Close-Up: Caribbean Cinema as Cross-Border Dialogue

"The Race to Modernization": Film Culture in the British West Indies Around the Mid-Twentieth Century

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Abstract

Michael Channan's assertion that the history of documentary is a history of forgetfulness has particular resonance in the Caribbean and prompts us to consider in this forum not only the ways that the region's cinema exists across linguistic and national borders, but also how it has been constituted and developed over time. The essay seeks to fill in some of the contours of this early expression of indigenous cinema in the region with particular reference to Barbados and two of the films made by the Barbados Film Unit. The essay explores how film connected the scattered colonies of the West Indies and the role it played in Barbadian society in the decade that preceded independence.

On the evening of Thursday, April 9, 1953, an audience of some 450 persons, led by the governor of the colony and his wife, attended the premiere of *Better Living*, a film made by the Barbados Department of Education Visual Aids Division (or Barbados Film Unit) at the Plaza Theatre in Bridgetown, Barbados. Also shown that evening was a newsreel, filmstrips on local pottery and the cotton industry, as well as another documentary, *You Can Help Your Child*, which was made by the Jamaica Film Unit (JFU). The size of the audience, the presence of no less a personage than the governor, and the subsequent generous reporting of the premiere in the *Barbados Advocate*, all suggest that the event was one of considerable local consequence. Beyond its immediate significance to the Barbadian public, that Thursday-evening screening is also important for what it tells us, more than sixty-five years later, about Caribbean film culture in the middle of the twentieth century and the role that film played in that society. The screening was an important milestone in the development of the nascent indigenous

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cinema of the period: *Better Living* was the second film made by the Visual Aids Division and was part of a state-supported film practice that emerged in the 1950s in four West Indian colonies—Barbados, Jamaica, British Guiana, and Trinidad and Tobago—and which produced a range of nonfiction films and film strips in an attempt to address developmental problems. Emergent in the decade preceding the advent of political independence in the region, when demands for reform and greater self-rule were being made, the films produced by the state-run West Indian units provide important insight into how the emerging nation-state addressed and communicated with its constituents, particularly those at the lower end of the social spectrum. Not unexpectedly, a burgeoning nationalism is evident in these films, so that they also tell us much about how a national identity was defined and understood, and how it functioned within the context of the process of nation formation.

The story of this early expression of Caribbean cinema, the emergence of a system or network of production, export, and exhibition in the West Indies in the middle of the twentieth century, is one that is not widely known today, which remains insufficiently explored and documented. Indeed, some accounts of cinema in the Anglophone Caribbean completely elide this period of production, thus further contributing to its obscurity.[1] One reason for this is that, sadly, some of the documentation that could help provide details of this period of production, along with many of the films themselves, no longer exist or are no longer located in the region. The loss of the films is, in part, the result of a failure to appreciate their historical and cultural value, but it is also the consequence of a persistent lack of resources to ensure adequate storage and the preservation of environmentally sensitive artifacts that require costly transfer processes to more resilient formats if they are to survive for future generations. The narrative of this cinema, an important chapter in the ongoing story of the development of Caribbean society and identity, thus evokes not merely feelings of nostalgia, but also notions of loss, fragmentation, and forgetting. Michael Channan's assertion that the history of documentary is a history of forgetfulness[2] thus has particular resonance in the region, and prompts us to consider not only the ways that Caribbean cinema transcends linguistic and national borders, but also how it has been constituted and developed over time. This essay, therefore, addresses the question of Caribbean cinema from a historical perspective and attempts to fill in some of the gaps in the story of the emergence of an indigenous film culture in the West Indies in the decade of the 1950s, with particular reference to Barbados and British Guiana.

The fragmentation of records and the existence of critical lacunae in the archives render the task of knitting together an account of a bygone period of film activity a difficult undertaking. Annual colonial reports, and in particular, annual departmental reports, are important sources of information about the production, distribution, and exhibition of film products during the

period, but the information they provide is not always definitive: references to the names of films may vary, and useful information about duration, date of completion, and the names of the filmmakers is often not provided. In addition, there is unevenness across the region in terms of the preservation of these documents and the films that were made. In Barbados, copies of many of the films and newsreels made in the 1950s are held at the Government Information Service library (but are not generally available to the public) and the annual reports for the Department of Education, where the Visual Aids Division was located, are accessible at the National Archives. In contrast, in Guyana, while annual colonial reports may be consulted at the University of Guyana Library, there are only a few surviving copies of the Government Information Service annual departmental reports for the 1950s; this is the department in which the British Guiana film unit was located. The surviving departmental reports are rich in detail about the activities of the unit, thus making the absence of the full range of reports for the decade that more keenly felt. Inquiries at the libraries of both the National Communications Network and the Department of Public Information in Guyana, the entities which would have inherited productions of earlier eras, revealed that neither library was in possession of any films that had been made locally prior to the 1970s, and further, it was believed that the older films had been destroyed because of lack of storage space. The loss of these films is all the more poignant as records indicate that the British Guiana unit had started to experiment with processing films and recording soundtracks earlier than other units in the region.[3] Neither is this loss of a valuable archive singular, or restricted to film, it is in fact a recurring theme in the history of the arts and cultural legacy of the region.

Recent scholarship has brought greater attention to the film culture that emerged in the 1950s in the British West Indian colonies. Tom Rice's succinct and informative essays on the open access database, *Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire*, provide the political and historical context for its emergence.[4] Terri Francis's longer article focuses more specifically on the expression of this cinema in Jamaica and highlights the work and contribution of one of the founders of the Jamaica Film Unit (JFU), Martin Rennalls. In an earlier article, I also look at the work of the JFU and two of its films made around the time of independence from Britain.[5] Franklyn "Chappie" St. Juste, a former member of the JFU, has documented the work of the unit in published as well as unpublished essays.[6] Both Francis and I rely on Rennalls's written legacy for insight into the emergence of the JFU and details of its operation. Rennalls (now deceased), left an unpublished memoir, held at the National Library of Jamaica, titled *A Career Making a Difference,* as well as a thesis, "Development of the Documentary Film in Jamaica," submitted in 1967 as a requirement for a Master's degree at Boston University School of Public Communication. These two documents,

written by the first director of the JFU, a man who played a critical role in the development of the unit, are invaluable sources of information. Many gaps still remain in the story of this early regional cinema, however, particularly in terms of our understanding of how it was expressed and constituted outside of Jamaica. Consequently, this essay focuses on Barbados, and to a lesser extent, British Guiana. While it does not fill all the existing gaps, it contributes to knowledge about the film culture of the period by bringing to light information garnered from government records. It represents, therefore, as the historians would say, a "top down" perspective, privileging official documents rather than the experiences and opinions of those who actually consumed the films and for whom they were intended. One obvious route for future research, then, is the gathering of the oral history of the period, the seeking out of surviving participants (both filmmakers and consumers), and the recording of their stories, experiences, and views.

It is difficult to definitively quantify the output of the West Indian units, but departmental records indicate that during the 1950s, the Barbados unit made at least fifteen films, including newsreels and "cinemags" (presumably magazine format programs), ranging from under ten minutes duration to a thirty-eight-minute production, *A Nation Is Born* (1958). This film recorded the formal inauguration of the West Indies Federation and required the production team to travel to Trinidad and Tobago to film the official ceremony and activities marking the event. Surviving records of the British Guiana Government Information Service (GIS), which housed the film unit, identify eleven films made in the 1950s, as well as an additional ten cinemags. (The year 1960, which falls just outside the period examined, seemed to be a particularly productive time for the GIS: four films were shot and readied for post-production in London, while two others were returned from London.) UNESCO Fellow, Sean Graham, writing in 1955 on completion of a tour to observe the use of films in fundamental education in Jamaica, Trinidad, and Mexico, lamented that the JFU, with an annual budget of £7000 had "produced so very little,"[7] although by the end of the decade the JFU had made seventeen films.[8] Certainly the output of the West Indian units may not have been impressive, but considering that these were small units and that they operated under conditions that required prints to be sent to London for processing and sound dubbing, which necessarily involved long delays, their output could be described as respectable.

