

Conclusion

In my search for tidy conclusions and a singular confirmation of the meaning of sport in the Black Atlantic, I came up empty handed, or “wit’ me two long arms” as cricket club members might say. There are so many dimensions to the trans-national flows of peoples and cultures of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora that have important bearing on how we think about black masculinities, culture and sport. This book concerns the notion of the Black Atlantic, which was introduced by Gilroy in 1993, as a geographic region and a theoretical framework that helps in understanding the experiences of a racialised community that spans national borders. The Black Atlantic continues to be a valuable concept to signal attention to the racial identities within, and importance of travel between Canada, England, the United States and the Caribbean. This book is also concerned with the cultural flows and mobility within the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. As emigrant populations outnumber those who remain at home in Caribbean territories and islands, and as ethnic and national conversations, creolisations and oppressions influence black consciousness, more attention must be paid to the ways in which race, ethnicity, gender and cultural boundaries are regenerated in the diaspora.

In conversations about the Black Atlantic, Canada is often overlooked, but black Caribbean migrants offer a unique lens through which to understand black relations to other diaspora “nodes” (Voigt-Graf, 2004) and how Canadian national discourses manifest race. Also virtually ignored in conversations about race and gender in diaspora settings is the use of recreational sport to connect migrants to the homeland and each other. The ethnographic research presented here shines a light on the complexities of sport in the Afro-Caribbean diaspora to develop understandings of the Black Atlantic.

This study expands on C. L. R. James’ (1963) text, *Beyond a Boundary*, which uses cricket to explain Caribbean nationalism and race relations. James was adamant that sport was important beyond the runs, wickets, bowling and batting because it could be used to draw attention to wider social and political contexts. His account of professional cricket(ers) is useful insofar as it explains the central

importance of cricket to constructions of Caribbean identity and as symbolic of the intertwined anti-colonial, class and race struggles of various Caribbean nations in the early twentieth century. Though James himself operated in the United States, England and Caribbean, he did not use the language of diaspora and did not describe the importance of cricket for connecting Caribbean peoples across the Atlantic Ocean. This book extends his analysis and moves beyond James' boundaries to examine a more contemporary period, and focus on what recreational cricket and contiguous cricket spaces offer in an analysis of the boundaries we create around racial identities, relational performances of hetero-masculinities and femininities, ethnic antagonisms and persistent nationalisms that constitute the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. As Gilroy (2005) writes, "The knot of ideas around sport demonstrates that we cannot sanction the luxury of believing that 'race,' nation, [gender] and ethnicity will be readily or easily disentangled from each other" (p. 111). I extend contemporary Caribbean studies by investigating sport in Canada to open up the complexities of how boundaries are produced around race, nation, gender and ethnicity. I examine various social spaces created by a group of older, first-generation Afro-Caribbean-Canadians that is referred to as the Mavericks Cricket and Social Club (MCSC).

This study also owes a debt to, but expands on other, more recent works on sport and the black diaspora by Carrington (2010) and Abdel-Shehid (2005). I move beyond their reference to the black diaspora as a moniker for a broadly dispersed racial group and their focus on professional, black American and Canadian athletes. Instead, I identify a particular black sub-population (Afro-Caribbeans in Canada), focus on recreational sport, and enumerate how sport and its associated plurilocal social spaces are used to make (and break) the diaspora. The MCSC were primarily Afro-Caribbean-Canadians, born throughout the Anglo-Caribbean. They were mainly between 50 and 70 years of age, and knew each other in Canada for nearly four decades. I attended their parties, fundraising dances, banquets and cricket games at grounds throughout the Greater Toronto Area on weekends from early May to late September in 2008 and 2009. I also travelled with approximately 30 MCSC members to observe and participate in cricket tourism in Barbados, England and St. Lucia. I draw from this empirical research to outline the ways in which sport is what Nassy Brown (1998) calls a "diasporic resource": a confluence of symbols, materials, images, people and places that help to create transnational social fields that interconnect migrants dispersed across Europe and North America as well as those who stay behind. To Nassy Brown's list, I add corporeal practices, spectator activities, and sport-related travel, music and food as resources deployed to maintain the Black Atlantic.

