition party at the time, shares his concern about Haiti:

> It is also incumbent upon the government to continually brief the Bahamian people on the security implications for our country and how this is likely to affect migration from Haiti to this country. A word ought to be said about our diplomats if any in Haiti. We are grateful to God for sparing our nation, particularly our family and friends in Inagua and the other south-eastern islands, the full impact of this catastrophe” (Bahamas Tribune 1/14/2010).

When the former Prime Minister of the Bahamas, Hubert Ingraham, released and granted temporary status to over 100 Haitian detainees, Haitian-Bahamians proclaimed his decision as a “positive humanitarian gesture”, while some Bahamians, particularly from the opposition political party, viewed it as “as a contradiction of the Department of Immigration's zero-tolerance policy on illegal immigration” (Bahamas Tribune 1/16/2010). Offensive and xenophobic comments, or what the Prime Minister called “misinformation, prejudice, and hard-heartedness spewed over the airwaves…” just a few days after the earthquake (Bahamas Tribune 1/18/2010). Prime Minister Ingraham
reassured Bahamians that he did not expect a large influx of immigrants from Haiti, explaining that most Haitians who migrate to the Bahamas are from Northern Haiti, and not Port-au-Prince, which is near the epicenter (Bahamas-Tribune 1/16/2010). As the political cartoon discussed above depicted, Ingraham also stated that detainees who were granted temporary status are required to “check in” with the Department of Immigration in three months and their status will be reviewed once it expires after six months (Bahamas-Tribune 1/18/2010).

The temporary status of detainees expired in September 2010 and the Bahamian government resumed their repatriation exercises. Approximately 900 Haitians were repatriated during 2010 (Bahamas-Tribune 9/3/2010). In response, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has called on nations with high Haitian refugee populations, like the Bahamas, to suspend the repatriations until conditions in Haiti improved (Nassau-Guardian 6/23/2011). The spokesman for the UNHCR stated that repatriating Haitian refugees would affect them on humanitarian grounds:

Despite the recent elections and ongoing reconstruction efforts, Haiti. Weakened by the earthquake, cannot yet ensure adequate protection or care, especially for some vulnerable groups in case of return, such as unaccompanied minors, disabled persons, people with health problems, victims of trafficking or of sexual abuse (Nassau-Guardian 6/23/2011).

However, repatriations continued while the influx and smuggling of Haitians into the Bahamas increased. Recently, in June 2012, a boat with 28 Haitian passengers left Treasure Cay, Abaco, bound for Florida. The 25-foot boat “Glory Time” experienced some engine trouble and capsized off the coast of North Abaco. Eleven bodies were recovered from the sunken vessel. Among the dead were six women, four boys, and one
girl (Nassau-Guardian 6/12/2012). Ten passengers were not found and only seven passengers survived. Bahamian police claimed that the boat was part of an illegal human smuggling operation, and that the boat captain organized the operation, but the boat captain is still missing (Nassau-Guardian 6/15/2012). The recent tragedy reveals how the Bahamas is a “major smuggling zone” for humans and drugs to the United States. Most of those being smuggled are Haitians attempting to reach the United States through the Bahamas (Nassau-Guardian 6/25/2012). In addition, there is concern that the Bahamian government has not been vigilant in aggressively prosecuting human smugglers.

In May, 2012, the Progressive Liberal Party defeated the Free National Movement Party in Bahamas’ national elections. The PLP campaigned on a tougher immigration policy than the FNM. The PLP called for “fixing a Broken system” by increasing “air and border patrols,” creating a new Royal Bahamas Defence Force to protect the borders, and working with the U.S. Government in the “processes of interdiction, migration, settlement, and repatriation of immigrants.” In addition, the new PLP administration is attempting to place intelligence officers in Haiti to track smugglers before they bring Haitians to the Bahamas. The PLP also proposed to establish a “joint commission agreement” with Haitian President Michel Martelly (Nassau-Guardian 5/30/2012).

In the meantime, Haitian migrants are routinely repatriated from the Bahamas. Over three hundred Haitians were captured and repatriated during the month of August, 2012 (Nassau-Guardian 8/18/2012). But once again, the recruitment of expatriate workers has backfired against the Bahamas, because Bahamians now face increasing

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numbers of Chinese migrant workers. Most of these migrants are construction workers building the multi-billion dollar mega resort and casino called Baha-Mar on Cable Beach near Nassau, and there are questions about if Baha-Mar executives are hiring Bahamians (Nassau-Guardian 6/26/2012). The cycle of repatriating Haitian migrant workers while recruiting foreign migrant workers has repeated itself in neoliberal Bahamas.

