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## Queerness in the Transnational Caribbean-Canadian Diaspora

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### Abstract

January 29, 2008—A mob of 20 men broke into the home of three young men in Kingston, Jamaica. According to reports, the machete-wielding attackers badly beat and severed limbs of one man who is in critical condition in hospital. A third victim is still missing. Witnesses say he jumped off a cliff to his death (*Gleaner* January 30, 2008).

May 12, 2008—Under pressure from gay rights groups and a sponsorship boycott of live dancehall shows by local beer giant Red Stripe, some Jamaican dancehall stars are offering free performances to events at which no Red Stripe products are sold or consumed. ...Last month, title sponsor Red Stripe pulled its financing from the major live shows Sting and Sumfest, which it has sponsored for six and seven years respectively, in what it says is a response to the continued use of violent and anti-social lyrics during performances... “We have noticed that there is a negative trend that has been creeping into some of the music...This is very damaging to our culture, the music and to our country as a whole,” corporate relations director Maxine Whittingham told reporters. Red Stripe’s initiative comes on the heels of an ultimatum issued to the Jamaican government by Canadian human rights group Egale Canada<sup>1</sup>. The organization has successfully

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<sup>1</sup> Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere. Egale Canada describes itself as a national organization advancing equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans-identified people across Canada.

lobbied for the removal of some popular reggae songs from iTunes' North American store. The group has also given the Bruce Golding-led administration until May 17 to announce plans to repeal the country's anti-homosexual legislation. If its demands are not met, Egale Canada says it will launch a campaign to ban Jamaican goods in the international marketplace as well as promote a boycott of its tourism. Not all gay rights groups are agreed on the strategy that should be used. The Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG)<sup>2</sup> has rejected Egale Canada's ultimatum and says it does not support a boycott—although it has criticized the new prime minister for refusing to take up the issue of anti-gay violence (Neufville, 2008).

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<sup>2</sup> The Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG) estimates there were 30 homophobic murders in Jamaica between 1997 and 2004 (JFLAG Blog Post).

## Introduction

More than a half million people living in Canada trace their origins to the Caribbean. Many were born in the Caribbean and migrated to Canada in the period from the mid-1960s to the present following fundamental changes to Canadian immigration rules. To date, much of the research that has been done on Caribbean immigrants in Canada has centered on the migration, settlement patterns, living arrangements, family structures, schooling achievements, and income levels of the “mainstream” within the group<sup>3</sup>. Research on the more marginalized groups within the Caribbean-Canadian population is very sparse<sup>4</sup>. Queer<sup>5</sup> Caribbean-Canadians represent one of the most invisible and often neglected in the mainstream migration literature because their presence is often regarded as a taboo topic. To date, much of the research on queer Caribbean-Canadians has come from a limited concentration of pioneering scholars such as Silvera (1991), Crichlow (2004), Alexander (2005), and Walcott (2006).

In much of the circum Caribbean, lesbians, gay men, and transgendered people are on the front lines, targeted for repression and violence. The Caribbean, broadly, and some places, particularly, such as Jamaica—as is evident from the newspaper accounts above—have a long and deeply established homophobic cultural tradition. It is promoted by a literal interpretation of Christian texts condemning sodomy. Male homosexuals, especially in Jamaica, face constant threat from organized homophobic gangs. They risk physical harm and even death if they publicly reveal their sexual orientation. Lesbians are frowned upon but not subject to the same violent repression. In contrast, Canada has made strides toward greater acceptance of homosexuality, at the same time that these moves have further complicated debates about sexual identity and citizenship. Gays and lesbians within the Caribbean-Canadian community are therefore often caught between two very different cultural traditions. Those within the Caribbean-Canadian community who “come out” and publicly declare their sexual orientation have tended to mobilize around a combined anti-racist and anti-homophobic agenda, seeking to build bridges with

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<sup>3</sup> See: Ramcharan 1976; Head and Lee 1980; Richmond 1993; James 1990; Henry 1994; Ramcharan 1982; Birbalsingh 1989, 1993 and 1997; Plaza 2001, 2004, 2007, Simmons and Plaza 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Over the past thirty years there have been some notable studies such as Calliste’s (1994) which looks at Caribbean women; Preibisch’s (2007) on agricultural migrant workers; Silvera’s (1989) on domestic workers; Flynn’s (2008) on Caribbean nurses; and Plaza’s (2006) on the second generation.

<sup>5</sup> The term “queer” is under constant debate and contestation as to its positioning vis-à-vis mainstream definitions of heterosexuality, as well as vis-à-vis dominant interpretations of categories such as “gay,” “lesbian,” “bisexual,” and “transgendered.” For a more nuanced discussion of the various angles of engagement and contestation in this debate, see chapter 1 of Ian Barnard’s *Queer Race: Cultural Interventions in the Racial Politics of Queer Theory* (2003). For the purpose of this paper, the term “queer” is used loosely as an umbrella category that is not meant to assume a unitary positioning and knowledge consciousness, but as a term that politicizes differently from dominant heteronormative categories. The authors are aware that while the term “gay” is more popularly identified with in the Caribbean region, the term “queer” gives more latitude to a range of non-heteronormative identifications, which might also accommodate the framing of such discourses from the perspective of the diaspora. It is also important to note that “queer” does not always neatly coincide with categories such as “gay,” “lesbian,” “bisexual,” and “transgendered,” and might in certain circumstances be constituted in direct opposition to these categories, as a way of accommodating further ambiguities and complexities of sexual identity.

broader anti-racist and anti-homophobic movements that are both local and transnational. Some have made progress in gaining greater tolerance within the Caribbean-Canadian community.

While the Caribbean community in Canada is perhaps less violent in its stand against homosexuality, it has not for the most part abandoned its opposition. Attitudes within the Caribbean-Canadian community are shifting slowly, and this puts transnational pressure on locations like Jamaica or Trinidad to change their views on homophobia. Being a queer first, second, or third generation Caribbean-Canadian has both advantages and disadvantages compared to living in the Caribbean. In Canada, there are some conditionally safe spaces in major cities like Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal for queer Caribbean-origin people. In order to live lives with less persecution, queer Caribbean-Canadians sometimes join the “mainstream” gay ghetto communities in major cities while others “front” or “live on the down low” in their own community. Joining gay communities in places like Toronto is often problematic because there are different degrees of racism, sexism, and class differences which keep queer Caribbean-Canadians feeling marginalized in two communities.

It is within this complex environment that this paper explores the lives of ten queer Caribbean-Canadians who live in Toronto. The paper provides insights into the ways in which queer Caribbean-Canadians arrive in Canada, cope with marginalization from family and community once they come out, and deal with racism, classism, and sexism from both within and outside of their community. The paper also describes the ethnic differences within the community and how that affects treatment. The generational and social class differences within the queer Caribbean community and what this means for acceptance and marginalization is also highlighted. Finally, the paper comments on the transnational activities that connect queer Caribbean-Canadians with human rights advocacy groups both in Canada and in the circum Caribbean region.

### **Overview of the Queer Caribbean in Canada**

There is a paucity of sociological investigation into the historical and contemporary realities of queer Caribbean people in the Caribbean region, as well as in Canada. Wesley Crichlow makes the following observation:

There is a rich literature on white, gay, and lesbian cultures in Canada, yet very little has been written on the lives of buller men and batty bwoys, so very little is known about how these men negotiate their identities in Canadian and other North American societies. (2004, 32)

While there is some degree of literary and filmic engagement with the queer Caribbean community in Canada, exemplified in the works of authors such as Dionne Brand and Shani Mootoo, and filmmaker Michelle Mohabeer, few sociological studies exist that investigate the macro-sociological issues that shape the queer Caribbean and its diaspora. Published studies by queer Caribbean sociologists in Toronto such as Wesley Crichlow (2004) and Rinaldo Walcott (2006) remain seminal, though each re-politicizes the queer black Caribbean experience in Canada from different angles. Crichlow’s *Buller Men and*

*Batty Boys* investigates the realities and experiences of black Canadian gay men, predominantly those with Caribbean backgrounds. His published doctoral dissertation focuses on the issues that plague queer black Caribbean men within their diasporic communities in Canada. He points out that, “In Canada, bullers experience a triple form of oppression: racism and heterosexism within white society; racism and the sexualization of racism within the white gay community; and heterosexism within the Black community” (2004, 32). While Walcott’s work acknowledges these dimensions of the queer black Caribbean experience, he is concerned with problematizing the ways in which the hyphenated category of “queer black Caribbean” is socially constructed by the mainstream white gay community in Toronto and the subversion of these dominant scripts by queer black men. The work of both scholars illumine the double disciplining of queer black Caribbean men through the racist practices of white gay men and the homophobia within their own black Caribbean-Canadian community.

These regulatory currents are reinforced by the social construction and state management of homophobia in the Caribbean region itself, and inform the ways in which queer diasporic subjects orient and manage their identities and politics when they arrive in North America. In *Pedagogies of Crossing*, Jacqui Alexander reminds us that all states have an investment in heterosexualization and that categories such as citizen, patriot, and immigrant carry ideological heterosexualism. Alexander points to a number of critical imperatives made all the more urgent by contemporary manifestations of neoimperialism and neocolonialism. She focuses on state regulation in the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago to reflect critically on the neocolonial state’s role in regulation of sexual citizenship. Alexander claims that the weight of immorality placed by the heteromale state on homosexuality, in the name of shoring up hegemonic and heteronormative versions of the nation, is disproportionately borne by Caribbean lesbian and queer women in particular. The state’s conflation of heterosexuality and citizenship normalizes a spectrum of violence against women in general, but even more so, against lesbian women who are constructed in legal discourse as outlaws. Alexander states that “Both in Trinidad and Tobago and in the Bahamas, state laws conflate lesbian identity with criminality” (2005, 27). Yet, Alexander underscores the binaristic maneuvers of the heteropatriarchal Caribbean state as follows:

The state works to reinvent heterosexuality by, on the one hand, creating a class of loyal heterosexual citizens and, on the other hand, by designating a class of subordinated non-citizens including lesbians, gay men, prostitutes, and people who are HIV infected, thereby reviving the myth of the apocalyptic destruction of Sodom by an oversexed band of non-procreative non citizens (2005, 29).

