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Citizenship Legislation as Cultural Policy: The Debate on Antigua's Millennium Naturalization Act of 2004

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This essay examines a controversial piece of legislation aimed at easing access to Antiguan citizenship for persons lawfully residing in the island of Antigua as of 1 January 2000¹. This Act was intensely debated in the House of Parliament, on radio talk shows, and even in rum shops. The debates centred not only on the Act's stipulations, but on its perceived consequences for the nation's cultural identity. Central to this discourse was the Spanish-speaking migrant community from the Dominican Republic, who are the most distinctive cultural minority on the island. A popular sentiment was that this Act was deliberately opening citizenship to other cultural identities and expressions, and in so doing, devaluing the cultural norms and expressions deemed central to constructs of Antiguan identity. Thus, the law, in seeking to welcome documented residents to full membership in the society, could be construed as a cultural policy. The legislation, outside of its stipulated shortened residency period, differed in no way from previous immigration writ, policies or practices. The debates, moreover, were not about 'who should we let into the country' but rather, 'who should be here long enough to become/be Antiguan' and 'who are these Antiguans'.

¹ Antigua and Barbuda is a twin-island state, with the seat of government and national capital in St. John's, Antigua, the larger of the two islands. This paper focuses on discussions of cultural diversity and citizenship occurring within the shores of Antigua. Thus, Antigua will be used to refer to both this particular geographic space and the nation as a whole.

The Millennium Naturalisation Act was a political strategy to acknowledge and legalise the cultural other, while accepting their cultural differences as part of the Antiguan space.

Regional and transnational migration has shaped the Antiguan society since the late nineteenth century. Every generation of Antiguan families is aware and do participate in migratory practises. Antiguan are also known for their seasonal movements, working on cruise ships and in the tourist industry in other parts of the Caribbean. Most families share great hopes of their children 'going away to study,' especially to the USA. It is considered 'ambitious' to emigrate. However, Antiguan societal labour needs demand a supply of immigrants. As Antiguan emigrate, other Caribbean persons will immigrate. While traditionally, these immigrants were from territories of the former Leeward Islands Colony, there are now more immigrants coming from the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Jamaica than from Montserrat, St. Kitts, Anguilla and Dominica. These territories have experienced weakened economies and societal hardships in recent years. The stability of the Antiguan economy allows for easy access to employment and other social benefits. This demographic shift has impacted significantly every aspect of Antiguan life and family. According to columnist Arvel Grant:

Here in Antigua and Barbuda, it is likely that a near majority of individuals living in these islands were not born in the country. More strikingly, it is likely that close to eighty per cent of all citizens are either children of immigrants, first generation immigrants, or grandparents of immigrants. To add to that, thousands of native Antiguan are either married to immigrants, cohabiting with immigrants, or otherwise intimately involved with immigrants.²

Spanish speaking migrants from the Dominican Republic, hereafter Quisqueyanos,³ have become a permanent part of Antiguan society. This community, with its steady population growth and settlement in villages and communities around the island, has permeated every sphere of Antiguan national life. Since the late 1990s, Quisqueyanos have started families and established churches, small enterprises and baseball clubs among other social groups and institutions on the island. Spanish language is commonly heard in public spaces and seen in signage around the island. A variety of Latino music, including Merengue, Bachata and Reggaetón, has been added to the island's soundscape. Government broadcasts and notices are transmitted in Spanish. In a very real and tangible way, Quisqueyanos have added a distinct socio-cultural and linguistic diversity to the Antiguan nation. No longer can Antigua be considered a bastion of Englishness, cricket, church and carnival. The cultural expressions of the Quisqueyano community, in particular, challenge constructs of Antigua as mono-lingual and culturally homogeneous. Thereby, Antigua is evolving into a multilingual and multi-cultural nation.

Unlike the Anglophone Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and/or Commonwealth migrant communities in the society, Quisqueyanos, generally, do not share the linguistic and historical connections with Antigua that would make their settlement as unobtrusive as that of Jamaicans, Guyanese and other Leeward Islanders. Some Quisqueyanos are descendants of Antiguan sugar

² Arvel Grant, "Permanent Residents At Three Years—Voting Rights for Citizens," Grant Us Thy Piece *Antigua Sun Online* 3 June 2009.

³ Quisqueya is the Indigenous name given to Hispaniola, especially to the Hispanic side of that Island. Thus, to differentiate from the other migrants from the English-speaking Commonwealth Republic of Dominica, this paper will refer to migrants from Santo Domingo as *Quisqueyanos*, although colloquially they are called *Spanish* or *Santo Domingans*.

labourers who migrated to the Dominican Republic at the end of the nineteenth century. Many Antiguans and other Leeward Islanders were part of the seasonal migration to work on sugar plantations in the 1880s. By the 1920s, these West Indian migrants had settled permanently in the Dominican Republic, starting families and communities, referred to as enclaves.⁴ Referred to as Cocolos in the Dominican Republic, the British West Indians created distinctive cultural spaces within the Dominican Republic. Carlos Andujar notes, "They...retained their 'mother culture'...language, food, religion, entertainment, carnival festivities, social organizational structures (for example sports clubs, friendly societies, lodges, etc)."⁵ More important, however, were the family narratives that took root in these enclaves. Antiguans and Leeward Islanders regaled their young descendants with stories and family histories of life and relatives 'back home'. These stories became the building blocks in the construction of their socio-cultural and racial identities in the Dominican Republic and would inform the return movement to Antigua in the late twentieth century. These individuals, with their English surnames and Hispanic first and middle names, are able to make claims of belonging by virtue of their Antiguan ancestry based on "the grandfather clause" of the Constitution of Antigua and Barbuda. Section 112 (b) of Chapter 12 of the Constitution provides that Antiguan citizenship could be granted upon proof that either one's parents or grandparents held Antiguan citizenship.⁶ Those⁷ who are not covered by that clause, however, are subjected to exorbitant rates for work permits and resident status. Moreover, Quisqueyanos opine that the processes and prices involved in the periodical renewal of permits was further marginalising the community and belittling their social and economic contributions to society. However, while there is a yearning to belong to the Antiguan nation, Quisqueyanos still want to maintain their cultural distinctiveness.

