



# The Construction of Black Jamaican Masculinity in a Neocolonial Imaginary: Canadian “Homohegemony” and the “Homophobic Other”

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## Abstract

In this discussion, I demonstrate that Canadian news media texts, centered in Toronto, serve to ideologically construct Jamaica as a “homophobic other” along neocolonial lines, with important implications for constructions of race and masculinity. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci, I argue that the production of “homophobic Jamaica” is an illiberal manifestation of “homohegemony” in Canada, a novel incarnation of the more basic benevolent liberal/illiberal tension that characterizes the ideological and material context of queer inclusion. Specifically, it is demonstrated that the construction of “homophobic Jamaica” is consistent with a neocolonial caricature, one that implicitly bolsters the national imagination of white Canadian masculinity as modern and progressive in contradistinction to black Jamaican masculinity, imagined as backward and excessive

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## Introduction

In this discussion, I perform a critical reading of three representative Canadian newspaper articles on homosexuality in Jamaica, and one on homosexuality in Southern Commonwealth countries more generally. I demonstrate that these articles serve to ideologically construct Jamaica as a “homophobic other” along neocolonial lines, with important implications for constructions of race and masculinity. This ideological construction of the “homophobic other” takes place in the context of Canadian “homohegemony.” Drawing on and extending Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 1971), I define homohegemony as an ideology of relative inclusion of gay and lesbian citizenship in the Canadian national imaginary, in which the Canadian state extends selective sexual citizenship rights — culminating in same-sex marriage — to the gay and lesbian minority in a “benevolent” liberal fashion. These rights are premised, however, on serious moments of “illiberalism,” in terms of specific exclusions both within and outside the nation-state. Homohegemony is entangled, for example, with power relations of capitalism, neocolonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. In the post-same-sex marriage moment in Canada, lesbians and gays are commonly imagined as equal citizens in light of the achievement of near legal equality. Though gaps remain in even this realm of formal equality (and more significant inequality is observable in civil societal spaces), some gays and lesbians have recently become, in effect, normative sexual citizens (Stychin 2003). Yet, the ideal-typical gay or lesbian citizen is rarely imagined as a racialized minority (Puar 2007, xxiv, 27-28), and is usually imagined as middle-class and/or a professional (Puar 2007; Sears 2005). Such a sexual citizen, as a member of a constitutionally interpreted and nationally imagined status group based on sexual orientation, must not transgress certain boundaries of sexual fluidity (Valverde 1985) and (cis)gender normativity (Butler 1993; Namaste 2000) lest they sacrifice citizenship status. These specific exclusions within the nation-state emerge as the price of inclusion within the “benevolent” liberal rights regime in which homohegemony advances. It can further be seen that sexual othering in Canada has incompletely yet significantly “flipped” from

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a longstanding historical fixation on the “homosexual other” within the country’s borders, to a preoccupation with “homophobic other nations.” The “homophobic other nation” is imagined in the context of the hegemony of homosexual inclusion in Canada, and functions ideologically as a foil or counterpoint to a gay friendly “national self.” Jamaica occupies a significant space in the Canadian national imagination of “homophobic” others, particularly from Canada’s queer capital and the major Jamaican diasporic city of Toronto (Burman 2010).

It will be contended here that the construction of “homophobic Jamaica” is an illiberal manifestation of homohegemony in Canada, a novel incarnation of the more basic benevolent liberal/illiberal tension that characterizes the ideological and material context of homohegemony. Specifically, it will be argued that the construction of “homophobic Jamaica” is consistent with a neocolonial caricature, one that implicitly bolsters constructions of white Canadian masculinity as modern and progressive in contradistinction to a constructed black Jamaican masculinity as backward and excessive. This is not to discount or diminish the importance of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer/questioning) rights gains in Canada and other state/societal contexts, but merely to illuminate ongoing exclusions of LGBTQ people and others via attention to some of the ideological and material stakes of LGBTQ rights.

It should be noted that the construction of “homophobic Jamaica” is persuasive, not least because it bases itself in a degree of truth grounded in real practices and experiences of heterosexism — including that which is coercive and at times violent — in the Jamaican context. For example, men’s consensual same-sex sexual activity continues to be expressly, in terms of “gross indecency” legislation (Section 79: The Offences Against the Person Act), and effectively, via “buggery” legislation (Section 76: The Offences Against the Person Act), criminalized in Jamaica within specific British colonial law retained after formal independence from the United Kingdom in 1962. As well, strains of intense

heterosexism exist among some segments of Jamaica's civil society, not least within some expressions of fundamentalist Christianity and dancehall music (Hope 2010, 72; 2006, 79-83). Yet it is contended in this discussion that one must distinguish between material/experiential realities of heterosexism in Jamaica, and Canada's problematic ideological construction of "homophobic Jamaica" along neocolonial, racialized, and gendered lines. The construction of "homophobic Jamaica," mainly from Toronto, is also an exercise in centering white Canadian masculinity vis-à-vis black Jamaican masculinity within a subtle neocolonial imaginary of Jamaica. Queerness — and more specifically, normative queer citizenship — therefore significantly enters into the construction of othered masculinity in contemporary neocolonial relations.