Implicated within this discourse, Alexander insists, are neocolonial arguments on both sides of the diasporic circuit that at best, complicate the notion of home for queer Caribbean diasporic subjects. On the one hand, the state and normative Caribbean community regard homosexuality as a “Western decadent incursion” (2005, 47) that they conveniently fit into their convoluted and highly paradoxical anti-colonial agenda. On the other hand, this denial is conveniently plugged into by the metropolitan queer community

that activates colonial logics to claim the metropolitan's political cache. Alexander calls on the queer diaspora to "challenge prevalent metropolitan impulses that explain the absence of visible lesbian and gay movements as a defect in political consciousness and maturity, using evidence of publicly organized movements in North America as evidence of their original status in the West and their superior political maturity" (2005, 28). These two logics of denial powerfully discipline the queer Caribbean-Canadian community, forcing their struggles to coalesce around discourses of racialization at the same time that they politicize sexual citizenship across the diasporic circuit.

### **Contesting the 'queer' mainstream in Canada**

Migrant and second-generation queer Caribbeans in Canada are compelled to fit into dominant i.e. white definitions of queer citizenship. According to Walcott (2006, 124), black men in general are the "willing and unwilling canvases" onto which society symbolically projects its desires and fantasies. Black queer Caribbean men are also folded into this discourse, though with specific nuances within the dominant white gay community. While they are viewed as hypersexual studs within the dominant metropolitan gay imaginary, this system of symbols denies their humanity, agency, and unique experiences as differently positioned gay men. In particular, Canadian gay urban discourse has been historically constructed as one in which terms such as "queer" and "gay" have been metonymically associated with whiteness, in which other, and in this case, racialized definitions of these categories are either completely muted or selectively digested into the dominant definitions. This system of racialized ranking of experiences within the categories "queer" and "gay" not only positions gay men of color in particular ways, but also regulates them and denies their autonomy to self-determine.

Walcott claims in the case of Toronto, that "gay ghettos attempt to confine and produce a racist/sexist black body within its already minoritized space from which the struggle over community proceeds. Black queers find themselves still relegated to struggling against what appear to be old yet resistant forms of discrimination, both in queer communities and other communities" (2006, 125). He adds that even when black queers are made absent in the mainstream white ghettos, they are very present as "silent backdrops" against which the metonymy between "gay" and "white" is further naturalized. This context produces multiple posturings on the part of the black queer community that strengthen the case against thinking about a unitary black queer experience, and by extension a queer Caribbean diasporic experience.

For Walcott, the labor of black drag queens (some of whom are of Caribbean background) in Toronto's gay ghetto represents one critical response in which a non-normative configuration of blackness contests and resignifies the formulation of metropolitan blackness within mainstream gay/white ghetto cultural politics. This symbolic maneuver, according to Walcott, is more about the decentering of whiteness as the most constituent force of the gay urban imaginary. Another response that Walcott points out is the way in which diasporic affiliations are increasingly registered in events such as Gay Pride that have historically been represented as white, gay, and male. His

discussion of Blockorama<sup>6</sup> during pride celebrations reflects the influence of Caribbean cultural forms on black and mainstream queer life, and the efforts to imprint these struggles onto the space of the gay ghetto that claims to be multicultural.

### **Contesting ‘Caribbean’ in Canada: Positioning within the diaspora**

Wesley Crichlow’s study provides an overview of both the structural and agentic dimensions of black queer Caribbean experience in Toronto, especially foregrounding marginalization processes within black heteronormative Caribbean communities in Canada. Like mainstream white Canada, racialized communities also enforce heteronormative constructions of masculinity, reducing homosexual racialized masculinities to weak or diseased masculinities. Crichlow finds that black gay men are viewed as race traitors who deviate from normalized codes of black sexuality (i.e. heterosexuality) by adopting “western sexual perversions”—a normative discourse that rationalizes why “bullers and batty bwoys” are seen as disease-ridden and prone to AIDS (2004, 37). He stresses that these oppressive discourses operate due to the absence of real dialogue between black dominant heterosexual and black same-sex communities. The latter is often forced to dangerously rely on the limited and stereotypical offerings of the dominant white gay community for some measure of visibility and affirmation. Because the categories “black” and “gay” (white-centric meaning) are seen as irreconcilable within the dominant black Caribbean consciousness, queer black Caribbeans suffer a sense of double consciousness that leaves them with feelings of shame and marginalization by their black Caribbean communities that view same-sex desire as anathema to their “racial uplift” in Canadian society (Crichlow 2004, 136). Crichlow opines that “the lack of support in Caribbean communities for people engaging in same-sex practices, the violent attacks on people who seek same-sex agency or identities, and family, community, and religious oppression have made it impossible for people to engage in same-sex practice and be open about it. Caribbean communities have policed desire along the lines of good and bad, clean and unclean, and have imposed very stereotypical roles and expectations on men and women” (2004, 75).

Despite this regulatory regime that institutionalizes homophobia in the name of a unitary black diasporic consciousness, Crichlow’s work reveals how black same-sex identities proliferate and challenge celebratory and essentialized constructions of Caribbean-Canadian identity. Queer black Caribbean men have experienced their families and communities as sites of “affirmation and support as well as alienation and pain” (Crichlow 2004, 80). Like the church and other interwoven social institutions, black diasporic families exert pressure on black men who engage in same-sex practices by inculcating feelings of shame, guilt, and self-contempt, which in many cases force queer black men to marry and have children to protect their families’ reputation. Crichlow highlights the gravity of this regulatory regime, especially as he points out that “sexuality

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<sup>6</sup> An annual party event held during Toronto’s Pride Parade celebrations for the past nine years. The official website describes Blockorama as an event that “celebrates the spirit of the black-queer community with performances by artists from throughout North America.” Patrons are urged to “Come down to the Blockorama stage for fierceness and family and feel the vibes from all over the African Diaspora, from Trinidad to Ghana, from Philly to Toronto.” While the event is lauded for its celebrations of blackness within the queer mosaic, it is also an important site for investigating how specific interpretations of blackness are registered within the mainstream queer community.

in Black life is not a private affair” (2004, 85). As a result of this systemic and community pressure for black men to conform to normative codes, many remain within the closet of married life and risk suffering various configurations of alienation, psychological torment, and even violence. Crichlow outlines a geography of violence, fear and hypermasculinity that polices black same-sex desires and relations in Canada’s black communities, especially in ways that forestall support and solidarity among queer black men. At the community level, queer black men are denied visibility as a legitimate site of blackness and suffer a sort of psychic torture as a result of the oppressive consequences of their investment in black communal solidarity. These oppressive experiences support Crichlow’s finding that “Black heterosexist families and Black diasporic nationalists have failed to take into account the underrepresentation and oppression of Black bullers and batty bwoys” (2004, 105).

There has also been some meditation on issues facing the queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadian diaspora as well, while this limited engagement must take into account the fact that contemporary queer theory has not sufficiently thought through intersections of gender, sexuality, and race. These limitations are due in part to undertheorized South Asian gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (GLBTIQ) subjectivities—compounded by a queer canon overwrought with the East/West or tradition/modern binary—which renders queer South Asian as a monolithic homogeneous category with little or no agency (Kawale 2003). The South Asian-Caribbean-Canadian GLBTIQ community members find it enormously difficult to construct fluid identities within the available GLBTIQ discourse in Canada. Reflecting on queer Asian subjectivities in the United States, Kamashiro (1999) has highlighted a discursive lattice of “queered Orientalism” that positions queer Asian American men as sexually hyperdesirable and undesirable at particular moments. It is within a similar symbolic scale that queer Asian (South and East) diasporic subjects are made to weigh in on a certain kind of symbolic import in the Canadian queer imaginary. Queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadian bodies are by default compelled into this larger discursive framework that regulates queer brown bodies and sexualities. Yet, as we shall see from the work in this article, queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadians struggle to perform distinct identities that resist the erasure of difference, while at the same time being selective about how their distinctive politic is framed and manipulated in relation to the larger queer South Asian Canadian diaspora, to the larger queer Afro-Caribbean-Canadian diaspora, and to white mainstream queer Canada.

Gayatri Gopinath has addressed these tensions regarding diasporic South Asian subjectivity by making a distinction between conventional diasporic discourse and queer diasporic discourse, which in the case of the latter, acknowledges the “contradictions and the violences of multiple uprootings, displacements, and exiles” (2006, 4). Michelle Mohabeer’s film *Coconut/Cane and Cutlass* traces the uneven valences of Caribbean-Canadian lesbian experience and points to these contradictions as she flirts with the nostalgia of return to Guyana, despite the traumatic discourse of exile that has forced her to become a queer refugee in Canada<sup>7</sup>. Her narrative is even more complicated by the

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<sup>7</sup> Mohanty (1988) notes that the failure of Western feminism to properly and critically theorize Third World women opens a space in which a monolithic subject (or object) of knowledge is constructed. Naheed Islam (1998), in her seminal study about South Asian women who love other women, finds that her

legacies of colonial oppression. Trinidadian-Canadian writer Shani Mootoo underscores this tension underlying lesbian diasporic subjectivity in *Ceres Blooms at Night*, complicating how home is always a site of struggle and habitation, questioning what we might expect in the concept of a queer home in the diaspora, when in fact the conventional orientation of diaspora has been constructed as heteronormative (Gopinath 2006, 187). These debates are illuminated from different angles by the respondents in this study, at times with different intensities and politicizations. They all warn of the danger of theorizing the queer Caribbean diaspora without grounding abstract ideas in experience—a challenging task that makes sexual citizenship and the framing of cohesive identities quite contentious.