In the middle of the twentieth century, film was an important means of connecting the scattered colonies of the West Indies, both to one another and to the world beyond. The screening of the Jamaican film *You Can Help Your Child* at the Barbadian premiere of *Better Living* points to the existence of a network between the colonies that facilitated the export and exhibition of locally made films and film strips around the region. *You Can Help Your*

Child, which appears to be no longer extant, is described in a JFU library catalog as a seventeen-minute black and white film with sound that

> aims at showing the need for greater self-help and communal responsibility in providing care, training and protection for young children, through the establishment of infant centres. It relates the story of a village which succeeded in providing a school all on its own and the type of work carried on in the school.[9]

Old library catalogs provide useful evidence of the circulation of films around the region. A 1965 catalog lists films from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and British Guiana in the holdings of the Barbados Visual Aids Section library; similarly, a JFU Library catalog also lists titles produced in the other colonies.[10]

Locally made films appear to have been widely screened and, not surprisingly, popular with audiences in the region. After its premiere at the Plaza Theatre, *Better Living* was released to the general public and shown in Barbadian cinemas in May of the same year. Said to be in great demand both locally and overseas, by August 1954, *Better Living* had been shown in Jamaica, Grenada, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, and even Puerto Rico, and Bogota. In Trinidad alone, it was screened on 112 occasions to an estimated 30,872 people.[11] Similarly, in British Guiana there was "an immediate demand" for the ten-minute black-and-white documentary, *British Guiana–1957*, on its completion.[12] Over a period of five days this film was shown three times daily, simultaneously, at three cinemas in Georgetown, while shows were also arranged for rural cinemas. The film depicted "British Guiana in its present stage of development, using the election scenes of 1957 as topical highlights"[13] and was created by the British Guiana GIS using 35mm footage its film officers had compiled of the 1957 General Election for United Kingdom and North American television stations.[14] As British Guiana was already lending films to other countries (a report notes loan requests from "Surinam, the West Indian Islands, Canada and the U.S.A"[15]), it is not inconceivable that *British Guiana–1957*, described as an outstanding addition to the GIS film library, was also loaned or distributed to other locations.[16]

British Guiana–1957, the British Guiana unit's first 35mm production, was planned and completed with the assistance of the Film Officer of the government of Trinidad and Tobago and is important evidence that some degree of regional cooperation and collaboration in the production of film occurred.[17] There were other instances of cooperation: in January 1955, the British Guiana Films Officer assisted the Trinidad unit in filming the visit of Princess Margaret to that island;[18] and the film, *Three Royal Days,* depicting Queen Elizabeth's 1953 visit to Jamaica, was shot by a team comprising film officers from Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and British Guiana.[19]

Given the participating countries' common status as colonies of Great Britain, the regional character of this early cinema is not at all surprising, and indeed its genesis might be located in what was conceived as a regional project. This was the establishment in March 1950 of what was known as the West Indies Film Training School at the University College of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica—a pivotal moment in the history of documentary in the region. The school, in effect, a one-year training program, was established by the Colonial Film Unit (CFU), which was headquartered in London and operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Information in the British government. Six individuals from four colonies completed this program: Rennalls, Trevor Welsh, and Milton S. Weller from Jamaica; Isaac Carmichael from Barbados; Wilfred Lee from Trinidad and Tobago; and Richard L. Young from British Guiana. At the end of the program the participants took up positions in government-run film units or divisions in their respective territories and set to work to participate in what would become the first wave of organized, sustained, indigenous film production in the British West Indies.[20]

The establishment of the school was a sign of the changing times, as film had not always been regarded as the optimum medium for addressing developmental issues in the West Indies. Successive comptrollers for Development and Welfare, who were responsible for overseeing the disbursement of development funding in the region, had advocated *against* using motion pictures for educational purposes in the preceding decade. Their reasoning was that local conditions did not support its use and the colonies did not have the resources to employ this expensive method of communication efficiently. In his 1940-1942 report, one such comptroller, Sir Frank Stockdale, supported the need for adult education, which he described as "the university of the people,"[21] but recommended the use of film strips—a series of static images on a strip of film—rather than motion pictures, as they were cheaper to produce and could be made locally. In reference to the structure that was already in place in Jamaica to show educational films (usually imported from Britain or North America) around the island using Mobile Cinema vans, Stockdale commented that

> the travelling cinema units established by Jamaica Welfare Limited, useful as they are, show the present limitations of the cinema for educational purposes in the West Indies. A recurrent expenditure of £1,200 provides one show a month in 15 centres only; and to be fully effective, a large proportion of locally-made films is required; which cannot be economically made for small populations. Visual education should rest upon broader foundations and be available to the whole people. The use is therefore recommended of film strips . . . .[22]

Stockdale's successor, Sir John McPherson, echoed these sentiments, adding that "further experience with the mobile projectors supplied by the Ministry of Information [in the UK], and with film projectors obtained from other sources confirms" the "limitations of using cinema for educational purposes in the West Indies."[23] By 1949, Sir Hubert Rance had only a slightly different outlook: while he affirmed progress in visual education and the work of the Mobile Cinema vans in Barbados and Jamaica, and noted the introduction of mobile units in Trinidad and Grenada, he also reiterated a litany of challenges to the delivery of the service that included limited electricity supply in country districts, poor supplies of local material, and the high cost of equipment and lack of organization in film and film strip library supplies. He concluded his report on "visual education" in the colonies by echoing the recommendations of earlier officials, opining that these challenges might be overcome "if there were less pre-occupation with the most expensive form of visual aid, the moving picture, and more concentration on the use of less expensive forms."[24]

The 1948 London conference "The Film in Colonial Development" would mark, as Tom Rice points out, a public shift and transitional moment in colonial film policy that was aligned to broader political developments.[25] Organized by the British Film Institute with the support of the Colonial Office, the conference provided a platform for a select group of British documentarists and administrators to promote the view that film production needed to be developed in the colonies, as well as propose how this could be done. Secretary of State for the colonies A. Creech Jones, gave the opening address at the conference and framed his remarks about the usefulness of films in mass education within the context of the need for Britain to recognize the importance of its special task in building up "the backward nations,"[26] not only in "sound educational standards but a right appreciation of the moral and ethical principles which . . . characterise Western civilization."[27] In a speech that reaffirmed Britain's sense of its racial superiority, Creech Jones stated:

> . . . we do regard the film as an important agent in the vast educational work we have to do in the Colonies and we regard it as an important factor in creating in the minds of the people in the Colonies a new sense of values, a contribution for obtaining their co-operation and their goodwill in the great work which has got to be done, and as a vital element in breaking through mass ignorance and illiteracy and in training these people to play a larger part in the life of their own territories and to help us in the more effective and efficient discharge of the responsibilities we, as British people, feel in respect of the colonial territories under our control.[28]

Creech Jones framed Britain's use of film in the colonies within the context of a need or duty, on the part of the imperial power, to prepare inferior

colonized people for greater responsibility and participation in national and civic affairs, as well as a means through which pressing developmental needs could be addressed. Contemporary film scholar Lee Grieveson proposes, however, a more complicated agenda and intention. He points out that Britain's investment in the use of film in the colonies was "considerable" and represented the most sustained and extensive use of film for governmental purposes by a liberal state.[29] Describing the colonial film project as the "enmeshing of cultural representation and political and economic control," Grieveson proposes that it was predicated on ideas "both about film as a symbol of technological modernity that embodied and projected colonial authority and, relatedly, about its persuasive power over 'unsophisticated' populations."[30]

