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"This rich and thoughtful edited volume challenges us to think through the meaning of terror, its everyday affects and effects, its echoes across the ocean, its memories and commemorations, and the circuits of power and politics through which it travels. The authors use their 'racialized and gendered positioning in [their] current locations' to theorize the interconnections between different sites and bodies subjected to terror. The collection is remarkably coherent, an imaginative, thought-provoking, and committed work of scholarship and politics."

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Letters (68)
courtesy of the artist.

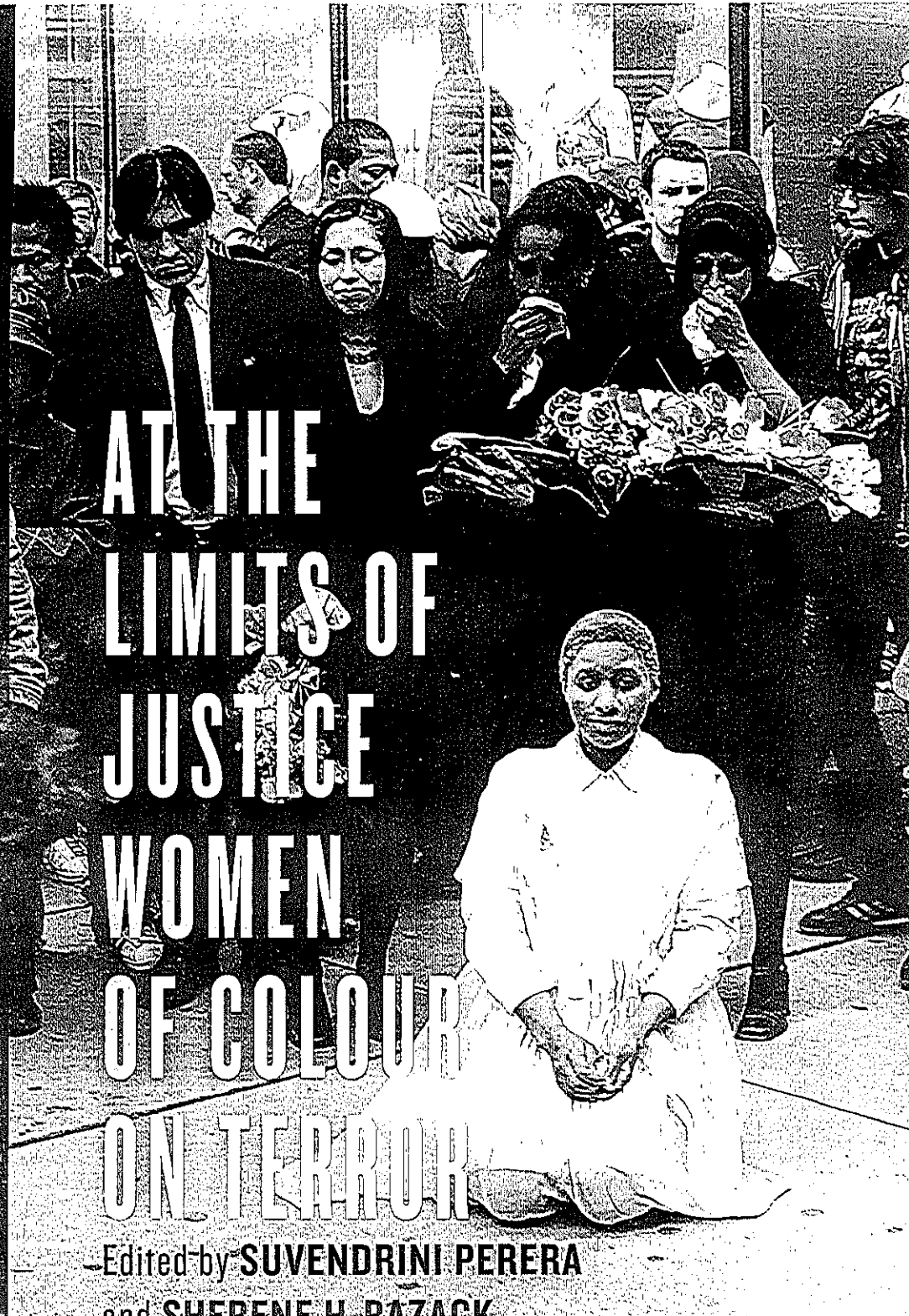


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AT THE LIMITS OF JUSTICE WOMEN OF COLOUR ON TERROR

Edited by **SUVENDRINI PERERA**
and **SHERENE H. RAZACK**

- 61 Bobis, *River, River*.
 62 Bobis, *River, River*.
 63 Bobis, *River, River*.
 64 Bobis, *River, River*.
 65 Bobis, *Fish-Hair Woman*, 4.
 66 Putting one's body on the line is discussed in Bobis, "The Asian Conspiracy."
 67 Bobis, "The Asian Conspiracy." See also Bobis, "Passion to Pasyon."
 68 Bobis, "The Asian Conspiracy." See also Bobis, "Passion to Pasyon."
 69 Bobis, *Fish-Hair Woman*, 56.
 70 Aaron Corn in Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines*, 202.
 71 Eng and Kazanjian, *Loss*, x.
 72 This water project was originally conceptualized as a river project on loss and empathy, with the story of *River, River* in conversation with the stories of specific water sites and communities in three countries: Philippines (Naga and Lupi rivers: Bikol), Canada (Fraser River: Vancouver), Australia (Allens Creek: Illawarra). But given the difficult hurdles in negotiation, the writer-performer decided to exclude the Australian process. The Canada and Philippine processes are currently in progress.
 73 Bobis, *Fish-Hair Woman*, 276.

14 Gone but Not Forgotten: Memorial Murals, Vigils, and the Politics of Popular Commemoration in Jamaica

HONOR FORD-SMITH

Kingston, Jamaica, 8 June 2012

I am at a sunset Vigil for Kavorn Shew, dead at 25 from a police bullet. Neighbours and family say police murdered Shew in his bed. His brother says he heard the police planning how they would report on their mission after they killed Kavorn.

It is sunset when the crowd makes its way slowly up the main road and turns off into the Mountain View neighbourhood. Youth, community members, representatives of activist organizations and even some members of the business community are all walking together – wearing white shirts as a gesture of solidarity and mourning. The crowd stretches across several slopes winding its way through the dusk in silence. Then it comes to a halt outside Kavorn's home. Candles are burning in the darkness as singing erupts and folks sway to popular spirituals like "Satan gimme pass."

Kavorn Shew was active in several youth organizations including the police youth club. He had played a role in the peace movement in Mountain View, where the murder rate was lowered significantly between 2007 and 2012. He was active in anti-violence organizing throughout the city and had been accepted to join the police force. Youth all across Kingston knew and respected him.

In their own defense the police regurgitated the hollow but familiar script that nearly every Jamaican knows by heart: Police on patrol entered a community and encountered men acting suspiciously. Gunmen opened fire on them. The police were forced to return fire resulting in persons losing their lives.