### **Data and methods**

This paper is based on data collected during the summer of 2008 in Toronto, Canada. Data was gathered using interviews and a content analysis of both Internet websites and newspaper/magazines published in Toronto. The main source of data comes from ten semi-structured life history interviews with men and women who are LGBTQ self-identified Caribbean-Canadians, both first and second generation, living in Toronto. All interviews were conducted individually in various locations across the Greater Toronto Area. A variety of locations were chosen to conduct the interviews primarily as a convenience for the interviewees. The respondents came from various Caribbean-origin ethnic groups, which included African, Indian and other mixtures. It was important to have representatives from these ethnic groups because families who originated from the Caribbean are heterogeneous. A purposive snowball sample was used in which participants were selected through their acquaintance with the researchers, through references provided by friends, colleagues, relatives, and the participants. All the interviews were audio taped and took between two and three hours to complete. Unlike most conventional in-depth interviews, the life history approach seeks to capture the longitudinal changes in a person's life by including its rhythm, cycle, and the changes that occur. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the strategy of the "constant comparative method of analysis," a strategy of data analysis that calls for continually "making comparisons" and "asking questions" (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Interviews were coded and sorted according to emerging themes which were then compared to each other for generalizability. According to Patton (2002, 56), inductive analysis allows for "categories or dimensions to emerge from open-ended observations as the inquirer comes to understand patterns that exist in the phenomenon being investigated." Essentially, as Patton (2002) notes, this type of analysis involves identifying categories, patterns, and themes in one's data through one's interaction with the data. After this analysis, similarities and differences were documented based on our personal understanding, professional knowledge, and the literature. As is common to studies using a smaller sample size, questions of reliability and validity arise. Given that our respondents were recruited through personal relations and the strict protocol of confidentiality was adhered to, we are convinced that our respondents had no reason to provide false information.

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respondents reject the term lesbian. South Asian-American women who sought lesbian organizations and communities, primarily defined by white lesbians, felt they were marginalized and exoticized because of their differences.

The study is supplemented by a non-random content analysis of Internet websites which were created by queer groups in the Caribbean. The sample is a convenient and judgmental one in that we looked at six websites constructed and maintained by Caribbean-Canadian or Caribbean-based queer organizations. A Google search for Caribbean queer organizations was carried out on November 13, 2008, and yielded 23,900 hits. We selected a sample from among these Google hits by using two main criteria. First, to be included in the sample the organization had to be based in the Caribbean but be doing work that involved queer issues that were relevant to the Caribbean-Canadian population. Second, the organization had to have a website that was active within the past year. The unit of analysis for this part of the study is Caribbean queer organizations' individual websites, the frames created within each site, text, blogs, sound files, active hot links, and any images found at the site.

The study was further supplemented by an additional content analysis of newspaper and magazine publications that were created by queer groups in Canada. The sample is again a convenient and judgmental one in that we looked at two publications that are maintained by queer organizations in Toronto (*Xtra* and *Fab* magazine). To be included in the sample a newspaper/magazine story had to include coverage of an issue that pertained to queer Caribbean-Canadian or queer Caribbean issues in general. We selected only those stories that were published within the past three years. Our analysis consisted of examining (n=35) articles or stories which pertained to the queer community of Caribbean origin in Canada. Another set of articles was located on the recent campaign of "Stop the Murder Music".

The qualitative analysis which follows offers rich data on both the macro and micro level of queer Caribbeans both in Canada and in the transnational diaspora. The particular individuals who were interviewed give us a unique perspective on their life, their cultural values, and their social norms. The data do not, however, allow us to generate information which can be subjected to quantitative analysis nor can they be used as a basis for making sweeping statements about more general conditions. Given that little previous data have been gathered about queer Caribbeans in Canada, this methodological approach enabled us to ask open-ended questions and to gather more detailed information than would have been possible through a survey methodology administered to the Caribbean community with close-ended questions.

The strength of these interviews and the content analysis lie in the fact that they offer us an exploratory view of how queer Caribbean-Canadians arrived in Canada, cope with marginalization from family and kin once they come out, deal with racism, classism, and sexism from both within and outside of their community, and the ethnic differences within the queer Caribbean-Canadian community. The paper also examines the generational and social class differences and what this means for acceptance and marginalization. The paper ends by commenting on the transnational activities that connect queer Caribbean-Canadians with human rights advocacy groups both in Canada and in the circum Caribbean region.

### **Characteristics of the respondents**

In the next section we provide a socio-demographic overview of the ten respondents who were interviewed (see table 1). Six of the interviewees were women and four were men. All ten of the individuals had parent(s) who were born in the Caribbean. Four of the respondents were classified as being first generation Caribbean living in Canada. Lisa and Roger arrived in the mid-1970s during the first brain drain of Caribbean professionals. Brandon and Vishnu arrived in the 1990s during the second brain drain of graduate skilled professionals. The individuals classified as second generation were either born in Canada of Caribbean-origin parents or they migrated to Canada before the age of four. No one in our sample was considered as third generation—that is someone who was born to parents who were second generation Caribbean-Canadian migrants (Zhou 1999).<sup>8</sup> The oldest person interviewed was sixty-six years, while the youngest was twenty-three. The average age of the respondents was thirty-five. Three of the interviewees were born in Trinidad (Nisha, Lucy, and Vishnu) and two were born in Jamaica (Lisa and Roger). Three were born in Canada of Caribbean parent(s) (Robert, Crystal, and Vanessa). One was born in England (Angie) and one was born in St Lucia (Brandon). Angie’s parents were of mixed ethnicity. One parent was born in Trinidad while the other was born in Sierra Leone. The two met in England while attending medical school, got married, had two children and then moved to Sierra Leone. The entire family subsequently moved to Canada in the late 1970s.

Only one respondent (Lucy) described herself as transgendered. Lucy was biologically a woman but presented as masculine. The other nine respondents had a binary male or female self-identification. Ethnic self-identification was an interesting issue among the respondents. Six of the ten interviewees described their background as having some African origin. Only two (Nisha and Vishnu) described their ethnic background as Indo-Caribbean or Trinidadian. Three of the respondents who were born in Canada (Crystal, Vanessa, and Nisha) used Canadian in their ethnic description of themselves. Only three interviewees (Angie, Lucy, and Brandon) referred to themselves as being of mixed ethnicity. For them, they felt that this gave them an “exotic” appearance and allure to others.

All ten of the respondents self-identified their social class as being middle class in some way. Some interpreted the question to mean their growing up experience or their current status. Three (Lucy, Nisha, and Robert) felt they were currently lower middle class. Brandon, Angie, and Roger felt that they were upper middle class based on their family

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<sup>8</sup> In this paper, we classify two immigrant generations within the Caribbean-origin cohort in Canada. The second generation includes those persons who are either Canadian born or born in the Caribbean but arrived in Canada at pre-school age (zero to four years). The first generation includes those who were born in the Caribbean but who arrived in Canada over the age of eighteen and went directly into the workforce. The inclusion of Caribbean-origin children who arrived at very young ages into the second generation is based on the assumption that these children share many cultural and developmental experiences similar to those of the Canadian-born. Although scholars may vary in their ways of defining the new second generation, they have generally agreed that there are important differences between children of different cohorts, particularly in their psychological developmental stages, in their socialization processes in the family, in their schooling experience, and in their treatment in the society at large, as well as in their orientation toward their homeland (Zhou, 1999).

backgrounds. Only three of the respondents felt they were from the middle class (Lisa, Vanessa, and Vishnu). One of the limitations of our study is the fact that we were unable to locate working class queer Caribbean-Canadian people in Toronto. The difficulty in locating these individuals is that many of them live on the extreme down low. Our sample is therefore biased towards the views and experiences of middle class Caribbean-Canadians.

With respect to current occupations in Canada, three interviewees were university students (Vanessa, Crystal, and Nisha), while one was a university professor (Vishnu). Two were social workers or community advocates (Angie, Lucy, and Brandon). Two were involved in the medical profession (Roger and Lisa). One (Robert) was an artist in Toronto. Once again our sample shows a bias in terms of perspective these individuals would have been able to share with us. Their views reflect a liberal, white collar perspective that one might consider fairly high profile.

None of the interviewees was currently married. Their living arrangements did vary somewhat from being closeted (Lisa and Roger) to being out and proud (Angie, Lucy, Crystal, Vanessa, Brandon, and Vishnu). These differences clearly seemed to reflect the different generations within the queer Caribbean-Canadian community. Those older members like Lisa and Roger tend to be more likely to be closeted or still living on the “down low.” The younger folk in the community tend to be more confident in their status and less concerned about what others think about them. Hence, they were more likely to be living outside of the closet. Another bias in our sample was not capturing the views of the third generation. This cohort consists of men and women who are the children of second generation Caribbean parents. This group is under the age of twenty and by all reports tends to be out of the closet at a very young age—normally their teens. This group contrasts with the first generation who are living on “the down low” or closeted. Despite this, the first generation tend to be politically involved in the queer community on an intellectual basis. This is in contrast to the third generation who tend to be visibly out but very apolitical in their activities in the queer community. Most are reportedly more concerned with issues like “fashion and dress” rather than gay marriage rights.