A close look at what goes on before and during cricket matches, at cricket after-parties and on cricket trips provides insights into the influence of transnational flows of people and cultures on racial consciousness, community-making and the contradictions and complexities of Afro-diasporic identity performances that never remain static; they keep changing and moving in response to governmental projects and discourses as well as individual roots and routes. Sport is an important cultural flow that provides opportunities for the simultaneous representation of sameness and difference among Afro-Caribbean, African-American, black British, Indo-Caribbean and South Asian groups. Diasporas operate neither in isolation from each other, nor in an historical vacuum. Racial identities are formed in relation to other groups.

Sport and social activities organised by the club are used as a diasporic resource in two important ways. They produce unity and reinforce differences. First, the club allows members to maintain connections to their region and nations of origin through an association with people, places, cultures and memories of the “homeland.” The club members under study here might be characterised elsewhere as members of the African diaspora, or African-Canadians, but they are not restricted by attachment to Africa. Even connections to their nations of origin are profound for some and scant for others. Rather, owing to their privilege as multiple-passport-carrying diasporic subjects, they interact across multiple national boundaries and draw from many similar ancestral and contemporary ties. Gilroy (1993) opines that, “it is important, while bearing significant differences in mind, to attempt to specify some of the similarities to be found in diverse black experiences in the modern West.” He focuses on the black sense of unity that derives from experiencing, to use W. E. B. DuBois’ term, “double-consciousness,” feeling both black and American (or of the modern West) at the same time. Beyond double consciousness, I suggest that club members also experience a shared sense of plurilocal homelands.

The emotional, social, financial and material investments they make in the varied black Atlantic locations they visit for sport mean Afro-Caribbean-Canadians maintain connections not only in or to their nations of origin, but also to Canada, the United States and England. The batting order for the team has a similar national distribution to the West Indies International cricket team; the dinners served are as likely to feature flying fish as curried goat; and the participants easily discuss their monarch, president or prime minister. They are officially included in multiple nationalisms, and yet they desire more: a diasporic community formed from specific collaborations and exchanges among Afro-Caribbeans from many islands and territories, now living across the Black

Atlantic. Club members know that on any weekend in the summer they can head to one of the local cricket grounds and unite with other Afro-Caribbean people. For certain special events they are guaranteed to encounter visitors from abroad, thus restoring a sense of neighbourliness they once had in their nations of origin in plurilocal homespaces.

Members of the MCSC celebrate the unity across nation-state boundaries they are able to generate, but certain club members draw on the same diasporic resource in different ways: some may be passionate about sport while others emphasise the social opportunities the club affords; the specific languages spoken and music, foods and alcohols consumed at every game are significant means of creating distinctly Afro-Caribbean spaces and generating a convivial, status-free, welcoming, friendly environment. Men of all classes, including plumbers, postal workers, police officers and principals interact in friendships that are spontaneous in some cases and pentagenarian in others. They create a space in which they can reinforce the “reputation” values (Wilson, 1973) of working-class, outdoor Caribbean spaces through talking, joking, *liming* and storytelling.

Some of the priorities for the MCSC are the imaginative, material and financial maintenance of various homelands. Older men’s ritual of sharing memories at the cricket field and MCSC social events is a means to recreate home and restore a sense of history, community, nationalism, regionalism and diasporic belonging. These club members are deeply embedded in nostalgia for the past; in particular, their lack of cricket resources as children is framed as an element of their upbringing that made them stronger, more courageous, more creative and more talented sportsmen. They tell tales of the supremacy of the Windies team and their own prior on-field greatness as demonstrations of their understandings of themselves as part of not only a community of men, but particularly of powerful black men. Their racial pride is demonstrated through continuous recounting and re-enacting how a few dozen black men from a tiny region dominated the entire world in cricket. While the stories of Windies supremacy might be true, other stories they tell are certainly embellishments, half-truths or fully acknowledged fabrications. However, in expressing their longing for times past and their gender and racial pride, they create a sense of stability and community.