Immediately after the shooting, community members demonstrated. They held a meeting with the police demanding accountability and planned a march. When Jamaicans for Justice, a human rights organization fighting police executions like this, condemned the killing, expressed solidarity with

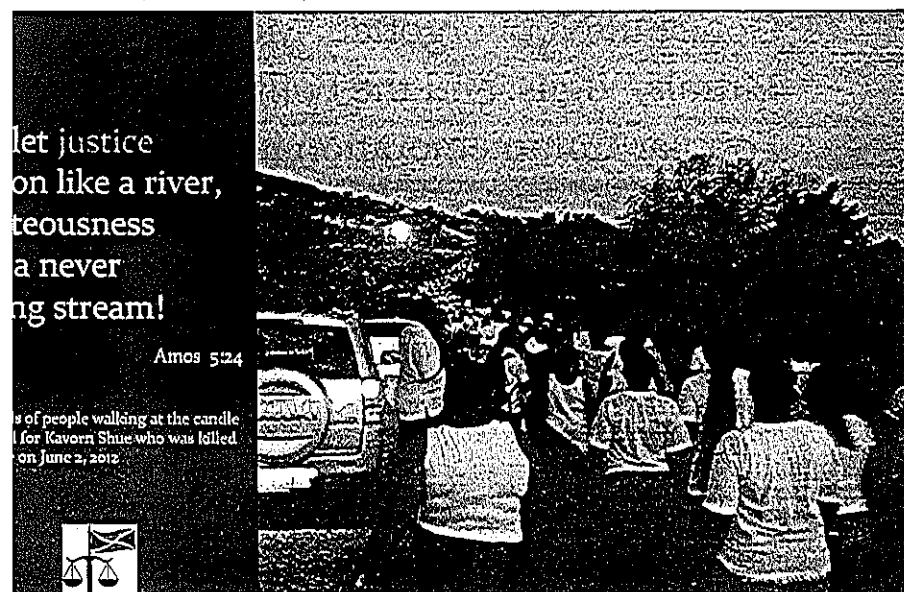


Figure 14.1. Vigil in protest of the murder of Kavorn Shue at Mountain View, Kingston, 2012 (photo courtesy of Jamaicans for Justice)

Kavorn's family and linked them with families of other victims of police shootings, the police claimed the march was a demonstration that could not take place without the required permit.

All day the event has been on again, off again. At 6 PM, we gather outside the police station anyway and begin to walk in single file along the sidewalk of the main road. The vigil cannot be stopped as long as it does not obstruct traffic. It is seen as a religious act that draws on wake traditions in which community members keep watch, pray and sing over the body of the departed. Such acts are outside the domain of the state. For a couple of hours the candles flicker in the wind as voices ring out. A preacher offers words of comfort and appeal for calm. For a few moments it seems that we are strong in numbers and will not give in to the power of violence.

It is commonplace to see, hear, and read about Jamaican violence and to encounter spectacular images of the "criminal Jamaican" in the

mainstream media and popular culture around the world. But acts of mourning such as the vigil described above demonstrate that far from being pathologically and inherently violent, Jamaicans actively resist violence in ways that are rarely reported. Acts of public memorialization have proliferated in Jamaica, where one consequence of the geopolitics of neoliberalism has been a dramatic rise in violent deaths since the late 1990s. Caught between extrajudicial killings by the state on the one hand and militarized strongmen on the other, community members attempt to reclaim the dignity of their dead in acts of memorialization that protest the unbearable human pain and environmental costs of violence.

Moving away from arguments that moralize, pathologize, and culturalize the roots of violence in racialized working-class communities, I argue that popular commemorative acts are haunted by interlocking local and global tensions that produce both state violence and violence that is simplistically labelled "criminal." I analyse two examples of popular working-class commemorations – vigils and street murals – mapping the ways these responses dramatize the hopes, desires, and survival strategies of local residents at the same time as they are haunted by invisible geopolitical presences. The proliferating memorials make vivid the many messy layers of violence that Jamaicans must negotiate and the violent losses on which the installation of the neoliberal order depends. More than this, they also dramatize how human subjects, caught in the web of hierarchical power relations, struggle to resist terror and elude death in the everyday. Grasping the meanings embedded in mourning practices can, I propose, complicate how we think of violence and criminality and nudge us towards reimagining transnational cultural and political possibility in the contemporary geopolitical moment.

I begin by discussing what attending to commemorative performance in the current context might help us understand. Then, showing how performances invoke older spiritual traditions of memorialization forged in transnational formations of racialized citizenship, I propose that taken together these performances reveal ambivalence about the effectiveness of challenging state violence in purely secular ways. Turning to the popular commemorative murals that appear on the walls of every neighbourhood in working-class Kingston (in spite of the police, who smother them with their signature blue paint), I show how these extend the work of mourning into the built environment, resurrecting

heroes of Cold War struggles, "outlaws" who operate trafficking networks locally and in the north, and unwilling victims of violence. The faces and bodies on the walls complicate easy narratives of Jamaican criminality by dramatizing the other side of that story – the thwarted humanity of those who have been criminalized, the deep desire for respectability and recognition, and the grief that materializes on walls and even cars to publicly transform the fragmented cityscape into a mosaic of mourning. Conversely, community members interpret these murals in conflicting ways that reveal painful disillusionment with formal politics and the state. These murals show how violence generates "useful" and respectable occupations in the legal, penal, and security systems and encourages a constant search for and cleansing of the enemy within while exploiting the caring labour of women. The last section of this chapter connects the work of commemoration to the broader geopolitical imperial agenda and draws out some of the ways in which the issues raised by memorialization might contribute to discussions about alternatives beyond the liberal focus on individual rights and freedoms.

Memory, the Body, and Neoliberal Violence

Diana Taylor has famously argued that "performances function as vital acts of transfer transmitting social knowledge, memory and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called 'twice behaved' behavior."¹ The implications of her argument are that if we want to understand how biopolitics circulate over time and across space and how this informs effective resistance, we need to explore precisely those areas that dominant knowledge-producing practices have excluded. Studying performance is important, Taylor argues, because embodied performances offer insights different from what the archive offers. Social meanings given to embodied repertoires are historically specific in terms of their enactment and their viewing and reception. They are also affective, enabling us to care – a word Connerton tells us originally meant "to mourn." So through the act of mourning, caring can be linked to remembering.²

Mourning is also a way to care because it *re-mem*bers the dead; that is, it invokes the spirit, experiences, and wisdom of the person who has passed, as many Caribbean religious traditions assert. It is a way of mobilizing and sharing stories that incite acts of humour and love

that re-create collective bonds. Mourning practices everywhere attempt to account for loss in productive ways. All societies do this, for in all societies death gives meaning to life and is the source of rebirth. Memorialization is the place out of which we re-create the meanings and relationships that are being threatened by death. The elegiac impulse is perhaps the original site of creativity in religion and art. But in societies like Jamaica where genocide, uprooting and forced transportation, racial slavery, and indentureship structured social formation, mourning practices and orality were sites where knowledge that was suppressed and excluded from the formal colonial archives broke through both sonically and visually to elaborate community-making memory.

Embodied practices in *nine nights* (wakes) in particular became sites for enacting and performing repertoires of memory because they allowed for a remembering of past community in affective ways. Kinesthetic commemoration of the ancestral past in Kumina, Pukkumina, and all the other African Caribbean religions enabled the reproduction of memory while bringing about ruptures with the enduring colonial narratives. These ruptures were not always discrete or pure. They overlapped with dominant forms of power because they borrowed and restructured repertoires of signs from European, Taino, and Asian cultures with predominant West African cultures. Nettleford describes the significance of Jamaican dead yard dances such as Kumina, Pukkumina, and Revival Zion, arguing that the dance that was performed in popular spiritual practices acted as a site of cultural maronage for resistance to colonization.³ In kinetic acts of transfer, the dance stored embodied knowledge and performed difference. These acts of living memory produced social spaces in which opposition to the dominant order could be tested.

