

'Freedom Songs' in Selected Caribbean-Canadian Contexts: Retrospective Fragments

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Abstract

This article explores important variations in concepts of freedom and resistance for people in the English speaking Caribbean, who for the most part, still live in oppressive economic and social conditions. The article has a threefold purpose: Initially, it highlights the meaning of freedom in terms of the historical context of legally sanctioned enslavement of African people in the Caribbean which existed for several hundred years. Secondly, it identifies freedom in terms of Caribbean authors who deliberately publish in Creole as acts of resistance to empire's dominance. Thirdly, the paper summarizes a few personal experiences of schooling and university teaching in terms of hooks' (1994) concept of education 'as the practice of freedom' and a few classic concepts from Freire (1970, 1982).

Introduction

Personal, historical and cultural memories, often the forte of previously colonized people are usually disseminated through stories, oral histories and performance poetry (e.g., Bennett, 1966; DePass, 2006; Dobson, 2004; Donsky & Champion, 2007; Kwesi Johnson, 1989, 2002; Mordecai , 1989, 1995; Reinhartz, 1992; Ryan, 2011; Walrond, 2008; Wong, 2007). As deliberate acts of resistance and cultural reclamation (Fanon, 2004; Freire, 1970), previously colonized people tend to teach their youth survival strategies and versions of their unrecorded, alternative histories which are quite different to officially sanctioned narratives (egs. Manley, 1997; Shepherd, 2007; Spence, 2005). Such alternative narratives often demonstrate that the subaltern (Spivak, 1999) can speak back to the centre (Galtung, 1976).

An excellent example of a strategy of talking back to the centre by incorporating autobiography and biography is evident in Yvonne Brown's work (2010). Her autobiography situates family history, personal memories and childhood experiences within far larger geographical and historical colonial contexts. As importantly, Brown's (2005) earlier theoretical analysis explicates the vital functions of memory and oral history. She demonstrates that traumatic memories are usually embedded in one's body and mind, and tend to have a significant influence on one's life chances (Gilmore, 2001). Brown's (2005, 2010) life story, in a similar manner to personal memories of bell hooks (1994) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000), demonstrates effectively that a liberatory education plays a vital role in their lives. It promotes freedom from abusive, oppressive families and poverty.

For my part, I grew up listening avidly to generations of women's stories of a Jamaican and Caribbean history. We were regaled with stories of uncles, aunts and cousins who lived in the USA, Canada and England, and heard poignant stories of their work experiences. We heard stories of being forced 'to know their place' in a colony, and of some family who 'passed for white' overseas (Bennett, 2005, p. 112). At times, I discuss many of the stories with family in Jamaica and overseas. I understand now, that although the Canadian contexts were different to

my family's histories, there were a number of commonalities in terms of the shared British colonial experiences in Canada and the Caribbean (e.g., Brathwaite, 2005; Said 1979, 1993).

This article has a threefold purpose. It explores significant variations of the concept of freedom, a vital issue to people, for example, in the English speaking Caribbean, who for the most part, still live in oppressive social and economic conditions. The paper begins by highlighting freedom and resistance within the context of legally sanctioned enslavement of Africans in the New World which existed until 1838 in the former British West Indies. Secondly, it identifies freedom in terms of the deliberate use of the Creole language by several Caribbean authors as acts of resistance to the dominance of empire. Thirdly, by weaving together memory with published sources, the paper makes a modest attempt to apply hooks' (1994) concept of education 'as the practice of freedom' to my schooling and university teaching. Admittedly, the scope of the paper is rather ambitious. Perhaps, it is best to see the article as being written with bold, colourful, tropical brush strokes, and to view it through the eyes of a wide angle lens. Accordingly, this paper is not a synthesis of a detailed case study. It represents a small part of a far larger research project of grappling with major works produced by postcolonial scholars such as Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said. The paper deliberately incorporates close, critical readings of some texts and selected individual memories. As importantly, it complements earlier critiques of colonial education by DePass (2006, 2008).