**Conclusion: Recognizing and addressing Intra-racial Discrimination**

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/ racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. Likewise the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’ already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated ---Homi Bhabha

The image and reputation of Haiti have been consistently portrayed in a negative light in U.S. mainstream media. Reports often describe Haiti as the world’s poorest country in the Western Hemisphere; Haitian refugees are often reduced to the derogatory term “boat people”; Haitians were often associated with AIDS that were allegedly linked with Vodou ceremonies; Vodou is often misinterpreted as an evil practice filled with bad spells, witchcraft, and zombies. The negative image was reinforced when Christian evangelical mogul Pat Robertson claimed that the earthquake was “divine retribution” for Haiti because the slave revolt and revolution was based on a “pact with the devil.”

New York Amsterdam News had described Haiti as a “leper among nations,” due to the violence and corruption of the Duvalier regime (Pamphile 168).

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Haiti has been considered an “Island among Islands,” and after a long, bloody revolution for independence, Haiti was “immediately ostracized,” and alienated from the international community, including from neighboring Caribbean colonies (Smith 2005 187). The United States punished Haiti for being the first black republic by imposing an economic embargo and did not recognize Haiti as an independent nation until 1862. Haiti’s isolation led to its distant relationship to other Caribbean neighbors. The “ideological construction of otherness”, as Bhabha describes it, emerged and Haiti has been viewed as backward, unchristian, and uncivilized, a negative example that other Caribbean islands must not follow.

During the mid twentieth century, as Anglophone Caribbean territories emerged from a broken federation and achieved independence, there was very little concern about the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti. During the black power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Anglophone Marxists and nationalists did not relate favorably to the noirist version of Haitian nationalism. These negative images about Haiti have been seared into the “popular consciousness” of Haiti’s Caribbean neighbors, particularly during the Duvalier era (Smith 2005. 179-180). The increased number of Haitians migrating to neighboring islands has further exacerbated the negative image of Haiti:

For newly decolonized Caribbean states in the 1970s and 1980s, insecure with their independence and overly conscious of the need to present themselves as beacons of civility and postcolonial order, association with Haiti and its waves of refugees fleeing by the hundreds in rickety fishing boats, was potentially embarrassing (Smith 2005. 180).
The Bahamas received many more Haitian migrants than any Anglophone Caribbean Island and Haiti had difficulty entering the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM).

Haiti first petitioned for CARICOM membership in 1974, Haiti’s inclusion received support from Eric Williams, of Trinidad & Tobago, and from Jamaica. However, the CARICOM Secretariat did not include Haiti as a member, but agreed to a “special relationship” with Haiti (Smith 2005.181). It was assumed that Haiti was not included because of the political instability and human rights violations during the Duvalier dictatorship, but exclusion of Haiti was also about CARICOM attempting to establish its legitimacy as a viable regional market. It was not until 1990, when Aristide was democratically elected that CARICOM took interest in Haitian affairs. Nonetheless, Haiti was granted full membership in1997, twenty years after CARICOM was founded (Smith 2005. 183).

The cultural, lingual, and historical differences between Haiti and the Caribbean have not always been about respect for diversity, but have been rooted in racial colonial discourse. Since its Revolution, Haiti has been feared as the place that can easily uproot colonial authority and slavery, and to counteract that fear, Haiti was “fixed” by racial colonial discourse as a place that is uncivilized, unstable, unchristian, unenlightened, and chaotic. Other colonized territories nearby, were discouraged from having meaningful relationships with Haiti, and from this binary set of oppositional differences the ambivalent and negative relationship between Haiti and the Bahamas was formed.
Despite the fact that the Bahamas and Haiti had close economic ties, the media ironically repeated these same differences between the Bahamas and Haitian migrants. After the Anglo-Caribbean islands had been granted their independence, Haiti, where independence was not granted but won on the fields of battle with Haitian blood, was still denied parity and legitimacy as a political and economic partner. The imposition of this intra-racial conflict can be traced back to the Haitian slave revolt when the British rewarded Bahamian blacks for capturing Haitian slaves in the Bahamas. British divide and conquer colonial strategies indoctrinated Bahamian blacks with the notion that Haitian slaves were dangerous, and the British were the first to impose religious and cultural differences upon Bahamians against Haitians.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot described how the Haitian Revolution “entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened” (73). One of the main challenges as to why Haiti is stigmatized is because Haiti’s historical contributions is excluded or ignored within the education curriculum of the Bahamas, and also the United States. In the tenth grade, I looked up Haiti in the index of my global studies textbook and found only a small paragraph about the Haitian Revolution. It explained that Haiti gained its independence, because the spread of yellow fever weakened French troops and therefore they retreated. There was no mention of Toussaint L’Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, or the Battle of Vertières.

