YOUNG JAMAICAN-CANADIANS AS DIASPORA PHILANTHROPISTS: A CASE FOR INTERGENERATIONAL COLLABORATION

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In 2012, Jamaica celebrated its 50th Anniversary of Independence and nationhood. Jamaica's Golden Jubilee was marked by a series of celebrations in Jamaica and across the Jamaican Diaspora. In Canada, a not-for-profit organization, Jamaica 50 Celebration Inc., was established to plan and execute a year-long program of celebratory events and activities in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. During the planning stage of the program, the young people volunteering with the Jamaica 50 initiative were encouraged to establish their own subcommittee charged with engaging young Jamaican-Canadians in the Golden Celebrations. Thus was born the 4WD Youth Committee of Jamaica 50 Celebration Inc. in Toronto.

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The mission of 4WD was to use this celebratory occasion to educate young Jamaican-Canadians about Jamaica, encourage them to engage in transnational initiatives, and showcase the achievements and community work of their peers. It was an effort to locate young people – 1.5- and second-generation immigrants – in the unfolding diaspora story.

As co-chair of the 4WD Youth Committee, I had the opportunity to lead and work with a wide cross-section of young Jamaican-Canadians. Over the period of a year, we worked to engage our peers in the celebrations and to positively benefit young people in Jamaica. Our efforts were grounded in our common belief that we were stakeholders in Jamaica and in the Jamaican diaspora in Canada. We cared deeply about the socio-political and economic welfare of these communities and diligently accepted our roles as narrators and agents of change within them. Indeed, we were the young faces of *diaspora philanthropy* in the Jamaican community.

This article will explore the role and experience of young people in diaspora philanthropy and discuss the opportunities and challenges of intergenerational collaboration in diaspora development efforts. Using as case studies the Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation Future Leaders and the Community of United Jamaicans (at York University), it will examine the ways in which older diaspora members mentor and support young people to become effective agents of change in their communities at home and abroad.

For the purposes of this article, diaspora is understood as an "ethnic minority group[s] of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands" (G. Sheffer,

1986, quoted in Newland & Patrick, 2004, p. 2). Diaspora philanthropy is defined as the "private donations of diasporas to a wide range of causes in their countries of origin" (Newland, Terrazas, & Munster, 2010, p. 2).

Philanthropy and the Jamaican diaspora in Canada

Philanthropy is part of the cultural fabric of the Jamaican diaspora, characterized by a wide variety of actors, with different motivations, capacities, and impact. Some donors give directly to beneficiaries while others donate through intermediaries (Newland & Patrick, 2004) such as private foundations, ethnic organizations, professional associations, alumni associations, faith-based groups, cultural clubs and organizations, among others. These philanthropic intermediaries identify priorities for giving, administer funds and often aggregate funds from other sources, such as non-diaspora donors (Newland, Terrazas, & Munster, 2010).

Individual remittances remain one of the most popular forms of diaspora giving, amounting to almost 15% of Jamaica's GDP. In 2012, net remittances were U.S. $1,597.9 million, representing an increase of 0.8 percent than over the previous year (Bank of Jamaica, 2012). The Canadian diaspora accounts for about 11 percent of that remittance inflow (Jackson, 2012). Stories of individual diaspora philanthropists – Jamaican migrants who achieved extraordinary professional and financial success in Canada – are also well-documented and oft-told. Perhaps the most high profile is Jamaican-Canadian Dr. Raymond Chang, former chancellor of Ryerson University, who was named Outstanding Philanthropist of 2010 by the Toronto chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (Wong, 2011). Dr. Chang has made significant contributions to many Canadian institutions as well as to the University of the West Indies and his high school alumni, St. George's College, "back home."

Yet, many diaspora members still seek to retain strong personal bonds to Jamaica via philanthropic intermediaries. A survey of the Jamaican diaspora landscape reveals that there are about 187 Jamaican diaspora organizations/associations in the three major diaspora locations, the U.S., Canada, and the U.K., with 40 of them in Canada (Ying, Manderson, & Smith, 2010). These groups and associations (for example, the Jamaican Canadian Association, the Alliance of Jamaica Alumni Associations, Jamaica Ex-Soldiers Association, Project for the Advancement of Childhood Education, Canadian Friends of St. Thomas Health Care Organization) are organized around the major areas of needs, namely education, health, and business, investment, and trade. Their activities serve both members of the diaspora and the needs of individuals "back home" in Jamaica (Ying, Manderson, & Smith, 2010). While there is little documentation of the monetary value of their contributions, these associations have a tremendous economic and social impact in the diaspora and in Jamaica. They build schools, fund infrastructure improvements, provide financial assistance and services to educational institutions, provide equipment to healthcare institutions, fund scholarships and bursaries for both Jamaican and Canadian students, and everything in between.