The paper is divided into three parts in which theoretical perspectives and key concepts such as resistance from postcolonial studies (Ashcroft et al, 2001; More & Johnson, 2004; Said, 1993) are explicitly and implicitly embedded. As importantly, by deliberately adopting a poetic voice, by including several sources from history, literature and poetry, the article departs from social science conventions which recently have become accepted in many educational journals. In part one, the article, uses the metaphor, 'songs of freedom', from Bob Marley's social justice genre to highlight key aspects of the lives of the early freedom fighters in Jamaica who fought for the abolition of slavery. Part two explicitly includes postcolonial perspectives in order to explain the adoption of the Creole language as a strategy of resistance by some pioneering Caribbean authors. Still using metaphors of freedom, part three, highlights a few personal memories of schooling and university teaching in order to trace ways in which education has been a form of freedom not only for hooks (1994), but as importantly, freedom from the negative influences of traditional forms of colonial schooling. In effect, by exploring concepts of freedom and resistance, in historical, contemporary, political, linguistic, social and educational contexts, the paper symbolically sings a Caribbean freedom song to an insistent reggae beat.

Part One, Fragment 1: Freedom Songs in a Historical Caribbean Context

Western European legacies of empire, colonization, and slavery have shaped, to a considerable extent, the perspectives and lives of Portuguese, Spanish, French and English speaking people in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Interestingly, del Moral (in press) argues that as of the late 19th century in Puerto Rico when it became a US colony that as part of an explicit policy of Americanization, the US history was taught in schools and American values were deliberately instilled in students. Concurrently, the Puerto Rican history, culture, and values influenced by its long Spanish colonial history were devalued and erased from formal schooling.

Similarly, British perspectives dominated the colonial education in the former British West Indies. My parents, for example, learned the history of the British Isles and the glories of the British Empire without formally learning a Caribbean history. The first part of my paper draws on the historical context of slavery in order to position the songs of freedom sung in this article. As importantly, it presents aspects of the Caribbean history from an insider's perspective instead of relying on the voice of the colonizer. Part one explores fragments of the lasting impact of slavery on Jamaica (historically, an important part of the English speaking Caribbean). Furthermore, in geographic terms the Caribbean islands represent a region in which the struggle for supremacy between Britain and France and to a lesser extent Spain was also demonstrated.²

In light of the significant differences between colonial and postcolonial perspectives, Phillip Sherlock and Hazel Bennett's research (1998) is important because it presents a shift in perspectives from a reliance on the European colonizers' voices (e.g., Long 2003; Shepherd, 2007; Wright, 2002), to embrace the perspectives of the oppressed. In so doing, Sherlock and Bennett, join historians and critical thinkers such as Elsa Goveia, Douglas Hall, Eric Williams, Kamu Brathwaite, Shirley Gordon, Lucille Mathurin Mair, Brian More, Verne Shepherd and Michelle Johnston who have shaped the thinking of many Caribbean students since the mid 20th century.

The struggles of Africans, the Caribbean's early freedom fighters, represent one of multiple forms of resistance to the western plantation system of slavery (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Shepherd, 2007). Sherlock and Bennett (1998) reiterate experiences of Africans uprooted from home, and of being torn from one's community. They highlight the horrors of enslavement and transportation from West Africa, and of being sold and treated as property in the New World. Quoting the Haitian poet, Jean Briere, they speak to the seldom acknowledged pain in the African-Caribbean, collective unconscious (Jung, 1989): "... together we knew the horror of the slave-ships and often like me you feel cramps awakening after the murderous centuries and feel the old wounds bleed in your flesh" (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998, p. 3). By linking historical with more contemporary events, Sherlock and Bennett (1998, p. 3) extrapolate themes of resistance to the established social and economic order, specifically that:

Wherever in the Americas, the plantation system was, there also were the African-American freedom fighters. Their defiance lives on in the American civil rights movement, in the dream of Martin Luther King, in the vision of Marcus Garvey, and in the words of writers such as Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Alain Locke.