Paul Connerton discusses the birth of histories from the spirit of mourning in the late twentieth century and argues that the memorialization of horrific forms of social and political violence was imagined as a failure and that forgetting was seen as a failure.⁴ At highly publicized memorialization commissions, victims and perpetrators told stories of their experiences in dramatic revelations. At a time when emancipatory narratives were being discredited, this unleashed a culture of trauma and regret and the collective past became imagined as a repository for unfulfilled claims and subjugated identities. Challenging the notion that remembrance is necessarily positive, he proposes that memorialization can be a mode of state legitimization and is not necessarily an

opportunity to repair injustice. Acts of memory can, he suggests, be reframed as ways of forgetting, and forgetting can be an important requirement for constituting new identities. While the conceptual workings of power always mediate specific scenarios of remembrance, Connerton suggests that new forms of historical narrative are generated when conventional forms of mourning are not adequate to express the "sheer accumulation of pain entailed in the process of historical transformation and enlightenment."⁵ He later adds: "It is a distinctive feature of such historical catastrophes and traumas that they precipitate cultural bereavement for which mourning customs are often difficult to find or invent, or which are widely felt to be scarcely adequate to the immensity of the bereavement, and where the emotional responses of the bereaved lack the formalised channels which might, to some extent, ritualise and contain those responses of loss and grief."⁶

Connerton does not theorize commemoration in relation to the violence that neoliberalism has unleashed against materially impoverished racialized populations around the world. In the case of Jamaica, new forms of popular memorialization such as vigils and street murals may have emerged as responses to the high body count, injury, and disability that affect impoverished urban communities. The links to neoliberalism are obvious. The retreat and reorganization of the bankrupt state as a result of structural adjustment and free trade has been well documented.⁷ After forty years of debt servicing combined with lingering colonial legacies, Cold War conflicts, political clientelism, corruption, widespread unemployment, and state bankruptcy, urban spaces have fragmented into fortified neighbourhoods.⁸ Some scholars refer to these as garrison communities because they are protected by groups of armed men. These groups, which formed after independence in support of political parties and then mobilized in opposition to socialism, were supported by some elites. Later, capitalizing on informal economies, they became linked to trafficking and violence. Leaders of the most powerful of these groups, often referred to as "Dons," control significant resources and space and dispense favours to their communities in return for loyalty, protection, and support.

Jamaica's high murder rate is generally assumed to be linked to high levels of crime. That rate has fluctuated between 58 and 64 per 100,000 (in a population of 2.5 million) since 2005 in spite of increased policing, surveillance, and investment in violence prevention programs by NGOs and bilateral agencies. The problem with these figures is that

they are themselves forgetful. That is, they "forget" those murders that are a result of state violence, and they do not explain that most of the violence occurs in urban spaces where impoverished black people live. Nor do the statistics include those who are executed extrajudicially or wounded and disabled by police. For example, in 2012 between January and March, the police killed fifty-six people, yet at the end of 2012 they reported a *reduced* murder rate of 1,087, a figure that excluded the numbers they themselves had murdered.

"In time the slave surrendered to amnesia. That amnesia is the true history of the new world. It is our true inheritance." Walcott wrote this in his much-cited essay "The Muse of History" in the 1970s.⁹ But perhaps Walcott was wrong. Is it possible to obliterate memory of violent acts like the Middle Passage or the destruction of iconographies of memory? Do memories of violence vanish? Do they form an invisible ecology in the same way that the eating of air by plants results in a release of carbon monoxide into the air at the end of a day of making oxygen for us to breathe?

I propose that in moments of incalculable social violence, the pain of loss re-emerges in new forms of commemoration that are haunted by traces of older struggles. Avery Gordon describes haunting not as an example of the occult but as a social phenomenon that performs "an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely."¹⁰ She proposes that the term haunting refers to moments in which something suddenly reminds us that the trouble we thought had been resolved is clearly still around. Haunting is a term that "describes those singular, yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar, when you lose your bearing on the world, lose direction, when what's over and done with comes alive and what's been in your blind spot comes into view."¹¹ Artefacts such as memorial T-shirts, posters, colourful funeral programs, elaborately decorated coffins, buttons, long obituaries, dance hall funerals, new modes of funeral dress, and memorial concerts are responses to the rise in the deaths, but they are also more than this. As the examples discussed below show, they haunt us with the unresolved social contradictions that produced the epidemic of death in the first place. They remind us covertly and overtly of the shadowy genealogies of violent death in Jamaican society. They spring up where the high body count contradicts the stories that justify it and bring into view the sides of the story that dominant narratives cannot represent – the desires and longings of the communities

that bear the brunt of the legacies of violence. They transform urban spaces into living deathscapes and confront us with the ways these acts of commemoration implicate us.

Vigils: Secular Politics and the Sacred

Vigils like Kavorn Shew's mobilize sacred languages and rituals that bypass the state, which is largely secular in character. The state routinely engages in rituals of violence against those constructed as threatening—the proverbial enemy within. In their own commemorative rituals, communities turn the state's definition of itself as secular and reasonable on its head, appealing instead to transcendent or divine forms of justice that might protect them from state violence.

One example of a long-standing commemorative performance that appeals to divine justice and that protests state violence is the Rastafarian "Bad Friday" commemoration of the Coral Gardens Massacre, which took place on Good Friday in 1963. This recalls one of the landmark acts of the newly independent Jamaican state against its citizens. In 1963, less than a year after the British flag was lowered, the state, headed by Alexander Bustamante, let loose on the Rastafari community of Coral Gardens in northwestern Jamaica in retaliation for the actions of five people involved in a land dispute. More than 150 people were arrested, tortured, and jailed, and an unknown number of Rastafari were killed. At the annual vigil, elders testify and there is drumming and poetry. In 2007, on the anniversary of the abolition of the trade in African bodies, the community used these performed memories to call on the state to formally apologize and offer reparations to the families scarred by the event. The Coral Gardens commemorations keep alive the memory of colonial and state repression and the story of the event. The community's claims have become better known as a result of the performance of counter-memories of the violent acts of the post-independence state.

In her discussion of this vigil and of violence in Jamaica, Deborah A. Thomas writes that the claims for reparations mobilized in Coral Gardens remind us that citizenship is not a static notion; rather, it is something that has developed over time in relation to transnational processes of violent racialization.¹² Contemporary state violence has to be seen as part of a project of class formation that implicates the local state and the geopolitical circuits to which it is connected. The counter-narratives enacted at vigils enable participants to envision alternative narratives of justice and belonging that bypass this problematic formation and to

claim cultural authority over their history. They also enable communities to draw on this authority in negotiations with a government eager to incorporate all such narratives into "brand Jamaica" for consumption in the global market.¹³

Performances like the vigil for Kavorn Shew mount claims to forms of citizenship forged within transnational processes while also appealing to divine justice. They covertly demand accountability, and to that end, they overtly depend on popular Christian frameworks such as singing, candle-lit processions, dance, sermonizing, and prayer. In so doing they are haunted by the ghost of the struggle for emancipation during which Christianity became a vehicle for opposition to slavery. By invoking this reference, vigils like the one held for Shew appeal to the state; they also avoid being shut down by the state since they appear to transcend its domain. Without the cover afforded by religion and the support of the entire community, secular acts might be seen as a challenge to the state and be shut down or lead to recriminations.

One story dramatizes this clearly. Jason Smith was shot and killed by police in the market near his house. He was fifteen years old. Some time after, his mother Monica Williams commissioned two memorial murals in his memory by a local artist. A third portrait adorned the bonnet of her car and travelled with her all around the city. At the bottom of the murals were the words "Police Brutality."