Only one of the interviewees (Robert) gave his orientation as being bi-sexual. Two of the interviewees did indicate that they had children from previous heterosexual relationships. Lisa had two boys and a girl while Robert had a son. Some of the interviewees did indicate that in the future they might want to have their own children (Nisha, Crystal, Vanessa, Lucy, and Brandon). Most were not averse to using new reproductive technologies like surrogate mothers or artificial insemination from an anonymous donor.

In terms of current living arrangements, half of the interviewees lived alone without a partner (Lucy, Brandon, Vishnu, Robert, and Vanessa). Almost all the interviewees did, however, say that they were in a relationship with a partner although they did not live with them. Interestingly, half of the interviewees were currently in a relationship with a white Euro-Canadian person. Only two interviewees indicated having a current relationship with someone who is of Caribbean ethnicity (Crystal and Roger).

All of the interviewees reported that they continue to have close relations with members of their family. Most said that their relationship with their mothers was the closest. Few mentioned their fathers being in the picture or having any relation with them. Some did have siblings to whom they were close. The pattern of having a close relationship with family even after having come out seemed to be fairly common among individuals in our sample. This pattern seems to reflect the improving level of tolerance for queerness within the Caribbean-Canadian community.

All the interviewees had made at least two holiday visits to the Caribbean in their lifetime. Some have made multiple (five or more). Roger, Crystal, and Lucy all report having made at least one, sometimes two visits, each year to their respective places of origin. Two interviewees (Angie and Lucy) moved back to the Caribbean and lived for an extended period of time (longer than six months). With respect to the interviewees' desire to move back to the Caribbean to live and work in the future, no one in the sample had that dream or aspiration because all felt that the region was not a safe place to be openly queer. Violence, persecution, or repression for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or queer) people in the Caribbean region was more the norm than the exception.

From the above socio-demographic profile of the ten LGBTQ Caribbean-Canadians in this sample, it is quite a heterogeneous mixture of individuals who nevertheless had a common ethnic Caribbean background, high levels of educational attainment and the experience of having lived in Canada for more than ten years. As a consequence of the sample size being small and non-randomly selected, it is difficult to make strong claims of reliability in the findings that follow. The life experiences of these ten individuals can however, give us a valid picture of the way first and second generation queer Caribbean-Canadians who live in Toronto adapt and negotiate a space for themselves both within the Canadian and Caribbean communities.

### **Migration and settlement: Unsettled diasporic subjects in a white settler society**

The migration stories from our respondents were typical of many young Caribbean-Canadians now in their early thirties. Some came to Canada to join their parents, often mothers, who had left them years earlier (DaCosta 1976). Others were born in the early 1980s to first generation Caribbean migrants in Canada and subsequently spent their entire lives in one location. What we are now learning, beyond the research of the 1970s and early 1980s (Anderson and Grant 1975; D'Oyley and Silverman 1976; James 1990), is how some of these second generation children fared as a result of their settlement and acculturation experiences. For some second generation Caribbean-Canadians, their determination, high educational aspirations and performance made them academically successful. This was the case for most of our interviewees (Angie, Lucy, Nisha, Crystal, and Vanessa). For others, poor academic performance, school absenteeism and dropout made it difficult to realize their own and their parents' aspirations for them. This was marginally the case for one interviewee (Robert) who has not been very successful academically. He has, however, excelled in the arts. Richmond (1993) notes that young Caribbean immigrants who arrived when they were in their teens did less well at school and this ultimately affected their future employment opportunities. We speculate that these young teenagers may have had greater problems because of their cultural

differences, shorter time resident in Canada, skin color, and ethnicity differences which made them more susceptible to being a target for greater discrimination.

From our sample, it seems that all the interviewees experienced some feelings of alienation or some degree of discrimination while growing up or since moving to Canada. These feelings and experiences had nothing to do with their sexual orientation in Canada. The extent of their feelings of being “outsiders” to Canadian society seemed to vary by ethnicity and skin color. There were notable differences voiced between men and women in terms of their exposure to the ugliness of racism while living in Canada. Men seemed to be on the leading edge of the hostile racism both in terms of physical attack or verbal attacks. Women also experienced racism and it manifested itself in physical and verbal attacks but more often it seemed to come in the form of the eroticization and objectification of women of color. Women faced the double jeopardy of both sexism and racism by the dominant culture. Almost all our interviewees in this study indicated that a racist cultural milieu in Canada is the main factor that makes them feel like outsiders in Canada. Those who were in the second generation recalled desiring to be “Canadian” but persistent marginalization over time caused some to reach back into their Caribbean roots as a form of resistance. Our first generation interviewees voiced these sentiments the strongest. Having lived in Canada for 45 years, Roger noted that he never felt like he was treated fairly even as a highly qualified medical professional. He states as follows:

Racism has plagued me my whole life in Canada. It took me a long time and up till now I still can't understand what racism really is. I know what it's supposed to be, it's I white, you black. But I have a lot of white friends, more white friends than black friends and I relate to them a little better. In Jamaica you are a first-class citizen in your own country so nothing stops you from achieving anything. When you go to a dominant society and this society happens to be white then you are not a first class person as you think you are. And you have some little things that will hold you back. (Roger)

Not surprisingly most of our informants who grew up in Canada (Nisha, Robert, Crystal and Vanessa) described their childhood years as a time often characterized by ambiguity, tension, and uncertainty about who they were culturally. Again, this feeling had nothing to do with their sexual orientation but had more to do with being a non-white immigrant trying to feel like they belonged in the Canadian milieu. The four interviewees spoke of schools and other public spheres as locations where they were pressured into being a “Canadian.” They also spoke about being encouraged to make Canadian friends in order to learn about the culture and to adapt but on the other hand making too many Canadian friends meant that, in their parents' eyes, they might have been losing their roots. In those households where multi-generations all lived under the same roof this seemed to be more magnified because older relatives gave them reprimands to remind them not to be too Canadianized. The sense of being on the margins of two cultures was perplexing to their identities. Under these conditions, young Caribbean-origin men and women grew up equating Canadian-ness with “whiteness.” As children and even as adolescents, the four interviewees (Nisha, Robert, Crystal and Vanessa) reported that they tried to be Canadian

by acting white in order to fit in with peer groups. Yet as they grew older, most became increasingly aware that regardless of their efforts they would not be accepted as completely “Canadian.” This was certainly the case for Nisha who was born in Trinidad and arrived in Canada at age three. She recalls going through the “marginal man<sup>9</sup>” stage in her primary and secondary school and then realizing in young adulthood that she had developed a sense of identity which was full of contradictions and uncertainty. Her life became even more complicated when she came to the realization that she was queer and living in a non-white immigrant body. She says:

I went through a stage in high school where I denied who I was. I didn't want to think I was brown. Yes, when I was with my family I considered myself Indo-Trinidadian-Canadian, but when I was with my friends I considered myself Canadian. When I was in university—I still didn't know who I was but my friends were all white girls. It's hard when you grow up in a school where you are pretty much the only culture there. My parents would say we are Trinidadian and then I said, well you should have left me in Trinidad and that was that whole issue for debate...Another complication in my identity came when I was at university and I was coming to my sexual identity. (Nisha)

Since the early 1970s studies have examined the mobility opportunities of Caribbean-born immigrants to Canada (Richmond 1988; Ramcharan 1976; Head and Lee 1980). Like most immigrants arriving in Canada, Caribbeans had the intention that they would experience the “mobility dream.” In Canada, the mobility dream is directly linked to the American ethos of being “the land of opportunity” where any person willing to work hard can “make it” regardless of color, ethnicity, or place of birth. The central tenet of the mobility dream, which made it especially appealing to earlier waves of Caribbean migrants, was that every immigrant was the architect of his or her own fortune, because equal opportunity was available to all. The reality of life for most Caribbean immigrants to Canada, however, has rarely matched these ideals. The opportunity to be upwardly mobile in Canada has never been evenly distributed among all the talented or ambitious in the population. The mobility “glass ceiling” has continued even into the second generation of Caribbean-Canadians. These barriers occur despite the fact that the second generation now speaks without an accent, have Canadian schooling and experience, and most know the mannerism of what it means to be a Canadian in terms of social and cultural capital (Plaza 2004).

Caribbean-origin people continue to be differentially incorporated into Canadian society (Henry 1994). Moreover, Caribbean-origin immigrants, compared to other ethnic groups in Canada, express more dissatisfaction with their lives and their opportunities for mobility (Model 1991). The major barrier preventing the incorporation of the Caribbean-origin immigrant population seems to be the feeling of blocked mobility (Pool 1989).

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<sup>9</sup> Initially conceptualized by Robert Park and later formalized by Stonequist, the “marginal-man” situation is one in which the individual who through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence leaves one social group or culture and makes a satisfactory adjustment to another, then finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither.

Employment discrimination and blocked upward mobility was voiced by all our interviewees in one way or another. In her work as a nurse in Toronto, Lisa told us that she continues to see racism in the hiring and recruitment process of friends. She says:

You have to understand why they are not letting you in to get the good work—its plain and simple racism!!... straight racism is why they are not letting you in... They cannot afford for a white person to walk into a bank on Bay Street and somebody like you sitting in their boardroom it means eventually you are going to be controlling their money right? I mean they are paranoid about your education. You can come here educated and they ask if you have Canadian experience. How are you going to get experience if they don't bring you in? So that's why we have so many qualified nurses in Canada cleaning bed pans, sweeping floors or cleaning homes. They cannot catch a break because they have the wrong skin color. (Lisa)

This section outlined some of the challenges and complications for queer Caribbean-Canadians from the perspective of their racialized diasporic identities within Canada as a white settler nation. It presented the base layer of alienation which diasporic subjects experience, and which sets the stage for their double alienation as a result of their sexual identity. The implication of these base narratives of diasporic experiences is that while queer Caribbean-Canadian subjects share the above experiences with their non-queer counterparts in the diaspora, they are often cast as atypical or non-members of the Caribbean-Canadian diaspora because of their non-normative sexual politics. By refusing to recognize this commonality of experience regarding overt and structural racism in Canadian society, queer Caribbean-Canadians are often denied a stake in the design of community solidarity.