On the other hand, the presence and cultural exuberance of the other has forced the Antiguan populace into introspection. Questions of identity and inclusion, such as 'what is Antiguan culture' and 'who is an Antiguan' are popular moot points. These questions are aired publicly in several forms, from letters to the editor to political platforms and radio talk shows. There is an intellectual and real battle of identities and space in which Quisqueyanos, other immigrant minorities, and Antiguans are engaged. This tussle of identity/ies is also articulated in legal terms, in the provisions that dictate who belongs, and in the claims to such stipulations. This became a major political issue during the campaigns for the 2004 General Elections. Leadership of the two major political parties used existing laws to appease both the Antiguan majority and allay the fears of the immigrant minority. A major initiative emerging from this political season was the provision of a legislation that would facilitate easier access to full citizenship, the Millennium Naturalisation Act.

⁴ Teresita Martinez-Vergne compiled a list and the number of entrants into the Dominican Republic for the period 1882-1916. Starting in 1882 with 379 "English" immigrants, the immigration scheme grew annually so that by 1893, some 3111 Leeward Islanders were at work in the Dominican Republic. By 1916, there were approximately 17,000 British West Indians in the Dominican Republic. See Martinez-Vergne, *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic 1880-1916* Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 2005, 82

⁵ Carlos Andujar, *Identidad Cultural y Religiosidad Popular* Santo Domingo: Cole, 1999, 32

⁶ See Section 112 (b) of Chapter VIII of the Antigua and Barbuda Constitution, 1981

⁷ This dichotomy between those who can and have claimed Antiguan citizenship and those who are not so privileged has impacted on the statistics outlined in the last national census, 2001. According to that Census, of a population of 63, 863, there are only 1, 239 Quisqueyanos. Numbers for the other migrant groups are also debated. These statistics have been challenged by both public and private sectors, with the population approximated to be 80,000 strong, with a Quisqueyano/Spanish-speaking population of 12,000. See Antigua and Barbuda. Department of Statistics. Population Census Report 2001.

Debating the MNA

The Millennium Naturalisation Act (hereafter MNA), which was passed in 2004, was a watershed legislation that sought to welcome eligible migrants by offering them the rights and privileges of Antiguan citizenship. The concept of the MNA was birthed by the United Progressive Party (UPP) in response to the seeming relegation to 'second-class citizenship' of the large immigrant population. The proposed law was to remove the stigma attached to labels such as "non-national" and to recognise and grant the settlers legal equality and economic standing in the society. The political manifesto noted, "The [former Prime Minister] has calculatedly labelled our Caribbean brothers and sisters who have chosen to make Antigua and Barbuda their home 'non-nationals'. No other CARICOM-country systematically uses a 'non-national' label to isolate its foreign-born citizens. How can a citizen of this or any country be a 'non-national'?"⁸ The MNA was to demonstrate that all residents in Antigua were either citizens by birth or by choice. It would release citizens-by-choice from the burden and expense of work permits and grant them the right to operate businesses and invest in property with little government interference.

Caribbean citizenship is rooted in the many ruptures that are inherent to the Caribbean space. Shridath Ramphal posits four forms of division that have plagued the concept of nationhood, and by extension definitions of citizenship, in the Caribbean. The divisions of geography, colonialism, slavery and indentureship, migration and the divisive politics of the movements towards independence characterise the forms, functions of, and membership in Caribbean nations.⁹ Ramphal contends, "The natural state of our Caribbean is fragmentation... A history of colonialism and the geography of a scattered archipelago deny [the] validity [of a Caribbean community]. Without constant effort, without unrelenting perseverance and discipline in suppressing instincts born of tradition and environment, it is to our natural state of disunity that we shall return."¹⁰ Caribbean citizenship, like nationhood, is therefore not fixed. It is always under contestation both from above—with the political directorate seeking economic investment—and below, with the masses appealing for cultural certainty. Rex Nettleford describes the Caribbean nation as an entity rising above its circumstantial and inherited divisions. "Despite the diversity of Caribbean life and the surface fragmentation evident in multiple small sovereignties (all with standard bureaucratic rigidities), there are 'submarine' unities manifested in shared cultural identities and [a] sense of community on which functional economic cooperation, if not immediate political integration, can be built."¹¹ Yet in all its fragmented state, there is an unconscionable stability that seeks to fix the characteristics and expressions of Caribbean citizenship. As Mimi Sheller states, "Caribbean citizenship has come to rest on a discourse of respectability grounded in self-discipline, an achievement orientation and fire and brimstone moral strictures. This is promulgated both as a response to decadent influences from outside and as a way of promoting tourism and attracting investors."¹² This quest for respectable stability of its Caribbean citizenry, if only for attracting external investment, gives impetus to regular alterations in immigration legislation. With reference

⁸ United Progressive Party 2004, *Manifesto Agenda for Change: Government in the Sunshine* 28 March 2009, <www.antiguaelections.com> 46

⁹ See Shridath Ramphal, "No Island is an Island", *No Island is an Island: Selected Speeches of Sir Shridath Ramphal* eds David Dabydeen and John Gilmore, London: Macmillan Education, 2000, 15-16

¹⁰ Shridath Ramphal, 16

¹¹ Rex Nettleford, *Inward Stretch, Outward Reach: A Voice from the Caribbean* New York: Caribbean Diaspora, 1995, 10

¹² Mimi Sheller, "Citizenship and the Making of Caribbean Freedom" *NACLA Report on the Americas*. Jan/Feb2005, Vol. 38 Issue 4, 33

to the Antiguan space, such alterations mostly refer to the length of time required for residency.¹³ Yet, public discussions centered on cultural expressions rather than legal exclusions. The MNA stipulated that eligibility was based on being lawfully present on the island from 1 January 2000, being of good character and ordinarily resident in Antigua. A resident seeking Antiguan citizenship via the MNA was to be considered totally committed to settling in the society. The law further established the procedures for the eligible applicant to apply for citizenship, which included oaths of allegiance. This piece of legislation mirrored the provisions of earlier immigration and citizenship enactments. However, the debate around the MNA centred on the fact that by using the first day of the new millennium as the marker for eligibility, the requisite seven-year waiting period was to be reduced to three years. Opposing parliamentarians maintained that the MNA was loosening the bonds of citizenship, cheapening its privileges and responsibilities, increasing the government's burden of care, and diminishing the characteristics of the 'national culture' of Antiguans.