This dense web of ties between the diaspora and Jamaica is overwhelmingly the creation of individuals and groups acting on their own initiative. However, in 2004, the Jamaican government formally courted the diaspora by creating the Jamaican Diaspora

Foundation with arms in the U.S., the U.K., and Canada. The principal objectives of the Jamaican Diaspora Foundation are to strengthen the links and support systems between Jamaicans residing abroad and at home and to deepen the collaboration between the stakeholder groups that serve them; and, facilitate and increase the scope and impact of the contribution of the diaspora to the development of Jamaica (jamaicandiaspora.gov.jm). Since its launch in 2004, the Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation has spearheaded several development initiatives in Jamaica, most recently running a campaign to equip healthcare facilities across the island with 1,000 hospital grade blood pressure machines (Share News, 2012).

Diaspora philanthropy: Where are the young people?

Despite increased academic engagement with diaspora philanthropy, youth-led associations have been mentioned only in passing (Plasterer, 2011). So, where are the young people?

Like the older generation of diaspora members, there is evidence of a strong obligation among young Jamaican-Canadians to help their fellow Jamaicans and Jamaican-Canadians, through the giving of time, goods, talents, skills, and money. Many youth leaders in the diaspora movement emphasize the desire to "give back" and a need to reconnect with the homeland as primary motivations for participating in transnational activities (personal communications, February 2013). Indeed, young people are very much occupants of the transnational space. I will now look at two youth-led Jamaican diaspora associations as a means of highlighting young people's participation in diaspora philanthropy.

The Community of United Jamaicans

The Community of United Jamaicans (CUJAM) is a student-run association at York University in Toronto. Founded in 2006, it is for those born in Jamaica and of the diaspora (S. Wilson, Founding President of Community of United Jamaicans, York University, Toronto, ON, personal communication, February 18, 2013). By all accounts, CUJAM is the largest Jamaican university student association in Canada.

CUJAM was founded by a second-generation Jamaican student at York University, Samentia Wilson, in response to the increase in violence in Jamaica. The objectives of the association are to increase awareness of crime and violence in Jamaica and raise funds to support initiatives promoting community change; to combat the negative stereotypes of Jamaica in Toronto by highlighting positive Jamaican role models; to assist York University students of Jamaican background by providing peer support and volunteer opportunities; and, offering scholarships to international students from Jamaica to assist with their academic pursuit (S. Wilson, personal communication).

A social club with a development purpose, CUJAM was originally conceived as an association that does work both in the local Toronto community and in Jamaica. To date, it has been successful in that mission: when a children's home in Jamaica was destroyed by fire, CUJAM fundraised to purchase school supplies and other items for the home (T. Eytle, Past President of Community of United Jamaicans, York University, Toronto, ON, personal communication, February 16, 2013). It has also partnered with other

established diaspora groups to fundraise for disaster relief in Jamaica. Here in Canada, it has partnered with the Jamaica Canadian Association to raise funds for scholarship disbursements.

CUJAM is an interesting case for exploration as it has a unique philanthropic identity. As an association, it is based on a relatively coherent identity, i.e., students of Jamaican background at a particular institution. This allows it to bypass most of the identity politics that play out in articulations of diaspora. It is also purely student- (youth-) led, relying on young Jamaican-Canadians to identify priorities for giving and administer funds. More importantly, with a strong membership base of international students, it is primarily driven by first-generation Jamaicans (i.e., those born in Jamaica but naturalized or living in Canada). These identity traits vis-à-vis intergenerational collaboration will be discussed later in the article.

The Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation Future Leaders

The Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation Future Leaders was established in 2006 as the youth arm of the Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation. Serving diaspora members aged 18-34, the Future Leaders is an autonomous space within the Foundation for young Jamaican-Canadians to connect with each other and act as agents of social change both at home and "back home."

