



**ST. JOHN'S
UNIVERSITY**

Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies (CLACS)
invites you to its

**XV Annual Multidisciplinary Conference on
Migration / Immigration:**

***MIGRANTS IN EDUCATION:
CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES***



Wednesday, May 6, 2026

**D'Angelo Center, Room 416ABC, Queens Campus
St. John's University**



PANEL II Indian Diaspora Council International <i>The Impact Of Education On Caribbean English-Speaking Migrants</i>	3:00 - 4:00 pm
	Engr. Ashook Ramsaran President, Indian Diaspora Council International Nicole Bissessar, PhD - Panel Coordinator <i>Migrants in Education: Challenges and Outcomes – An Economic Perspective</i> Vishnu Bisram, PhD <i>A Political Perspective</i> Narayan Persaud, PhD <i>The Social and Cultural Dimension</i> Ms. Kamla Karina Millwood <i>The Cost of Opportunity: Sacrifice, Strength, and Success in the Immigrant Experience</i>

Panel II Participants



Ashook Ramsaran, Engr, is a distinguished engineer, entrepreneur, and advocate for the global Indian diaspora. Born in Corentyne, Guyana, to descendants of Indian indentured laborers, he immigrated to the USA in 1968, earning graduate degrees in electrical engineering. He founded Ramex, a family-owned electronics manufacturing company, after a successful corporate career. Ramsaran is deeply involved in immigrant advocacy, collaborating with St. John’s University and New York City’s Mayor’s Office on Immigrant Affairs on seminars and conferences addressing immigrant experiences. He has been recognized with numerous awards, including the Gandhi Peace Award (2014) and the Government of India’s Pravasi Samman Award (2011). A prominent figure in the Indian diaspora, Ramsaran has spearheaded global initiatives, including the construction of monuments commemorating Indian indentured laborers and the centennial of the abolition of indentureship. He serves on several boards, including

United Indian Television (UiTV) and the Indian Jewish Council, and continues to advocate for diaspora communities worldwide. Ramsaran resides in New York with his wife, Camille, and is a proud father and grandfather.



Dr. Visnoonand Bisram was born in Guyana (formerly British Guiana) to Baldat Jewah Bisram and Gladys Ketwaru Jewah whose grandparents migrated from India as indentured laborers. Visnoonand (commonly referred to as Vishnu) received his formative education in Guyana before migrating to New York to further his education. He is the holder of two PhDs and several other graduate and undergraduate degrees and has been an educator for over three decades in New York, USA. He is married to Parbatie Laloo of Trinidad. He has been advocating for the Indian diaspora. He travels and researches the Indian diaspora. They make their primary residence in the US but also moves back and forth between there and Guyana as well as Trinidad. Dr. Bisram has been an avid promoter of India in the US and Caribbean and engages in volunteerism to improve

lives of depressed communities in India and in the diaspora.



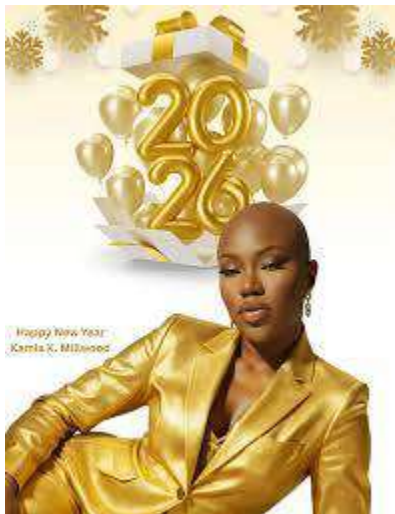
Dr. Nicole Bissessar is a senior academic leader, economist, and educator with over fifteen years of experience in higher education and public service. Originally from Trinidad and Tobago, she is now based in New York, where she is actively engaged in civic and cultural leadership, serving as Director of Community and Cultural Affairs for the Indian Diaspora Council and as a delegate and alumna of the Queens General Assembly under the Office of the Queens Borough President. Her work reflects a strong commitment to public engagement, intercultural dialogue, and community advancement. Dr. Bissessar's teaching career spans undergraduate, graduate, and executive education across leading institutions, including Southern New Hampshire University, William & Mary, Grand Canyon University, Worcester State University, and Kent State University. She is widely recognized for her expansive, student-centered teaching approach that integrates economics, global affairs, ethics, and responsible uses of emerging technologies. A published scholar and invited international speaker, she is also deeply involved in

curriculum design, faculty mentoring, and instructional innovation. Her work consistently bridges academic rigor with real-world impact, empowering diverse learners in both traditional and digital learning environments.



Dr. Narayan Persaud is a Professor Emeritus who holds an M.A in Family Relations, and a PhD in Social Psychology. During his over thirty-five years tenure in postsecondary education, he taught at Kent State University, the University of Guyana, the University of the Virgin Islands, Florida State University, and Florida A & M University. While teaching at Florida A & M University, he was elected to two two-year terms as President of the Faculty Senate, and by virtue of this office became a Trustee on the University's Board of Trustees. Prior to joining the faculty at Florida A & M University, Persaud served four years as a Policy Analyst, and four years as a Legislative Analyst in higher education for the State of Florida. Apart from his academic publications, Persaud has written two books *Guardian Angels. Along My Homeless Path* - which chronicles the struggles of one of his Graduate Assistants - and *Recollections of Bath Estate* - a memoir of the sugarcane plantation where he was born and raised, in a community built and destroyed by colonials. Over the years,

Persaud has written numerous newspaper articles on various topics which appeared in the Tallahassee Democrat, the Capital Outlook, and the Orlando Sentinel. Within the last three years, with emphasis on Guyana, his articles appeared in the Kaieteur News, Guyana Times, Stabroek News, and Guyana Chronicle, all focusing on Guyana's politics and economic development. In addition to his writings on Guyana, Persaud served as a panelist in several episodes of the Guyana Dialogue. Now retired, Persaud and his wife Pabitri of fifty-three years live in Orlando, near to their two sons. As a retiree, Persaud loves being Aja to his four grandchildren.



Ms. Kamla Karina Millwood, born in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is a powerhouse entrepreneur, executive consultant, publicist, author, and community advocate whose work drives business growth, media influence, and economic empowerment. She is the Founder and President of Palatial Publishing LLC, a certified M/WBE firm based in Brooklyn, New York, known for transforming vision into measurable, lasting impact. Under her leadership, Palatial Publishing LLC produces some of New York City's largest Black woman-owned small business expos, convening hundreds of entrepreneurs, elected officials, media professionals, and the public in high-impact spaces built for visibility, opportunity, and real economic exchange. A defining feature of these events is the Art Gallery, where artists from across the United States and the global diaspora showcase and sell their work on a powerful, sought-after platform. Her next flagship expo will take place on Juneteenth at the Major Owens Health and Community Center. Holding a Master's Degree in Management with concentrations

in Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship from St. Francis College, Kamla has certified hundreds of businesses as M/WBE and M/BE, opening doors to contracting opportunities and long-term growth. She is also a respected publisher, a highly sought-after Master of Ceremonies trusted by elected officials, and an award-winning author of eight children's books and a video game, as well as the creator of *Peach the Duck*. The daughter of the late Kenton Kirby of Caribbean Life News, Kamla continues a legacy rooted in storytelling, media excellence, and community impact. Recognized by public leaders, including a 2025 Woman of Distinction nomination, she

stands as a commanding force for entrepreneurs, creatives, and underserved communities, building platforms where opportunity is not just promised, but realized.