Following the conference, Creech Jones proposed that a CFU team should visit the Caribbean colonies to produce films suitable for educational purposes "and at the same time train local officers in the technique of film production, with a view to the assumption of these services by the territorial governments."[31] Lack of funding resulted in the modification of this proposal, and in 1949, William Sellers, head of the CFU, set off for the Caribbean to investigate the possibility of setting up a training program. With assurance from the University College of the West Indies that they would house the school, and local enthusiasm for the project, the program was set up at Mona in 1950. Governments that were in a position to release staff for training could fund their participants' living expenses at Mona and could also provide funding for local film production were able to take advantage of the opportunity, but notably, although there was initial accommodation for nine participants, only six persons completed the course of study.[32] At the time of his tour, Sellers was very clear about the objectives of the school. He is quoted in the *Gleaner* as stating that he was looking into the "possibility of the production of local films dealing with the major social problems of health, agriculture, education, economics including co-operative movements with an eye to better homes, better crops and better living."[33]

As Grieveson points out, the advent of filmic independence in the colonies "mirrored, and crossed over with, that of political independence."[34] Thus, in the West Indies, the development and expansion of the colonial film project into support for local production was also driven by the processes of nation formation and a desire on the part of the colonized to see representations of West Indians on the screen that resonated with their own experiences and lived realities. This is reflected in the boldly nationalistic motto or mandate of the Jamaica Film Unit: "to produce films for Jamaicans, by Jamaicans, with Jamaicans, designed to assist in the solution of Jamaica's problems—educational, social, cultural and economical."[35] The motto certainly reflects a developmental and educational focus, as well as the goal of

uplift, but it also speaks, quite profoundly and explicitly, to an intention to contribute to a national consciousness and a Jamaican film culture in which Jamaicans could see themselves on the screen in films they had crafted, rather than through the exoticizing lens of the outsider. The JFU mandate reflects on the part of Jamaicans, a desire—to paraphrase Robert Stam and Louise Spence—to take control of their own cinematic image and speak in their own voice,[36] even if only within the rather narrowly defined framework of educational documentary and newsreel production.

Indeed, the desire to make one's own films was repeatedly articulated by West Indians and may well have been amplified and driven by what was, by 1950, an established practice of using foreign-made films in the colonies' visual and adult education programs. By 1950, Barbados, Grenada, Trinidad, and Jamaica all had Mobile Cinema van services that showed foreign-made educational and informational films in community settings. The meticulous annual reports of the Barbados Department of Education give an idea of how extensive and popular the Mobile Cinema service was in that island. In 1945, its first year of operation, the Mobile Unit traveled 5,113 miles to give 220 "performances" (as the screenings were described), showing news films (presumably newsreels) obtained from the Ministry of Information in the UK and educational films supplied by the British Council, at venues throughout the island.[37] Average audience size per screening "rapidly rose from an estimated figure of 1,000 to between 2,500 and 3,000—far too many," it was noted, "for all to have an effective view of the screen."[38] While open-air shows in communities seemed to be the most common form of screening (fig. 1), the service also visited government institutions, such as almshouses, and by 1947 had also established a program of film lessons in all 126 of the island's elementary schools, using a car adapted for the projection of film-strips.[39] By 1953, talks and presentations by local specialists and experts had become a regular feature of the screenings. To accommodate this, the back platform of the cinema van was outfitted with a light and microphone so that the speakers could be clearly seen and heard. A description of the Mobile Cinema services in 1949 noted that,

> Most performances in the open air lasted for two hours. The programmes comprised British Documentaries, News Reels and Instructional Films. In addition there were cartoons and musical interludes of folk songs and dance music. Films for the performances were bought from Gaumont British[40] or were borrowed from the Colonial Office (on long loan), the British Council and the Department of Health and Agriculture. Each film was explained to the audience by a member of the Visual Education unit on the public address system with which the van is equipped. Audiences were very mixed as to age and intelligence. Their reaction varied from good to very good. It is estimated that some 103,000 attendances were made to the cinema programmes during the period under review.[41]

Figure 1. An undated photograph of a screening by the Barbados Mobile Cinema Unit showing a section of the large crowd. Both young and old are in attendance, but the audience appears to be mostly male. Photograph property of the Media Resource Department, Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, Barbados.

Newspaper announcements alerted audiences as to the date, time, and venue of the screenings. A sample of those published in the *Barbados Advocate* during 1950 indicate that while most of the screenings were held in the more urban parish of St. Michael, shows were also regularly staged in more distant communities around the island, including Crab Hill, St. Lucy in the north, St. Philip and Christ Church in the southwest and southeast, respectively, and in the interior parishes of St. George and St. Thomas. The large audiences suggest that the Mobile Cinema van screenings must have been highly anticipated and welcomed social and community events, particularly in rural areas, where they would have provided, prior to the introduction of television, images of the outside world in the sophisticated form of motion pictures. Barbadian historian Trevor Marshall, whose father was at one time the driver of the Mobile Cinema van, recalls attending numerous screenings and vividly remembers how the newsreels that were shown brought the outside world in. My older siblings also recall attending cinema van shows at the St. Stephens pasture, a common area in the community where our family lived in the fifties, although they most vividly remember the Bud Abbott and Lou

Figure 2. An undated photograph showing speakers doing a presentation on the rear platform of the Mobile Cinema van. Photograph property of the Media Resource Department, Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, Barbados.

Costello films, comedies that the unit showed to entertain (and probably attract) audiences alongside the more serious fare of educational documentaries. Beyond providing entertainment and news, the Mobile Cinema Unit supplied vital services and played a key role in the development of the country by providing information to communities throughout Barbados on smallpox vaccination programs, hurricane preparation and warnings, and instructions for the registration of voters (in preparation for the first election in Barbados contested under universal adult suffrage) (fig. 2). In British Guiana, a large country possessed of a vast interior and almost twenty times the size of Jamaica, the Mobile Cinema Unit was responsible for introducing film in remote settlements.[42] These open-air shows were, for many in isolated rural villages, the first time they had ever seen "moving pictures." The size of the audiences at these screenings indicates how compelling and novel the experience must have been: an average of 150 people per night and as many as seven hundred on some occasions was recorded.[43]

These reports from Barbados and British Guiana, attest to the extensive national reach of the Mobile Cinema vans and reveal an avid interest in the new medium, an eagerness on the part of the people to see it and participate

in it, and the potential this held for film as a tool for education and development. Before 1951, however, the films seen by audiences in West Indian colonies would not have been made by West Indians. British-made films like *Jamaica Harvest, Caribbean*, and *Caribbean Holiday*, which had been shot on location in the region and were shown by the regional Mobile Cinema services, could not fully satisfy demands for films of "local and West Indian character" or "atmosphere," for they still represented an outside gaze. Indeed, such films were part of the colonial phase of what Mbye Cham describes as the Caribbean's long acquaintance with cinema as a resource for foreign productions that extracted "raw materials," that is, images, that were packaged and then exported back to the region in the form of films, for consumption by Caribbean people.[44]

Using British or North American films for educational purposes in the Caribbean not only failed to bring about the desired results, it may well have underscored the need for locally produced content and thus driven or intensified demands for local films. For while Creech Jones remarked at the London conference on the usefulness of British films for introducing colonial audiences (Africans in particular) to British ways of life, the activities of British people, and so on, the West Indians involved in using British films for educational purposes found them strikingly inadequate. In this regard, Rennalls wrote in *Colonial Cinema*:

> Educational films from foreign sources are shrouded in an atmosphere of strangeness where our local population is concerned. They lack that intimacy, a quality which is so essential in the learning process. The actors, scenes, customs details are regarded as foreign. The audience cannot wholly identify themselves with what is portrayed on the screen, however much the problem as a whole may be similar to those in this country, and so the films lose that reception necessary for effecting a change in our people's attitude and ways.[45]

J. I. Frederick, probably an officer in the Trinidad film unit, also reported in *Colonial Cinema* "difficulties with regard to the suitability and availability of films, and the taste of an audience accustomed to Commercial Cinema." The type of films shown by the Mobile Cinema Unit, he stated, "could not hold audiences and convey its messages in relation to local aims, aspirations and way of life."[46] Writing in the year following the establishment of the West Indies Film Training School, Frederick proposed that the best answer to this problem was "to purchase films in Trinidad for Trinidad," and pointed out, "[Now that] films are being made in Trinidad and the other West Indian colonies, a new era lies ahead for West Indians to develop their own culture and expand their own way of life."[47] As with the JFU motto, the language of nationalism is striking in Frederick's assessment. He too reiterates the idea of

a national identity and the concept that Trinidadians, and by extension, the larger grouping of West Indians, have a distinct set of interests, needs, culture, and way of life—that clearly distinguishes them from the so-called "Mother Country"—and which needed to be prioritized in local filmic representation. Frederick also explicitly affirms the high degree of significance accorded to the new capability to make one's own films, providing some insight into the importance attached to the role of film in West Indian society at that time.

While the value accorded film as a means of mass communication might be difficult to appreciate today when the proliferation and accessibility of different means of visual communication is taken for granted in many parts of the world, Stam points out that cinema was a strategic instrument for "projecting" national imaginaries and notes that the beginnings of cinema coincided with the very height of imperialism. Cinema, he states, "combined narrative and spectacle to tell the story of colonialism from the colonizer's perspective," prodding African spectators to identify with Rhodes, Stanley, and Livingstone,[48] and, one might add, Native Americans to identify with the cowboys and West Indians to identify with racist and ethnocentric colonial administrators, expatriates, and their own marginalization and objectification. As Stam states, "[F]or the European spectator, then, the cinematic experience mobilized a rewarding sense of national and imperial belonging, but for the colonized, the cinema produced a sense of deep ambivalence, mingling the identification provoked by cinematic narrative with intense resentment."[49] For West Indian audiences, and especially for West Indians interested in filmmaking and who used films for educational purposes, the prospect of locally made films must have been a sign of potential empowerment: an opportunity to address this imbalance in representation and the chance to finally participate in this most powerful and persuasive form of modern mass communication, a technological and industrially driven art that signified not merely national presence and identity, but progress, development, and modernity itself. It is probably not overreaching, therefore, to presume that the screening of *Better Living* at the Plaza theater in Bridgetown in 1953 must have been the source of considerable national pride.

It is worth noting that the premiere of *Better Living* appeared to receive greater public attention than the premiere of the Barbados unit's first film, *Give Your Child a Chance*. The venue for the earlier premiere, held in 1951, was the hall of a prominent boys' school, rather than a commercial cinema, and the audience was about half the size of that which attended the premiere of *Better Living*. The photograph that was carried on the front page of the *Barbados Advocate* on the day after the screening of *Give Your Child a Chance* identified the governor and his wife, the headmaster of the school, the Director of Education, and Sellers of the CFU, who was present for the screening of the unit's maiden effort. The caption, however, failed to identify

Isaac Carmichael, who directed the film, although this information was provided in a brief report on page five of the newspaper. In contrast, the *Barbados Advocate*'s coverage of the premiere in 1953 of *Better Living* pays due respect to Carmichael's role as supervisor of the unit and director of the film by providing a fulsome account of his speech at the event, which gave much detail about the work of the unit.

The greater significance accorded the premiere of the unit's second film, and a noticeable shift in the focus of the reportage that inferred the premiere was recognized as something more than a mere *social* event, might well be due to the success and popularity of the unit's first effort, *Give Your Child a Chance.* This twenty-minute film about the care of the expectant mother and the antenatal services provided by the Maternity Hospital was, by Carmichael's account, well received in Barbados and would have alerted Barbadians to the fact that films could now be made locally. It ran at the Plaza Theatre for a week, where it was seen by some 7,622 people and was shown throughout the island by the Mobile Cinema Unit, where screenings were accompanied by lectures from "specialists in maternity and child welfare." Carmichael even proposed that his first film "might well claim its contribution" toward an "enlightened attitude" that had resulted in an increase in the numbers of pregnant women seeking medical attention at the island's Maternity Hospital.[50] The film was also popular outside of Barbados, and in 1953, almost two years after it was released, Carmichael could report that it had "circulated throughout the Colonial Empire" and was regularly used in health programs in Trinidad and Tobago, where there were eleven screenings to over 12,000 people. The film also met with a favorable response in Jamaica and British Guiana, he stated.[51]

Like Rennalls of the JFU, Carmichael (now deceased) was initially a teacher, and in 1945 was recruited from the staff of St. Giles Primary school in Barbados for secondment to the Department of Education as Supervisor of Visual Education. This appointment was made in concert with the arrival in the island of the first Mobile Cinema Unit. The Visual Education Unit, which Carmichael headed, was responsible for training teachers in the use and maintenance of audiovisual aids, which one report identifies as "the film, the filmstrip, the flannelgraph, the bulletin board, the educational chart and still pictures."[52] The Mobile Cinema Unit and the Production Unit (or Film Unit) all fell under the auspices of the Visual Education Unit. To better prepare him for his new responsibilities as supervisor, Carmichael was sent to the University College of Exeter in the UK for training in methods of visual education. I would venture that Carmichael considered himself both a teacher and filmmaker, and saw these two roles as complementary. In an article titled "Visual Aids: When I Hear I Understand; When I See I Know," he affirmed the pedagogical importance of audiovisual aids[53] and he was aware

that the films he made were produced with specific objectives in mind and were expected to achieve defined outcomes. He also believed, however, that as a filmmaker he was engaged in an artistic and creative endeavor. In the speech he gave at the premiere of *Better Living*, he underscored how these two considerations inform filmmaking within the context of "visual education" and sought to distance the work of the Barbados Film Unit from what he clearly considered the frivolous efforts of amateur filmmakers. He stated:

> [F]ilm production is a highly technical business that takes time and energy. It is creative work and cannot be rushed through if the creation is to be worth anything. Film production as we know it is not synonymous with "taking movies." The former is an art form in which the Director, always guided by a compass of purpose, seeks to translate that purpose through well-planned visual images into living cinematographic form. For him the whole is of greater significance than the sum of its parts and each "shot" taken is a vital element in the synthetic structure. Taking movies is frequently indulged in by persons who visit our shores, stand at the head of Broad Street and with a few camera gymnastics they have enough for amusement and record. The Film Unit does not go in for "taking movies."[54]

Despite describing educational filmmaking as creative work, Carmichael's first two films show little effort to incorporate performative or aesthetic elements of Barbadian culture that might increase appeal to the local audience. Such criticisms must be made cautiously, however, for film production in Barbados, at least initially, appears to have been a challenging undertaking. Carmichael reported that it took a full year to "investigate, script and [to] complete actual shooting" for *Better Living* which was made in collaboration with the Social Welfare Department. He also reports, during production of this film, an "awful experience:" the deterioration of film stock "despite precautions taken" because of high humidity and salinity, atmospheric conditions that are characteristic of the Barbados climate.[55]