### **Very Ideological Texts**

The first article is titled, "Jamaica's leading gay activist, Maurice Tomlinson, married a Torontonion" (Porter 2012).<sup>1</sup> The article profiles Jamaican and international LGBTQ activist, Maurice Tomlinson. It prominently characterizes Tomlinson as living a "double life." Being gay is cast as completely different in Canada relative to Jamaica. Notably, the metaphor of the "double life" lends itself to thinking about Canada and Jamaica in binary terms on the issue of homosexuality. It also excludes the possibility that a gay- or lesbian-identified Jamaican-Canadian could negotiate an integrated diasporic and transnational existence in spite of the differences that exist in the regulation of homosexuality between the two nation-states. The text does well to highlight real heterosexism in Jamaica that has in fact forced some gay and lesbian Jamaicans to leave the country. What is most notable, however, is what is not mentioned in the news text.

Omitted in the discussion of "homophobia" are social movements and everyday challenges to extant heterosexist practices in Jamaica, queer spaces in Jamaica, and ongoing heterosexism and other exclusions in Canada.

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Language like “the country’s [Jamaica’s] virulent homophobia,” and “[Tomlinson] is right to be scared” since “vigilante justice against gay men is common in Jamaica,” lead to the impression that Jamaica is a uniformly “homophobic” place. A whole culture of “virulent homophobia” is herein generalized from particular and particularly shocking incidents of heterosexual violence. This can be observed where the article relates: “Last year, two men were chopped to death with machetes because they were gay.” Importantly, it is the function and meaning of these discourses, rather than the particular examples to which they relate — examples that are tragic and truly unspeakable — that must be queried. The troubling effect of the discursive relating of these types of examples is that their horrific details and imagery have a tendency to slip into a generalized notion of a racialized Jamaican “homophobia” for a Canadian audience, similar to the generalization of a “homophobic” culture from the particularities of Jamaica’s legal context (Gosine 2012, 515). At no point in the storyline is there a “breakage” to reflect on whether realities of violence against gays and lesbians (and especially against other queers) continue to occur in the Canadian state and societal context (Lamble 2012). It is actively forgotten that manifestations of heterosexism, often of a violent nature, persist. For example, 218 police-reported hate crimes in Canada in 2010 were motivated by sexual orientation, with 65 percent of those being considered “violent” (Dowden and Brennan 2012). This statistic does not even take into account the epidemic of the bullying of LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ youth suicide, which have prompted such noble if structurally insufficient interventions as the “It Gets Better” campaign (It Gets Better Canada).<sup>2</sup> The spectre of such violence in Canada is thus relegated to the past, further illustrated in the text’s assertion: “Change both seeps and charges. Just think: 11 years ago this month, [Reverend] Hawkes performed the country’s first gay wedding, wearing a bulletproof vest under his clerical vestments.” While the admission of realities of violence against gays and lesbians in Canada could be read positively, as a breaking down of the Canada/Jamaica dualism on this issue, the statement also reads as a suggestion of how far Canada has come since the legalization of same-sex marriage, relegating Jamaica to a much

earlier stage of gay and lesbian rights development during the same temporal period.

This assessment assumes that same-sex marriage is the end of a teleos of progress on LGBTQ rights in Canada. The specific example of the continuing lack of explicit transgender legal protections in Canadian jurisdictions — including federally (Stone 2014)<sup>3</sup> — indicates a clear absence of legal equality for transgender persons that would serve to symbolize equal citizenship in the national imaginary (Egale Canada 2012; 2013). In fact, same-sex marriage can be seen to entrench binary notions of sex and gender, thus bolstering contemporary cis-sexism in Canada. Moreover, hegemonic forms of queer citizenship represented by the institution of same-sex marriage may not even be directly relevant to the diverse same-sex/gender nonconforming identities, practices, and family forms of queers of colour in Canada (Crichlow 2004),<sup>4</sup> revealing the racialized character of queer citizenship and community in Canada. Finally, it bears mentioning that same-sex marriage marked the arrival of near formal equality for normative gay and lesbian citizens, but there exist continued restrictions even in this realm of basic legal equality in Canada. Family policy continues to institute legal inequality (Epstein 2012); age of consent laws remain unequal for vaginal versus anal intercourse, with a higher age of consent for the latter in jurisdictions where Canada’s anal sex law (Section 159 of Canada’s Criminal Code) has not been deemed unconstitutional by the courts, and prohibitions on anal sex in which more than two persons participate or are present likewise continue to be legally in effect in some Canadian jurisdictions in spite of no similar prohibitions on “group sex” for other forms of sexual activity (Rayside 2008, 117-18; Criminal Code, Anal Intercourse, Section 159; Tanovitch 2010; Barriere 2004); and restrictions on the donation of blood by sexually active homosexual and bisexual men are still instituted by Canadian Blood Services (CBC News 2013).<sup>5</sup> Finally, the “law of provocation,” recognized by common law, retains heterosexist elements. This law has operated to allow the “reasonable” heterosexual man who kills another man in a fit of “panic” because of a perceived “homosexual sexual advance”