The purpose of the MNA, according to Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer, was to improve social relations with the non-Antiguan residents and to rationalise the management systems of the immigration department. In so doing, the migrant would be fully integrated into Antiguan society. Spencer states,

...The whole idea behind this thing is to ensure that we deal with an improvement of the system and the rationalisation of it. It is going to help us to have a greater appreciation and understanding of what is going on because these individuals, to the extent that they wish to standardise and regularise their status in Antigua, I am quite sure that they will take the opportunity to come forward and provide us with the information, and so long as they fulfil the minimum requirements under the Act...*they will be entitled to the freedom and the opportunity to live and have their being in Antigua and Barbuda*, without having to look over their shoulders, without having to pay exorbitant rates for work permits,... They will become citizens and be properly integrated into the society for us to work together to develop Antigua and Barbuda (Author's emphasis).¹⁴

This started a debate that would be littered with specific reference to the Quisqueyano community, for it was this minority that would have been most affected by the stipulation of a seven-year residential period. The MNA was a legal attempt at enfranchising a significantly large and present cultural other within Antiguan society. It further indicated how significant this cultural other was to the socio-political fabric of Antigua, influencing political policy on immigration and citizenship. The Prime Minister intimated that the MNA was a cultural policy, a policy for cultural inclusion, wherein all "will be entitled to the freedom and the opportunity to live and have their being..."¹⁵

The Leader of the Opposition, Robin Yearwood, stated that the MNA was too liberal a move, opening up the society to all and sundry. He argued that the MNA should provide preferential

¹³ The latest immigration scheme, "Antiguan Citizenship by Investment" has evoked similar sentiments as the MNA. See article "Syrian Family First Citizens by Investment" *Caribarena* 11 February 2014, with its 81 responses. www.caribarenaantigua.com Accessed 20 April 2014

¹⁴ Baldwin Spencer, address, Debate on the Millennium Naturalisation Bill, 2004, Antigua and Barbuda, House of Representatives Hansard of Meeting, 11 June 2004. 3. Mr Spencer is the Hon. Member for St. John's Rural (West).

¹⁵ Spencer, Debate on the Millennium Naturalisation Bill, 4

access to citizenship only to citizens from the British Commonwealth and CARICOM member states. Yearwood further contended that there would be pressure on the various social services and governmental agencies, including health care and education, once the legislation came into being, as newly naturalized persons under this Act would be eligible for access to such services. These services were already considered inadequate to meet the demands of the Antiguan-born population. The expansion of the demand pool would only increase the financial burdens and responsibilities of government services. Additionally, the preferential treatment offered to Antiguan professionals and tradesmen would grow meaningless as naturalised citizens would be entitled to government contracts, to the detriment of the Antiguan labour force. Moreover, this liberal citizenship policy could possibly impair the longstanding favourable migration policies between Antigua and the larger territories of the Commonwealth, which impose no visa restrictions on Antiguan citizens. It was here that the first open reference to the Quisqueyano community was made. Thus he argued:

...if you are going to come with this thing and you are lowering from seven years, why not say any CARICOM member citizen who has been in Antigua up to the 31st of March [2004] go through with citizenship? ...Why not say every CARICOM citizen, because they came through the Middle Passage, who has been in Antigua up to the 31st of March, legally...

I have no problem with our Commonwealth Caribbean people especially the CARICOM. I am saying I have no problem with our CARICOM. I have no problem—most of the Santo Domingo [Quisqueyano] people are Antiguan... Citizenship is sacrosanct. Citizenship is very important; it goes to people's bellies; it goes to people's pride. This [MNA] can have effect on [Antiguans and Barbudans'] lives; on your life style, [and] on mine. It can have ramifications because it goes out beyond CARICOM. There might have to be some language taught in schools for us to understand. There are several other things, but with CARICOM and Santo Domingo, we all can speak a little Spanish.¹⁶

The parliamentarian made an interesting link when he likened eligibility to Antiguan citizenship to what is referred to as the "brotherhood of the boat", that is, all persons, descendants of the enslaved Africans and the indentured servants who journeyed over the Middle Passage to labour in the Caribbean. This concept was derived from the Trinidadian socio-cultural reality and was made popular in a 1996 Calypso, *Jahaji Bhai*, (Hindi for 'brotherhood of the boat') which reflected on the possibility of a national unity forged from the same colonial historical experience. Puri maintains that the song, through the usage of African and East Indian instrumentation, languages, and rhythms, "deploys the phrase [Jahaji Bhai] to inscribe a broader brotherhood, one that is forged in history rather than assured by blood."¹⁷

Yearwood introduced notions of a Caribbean identity as part of the debate. He suggests that citizenship is national in its pride, but really regional in its scope. Thus, the CARICOM citizen is an equal survivor of the Middle Passage experience and, thereby, a prime candidate for Antiguan citizenship. Yearwood challenges that four-part concept of Caribbean citizenship, which is based on

¹⁶ Hon. Member for St. Phillip's (North), Mr. Robin Yearwood Antigua and Barbuda. House of Representatives Hansard of Meeting Debate on The Millennium Naturalisation Bill, 2004, 11 June 2004 p8-10

¹⁷ Shalini Puri, "Canonized Hybridities, Resistant Hybridities: Chutney Soca, Carnival, and the Politics of Nationalism" ed. Belinda J. Edmondson, *Caribbean Romances: The Politics of Regional Representation* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999, 30

geography, history, migration and politics. Unwittingly, he introduces culture, albeit cultural expressions rooted in the Caribbean experience, as a fundamental marker of, and an imperative for attaining, Antiguan citizenship. While Yearwood refuted the idea of migrants from other regions of the world having access to the membership of the Antiguan nation, he embraced the CARICOM and Quisqueyano immigrant to Antigua as one who has similar interests, experiences, hopes and dreams. He was therefore open to learning other languages, including Spanish, in that effort to include the Caribbean other. Therefore, it was Yearwood's view that the MNA should only apply to those bound by the socio-historical and economic realities of the Caribbean, and to be non-Caribbean, i.e. Asian, African, European and American, was to be non-Antiguan and therefore excluded. Moreover, he questioned whether there was any reciprocal accord with any other nation that would afford emigrating Antiguan and Barbudans such easier access to citizenship and residency abroad. Nevertheless he ended his presentation with the call for a national referendum regarding the terms of the MNA.