Another challenge to production was the unit's inability to do synchronous recording and fully edit the film. As occurred with the other West Indian units during much of their first decade of existence, the Barbados unit sent prints to the CFU in London for processing, the voicing of the soundtrack, and editing. With reference to the JFU, Francis describes this as "a complex transatlantic post-production process," an arrangement that resulted in an "awkward portrait because of the disconnection between the images of the people pictured and their voices."[56] In some instances, the CFU recruited West Indians living in London to voice the narration. This appears to be the case with the two Barbadian films,[57] but notwithstanding the use of West Indian narrators, as Francis points out, the lack of synchronous sound

in the West Indian units' early films was problematic and distancing. She refers to one scene in the Jamaican film *Farmer Brown Learns Good Dairying* (1951) that features a discussion between a small group of farmers and notes that "the specifics of conversation, their voices and inflections, the pace of their exchange—everything is elided by an intrusive voice-over commentary. Neither a silent nor a sync-sound film, *Famer Brown* is silenced."[58] Francis, however, identifies the ameliorating effects of Jamaican cultural elements in Rennalls's later film *Let's Stop Them* (1953), which, she points out, incorporates Jamaican music (mento) and proverbs to help counteract the alienating effect created by the lack of synchronous sound.

Rice observes of *Farmer Brown*, one of the JFU's earliest films, that it represented "a gradual shift" in responsibility for filmmaking—from the CFU to indigenous units—as reflected in the mode of production, described above, and also in the film's use of stylistic elements and its ideological inflection.[59] This is also true of the Barbadian films; *Give Your Child a Chance* and *Better Living* were processed and edited by the CFU and, like *Farmer Brown*, they made use of the Mr. Wise and Mr. Foolish narrative structure that was preferred by the CFU and taught at the West Indian Film Training School. In *Better Living*, this narrative model is explicit, with clearly identified "good" and "bad" characters actually referred to as "Wise" and "Foolish." In *Give Your Child a Chance*, it is implied: the expectant mother in the film behaves "foolishly" during her first pregnancy and consequently has an unsatisfactory outcome; when she acts "wisely," that is, she adopts the practices the film encourages, the outcome improves. The Barbadian films also adopt, as Rice notes of *Farmer Brown*, elements of a largely traditional, established colonial rhetoric.[60] This is not surprising; the establishment of the West Indian units occurred in the decade preceding independence, a period marked by ongoing and gradual political change, and the films they produced in the 1950s reflect all the ideological ambivalence that would be expected of a transitional period.

Indeed, the Barbadian films both reflect and were shaped by the socioeconomic and political context out of which they emerged. While Barbados at the dawn of the twenty-first century was recognized as one of the more prosperous and economically stable countries in the Anglophone Caribbean, historian David Browne describes the colony in the early decades of the twentieth century as a place characterized by the unwillingness of the political elite to institute reform, and the resulting widespread poverty, unsanitary and unhealthy conditions in which the majority of Barbadians lived.[61] Describing a "policy of neglect and indifference" on the part of local authorities with regard to the welfare of the laboring classes, which formed the majority, Browne points to the existence of a powerful merchant-planter elite that purposefully attempted to maintain the black masses in a state of poverty

and servility, in order to better maintain its position of privilege and dominance in Barbadian society:

> In essence, from the womb to the tomb, the majority of black Barbadians lived a life of abject poverty which denied them the least chance of enhancing their own personal development. The merchant-planter elite, on the other hand, dominated society through its ownership and control of the land, the vital import-export sector and the political machinery. This domination existed in the State, even in the Church, and in almost all aspects of local life.[62]

By the 1940s, however, significant reforms had been initiated. A series of protests and disturbances in the region, beginning in St. Kitts in 1935 and occurring in Barbados in 1937, resulted in the appointment of a West India Royal Commission in 1938 to investigate social and economic conditions in the colonies. The Commission's report was, James Ferguson states, "a damning account of neglect and deprivation in the British Caribbean," citing squalid and unhealthy housing, inadequate provisions for health and education, and the colonies' inability to provide themselves with basic foods.[63] The report strengthened the movement toward reform, while a more immediate consequence was the passing of a Colonial Development and Welfare Act (CDWA) in 1940 that provided a mechanism through which the Colonial Office could institute programs that were beneficial to the masses despite opposition from the powerful local elites. In 1945, in response to agitation and demands from progressive elements in the colonies for greater reforms, the funds available for spending on social and economic development under a new CDWA were significantly increased.

The disturbances of the 1930s also resulted, Ferguson states, in the strengthening of the trade union movement in the region and the concomitant rise of new political leaders who sought to channel the radicalism of the poor majority into party politics.[64] Consequently, as Hilary Beckles points out, between 1944 and 1950, the political and economic enfranchisement of blacks dominated national politics in Barbados, with issues such as land reform, the outlawing of racial discrimination in the private sector, and white control of the capital and equity markets figuring prominently in public political discourse.[65] In fact, the newsreel shown at the premiere of *Better Living*, "1951 General Elections in Barbados," recorded a key moment in the process of political enfranchisement for the black masses, for it chronicled the first general election in Barbados to be held under universal adult suffrage. In 1937 only 5,000 out of 200,000 Barbadians were entitled to vote,[66] but the opening up of the political process in 1951 would help to ensure that greater attention was paid to the needs and welfare of the poor who constituted the overwhelming majority.

The film training school at Mona, as was asserted earlier, came about because of a shift in colonial film policy, but its establishment was also, in part, the result of the confluence of these other forces and events, for the funds to operate the school were awarded under the CDWA. This was also the case with the Maternity Hospital that *Give Your Child A Chance* encourages expectant mothers to attend; it too was funded through the CDWA. Thus, a primary objective of the film was to persuade expectant mothers to utilize the services of this relatively new and unfamiliar institution, which had only been established in 1948 and which provided antenatal services that were "open to all," as the film informs. What the Barbadian films broadly reflect, therefore, is a shift in Barbadian society: the slow erosion of the overwhelming dominance of the merchant-planter elite, the accompanying amelioration of living conditions for the poor, and the political changes which would facilitate and drive even greater transformation.

In the thesis he wrote more than ten years after he became director of the JFU, Martin Rennalls would affirm that a primary concern of the films made in Jamaica was "to bring the messages relative to social and economic development" to the small farmers who formed the largest sector of the Jamaican population, "engage their interest, redirect, channel and activate their attitudes and so involve them in the race towards modernization."[67] However, his description of the farmers' ancestral origins as the "uncivilized, traditional and preliterate cultures of Africa," and his insistence on their "deep rooted cultural values that resist the methods used by the films to reach them and to bring about change," suggest that Rennalls saw the JFU as being engaged in a process of cultural change that sought to distance the rural farmers from the remnants of their ancestral African culture. While no overt statement of such intention has yet been uncovered in regard to the work of the Barbados Film Unit, it is evident that the makers of *Give Your Child a Chance* and *Better Living*, were also engaged in a similar process of "modernization" that involved, not merely the improvement of health and living conditions, but also cultural transformation. While Rennalls identifies the Jamaican small farmer as the primary target for the work of the JFU, the films made by the Barbados unit appear to address a somewhat more elevated social group. The Barbadian films seem to anticipate the expansion of a lower middle class; their project of encouraging "better living" involves prescribing gendered social roles and behavior, and appears to envision, for those recently emerged or aspiring to emerge from the ranks of the laboring classes, a model of middle class life and values that resembles a Western ideal and incorporates Western cultural norms.