Panel II Papers by order of speaker

Political Involvement of Indian Caribbean people in NY **By Dr Vishnu Bisram**

There is no formal study on political education or political mindedness or political involvement of Indo Caribbean people in USA – nothing on or about their political education and knowledge and their participation in the process. Although Indo Caribbean immigrants make up a sizable part of New York’s population, they remain largely underrepresented in politics at the local as well as state and national level and they also have a low level of political participation, as in voting or joining political campaigns or running for or winning offices. Political education is a tool for political empowerment and services and even to have representatives that look like members of the community.

The level and extent of political knowledge (Political education) about governance among a people in a society impacts on their civic and political participation (involvement) such as registering to vote, volunteering in political activities, voting, lobbying, campaigning, seeking elective office, and donating to politicians, political parties, and candidates., among other political acts. The more political knowledge or political education people have, and the more civic minded they are, the more likely they are to participate (become involved) in the political process of their society. The more politically involved a group, such as in voting or donating to candidates or parties, the more political power (influence) they have in a society in having their requests met. How influential are Indo Caribbean people? How politically versed, knowledgeable, and civic minded are Indo Caribbean people in their community (locally and in the state and Congress) and what is the state of their political involvement (as well as influence) in New York? Field research, engagements with Indo Caribbean Americans and anecdotal observations in NYC and elsewhere have found that Indo Caribbeans are seemingly averse to political involvement. They have a very low voter turnout in NY and elsewhere in US not only in primary elections but in general elections also for all offices – local, statewide, and nationwide (Presidential). Why is there low turnout and an aversion to political involvement among Indo Caribbean English speaking people? How can their political education and involvement be boosted? How does one (or members of the community) acquire or develop political knowledge or education to boost political involvement and greater civic participation – from basic schooling, college or university, community groups or organizations, special centers or institutions, reading, coaching, other ways? This presentation attempts to answer the preceding questions, focusing on political involvement of Indo Caribbean people in New York and by extension the United States, and it also suggests ways to increase political education, mobilization and involvement in the political process or system. It examines how involved Indo Caribbeans are in politics or in the political system (process) and how much attention they pay to governance and how they are being governed or being serviced in their community. It suggests ways for Indo Caribbeans to create more inclusive pathways into public life and political participation. Although New York focused, the study has relevance nationally for Indian Caribbeans.

Political education, meaning knowledge about the political process, generally speaking, is found to foster or increase political and social integration and civic participation in any society. Political education refers to the knowledge one has about the political system under which one is governed or ruled. Those without knowledge of the process or system exhibit a lack of interest in political affairs and being involved in the process. They have an aversion of politics. If immigrants are deficient in or found lacking in political knowledge, then they will not be able to optimize or maximize their participation in the political system — sharing their views on issues, holding politicians and governments accountable, voting intelligently for their or their communities's interests, etc. and make meaningful contributions to development. They will have an aversion of politics in their community. Acquiring or developing political education or knowledge helps to create or prepare citizens for responsible citizenship (civic engagement) and participation in the political process.

What is political education? It is knowledge in or on or about a political system where people dwell or make their homeland — in which people understand the importance of civic engagement like voting and participating in political affairs of their community and the nation at large. It is understanding rights and responsibilities and the host country's constitutional values. It also includes learning about or understanding the political structure and participating in the process— as an activist, organizer, voter, donor, lobbyist, a volunteer, etc., designed to address political and social challenges of one's self and or community. It is also about running for office. How politically astute or involved are Indo Caribbeans?

Anecdotal evidence suggests voter turnout in elections and other involvement in political affairs is very low. Why? There are three main reasons: 1. They are very occupied with other aspects of life like entertainment and social activities and obsessed in monetary earnings and pursuing material things; they don't view political events as being very important, taking time away from pursuing earnings and enjoying material aspects of life like social parties, going to clubs or bars, cultural concerts, religious programs, etc. 2. They are still immersed in the affairs of the homeland which brings them benefits. 3. Because of their encounters with electoral fraud and other negatives in Guyana and Trinidad during which their political party was denied power for decades, they have developed an aversion to politics and in voting. They fear their vote may not count as in Guyana where there was outright rigging and in Trinidad where there was gerrymandering of seats, denying them political power for decades. Their communities were not serviced in the home country. Thus, they see little or no gain in voting or in the political process in the new homeland. Their communities were not properly serviced in Guyana and Trinidad. They mistakenly equate the politics of the home country with that of the new adopted homeland. Thus, they see no benefits in becoming politically involved.

Indo Caribbeans do not comprehend the importance of political participation and political organization. And the community leaders do not understand their role in providing political education to followers and supporters and the community in general. Political education will help Indo Caribbean immigrants navigate potential advantages in becoming politically astute in the society's politics and to improve social mobility of members.

How can they become more politically conscious and civic minded to increase participation in the political process? The community leaders will have to play a greater role in encouraging Indo

Caribbeans to increase participation. Organizations must not only focus on culture and religion but also on political education. Religious institutions and cultural organizations need to sponsor or organize programs that teach Indo Caribbean immigrants about the political, social, and legal systems of the society where they live to ensure they can exercise their rights, including voting and civic engagement.

Education can take various forms with the goal of schooling immigrants about the importance of becoming politically involved and how to engage in public life. Such schooling takes place in public schools and in universities. Children in immigrant families or their kin can play a crucial role by accessing information through schools and media, and educating their family members on political matters. The goal is to move towards a more active involvement in political affairs. They need to gain power in the U.S through politics, from voting and getting involved in neighborhood commissions and issues and school boards as well as party clubs to being elected to city councils and state legislatures, and ultimately moving on to the national stage.

The political education and engagement of Indo Caribbean migrants, especially Guyanese, in the USA should shift away from a focus on homeland politics to active involvement in American local, state, and federal politics, particularly in New York and the states where they have large numbers. Channeling their political energy into the happenings back home will not empower them USA or even in the home countries. They must become politically involved in American affairs. They need more active participation in community advocacy, particularly around education, housing, and economic opportunities. If you don't vote or become politically involved, you will not acquire political muscle to influence politics and or have politicians pay attention to you.

Indo Caribbeans must become more engaging in local politics to obtain services for which they have been long neglected. Their political involvement will reduce marginalization and improve services to their communities. Political education is the means for greater political involvement. And political involvement will boost empowerment. Educate, register and mobilize the Indo Caribbean community to vote and to participate in other ways as well in the process. They are a sleeping giant that can change the politics of the community where they live, their state, and the federal government.

The Impact of Education on Caribbean English-Speaking Migrants: An Empirical Economic Perspective

by Dr. Nicole Bissessar

Abstract

This paper analyzes the role of education in shaping migration decisions, labor-market outcomes, and social integration among English-speaking Caribbean migrants. Using empirical evidence from the **World Bank (2023)** and the **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)**, the paper documents three central findings. First, migration from the Caribbean is highly education-selective, with skilled workers disproportionately represented among emigrants. Second, migration has reached large

economic scale: Caribbean emigrant stocks increased from **2.5 million in 1990 to 6.1 million in 2020**, while remittances account for **10–20 percent of GDP** in several countries. Third, despite relatively high educational attainment and English proficiency, migrants face labor-market penalties due to credential mismatch, racial discrimination, and gender inequality. These findings suggest that education is necessary but insufficient for equitable migration outcomes.