Subsequent presenters argued that the migrant community significantly contributed to the economic life of the nation. In addition to providing essential services to the nation's economy, the migrants had culturally diversified the society's lived experience. The Act would therefore present an opportunity to legalize and enfranchise these further creolized citizens. Opposition member for St. John's City (West), Gaston Browne, stated in response to a previous contribution:

Without our Caribbean brothers and sisters, the type of cultural diversity that we have in this country would not exist today. He ought to know too, Madam Speaker, that in the [1980s] and [1990s] when this country's economy was booming, that these CARICOM nationals came here and did menial work, work that Antiguan refused to do. Madam Speaker, he ought to have known that these Caribbean nationals were responsible for the population growth in this country. He ought to have known, Madam Speaker, that these Caribbean nationals were responsible for the growth of our country's economy over the years, and that they have made such an immense contribution towards the socio-economic development of this country that if it were not for their contributions, Madam Speaker, the standard of living in this country would have been far lower than any other country in the Caribbean. [Furthermore, the immigrant population] are responsible for at least forty percent of all consumption in this country. They bring skills to the country. They do menial jobs. They provide us with some cultural diversity and even cross-fertilization, Madam Speaker. I heard a lady recently referring to herself as a 'Guytigan'.¹⁸

The member for St George, Dr. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro stated in her contribution that the villages and communities around the island are no longer mono-cultural Antiguan enclaves. Immigration and settlement has impacted every community on the island and in particular her suburban constituency. She therefore believed that the MNA would enfranchise large migrant communities that had been formed within the various constituencies around the island. By doing this, the government would be forced to expand its services and increase resources to include these new minorities for the nation's development:

¹⁸ Hon. Member for St. John's City (West), Mr. Gaston Browne, Antigua and Barbuda. House of Representatives Hansard of Meeting Debate on The Millennium Naturalisation Bill, 2004, 11 June 2004 p20

We have in St. George our own little Roseau [i.e. the capital of the Commonwealth of Dominica], and on any given Sunday you may have cook-up rice, pellau, mettagie...coocoo, doucana... What we are seeing is that the composition and the whole cultural make-up of suburban communities like Potters, Herberts, Pigotts, Barnes Hill and some of the other areas in my colleagues' constituencies are rapidly changing. No longer will we find only native-born Antiguan in these communities. The suburban communities are comprised of small microcosms of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural pockets of Caribbean peoples and we, as a Government, feel that we are duty bound to facilitate these communities within communities.¹⁹

The member for St Paul, Hon. Eleston Adams, maintained in his parliamentary presentation that the MNA would not only increase the government's developmental role in society, but by virtue of the migrant's citizenship, there would be a wider and diversified human capital that could only holistically benefit the nation. He illustrated this by examining the need for more teachers, more classrooms, multi-lingual police officers and improved cultural acceptance and cultural relations within the society at large. Adams spoke at length about the people from the Dominican Republic whose skills and talents were underutilized because of the language differences. He argued for the involvement of the Quisqueyano community in areas of social development, namely as teachers and police officers. Additionally, the teaching of Spanish as a second language officially within the Antiguan school curricula should be encouraged and implemented. Adams was of the view that the learning of this other language would be beneficial to the entire community and the Antiguan economy.

The MNA, in providing access to Antiguan citizenship, was in essence validating the cultural diversity that is now part of the Antiguan lived experience. Adams, who also served as Minister of Culture, stated that the MNA was an attempt to assimilate the various cultures into the Antiguan culture, while at the same time routing out the cultural elements that are deemed undesirable. Thus he argued:

We must also think about their culture that they are bringing here, so we are going to assimilate their culture. We have already been doing that, so we have to plan more to assimilate the cultures that are coming here, those that are positive, that is because I know with some immigration there are going to be things that are not accepted in our country. That is why the [MNA] addresses the concern that those who are coming to live and work and to be citizens are of good repute and will not be granted citizenship if they are undesirables in our country, but we definitely want those who bring positive thinking, positive action to our country.²⁰

The MNA was therefore presented to the Antiguan public as the answer to the nation's immigration problem and the anxiety concerning the growing multiculturalism that was commonplace in the society. The Act was seen as the most appropriate response by an aware and

¹⁹ Hon. Member for St. George, Dr. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro, Antigua and Barbuda. House of Representatives Hansard of Meeting Debate on The Millennium Naturalisation Bill, 2004, 11 June 2004 p29, 30

²⁰ Hon. Member for St. Paul, Mr. Eleston Adams, Antigua and Barbuda. House of Representatives Hansard of Meeting Debate on The Millennium Naturalisation Bill, 2004, 11 June 2004 p41

responsible government. The MNA, by dictating who should belong to the Antiguan society, was to suggest to the new citizen how to behave. This illustrates the nexus of law and cultural identity. To be legal is to belong and to belong is to behave accordingly. Thus, when new citizens are asked who they are, they are simultaneously being asked what they are. Their legal status must therefore be performed, acted out, and articulated in a manner deemed in accordance to what is considered culturally Antiguan. This legal belonging, for example, must be expressed linguistically through acquiring—as much as possible—the nuances, intonations and body gestures of the local dialect. Documentary evidence of citizenship is secondary to cultural expressions of belonging.