Meanwhile, Monica pursued her quest for justice in the courts, eventually winning a civil suit against the police. She spoke out against police violence and declared her son's innocence in the media, at public discussions, and at vigils. She discussed her case in a film about police violence made for the website of Jamaicans for Justice, a local human rights organization. Every year she applied to the police for permission to hold a secular memorial vigil for her son. This included a march to the place near the market where he was shot followed by a meal with all who attended, a viewing of the video of his funeral, and music. Sometimes the police refused permission for the participants to march to the market.

In May 2012, police shot another family member five times in the back right outside the family compound. Terrified, Monica painted out the words "police brutality" on the murals. But the family and sympathizers continued to protest his death, denouncing police violence in a small demonstration outside the police station. Immediately after this, police painted out the memorial murals covering the wall of the compound in their signature colour, blue. Jason's face disappeared from the walls of his mother's compound. Monica's family has reported

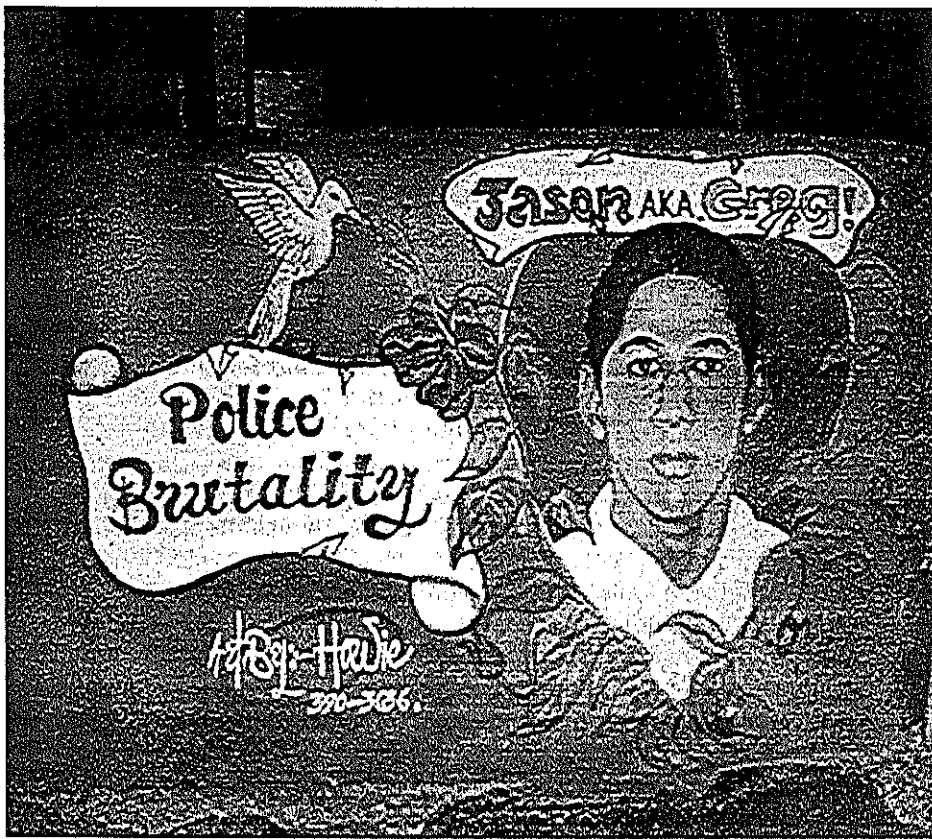


Figure 14.2. Memorial for Jason Smith by Vernon Grant, Spanish Town, Jamaica, 2009 (author's photo)

repeated intimidation by police and soldiers, who arrive at their compound heavily armed at unpredictable times and occupy their yard for no stated reason. I witnessed one such incident in 2012. Monica became afraid to speak out. Demoralized, she wanted to leave the country. Human rights organizations have denounced this intimidation and vigilantly support the family, but those groups lack the resources to constantly physically protect them or any other family, so the threat of murder and the atmosphere of police impunity act as effective silencers.

The blue patch on the compound wall that has covered Jason's portrait is haunted by this terror. The ghost of his image can be seen

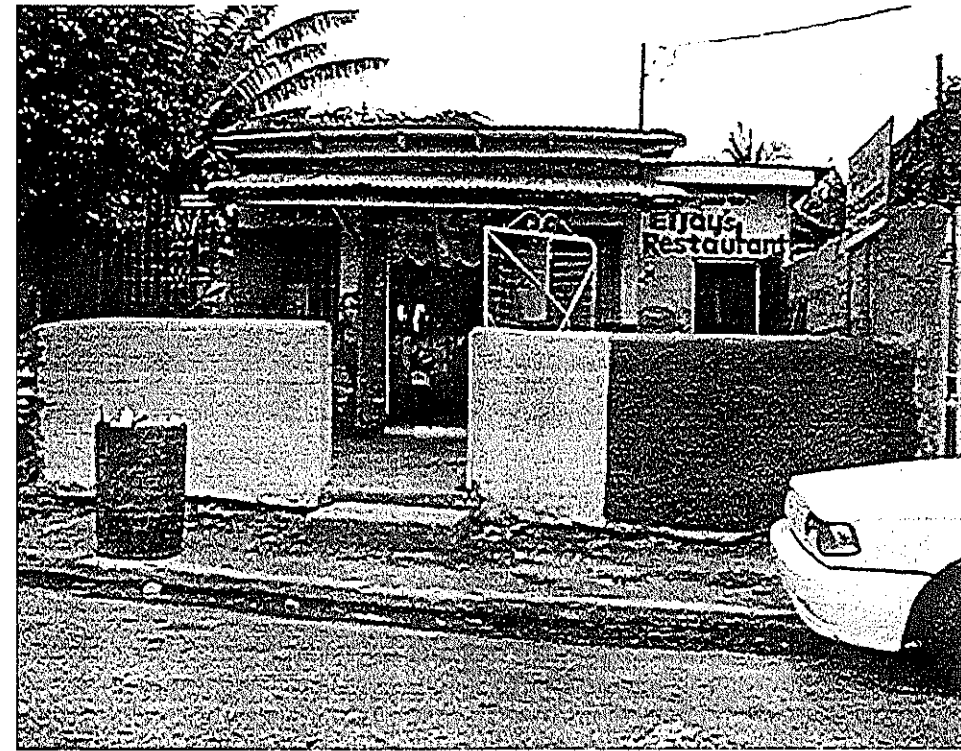


Figure 14.3. The wall outside the family compound after police painted out the mural by Vernon Grant in memory of Jason Williams. The square of blue paint corresponds to Figure 14.2 (author's photo)

through the police paint, bringing into view lingering questions about the relationship between contemporary state violence and its origins in a transnational world structured by colonial legacies. Vigils animate his memory and extend his presence from the wall to the street, but at the same time, the obliteration of his image demonstrates that protests framed entirely in terms of individual human rights and legal redress may lack impact. Unlike the demand for reparations mounted by the Coral Garden community, the court case that Monica Williams brought against the police was an individual legal challenge made by a singular subject that depended on the authority of the secular state. The court challenges made by women who have lost their children to police bullets address extrajudicial killings as violations of individual rights

and freedoms; if their challenges succeed, they are compensated with money. Mounting a legal challenge, however, takes considerable courage; some, like Monica Williams, find that courage with the support of civil organizations. But it has to be said that this strategy does not address the ways in which state violence affects marginalized urban communities as a whole. Nor does it address the fact that violence has been normalized as an ordinary part of social relations. Nor does it address the desires and aspirations of those who have had to learn to live with death. For all of this, we have to turn to the popular street murals.