Within the Jamaican, historical context Lucille Mathurin Mair's (2006) ground-breaking research meticulously documents the multiple forms of resistance by the enslaved women, who challenged the brutality of plantation economy. [“They were] among the most articulate in the slave community” (Mathurin Mair, 2006, p. 235). These forms of resistance were well represented in their rich songs and folktales in the Jamaican Creole. Armed with a wide repertoire of language skills, the women heaped on ‘ridicule’, were ‘outrageous’, ‘insulting’, ‘and threatening’. In so doing, they exposed their violent treatment by free persons (Mathurin Mair, 2006, p. 235). Even in their songs, many enslaved women ridiculed the white overseers and plantation owners. They revealed the double standards often underpinning religious piety. One such extract from the slave women's songs broadcasts the master's foibles:

Masa w-f-e da come ober de sea,
Wid him roguish heart and him tender look,
And while he palaver and preach him book,
At the negro girl hi'll winkie him yeve.
(Mathurin Mair, 2006, p. 236)

[Master comes from overseas. With his roguish heart and tender looks, he preaches his Bible, and at the same time, winks at the young slave girl].

The enslaved women also utilized a strategy of collective complaints to the courts to avoid harsh field labour. Mathurin Mair (2006) argues that the women's complaints brought before the magistrate's courts are an example of the solidarity that existed between the enslaved women and men. They lodged their complaints, knowing that their cases were likely to be dismissed, and that subsequent punishment included field labour, lashes, imprisonment and transportation for life. Mathurin Mair (2006) postulates that slave women's complaints were effective strategies to delay plantation efficiency and production schedules, and further that impacts of a slow down to the white plantation establishment was incalculable.

In small groups, enslaved women often struck, perfected multiple ways of malingering, 'feigning sickness', and usually, prolonged breast feeding, in order to promote the health of their infant children when they chose not to abort their unwanted pregnancies (Mathurin Mair, 2006, p. 241). For some, the road to physical freedom consisted of fleeing the sugar plantations to join the Maroons (discussed below), seeking sanctuary with free blacks in different parts of the island, hiring themselves to free people, and passing as freed people. Noticeably, in Mathurin Mair's analysis, the slave women are not portrayed as an anonymous, monolithic group of passive chattled property, objects or machines. Instead, they are named as individuals in plantation and court records, described by specific characteristics, and are often grudgingly praised for outwitting and outsmarting their owners when they fled the plantations (Mathurin Mair, 2006). The use of strong verbal abuse is part of the historical legacy of slavery. It is still evident among men and women who with little provocation engage in cursing matches. Such verbal abuse can be seen as a protective mechanism of oppressed people, and furthermore, as one of the lasting impacts of internalized colonization and oppression.

For the Maroons, freedom meant fleeing from oppression and abuse of the sugar plantations. One of the earliest and best known forms of resistance was led by run-away-slaves who established several free Maroon communities in Jamaica's mountainous interior. Using guerilla warfare, they resisted the British conquest, and were forced eventually to sign treaties with the British occupying forces. Many Maroons were later deported by the British to Nova Scotia. (Interestingly, the landmark fort, the Citadel, in Halifax, Nova Scotia acknowledges that Jamaican Maroons built at least one of its walls. Personal communication, Caroline Fowler, former federal employment equity officer, spring 2003). Subsequently, due to dissatisfaction with their treatment in Nova Scotia, many of the Jamaican Maroons accompanied by a large number of black Empire loyalists, migrated to the colony of Sierra Leone.

Numerous rebellions by enslaved African people also took place in Jamaica from the late 17th century to the early 19th century (e.g., 1673, 1678, 1685, 1690, 1760, 1765, 1795, and 1831). During the 19th century, perhaps the best known slave rebellion was led by Sam Sharpe, a Baptist deacon, who in 1831, led the largest slave rebellion in the western part of the island (Shepherd, 2007). Sharpe claimed that freedom was an important human right for which he was prepared to die (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). After slavery's abolition (1838), the refusal of the plantocracy in the Jamaican legislature, to ameliorate the poverty of the former slaves and their children, further exacerbated by drought, and lack of employment, led to the Morant Bay Rebellion in St Thomas (1865). Augier et al (1960) describe the rebellion as a riot caused by Paul Bogle, a Baptist deacon, and several independent, peasant, small holders who marched to the court house in Morant Bay to protest an unfair arrest. During the confrontation, 28 white people were killed. In a severe retaliation, Governor Eyre ordered the militia to repress the riot and any form of opposition to his governance. To do so, some 580 black men and women, including George William Gordon, a noted advocate for the people's rights, were killed (Augier et al, 1960; Black, 1960). Interestingly, Said (1993), also notes the riot's brutal repression.