The principal objectives of the Future Leaders are the same as those of the larger Diaspora Foundation. The point of departure is its primary focus on engaging youth, predominantly second-generation (i.e., Canadian-born children of Jamaican-born parents) and later for the betterment of Jamaica (A. Moulton, Past Co-chair of Jamaica Diaspora Canada Foundation Future Leaders, personal communication, February 22, 2013). It shares the development priorities of the larger Foundation, depends on its process of administering funds, and relies on it to act as its interlocutor. Nonetheless, the Future Leaders have successfully led its own initiatives. In 2009, the Future Leaders of the U.K., the U.S., and Canada convened their own Diaspora conference in Jamaica under the theme "Connecting Diaspora Future Leaders: Solidifying our Places in our Homelands and Jamaica" (Mullings, 2011). The conference included a number of workshops and seminars addressing different issues, including crime and violence, engaging youth in governance, entrepreneurship and business, and spirituality. It also included a day of volunteer service where participants in the conference lent a helping hand to inner-city projects (Mullings, 2011). A few years earlier, the Canadian Future Leaders held a Fun Day for youth in the inner-city community of Rose Town, Jamaica (T. Eytle, personal communication, 2013). The day was an opportunity for young Jamaican-Canadians to connect with youth in Jamaica and work collaboratively on community initiatives. The Future Leaders, in essence, is separate from the adult-led Diaspora Foundation but not distinct.

As a formal body, the Future Leaders embeds young people in the governance structure of the Diaspora Foundation. It has its own leadership and constitution, with its president sitting on the executive committee of the Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation (L. Richards, President of Jamaica Diaspora Canada Foundation Future Leaders, personal communication, February 12, 2013). This existence of a clearly defined and designated position of power for young diasporans translates into access to a particular

kind of political and social currency within the transnational space not possessed by other youth-led diaspora associations. The Future Leaders have *access* to ministers of the Jamaican government, consuls generals and high commissioners, and other movers and shakers by virtue of their location in the diaspora structure as conceived by the home state. This access to political and social currency is intricately intertwined with and a corollary of their collaboration with older allies.

Young people and their older allies

From personal interviews with young leaders in the Diaspora organizations, it is clear that older allies played a decisive, if not necessary, role in the success of their activities and initiatives. The Community of United Jamaicans at York University and the Jamaican Diaspora Foundation Canada Future Leaders both rely on older allies for guidance, mentorship, and technical assistance. It is, however, of note how intergenerational collaboration plays out in distinct ways in these organizations.

Priority-setting, i.e., the identification and categorization of initiatives and activities for diaspora giving, occurs differently for these two youth-led groups. The predominance of first-generation immigrants[1] in CUJAM – with their direct transnational links – allows that organization to have complete ownership of priority-setting. They initiate their own projects and seek help from older allies vis-à-vis execution. For instance, the association identified the need to provide school supplies to the children's home in Jamaica but then relied on assistance from older allies to ship these items safely to their destination. For the Future Leaders, an open community of all generations, priority-setting occurs at the level of the Diaspora Foundation, which is predominately headed by first-generation Jamaican-Canadians. The Rose Town project, for example, was identified by the larger Foundation, though it ultimately became a youth-led initiative (T. Eytle, personal communication, 2013). More recently, the current Future Leaders played a significant role in fundraising for a campaign to purchase blood pressure machines for healthcare facilities – a priority identified by their older allies. While the Future Leaders is free to identify and set its own priorities, it must be noted that the tendency has been to develop execution and engagement processes for priorities identified by older allies.

Perhaps one way to contextualize priority-setting amongst youth-led diaspora organizations is to understand priority-setting as a political process. Indeed, questions of legitimacy and authenticity arise in discussions of *who* gets to identify social needs and *who* gets to give primacy to a one particular need over others. One can argue that the first-generation (international) students in CUJAM possess more legitimacy in identifying priorities for diaspora giving than their peers in the Future Leaders, who are not only a mixed community of multiple generations but are part of a larger organization headed by first-generation immigrants. In a sense, the youth of CUJAM possess a comparable currency of authenticity in the transnational space to that of the older allies in the Diaspora Foundation. For second-generation and later Jamaican-Canadians, intergenerational collaboration can imbue their agenda and priority-setting with legitimacy.