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to be convicted of manslaughter instead of murder (Banks 1997). Thus, subtle and systemic legal and societal inequality persist even for those sexual citizens who have been granted significant citizenship rights marking their imagined inclusion as equal members of the nation. This is not to equate state/societal heterosexism in Canada and Jamaica but rather to deconstruct the common sense construction of Canada/Jamaica on this issue along the lines of a dualism, and to inject a much needed intersectional analysis (Crenshaw 2005).

Stephen Lewis, a prominent former Canadian social democratic politician with an impressive record of involvement with the UN and in development work, as well as a colleague of Tomlinson's through their mutual work for AIDS-Free World, is quoted in the article as saying that Tomlinson is "on a personal crusade to convert Jamaica to tolerance." While Lewis is considered to be solidly on the left of the Canadian political spectrum, the language used here betrays an implicit acceptance of a form of neocolonialism surrounding issues of homosexuality. This suggests that such contemporary imperial assumptions are shared across even left segments of the political spectrum in Canada, befitting a national identity that is hegemonic. The religious metaphor of "converting" Jamaica conjures up colonial imagery and the role of religion in colonialism historically. The idea that Jamaica needs to be converted to "tolerance" assumes its presently intolerant nature. This stands in contrast to the unstated but heavily implied assumption, through the text and photo alike, of Canada's modern, advanced, or more enlightened nature. This constructed modernity is also seen in the text's implicit treatment of masculinity.

The fact that Lewis (who is white, straight, and male) is a well-respected elder statesman and a symbol in many ways of Canada's progressive/social justice tradition, functions along with the mention of Reverend Hawkes (who is white, gay, and male) in the text to subtly code Canadian men — men in the image of Lewis and Hawkes — as modern and progressive in their tolerance, presumably contrasted with black heterosexual men in Jamaica. The masculinity and whiteness of homohegemony are here undeniable in terms of Lewis

featuring so prominently in the article, as well as in terms of the pictorial representation of the wedding ceremony itself, in which Hawkes is depicted signing the marriage certificate and Tomlinson and his husband (who is white) are pictured along with another white male in the background. Thus, whiteness and masculinity abound in the actual image connected with the article, and in the imagery conjured up by the language of the article. The text describes important features of the Jamaican context, such as former Prime Minister Bruce Golding being “openly homophobic,” and Tomlinson’s account of a male police officer who went on a hateful tirade against gays; the text pairs this with an important discussion of potential advancements on gay and lesbian issues under Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller. While these facts are important to note and the anecdotes indeed flow from Tomlinson’s painful personal experiences of heterosexism, the representation of Jamaican males/men (made sharper with the contrast to Jamaica’s female Prime Minister) alongside Canadian males/men in the article heightens the problematic effect of painting black Jamaican men (presumably including many in Canada) as intolerant and regressive, setting up a contrast with white “Canadian” men as modern and progressive. Interestingly, the implication is also that Tomlinson is only in a position to save Jamaica now that he has been saved by Canada. A “national self” is herein produced as a gay and lesbian refuge, a neoimperial position from which gestures of assistance to neocolonial Jamaica can be made. This narrative of rescue is characteristic of much of the discourse about Jamaica’s gays and lesbians in these news media texts, speaking to an understanding of Jamaican queers as “third world queers” (similar to the construction of “third world women;” see Mohanty 2003, 22, 40-42) that need assistance in the face of an intractable intolerance.

The symbolic function of the immigrant gay Jamaican-Canadian man — rarely a lesbian in the discourses that I have examined as part of a larger project — is crucial here. The gay Jamaican-Canadian who has left Jamaica for Canada tends to be celebrated in these discourses in a way that presumably makes Canadians feel proud of their nation’s status as a gay-friendly refuge. This

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discourse, however, generally also ignores race, class, (cis)gender, and other intersections of the gay Jamaican-Canadian's identity that must be negotiated upon migration to Canada. That the gay Jamaican-Canadian might have to negotiate racism, for example, particular forms of sexual exoticization or objectification in the case of black Caribbean-Canadian men in the mainstream and malestream white gay community in Canada (Walcott 2006; Wahab and Plaza 2009, 4) is unlikely to even be intelligible in the delimited field of meaning constructed by these common sense discourses. The gay Jamaican-Canadian in these texts speaks to lived experiential realities of heterosexism in Jamaica, but, crucially, the gay Jamaican-Canadian does not completely represent himself nor does he represent all queer Jamaicans still living in Jamaica.