1. Introduction

Education is often a *key factor* motivating migration from the English-speaking Caribbean.¹² The Caribbean is one of the most migration-intensive regions in the world. According to World Bank estimates, emigration rates in multiple Caribbean countries exceed global averages, particularly in small island states where emigrants represent a large share of the national population. Economic theory predicts that migration decisions are driven by expected wage differentials and returns to human capital, both of which are substantial between the Caribbean and major destination countries such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Education plays a central role in this process. World Bank and IDB evidence consistently shows that migration from the English-speaking Caribbean is **positively selected on education**, meaning migrants are more educated than the populations they leave behind (Jaupart, 2023; Elias et al., 2022).

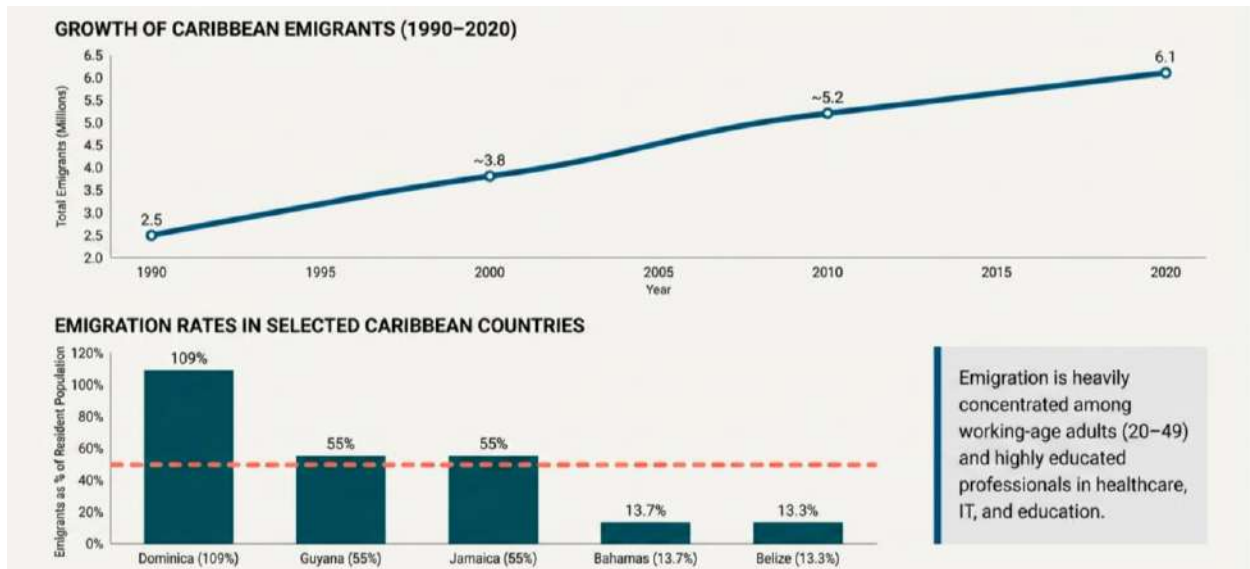
2. Education and Migration Decisions

The World Bank data in *Figure 1* below show that emigration has become a defining demographic and economic feature of the Caribbean. Between 1990 and 2020, the Caribbean emigrant population grew from approximately **2.5 million to 6.1 million**, reflecting sustained migration over several decades (Jaupart, 2023).

Figure 1: The Scale and Velocity of the Exodus

¹ English is the official language, but many countries also use: English-based Creoles (e.g., Jamaican Creole, Trinidadian Creole), French-based Creoles (especially in Saint Lucia & Dominica)

² These 6 are not independent nations but are commonly included in discussions of the English-speaking Caribbean: Anguilla, Bermuda (often grouped with the Caribbean socially/politically), British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Turks & Caicos Islands. These 12 are fully independent states where English is the official language: Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize (geographically Central America, culturally Caribbean), Dominica, Grenada, Guyana (in South America, culturally Caribbean), Jamaica, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago



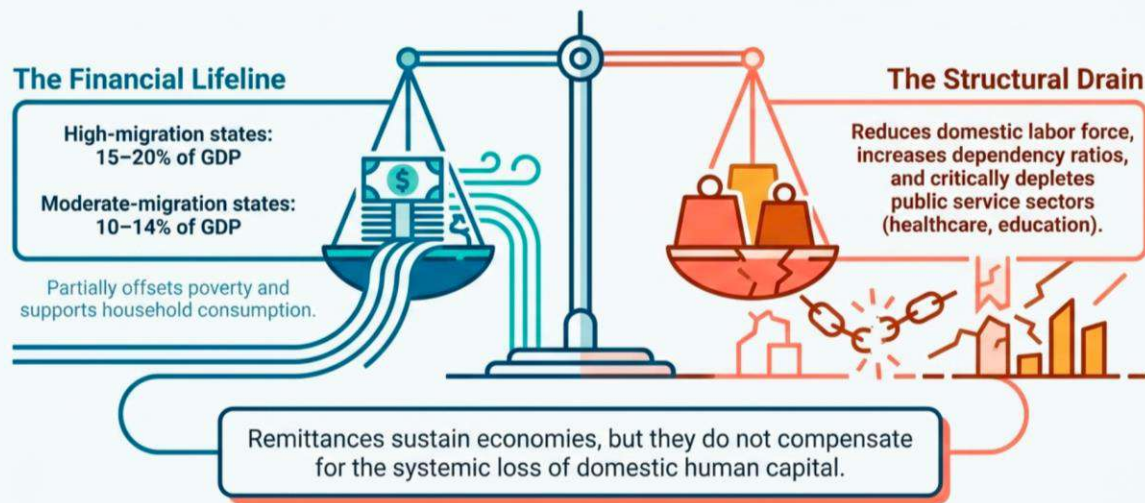
Source: World Bank migration stock data summarized in Jaupart (2023).

The World Bank also highlights that many Caribbean countries, especially *Guyana, Jamaica, and Haiti*, have lost large shares of their working-age and highly educated populations to emigration, while only a few countries, such as *The Bahamas and Belize*, experience positive net migration. *Figure 1* uses a 50% reference line to identify countries in which more than half of their resident population living abroad.

Emigration is concentrated among **working-age adults aged 20-49**, which amplifies economic effects by reducing the domestic labor force while increasing dependency ratios in sending countries. Highly educated individuals are especially likely to migrate, reflecting both strong human-capital formation and limited domestic labor-market absorption in sectors such as *healthcare, education, and information technology*.

3. Remittances and Macroeconomic Dependence

The Macroeconomic Trade-off: Remittances vs. Brain Drain



Remittances play a major macroeconomic role in the Caribbean migration system. World Bank estimates indicate that in several English-speaking Caribbean countries, remittance inflows represent **between 10 and 20 percent of GDP** (see *Table 1*), placing the region among the most remittance-dependent in the world (Jaupart, 2023).

From an economic standpoint, remittances partially offset the negative effects of brain drain by supporting household consumption and *reducing poverty*. However, they do not fully compensate for the loss of skilled workers, particularly in public service sectors.