This is seen, for example, in the way *Better Living* addresses the matter of the family meal. The Barbadian housewife is encouraged to discontinue the habit, said to be common among the poor in the West Indies,

of gathering “food together in a tin dish or plate, and eat[ing] it at any time and in any place round about the home which may be convenient.”[68] Thus, the film stages a family meal, showing the entire Wise family sitting down to breakfast. It also invests this practice, however, with a variety of class and cultural values: the Wise family table is elaborately (if not formally) set, with serving dishes, tableware, cutlery, and a floral centerpiece, and Mr. Wise kisses wife and daughter before leaving for work, while his wife stays at home with the children. In these and other scenes, therefore, there emerges not merely practical advice for increased health and well-being but also, it would appear, for those families who a generation ago would have had minimal expendable income, instruction on the appropriate consumption of products and services that constitute the accessories and material trappings of lower-middle-class status, as well as guidance on the manners and social rituals that were believed to accompany such status in Western society.

Consequently, the film’s model for “better living” is characterized not merely by prosperity and health, but also by social propriety in ways that reflect colonial views of family life. In her review of studies of the Caribbean family, Christine Barrow observes that English social welfare workers in the post–World War II period, “judged Caribbean families from their own middle class, Christian, nuclear-family standards and found them to be dysfunctional and disorganized.”[69] The high occurrence in the West Indies of childbearing out of wedlock, or as it was more delicately described, the infrequency of “Christian marriage,” was often cited by anthropologists and colonial authorities as evidence of loose morals and an aberrant family structure. One of the major proponents of this view was T. S. Simey, an advisor to Colonial Development and Welfare who, invoking the Freudian model, affirmed that illegitimacy, and what he defined as its consequence, the lack of a close association between father and child, “cannot but have a most important bearing on the development of personality.”[70] What Barrow describes as the mandate adopted by colonial welfare workers to reconstruct the Caribbean family “to conform to the nuclear ideal, with marriage and legitimate children,”[71] is consequently reflected in *Better Living* and *You Can Help Your Child*. These films define the ideal family as consisting of a husband, his subordinate wife, and their (two or three) children—thus “correcting” what was considered another cultural aberration of the West Indian family, which was its extended structure that might include cousins or other relatives living in a single dwelling. At the end of *Better Living*, the Wise family is shown as an ideal representation of Victorian propriety: husband, wife, and children—happy, healthy, and well-dressed—are pictured attending church. This propriety is maintained within the private confines of the home as well, for the film points out that, unlike Mrs. Foolish, Mrs. Wise separates

the sexes when it comes to their sleeping arrangements, and her son is not allowed to sleep in the same room as his sisters.

The replacement of the extended family with the nuclear unit in *You Can Help Your Child* must have been disconcerting for the midcentury working-class Barbadian audience, however. Here, pregnancy and childbirth, events that would normally involve the support of the extended family group, are removed from the sphere of family life and relocated to the rather impersonal confines of the hospital and medical clinic. In the film, the expectant mother's sole social contact is the neighbor who informs her of the services of the Maternity Hospital and who accompanies her on the first visit. By eliding the figures who would normally be present around the time of pregnancy and childbirth—such as the woman's mother, grandmother, or older sister—the film seeks to initiate a cultural shift, replacing traditional reproductive and birthing practices with more modern, scientific modes of care, and the kinds of social relations more common to Western urban communities. The salient reason for this, as will be discussed later, is that the film expressly addresses the problem of Barbados's high infant mortality rate by encouraging women to seek antenatal care and hospital delivery; it thus defines pregnancy and childbirth as events that should be managed by medical professionals. But in doing so, the narrative also excludes the extended family; when the narrator declares, as the anxious, solitary father awaits the outcome of his wife's labor, that "the family tie is the closest and most sacred of all ties," there is no doubt that "family" is here conceived as husband, wife, and their offspring, rather than the web of connective associations and loyalties that commonly exist in the extended West Indian family group. In place of the support of the extended family, the film offers the expectant mother the ideal of a loving, helpful husband, the assurance of a safe, professionally managed delivery, and the birth of a child whose good health will allow him to "play a role in the world as [a] useful citizen[s]."

As the comment above infers, *You Can Help Your Child* affirms a direct link between the nuclear family unit, the domestic space, and the wellbeing of the nation. This relationship is developed even more expansively in *Better Living*. In this film, the family acts as a metonym for the nation and the home, as the locus for the reproduction of the values of "useful citizenship," is the primary socializing institution in which these values are formed and taught. What would emerge, more than a decade after these films were made, as the national values enshrined in the Barbados motto of independence (pride and industry), are the very ideals that *Better Living* promotes. The initial sequence of this film, which consists of an extended commentary by the narrator heard over a montage of images showing various aspects of Barbadian life, is key to reading the ideological inflections of the narrative, that is, the assertion of a direct connection between the actions of the individual and the wellbeing

of the country, and thus the obligation on the part of each citizen to work to improve his own well-being and standard of life. At the opening of the film, the narrator states:

> This is *our* country, a land of softly rolling hills and natural beauty, with all the year round sunshine and warm sea breezes. It is a land of many fine health resorts. On its eastern shores the Atlantic breakers crash whilst the placid waters of the Caribbean gently lap the leeward sands. What has man done to the paradise he found? Look at our beaches, too often turned into a place for refuse heaps. A dumping place for anything, even the entrails of animals are left to rot and smell. And in the streets after the sanitary department has made its rounds, refuse is often dumped and left 'til the next day. Others still dirty the city walls despite the provision of public urinals. In fact, the scavenging department has a very difficult and unpleasant task. We are too inclined to blame God, or the church, the government or a nebulous "they" for all our ills. But are we making the best of our time? Are we contributing to better living? Should we blame ourselves more and others less?

Only men are shown in this initial sequence. In particular, as the opening statement draws to its conclusion and the narrator rhetorically poses a series of direct questions that emphasize the need for self-help, we see images of a group of working-class men playing cards in a public space. The combination of narration and image infers that the questions are being directed at these men, or at least at people like them, for their leisure provides a contrast with other men visible in the background who are working. It is highly ironic, therefore, that the film's remedies to the problems it identifies are largely proposed and elaborated through reference to the woman's domestic performance within the context of a gendered division of labor that locates the woman in the home, and the man in the world of work. Indeed, the sphere of man's work outside the home is not made visible in the narrative. This may well be for practical reasons, that is, to reduce the number of locations for shooting. One might also surmise, however, that by constructing this narrative of black life in mid-twentieth-century Barbadian colonial society around the figure of an obligingly subordinate (though efficient) wife and nuclear family, the filmmakers were able to endow the male figure, Mr. Wise, with unquestioned patriarchal status. In both films, roles are identified for men, as head of the household, breadwinner, and supportive, loving partner to their wives; but the responsibility for the harmony and well-being of the family, the efficient management of the family's resources, and its social propriety, is laid squarely at the feet of the woman. Thus, in *Better Living*, we are told that Mr. Foolish, who "spends much of his time drinking," is neither thrifty nor helpful at home, but it is his wife's fault—home is always in a mess and she

always wants more money—it is her deficiencies as a homemaker, including her poorly prepared meals, that contribute to her husband's ill-temper and the protracted hours he spends at the bar.

The emphasis on a gendered performance in the project of nation building is also apparent in *Give Your Child a Chance*. At the beginning of the film the narrator announces: "Everybody likes babies, healthy babies. These little ones are the makers of tomorrow's world. It is a mother's first duty to her community to produce a healthy babe and give it the right start in life." The notion that successful reproduction is the woman's civic duty is further supported by the narrator's comment that motherhood is "the wife's great part in life" and also by the film's treatment of the expectant mother's older child, "sickly Allan" who, frail from birth, is a "worry to his mother and his teachers." In a telling scene in which the family sits at the table for a meal, Allan is frequently cut out of the frame, implying his exclusion from the life of the family, and by extension, the larger community beyond the home. Indeed, he often misses school as a result of ill health. There is little sympathy for Allan; however, the narrator informs us that his "mother had only herself to blame, for through neglect during her pregnancy she had caused her son this handicap for life." Importantly, what prompts Mrs. Welsh to seek antenatal care is not merely the news, delivered by a neighbor, that the Maternity Hospital is "open to all," but also the worry of having "another weakling like Allan."