This news media text ends with a curious statement that needs to be interrogated: "Looking at the freckles that splash down Tomlinson's left cheek like sugar grains, I wonder how anyone could hate a man so breathlessly beautiful." This physical description is odd for its inclusion in the article, not least since there is already a photo of Tomlinson and his husband beside the text. The statement is also heavily racialized. Tomlinson's freckles appearing to look like "sugar grains" seems to connect to Jamaica's plantation history involving sugarcane, a history in which black African slaves laboured under coercive and torturous conditions. Further, that it is "hard to imagine" that anyone could "hate" Tomlinson implies that Jamaicans must be extremely, monstrously, or perversely "homophobic" — a "homophobia" cast as truly other for the Canadian national imagination. This is revealing of a tendency to treat Jamaica, and indeed even the character of Jamaicans (particularly black Jamaican men), as stereotypically uncivilized. Modern civilization is indexed to the benevolent state treatment of homosexuality, with Canada (and white Canadian men in the text) acting as exemplary.

Another article, "'Murder music' sparks Caribbean tourism boycott call," wades into an ongoing debate about "homophobic" music and its international

export, mainly from Jamaica (Infantry 2008).<sup>6</sup> Jamaica provides the primary context for the article's discussion of those who are engaged in attempting to prevent certain dancehall music, or what the article imprecisely refers to as "reggae," from being distributed and performed in Canada. These actions are based on the rationale that the music, dubbed "murder music" by gay rights activists, contains "threatening sentiments toward homosexuals and pejorative patois terms for them." The motivation behind this campaign is that cracking down on such "homophobic" music will have an impact in Jamaica, where, according to gay Jamaican asylum-seeker Gareth Henry, quoted in the article, a climate of homophobia and homophobic violence is "sanctioned" by the state and "supported by reggae artists and the church."

As background to the discursive analysis of this article, it is important to point out that the coalition comprising "Stop Murder Music (Canada)" has been part of a larger international campaign and has contained a number of groups, including LGBTQ, anti-racist, and other human rights organizations. The coalition was a working group of the Canadian Caribbean Human Rights Group (CCHRG). It initially included the participation of the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG), the main LGBTQ rights NGO in Jamaica (Stop Murder Music (Canada)). One of the interview participants consulted for a larger research project that I have been engaged in, a current coordinator for J-FLAG, explained that the organization, then under a different generation of leadership, was an early supporter of the Stop the Murder Music campaign, but has since sought to distance itself from some of the discourses and "persona" surrounding it, including the idea of a tourism boycott of Jamaica.<sup>7</sup> This interviewee and others notably pointed out, however, that the campaign did enjoy a degree of success in persuading artists (who are mostly male) to abandon "homophobic" lyrics that should be acknowledged.

Returning to the article, the text recounts a Toronto forum in 2008 called "The Sound of Hate," where two hundred people turned out to talk about the problem of "murder music" on a Friday evening at the University of Toronto. A

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tourism boycott was suggested at this forum, as the title of the article and its very first line indicate. While the report of this town hall-style gathering goes on to suggest that a fairly careful conversation took place, the text is nevertheless revealing of the common sense construction of a universally “homophobic Jamaica,” with implications for constructions of masculinity and race within neocolonial space.

Situating the story in material conditions, the very idea of a meeting consisting of several hundred people in Toronto, brought together to discuss the problem of Jamaican dancehall music on a Friday night, suggests a certain preoccupation in Canada's largest city with Jamaica's ascribed “homophobia.” While this interest is no doubt fuelled by the legitimate concerns of members of the substantial Jamaican and Caribbean diasporas in Toronto, as well as, and including, members of the queer community there, both the gathering and the reporting of it are also conditioned by homohegemony. The decision to focus on hateful, heterosexist music and its international circulation presumably grabs Canadians' attention. Yet, this is precisely the issue, as a mainstream Canadian audience is likely to interpret this message as a representation of Jamaica in general. This is particularly the case since the article shifts among discussions of “this popular segment of reggae,” to “homophobic violence,” to “homophobia” in Jamaica more generally. The causal arrows are here obscured in one convoluted image of a universally homophobic nation. Particular instances or expressions of heterosexism, in this case once again related by a gay male Jamaican-Canadian immigrant who functions as the native informant, tend to be generalized in these discourses and their popular reception.

The discussion of “murder music” and “homophobic violence” at the outset of the article quickly moves into a wholesale portrayal of Jamaica in a decidedly backward light: “a country where sodomy is a criminal offence, abortion is illegal and a condoms-in-schools proposal was recently shot down.” This is a portrayal of Jamaica as socially and politically pre-modern, with

"homophobia" providing the main context of this assessment. Seen in this example, the shaming of "murder music" and the "sound of hate" can quickly slip into a shaming of Jamaica's assumed murderous "homophobia" and hateful culture. More elementally concerning homohegemony, the very first line of the text includes the statement that Caribbean governments need to be pressured "to protect the human rights of their gay citizenry." Given that homohegemony is precisely about the imagination of gays and lesbians as equal sexual citizens, it is highly significant that this opening statement calls attention to a lack of gay and lesbian citizenship in Caribbean countries. This is a clear gesture at "homophobic" other nations on precisely the issue, sexual citizenship, that homohegemony has come to crystallize domestically, with Jamaica functioning as the main Caribbean "homophobic" counterpoint.