Table 1. Remittances as a Share of GDP in Selected Caribbean Economies

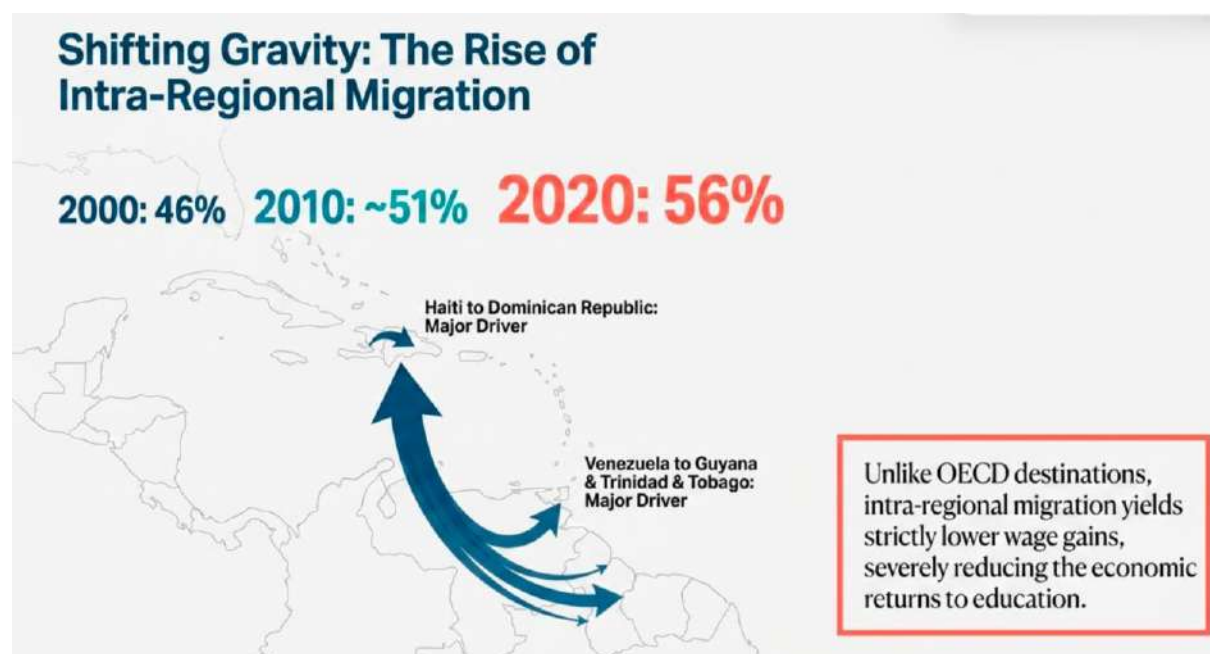
Country Group	Remittances (% of GDP)
High-migration states	15–20%
Moderate-migration states	10–14%

Source: World Bank World Development Indicators, summarized in Jaupart (2023).

4. Changing Migration Patterns: Intra-Regional Flows

In addition to migration to OECD countries, *intra-regional migration* has increased substantially, see *Figure 2(a)*. According to Lacarte et al. (2023), the share of intra-Caribbean migration rose from approximately 46 percent in 2000 to 56 percent by 2020.

Figure 2(a). Share of Intra-Regional Migration in the Caribbean

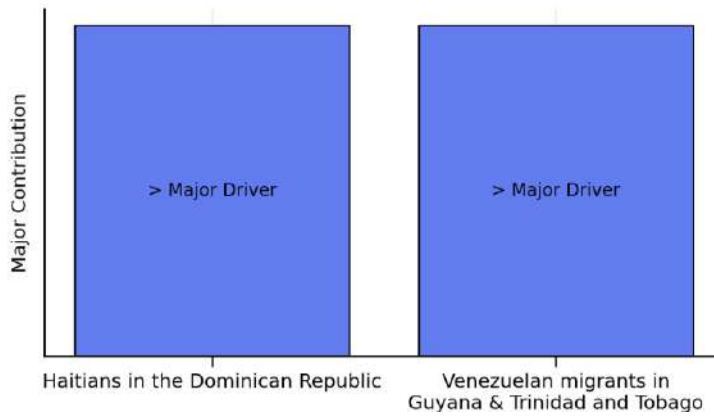


Source: IDB and Migration Policy Institute, Lacarte et al. (2023).

This increase has been driven largely by migration from *Haiti and Venezuela* to neighboring Caribbean countries (see *Figure 2b*). Compared to migration to high-income destinations, intra-regional migration yields lower wage gains, which reduces the economic returns to education for many migrants.

Figure 2b: Growth Over Time

Key Drivers of Immigrant Stock in the Caribbean (>1 Million)



Source: IDB and Migration Policy Institute, Lacarte et al. (2023).

According to *Figure 2(b)*, this growth is driven largely by Haitian and Venezuelan migration, reflecting widening economic inequalities, persistent political instability, and mounting environmental pressures across countries. Venezuelan migration has accelerated since 2014, particularly to Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, driven by economic collapse, political turmoil, and rising environmental stress. This research emphasizes that while migration generates important benefits through remittances and diaspora engagement, weak immigrant integration systems, uneven implementation of free-movement regimes, and limited regional policy coordination continue to constrain the Caribbean’s ability to fully leverage migration for inclusive development.

5. Labor-Market Outcomes and Returns to Education



Education improves employment probabilities for Caribbean migrants, but returns are constrained by labor-market frictions. IDB evidence in *Table 2* shows that migrants with secondary and tertiary education have higher labor-force participation and employment rates than those with less education (Elias et al., 2022). However, many educated migrants experience **occupational mismatch**, working in jobs below their qualification level.

Table 2. Education and Labor-Market Outcomes of Caribbean Migrants

Outcome	Less than Secondary	Secondary	Tertiary
Employment probability	Low	Moderate	High
Occupational mismatch	Moderate	High	Very High
Wage returns	Low	Moderate	Below potential

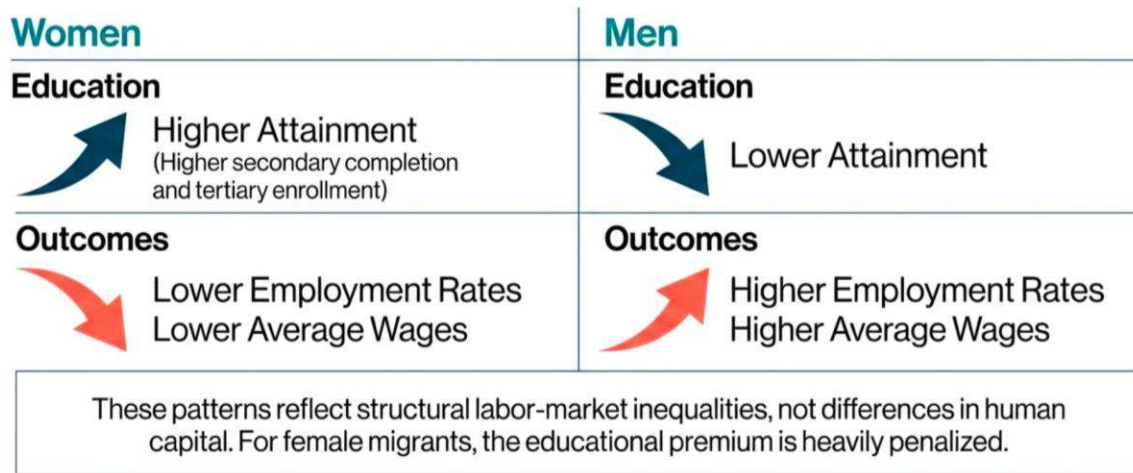
Source: Elias et al. (2022), IDB Technical Note.

This evidence suggests that credential recognition barriers significantly reduce returns to education, limiting productivity gains for both migrants and host economies.

6. Gender Differences in Education and Earnings

Gender shapes how education translates into labor-market outcomes.