The member for St. Mary's (North), Bertrand Joseph, asserted that the MNA, by giving migrants citizenship, would better their working conditions and their socio-economic lot. The legislation, furthermore, gives recognition to the cultural diversity of the Antiguan populace and will lead to greater nationalism and patriotism by conferring citizenship on eligible migrants. To do otherwise, Joseph opined, was to further propagate racism and division that could result in social anarchy. Joseph further acknowledged the richness of the developing Antiguan multiculturalism, whose performers would benefit from the privilege of full membership in Antiguan society.

I recognize that the great societies in the world are the result of an amalgam of people who have come from elsewhere to create a beautiful mosaic. I am saying to you that our country will be the better for it, with these people coming here from their diverse backgrounds bringing their traditions and cultures and mixing it into a unique Antiguan and Barbudan culture. This is nothing to worry about. This is not playing politics; this is the art of governance in the interest of our economic and social development.²¹

The MNA was presented to parliament by Joseph as a cultural policy that promised economic and social development benefits for the society. He likened the cultural development in Antigua to that of metropolitan, and therefore, developed societies. There is a widespread view in Antigua that multiculturalism, that 'beautiful mosaic', in the society is a sign of a progressive and developed nation. And the legal recognition given to the purveyors of these traditions and cultures is of economic and social interests.

The member for St. Phillip's (South), Hon. Wilmoth Daniel, concluded that the MNA was intent on embracing and integrating the other in Antiguan society. He stated,

We want the people from Guyana and Jamaica and Trinidad and Santo Domingo and from Canada and from America to understand that...we are bringing Antiguans and our Caribbean brothers and sisters together, *one family under this huge tent* that was cast by the [Prime Minister]. ...The future looks very bright for Antiguans and Barbudans, and all those Caribbean brothers and sisters and people from Santo Domingo and people all over, are going to have lots of opportunity to work... (Author's emphasis)²²

²¹ Hon. Member for St. Mary's (North), Mr. Bertrand Joseph, Antigua and Barbuda. House of Representatives Hansard of Meeting. Debate on The Millennium Naturalisation Bill, 2004, 11 June 2004 p45, 46

²² Hon. Member for St. Phillip's (South), Mr. Wilmoth Daniel, Antigua and Barbuda. House of Representatives Hansard of Meeting. Debate on The Millennium Naturalisation Bill, 2004, 11 June 2004 p57, 59

Daniel's presentation is noteworthy. He likens citizenship to the act of social inclusion of all. The image of all these peoples sitting under a huge tent as one nation is indeed a powerful and all-embracing one. It certainly denotes equality before the law and the cultural acceptance of different members of society. It is a clear illustration of Benedict Anderson's imagined community for "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."²³ Daniel's assertion presents the MNA to the public as a legal provision that would transform the Antiguan imagination of the nation. It presents the possibility that all settlers would be respected not only for the value of their labour but also for the identities that they bear. The MNA not only served as a window for new citizens but more importantly, as a policy for more cultural recognition and open practice within Antiguan society. The concept of multiculturalism as all-embracing, all-inclusive and as a marker of societal development has been accepted and yet eschewed in various academic circles. Katharyne Mitchell posits that multiculturalism, as a philosophy, goes beyond the acceptance and recognition of the other. Multiculturalism "effectively reworks for *everyone* the embodied cultural criteria that manifest civil competence; it is not additive but rather reconstructive."²⁴ (her emphasis) The welcoming tent, pitched via this piece of legislation, was essentially re/working the borders of membership in Antiguan society. Thus, by legal means, the political directorate was re/constructing Antiguan identities while negotiating spaces for the cultural expressions of the other.

A central theme in the debate on the MNA that spilled over into the various newspaper editorials, opinion columns, and call-in radio shows was the changing nature and characteristics of the Antiguan citizen as implied in the Act. The MNA, as was argued, would change not only the face of Antiguans, but also the very landscape and lived experience of the nation. The arguments centred mainly on the Quisqueyanos, for they were believed to be that distinctive other most in need of being welcomed under the new tent of the nation. The Quisqueyanos (barring the descendants of emigrant-Antiguans) are in no way eligible under the legal provisions for inclusion given their historical and cultural colonization. Thus Antiguan citizenship laws would have to change to embrace and encompass this linguistically and culturally distinctive political and economic bloc.

The Act not only enfranchised eligible candidates for citizenship, but it also inadvertently legitimised the diverse cultural heritages of the citizenry. Hence, as the debate reflects, the identity constructs of Antiguans being Anglophonic, and bearing and enjoying the stereotypical features of Antiguan life and experiences, such as carnival, calypso and cricket, were now being challenged. The boundaries and geographical landscapes of Antiguan society would be liable to change and to include new styles of architecture and linguistic expressions of these new citizens. A major implication of the Act, therefore, was the blurring of the distinctive lines between the legal citizen and the cultural citizen. Even though this particular legislation was in response to a changing society, it could be argued that the MNA was re/constructing the society, affirming the importance of all not merely for political leverage, but more so for their cultural, social and economic contributions. Consequently, terms such as 'native-born Antiguans' and 'indigenous Antiguans' among others were now used throughout the media to distinguish and demarcate the heritage and cultures of the citizenry. In an article reflecting on the twenty-four years of independence in

²³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* London: Verso, 1991 7

²⁴ Katharyne Mitchell "Geographies of Identity: Multiculturalism Unplugged" *Progress in Human Geography* 28:5 (2004) 642

2005, journalist Andy Liburd considered multiculturalism as a feature of the Antiguan nation, an attribute that was not present at the first independence celebrations on the 1st November 1981. He states that “neighbours knew each other by name and all spoke with the same accent.”²⁵ Columnist Ronald Maginley was more descriptive in his “Rainbow Nation” commentary. He writes:

Like the callaloo of Trinidad and Tobago (a mixed dish of various vegetables blended together), the issue of race, creed, religion and nationality, was never an issue in Antigua and Barbuda. As perhaps the most open of all CARICOM states, our country has always held its doors open to all and sundry and their diversity has helped to make our country unique. As one walks along any street in St. John’s we are bombarded by the sound of accents from almost all countries of the Caribbean. The Dominican Republic, Dominica, Montserrat, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica, Grenada and St. Lucian accents, are heard regularly on our streets. Forming part of the mix that is Antigua and Barbuda, it will come as little surprise that our country is almost evenly split between nationals (i.e. persons who were born here) and new immigrants. While there are positive aspects in having a country that is culturally and racially diverse, diversity...can be a cause for alarm.²⁶

This ‘cause for alarm’ that Maginley alludes to is really the societal struggle to accept this emerging multiculturalism.