Desire and Masculine Respectability in Kingston's Popular Memorial Murals

Commemorative murals, much like vigils, reframe stories of violence from the perspective of family and friends and appeal to both the sacred and the secular to mobilize affect. These are not the only street murals one finds in Kingston, but they were probably the predominant kind up until 2012. Since 2010, the police have been actively suppressing the murals in a number of communities, claiming that they are illegal and that they glamorize criminality. As new memorialization practices, the murals reframe media representations of criminal Jamaicans and challenge the state's marking of some citizens' bodies as disposable. Commemorative murals map violence onto the built environment of the city, thereby extending the presence of loss into the everyday world of passers-by. They assert that all those who have been killed deserve respect, not because of who they were or what they did, but "because you remember how valuable life is," as the Jamaican poet Mbala put it. "It is part of a process of remembering that we the living, we have value as well. Our lives mean something."¹⁴

The layered historical contempt with which inner-city residents are regarded by the state and the middle class was vividly demonstrated during the Tivoli uprising of 2010. At that time, the army and police shelled and shot their way into a barricaded residential community with little thought to the deaths, destruction, trauma, and disability that would result. Ostensibly, their goal was to capture and extradite a powerful community "don" who was wanted by the Americans on charges of trafficking and murder. The army assault and occupation did not result in his capture. An American surveillance plane, a Lockheed P-3 Orion, was flying above Kingston on 24 May 2010, the date of the army assault, and the tape shot from the plane was released as a result of pressure



Figure 14.4. Memorial for fallen members of the Rich and Famous, by Anthony Brown, Hannah Town, 2009 (author's photo)

from a *New Yorker* journalist. According to him, the tape in its present form raises more questions than it answers.¹⁵ In an eerie echo of the drone attacks in Pakistan, there is evidence that those who were killed in Kingston were not armed insurgents but residents unable to leave their homes in the space marked for attack. Three years after this violent and unnecessary incursion, the official death toll of those who were killed in Tivoli Gardens in the name of the state remains contested, as are the implications of this armed operation for other neighbourhoods in Jamaica. In communities where the residents are caught between intermittent attacks by police and armed strongmen, murals frame the dead as fallen warriors in a war on the poor. Memory is projected onto places that exist as a mnemonic for the body;¹⁶ the dead become a haunting presence among the living as they go about their business.

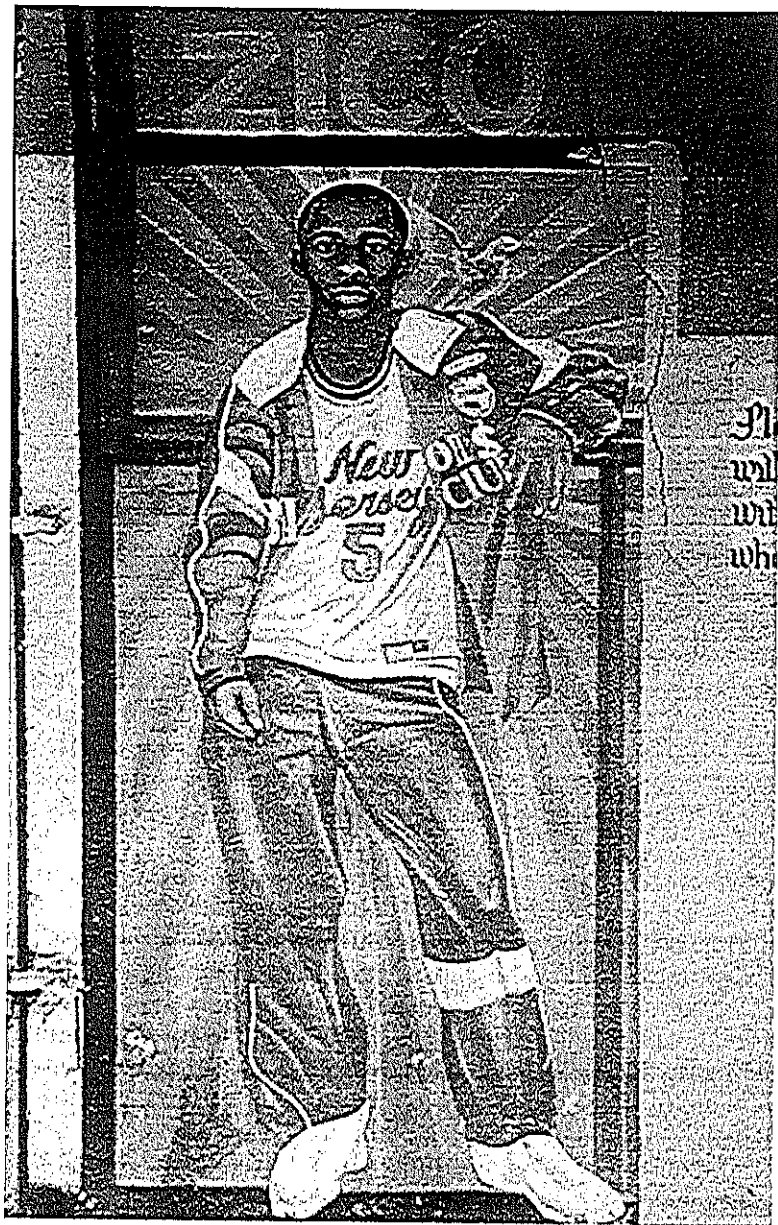


Figure 14.5. Zico, by Anthony Brown in Hannah Town, Kingston, Jamaica (photo courtesy of Kara Springer)

The work of the artist Anthony Brown at one time mapped the bodies of the fallen onto the walls of the Hannah Town community, literally linking place to embodied memories of violence. In the fall of 2013, all of his work was painted over by the police. Brown's murals of the Upsetters and the Rich and Famous marked the corners still controlled by these crews. Larger-than-life full figures looked out at passers-by, their power and authority greater in death. These images gave the community character, joining the private world of the home to the more public world of the street.

Brown worked a number of citations into these images. The first of these was spiritual but could also be read as political. Zico was depicted with a strong aura rising from behind him as if he were a saint or apostle. He appeared with a dove on his shoulder, a citational reference to Jesus after his baptism, or Bertrand Aristide making a triumphant speech on his return to Haiti after his first exile, or Fidel Castro on the day of his famous speech just after coming to power. The dove was a symbol of peace and a signifier of the Holy Spirit, which can manifest itself in the body of the believer. In much the same way, the spirits of these dead men became present in the lives of those who passed by their murals. Psalm 35, which appeared beside Zico's image, served notice on the living by appealing to an avenging divinity. "Plead my cause O Lord with those who strive with me. Fight against those who fight against me." Brown said this was a very popular psalm for memorials. Archaic calligraphy gave the inscription a formal weight and invoked the written textual authority of the Bible.

The black star over the head of Touchy was the artist's gesture to Pan-Africanism and the transnational struggles of black folks. It also cited the Black Star Steamship Line of Marcus Garvey, Brown's hero, whose memorials he said he would much rather be painting. The star also doubled as a symbol of the Rich and Famous. Between each panel of murals Brown had painted a large yellow star with the word SUPER; this combined elements of American popular culture with elements of African nationalism.