Diverging Realities: The Gender-Human Capital Contradiction



According to IDB data in *Table 3*, it shows that women in the English-speaking Caribbean achieve **higher average educational attainment than men**, including higher rates of secondary completion and tertiary enrollment (Davalos & Garcia, 2023). Despite this, female migrants earn lower wages and face higher unemployment.

Table 3. Gender Gaps in Education and Labor Outcomes

Indicator	Men	Women
Average educational attainment	Lower	Higher
Employment rate post-migration	Higher	Lower
Average wages	Higher	Lower

Source: Davalos & Garcia (2023), Inter-American Development Bank.

These patterns reflect structural labor-market inequalities rather than differences in human capital.

7. Education and Social Integration

Higher education improves migrants' ability to navigate institutions and support their children's educational outcomes. However, Caribbean linguistic varieties, including English-based Creoles, are

often undervalued in destination school systems, which can negatively affect placement and assessment (Alviarez, 2023). These institutional barriers weaken the intergenerational transmission of human capital despite high parental education.

8. Challenges and Policy Implications

The policy recommendations outlined below are derived primarily from **World Bank migration-development frameworks**, complemented by **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** and **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)** integration policy reviews.

8.1 Inclusive Education Policies

The call for inclusive education policies for migrant children originates from the **World Bank's World Development Report 2023** and its Caribbean background paper by Jaupart (2023). These documents emphasize that migrant children, even native English speakers from the Caribbean face barriers related to enrollment, grade placement, and curriculum alignment due to *institutional rigidities* rather than language deficits. The World Bank frames inclusive education access as a productivity-enhancing investment that improves long-term labor-market outcomes and social cohesion.

8.2 Credential Recognition Frameworks

Policy recommendations on credential recognition are grounded in **World Bank** and **IDB** evidence documenting high rates of *occupational mismatch* among Caribbean migrants. Jaupart (2023) highlights skills underutilization as a central inefficiency in Caribbean migration systems, while IDB policy reviews identify mutual recognition agreements and standardized certification as key mechanisms to improve returns to education.

Bridging the Gap: Moving from Potential to Actualized Value



8.3 Targeted Migrant Support Programs

Targeted educational and *labor-market support programs* (such as bridge programs³, adult retraining, and migrant-specific counseling) are advocated in **Migration Policy Institute IDB** reviews of Caribbean integration systems. These policies are framed as tools to reduce underemployment and accelerate migrants' contributions to host economies, particularly in sectors facing labor shortages.

8.4 Productivity, Social Cohesion, and Intergenerational Mobility

The argument that improving migrant education outcomes benefits both migrants and host societies draws directly from the **World Bank's "match and motive" framework** in WDR 2023. This framework emphasizes that stronger skill matching increases productivity and reduces social tension, while educational inclusion promotes intergenerational mobility and long-term fiscal gains.

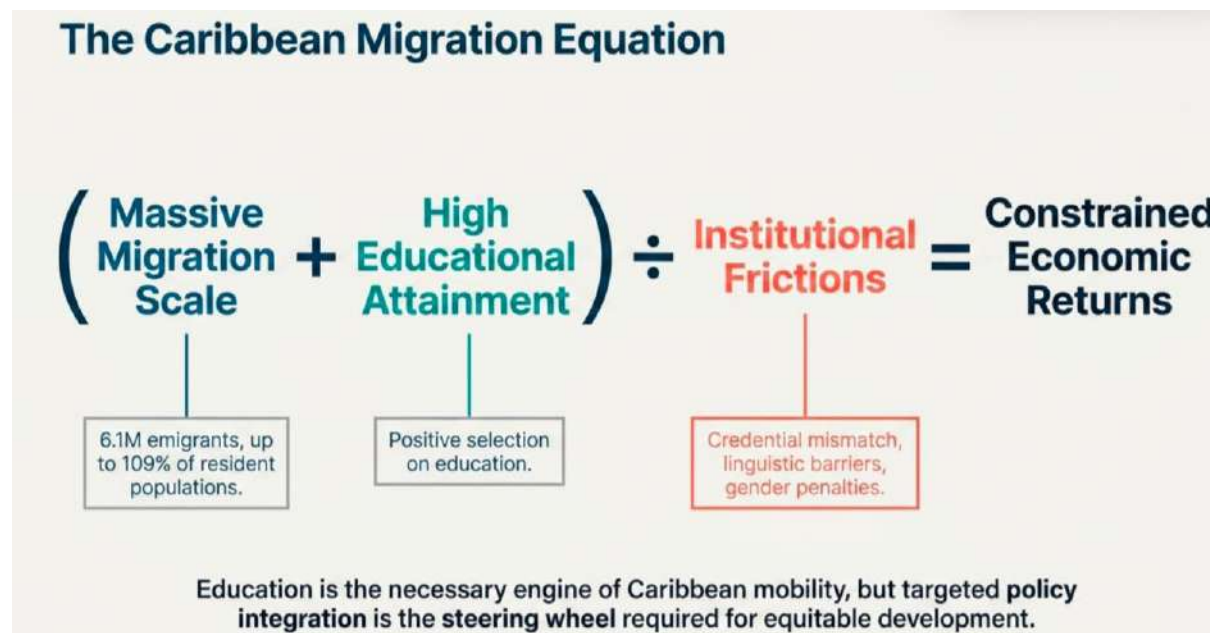
8.5 International Organization for Migration (IOM) Governance Principles

The emphasis on education access as part of broader migrant well-being aligns with **IOM migration governance standards**, which frame education as essential to **safe, orderly, and dignified migration**. IOM's Caribbean migration governance work highlights education as a prerequisite for effective labor-market integration and social stability.

9. Conclusion

³ Bridge programs refer to targeted transitional interventions, such as *credential assessment, supplemental training, and labor-market orientation* designed to help migrants translate foreign education and skills into host-country employment, thereby reducing occupational mismatch and improving returns to education (Lacarte et al., 2023; Jaupart, 2023)

Empirical evidence from the World Bank and IDB shows that education is central to Caribbean migration but does not guarantee equitable outcomes. Migration is highly education-selective, economically large in scale, and macroeconomically significant through remittances. Yet credential mismatch, discrimination, and gender inequality substantially reduce returns to education. Policies focused on credential recognition, labor-market integration, and gender equality are essential if education is to function as an effective pathway to mobility for Caribbean migrants.



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Socio-Cultural Dimensions Of Caribbean English-Speaking Migrants' Education: Post 1965

Dr. Narayan Persaud

Abstract

The focus of this presentation is to highlight some of the social-cultural factors that serve in influencing and impacting English-speaking Afro and Indo Caribbean immigrants' educational pursuits in the US. Often overlooked or neglected in the study of Caribbean immigrants, social-cultural factors that often contribute to such residential new-comers' resilience, educational achievements, and economic upliftment, regularly become misapprehended and underplayed.

1. Introduction

To truly contextualize English-speaking Caribbean migrants within the Western education system, it is necessary to underscore the social-cultural context from which these migrants emerge, and the societal forces that contributed to their convictions and constructions of everyday lived realities.