Antigua, with its central geographic positioning in the Leeward Islands, was always impacted by migration and this historical reality is now manifesting itself in multicultural terms. The island served as the seat of colonial federal governance, strategic military defence for the Leeward Islands and as a hub for regional post-secondary education, travel, medical sectors and other socio-cultural organisations. This in-out movement has resulted in what Gordon K. Lewis terms a “psychology of openness”. He contends “...Psychologically, Antigua is an open society... made evident, for example, by the rapid tourist development in Antigua...”²⁷ Lewis maintains that the presence of a large colonial military base during the early seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (as well as an American military base established in the 1940s), had a positive effect on the psyche of the societal leadership, which translated into an ‘openness’ to future migrant-settlers that were willing to contribute to the society’s development. This openness is also seen in the immigration and labour policies and practices of the late colonial and independent Antiguan governments. From the late 1970s, migrants were encouraged to move to Antigua, given its fairly stable economy and dire need for labour. Thus, the society became an open society with easy access to jobs in the free trade zone, the burgeoning hospitality industry and as domestics or manual labourers. Job availability and opportunities for educational and social mobility attracted migrants from other parts of Caribbean, including the Leeward Islands, Guyana, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, and different ethnic groups, including the Chinese and Syrians. The Guyanese, Jamaicans, the (former) Leeward Islanders and Quisqueyanos all brought with them their “cultural equipage” which has diversified the nation’s socio-cultural tapestry and lived experience.²⁸ The English-speaking

²⁵ Andy Liburd, “Happy 24th Anniversary of Independence—Antigua & Barbuda” *Antigua Sun Online* Tuesday 1 November, 2005

²⁶ Ronald Maginley, “Current Issues and Concerns: A Rainbow Nation” *Antigua Sun Online* Thursday 14 June, 2007

²⁷ Gordon K Lewis, *The Growth of the Modern West Indies* Kingston: Ian Randle, 2004, 133

²⁸ Rex Nettleford, *Caribbean Cultural Identity: The Case of Jamaica* Kingston: Ian Randle, 2003, 2

Caribbean immigrants share historical and social commonalities, thereby making social integration not as distinct and challenging (both for the migrant and the local alike). The Quisqueyano migrants, by settling in and living out their culture overtly, dare to re/imagine and re/construct the island's socio-cultural lived experience.

The open diversity that exists in the society challenges the expectations of identity, thereby creating ambiguity as to what it means to be Antiguan. Kwame Appiah posits that identity is often tied to conformity and the presumption to comply or perform accordingly. He argues that through the use of labels such as gay, black, straight, American, man, or woman, ideas are evoked and people operate their lives, arguably, in or out of those boundaries. Appiah writes, "Once labels are applied to people, ideas about people who fit the label come to have social and psychological effects. In particular, these ideas shape the ways people conceive of themselves and their projects."²⁹ The issue presently in Antigua is how to define Antiguan. There no longer is a fixed certainty about that national label. It has been replaced by a struggle to define the concept Antiguan in cultural terms, given the fact that the legal designation embraces all eligible citizens and is no longer exclusive. The MNA cast a vision of equality for all in Antigua, if only in legal terms. This vision, while seeking to recognise and include the other, becomes a moot point for constructs, and interpretations, of Antiguan identities. The legal inclusion of the culture of the other, many argue, is to devalue the culture of the 'born' Antiguan. This contestation again manifests itself in informal public debates and online fora.³⁰

The MNA, by legally including the other and welcoming them under the tent of citizenry, legitimised a re/interpretation of the imagination of the nation. The Act is simultaneously a reflection of the cultural metamorphosis that Antiguan society was already undergoing and a constructive attempt at consolidating present and future social norms by welcoming the other to Antiguan citizenship. The MNA exposed the politics of culture in the redefinition of Antiguan identities and nationhood. It was possibly the first time that the nation's culture was ever debated so feverishly in the halls of the Antiguan Parliament and in the public arena. The MNA serves as a cultural policy that is re/constructing a society and is not merely a reflection or a means of redressing a social reality and providing insight—local knowledge—into the socio-cultural state.



²⁹ Kwame A. Appiah *The Ethics of Identity* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005, 66

³⁰ See article and discussion, "Antigua Culture Under Threat—Laudat" *Caribarena* 28 January 2013. www.Caribarena.com

New Antiguan citizens being sworn-in under the provisions of the 2004 Millennium Naturalisation Act. c. 2006. www.ab.gov.ag Accessed October 2006

Unlike a cultural policy document, the MNA does not go in-depth about the workings and feasibility of a culturally diverse, yet integrated society. The MNA was, after all, legal edict enacted to formalise societal relationships based on a specific social issue. Although the Quisqueyano community are engaging in robust economic activities and have established transnational commercial linkages with the Dominican Republic, at the time of the MNA's enactment, no consideration was given as to the possible impact the legislation would have on the community's financial prowess and social contributions. Yet, by having access to citizenship, the MNA endorses their participation in the nation's economy. While the debates, especially on the side of government politicians, were optimistic about the magical changes in attitudes and glowing appreciation to rising Quisqueyano and other cultural minority expressions within the national space, there was no real policy direction as to making this 'beautiful mosaic' of the 'Antiguan dream' a reality. The MNA, and its debates as recorded in Hansard, is, perhaps, the only official document recognizing the 'new' cultural others in the Antiguan space. Neither the Ministry of Culture nor the Department of Culture were empowered to investigate, draft frameworks and direct a national effort at welcoming all cultures under the national tent. In fact, these very agencies mandated to protect, preserve and promote the nation's culture seem powerless at safeguarding the tangible legacies of Antiguan heritage.