### **Family and community responses in the Caribbean and Canada**

The living arrangements that Caribbean immigrants have established in Canada are the result of a combination of factors which include social class transformations, period of arrival, and transplanted customs (both Creole and Indian). These are all factors that have their origin in the Caribbean and seem to be played out in Canada for our interviewees. The importance of family in Caribbean-Canadian households was voiced by all the interviewees. The family continues to be the lynchpin which grounds and connects Caribbean-Canadians of all generations to something that is “solid and reliable,” according to Vanessa. The family is the institution that helps Caribbean-Canadians psychologically deal with the ups and downs of friends, employment, intimate relationships, schooling, and the feelings of alienation and marginalization in a hostile environment. The Caribbean-Canadian family therefore gave a feeling of agency to an otherwise atomized first and second generation population in Canada. From all our respondents we heard the same sentiment about fearing the loss of connections with family in Canada and abroad. Robert reflected on his extended family in Canada and their importance while he was growing up. He also told us that it was a hard decision to come out to his mother because he feared losing his main family support mechanism. His mother was very religious and Robert was very concerned that she would abandon him once he told her that he is bisexual. He tells us:

I was very close with my extended family up until about 18.... When we were growing up any time there was a wedding, birthday or family event we all attended...you meet the other families; in that sense there was the sheltered kind of thing and there was the support growing up...We had our other cousins we always talk to and because on my mom side at least we are around the same age it made us really close... my dad side I did not know. Growing up I could always connect with someone in my family and say I am having a problem can you help me out and there would always be support.... Deciding to come out to some members of my family was a hard thought because I felt I would lose all of that support... I felt that if I told my mom she would tell me that I am committing a sin against God... It took me two years to tell her, but when I finally did she and my brothers and sisters just accept it and now we don't talk about it because they think I will find my way and choose the love of a woman in the future. (Robert)

All the respondents spoke strongly about the ways in which their families and communities in Canada and the diaspora respond to their queer identity, and the ways in which this is central to their positioning and self-management in relation to the mainstream queer community in Canada. According to Brandon, there are many homophobic and transphobic assumptions and practices within the Afro-Caribbean community in the region and in the diaspora that structure a culture of silence and denial, especially within more middle-class segments of the community.

Families, we heard, often regard homosexuality as a shame that cripples their respectability in the wider community, which polices sexuality in the name of state and church-sanctioned moral citizenship. Another family response is denial, in which parents especially refuse to focus on their children's sexual identity, viewing it as a temporary abnormal condition or "phase," and in many cases refusing to recognize queerness as constituting a coherent identity. For Brandon, this meant he could not talk about dating with his parents. For Vishnu, this meant that he censored his practices so they would not embarrass his family. For Nisha, this meant that her partner was always awkwardly referred to by her parents as a "friend" and that she came out only to her immediate rather than extended family. For Lucy this also translated into some degree of family shame on the part of her mother.

While Lucy and Nisha perceived Caribbean mothers as more tolerant and fathers as more vigilantly policing, Vishnu expressed that this was the inverse in his case as the responsibility for moral policing is asymmetrically burdened on mothers in Caribbean society. All respondents felt that queer (especially feminine) males are subject to much stricter policing than queer females, especially transsexuals, many of whom are automatically severed from family networks. In cases such as Brandon's and to some extent, Vishnu's, their exilic positioning outside the region is in response to what they

feel is a homophobic hyperpolicing within the private sphere that complicates their meaning of home and family and troubles any idyllic nostalgia for return.

### **Virtual communities: Networking and self-affirmation**

Berger and Mallon (1993) found that social networks are extremely important in the lives of young queer people, often serving in place of their family when their biological family is unable or unwilling to provide positive support. Gauthier and Chaudoir (2004) found that the Internet serves as a virtual community center, a gathering place for exchange about medical, social, legal, and economic issues, aspects that when understood and optimized, lead to greater positive personal growth. Unlike most other minorities, queer Caribbean-Canadians often find themselves in a position where they cannot rely on information from relatives about queer culture and ways to cope with societal prejudice. Most of them need to find others with whom they can discuss their feelings. This can be a difficult and possibly dangerous situation within the Caribbean-Canadian community where stigma and isolation often exist for men and women who come out and declare their sexual orientation to be queer. Fear, prejudice, and isolation from the Caribbean community kept both Lisa and Roger living closeted for all their lives in Canada. However, the majority of our respondents use the Internet as a way to help them find more information about the queer community in Toronto and network internationally. This virtual queer imagination has provided queer Caribbean-Canadians with a sense of community and self-affirmation that helps to buffer the material dimensions of homophobia. Crystal noted that she used the Internet to “find other second generation Caribbean-Canadians like myself... to discover support groups... to overcome social and psychological isolation... to find out information which was going to help me in my coming out experience in Toronto.” Similarly for Robert, the Internet websites he visited while coming to terms with his “sexual orientation allowed me to deal with the fact that there was a chance that my family and friends may disown me once I disclosed my bisexual orientation to them.” For Lucy, having come out more than ten years ago, she says that she now uses the Internet to find other transgendered people. To these virtual community members Lucy feels she can disclose her feelings of being “different” (being biologically a woman but presenting as masculine), can share her own experiences and learn from others, which has ultimately enabled her to “build self-esteem, gain emotional and motivational support, and feel less isolated” (Lucy).

Other interviewees like Brandon report using the Internet for more transnational organizing. Since he only recently moved from St Lucia to Canada he still monitors queer websites maintained by queer political organizations in the Caribbean such as the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG), the Barbados Gays & Lesbians Against Discrimination (BGLAD) and the Caribbean Forum for Liberation of All-sexualities and Genders (CARIFLAG). By having these transnational connections, Vishnu felt that queer Caribbeans in Canada can also connect with comrades in the Caribbean in order to form a “transnational support group.” This is particularly relevant he notes for “individuals who find themselves outside of what society defines as heteronormal.” These sites allow diasporic subjects like Vishnu and Brandon to know in real time what the conditions are like in the Caribbean for queer folk. Brandon feels that these sites, although at various stages of development, help the local queer populations to

reach out and link with the diasporic queer community. Evidence of this comes from the blog postings and the hyperlinks on various queer websites. At the J-FLAG site for example, there is information about asylum cases in the UK, US, and Canada for all sexual minorities. According to Brandon, such information puts pressure on the Jamaican government to improve its human rights record in regard to sexual citizenship. Local police also have to be more vigilant in checking their human rights abuses of sexual minorities as the Internet keeps them under a microscope. This strategic mobilization and organization of a queer transnational web of surveillance helps to make state organizations and their practices more accountable to human rights concerns. Brandon also noted that having hyperlinks to other queer communities in the region and around the world gives Caribbean sexual minorities a chance to foster solidarity with the international struggles that are going on. On the J-FLAG site for example there are hyperlinks to the Rainbow project in Namibia, Pro-Gay site in the Philippines, Gay men of African Descent (GMAD), and South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA-NY). These are all organizations that have well-developed websites which provide additional information on health, immigration, and human rights issues to anyone who visits them.

To many younger queer participants of this research, it seemed that the Internet is a means to an end. The Internet was used as a tool to discover venues, events, and organizations that would enable them to meet and connect with people in face-to-face situations. Nisha reported that she uses Facebook and MySpace to keep abreast of the queer friendly parties and social events taking place in Toronto. By having access to these sites, Nisha felt that she could immerse herself in “queer safe space in Toronto thus avoiding the ugliness of sexual harassment or feeling awkward if my partner and I decided to display intimacy in a public space.” This was a sentiment we heard in virtually all the interviews. Everyone wanted to avoid feeling awkward and embarrassed when they were out in Toronto with friends or lovers. For Nisha, this was the triple jeopardy of being a woman, queer, and a person of color in a public space.

Some of our older respondents such as Roger and Lisa said that they did not use the Internet to gain up-to-date information about the queer community in Toronto. Roger and Lisa were more likely to be drawn to the printed newspaper or magazine publications that had information on the queer community. Vishnu told us in great detail how he used the *Xtra* and the *Fab* magazines as a source of information while he was coming to terms with his sexual orientation. His curiosity about the queer life led him to eventually visit the “Barn” night club because “it had the biggest advertisement in the newspaper.” His first visit to the “Barn” alone was a “shock” because it was the first time he had witnessed “males dancing with males.” He later psychoanalyzed his reaction and concluded that his initial response was due to his internalized homophobia that he was socialized to feel. For Vishnu, however, the newspaper and magazines produced within the queer community was the catharsis that opened the door to his sexuality, though he also highlighted the racialized biases of the mainstream queer media. Radio stations, weekly print newspapers or magazines as information sources about the queer community events in Toronto were more typically utilized by the older interviewees in our sample. Both Lisa and Roger reported that they had only recently logged onto the queer scene available on the Internet. Both of them, however, said that they did not

embrace the media because the technology was daunting. Roger noted that he did not like the proliferation of “easy hook-ups” or the “anonymous sex scene opportunities” which have now become very much part of the Internet queer culture in Toronto. The Internet for these two went against their idea of living quietly on the margins where you remained hidden. Getting involved in the queer scene in Toronto via the Internet was regarded by both as a way to make oneself susceptible to being identified and therefore vulnerable to being taunted or exploited.