The film proposes that regular attendance at the Maternity Hospital antenatal clinic is the means through which the expectant mother can ensure the birth of a "healthy babe." As stated earlier, the opening of the Maternity Hospital four years before the making of *Give Your Child a Chance* was one of the reforms supported by the CDWA in an attempt to better address the needs of the poor, and indeed, the provision of antenatal services for expectant mothers was a critical step toward tackling the stubborn problem of high infant mortality in Barbados.[72] As is shown in the film, one of the contributing factors that it would directly address through screening of expectant mothers was congenital syphilis, which Claire Millington notes, "took a tragically large toll on the infant population" in Barbados.[73] Both Millington and Beckles, however, identify additional factors—inadequate nutrition and poor living conditions, such as deficient sanitation and the lack of clean running water—as the major causes for the persistently high death rate of infants.[74] Indeed, Beckles describes Barbados in the early part of the twentieth century as "a hostile society for young black life," with the high infant mortality standing, he proposes, "as testimony of the deep poverty that characterized the lives of the laboring classes in the Bridgetown slums and rural villages."[75]

By eliding these contributing social and environmental factors, *Give Your Child a Chance* identifies the sole cause of the older child's ill health as maternal neglect, and consequently emphasizes notions of self-help and civic

responsibility in the alleviation of a widespread social problem. At its conclusion, the film admonishes, “Don't cripple your baby's chance of a healthy and useful life, it's future is in your hands.” In *Better Living*, this insistence on self-help and the need for the individual to shoulder responsibility for initiating change is reiterated, but while *Give Your Child a Chance* focuses quite specifically on maternal and infant health, *Better Living* addresses a range of sanitation, nutritional, and housekeeping practices. In effect, it appears to address some of those environmental issues that Beckles and Millington identify as having an important impact on infant deaths. The Barbados Visual Aids Section catalog describes *Better Living* as a twenty-one-minute black-and-white film in which “[t]he value of careful planning and proper management on the part of the housewife [is] seen in the comparing of Mrs. Wise and Mrs. Foolish, neighbors of the same district but different in outlook and management.” We are told in the film that Mr. Wise and Mr. Foolish earn the same salary, each bringing home £10 per week, but it is the respective wives' management of this income that makes the difference to the quality of life, well-being, and economic stability of the family. Mrs. Wise supplements her household income and family diet through backyard animal husbandry and gardening, and carefully plans and budgets the family income. She feeds her family well-planned, balanced meals, and cooks just enough to ensure there is no waste. Her kitchen is modern and efficiently laid out with storage shelves and cupboards built by her husband. In contrast, Mrs. Foolish—more frequently referred to in the film by her first name, Doreen, thus implying diminished social status—spends indiscriminately at the grocery with the result that she gets her family into debt; she cooks starchy foods and refuses to measure her ingredients so there is much wastage. In comparison to Mrs. Wise's neat and well-organized surroundings, Doreen's home is messy (except for her living room, which is reserved for visitors only), and her backyard is so littered with refuse that she is fined by the inspector.

In *Better Living,* the explicit Wise and Foolish structure allows for significant ideological inflection in the narrative by implying that Mrs. Foolish's condition is due to a lack of will and a deficient character. Her neglect of home and children and her failure to keep the family out of debt are not a consequence of ignorance or even socioeconomic conditions that are out of her control. Rather, they are due to a flawed character; she is lazy, prefers to spend her time gossiping rather than working, and lacks the discipline to encourage good habits in her children and implement the practices she has learned from Mrs. Wise. On to Mrs. Foolish, therefore, is shifted an amalgamation of negative colonial stereotypes of blackness and dysfunction in the West Indian family that have to do with a tendency toward sloth and an unwillingness to work to improve one's station in life. In effect the film

reproduces, through its construction of the character Mrs. Foolish, a perspective that Browne affirms was common to the white elite, namely, that the responsibility for the poverty of the black population was the consequence of their own apparent bad habits, laziness, and certain inherent, undesirable personality traits.[76] The final comparison of the two families, made at the conclusion of the film, reaffirms the ideology that those aspiring to "better living" can achieve this goal through discipline, perseverance, and self-help. We are told that "carelessness, neglect, a false sense of values and lack of industry" have brought sorrow on the Foolish family, while the Wise family will enjoy a very different fate: "[T]he happy future of a family knit together by the bonds of love, well trained children, careful planning and wise industry, husband and wife a good team, working together for better living."

With the introduction of television services in the colonies beginning in the 1960s, the work of the West Indian film units shifted to meet the needs of the new medium, while the advent of video technology also saw the phasing out of film production. The coming of television also signaled the beginning of the end for the Mobile Cinema Unit services. Over time, the Barbados Film Unit would become absorbed into the national government's public relations and informational machinery, the Government Information Service, while the work of visual education was extended and developed into an educational television service and the development of what is now the Media Resource Department in the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training. In the 1950s, however, this state-supported cinema was a vibrant sphere of activity that created films seen by large segments of the population, particularly members of the working class. These films reveal much about how the emerging nation-state addressed a populace that would soon become citizens of the new nation and the kinds of values and sense of identity it sought to encourage in those citizens. The first two films made by the Barbados Film Unit reveal an intention to improve the lives and well-being of ordinary Barbadians, but they also betray, in their modes of address, the remnants of colonial rhetoric and the reproduction of elite perspectives and ways of seeing. It would be the task of a later generation of West Indian filmmakers operating independently of the state in the postcolonial period to realize a new expression of cinema that better reflected the points of view and consciousness of the Barbados working class.

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Notes

1. Mbye Cham, for example, identifies the 1970s and 1980s as the period of emergence of an indigenous Anglophone Caribbean cinema, rather than the 1950s. See Mbye Cham, "Introduction: Shape and Shaping of Caribbean Cinema," in *Ex-Iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed. Mbye Cham (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1992). Neither does Keith Q. Warner's comprehensive study of Anglophone Caribbean film, *On Location: Cinema and Film in the Anglophone Caribbean*, mention the documentary practice that emerged in the 1950s, although Warner defines his focus as fictional feature-length films. However, series editor Alistair Hennessy's statement in the preface to Warner's book, that only a dozen or so films have been produced in the Anglophone Caribbean over three decades (iii), supports the elision of the mid-century production.

2. Michael Chanan, *The Politics of Documentary* (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 257.

3. The 1959 Colonial Report of British Guiana documents "an experiment in which a newsreel sequence on the arrival of the new Governor Sir Ralph Grey was filmed, processed and made available for showing with sound track the same evening" (189). The 1960 report also mentions the local processing of a film (204).

4. See Tom Rice, "Farmer Brown Learns Good Dairying," http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk./node/1196; and Tom Rice, "Churchill Visits Jamaica," http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk./node/1543.

5. See Terri Francis, "Sounding the Nation: Martin Rennalls and the Jamaican Film Unit, 1951-1961," *Film History* 23 (2011): 110–28 and Rachel Moseley-Wood, "Ambivalence in the Image: The Jamaica Film Unit and the Narrative of the Emerging Nation," *The Jamaican Historical Review*, no. 26 (2013): 47–66.