Prior to abolition, activities of freedom fighters in Jamaica complemented the anti-slavery movement in England. With the promotion of free trade and the increasing economic and political significance of the manufacturing sector in England, important contradictions surfaced within the English anti-slavery movement, during debates concerning slavery's abolition in the British colonies (Holt, 1992; Williams, 2005). Major disagreements occurred in, for example, notions of individual and collective freedom. Vocal factions argued that the colonial labour force should remain within the established plantation social structure (Holt, 1992). Such debates when examined in the contexts of the American War of Independence, the Saint Domingue (Haitian) revolution, and the political, social and economic reforms introduced in Britain are reminders that advocates of abolition and free trade often positioned their anti-slavery arguments in conservative ways (Holt, 1992). Holt further argues that in the industrial centres of northwest England, sizeable numbers of displaced workers supported abolition of slavery in the Caribbean and southern USA, because they understood, in human terms, the difference between slavery and freedom (Holt, 1992). Public support, stimulated by religious dissenters was also an important factor in creating a climate of opposition to slavery. By 1833, five thousand petitions submitted to Parliament, supported by over 1.5 million people endorsed abolition (Holt, 1992).

In part two, I highlight the deliberate use of the Creole language by some English speaking, Caribbean writers, as examples of symbolic resistance to empire's dominance. The pioneering authors' use of Creole has played an essential role in challenging the acceptance of dominant voices of the colonizers and elite in the metropolitan and colonial centres. Traditionally, the colonial elite represented the economic and political sectors who supported the established hierarchies and status quo, and largely ignored the living conditions of most of the population. In contrast, the early to mid 20th century writers who wrote in the Creole language, tended to concentrate on the social and economic problems of the rural and urban poor at the periphery of the periphery (Galtung, 1976). Such writers used the pen to challenge the balance of power, by making visible to readers in the metropolitan centres and colonies, the stark living conditions of marginalized and oppressed people at the periphery (Galtung, 1976). Interestingly enough, Moore and Johnson's (2004) meticulous research also reveals that during the late 19th

century and until after the First World War, the majority of the poor people in Jamaica demonstrated agency. They resisted British cultural imperialism in multiple ways.

Part Two, Fragment 2: Resistance Songs of a Creole Language

Since the 1950s, the Jamaican Creole language has been well documented by linguistic professors in the USA; the most well known undoubtedly being, Frederic Cassidy and Robert Le Page (Cassidy & Le Page, 2002). The Jamaican Creole language has evolved over several hundred years, since the introduction of enslaved Africans to the sugar plantations in the late seventeenth century. Senior (2003) argues, for instance, that at least 70% of the Creole vocabulary is derived from different English dialects. Except for formal institutional communication purposes, Creole has become the lingua franca of the majority of the population who are bi-dialectical and move smoothly between standard English and Creole (Mordecai, a well known Jamaican author's personal communication, spring 2007). However, to a large extent, an individual's speech patterns, easily identifies the speaker's social and economic class, and educational background (Senior, 2003).

Progressively, after the Second World War, several Caribbean writers, such as Samuel Selvon, Claude McKay and others, began to disrupt the dominance of the colonizer's language by deliberately publishing their works in Creole. Leading postcolonial critics argue that Creole publications are a form of resistance. Furthermore, that Creole subverts the cultural assumptions of the dominant English canon, and resists metropolitan control (Ashcroft et al, 2008).