The availability of Haitian culture and history is limited within a collegiate level as well. Haitian Studies even remains on the periphery of academic units such as Latin American and Caribbean Studies. There are about six institutions that consistently offer
Haitian Kreyòl, culture, and history courses. For example, the University of Massachusetts in Boston is home to the Haitian Studies Association, which has a language institute and conducts conferences pertaining to issues concerning Haitians and the Diaspora. Other programs that offer courses on Haitian Kreyòl is Indiana University, Florida International University, and University of Florida. Institutions that include a Haitian Studies minor or concentration is the University of Kansas and York College (CUNY). Haitian Kreyòl courses and one Haitian history course is also available at the College of Bahamas. But, teaching Haitian studies in the Bahamas is essential at the pre-collegiate level, particularly when a substantial amount of students in Bahamian public schools are Haitian, or Haitian descent.

It is important to examine how media, nation-building, migration, and labor patterns were all tools in facilitating the divisions between two black identities. During the late nineteenth century, there was very little employment opportunities for black Bahamians, particularly after the decline of the pineapple industry. Black Bahamians migrated to Central America, to Dominican Republic, and to Miami to work. Many Black Bahamians worked in the agricultural sector and on railroad construction, but primarily they built Miami into a cosmopolitan and tourist hub. Although black Bahamians earned higher wages in Miami, they endured racism and segregation at the hands of the white population and the Miami Police. As the Bahamas transformed its economy, Haitians were recruited to build Nassau into a tourist hub of the Caribbean, and, ironically, Haitians experienced discrimination from black Bahamians. These events and migration
trends are inter-connected, and they expose the hypocritical mechanisms that can be identified as intra-racial discrimination.

One of the core ideals of Bahamian independence was to achieve and maintain black majority rule. Once the Bahamas has reached black-majority rule, the meaning of blackness or black identity was limited to the definition of the nation-state within a political context, and in the Bahamas, there is a lack of what Ifoema Nwankwo describes as “intra-racial relationality” (93). At the same time, the Bahamas had to prove itself as a stable modern Caribbean nation-state. The recruitment of professional foreign expatriates, retirees, bankers, tax fugitives, and businessmen from Europe and the United States, illustrate Frantz Fanon’s idea of the “two dimensions” of black individuals. The treatment of white expatriates in the Bahamas is quite different from how black Haitians are treated by black Bahamians. This “two dimensional” interaction manifested itself during the Spanish Wells conflict. Black Bahamians came to the defense of white Bahamians in the debate about the presence of Haitian school kids, despite the fact that white residents of Spanish Wells were discriminating against black Bahamians. Haitian migrants on the other hand are needed only for convenience to hold labor jobs that Bahamians deemed inferior.

Some national and cultural differences between Haitians and Bahamians are constructs designed to define who is dominant or superior in a modern nation-state and who, by binary opposition should be excluded. Print media sources repeat those ethnic divisions despite the close proximity and economic links that unite Haiti and the Bahamas. Once again, the media plays a powerful role as an institutional apparatus that
attempts to fix images and meanings (Hall). The above analysis of ethnic boundaries in Bahamian media reveals a deliberate and unnecessary generation of differences between Bahamians and Haitians in terms of language, religion, aesthetics, hygiene, and race.

The above analysis of editorial comments in the Bahamas Tribune and Nassau-Guardian, are the newspapers with the highest circulation in the Bahamas confirms the role of print media in the creation of what Benedict Anderson has described as an “imagined community.” The textual analysis of the comments printed in the newspapers indicates a struggle for control, for order, and for the imposition of the values of what is defined as modernity not in former peripheral colonies like the Bahamas but in former imperial centers. The articles reveal how the Bahamas holds to a particular artificial standard as a stable and modern Caribbean nation, because this standard is viewed as being eroded by the influx of illegal Haitians; these media sources tap into the fears of Bahamians. Stuart Hall’s constructionist approach describes how the meanings of media images, symbols, and words are arranged and contrasted, reflecting the technique and process of how Haitians are represented to readers. However, there are articles and editorials that dispute these differences and challenge Bahamian nationalist rhetoric by examining the root of this fear and resentment towards Haitians.