Constituted primarily of descendants of African slaves and indentured Indians, the English-speaking Caribbean migrants in the United States, emerged out of nation states where colonizers de-Africanized African slaves by forcibly stripping them of their indigenous culture and unique identities, and repressed that of indentured Indians. In aggressive efforts to promote and sustain colonization and domination, colonizers established elaborate systems of proselytization and deculturation to transform slaves and indentured into being obedient, submissive, and loyal servants to colonial authorities. Africans, physically brutalized, and frequently victimized by the atrocities and cruelties of enslavement, rapidly lost their indigenous cultural identities which they submissively and submissively acquiesced to a manufactured fragmented interpretation and emulation of Eurocentric cultural values and practices. From the colonized Africans' distorted assimilation morphed psychosocial behavioral patterns and attitudes that indicate the evolution and formation of a distorted amalgamated of Euro-Afro-Indio cultural traits that peoples of the Caribbean termed "creole culture," - a maladaptation to Anglo-centered cultural characteristics which include linguistic syntaxes and idiomatic expressions. Such an adaptation and construction of psycho-social behavioral reality falls within the framework of what Frantz Fanon described as "Black skin [with] White masks." As expressed in the words of Fanon:

Every colonized people-in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality-finds itself face to face with

the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle, (Fanon 1967:18).

Fanon's explication of the "death and burial" of the colonized cultural originality finds supportive expression in Paulo Freire's assessment of oppressed people. According to Freire, the processes of proselytization and creolization represent the many sided forms of "cultural invasion." This invasion of oppressed colonized peoples' culture Freire termed antidialogical action. In his widely translated book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire explains an aspect of the process of antidialogical action this way:

The theory of antidialogical action has one last fundamental characteristic: cultural invasion, which like divisive tactics and manipulation also serves as the ends of conquest. In this phenomenon, the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, in disrespect of the latter's potentialities; they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression.

Whether urbane or harsh, cultural invasion is thus always an act of violence against the persons of the invaded culture, who lose their originality or face the threat of losing it, Freire, 1970:133).

Undoubtedly, Colonizers antidialogical action contributed to the destruction of Africans culture and identity. However, it failed to eradicate or erode most of the social-cultural adherences of indentured Indians.

Social-Cultural adherences of indentured Indians

In contrast to Africans, indentured Indians, oppressed within the confines of colonial domination and control, clung tenaciously to their cultural identities, traditions, and communal relations inculcated and formalized in India before their voyage into plantation bondage, (D. Lowenthal 1972). While somewhat modified through the severity of indentureship, the distant separation from their homeland, and detachment from their consanguineal, communal, and affinal bonds, indentured Indians in quiet adherence to their social-cultural practices, constructed ingroup alliances of kinship relations and adoption whereby they embraced each other on the plantation as brothers, sisters, extended family members, uncles, aunts, and close friends, (see for example Persaud, 2024; Hangloo 2013). This they did, while simultaneously upholding adherences to their religious belief systems with all ceremonial practices and symbolic representations possible. Soon thereafter, by way of common law and conjugal relationships, becoming parents, and establishing their own households, indentured Indians, through remembrances of lived experiences in India, gradually reproduced a system of extended families and communal relations with all the social-cultural authenticities, ideals, customary relations, and practices. Within this reconstructed indentured Indians familial-cultural milieu, children were socialized to be obedient to authority, respectful, honest, hardworking, and to share with one another. Given the communal-cultural embeddedness, the transference of this socialization practice into succeeding generations became normatively commonplace. As Macionis and Benokraitis (2007: 101), noted, "One of the most important functions of the family worldwide is the socialization

of children. Although parents might receive help from others (such as relatives, neighbors, and personal caregivers, most communities expect parents themselves to raise their children to become productive and responsible adults.”

Education of Caribbean Afro and Indo immigrants prior to their entry into the U.S

Out of the dynamics of population growth, and its accompanying changes in the plantations social-cultural milieu, Colonizers, faced with protests from freed slaves, first granted elementary grade level education to the descendants of colonized freed Africans, and later did the same for the children of indentured Indians. Underpinning the granting of formal education at the elementary school level was the critical need for lower-level clerical assistants, teachers, plantation healthcare workers, and literate field supervisors. The dwindling of transplanted colonial personnel coupled with problems of recruiting replacement from England - due to costs, exclusive residences, hardships in the tropical colonies, and Englishmen and women remoteness from homes and families, Colonizers found it necessary to hasten the education of colonized children out of critical necessity to support the advancement of continued colonial domination and oppression.

Over a few years, population growth and plantations expansion to extract and export greater wealth spurred the drive for education beyond the elementary school level, as more qualified educators, and well prepared healthcare workers, policemen, plantation staff and civil servants became essential for the continuation and expansion of Colonizers continued domination, exploitation, oppression and control of the laboring masses. To satisfy the staffing demands needed in the extraction and exportation of wealth from the colonies, Colonizers established secondary schools principally needed for educating colonial children and select groups of children of the colonized Africans and Indian laborers. Given the increasing necessity for educationally prepared personnel beyond the grammar school level, colonizers sparingly established additional secondary schools and like the ones before, customarily placed them under the aegis of the Anglican church, and staffed primarily by missionaries. Although varied by colonies and internal colonial structures and relations, the granting of education to children of the colonized signaled the importance of academic preparedness for employment away from becoming proletarian field laborers. From such awareness of academic preparedness as an important avenue towards socio-economic upliftment, the ‘hunger’ for education among Caribbean English-speaking immigrant residents seeking to improve their lives in the U.S can be traced.

Today, wherever they reside within the USA, the descendants of Afro and Indo-Caribbean immigrants can be found actively participating in education at every level. For these descendants, Colonizers denial of education to their fore-parents whose livelihoods became inextricably interwoven with arduous plantation wage labor, success in academic training served to pave the way out of becoming proletarianized and climbing out of the socio-cultural arena of poverty, (See for example Oscar Lewis, 1966, & 1975).

As residents within America’s industrialized-metropolitan context, many English-speaking Caribbean immigrants continue to prize education as the gateway to success, the opportunity for upward socio-economic mobility, and the normative pathway towards one’s material security and wellbeing, even after the age of retirement. In this regard, Caribbean immigrants’ socio-cultural

experiences, their historical groundings of hardships and subsistence existences, all combined in playing a critical role in charting and strengthening their educational pursuits in the US.

2. Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Caribbean Afro And Indo Migrants In Education

Family Structures, Relations, and Values

Originating from Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, Afro-Caribbean migrants brought with them into the US, their family structures and relations, constituting of matrifocal nuclear units of husband, wife and children, while that of Indo-Caribbean consisted of patriarchal units with extended family members, (See R. T Smith, 1996; L. Roopnarine). Incrementally transported, these immigrant family systems gradually took roots after U.S Congress passed the Immigration and Nationalization Act in 1965 (US Government, 1981). The Act relaxed the quota system placed on immigrants and thereby open the doors for people from the various Caribbean islands, including Guyana, to enter into the U.S. Initially immigrants trickled into the country, and upon becoming naturalized, individuals began sponsoring family members in larger numbers. The network of familial relationships that developed from such immigration patterns became the bulwark of support for those in pursuit of educational advancement, instilling in them the importance of assiduously striving for academic excellence.