The Creole language and literature produced by the English speaking, Caribbean writers, although heralded by postcolonial critics, was usually disparaged, often punished and ridiculed by establishment institutions (e.g., schools, public and private sectors) and larger public. This is similar to entrenched responses of hostility to the use of indigenous and Creole languages in other former colonies. In New Zealand, for example, up to the 1970s, when I attended university there, students and children were punished severely for speaking Maori (personal communication with Rahera Douglas, post secondary Maori educator, summer 2006). Louise Bennett, a well known Jamaican poet and author who was trained in England and has written in the Creole language since the 1940s, jokingly explained that in an early public performance of her poetry, a voice in the audience shouted, "... a dat yuh modder sen yuh a school fa [Is that what your mother sent you to school to learn]" (Bennett, 2005, p. xx). Critics often see the use of the Creole language as markers of being backward, uneducated, rural, and unsophisticated (Frank, 2007). Interesting too that Bennett's critic, cited above, uses Creole to scold her. This may also be an indication of the inherited colonial legacy that public performances should be presented in standard English.

Bennett's Creole freedom songs (e.g., 1966; Morris, 2005) range widely. She covers social, political and economic events (from the 1940s to the 1990s). Her poems: portray the Jamaican's love for the sounds of words and spontaneous excess (Nettleford, 1966, pp. 12-13); explore the impact of migration of sizeable numbers of Jamaicans to England, after the Second World War, in her well known, "Colonization in reverse" (Bennett, 1966, pp. 179-180); explain

satirically, “In bans a killin” [“In bands of killing”] that English is a hybrid language (Morris, 2005, pp. 4-5); and poke fun at pretentiousness, in “Dry foot bwoy” [“Dry foot boy”] (Morris, 2005, pp. 1-2) and “South Parade Peddler” (Morris, 2005, p. 91). As importantly, she praises the indomitable strength of women:

From de grass root to de hill-top, In profession, skill and trade,
 Jamaica oman tek her time, Dah mount an mek de grade.
 Some backa man a push, some side-a
 Man a hole him han,
 Some a lick sense een a man head, some a guide him pon him plan...
 (Bennett, in Morris, 2005, p. 23)
 [From the grass roots to the hill top,
 In either a profession, skill or trade,
 The Jamaican woman takes her time to attain her goals by helping her man.
 She stands behind him pushing him, or she stands beside him as an equal.
 Or she beats some sense into his head, or she guides him to achieve his goals].

In translation, unfortunately, this extract loses Bennett’s multiple word plays and humour. As a performance poem, the unnamed narrator usually plays to a highly vocal, appreciative crowd who enjoys seeing and hearing their everyday experiences validated by an iconic Jamaican poet. As importantly, Bennett’s reference to the grass roots, trades and professions in the same sentence, conveys the impression that Jamaican women from all walks of life are skilled strategists in the workplace and at home.

Creole is still seen as a folk language and not a marker of being formally educated. Mervin Morris, a senior Caribbean English professor emeritus, for example, attributes the continuing prejudice concerning the use of Creole to the enduring legacy of a colonial education (Morris, 2005, p. xx). As importantly, the Creole language is a visible reminder of the country’s slave history which some wish to deny³. Several well known, well educated poets and authors, from the mid to late 20th century, however, acknowledge their debt to Louise Bennett’s Creole poetry which has encouraged a pride in, and an affirmation of self. This tribute to Bennett is itself a form of resistance, and stands in marked contrast with the thinly veiled contempt of the natives and colonies which was actively disseminated by a colonial education (Moore & Johnson, 2004). Some Caribbean authors and poets who acknowledge Bennett’s positive influence include: Pamela Mordecai (personal communication, winter 2008), Kamau Brathwaite, and Dennis Scott (Morris, 2005, pp. xxi-xxii). Understandably, not all Caribbean writers support the adoption of Creole in order to subvert empire’s language and its codes. Significantly, Derek Walcott, a St Lucian, Nobel Prize recipient and one of the twentieth century’s great poets (Baugh, 2007, p. xvi) has also written satirical plays in which the roles of the colonizer and colonized are reversed (Slemon et al, 1989). Walcott recommends appropriation of the English language and its celebration (Ashcroft et al, 2008, p. 49).

Part three explores fragments of freedom songs within the context of a few schooling and university teaching experiences, situated within important theoretical concepts of Freire (1970) and hooks (1994).