The suggested tourism boycott would have the effect of seriously harming the Jamaican economy, dependent as it is on tourism from key countries of the global North, including Canada. This heavy dependence on tourism is a manifestation of an unequal, neocolonial economic relationship with Canada and other Northern nations, as well as the continuation of colonial economic patterns (Burman 2010, 26). As Jenny Burman points out, tourism is one of Jamaica's "top few foreign exchange earners ... along with bauxite and migrant remittances," exemplifying contemporarily "the distinctive ways in which Canada, as a former British settler colony, and Jamaica, as a former plantation and slave colony with few settlers, were integrated into the global economy" (Burman 2010, 26). The economic power imbalance between Canada and Jamaica remains a largely hidden condition in Canadian media coverage of "homophobic Jamaica," elided in framing Jamaica's problem with its sexual citizenry.

Finally, the news article omits what the problem of "homophobic" dancehall music is actually about. The particular dancehall music under discussion is not situated in its historical context. Following the scholarship of Donna Hope, it is worth considering that this type of overt or extreme

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heterosexist and misogynistic dancehall music is actually rather novel, and came about as part of a wider reaction within Jamaican society to the increased global and local visibility of gays and lesbians in the late 1990s (Hope 2006, 81-82). Applying these insights, the dancehall artists in question have not been reacting to same-sex sexual activity or same-sex sexual object choice *per se*, though certainly this forms part of the context of these reactions, but to the increased public visibility of “out” gays and lesbians. This is particularly the case regarding gay Jamaican men, who are sometimes perceived to be in direct violation of masculinity and/or to be feminine, and are thus constructed as offensive or even threatening to black Jamaican postcolonial masculinity, and to the heteropatriarchal neocolonial state (Hope 2006, 79-84; though about The Bahamas, see also Alexander 1997, 65-67, 86-87).<sup>8</sup> These reactions are therefore significantly linked to dominant masculinity and the association of male homosexual identity with feminization, for example in terms of a perceived failure to dominate women as mandated by traditional masculinity.<sup>9</sup> That such concerns with homosexuality in dancehall music largely turn on masculinity and the particular threat of male homosexuality is evidenced by “the paucity of dancehall songs that violently denounce lesbianism and the ... surfeit of songs and lyrics that denounce male homosexuality” (Hope 2006, 83). This amplified heterosexist reaction, within both dancehall music and some segments of the wider Jamaican society, has also been advanced in the context of perceptions of homosexuality as an elite/outside/foreign/Northern influence, as something fundamentally un-Jamaican (LaFont 2001).

Such a contextual analysis is not at all meant to minimize or act as an apologist for heterosexist lyrics in popular music, some of which are truly unsettling. Yet, the unproblematized assumption of “homophobic” music, let alone a “homophobic” culture, is inaccurate given that it ignores that these reactions advanced within dancehall music have been motivated as much by concerns about foreignness, publicity of gay and lesbian identity, and gender nonconformity within a heteropatriarchal and neocolonial context, as they have been by concerns about sexual orientation. These artists and their

followers are also, as Donna Hope argues, reacting in the context of somewhat of a crisis of black masculinity brought on by the difficult economic circumstances in Jamaica induced by neoliberalism, and women's advancements relative to some groups of men under contemporary social and economic conditions (Hope 2006, 84-85). Thus it can be seen that dancehall music in many ways represents a challenge by black/Afro-Caribbean, working-class masculinity to the historically significant intersecting classed and racialized character of masculine power in Jamaica (including in the neocolonial state, with a continuing correlation between upper-class persons and lighter skin-tones, as well as between upper-class individuals and less Afro-Caribbean markers of race). On the other hand, deeply heterosexist music, as Hope points out, entrenches and extends the colonial legacy vis-à-vis gender and sexuality. The point for our present purposes is that the reporting of heterosexist dancehall music, in addition to cementing the construction of "homophobic Jamaica," is likely to confirm common sense Canadian understandings of black Jamaican masculinity as backward in its intolerance. In effect, this is a construction of black Jamaican masculinity, based on the predominantly black male dancehall artists under indictment within these media discourses, as having an excessive, pre-modern mentality. Invisibilized is the fact that dancehall music advances a contradictory challenge to (neo)colonial masculinity and power relations, power relations that Canada is part of. Hegemonic Canadian news media discourses prefer to fixate on the "sound of hate," a sound that registers as emanating from a generally homophobic nation with an excessive and regressive masculine vibe.