While the Ministry/Department of Culture may have been teaching the performing arts, such as dance and steel pan music, the Ministry/Department of Culture have not formally addressed the multiple cultural identities and expressions now present in the Antiguan space. There have been efforts to include the Quisqueyano community in national events, such as a "Spanish Night" in Carnival (particularly in 2005) and to have Spanish language translators at national events, but there is no real framework for promoting the socio-cultural inclusion and cohesion that the MNA was expected to enact. This lack of policy direction is a definite 'cause for alarm'. Gilbert Laudat, a director in the Ministry of Culture, posited recently that, "Some Antiguanians have forgotten their own culture because they've adopted other cultures so the Antiguan culture has lost itself. But Antiguan culture should be above the rest... the fact that the state is multicultural should not lead to infringement on the national culture as is happening now, causing Antiguanians to lose their identity."³¹ This outlook is not an isolated one. There is some apprehension amongst the 'native' Antiguan populace regarding the pace of migrants' cultural contributions in society. Many believe that their national distinctiveness is being eroded by the relative ease in which citizenship and other instruments of permanent status are acquired. The Quisqueyanos, inter alia, experience antagonism from below in seeking to obtain the privileges dictated by the government. Another popular perception is that non-Antiguanians receive preferential treatment in employment and hiring practices. The reality is, and this exemplifies G.K. Lewis' 'psychology of openness', that naturalised citizens have permeated every sphere of public and private life. This perception of unfettered openness towards the 'non-born-citizen' causes social friction. The media is replete with reports and anecdotes of Antiguanians 'suffering' or being 'disadvantaged' by the foreign-born employee or

³¹ "Antigua Culture Under Threat—Laudat" *Caribarena, The Caribbean's Best News Portal: Antigua and Barbuda* 28 January 2013 <www.caribarena.com>

employer³². The government's latest move towards implementing an economic citizenship programme has not allayed social fears and concerns.³³ The presence and increasing permanence of immigrants, especially by legal means, has cultural implications that could be addressed by a concerted effort, i.e. a cultural policy. Suzanne Burke aptly describes the urgency facing the Antiguan nation regarding the need for a cultural policy. "The need for developing countries to formulate cultural policies that foster diversity, creativity, and economic well-being has assumed greater prominence...as the forces of globalisation, trade liberalisation, rapid technological change and the convergence of telecommunication media all threaten to erode their capacity to grow and maintain their cultural institutions, retain their indigenous art forms, and sustain their artists and cultural entrepreneurs."³⁴

Suggestions for a Cultural Policy

The MNA debates provide suggestions for the formulation of a cultural policy that is embrative of all within the space. While there are many issues to consider, there are three main areas which are rich fodder for the development of a cultural policy for Antigua. Firstly, questions of national identity, its characteristics, its expressions and even its languages must be seriously considered. The presence of the Spanish language in Antigua is a prime example for this type of national introspection and policy development. Bernadette Farquhar, in her study on the diversity of languages and language usage in Antigua observed that, "Antigua has developed a multi-lingual, multi-Caribbean dialect tapestry... Quisqueyano Spanish has been added to a language tapestry made up of Antiguan, Jamaican and Guyanese dialects of English, and Dominican French Creole. It remains to be seen what influences will be exerted in any direction on the phonology, morphology and syntax of the three language groups..."³⁵ There are cultural hybridities occurring within the Antiguan space that are growing and going unnoticed by national authorities and agencies. More importantly, however, this emerging new cultural self that is a fusion of routes and dialects stirring among the Antiguan populace is yet to garner the attention it rightly deserves.

The second area for research for an Antiguan cultural policy is the concept of multiculturalism. The term 'multiculturalism' is increasingly common within the Antiguan discourse, but is yet to be defined within the context of the local realities. Will Kymlicka, in his recent work on multiculturalism observed, "In much of the post-multiculturalist [i.e. post-mid 1990s] literature, multiculturalism is characterized as a feel-good celebration of ethnocultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music, and cuisine that exist in a multiethnic society."³⁶ This approach fails to recognise the complexities of an ethnic group's culture, their socio-political and economic struggles, and more importantly, attaches characteristics, expressions and identities that are static and could in fact be construed as stereotype. Instead, as

³² For examples of this, see article and blogger comments "Antiguan Out: 2 Non-Nationals In" *Caribarena, The Caribbean's Best News Portal: Antigua and Barbuda* 24 April 2013 www.caribarena.com

³³ See "First CIP [Citizenship by Investment Programme] Passport Sold" *Antigua Observer* 11 February 2014, www.antiguaobserver.com

³⁴ Suzanne Burke, "Policing the Transnational: Cultural Policy and the 'Travelling Cultures' of the Anglophone Caribbean" *Wadabagei*. Vol 11, No 3 2008, 73

³⁵ Bernadette Farquhar, "The Spanish Language in Antigua and Barbuda: Implications for Language Planning and Language Research." Paper presented at the UWI School of Continuing Studies Antigua and Barbuda Country Conference. November 2003. 10 April 2005. <www.uwichill.edu.bb/bnccde/antigua/conference/papers/farquhar.html>.

³⁶ Will Kymlicka, *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure, and the Future*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute: 2012. 4

Kymlicka notes, "Multiculturalism takes these familiar cultural markers of ethnic groups — clothing, cuisine, and music — and treats them as authentic practices to be preserved by their members and safely consumed by others."³⁷ This mindset fixes the identities and cultural expressions of the other and restricts their full inclusion in the society. At the heart of multiculturalism is open recognition of everyone's democratic and human rights. Kymlicka maintains, "A genuine multicultural state recognises not only the citizens that are different in their language and culture but also that citizens are different in different ways, and so will relate to the state in different ways, with different forms of multicultural membership..."³⁸ Thus, any interpretation and implementation of a cultural policy that is based on multiculturalist principles must be locally specific with an aim of recognising and including all within the space.