Part Three: Freedom Songs of Resistance and Compliance in School and University Classrooms

Generally in the English speaking Caribbean, the colonial hold was maintained until the late 1970s, when it was possible for high school students to graduate by learning very little, Caribbean literature, history or geography. Even though my high school was a very British grammar school, in retrospect, I must have had some remarkable women teachers who were willing to break the mold of colonial dependency.⁴ They deliberately taught Caribbean History, written by the new generation of university professors such as Roy Augier, Douglas Hall, and Shirley Gordon. In learning Caribbean Geography, for the first time, we saw photographs, maps, and statistical tables of Caribbean lands including Guyana, and learned Caribbean regional and economic geography. We used Caribbean Ordnance Survey maps, instead of relying on British maps for examination purposes. (I can still remember the thrill of reading Ordnance Survey maps of Jamaica). In addition to learning about the geography and industrial developments of Britain and Europe, admittedly, from a Eurocentric, male perspective, we were taught strong critical thinking skills.

Memory: When I was in the lower 6th form (equivalent to Canadian, grade 12) and school 'Head Girl', some of us, Advanced Level History students, completed a historical study of our high school whose administrative functions were located in an old plantation, great house, dating to the early 1800s. We researched relevant plantation records, describing the skills of the enslaved people and their monetary value. In reading the plantation records, I remember shivering as I thought that these dusty old books contained descriptions of real men and women who had once laboured on the school's grounds. Our school history was submitted to a national high school competition. To our astonishment, it was awarded a prize for the best researched essay submitted in that year. I remember that when I wrote the final draft, I wanted the active life of the school to spring from the pages. In retrospect, by researching our school's history without any interference by our teachers, they gave us the freedom to think. The teachers, for this project, did not perform education in terms of Freire's (1970) banking concept. Intuitively, as teenagers, we sang our own freedom song. We believed that important knowledge was not restricted to history texts, but as importantly, that knowledge could be constructed by students using sound original sources.

Later, at the University of the West Indies, I learned to hone my critical thinking skills, perhaps most, in the Modern European History course taught by a European woman professor who systematically, deconstructed notions of progress associated with the evolution of western European history. She also shattered cherished myths from school history concerning the inevitability of the unification of Germany and Italy. She insisted that our essays should challenge the British perspectives in our texts. In retrospect, from this professor, I learned to value the perspectives of historians who wrote from an insider's perspective. I remember distinctly, for one essay on the unification of Italy that I scoured the university library to find sources. With considerable trepidation, I wrote and submitted my essay. I was delighted when, in returning the essays to our tutorial group, she looked at me and in precise tones stated that she was pleased that I had found excellent sources. With such strong encouragement, I was determined to excel at university (see Freire, 2001).⁴

Interestingly, in validating African American educational experiences, bell hooks (1994) draws on personal experiences of schooling and teaching in several US universities. To support her thesis that education should become “the practice of freedom”, hooks revisits scenes of educational conformity expected at her integrated high school and at university. She explains that questioning of either her teachers or university professors was discouraged. Indeed, hooks reiterates her experiences of Freire’s (1970) concept of reliance on ‘banking’ in schools. As importantly, she identifies major characteristics of feminist classrooms which problematized existing structures of power, and explored class differences and gender privileges (hooks, 1994).

By also paying tribute to the influences of Freire and the Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, hooks argues that Nhat Hanh goes even further than Freire because the monk practices teaching as a sacred act and views teachers as healers. She explains that Nhat Hanh’s emphasis on the union of mind, body, and spirit, is significantly different to traditional transmission pedagogies (hooks, 1994, p. 14; Liljefors, 2011). Interestingly too, hooks discusses the creation of teaching spaces in which teachers and students are actively engaged, enthusiastic, and excited (hooks, 1994, p. 15). Furthermore, she recommends that engaged pedagogies (p.15) are not restricted to book knowledge but encourage living well in the larger world.