Down the street was Brown's detailed portrait of Dada (an alias), the former leader of the Upsetters, who had been executed by the police. Relaxed and confident, Dada dominated the urban landscape, appearing against the zinc fence that framed his domain. Dark glasses hid his eyes and reflected the community as if to say, "Look at me to see who you are." Psalm 35 appeared as a caption below this mural, and the words "Gone but not forgotten" appeared on a banner beside his alias.



Figure 14.6. Dada on the Upsetters corner, by Anthony Brown, 2009 (photo courtesy of Judith Salmon)

Beside him were portraits of his comrades who had been either executed or imprisoned by a special police squad. The Upsetters still held their corner and defended their turf, although police routinely shot their members and took others into custody. Both revered and feared, loved and criticized, Dada had become mythologized in community lore as someone who tackled both rival gangs and corrupt police.

In contrast, the mural portraits of Kimarley and Mollo depicted young men who embodied the desire for respectability and educated civility. Commissioned by their families, they depicted the bodies of youth who had been shot and killed because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Kimarley had been shot because he had witnessed the murder of his friend. Until then, he had done well at high school in spite of the odds against him and “never mix up inna notten.” Brown’s portrait of him recalled Marcus Garvey attired in his scholarly robes, embodying images of the modern African diasporic subject as responsible, respectable, educated, and ready to rule. Kimarley’s mural, then, expressed thwarted desire for educational attainment.

The image of Mollo standing outside his mother’s house as he once stood in life held together the extraordinary and the unthinkable with a reminder of what could have been. Portrayed in a magical garden, Mollo’s body haunted his mother’s wall. The geometric green-and-white pattern around him drew the viewer to his image in the same way a Haitian *vèvè* might appeal to the energy of a divinity.

Brown worked from domestic photographs and funeral programs, transposing the personal and private archival practice of the family photograph onto the public archive of the local community. In his hands, the bodies of the dead moved from inside to outside and from private to public. Loss was projected from the family onto community space through these images. Brown’s work largely conformed to the tropes of domestic photography – a man posing beside a car, a youth in a graduating gown, images taken from passports or visa applications, and so on. He remained faithful to the photograph but added his own ideas. In a context in which attacks on communities by gangs and state forces had become normalized, and where people often found themselves caught between the two, the murals challenged the normalization of violence, turning spaces of terror into places of memory. They reminded us that those celebrated as community heroes were also physically and materially marginalized as worthless lives within the narratives of the neocolonial nation.

Geopolitical Ghosts and Contested Memories

Geopolitics haunted these murals both in terms of what they showed and in terms of the violence of what was not shown. In 2010, during the occupation of Tivoli Gardens, police painted out the murals, destroying

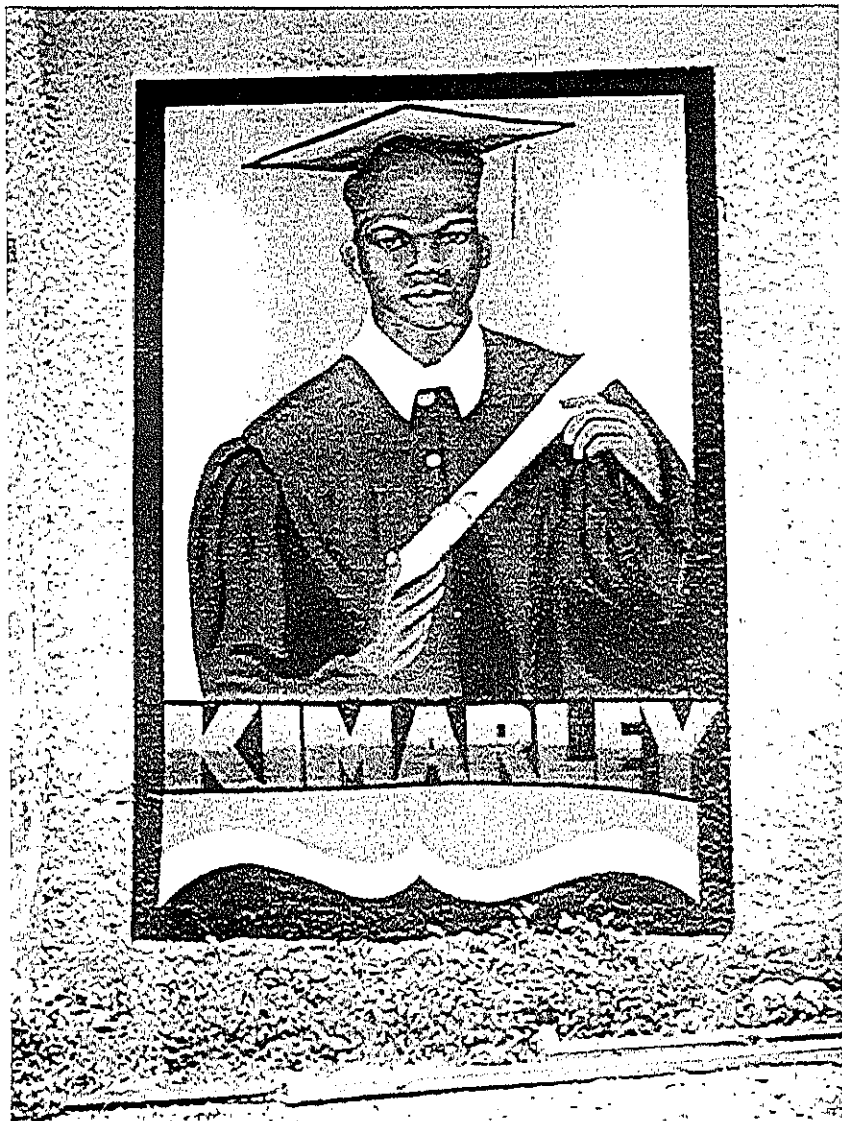


Figure 14.7. Commemorative mural of Kimarley, by Tony Brown (photo courtesy of Kara Springer)

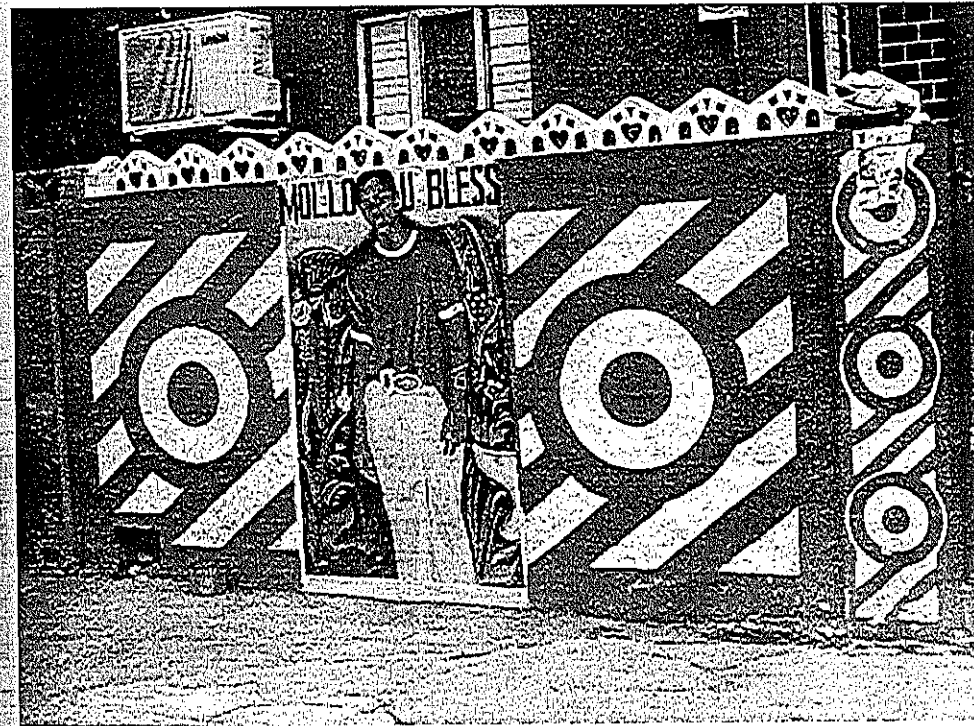


Figure 14.8. Mural for Mollo, by Tony Brown (photo courtesy of Kara Springer)