Such family contributions in the socialization of children find support among sociologists who, for decades, underscored the importance of family values in one's educational accomplishments and success in life, (see J. Coleman, 1961, and 1990; P. Bourdieu and Claude Passeron, 1977). Given this reality, it is not surprising that Afro and Indo Caribbean immigrants, upon leaving their home countries for the United States (U.S), brought with them their family structures and relations in which family members socialize children not only on the values and beliefs of the family, but also on the critical importance of education in one's socio-economic success and social mobility, (See Roopnarine & Brown, 1997; S. Model, 1991). As it relates to English-speaking Caribbean immigrants, the process of socialization is best described by Eric Williams in his autobiography, *Inward Hunger: The Education of a Prime Minister* (2017). In recounting his own socialization, Williams explained in detail the socialization he received from his family which included the inculcation of discipline, respectability, hard work, morality, honesty and the importance of education as the pathway to upward social-by economic mobility. Given Williams' emphasis on education, a quote often attributed to him is that "education is a means by which a society perpetuates itself." To this, I add that "education is a testimony to which a family reproduces itself and its values." Like Williams' family, many Caribbean English-speaking families uphold similar certitudes regarding value of education in the socialization of their children. Many of the children today hold professional and other academic degrees in various fields.

In my decades of teaching at the postsecondary level, many Caribbean Afro and Indo students often expressed the importance of education their parents inculcated in them, some punctuating their retrospections with examples of prominent Caribbean individuals such as Nobel Laureate economist Sir Arthur Lewis, Nobel Laureate novelist Sir Vidya Naipaul, Nobel Laureate poet and playwright Dr. Derek Walcott, Prime Minister, historian and university professor Dr. Eric Williams, renowned anti-

colonial advocate, Black historian, novelist and academician C L R James, historian, academician and international lecturer Dr. Walter Rodney, medical educator and prominent surgeon Sir Harry Annamunthodo, and criminal attorney Sir Lionel Luckhoo as exemplars of educational success.

In the absence of valid data, one can validate the accomplishments of today's Caribbean English-speaking migrants by visiting schools, colleges and hospitals, and engaging in conversations with from Queens and Brooklyn, New York, Miami-Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Florida, Atlanta Georgia, etc. Such methods of information gathering would readily verify by ethnographic and anecdotal evidences, the educational achievements of many Afro and Indo professionals from the various English-speaking Caribbean countries. In the process, one is likely to find the highest level of educational attainment among children and grandchildren of immigrants, especially those born in the US, who benefited from the educational opportunities that became readily accessible to them at a young age.

Cultural Values

For centuries sociologists and anthropologists have noted the importance of culture on people's lives. Defined as the total way of life of a group of people, their customs, traditions, values and beliefs, language, social norms and behavioral patterns that are handed down from one generation, culture helps to determine how people live, and distinguish themselves, (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969).

In coming to the United States English-speaking Caribbean immigrants from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Guyana and other Caribbean nations, brought with them their cultures which, although regularly referred as "West Indian creole culture," carry within each group unique and distinctive characteristics that set them apart. In their pluralistic distinctions, the singular most commonly held belief is the value of education. Viewed as the pathway to upward social and economic mobility, the value of education and academic success are regularly stressed by both Afro and Indo English-speaking migrant parents. In this regard parents customarily emphasize the values of discipline, personal conduct, honesty, obedience, respect for elders and individuals in authority as critical factors in one's educational achievement.

Despite Afro and Indo Caribbean English-speaking immigrants' common emphasis on the acquisition education as the pathway to success, there are subtle differences on the socialization of children toward this end. For example, in Afro immigrant households, commonly nuclear matrifocal units constituted of husband, wife and children, mothers and older siblings' shoulder most of the responsibilities in the socialization of children, whereas in Indo immigrant families, extended family members are involved in the socialization of children whether they live in the same household or not. Under such circumstances, while Afro immigrant mothers are likely to be the person who emphasizes the importance of education to children, for Indo immigrant children a host of family members often impress on the young the importance of academic success.

A distinctive difference in cultural values between Afro and Indo Caribbean migrants relates to social mobility and its links with education. While intra and intergenerational mobility exist in both family systems, the Afro-matrifocal families regularly emphasize mobility along the maternal line, while the Indo-patriarchal families emphasize social mobility along the paternal line. Customarily, Afro-matrifocal families encourage and support the education of both male and female children while the

Indo-patriarchal tend to place greater emphasis on advanced level of education for male children. Over the years, however, while Indo-patriarchal families place emphasis on intergenerational mobility, the system is gradually changing with emphasis being placed on socializing both male and female children to aspire to the highest level of education possible.

Customarily, both Afro and Indo English-speaking Caribbean immigrant families utilize stories to transmit cultural values in their efforts to motivate children towards the acquisition of education. Drawing from their own experiences, both Afro and Indo immigrant parents seldom hesitate to recall and narrate stories of hardships, resilience, and work ethic. In so doing, Indo immigrant parents, in addition to their own experiences, regularly draw from that of their indentured fore-parents' historical past, and stories linked to teachings in the Hindu Ramayan and Mahabhrat, and the Muslim Koran to instill in children the importance of cultural values and educational expectations.

In my decades of university teaching, and interaction with professionals in education, students and professionals of Caribbean extraction often cited such methods of storytelling in their inculcation of cultural values, with some quick to emphasize their remoteness, or lack of familiarity, with their parents or grandparents' homelands.

Religious Orientation

Like the many other immigrant groups of people who arrived in the US before them, the role of religion (including religious education) in the stability, social-cultural revivals and success of English-speaking Caribbean immigrants cannot be underplayed. As the respected sociologist Emile Durkheim outlined in his book the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, religion plays a critical role in shaping individual life and communal lifestyles. According to Durkheim, religion teaches norms, values, and helps to regulate and maintain stability. In addition, he noted that religious ceremonies bring people together and reinforce beliefs through the collective participation of members of the community, (E. Durkheim 1995).

Evidence of Durkheim's views on religion can be found in communities wherever Caribbean English-speaking Afro and Indo immigrants reside. As previously noted, Afro-Caribbean migrants, proselytized and Christianized during colonization, brought with them their Christian faith. This made it possible for them to initially find acceptance and support in established Christian churches, particularly African American churches. Over time, in some communities, Afro Caribbean immigrants founded their own churches to worship in accordance with the principles and practices of their faiths in their countries of origin.

In the case of Indo Caribbean Hindu and Muslim migrants, their faiths - in the absence of established physical structures - first found expressions in household basement settings where a few Hindu and Muslim homeowners willingly made accommodations for prayers and worship. As an Indo-Caribbean Hindu, I had the privilege of attending some of the basements' religious gatherings where homeowners personally welcomed participants from Guyana, Trinidad, and Jamaica, and made all preparations for the Pandits (Hindu priests) ceremonial observances.

As the Caribbean Indo population grew, they established Mosques and Mandirs with many of the same symbolic representations found in the Caribbean. Today, in New York, Miami Florida, and

Atlanta Georgia, these religious institutions not only serve as places of worship but also serve as centers of education and socio-economic upliftment for many Indo-Caribbean immigrants, the majority of whom arrived in the U.S with suitcases half-full and pockets almost empty. In their enigma of arrival, they carried within themselves, hearts laden with faith that strengthened their resolve to succeed. As Durkheim explained, religion is made up of both the sacred and the profane; sacred things refer to objects, rituals, symbols and ideas that are embraced with reverence and respect, and profane things focus on the ordinary aspects of people' everyday life, (Durkheim, 1995). Hence, it is not surprising to find in Mandirs and Mosques, activities that represent both the sacred and profane.

Wherever they exist, the Christian churches, Hindu Mandirs, and Islam Mosques, besides being places of worship also serve as the cornerstones of various forms of support for immigrants, including that of education. Customarily, within the walls of these buildings, attendees from all levels of society find emotional support and comfort, including encouragement, while those of school and college age receive guidance and mentoring, on the value and importance of education towards the achievement of socio-economic success. Upon graduation, the Churches, Mosques and Mandirs serve as venues to pay homage to the deities as well the arenas for jubilation.