Moving from media coverage of civil society to media coverage of political society (Gramsci 1971), in "Commonwealth countries ignoring hatred, Baird says," Laura Payton writes about Canada's Conservative Foreign Affairs Minister, John Baird, as he turns to a promotion of gay rights and religious freedom internationally (Payton 2012).<sup>10</sup> Notably, this combination of gay rights and religious freedom is itself curious. It speaks to the need to appease the Conservative Party's political base in Canada, including electoral and financial

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constituencies, and thus balance homohegemony with socially conservative elements still influential in spite of being politically marginalized in Canadian society (Smith 2008, 188; Warner 2012). The article recounts a “sweeping speech about human rights” delivered by Baird in London, England, in which the Conservative Minister hammered home the message that “Canada won’t stand by while its ‘Commonwealth cousins’ criminalize homosexuality and ignore other fundamental freedoms.” The article quotes Baird as stating in his speech that “we will not sit in our far-off homes and plead ignorance to crimes against those who seek the same freedoms we enjoy.” While the article does not refer specifically to Jamaica, Jamaica is a prominent Commonwealth country retaining buggery and gross indecency legislation, one that is often singled out in international discourses in addition to Canadian discourses (US Department of State 2008; Human Rights Watch 2004; Amnesty International 2007).

This speech and its coverage represent an example of Canadian homohegemony and the neocolonial construction of “homophobic” others in their most stark and contradictory forms. Not least, the contradictions of homohegemony are observable in the fact that Baird, who is white and male, is also well known to be queer (presumably gay) in LGBTQ and political circles, though he does not speak to the general Canadian public about his sexual identity. Because this fact is so well known in various Canadian circles in political and civil society, noting it here is not tantamount to “outing.” On the contrary, not mentioning it would be interpreted by many Canadian readers as an obvious omission, and, in the context of this discussion and its wider audience, might appear as an effort to conceal homohegemony’s contradictions. That Commonwealth countries of the global South are being chastised on the issue of gay rights by a Conservative cabinet minister who is publicly silent on his own queer subjectivity reveals the active invisibilization of ongoing heteronormativity in Canada in the very same breath as Baird’s criticism of “homophobic others.” While it is true that individuals neglect to publicly “come out” for a variety of complex, including critical, reasons, it is highly likely in this case that segments of the Conservative Party and its supporters, while permissive of the condemnation

of "homophobic others," are still reluctant to embrace an openly gay Canadian cabinet minister with a major portfolio such as Foreign Affairs. As a white queer man with conservable class privilege and a largely normative gender presentation, Baird's failure to publicly come out must also be viewed in terms of a reluctance to cede white heteropatriarchal privilege. This is reflective of a wider trend in which many white, gay, middle- and upper-class Canadian men remain complicit with varying degrees of heteronormativity and aligned with conservative political forces. More generally, that social democratic (as represented by Stephen Lewis, discussed above) and conservative Canadian political voices alike are invested in the narrative of Canadian homohegemony in terms of both its domestic "benevolent" liberal inclusive elements and its international illiberal exclusionary elements speaks to its pervasiveness as a marker of national identity. In the neocolonial championing of gay rights by prominent white Canadian men in political society, it can once again be seen that there is an implicit coding of white Canadian masculinity as modern, progressive, and civilized, in contradistinction to the constructed backward, excessive, and racialized masculinity of the global South that enacts "regressive laws" (according to Baird's speech) on women's rights and LGBTQ rights. These are places, according to Baird, where "darkness still lives," a racialized and neocolonial construction of such contexts as having yet to see the light of progress.

In addition to exemplifying contemporary neocolonialism, the article erases histories of colonialism. The media text completely fails to mention that much of the anti-same-sex legislation currently in existence in Commonwealth countries today is a direct result of a history of white heteropatriarchal British imperial law.<sup>11</sup> This is the case, for example, in the Jamaican and wider Anglophone Caribbean contexts (AIDS-Free World 2010).<sup>12</sup> This shared legal history, not without amendments and additions to the laws in question by some "postcolonial" nation-states (Alexander 1997; AIDS-Free World 2010), is a major reason why 41 out of an estimated 76 countries that continue to criminalize same-sex sexual activity among consenting adults worldwide (not counting

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Canada and other states with more minor anti-same-sex legislation) are members of the Commonwealth (Itaborahy and Zhu 2013; Kaleidoscope Trust 2013). The text problematically reports that “homosexuality is illegal in 41 of 54 Commonwealth member states.” As we have seen, in the Jamaican context, it is men’s same-sex sexual activity, rather than homosexual identity, that is in fact illegal. The form that this criminalization presently takes in Jamaica - buggery and gross indecency laws - is the same form that the repression of same-sex sexual activity has historically taken in England, Canada, as well as other legal contexts influenced by a British history of sexuality (Kinsman 1987).<sup>13</sup> In sum, the article fails to contextualize these “dozens of Commonwealth countries” with “regressive and punitive laws” by referencing the invisible elephant in the room: British imperialism. It cannot be assumed that readers will simply make this connection themselves, particularly since the indictment of these “Commonwealth cousins” occurs alongside a celebratory mention of the “values” shared by Canada and the United Kingdom. While the textual production of “homophobic others” seeks to erase uncomfortable histories of colonialism, a clear continuity can be observed in the way contemporary homohegemony places whiteness and masculinity at the centre of its neocolonial gaze, a gaze of which white neoimperial gays are now themselves a part.