At far more modest levels of analysis and praxis (Freire, 1970, 1982), I have been influenced also, by Freire’s and hooks’ thinking. Since the 1990s, I have practiced some limited aspects of Freire’s engaged dialogic pedagogies, and explored ways of creating respectful learning communities at a western Canadian university (e.g., see author’s videotapes of collaborative projects with student teachers which explored experiential and collaborative approaches to teaching social studies). As importantly, the university students showcased ways in which primary students were actively engaged in identifying key issues, skills and attitudes for specific units. Not surprisingly, course evaluations indicate that the more mature pre-service teachers appear to value my modest versions of Freire’s pedagogies. Perhaps, because they have completed at least a Bachelor’s degree, and have acquired a wider range of life and work experiences in which to re-examine conventional notions of teaching and learning.

As importantly, my adoption of Freire’s concept of ‘educator-educatee’ (Freire, 1970, 1982), explains the pedagogical relationships between professor/teacher and graduate students in two graduate courses. These pedagogical successes, exemplified in spontaneous comments from graduate students, are probably due in part, to firstly, the careful crafting of a learning environment which respects the students’ perspectives, and secondly, the creation of safe learning places in which both professor/teacher and graduate students can interrogate societal patterns of hierarchy, and power.

For my teaching, hooks argues that a “... progressive, holistic education, [associated with an] engaged pedagogy is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy... [because it emphasizes]... “the well being of students and teacher” (p. 15). Striving for the well being of teacher and students, calls forth among other things, reciprocal strategies of empathy and compassion (Palmer, 1998). It might involve the professor/teacher providing limited support for students who are grieving the sudden loss of a parent or grandparent (e.g. in fall 2010, and winter 2009). To encourage the well being of the ‘educator and educatee’, includes in my well

considered view the ability to: (i) create learning communities in which students are valued as unique individuals, and neither seen as symbolic, involuntary plantation/factory labourers (outlined earlier in the context of slavery), (ii) sensitively encourage the students' re-examination of prejudices, biases and behaviours concerning education of self and others⁵, and (iii) situate students' schooling experiences at the symbolic centre of the learning circle in which they become the critically conscious, well informed agents (Freire, 1970) and play reciprocal roles of teaching and learning (Palmer, 1998).

Admittedly, in one of my graduate classes on critical pedagogy and social justice, critical analyses were facilitated immeasurably by the careful inclusion of key course texts by Pieterse and Parekh (1995), Willinsky (1998), and hooks (1994), accompanied by my explicit invitation to explore the assumptions underpinning their own education. Admittedly, this approach has been quite problematic for some students. Several have stated at different times that they have never been asked to re-examine foundational aspects of their education, and that they are reluctant to question its explicit and implicit Eurocentric perspectives.

Conclusion

Except at one's death, the concept of freedom cannot be defined in an absolute manner. Further, in postcolonial terms, compliance and resistance are interrelated concepts. Indeed, in more rigid social and educational environments, activities which appear, at first glance, to be forms of compliance might be subtle ways of contestation or resistance (DePass, 2006; More & Johnson, 2004). Further, this paper shows that the concept of freedom is not static; it has evolved in historical and contemporary contexts. It has changed from the late 18th century cry in France for liberty, fraternity and equality to become far larger and more inclusive. In the post World War Two era, for example, it has become broader and deeper as a result of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Civil Rights, Feminist, Disabilities and Gay Rights movements. Globally, however, freedom for the majority of the population remains an illusive, idealistic dream. It means very different things to different people, in different times, and different places. Part one of this article shows that ironically, in the New World, Old World attitudes imposed by the western European colonizers ensured the legality of plantation slavery for hundreds of years. This article highlights further that in former enslaved colonies such as Jamaica, freedom meant the abolition of slavery for Africans and their descendants. It also argues that the enslaved people were neither passive, nor monolithic groups. They fought for their freedom in a range of ways. For the Maroons, freedom meant fleeing to the mountainous interior. The desire for freedom was fostered by numerous enslaved women who honed a wealth of individual and collective resistance strategies. The descendants of such women have taught several generations survival strategies of living and dying with dignity (personal communication, Brown, 2011; Mathurin Mair, 2006; and Bennett, 2005). Freedom songs of African American and Caribbean peasants have reverberated loudly for centuries. By establishing 'free villages' in the mountains, independent small holders have fostered the widespread distribution of small farming communities and fostered the diversification of food production.⁵