Where they exist today, the Churches, Mandirs and Mosques stand symbols of religiosity and enduring loyalties of Caribbean Indo and Afro English-speaking immigrants to their forms of worship, and family life including the socialization of children.

Residential Community

The livelihood and success of Caribbean Afro and Indo immigrants, like that of other immigrant groups in the U.S, is determined and fostered by the socio-environmental dynamics of the communities in which they reside. Due to this reality, the establishment of residential communities in the transference of cultural values cannot be overlooked or underplayed since the environmental conditions affect residents and children's access to assorted opportunities - including economic and educational opportunities. As such, residential communities situated in and around well-resourced population sectors increase children's chances of attending better-performing schools and acquiring education that enhances the pathway to economic opportunities and upward social mobility.

Over the years, in coming to the U.S, Afro Caribbean migrants have established residences in urban areas in or around established African American neighborhoods such as Brooklyn, New York, (see L. Roopnarine, 2018). Due to the historical structural inequalities and under-funding of such neighborhoods, residential segregation, and discrimination against people of African descent, Afro-Caribbean migrants usually encounter social barriers that inhibit their chances of gaining residential access into well-funded communities that increase opportunities for educational success and socio-economic mobility.

Unlike Afro-Caribbean migrants, Indo-Caribbean migrants, having experienced less overt discrimination and structural barriers, established residential enclaves where families feel safe, accepted, and culturally well represented. Motivated by an unyielding desire to succeed, some pursued professional and other academic degrees, some became lawyers, doctors, engineers, accounts, teachers, entrepreneurs etc. And, with their assistance in molding and mentoring family

members, relatives, and friends, it gave rise to a well-established diaspora network that facilitates success and advancements of many within the Indo-Caribbean community.

With the establishment of Mandirs and Mosques within the Indo-Caribbean residential communities, these religious institutions have become the loci for residents' gatherings including worship, ceremonial activities, religious celebrations, and the socialization of believers, all of which lend guidance and support the educational and economic success of individuals and families. As previously mentioned, parents utilize the network connections religious gatherings provide, to join in celebrating and giving thanks for their children's acceptance into, or graduations from colleges and universities. *Challenges and outcomes:*

Undoubtedly, Afro and Indo English-speaking immigrants from Caribbean nations such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and Guyana, like many other immigrants before them, have contributed to the transformation of the economic and socio-cultural environment in places where they reside in the US. Their contributions, however, have not come without varied challenges. Despite their contributions, these immigrant groups have had to surmount several difficulties in adapting to their new circumstances including that of education.

In pursuit of education, Caribbean Afro and Indo students of immigrant backgrounds must overcome enormous difficulties. While parents instill discipline and high academic expectations in their children, schools' social and academic environment usually serve to test or challenge such parental training. For example, teachers in the U.S public school system encourage and facilitate student centered learning which may run counter to Afro and Indo parents' cultural values regarding academic achievement, and their children's instructional expectations from teachers. In addition, the creole dialect, and idiomatic expressions of Afro and Indo Caribbean students may be incorrectly perceived or stigmatized, leading to bias or prejudicial assessments by teachers. Also, latent and overt expressions of racial and ethnic discrimination from both teachers and peers can become barriers to students' learning and academic success, especially since such practices within the school environment can create fear, and result in social withdrawal among Afro and Indo Caribbean students.

Depending on the schools' staffing and their familiarity with Caribbean cultures, Afro and Indo immigrant students can be stereotyped as to their learning capabilities especially since their accents and 'creolese' dialects can result in misunderstandings or mimicking when participating in classroom discussions. Also, schools' curricula can be frustrating to these immigrant students, especially when the instructional material contain little to no information, or debase their histories or cultures, (see for example, Kozol. J. 1975).

In schools where teachers are of Afro and Indo Caribbean descent, they too, may experience discrimination from administrators and students because of their race, ethnicity, accents, and instructional styles. The best example of such responses is illustrated in the book and later portrayed in the movie, *To Sir with Love*, the real-life story of Edward Braithwaite, an Afro- Guyanese teacher in a London school. The book chronicles, and the movie, starring Caribbean raised Sidney Pottier, depicts the taunts, jeers and challenges Braithwaite had to overcome in his teaching experience. Even at the postsecondary level, Afro and Indo Caribbean professors experience racial and ethnic discrimination especially as it relates to tenure and promotion. Despite the odds, at all educational levels, students,

teachers and professors of Caribbean Afro and Indo background have succeeded and excelled through the values of perseverance, dedication, and hard work instilled in them.

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The Cost of Opportunity: Sacrifice, Strength, and Success in the Immigrant Experience

By Ms. Kamla Karina Millwood

Sacrifice

- Leaving family, friends, and support systems behind
- Departing from familiarity, culture, and comfort
- Facing the emotional weight of separation and uncertainty
- Taking risks without guarantees
- Holding onto faith that the journey will lead to something greater
- The cost of opportunity begins with what is left behind

The Journey

- Arriving in a new country filled with hope and fear
- Navigating unfamiliar systems, environments, and expectations
- Adjusting to a faster pace of life and new standards
- Holding onto vision despite uncertainty
- Believing that sacrifice will produce results
- The journey requires endurance and faith

Starting From Scratch

- Immigrants often restart regardless of prior success
- Professional status may not transfer into new systems
- Rebuilding finances from the ground up
- Accepting opportunities below previous experience
- Learning new systems, processes, and expectations

- Re-establishing identity and credibility

Strength

- Strength is built through adversity and persistence
- Continuing forward despite setbacks and challenges
- Maintaining discipline and focus
- Drawing motivation from purpose and long-term goals
- Turning pain into power
- Strength becomes the foundation for success

Education as the Turning Point

- Education provides access to new opportunities
- Creates pathways for economic mobility
- Builds confidence, knowledge, and credibility
- Allows individuals to compete in new environments
- Breaks generational limitations
- Transforms potential into achievement

Family Influence

- Parents emphasized the importance of education and excellence
- Mother served as a State Bank Examiner demonstrating discipline and achievement
- Father worked as an Editor at Caribbean Life Newspaper
- Family values shaped mindset and ambition
- Education was viewed as a necessity, not an option
- A legacy of excellence continues forward

Academic Achievement

- Education positioned me for greater opportunities
- Focused on Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Applied education to real-world solutions
- Developed leadership and strategic thinking skills
- Proof that sacrifice and effort lead to advancement

Transition to Success

- Moving from survival to stability
- Building confidence and professional presence
- Turning education into opportunity
- Creating value within communities
- Establishing a foundation for leadership
- Success begins when preparation meets opportunity

Entrepreneurial Impact

- Founder and President of Palatial Publishing LLC
- Created platforms for small businesses and entrepreneurs
- Developed large-scale expos that drive economic activity
- Focused on visibility, branding, and opportunity creation
- Empowering diverse communities through business
- Turning vision into measurable impact

Leadership and Legacy

- Leadership built on purpose, service, and vision
- Creating opportunities for others to succeed
- Building systems that support long-term growth
- Expanding influence beyond personal success
- Leaving a legacy that impacts future generations
- True success is measured by how many others are elevated

Closing

- Opportunity requires sacrifice
- Strength is developed through struggle
- Success is built through persistence and belief
- The immigrant experience reflects courage and resilience
- Every challenge contributes to the final outcome
- From sacrifice comes strength, and from strength comes success