The nationalist rhetoric in the Bahamas continuously reiterates the cultural and ethnically homogeneous characteristics of what is a Bahamian. Paul Gilroy’s concept of cultural insiderism helps explain how shared national characteristics in the Bahamas glosses over the complexities of historical and racial experiences. The “Bahamians First” national movement focused on black Bahamians attaining political power from the white
elite. Yet after the Bahamas gained its independence, nationalism took a different
dimension, and the influx of Haitians became a threat to Bahamian national identity. The
different ethnic features displayed between Haitians and Bahamians were all hidden
under the guise of contemporary new racism. The emphasis on ethnic homogeneity has
an effect on Haitian-Bahamians, exhibiting facets of cultural hybridity.

The Bahamas should not be singled out as simply a nation that has not reconciled
with its blackness. Research findings clearly illustrate that there is racist discrimination
against Haitians in the Bahamas. In many of the articles, Bahamians repeat their feeling
of superiority and they denigrate Haitians for their appearance and hygiene, while they
depict Haitians as importers of disease. Once again, the construction of Bahamian
nationhood is linked to British black nationalism, which inherited features of European
fascism, feeding into the new contemporary racism against Haitians in the Bahamas.
Ultra-nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric against Haitians is quite frequent in Bahamian
media and editorials. In addition, the legacy of British colonialism is key to the formation
of Bahamian identity. The role of the Baptist and Anglican churches, Victorian
aesthetics, the English language, and Westminster system of governance, are all-
important British facets of Bahamians identity that are defended against Haitian
influence.

The effort to facilitate a long-term solution to undocumented Haitians in the
Bahamas should begin with finding strategies to overcome intra-ethnic racism between
Bahamians and Haitians. Bahamas and Haiti have been linked historically from the time
of the Lucayans and Tainos of Hispaniola and the time of close economic ties between
Northwestern Haiti and Southern Bahamas. However, both island nations are victims of colonialism and globalization. Currently, the neoliberal agenda is not helping Bahamian-Haitian relation but actually exacerbating the tension between the two. The post-earthquake reconstruction process in Haiti is still using the status quo to exclude the poor Haitian majority in the political and economic arena. Despite their flaws, the Lavalas Party and former President Aristide were the only political movement able to win the trust and support of the poor Haitian majority. Lavalas and Aristide began to establish viable immigration treaty arrangements between Haiti and the Bahamas. At that point, Haitians in Haiti and abroad, including in the Bahamas, felt that they were included in the political process to change Haiti for the benefit of Haitians and to the advantage of the entire region. As a result, the 1995 immigration accord with the Bahamas signed under Aristide experienced substantial success.

Because the Bahamian government is always aware of political trends in Haiti that increase immigration into the Bahamas, policies after the Earthquake have not encouraged the poor Haitian majority that they will be included in legal immigration agreements. As a result, Haitians leave Haiti by boat and sometimes through human smuggling schemes that endanger their lives. It is the Haitian government’s responsibility to invest in and empower the poor Haitian majority, particularly in providing diverse economic opportunities beyond assembly factories and cheap labor jobs. These factors would improve the quality of life, particularly for Haitians who live in the isolated Northwest region. CARICOM and the United Nations have not embraced the plight of Haiti sufficiently to provide lasting solutions. My dream is that the work done
by Haitianists would help politicians create policies that involve the Haitian people, and create sustainable strategies that will afford the Haitian people the kind of solutions they deserve.

The Bahamas also must realize that their future as a nation is connected with Haiti, particularly with the large presence of Haitian-Bahamians. Bahamians of Haitian decent have contributed to the island and are a part of the composition of the Bahamian nation. It is immigrants like Stephen Dillet, one of the first black members of the Assembly and a prominent figure in the free colored movement of the Bahamas that have made valuable contributions to the Bahamas. Haitian-Bahamians have illustrated that the dynamics of cultural identity are never one-dimensional. Haitian-Bahamians should not be ashamed or forced to hide their identities by anglicizing their names. Discriminating against Haitian-Bahamians, and restricting them from attaining citizenship, marginalizes Haitian-Bahamians and reduces them to a stateless status; stateless Bahamians cannot contribute positively to Bahamian society.

The animosity and discrimination towards Haitians will not solve the problem of Haitian migrants entering the Bahamas. A reasonable approach to creating a viable immigration policy is necessary, without anti-Haitian rhetoric. However, the intra-ethnic racism against Haitians must be acknowledged and addressed by examining the discursive practices of nation building in the Bahamas, and by educating all Bahamians about past historical struggles in the Bahamas and in the black Diaspora. A new critical national discourse on racism in the Bahamas should involve facing racism rather than
avoiding it and looking at the complexities of contemporary racism from new multi-dimensional lens, while respecting the multiple identities of blackness.
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