a visual genealogy of powerful “dons” and local leaders. They attacked the walls as well as the community, painting out murals of outlaw leaders like Claudie Massop and Christopher Coke and Jim Brown, Coke’s father. These men were militant activists for the conservative Jamaica Labour Party at the height of the Cold War. On the ground, they led the violent campaign against the elected socialist government for control of the state, helping the JLP take power in 1980. The illegal trafficking networks of men like Massop and Coke procured the arms that undermined the anti-colonial socialist project in the 1970s.

The murals commemorating these men forced us to complicate easy notions of innocence and crime. Criminals, it seems, are seekers of justice when their work is in harmony with imperial agendas. Illegal

networks of violence organized by these men in collaboration with the United States and conservative forces helped install the global order we now call neoliberalism. Painting out murals induces amnesia, but when troubled this veiling of the past creates an echo chamber for the invisible but ghostly spectres of history: the formation of the Caribbean by a criminal act that dispossessed Aboriginal people and illegally commodified land; piracy as a foundational moment in the birth of capitalism; the illegal capture and bloody transportation of Africans; the violent suppression of an agenda of redistribution; and the installation of new class and racial formations in harmony with neoliberal agendas. The outlines under the police paint call attention to the unrealized desires that are in part the result of the defeat of a struggle for redistribution. All of this has complicated our understanding of the links between global power relations and local crime.

The meanings of the murals shifted depending on who looked at them. For the police, the murals were threats, performances by dissenting subjects who celebrate criminals. Community members, though, had their own interpretations. Marley, a student and community AIDS activist who grew up after the Cold War ended, saw the figures on the walls as an incitement for new kinds of masculinity. While some named the figures on the walls as soldiers, protectors, and warriors, he saw them as something against which to differentiate himself: "I am so glad these murals are here. I need them. I don't want to be another face on the wall. They are a reminder of the path I do not want to go down. Every day when I see them, it helps me make up my mind not to get involved in that. They help me remember what I want for my life. They help me set my goals."¹⁷

CG, a woman activist, proposes a gendered reading. For her, the murals were best understood in terms of all they did *not* represent, which was women and children. The murals ignored the contributions of women and the ways they had been affected by violence. She reminds us that gun violence is not the only form of violence that deforms. So do rape, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse. It is always the women of the inner city who must manage the everyday consequences of violence, the retreat of the state, and the economic forces that produce unemployment, marginalization, and hunger. Women bear the burden of caring for the wounded, the survivors who are left behind. "Rather than remember 'pure bad man' they [the commemorations] should encourage us to remember those who contribute to the life of

the community, who work so hard to build up the community. We the members of this community should decide this together."¹⁸ Anxieties about masculinity that occlude the caring work of women risk reinscribing a global order in which violence is gendered in terms of where, how, and whom it claims. Those who care for life, she asserts, should be recognized, remembered, and memorialized by the communities they serve with their labour.

The murals enacted a cynical commentary on the politics of the nation-state – a commentary that echoed the disillusionment of community members. Few national politicians were portrayed on murals. Again and again, residents expressed deep anger that their trust had been betrayed and described the huge personal and collective cost of a formal political system that had failed. In discussions, community members who were over fifty traced the trajectory of this disillusion from independence in the 1960s to the present day. They offered a litany of examples of innocent people dying violently for popular struggles that failed. As one woman put it: "Long time now politician give the youth them gun and make the youth do their wrongs for them. Then when the youth get strong, them same one turn round and make the police come kill them. Long time now that is going on and it have to stop. It can't work because we tired of it now."¹⁹ This view – that politics was just "polytricks" or "folly tricks" – was repeated countless times. Politics here means partisan bickering for control of the state or the cynical use of ordinary people for the gain of individual political elites and not the broader organization of power for the equitable sharing of resources.

The idea that a just nation-state might be possible was never mentioned in any of the community discussions or interviews I conducted. In fact, some community members suggested that NGOs had replaced the state in terms of providing services and that these groups were just as unreliable and exploitative as the state. According to CG, "they should be glad we down here a kill we one another or they wouldn't get nothing to eat, for is we them live off."²⁰

Yet this sense of mistrust, which went hand in hand with the desire to "make it" as an individual, was contradicted by the bonds of solidarity that were so evident at community events as well as by a sense of connection to similar communities overseas. Perhaps the mural of Papa Smurph represented a vision of possibility that straddled the tension between the global and the local. Papa Smurph, aka Murphy, painted by an anonymous muralist, was a masked man in white

suspended over the illuminated skyscrapers, sitting on top of the world in the realms of the heavens. Murphy, in death, was mobile, a man and a supernatural spirit, a masked gangster and a godlike figure who embraced his apotheosis while maintaining his outlaw status, as the words "gangster for life" suggest. His image was rooted in the local, on the corner in Kingston where he once hung out, but it was also a visual bridge connecting his neighbourhood in Kingston to the hubs of earthly global power imagined to exist in metropolitan cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Detroit. The mural's self-parodic style appropriated elements of an American TV series, *The Smurfs*, in which Papa Smurf, a wise elder and counsellor, protected a village of creatures called Smurfs from evil. So Murphy was imagined watching over the welfare of his neighbourhoods at home and in diaspora from the safety of the heavens, his white attire symbolizing spiritual purity and/or perhaps social whiteness. With humour and defiance, the mural mixed displacement and rootedness, stubbornly insisting on the sacred and the secular and linking the local to the transnational. It also connoted the ways in which the fragmentation of local urban communities into tightly guarded neighbourhoods had been the result of local violence, whose cause lay in global structures.

Scholars such as Richard Drayton point out that the violence brought to bear on Jamaicans is part of a global pattern of aggression, one that raises questions about the relationship between global geopolitics and the violence of nation-states. He asks whether the attack on Tivoli Gardens in Kingston was driven by "the need of the interlocked global security establishment to justify its existence? What are the long-term consequences for democracy of treating the urban poor as an enemy population to be beaten into submission, the militarisation of policing, the expansion of intrusive surveillance of society?" He links the Jamaican crisis with security networks in the United States, Britain, and Canada and with the "War on Terror." He argues that the approach used in Jamaica in Tivoli Gardens was similar to the one followed for street fighting in Iraq, citing a 2009 manual on counter-insurgency operations compiled for the US Joint Chiefs of Staff that equated police actions against "criminal organizations" with counter-insurgency operations and that discussed key tactics, which included aerial and electronic intelligence and targeting, the use of "passes" to restrict movement, and information management. In this vein, for two years the Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR) combined operations in Afghanistan with the training of the Jamaican special forces, the Ninjas. In March 2010, Jamaican newspapers reported that a joint US-UK-Canada intelligence

operation was being run from Kingston. Advisers from all three NATO powers are active in Jamaica. The Jamaican army has been tightly integrated with the US military since the early 1980s; in a striking parallel, those whom the army is now fighting in Jamaica were in large part *created* by the United States and the JLP in the 1970s and 1980s. The extent to which the state and regional states are acting in accordance with US and other Western agendas has clear implications for how Jamaicans and others similarly positioned at home and in diaspora deal with questions of security and of the state's dememorializing strategies.²¹