### **Racism in Toronto’s mainstream queer community**

Like many other racialized groups in Canada, the Caribbean diaspora is affected by and resistant to multiple forms of overt and systemic racism. This marginalization is intensified within the mainstream white queer community, which has historically equated categories such as “gay,” “lesbian,” and “queer” with white-centric definitions and histories. All respondents spoke out about racism within the white queer community in Canada, giving numerous examples of the ways in which queer Caribbeans in Toronto, in particular, occupy a unique position in the racialized queer hierarchy. Brandon and Lucy mentioned the differential treatment of queer Caribbeans within the mainstream queer community. Their issues and political struggles are often peripheralized and treated as trivial to any renovation of Canadian queer citizenship.

Brandon recollected that a radio call-in program on Proud FM (Toronto’s gay radio station), during which he and other queer Caribbean-Canadian activists were discussing the Stop Murder Music campaign, was met with hostility from white gay callers who felt that the issue was not a Canadian, but Caribbean one. Editors of the gay village newspaper also felt that this was a Jamaican (i.e. not Canadian) problem that should be handled by an international organization, rather than Egale Canada. This culturalist argument located within the white gay male community underscores the dominant discourse that regulates the tabling of issues that serve as proxies for queer citizenship. Vishnu also extended this analysis in which homophobia in Jamaica is taken up by the mainstream queer media in Toronto, more so as a reference point for claiming a more liberal and superior Canada and hence as a strategy for prioritizing white subjects for queer citizenship.

The hierarchy of issues that are considered to be relevant to the queer community in Toronto is therefore white-centric and directed. For example, Brandon lamented the unfortunate elevation of the gay marriage discourse that really benefited upper-class gay white males above discourses of poverty and racialization within the queer community. This selective focusing apparatus at times brings invisibility to queer Caribbeans in Canada and the issues that they feel are unique to their diasporic and transnational projects. Afro-Caribbeans in particular are made especially invisible and only digested through the stereotypes that are circulated and maintained within the mainstream Canadian community. For example, Brandon reported that Afro-Caribbean gay men are often approached for drug purchase or hook ups at the gay clubs in the gay village. He also cited fear on the part of the mainstream queer community in Toronto, of queer blacks congregating on occasions such as the gay Pride parade, as this has connotations of violence and unrest. In fact, he mentioned that the annual Afro-Caribbean gay Pride

party, Blockorama, was moved from the village to a parkette at the periphery of the village, symbolically marginalizing the queer Caribbean community as a way of cleansing the village space to reflect a predominantly white version of Pride. These material forms of discrimination against racialized queer Caribbeans are also compounded by the village politics of representation as the mainstream queer media, controlled by the Pink Triangle Press (*Xtra* Newspaper, *Fab* Magazine, *Pride* Magazine) that is narrowly accountable to the white queer community, continues to deny alternative political platforms and constituencies in the queer community and reproduces racialized interpretations of queer people of color.

The response to this sort of regulation is multiple, often determined by many issues, one of which, according to Lucy, is that the younger generation of queer Caribbeans is more vociferous and intolerant of racism as it is of homophobia. Lucy also cited transphobia in the lesbian community as a real problem facing lesbian and transsexual Caribbeans. However, she felt that factional identity politics has thinned the grounds for solidarity amongst the black community; a problem that provides de facto leverage for racism from the more solidly organized white lesbian community. Interestingly, Lucy cast the disjointed black community, not only against the white queer community, but against what she felt are more organized and cohesive groups of queer ethnics such as Filipinos and South Asians. This tactic of comparing political bargaining power among ethnic constituencies is reflective of the ways in which a competitive model of Canadian multiculturalism dominates the organizing of difference within Toronto's queer community. Yet, the disaggregation of queer communities of color is a salient problem according to Nisha, who felt that it results from a coerced absorption into the white queer community that determines the frame of visibility of queer identity. While this affords conditional inclusion, Vishnu expressed anxiety about the ways in which white gay men become the gatekeepers of access to queer community status and social capital, at times traded for an acceptance on the part of some queer people of color for the stereotypical categories through which they are afforded such visibility. Whiteness therefore becomes the central organizing feature of in/visibility, and the conditions under which queer people of color can claim visibility.

### **Ethno-sexual boundaries and relations<sup>10</sup>**

Especially in intimate relationships, the framing of difference is so personalized that it becomes privatized instead of seen as a political matter of queer public discourse. Reflecting on biracial relationships between queer Caribbean-Canadians and dominant queer white Canadian bodies, the latter often considers the former as a project to be

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<sup>10</sup> Nagel (2003) notes that ethno-sexual contact across ethnic boundaries is not always a long-term affair, and it is not always a welcome advance. Recreational sex and sexual abuse of members of other ethnic groups are the specialties of ethno-sexual adventurers and ethno-sexual invaders. These forms of hit-and-run adventuring are very common in the colonial history of the world. Ethno-sexual adventurers and invaders are less likely to be penalized or stigmatized for having sex with sometimes reviled ethnic others since they often keep their border crossings a secret, they deny their liaisons, or their acts officially are overlooked. Ethno-sexual adventuring depends to a great extent on stereotypes of the sexual talents or characteristics of members of particular races, ethnicities or nationalities. Such ethno-sexual mythologies include visions of ethnic others with large or exotic genitals who are in possession of unusual sexual prowess, skill, or who are exceptionally attractive or beautiful.

shaped and molded into the proper gay subject, often underlined by white/bourgeois-centric assumptions and practices such as going to high culture events (e.g. opera), and based on neocolonial fantasies in which white gay men position themselves as the rational civilizing subjects of gay men of color. These white gatekeepers are often the ones who introduce Caribbean-Canadians to the queer scene at “Church and Wellesley Street” according to Robert. For Vishnu, this was certainly the case. He met John, an older white male, who became his “gatekeeper” to the queer community. John was a white male who had lost his sexual cachet in the queer community because of his age and declining physical appearance. John befriended Vishnu and proceeded over time to introduce him “to gay culture and the village.” This included “queer art, expensive dinners, some very stereotypical stuff,” according to Vishnu. “I became a project for John ...who wanted to make me into a proper gay person.” In the village, John would be regarded as a “chocolate queen” because his relations were with predominantly brown men. These were men John felt that he could dominate due to his cachet of ethnicity, social and cultural capital.

Brandon viewed this dynamic as one that especially Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men would be predisposed to, as they are exoticized and feminized within the mainstream queer community. Both these representations sharpen the visibility of Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men in the mainstream, while compounding the consumptive power of an especially bourgeois brand of white gay masculinity. For example, older white gay men who desire men of color (labeled chocolate queens in village vocabulary), might find younger Indo-Caribbean gay men appealing, as the trade-off is access to exotic feminized property and youth for the former, while it is access to privilege and power for the latter. Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men, similar to their South Asian Canadian counterparts, are therefore important to the investment of what might be termed sexual capital in the mainstream gay community<sup>11</sup>. According to Vishnu, while such a situation is definitely indicative of the criss-crossing of social vectors in the village identity power grid, it again points to the precarious existence of members of the queer Caribbean community who at times feel they have no choice but to engage, renovate, and manipulate the very imprisoning racialized stereotypes. This suggests that any account of the queer Caribbean-Canadian community should reflect the convoluted politics embedded in biracial relationships, a different experiential base for politicization than that of those members whose experiences are outside this configuration.

Having so few queer Caribbean-Canadians living out of the closet is one reason why so many queer Caribbean-Canadians find themselves initially with partners who are White Euro-Canadians. Brandon, Nisha, Vishnu, and Lucy, who are all from relatively middle-class families, reported that their own families respond differently to their queer identity based on the race and class of their partner. White partners are always seen as less threatening, possibly compensating through race privilege for what is seen to be

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<sup>11</sup> Drummond (2005) notes that a South Asian gay man’s body and overall “looks” play a significant role in determining his cultural status and sex appeal to white Australian men. The look of the Asian body has the capacity either to attract or deter potential sexual partners; such is the image-driven gay culture in Australia. Undoubtedly, the body becomes a central point around which gay South Asian men in Australia develop and ultimately exist.

threatened sexually. Race and class combined can therefore serve as buffers from the more overt expressions of homophobia on the part of families and communities. Nisha's response about her Indo-Caribbean family in Toronto captures the preference for white partners even within the family structure. She states as follows:

My parents are really racist when it comes to my partners. Although they were both brought up in Trinidad, I can tell by their tone and body language that they prefer me to be with a white woman rather than a black or worse yet a dark-skinned butch looking black woman. Don't get me wrong, they would prefer if I was not attracted to women at all, but since they don't have a choice they would prefer that I bring home a white lipstick fem partner (Nisha).

A similar sentiment was heard by Lucy who reflected on her own personal preference for white women. Lucy felt that some of her own bias came from the strict color and class boundaries that existed in Trinidad while she was growing up. Lucy grew up as part of the mixed high brown population in Trinidad who distanced themselves from dark-skinned individuals. She tells us:

As a trans-gendered male-identified female, I only find myself in relationships with white Jewish women since I came out. This is the only group I feel most attracted sexually to. I would be considered high "red" in Trinidad and so this has sunk deep in my psyche. I think because of this upbringing I harbor a white supremacy socialization where all things white are "good" while all things and people black are unattractive and untrustworthy. Quite sick when I think about it! The effect of colonialism on the mindset of even us progressive queers is quite sad! Fanon and Albert Memmi really had something to say that was right about our sick minds! (Lucy).