The application of the concept of multiculturalism to the dynamics of the Antiguan space is exacting. In a real sense, the peaceable co-existence of the various cultural expressions and lived experiences side-by-side is grass-root driven. There has been no formal attempt, outside of regularising citizenship, by the directorate to guide and maintain a culturally cohesive population. Inter-cultural relationships, a description that applies to various types of friendships and amorous liaisons, are based on personal choices rather than official dictates. New identities emerge from such relationships, "Guy-tiguan, Span-tiguan, Jam-tiguan" are some of the monikers that are crafted to reflect the routes of one's heritage or the origins of one's partner. Moreover, local popular culture, especially following the enactment of the MNA, promoted cultural integration and miscegenation rather than social division.³⁹ Should the social practices of the masses from below be considered in crafting a definition, multiculturalism in Antigua could be construed as a lived experience with diverse cultural expressions. Unlike other interpretations, implementations and experiences of multiculturalism around the world, the Antiguan space presents a population-driven attempt at social inclusion and cohesiveness despite cultural diversity. The government may have the rhetoric but it is the masses that are implementing the vision.

There is certainly more to multiculturalism than acknowledging and celebrating the dress, food and music of the other. Kymlicka maintains, "Multiculturalism is first and foremost about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human-rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion"⁴⁰ Given this ideal, the MNA was certainly a step in the right direction, as it gives legal and equal standing to the marginalised. A full and localised understanding of multiculturalism would help national leadership develop a framework for greater cultural integration and understanding. The Ministry/Department of Culture would also find a more distinct mandate and role within the nation space.

Important to this application of multiculturalism is the acknowledgement of the various routes of Antiguan heritage and family histories. Given the central role of migration and transnational

³⁷ Will Kymlicka, 2012. 4

³⁸ Will Kymlicka, "Multicultural States and Intercultural Citizens" *Theory and Research in Education* 2003, 1:147, 153

³⁹ Several party-type calypsos were produced for the Carnival season in 2005 promoting socio-cultural inclusion. Notable amongst the musical offerings was *¡Bailamos!* by High Intensity Band, which not only fused meringue rhythms to the calypso beat, but also used Spanish-language lyrics in the song. The High Intensity band collaborated with a local merengero band, First Class Band (now defunct) to produce this musical number. See S. Griffin, "*¡Bailamos!*: Re/Presenting an Other Antiguan Identity" *Sargasso* 2010-2011, I & II, 163-172

⁴⁰ Will Kymlicka, 2012. 8

connections in Antiguan society, migration remains central to the imagination of the nation and to constructions of Antiguan identities. Movement is part of the Antiguan lived experience. This reality must be reflected within a cultural policy document for it impacts on the national narrative. The cultural dynamics that are at the root of the developing multiculturalism is based on the island's history. Hence there is need for the involvement of the main institutions of the nation's heritage sector, i.e. the National Archives, Museum and Library. These units are valuable to the appreciation of the national narrative and for informing policy on the nation's culture. The histories of all Antiguan citizenry must find representation in the national discourse.

The third area refers to the developmental benefits Antigua can earn as a result of a cultural policy of inclusion. Tourism is a major contributor to the Antiguan economy. With all the cultural diversity now present in Antiguan society, there is a question as to how these unique fusions could be used to bring economic growth, sustainable development and prosperity to the society. Keith Nurse's insightful work on culture as a key pillar to sustainable development provides a framework for a policy that recognises culture as an integral foundation to national and economic growth. Nurse posits that

Culture must be placed as the central pillar and fully integrated into the other pillars of the economy, the social and the economic... By putting culture at the centre of the sustainable development paradigm this framework allows for greater diversity in policy choice... [which] promotes self-reliance, social justice and ecological balance.⁴¹

By recognising the cultural values of a people, the activities and industries created would reflect their uniqueness, and their support and involvement would not be difficult to attract. This model for sustainable development is useful in helping to boost cultural confidence within a developing nation. By centralising the cultural sector, i.e. the artists and artisans, economic activity would be based on, and reflect the nation's cultural identities. Nurse maintains, "The cultural sector plays a dual role in that it is an arena for identity formation and an economic sector with growth potential including its role as a key driver of the new digital and intellectual property economy".⁴² It is therefore possible that an Antiguan cultural policy could generate cultural and economic benefits to its society. It may be a feasible way of making profitable use of all the cultural diversity in the nation. Nurse asserts, "From the perspective of small island developing states [like Antigua] cultural production is an important area for investment and a means of bolstering cultural identity".⁴³ The culturally diverse migrants now resident, and legal, in Antigua present opportunities for economic diversity, should their cultural expressions be appropriately harnessed, to promote new avenues for economic growth and social development.

Conclusion

The MNA was passed into law in 2004 in response to the growing political interests in migrant communities, and resulted in some fifteen hundred (1500) immigrants being sworn-in as Antiguan between the years 2005 and 2009. These minorities, especially the Quisqueyanos, were

⁴¹ Keith Nurse, "Culture as the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development" Paper prepared for Commonwealth Secretariat, June 2006. 38 <http://www.fao.org/SARD/common/ecg/2785/en/Cultureas4thPillarSD.pdf> Accessed 26 April 2013.

⁴² Keith Nurse, 2006, 41.

⁴³ Keith Nurse, 2006, 41.

marginalised by pre-existing immigration and labour policies which were more favourable to the citizenry of countries in CARICOM and/or the Commonwealth. The MNA aimed at providing easier access to the privileges of Antiguan citizenship by reducing the number of years required for residency. The MNA and its parliamentary debates hint at societal concerns about Antiguan identities, space and nationhood. The public outcry and discussions were further indicative of the growing identity crisis. These public discourses have articulated possible features of a cultural policy to adequately implement the spirit of the law, whereupon the provisions of the law are unable to prescribe. There is no doubt that the MNA was a means of providing a legal opportunity for socio-cultural inclusion. And while the MNA may have blurred the lines between legal and cultural citizenship, themes arising out of the dialogues analysed in this article suggest that there is need for a cultural policy to formulate a national response to queries on cultural identity, multiculturalism and economic and sustainable development.

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