6. See Franklyn St. Juste, "The Reparation of Jamaican Film Images", in *Film and the End of Empire*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011) 267–71.

7. Sean Graham, *The Use of Film in the West Indies and Mexico: An Inquiry into Techniques of Film Production for Fundamental Education* (UNESCO, 1955), 47.

8. See Terri Francis's filmography of JFU productions in her article "Sounding the Nation."

9. *Film Unit Catalogue of Films* (Kingston: Film Unit Public Relations Department, 1959), 43. The film is listed in the catalog as *You Can Help Your Children*.

10. Some of the titles listed in the Barbados catalog include *Farmer Brown Learns Good Dairying*, *Citrus Harvesting Methods,* and *Delay Means Death* (Jamaica); *Cocoa Rehabilitation* (Trinidad); *Aided Self-Help Housing* and *Co-operative Farming* (British Guiana). The Jamaica Film Unit catalog lists these Trinidadian and Guianese films as well as *Better Living* and *Give Your Child A Chance*.

11. *Report of the Barbados Department of Education for the Year Ended 31*st *August 1954* (Advocate Company), 12.

12. *British Guiana Government Information Services Annual Report,1958,* 69.

13. Ibid., 9.

14. *Colonial Report of British Guiana, 1957*, 180.

15. *British Guiana Government Information Services Annual Report, 1958*, 69.

16. The 1958 report states that a film, *British Guiana*, "showing the expansion of British Guiana's varied industries, has been and is still being shown, to University

and School Groups as well as other organisations in the U.S.A." (9). Both in name and content, this film sounds similar to *British Guiana–1957*, but it is described as a kodachrome film, whereas *British Guiana–1957* is black-and-white. I have been unable to ascertain whether the GIS film unit played any part in the making of the film *British Guiana,* but it is unlikely the unit would be reporting on the exhibition of a film it had not made.

17. *British Guiana Government Information Service Annual Report, 1958*, 69.

18. The Chief Information Officer, *Report of the Government Information Services for the year 1955* (British Guiana, 1956), 21.

19. Ibid., 9.

20. There are several references to a one-year program, but by January 1951 Carmichael had returned to Barbados and was visited by R. W. Harris, one of the instructors, who was assisting with "any problems that might confront him in starting film production in Barbados." See "W.I. Films Can Now Be Made," *Barbados Advocate*, Jan. 16, 1951, 3.

21. Frank Stockdale, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies 1940–42* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1943), 81.

22. Ibid.

23. John MacPherson, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies 1945–46* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1947), 97.

24. Hubert Rance, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies 1947–49* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), 50.

25. Tom Rice, "From the Inside: The Colonial Film Unit and the Beginning of the End," in *Film and the End of Empire*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 135–153.

26. A. Creech Jones, "Opening Address", *The Film in Colonial Development: A Report of a Conference* (London: The British Film Institute, 1948), 4.

27. Ibid, 5.

28. Ibid, 8.

29. Lee Grieveson, "Introduction: Film and the End of Empire," in *Film and the End of Empire*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 2–3.

30. Ibid, 3.

31. See McPherson, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies 1950*, 53.

32. It is uncertain whether some persons started the program but did not complete, or whether there were insufficient resources among the colonial governments to fill all the available spaces in the program.

33. "Colonial Film Unit Man from London on Survey," *Gleaner*, November 4, 1949, 12.

34. Grieveson, "Introduction: Film and the End of Empire," 4.

35. M. A. Rennalls, "Visual Education in Jamaica," *Colonial Cinema* 11, no. 1 (1953): 16.

36. Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism and Representation: An Introduction," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 240.

37. *Report of the Barbados Department of Education for the Year Ended on the 31st March 1946* (Advocate Company), 5.

38. I. Carmichael, “The Mobile Cinema in Barbados,” *Colonial Cinema* 5, no. 3 (1947): 63.

39. Ibid., 64.

40. Gaumont British (also referred to as Gaumont-British) was a British company involved in film production, distribution, and exhibition; it specialized in films for the educational market and was also a major producer of newsreels.

41. *Report of the Barbados Department of Education 1st April–31st August 1949* (Advocate Company), 51.

42. British Guiana, or Guyana, as it is known today, is over 214,000 km^2.

43. The Chief Information Officer, *Report of the Government Information Services for the year 1954*, 9. The 1955 report also makes reference to film shows at the Amerindian Missions in the Moruca River and in the Pomeroon River area that “were accorded an enthusiastic reception” by audiences who had never before seen films. The Chief Information Officer, *Report of the Government Information Service for the Year 1954*, 12.

44. Mbye Cham, “Introduction,” 2.

45. Rennalls, “Visual Education in Jamaica,” 16.

46. J. I. Frederick, “Adult Teaching with Film in Trinidad, British West Indies,” *Colonial Cinema* 9, no. 2 (1951): 35.

47. Ibid., 36.

48. Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 19–20.

49. Ibid., 20.

50. “Visual Aids Section Making 4 Films,” Sunday *Advocate*, April 12, 1953, 3.

51. Ibid.

52. *Colonial Report Barbados: 1954 and 1955*, 54. The flannelgraph, or flannel board, is a classroom aid consisting of a board covered with flannel material.

53. Isaac Carmichael, “Visual Aids: When I Hear I Understand; When I See I Know,” *The Bulletin: A Periodical for Teachers in Barbados* 4, no. 1 (1964): 18–21.

54. “Visual Aids Section Making 4 Films,” *Sunday Advocate*, April 12, 1953.

55. Ibid.

56. Francis, “Sounding the Nation,” 116.

57. The narrator of *Better Living* is not identified but the credits of *Give Your Child a Chance*, identify E. Eytle as the “commentator.” This appears to be the same person who narrated the JFU film, *It Can Happen to You* (1956), identified as Ernest Eytle in the film credits. This suggests, therefore, not merely colonial input in the production process of the West Indian films, but also, the involvement and impact of a West Indian diaspora.

58. Francis, “Sounding the Nation,” 116-117.

59. Rice, “Farmer Brown Learns Good Dairying.”

60. Ibid.

61. David V. C. Browne, *Race, Class, Politics and the Struggle for Empowerment in Barbados, 1914–1937* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2012), 77.

62. Browne, *Race, Class, Politics,* 79–80.

63. James Ferguson, *The Story of the Caribbean People* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999), 247–46.

64. Ferguson, *The Story of the Caribbean People*, 246.

65. Hilary McD Beckles, *Chattel House Blues: Making of a Democratic Society in Barbados, from Clement Payne to Owen Arthur* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2004), 42–43.

66. Ferguson, *The Story of the Caribbean People*, 247.

67. M. A. Rennalls, "Development of the Documentary Film in Jamaica" (Master's thesis, Boston University, 1967), 170.

68. T. S. Simey, *Welfare and Planning in the West Indies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 91–92.

69. Christine Barrow, "Men, Women and Family in the Caribbean: A Review" in *Caribbean Sociology: Introductory Readings*, ed. Christine Barrow and Rhoda Reddock (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2001), 419.

70. Simey, *Welfare and Planning in the West Indies*, 88.

71. Barrow, "Men, Women and Family," 419.

72. In 1947 the island recorded 147 deaths per thousand live births, the highest infant mortality rate in the region, compared with Trinidad ,which had seventy-five deaths per thousand live births, the lowest rate in the region.

73. Claire Margaret Millington, "Maternal and Child Health in Barbadian History" (Master's thesis, University of the West Indies), 157.

74. See Beckles, *Chattel House Blues*; and Millington, "Maternal and Child Health in Barbadian History."

75. Beckles, *Chattel House Blues*, 62–63.

76. Browne, *Race, Class, Politics*, 70.

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