For Brandon, this further exacerbates the tension between black gay men, as such relationships register as a double liability for the community that responds with overt disgust. Partners must therefore bring to queer Caribbean-Canadians some measure of race or class privilege or leverage with which to counter the homophobic disciplinary tactics of their heteronormative families and community. Brandon hypothesized that, depending on the age of coming out of queer Caribbeans in Canada, families might customize their responses. For example, he felt that there were different levels of homophobic control of younger out sections of the community, as opposed to older sections that are still in the process of coming out. Especially for bisexual men i.e. "men on the down low" in the queer Caribbean-Canadian community, Brandon felt that they are able to perform both queer and straight identities depending on the spaces that they inhabit. While these men are able to position themselves in the queer community, their ambiguity and slippage across identity locations offer some degree of protection from their families and the community.

This was also the case for Roger who had lived in Canada for more than forty-five years. Roger found a niche for himself by playing the part of the eccentric and flamboyant doctor who could never find the right woman. As a member of the Jamaican upper class and having received a first class education in his lifetime, Roger was not harassed or taunted by members of the Jamaican community for not marrying or having any children. His actions were seen as acceptable within the context of his profession and class eccentrics. Roger tells us:

Since moving to Canada from Jamaica in the 1960s, I have always had to live on the down low...on the margins of the Jamaican/Canadian community. Everyone just refers to me as the oldest bachelor at Jamaican or family social events... but it's like tongue and cheek because I know they know I am a queer man who loves the arts, opera, or symphonies and I still live with my mother! My profession and social class background however has insulated me and always given me the wiggle room to be quite vocal but at the same time avoid the ugliness of being called out as a batty man or buller man. I get respect so long as everyone continues to respect me for my profession and my Jamaican class background.

### **Stratification within the queer community**

At the same time that queer Caribbeans are engaged in multiple acts of positioning vis-à-vis the white queer community, they also politicize in reference to other ethnic groups within the queer community. The experiences of queer Caribbean-Canadians are also different based on the ethnic relations within this community, especially between Indo and Afro segments. The sexual eroticization of these two segments positions them at opposite ends of the symbolic spectrum (Indos as feminine and Afros as hypermasculine), which implies different (though not always exclusive) experiences and political projects, with the potential for exacerbating the tensions between Indo and Afro segments of the queer Caribbean-Canadian community. A case in point is the effect of the post 9/11 racialized regulation in Toronto's village life, where the emerging category of "brown" into which queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadians are easily collapsed by the mainstream, has expanded the repertoire of signs through which this group is managed. Both Brandon and Vishnu commented that "brown" gay men such as Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men, are now viewed with suspicion and fear. For Vishnu, this stigmatization was evident in the village bathhouse practices, where he was treated as a sexual liability rather than the exotic commodity he had come to expect from the pre 9/11 context. This paradoxical positioning of "brown" as ultra feminine (unthreatening), or dangerously masculine in the post 9/11 context, makes the experiences and politics of Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men even more unique and ambiguous. This makes issues of solidarity and community even more fraught across the spectrum of queer Caribbean-Canadians.

Indo-Caribbean-Canadian gay men in particular have attempted to harness some degree of visibility within the queer community, even though this struggle for an authentic space is countered by the mainstream culture of fetishization (one way in which Canadian multiculturalism is supposedly operationalized within the queer community). For

example, Vishnu illuminated that although there is one entertainment club event that caters to the needs of the queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadian community (Mela), this event emerged as queer Indo-Caribbean-Canadians attempted to mark themselves as distinct from queer Afro-Caribbean-Canadians and queer South Asian Canadians, both categories in which their unique identificatory markers are collapsed and rendered invisible and tentatively inauthentic. Vishnu also observed that the competition among queer groups of various ethnicities is enmeshed with the ways in which the mainstream queer community, co-opted by a corporate agenda, seeks to selectively commodify (or erase) queer ethnicities in ways that reproduce and compound the power of the mainstream.

For example, while South Asian culture was commodified during a Fashion Cares HIV fundraiser (Bollywood Cowboy in 2005), reggae, soca, reggaeton, and dancehall music were banned at a major village club as it was felt that the patrons (predominantly Black lesbians) who listened to these genres of music were not inclined to spend much money at the club's bar. The assumption was that Afro-Caribbeans in particular were not spending lavishly on alcohol as the rest of the mainstream queer community. Angie also reported that one of the lesbian clubs on the outskirts of the gay village would only play dance hall and reggae music late at night when their white patrons were intoxicated. There were complaints about this music if played before midnight. Vishnu also strongly criticized the racialized regulation of village club culture in Toronto, which heavily edits out any black music for fear that it might attract too many queer people of color. The flip side of this, according to Angie, is that Afro-Caribbeans are only made present in ways that are deemed useful to the mainstream queer community, especially as eroticized fetishes. Angie also lamented the systemic denial of black queer achievement in the white queer media, which did not reflect the political stance taken by queer blacks during the 2008 Pride parade celebrations. Visibility for queer people of color therefore is conditioned by a series of checks and balances that cannot threaten, but only reinforce the dominant logic of whiteness as it configures the legitimate expression of queer citizenship.

### **Queer transnational networks and activism**

Queer Caribbeans in Canada have not only carved out a political space for contesting and reorienting the mainstream queer Canadian community, but some have been able to use this political platform to network with Caribbean-based queer and human rights organizations within the region. Carefully negotiating around any neoliberal and neocolonial assumptions of enlightenment and aid, the Caribbean-Canadian queer community has intervened on certain platforms and moments within the region's ongoing and increasingly visible discourse about queer rights. Via Egale, activists in the Caribbean-Canadian queer community, have been able to create linkages for ongoing dialogue with the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG), the Caribbean Forum for Liberation of All-sexualities and Genders (CARIFLAG), the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD), and other queer activist organizations in Guyana, Trinidad, and St. Lucia. While this diasporic community has organized and channeled its activism and solidarity through mainstream queer Canadian activist organizations such as Egale, the Caribbean-Canadian queer community remains convinced that local groups must take more ownership of the change process.

Yet, queer activists in the diaspora insist that their Canadian activism must have an impact on the change process in the region. Positioned in the diaspora, respondents like Brandon claim, “I could not justify living in a country (St. Lucia) that criminalized same sex acts unless I wanted to fight to change those laws. I prefer to do my work from Canada.” Brandon’s activism against homophobia in the region is expressed in a punitive discourse that connects homophobia and the economic livelihood of Caribbean economies. In Jamaica, which he considers to be the epicenter of homosexual violence in the region, Brandon suggests that withholding the tourist dollar is one way of putting pressure on governments that continue to condone homophobia overtly and institutionally. He adds that a Canadian boycott of Jamaican goods and services will also produce similar pressures. Of course, these strategies of battling one form of oppression with another can have ambiguous consequences, especially for groups that are underrepresented, and especially for the resident queer community that might not be afforded any access to representation. In fact, they might become even more target-prone as a result of such pressures. Brandon’s suggestion points to the frustration of the Caribbean-Canadian queer community and both the possibilities and limits of the current transnational network.

At the same time queer transnational networks that derive some impulse from the Caribbean-Canadian context are making progress in politicizing the issue as a human rights issue in the Caribbean region, which is countered by a new transnational wave of the religious right. Conservative religious groups in Canada and the United States, which are losing ground in their own liberalizing countries, are increasingly focused on the Caribbean, trying to depoliticize any dialogue about broadening sexual citizenship, advocating for intensified homophobic social regulation and producing a reactive regime policed by hyperconservative attitudes. As an activist within Toronto’s Caribbean queer community, Brandon felt that Canada is positioned to play a more positive role by reflecting on some of its supposedly progressive laws and how these might be translated into foreign policy. However, he stressed the need for the queer organizations in the region to have sufficient capability and capacity to approach such a process with tact.

One example of queer transnational networking and activism between Canada and the Caribbean that stands out concerns a campaign that was started in 2007 by the Working Group of the Canadian Caribbean Human Rights Group in conjunction with Egale, called Stop Murder Music.<sup>12</sup> Activists claimed that the songs of anti-gay dancehall artists such as Sizzla and Elephant Man “violate the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act by inciting violence and murder against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified (LGBT) communities.”<sup>13</sup> The campaign, supported by a total of twenty human rights organizations in Canada and the Caribbean, called for the removal of the artists’ work from music store shelves in Canada and the denial of entry visas to artists espousing hate lyrics against the LGBT communities. This organized effort not only helped to strengthen

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on this group’s articulation of the campaign and its solidarity network, see [http://www.egale.ca/smm/docs/070910\\_Minister.pdf](http://www.egale.ca/smm/docs/070910_Minister.pdf), downloaded 01/19/09

<sup>13</sup> See Egale’s Web site highlights on “Stop Murder Music” <http://www.egale.ca/index.asp?lang=E&item=1374>, downloaded 01/19/09

solidarity between the marginalized Caribbean-Canadian queer community and the mainstream Canadian queer community by transnationalizing the local Canadian queer discourse, but it also brought more teeth to the regional movement that seemed limited in its power to affect the material violence of dancehall music. The Stop Murder Music campaign which challenged homophobic and transphobic music involved a broad spectrum of international organizations and coalesced around other transnational networks (e.g. Caribbean British) under a human rights discourse.

While the campaign was multipronged in terms of advocacy for legal change, improved networking, financial strategizing, and so on, in Toronto, one of the milestone outcomes of the increased visibility of homophobia in the region as a human rights issue was the successful attempt by Caribbean-Canadian queer activists (via Egale) to obtain refugee status for Jamaican gay activist Gareth Henry in Canada. Henry became the international grand marshal of the Gay Pride parade in 2008 in Toronto. Interestingly, his iconic presence was interpreted by the mainstream white queer media as an indication of a liberal and benevolent Canadian nationalism (the same one that allowed white queer subjects some measure of claims to human rights two decades earlier!), rather than symbolic of the strides of the Caribbean-Canadian queer community to recast and repoliticize the category of “queer Canadian” as one that was not only not white, but at the same time transnational.