In addition to the “imaginative rediscoveries” (Hall, 2003) of their homeland cultures, club members are able to contribute materially and financially to the amelioration and restoration of Afro-Caribbean communities in their nations of origin, throughout the Caribbean, in Toronto and elsewhere. Caribbean diaspora literatures highlight the importance of economic flows from the diaspora

back to the Caribbean, which contribute significantly to the gross national product of the homeland. Through their economic commitments, including making donations to Afro-Caribbean organisations and individuals, the members of the MCSC maintain a connection to home. Club members feel a sense of obligation to help those in need who were unable or unwilling to migrate. Fundraising to pay for charitable donations, “authentic” Afro-Caribbean food, well-kept grounds, professional umpires and trips to the Caribbean or Afro-Caribbean diasporic cricket spaces, is important to replicate the cricket they were able to play at home, and to display and improve their social status (in Canada and the Caribbean) as prosperous, morally upright, benevolent and generous members of the diaspora. Meanwhile, their donation of cricket equipment to underprivileged boys in the Caribbean is a real investment in the making of masculinities at a local scale and an imagined contribution to regional cricket prowess on the world stage. Their donations to immigrant organisations and local charities in Canada, the United States and England allow them to participate in community making across the Black Atlantic. Participation in the sport of cricket helps to maintain the homeland and broader communities of their memories and reality.

This ageing group of migrants also promotes unity through the use of their sporting spaces and communities to collectively assuage the melancholy of their failing bodies, ill and dying friends and relatives, lonely retirements, homesickness and inability to travel regularly or return to the homeland as they had once planned. Their sharing of nostalgic stories about their youth, about the heyday of the Windies international cricket champions and about their own previous cricket travels provide talk therapy. Their foods, music and dancing reveal that a carnival atmosphere can operate as a salve for life’s pains, with what Gilroy (1993) describes as the “racial terror” of the Black Atlantic being only one part. Ageing terror is an equally unifying force in the Black Atlantic.

The second way in which sport and social activities are a diasporic resource is that they provide a venue for differences within unity, that is, for class, gender, ethnic and national hierarchies to be expressed and reinforced. The diaspora, like the nations from which migrants come, are consumed with boundary-making projects that exclude as much as, if not more than, they include. Cricket spaces represented freedom for some powerful members. They were seen as a constraint for less influential others. Edwards (2003) describes diasporas as rife with *décalages*, that is “differences within unity,” and calls for specific interrogations of exchanges among black interlocutors within transnational networks to generate multiple understandings of black culture and experience. Examining the hierarchies and disjunctures within diasporas indicates more complicated

ways of thinking about Afro-Caribbeanness and/or blackness in Canada. It is the interactions and intersections among groups that allows for boundaries to be made and/or crossed. Paying attention to the members of the diaspora who are absent, marginalised, denigrated, or excluded from cricket and social activities reveals some of the hierarchies and disjunctures in Afro-Caribbean-Canadian communities and the power struggles of the homeland that are ongoing within diasporas. For example, not every club member is eligible for travel as a result of citizenship restrictions or a lack of disposable income and the culture of alcohol consumption excludes or at least marginalises their non-drinking peers. Three major groups are worth exploring for what their absences reveal about hierarchies in the Black Atlantic. Women, men of Indo-Caribbean origin and second-generation Afro-Caribbeans are conspicuously under-represented among the “unified” members of the MCSC and their community-making practices.

Though women of a wide range of ethnic and national heritages are included among the members of the MCSC, their numbers are miniscule compared to men’s, especially at cricket matches. My analysis of the few women who do attend cricket games and particularly those who travel with the Mavericks could shift the discussion of sport and race in the Black Atlantic to relationships between heterosexual masculinity and femininity in the reproduction of black diasporic spaces. In order to disavow homosexuality, it is imperative that there are some women – girlfriends, wives and mistresses – present who can bolster the men’s heterosexual identities. Cricket and social spaces are places for the performance of dominant Afro-Caribbean masculinities, which depend upon homosociality laced with homophobic jokes and banter that denigrate gays and transsexuals, and exclude or marginalise women while relying on their labour.