Interestingly, the Creole language has emerged as a vibrant, vital, and important form of communication and resistance (Bennett, 1966; Mordecai, 1995; Morris, 1999, 2005). Creole is

the language of different types of poetry ranging from Louise Bennett's, to Honor Ford-Smith's "My Mother's Last Dance," to Linton Kwesi Johnson's (2002) performance poems. Since the 1950s, Claude McKay (Jamaican), and Samuel Selvon (Trinidadian), among others, have pioneered the writing of many novels in Creole. At the same time, other Caribbean authors have written books in standard English. The Trinidadian, CLR James' "Black Jacobins", for example, traces the sources of the late 18th century, Haitian revolution. Eric Williams' "Capitalism and Slavery" (republished in 2005), explicates: the economic factors linking the rise of capitalism with the African slave trade, Britain's Industrial Revolution, Europe's industrial and economic development, and slavery's eventual demise. Roger Mais, Orlando Patterson, and Honor Ford Smith to name a few, have portrayed the harsh lives of poor, urban people. Playwrights such as Trevor Rhone, a former high school teacher, have continued a tradition established in the 1940s, of producing humorous plays in Creole. Rhone's "Smile Orange", parodies for instance, a lot of school teachers forced to become part-time, small farmers due to their meager salaries. Freedom songs for social justice and equality were major themes in the reggae songs of Bob Marley (e.g. only, "No woman nuh cry", "Buffalo Soldier" and "Redemption Song").

Despite the current economic recession which has crippled several northern and southern countries, despite the devastating medusa-like hold of the drug industry, despite the stringent conditions of structural adjustment programs imposed by international funders, and the downsizing and privatization of several arms of the public sector, despite all of these massive problems, many people support the value of education, as demonstrated in the following extract from one of Christine Craig's (1989, pp. 54-55) poems:

In the face of this heavy terror
The mothers polish and shine, starch
And press the children into school.

Endnotes

1. Dedicated to my university professors and to Louise Bennett. Bob Marley's song, "Redemption Time", concerning the need for people to free themselves from the mental slavery and oppression of colonization has influenced this article's tone and manner of development.
2. Under plantation slavery, 'The British and French West Indies' emerged in the early to mid 18th century as major producers of sugar for their respective metropolitan centres. In many Jamaican high schools, students learned a colonial history in which islands such as, Grenada, Trinidad, Tobago, St Vincent, and St Lucia were ceded from the Spanish or French to become British colonies. All such trades occurred as a result of English European war victories. Furthermore, concerning the Caribbean and Canada, students interestingly learned that Guadeloupe was returned to the French, and in turn that Canada became a British colony (e.g. Black, 1961, pp.133; 153; Augier et al, 1960, p. 96). This form of a colonial education usually emphasized England's supremacy in North America, the Caribbean, India, and West Africa (Augier et al, 1960, p. 97), and deliberately, fostered loyalty to the British crown and devalued the local history and culture.
3. Several postcolonial authors have implicitly and explicitly, critiqued the negative impacts of colonization and 'the civilizing mission' of a colonial education, e.g. only: Fanon (republished, 2004); Cesaire (2000); Bacchus (2005); Bayoumi and Rubin (2000); Said

- (1993, 1979); Shepherd et al (1995); London (1996); Marshall (1993); Moore and Johnson (2004); Craig (Ed.) (1996); King (1999); Brown (2010), and DePass (2006). Freire's (1970) concept of 'banking', accordingly, may be regarded as the colonization of students' minds by the teachers (Pieterse and Parekh, 1995). Del Moral (in press) presents a critical analysis of the colonial education imposed by the US on Puerto Rico since 1898, and as importantly, highlights ways in which the explicit policy of Americanization was challenged by educators.
4. DePass was educated in a Jamaican high school during the transition to political independence. From family and friends she learned a critique of her lived colonial education. She has graduated from universities in three different Commonwealth countries and has taught for some time at a Canadian university.
 5. Freedom songs associated with the 1930s labour movements, and the emerging Caribbean perspectives in the visual and performing arts are understandably, important components of contemporary Caribbean narratives, understandably, such analyses, are beyond the scope of this article.

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