The issue of generational status muddies the distinction between youth and older allies when we look at how these two *generations* collaborate in diaspora development efforts. While it is clear that young people need the assistance of older allies – whether to

identify priorities or to execute activities in support of those priorities – the generation status of the youth themselves seems to have implications on their engagement in diaspora philanthropy and how they collaborate with older allies.

The leadership of both youth-led Diaspora organizations also highlighted the opportunity for *community-development learning* within their intergenerational collaborations. Diaspora philanthropy, particularly in the Jamaican community, is grounded in notions of community development and community engagement. Young Jamaican-Canadian leaders see their older allies as mentors and teachers in the art of developing and engaging the community. Older allies represent a body of experience and knowledge that has been tried and tested. The young leaders who were interviewed spoke emphatically about the individual mentorship they received from community elders in how to be effective community workers. They received counsel, were introduced to key members of the wider community, and had committed advocates in their corners. It is this generational transfer of the art of community engagement and advocacy that reflects the best fruit of collaboration between young Jamaican-Canadians and their older allies.

Indeed, from the perspective of the older generation, identifying and collaborating with young leaders is a necessary and logical step in community development. Philip Mascoll, founding president of the Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation and father of the Future Leaders, believes that training young people to be [community] leaders is not only part of good succession planning but is "necessary for the community to live" (P. Mascoll, Founding President of the Jamaica Diaspora Canada Foundation, personal communication, February 22, 2013). For him and other older leaders in the diaspora, the community's survival is dependent on young people knowing how to advocate for their community, how to engage their community members, and how to interact with the wider community. Mascoll, whose philosophy on youth engagement is shaped by his personal experience as a politically-engaged youth in Jamaica, argues that young people need to be involved in the political life of the larger community; and, it is incumbent on the older generation to foster their sense of political efficacy by allowing them space in the decision-making process (personal communication, 2013).

The generational transfer of community experience and socio-political engagement is the raison d'être of the intergenerational collaboration for older allies. They mentor young people not for the sake of mentorship but for the survival of the community. Collaboration therefore becomes the training ground for the new agents of community activism (where the community is both the diaspora and the Jamaican nation-state) and, citizenship in the community is a learned process of engagement and advocacy.

This generational transfer of knowledge through collaboration is not without its cost. In the same way that generational status (i.e., first-generation versus later generations) raises question of legitimacy in the transnational space, so does age. While young people are fully capable of establishing successful youth-led diaspora associations, their authenticity in speaking on community issues – particularly those seen as non-youth related – is often questioned by the older generation. Accordingly, it is not sufficient to simply have spaces of power and leadership for young people; these spaces must also imbue them and their actions/voices with legitimacy. Otherwise, youth leaders become tokens at best and "work horses" at worst. As such, a powerful opportunity that arises from the

collaboration of young diaspora leaders with older allies is the transfer of legitimacy and authenticity.

Older allies can use their legitimacy – their social capital – to create a space of real power for young people. This spending (or sharing) of social currency goes beyond mere advocacy and insists on older allies giving up their positions of power and their grasp on power so that young people can occupy those spaces. The Future Leaders is the best example of this form of intangible transfer. The creation of this youth platform by older allies and their insistence that it be recognized and given real power is a demonstration of how this process can work. In many ways, those community elders lessened their grasp on power so that the Future Leaders could gain *real* power. The transfer and sharing of legitimacy is the most significant opportunity of intergenerational collaboration and, simultaneously, the most challenging, as those with power rarely desire to give it up.

Conclusion

The future of diaspora philanthropy looks bright. The Jamaican-Canadian experience is just a sample of the breadth and depth of young people's engagement in philanthropy. As products of a Canadian culture that valorizes a hyphenated identity, complimented by growing globalization from below and above, it is reasonable to assume that diaspora movements and diaspora philanthropy will deepen and strengthen among young Canadians.

The most important lesson to be learned from the experience of young Jamaican-Canadians in diaspora philanthropy is that the greatest challenge to their effective engagement is a perceived lack of legitimacy and authenticity, whether due to generational status or age, to speak to and on behalf of the community. Intergenerational collaboration offers the opportunity for older allies to transfer social capital to these young people that will validate them as authentic community spokespersons. What young people need to be effective agents of change in their communities is older allies who will empower them to be just that.

Note

1. I refer to the international students in CUJAM as first-generation immigrants because a majority become permanent residents of Canada after their study.

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