A final article to be considered concerns the textual confluence of the Canadian military, homosexuality, masculinity, and Jamaica. In “Military joins Pride parade,” Emma Reilly writes about the first official participation of personnel from the Canadian Armed Forces in the Toronto Pride Parade in the summer of 2008 (Reilly 2008).<sup>14</sup> This was the same year as the selection of Henry, formerly of Jamaica, as International Grand Marshal, a fact that provides the context for the conclusion of the article. After mentioning the official participation, for the first time, of members of the Canadian Armed Forces in the Parade, the text moves on to highlight a number of political leaders from different political parties who were also in attendance. Brief attention is then given to the history of struggle of gays and lesbians in the military, with Pride

Toronto's Executive Director Fatima Amarshi summarizing: "So for the military to turn around and recognize its soldiers, the diversity within its ranks and the need to have a presence at Pride means a tremendous amount." Mention is also made of the fact that the Hamilton Pride Parade controversially banned members of the military from participation earlier that same month, causing a major reaction among some members of the gay community who argued that the military has substantially changed since its discriminatory policies in the early 1990s. Some of the more political messages of the Toronto Pride Parade are then noted in the article, which also points out that the women-centred "Dyke March" is a more "grassroots" and radical parade that occurs alongside the larger event. Thus, a degree of nuance is evident in the text in terms of an implicit recognition of counter-hegemony; some queers in Canada reject the particular form of inclusion on offer under homohegemony, remaining politicized in a radical fashion and resisting alignment with the Canadian state.

Along with the police, the military is the classic expression of a nation-state's coercive authority. Furthermore, who is included in the military carries substantial symbolic and ideological weight in many nations (Stychin 1995; Enloe 1983). That the military is now marching in Pride speaks to a fundamental transformation in the dominant Canadian understanding of the relationship of homosexuality to national identity and the state. It also reflects a fundamental transformation in the LGBTQ community's overall orientation toward and identification with the state and military, which have historically, and decisively, excluded them (Kinsman and Gentile 2010). These centres of power, symbols of security, and conveyors of national community have been among the most resistant to change as homohegemony has gradually and unevenly ascended (Kinsman 1987; Kinsman and Gentile 2010). The military's marching in Pride and the overall celebratory reporting in texts such as this article together represent a normalization of homosexual citizenship in the Canadian national imaginary in a way that would have been almost unthinkable even twenty years ago. The militarization of Pride and the homosexualization of the military reflect a massive

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change in common sense and LGBTQ conceptions of sexual citizenship in Canada.

The military has functioned as an important locus for the production of masculinity and femininity in the state and society of modern nation-states, not least in terms of the historical exclusion of women (Enloe 1983). In spite of the incorporation of some women into its ranks in many countries, this has occurred largely along the lines of a gendered division of labour (for example, the exclusion of women from command structures and combat roles). This incorporation has not fundamentally challenged the normatively masculine status of the military, nor has it undermined systemic (hetero)sexism within the institution in any significant way. Thus, the military remains a very masculine institution. The militarization of Pride is simultaneously, therefore, a further masculinization of Pride, in which physically fit gay soldiers – mostly white – don khaki-coloured masculine drag in order to flex the muscles of homohegemony for a consenting public. Thus, the real-life and textual collision of the military and Pride is also a collision of masculinity and Pride, reinforcing and perhaps even extending the patriarchal context of homohegemony, and, more subtly, the whiteness of Canadian masculinity.

In spite of the fact that some elements of a contradictory domestic context are accounted for in the article, in terms of an implicit recognition of counter-hegemony, there is no such nuance in the coverage of Jamaica. As part of the text's treatment of the more "political" side of Pride, it closes with a discussion of "homophobia" in Jamaica. A specific focus is placed on Henry's decision to leave Jamaica because of "homophobic" violence. This occurs, however, alongside the text's implicit imagination of the figure of the white gay soldier. The diasporic black gay Jamaican can here be seen to represent a lack of queer agency (even though in actual fact, he has exercised a degree of queer agency that most middle-class gays born in Canada have never had to negotiate) given his constructed status as an object of queer Canadian rescue. His status as International Grand Marshall, and its reporting here, attests to the

"homophobia" of Jamaica and the international "benevolence" of gay friendly Canada. By contrast, the text's implicit imagined figure of the white, physically fit gay soldier represents a huge degree of agency. The latter is now able to embody and project a white Canadian masculinity sanctioned by the coercive arm of the state itself. Such masculinity is subtly positioned as superior in its modernity, relative to the constructed "homophobic" black masculinity of Jamaica that occasioned Henry's move to Canada.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this discussion, I have argued that the construction of "homophobic Jamaica" is an illiberal manifestation of homohegemony in Canada, an ideology about inclusive queer citizenship that is nevertheless premised upon significant exclusions of LGBTQ people and others. Specifically, it has been argued that the construction of "homophobic Jamaica" takes place along neocolonial lines, lines that implicitly advance constructions of white Canadian masculinity as modern and progressive in its treatment of lesbians and gays in contrast to a constructed black Jamaican masculinity as backward and excessive in its denial of gay and lesbian citizenship rights.