Most female club members support their husbands’ participation through cooking, laundry, domestic and childcare, but do not attend MCSC games. Due to women’s roles as the keepers of the insular nuclear family in Western patriarchal structures and nation building, Afro-Caribbean-Canadian women are more assimilated into Canadian structures than their menfolk and are limited in their ability and desire to reproduce Afro-Caribbean homespaces. Many Afro-Caribbean-Canadian wives “lose” their husbands to cricket every weekend, but they live with that because of a lack of support resources and discursive tools available to them for assistance with child-minding and domestic duties, because they want to grant their husbands the freedom to create homosocial environments, and because their respectability would be compromised by entering men’s *liming* spaces. The Caribbean homespace cricket offers is something many Afro-Caribbean women migrated away from without desire to return.

Much research remains to be done on female club members. What do they do on summer weekends when they are not at games and with whom? What are their experiences at club dances and fundraisers? What are the roles and experiences of white, or East-Asian-Canadian women who marry into the Afro-Caribbean culture celebrated by the Mavericks? What types of opportunities are available for women who would prefer to be players rather than supporters or absent “widows” (Razack, 2009 provides insights in this regard).

In Toronto today, there are more Indo-Caribbean than Afro-Caribbean cricketers; however, the MCSC games belie this reality. Many Indo-Caribbeans, particularly Guyanese, have formed their own teams, it could be argued, because overt expressions of anti-Indo-Caribbean or anti-South Asian racism including the denigration of certain foods, music and language sends a strong message that they are welcome to participate among the Mavericks only if they accept and adopt an Afro-Caribbean habitus (Joseph, 2014). Carrington explains that sports contests are racially signified, that is, they “act as a key signifier for wider questions about identity within racially demarcated societies” (1998, p. 280). The acceptance of Afro-Caribbean cultural forms as the only representation of authentic Caribbeanness at the cricket grounds excludes many Indo-Caribbeans who may remember or wish to celebrate their homelands differently. This may explain the ongoing presence of Toronto’s Guyanese or Trinidadian cricket clubs when many of the other nationally specific Caribbean teams have amalgamated into clubs such as the MCSC.

Another “absent” group comprises the second and third generations, who are referred to by Walcott (2001) as the authentic arbiters of black popular culture in Canada. Many club members expressed disappointment that their Canadian-born (grand-)sons were not interested in the sport of cricket. As Gilroy (2005) astutely observes of this generation in Britain, “[tall] children want to play basketball rather than bowl, and the fundamental idea that a wholly satisfying contest can endure for five days and yet produce no result increasingly defies comprehension” (p. 111). The Mavericks lament that they were unable to pass on this important aspect of Afro-Caribbean masculinity in a social setting where cricket has little salience among Canadian sporting rites of passage such as basketball, football, baseball and, of course, ice hockey. However, with the influx of South Asian youth, and now that cricket has been incorporated into the varsity sports system of many Canadian public and Roman Catholic secondary school boards, particularly those in and around Vancouver and Toronto, there are more opportunities for second- and third-generation Afro-Caribbean children and adolescents to play. The nostalgic storytelling of migrants may receive a new

audience as youth of many ethnic backgrounds can potentially learn of the connections between the sport and racial and ethnic heritage from their volunteer coaches. A few of the Afro-Caribbean Mavericks are increasingly involved with secondary school cricket teams as they retire from paid employment and look for ways to fill their days. Whether cricket will become a corporeal diasporic resource for Afro-Caribbean youth, fundamental to their transnational community making and sense of deterritorialised identity, or gets categorised alongside other seemingly local, neutral sports in the Canadian landscape remains to be seen. What is clear is that for the older generation, those who were in their prime when the Windies team dominated the world in the 1970s and 1980s, cricket will remain central to the performative, corporeal and narrative production of their identities and this passion is a barrier for their unification with younger Afro-Caribbeans.

Exclusions of gender, ethnicity and generation are just three ways this Afro-Caribbean community experiences disjunctures. It is worth highlighting that there are at least a dozen other ways that the community is divided at certain times. Conflicts arise among wives and mistresses, fundraisers and misers, working- and middle-classes, organisers and revellers, patriots from different nations, those who travel and those who stay in one place, and so on. The Afro-Caribbean diaspora is internally divided and it is through the different ways people access and express themselves in cricket and its associated spaces, that we see how hierarchies within the community are established and dominant cultures formed.