The human cost of global security operations raises questions about the form states will take in this new arena of global politics. This security agenda, which has been felt around the world from Iraq to Somalia to Colombia, points to a shift in global governance and transnational interconnectedness. The casual and impersonal brutality of new technologies of violence and the penetration of new forms of surveillance are driving a shift towards global government, a shift that entails invasive scrutiny and observation on the one hand and the expansion of criminal justice systems on the other. Both security interests in the US and US security policy in the Caribbean and Latin America are driven less by the need to maintain state sovereignty than by drug control, immigration control, and other matters related to policing the borders of the North. In much of this hemisphere, military apparatus is being used more and more for policing operations rather than for war. In other words, one of the critical things that has shifted in the geopolitical reality is the role played by transnational surveillance and military technology on the one hand and by expanding criminal justice systems in the United States and other Western powers on the other. The commemorative murals and the vigils both perform and represent the everyday lived reality of this experience.

Conclusion

New forms of commemorative performances of vigils and murals have emerged as responses to the violence that has marked the installation of the neoliberal order in the Caribbean. The examples I have discussed mobilize community agency, create counter-narratives, inscribe living memories of loss on place, and speak back to the criminalization of the Jamaican. Questions of geopolitical interconnectedness are largely ignored in the local and mainstream media, which tend to focus on state corruption, economic crises, and pathological criminality. By contrast, local, place-based commemorative murals and vigils move the

discussion away from pathologies of criminality and individual corruption and instead refer us to the layered, lived reality of geopolitical power in the inner city. They attend to the thwarted desires of youth whose lives are being wasted, and the interpretations they generate call attention to the labour of women like Monica Williams and CG, who care for communities and families by attending to the injured, recording their pain of loss, and remembering what should have been. These new vigils and murals link appeals to divine justice with Pan-Africanist politics. They mix global forms of popular culture with sacred iconographies, and they make claims to forms of citizenship forged by centuries of transnational racial formation while expressing people's desire to maintain ownership of their own cultural subjectivity.

Nevertheless, while vigils and murals protest covertly and overtly and contest the state's unpredictable violence, they are also expressions of ambivalence regarding how to challenge and transcend that violence. Local people call on divine justice for retribution, but they also take material action at the local level or at the level of individual legal redress. Commemorative murals resurrect the bodies of area leaders while grieving victims of violence. They challenge the police but stop short of revealing the identities of police executioners. They display the unrealized hopes and ambitions of human subjects in ways that demonstrate how the politics of the local and the global have overtaken the politics of the nation-state. This can only be understood by connecting the work they do to the broader geopolitical imperial agenda.

The murals and vigils offer a partial picture that in some ways resists the power exercised by the media, the state, and official narratives, but they cannot on their own materialize struggles that can fully address these tensions. For this, other forms of mobilization will be needed across the borders of place and time. Under the present geopolitical order, the state and those who elect it have to "wheel and come again," as the deejays say. But conditions also suggest a new role for popular local collectivities in relation to the transnational and trans-imperial workings of power. One thing that emerged alongside the organization of communities in their own defence was an immediate style of local governance, along with a sense of community identity, confidence, and autonomy that brought results in ways that the formal state sector has been unable to do. There are perhaps important lessons about alternatives here. Developing a better understanding of how local groups make meaning from their own difficult circumstances might be one way to begin developing ways of building opposition to the inequity and violence that surrounds us. When we listen to the music

and the talk, and when we walk around town looking at the popular media that adorn community walls, we can see the contradictory ways in which folks stubbornly assert the desire for a form of visibility that serves them locally and that also joins them to a wider world alongside others who struggle in different ways to confront the new imperialism.

But no listening or looking can happen where people are afraid to speak. People from all levels of the society expressed fear of speaking out publicly about state and other forms of violence. Terror prevents a full discussion of the possibilities and pain of the new moment and allows the police to kill with impunity. This silence enables violence to become a form of government through security.²² "Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent," Hannah Arendt wrote long ago. Power, she proposed, is the concerted exercise of collective will. This, she contends, can be an antidote to violence. While many propose that violence is the ultimate demonstration of power, she proposes that loss of power or fears of weakness can be an incitement to substitute violence for power. Reversing this requires new forms of transnational dialogue and organization that will create bonds of solidarity able to inspire the exercise of collective will. This is one way to speak back to fear and isolation. And speak back we will, from local sites to national, regional, diasporic places and beyond.

NOTES

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- 1 Taylor, *The Archive*, 2-3.
- 2 Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning*, 4.
- 3 Nettleford, *Dance Jamaica*.
- 4 Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning*.
- 5 Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning*, 12.
- 6 Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning*, 17.
- 7 Klak, *Globalization and Neoliberalism*; Mullings, "Neoliberalization."

- 8 Gunst, *Born fi' Dead*; Gray, *Demeaned but Empowered*; Tafari Ama, *Blood, Bullets, and Bodies*; Levy, *They Cry "Respect"!*; Harriott, *Understanding Crime in Jamaica*.
- 9 Walcott, "The Muse of History."
- 10 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*.
- 11 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.
- 12 Thomas, *Exceptional Violence*.
- 13 Thomas, *Exceptional Violence*, 174–6.
- 14 Mbala, personal communication, 28 May 2009.
- 15 Schwartz, "Traces of a Massacre," accessed 14 January 2014 at <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2013/05/video-massacre-in-jamaica.html>.
- 16 Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning*, 85.
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- 18 CG, personal communication, 6 May 2009.
- 19 BF, personal communication, 6 May 2009.
- 20 CG, personal communication, 3 May 2012.
- 21 Drayton, "From Kabul to Kingston."
- 22 Arendt, "On Violence," in Schlegel-Hughes and Bourgeois, *Violence in War and Peace*, 236–43 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

15 "Lest We Forget": Terror and the Politics of Commemoration in Guyana

D. ALISSA TROTZ

*Dust don't disappear when you sweep it behind bed
 People stay quiet but all the questions in their head
 Is true time could heal and bad times could change
 people mind
 But we have to figure out how to talk, leave the hurt behind
 And if you bright and reading plenty book
 You must realize how the silence must look ...¹*

These fragmentary notes encounter an out-of-the-way space – the Caribbean. Unusual because – except perhaps for Haiti or the holding pens of Guantanamo Bay – the region has been peripheral to contemporary discussions of terror. Unexpected because this requires us to engage not just neo-imperial but also neocolonial state violence. Unanticipated because until the 1980s, the anglophone Caribbean was described in several quarters as one of the world's largest groupings of "stable democracies." Only recently have we heard calls to reckon publicly with the legacies of what anthropologist Veena Das has described as "critical events."²

But for those who have lived the violence, like the subjects of the poem by Grenadian Merle Collins that frames this chapter, the Caribbean is not such a surprising place. What is strange is not violence, but conversation, and ways of publicly reckoning with the trauma and incoherence that terror leaves in its wake across the archipelago, imposing limits on what can be said, offering the illusion of safety in silence. The internecine violence leading up to the 1980 Jamaica elections. The December 1982 Suriname murders. The 1983 implosion of the Grenadian revolution and the US invasion that followed.