At the same time the intervention of Caribbean-Canadian queer activists in the region’s queer politics via Egale raises issues about the “colonialistic flavor” of the queer Caribbean diaspora in Canada; it also illuminates a different “Caribbean” that is at stake for the diaspora itself, and which is significant to its identificatory and political discourses within Canada itself. While activists in the diaspora like Brandon acknowledge that they are relatively in a position of privilege, they feel that they are also accountable to their members in the diaspora to politicize salient issues; for example, by debating whether or not the queer diasporic dollar should be invested in homophobic spaces. These activists recognize that their activism and political discourse activate often conflicting tides of change—on the one hand neocolonial tendencies, on the other, transformative anti-homophobic practices. The effect of change is therefore one that the queer diaspora faces with some degree of contention that is even more complicated by the fact that some activists, such as Lucy, insist on the powerlessness of the gay community in places like Trinidad, compared with a supposedly more progressive queer politics in Canada. At the same time, Lucy attributes this problem to the power of the religious right as well as the dominance of an unpoliticized mixed race middle-class queer culture in Trinidad. These strands in the argument enliven transnational queer discourse, as a shared, though at times asymmetrical process, producing a dynamic mix of ambiguities and progressive strides that complicate the very discursive categories of the Caribbean *and* Canada.

### **Conclusion**

This exploratory investigation illumines some of the main issues of study and debate regarding the queer Caribbean diaspora in Toronto, Canada. While it is by no means representative of a homogeneous group of queer Caribbean-Canadians, the data suggests

a complex and uneven matrix of positionalities, politics, and experiences that dot a relatively invisible area of investigation. Yet, these experiences primarily highlight the problems of dealing with sexuality and racialized social disciplining and regulation in Canada and the Caribbean. As a sub-group within the diaspora, this paper shows that these respondents cannot only be viewed as subjects apart from the wider Caribbean diaspora, as they are vulnerable to the multi-faceted workings of Canadian anti-immigrant racism in its most overt and systemic manifestations. However, the respondents also suffer from an added degree of racism, positioned within a sexual minority category in which they are made tentative members on the grounds of their racialized identities.

This double racism as it is effected in the mainstream queer community affects material livelihood issues such as employment access as well as those concerning access to symbolic citizenship, not just in terms of inclusion, but also regarding the entitlement and power to renovate the dominant meanings of “Canadian.” The testimonies of the queer Caribbean-Canadians in this paper point to racialized regimes of representation and regulatory practices within Toronto’s queer community, which is primarily controlled by the white bourgeois gay male community. The absence of racialized queer bodies and politics in the queer media emerged as a major issue hindering organizing and solidarity. Another important issue that emerged was the politics of race in interpersonal relationships in which queer Caribbean-Canadians are constituted as naïve, subordinate, and undeserving queer citizens, whose membership in Canada’s queer community is licensed by white gay male citizens. The urgency of further investigating this much underexplored area of biracial relationships and ethno-sexual adventuring, involving queer Caribbean-Canadians and white queer settler Canadians, should not be read within a discourse of making the former more palatable for integration. Rather, it should be seen as a tense axis about which competing claims to sexual citizenship require critical engagement and re-engineering.

Respondents’ emphasis on the gay ghetto’s club and entertainment culture and its political events such as the annual Pride parade also illuminated the regime of race management in the mainstream queer community, in which various unpalatable aspects of queer Caribbean-Canadian life and politics are edited out, so as to keep this group visible on the margins of queer Canada. The implication is that racialized queer subjects are made absent in mainstream queer spaces, and forced to seek refuge in the closet or in alternative queer spaces, an issue that requires further investigation. This materialist mapping of queerness, while cognizant of the hegemony of whiteness, should also contemplate beyond the binary, to look at the ways in which different racialized and ethnic sections of the queer community frame and activate each other, if even to the end of reifying mainstream social dynamics.

At another level, the paper also identifies the different ways in which Afro and Indo-Caribbeans are positioned by the mainstream queer community, which further exploits ethnic tensions and militates against solidarity. The cursory insertion of queer Caribbean-Canadians into the mainstream fabric of queer life in Toronto therefore reflects the hegemonic ideologies and practices of white gay males’ control of queer citizenship,

rather than a modernist metanarrative of rational (white gay male) subjects civilizing helpless racialized queer subjects.

The other jaw of disciplining queer Caribbean-Canadians concerns the regulatory practices of the heteronormative Caribbean community in the region and within the diaspora. Respondents illuminated a range of family responses such as shame, denial, exclusion, accommodation, and so on, that moderate and broker membership status. These responses echo Crichlow's (2004) extensive analysis of the ways in which the Caribbean community in Canada polices and regulates same-sex relations in the name of a more morally digestible version of the diaspora in Canada. This paper also illuminates how this homophobia serves to prevent solidarity among queer Caribbean-Canadians, instead strengthening their dependence on and therefore vulnerability to the white LGBTQ community. Coupled with racism, homophobia within the Caribbean-Canadian diaspora serves to hypermarginalize queer Caribbean-Canadians to the point where many are forced to live fractured and incoherent realities, living at once in and out of the closet (e.g. men who have sex with men), to manage the atrocities of racism and homophobia combined.

Much more exploration is needed about the everyday lives of queer Caribbean-Canadians to reveal the range of survival practices across classes and ethnicities. While this exploratory investigation illuminates the complicated lattice work of identity politics across particular intersecting sites of race, gender, sexuality, and class, the authors recognize that this paper only partially reveals the ways in which issues of social inequality in the Caribbean translate into the diasporic context in Canada. The limited sample size, while spotlighting a more middle-class spectrum, challenges future research to address the discursive construction of working-class and upper-class queer identity by possibly expanding the sample size and investigating issues such as poverty and status in constructing categories such as "queer," "Caribbean," and "Canadian." In addition, though the paper identifies biracial constructions of queer politics, further investigation will be needed to deepen an understanding of the role of white Canadian partners in conditioning these aforementioned categories. It is perhaps by using a more symbolic interactionist approach that it is possible to illuminate the micro-level interactions and relations that work against any attempt to impose a unitary category of experience, identity, and political consciousness on queer Caribbean-Canadians.

On a more encouraging note, this paper has highlighted the ways in which some queer Caribbean-Canadians constitute their politics and distinguish themselves as a transnational diaspora. The Stop Murder Music campaign is one such site through which this group is able to canvas support for anti-homophobia activism in the Caribbean, at the same time, attempting to renovate the boundaries of what legitimately qualifies as "queer" and "Canadian." While these circuits of activism are riddled with several complexities and contentious entanglements, some of which concern complicity in neocolonial and neoliberal discourses, they help to activate and energize the activism of LGBTQ groups within the Caribbean. The politics of managing transnational solidarity and activism therefore remains an area of investigation with the potential to transform the actual and experienced realities of those whose very survival depends on it.

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**Table 1. Characteristics of the Participants in the Queer Caribbean Canadian Study**

<b>Interviewee Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Generation</b>	<b>Gender Self-Identified</b>	<b>Ethnicity Self-Identified</b>	<b>Social Class</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Country of Birth</b>	<b>Length of Time in Canada</b>	<b>Orientation Self-Identified</b>	<b>Living Arrangement</b>	<b>Family Structures</b>
Angie	37	2nd	Female	Mixed African Caribbean & African	Upper middle class	Social Worker	England	25 years	Out Lesbian	Lives with white partner	Close connection to family No children
Lucy	35	2nd	Transgendered biologically a woman presents masculine	Mixed Red African, White	Lower middle class	Lawyer/Social Worker	Trinidad	27 years	Out Butch Lesbian	Lives alone white partner	Close connection to family No children
Brandon	33	1st	Male	Mixed African Chinese/Syrian	Upper Middle class	Community Advocate Lawyer	St Lucia	11 years	Queer Man	Lives alone no partner	Close connection to family No children
Vishnu	36	1st	Male	Indo-Trinidadian	Middle class	Professor	Trinidad	9 years	Queer Male	Lives alone white partner	Close connection to family No children
Nisha	28	2nd	Female	Indo-Canadian-Trinidadian	Lower Middle Class	Graduate Student	Trinidad	28 years	Questioning Lesbian	Lives with parents white partner	Close connection to family No children
Robert	23	2nd	Male	African Caribbean	Lower Middle Class	Artist	Canada	23 years	Bisexual Male	Lives alone no partner	Distant connection to mother & sibling Has a son
Crystal	27	2nd	Female	African Jamaican-Canadian	Middle Class	Graduate Student	Canada	27 years	Proud Lesbian	Lives with Jamaican partner	Close to mother distant from sibling & relatives No children
Lisa	47	1st	Female	Jamaican	Middle Class	Nurse	Jamaica	25 years	Closeted Lesbian	Lives with children has white partner	Close to mother living in Jamaica Has three children
Roger	66	1st	Male	African Jamaican	Upper Middle Class	Retired physician	Jamaica	45 years	Closeted homosexual man	Living on the down low with mother	Never married Close to mother No children
Vanessa	21	2nd	Female	Canadian-Dominican	Middle Class	Undergrad Student	Canada	21 years	Out Lesbian	Living alone no partner	Close to mother & sibling No children

Note: All names used above are pseudonym's. We have tried to keep the interviewees anonymous when constructing the matrix. All First generation interviewees are born in the Caribbean and migrated to Canada after age 12. All second generation were born in Canada of Caribbean parent(s) or arrived in Canada before age 4.