Beyond the boundary of diaspora as a unified or internally divided entity, the evidence of black cricket spaces reveals that this diasporic resource may also be a Canadian national resource. That is, there are many ways in which the members of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora are creolised or acculturated Canadians and contribute to Canadian multiculturalism that are worth highlighting for the insights they provide into the Black Atlantic. Barnor Hesse (2000) introduces the term “transruptions” to account for the ways in which diaspora groups, by both drawing from their homeland cultures and generating cultural entanglements in their new homes, create recurrent, political contestations, unsettling the meaning of multiculturalism. Transruptions are “*any series of contestatory cultural and theoretical interventions which, in their impact as cultural differences, unsettle social norms and threaten to dismantle hegemonic concepts and practices*” (Hesse, 2000, p. 17, emphasis in original). The cricketers and club supporters examined in this study continue to embrace and at times challenge dominant ideas of what it means to be Canadian. Many are involved in interracial

marriages and relationships; have children and grandchildren who express little to no interest in or knowledge of cricket; are embedded in white Canadian structures such as education, police services, or finance for their employment; and few will return to their nation of origin to retire as they had once planned. They have also experienced interpersonal and systemic racism, unfortunate hallmarks of Canadian nationalism. They are fixed to the Canadian nation-state.

When they travel abroad they share symbols of pride in Canadian nationalism with their black “brothers,” demonstrating the complexity of their national affiliations. Afro-Caribbean-Canadians simultaneously oscillate between black diasporic consciousness, pan-Caribbean identity and hegemonic nationalisms. They are what Cohen (2007, p. 381) describes as creoles: “interposed between two or more cultures, selectively appropriating some elements, rejecting others, and creating new possibilities that transgress and supersede parent cultures, which themselves are increasingly recognized as fluid.” Yet, they belie their own realities and constantly draw on essentialist language, describing themselves as “pure” black men, or “truly” Jamaican as circumstances warrant. Their high mobility, a result of their middle-class status, disposable income and retirement or vacation time, allows this group of older Afro-Caribbean migrants to access many different homespaces. Their constant redrawing of boundaries is a direct result of the increasing volume of cultural interactions they encounter in their plurilocal homelands and the constant challenge to their identities these present. The maple leaf flag that they hang on their clubhouse when they travel suggests that the Black Atlantic is a space for demonstrating Canadian pride.

Rather than orienting solely towards a singular homeland on one hand or feeling dislocated on the other hand, as diasporas are often described, Afro-Caribbeans can use cricket and its associated *liming* to recreate a homespace in their place of residence, which is part of, not instead of, their integration into the dominant Canadian culture. As Werbner (2005, p. 751, emphasis in original) notes of Pakistani immigrants in Britain, “increasing prosperity and indeed integration ... has been associated, paradoxically, not with cultural assimilation, as might be expected, but with ethnic cultural *intensification*, as the ritual celebrations of the elite have increased in scale, expense, frequency and cultural elaboration.” As such, MCSC members’ creation of vibrant homespaces across the Black Atlantic is an example of their affluence and performance of a highly valued Canadian ideology: multiculturalism. These migrants are able to feel emplaced in Canada because their local cricket grounds are a symbolic stand-in for the Caribbean and its hybridity, transnationalism and heritage. Yet, I do not wish to perpetuate what J. Lorand Matory refers to as the “illusion of isolation”

in reference to South Carolina's Gullah/Geechee peoples. Though the MCSC is a significant case study of Afro-Caribbean "survivals" in Canada, and at times the cricket ground "feels exactly" like cricket in any of the Anglo-Caribbean islands, the spaces they create demonstrate the "evolving product of interaction" (Matory, 2008, p. 950), the reality of the permeability of ethnic communities in everyday life in the Black Atlantic, and the impossibility of an exact recreation of a home culture in a new diaspora location. Matory explains Black Atlantic culture as exemplified by two cross-cultural facts of life:

First, the units of collective action and meaning-making that we call "cultures" are unique intersections, interpretations, and adaptations of translocal flows. They are not "islands" of *sui generis* distinction and internal homogeneity awaiting subsequent discovery by outsiders. Second, the consciousness and endogenous enforcement of heredity difference – or ethnicity – becomes a named reality only when and where one population and a co-present population share a desire to distinguish themselves from each other." (Matory, 2008, 951)

In other words, the cultures of the MCSC are defined against other groups and at times, even certain club members set themselves apart from each other, revealing that black masculine identities are reproduced in conversation with other gendered and ethnic identities, and are therefore affected by the "routes" of others as much as they draw from their ancestral "roots." The presence of multiple diasporas (e.g., from India and Pakistan) in Toronto are integral to the making of the Black Atlantic through the boundaries that groups create around themselves. Boundary-making is a process and boundaries must be constantly maintained by continual expression and validation to become meaningful.

Walcott (2003) argues that the continual erasure of blackness from dominant Canadian identities forces Afro-Caribbeans to look elsewhere for a sense of national belonging, and a plurilocal sense of home emerges as a result. This work fleshes out that notion with examples of the multiple elsewhere to which Afro-Caribbean-Canadians "look." Some travel to their nations of origin or another diaspora location to play and watch cricket and feel "at home." Those club members who travel do so regularly, and they typically visit their nations of origin, or a more broadly defined homespace found in other Caribbean countries, England, the United States and elsewhere in Canada. The MCSC creates opportunities for cricketers and non-cricketers alike to travel throughout the Black Atlantic to (re-)generate Afro-Caribbean cross-border kinships, friendships and networks. Club members engage in "roots tourism," but instead of returning to slave ports in Ghana or plantations in the United States for a glimpse of the past and to appreciate "the way things were," Afro-Caribbean-Canadian cricketers

and their supporters tour Caribbean and diasporic parishes, towns and cities, visit world-class stadiums, national museums and heritage sites, and see consulate offices, beaches and shopping centres. They, thereby, expand their knowledge and understanding of Afro-Caribbeanness, global cultural flows and racial communities (Joseph, 2011b).

They can also stay home in Canada and the past and their culture can “come alive” at the local cricket grounds, banquet halls and community events they attend, often with visitors from across the Black Atlantic. As Walcott notes, “any useful discussion of Afro-Caribbean popular culture in Canada is fixed between the transmigration of cultural artefacts, practices and peoples throughout the United States, Britain and the Anglo-Caribbean region” (Walcott, 2001, p. 126). Their travels and home games fuel their sense of belonging and provide them with new stories to sustain them for years to come.

Investigations of the Black Atlantic must take into account actual transnational travels, the memorabilia and memories of travel, and the differences among them. The unity of community and the class, gender, national and ethnic hierarchies that manifest in diasporic spaces are equally important. Sport is an aspect of culture that is used as a source of racial and national pride, but also produces conflicts between and within different diasporic groups in multicultural settings. “How, then, to describe this play of ‘difference’ within identity?” is a question asked by Stuart Hall (2003, p. 238). He refers to the “play” of history, culture and power that results in an identity not based on an essentialised past, but in a continuously changing narrative of ourselves. We can “play” with diasporic identities because they are forever unstable, unsettled and lack any final resolution. He also uses the word “play” to remind readers of the specific origins of dispersal for many black people in the West: the Caribbean. Here the varieties of Caribbean music “playing” exceed a binary structure of past/present, or them/us; Caribbean music signifies the mixtures, constant borrowing and creativity of Caribbean cultures. To his analysis, I add the “playing” involved in *liming* and sport in diasporic settings.

Liming is a complex phenomenon that entails playing language games, a play or performance of stylised aggressive talk, playing dominoes and playful cross-gender flirting, all of which are key to constructing Afro-Caribbean masculinities in the diaspora. Playing the sport of cricket includes bowling, batting, wicket keeping, fielding, cheering, heckling and strategising, which are all means of regenerating gender and race. This investigation of various types of play reveals the ways communities are built across borders and within nations. Understanding the centrality of masculinity and blackness and the

political cultural expressions, such as sport, with which they are intertwined creates an opportunity to re-evaluate the Black Atlantic, particularly from a Canadian and Caribbean perspective. Playing sport requires making and crossing boundaries of race, nation and gender. Cricket, played both here and there, reveals multifaceted, plurilocal Afro-Caribbean communities, cultures and consciousness.

The final narrative, presented below, is based on both my observations and those of Kundell, a black 52-year-old St. Lucian-Canadian at a club meeting in August 2008. After showing him my documentation of events, he highlighted the importance of the transnational networks the club creates and mobilises for future travel plans. He also explained that the promise of *liming*, food, drink and cross-border “family” connections, were critical for his decision to join the Mavericks’ next big cricket trip, indicating the importance of sport and its associated activities in the making of black and Caribbean diasporas.

Brothers Down Under

The cricketers gathered in a meeting room at the Howard Johnson hotel. It wasn’t spectacular: forty grey chairs, four brown folding banquet tables and four peach-coloured walls with chipped paint and crumbling wallpaper borders. One of team members worked there as the evening supervisor and managed to reserve the room for them on a slow night, but they had only one hour to wrap up their meeting.

The club president and vice-president were first to arrive. Together they unfolded a table and placed it at one end of the room. They opened three metal chairs, one for each of them and the club secretary, and sat, facing the empty room, waiting silently for others to arrive. Though the meeting was scheduled to start at 7, it was 7.15 before any cricketers trickled in. As they entered, each took a metal chair from the stacks that lined the far wall, and arranged them in a semi-circle facing the club executive. Fifteen minutes later there was a quorum and the president called the meeting to order.

The first item on the agenda was the next big trip. Now that they had returned from a two-week tour in England, they were ready to organise future travels. The president raised the issue of fundraising for three weeks in Australia as though it was a done deal. The dissension was audible.

“Why we gonna go all the way to Australia when for that money we could finance five trips to Atlanta, or Hartford, or anywhere else in the States?”

“Who has three fuckin’ thousand dollars to spend on a flight?!”

“What is gonna be so great there that we couldn’t get in England? I don’t have no people in Australia!”

The tension built as some men got out of their chairs, not to speak, but just to stand, wide-legged and cross-armed to make their presence felt. The president

explained gently that the last time they played in an international tournament in Grenada, the captain of the Australian side had approached him and said that he could guarantee them a half dozen games against men of their age and calibre, the combination of which was not easy to find. Though the cost of the flight was only two grand (some members sighed relief), the trip would cost four (those same members gasped). Well, the president explained, the club had to pay for accommodations, buses to take them from the hotel to the games, entry fees for tourist activities and fees for cricket matches, which would cover food and drink. That is why he wanted to talk about fundraising now, two years in advance of the trip. Most of the players grumbled their reluctance owing to the expense and the distance. Though most were retired, it would be difficult for those who still worked to get three weeks off. Those who wanted to travel around Australia or the South Pacific before or after would need even more time. And those who wanted to bring their wives or children would need even more money. As one man pointed out, he “better get started winning the lottery” to pay for such a trip on a fixed retirement income.

It took the testimony of the vice-president, who was probably vying to usurp his leader’s position at the helm of the club, to convince the group. He had been to Australia when he played on a touring Guyanese team 10 years previously, plus he had also spoken to the Australian captain in Grenada. “Listen. Trust me.” He began, begging for their attention, “Listen fellas, listen. It will be good. Australians are island people. They play like us. Bar open 10.00, Game start 1.00. You can eat an’ drink in the club house all day! When I was there in 1998 we would go to the grounds, have a real meal for breakfast, rice and peas, ribs. Seriously, our fees pay for a full three-course dinner for breakfast. Then they open the bar. Me think, ‘Wah, We cyaan’t start drinking dis early?!’” But I was only the manager on that tour. Lawd. I drink like a fish! And besides, they promise me we are gonna have a chance to play against an Aboriginal side. Yeah, dey play cricket too. We can meet our black brothers from down unda!” With that information the mood in the room shifted. Some of the men who were standing sat down and some nodded. One used the calculator on his phone to figure out how he could afford the expense. The discussion then swung to what they could do as fundraisers to alleviate the cost of the trip. The vice-president successfully showed the club members that in Australia they could still fulfil their priorities. As long as they are *liming* and networking, they can reproduce black and Caribbean cultures and communities.