In effect, the discourse analysis of representative media texts on homosexuality in Jamaica and one on Southern Commonwealth countries in general has shown that homohegemony's construction of "homophobic Jamaica" does not merely function to produce a sense of inclusive sexual citizenship in Canada. More subtly, it informs understandings of white Canadian men as superior to black Caribbean men and thereby legitimizes the continuation of unequal economic and political power relations between the two patriarchal contexts. This is not altogether surprising insofar as sexual othering of the Caribbean has long served racialized and patriarchal — in addition to imperial and capitalist — interests (Kempadoo 2004); the terms of reference of sexual othering and normative sexual citizenship have significantly

and queerly changed, but longstanding imperial and racialized masculine interests remain at the heart of sexual ideology.

An implication of this analysis is that the problematic construction of “homophobic Jamaica” is ultimately unhelpful in addressing heterosexism in Jamaica and Canada alike. It obscures the ideological and material exclusions and stakes of such constructions. To the extent to which sexual othering supports an overall structure of neocolonialism between the two nations, the construction of “homophobic Jamaica” may even ironically contribute to conditions in the Jamaican state that make heterosexism more difficult for local activists to dislodge. What is needed is movement away from the masculine and white supremacist logic and interests of the gay-friendly Canada/homophobic Jamaica dichotomy uncovered in this discussion, and towards a social movement based in an ethics and praxis of transnational sexual solidarity. Building such a movement must move beyond the deconstruction of texts and into the similarities, differences, and relationships between and among “Northern,” “Southern,” and diasporic contexts on issues of sexuality and its intersections. It is hoped that this discussion, advanced from the admittedly vexed positionality of being a white gay man cast within relatively normative constructions of queer citizenship in Canada, may contribute in some small way to further critical and constructive conversations.

<sup>1</sup> Porter, Catherine. 2012. "Jamaica's leading gay activist, Maurice Tomlinson, married a Torontonian." *The Toronto Star*, January 10. [http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2012/01/10/porter\\_jamaicas\\_leading\\_gay\\_activist\\_maurice\\_tomlinson\\_married\\_a\\_torontonian.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2012/01/10/porter_jamaicas_leading_gay_activist_maurice_tomlinson_married_a_torontonian.html).

<sup>2</sup> "It Gets Better" is a video campaign showcasing prominent and everyday LGBTQ people for whom life has gotten better as they have gotten older. The campaign has been a response to the epidemic of the bullying and suicide of LGBTQ youth in Canada and the US.

<sup>3</sup> Stone, Laura. 2014. "NDP MP still hopes Senate passes transgender rights bill – three years on." *Global News*, Oct 1. <http://globalnews.ca/news/1593082/ndp-mp-still-hopes-senate-passes-transgender-rights-bill-three-years-on/>.

<sup>4</sup> An example of which is the hidden sexual epistemologies and community forms of "buller men and batty bwoys" in the Canadian urban context. See Crichlow 2004.

<sup>5</sup> CBC News. 2013. "Blood donation ban lifted for some men who have sex with men." May 22. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/story/2013/05/22/blood-policy-men.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Infantry, Ashante. 2008. "'Murder music' sparks Caribbean tourism boycott call." *The Toronto Star*, March 3. [http://www.thestar.com/news/2008/03/03/murder\\_music\\_sparks\\_caribbean\\_tourism\\_boycott\\_call.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/2008/03/03/murder_music_sparks_caribbean_tourism_boycott_call.html).

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Lees (LGBTQ activist with J-FLAG), recorded Skype interview and transcription by author, May 2013. Name is an alias to protect the interviewee's anonymity.

<sup>8</sup> This analysis also derives from interviews with LGBTQ Jamaicans as part of a larger project. Although about another Anglophone Caribbean context, the Bahamas, the work of M. Jacqui Alexander is instructive in discussing neocolonial, Black heteropatriarchal state formation, and the masculinity of national identity. See Alexander 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Of course, gendered constructions of homosexuality and lesbianism have been and continue to be common in a number of contexts, including in Canada.

<sup>10</sup> Payton, Laura. 2012. "Commonwealth countries ignoring hatred, Baird says." *CBC News*, January 23. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/01/23/pol-baird-commonwealth-speech-gay-rights.html>.

<sup>11</sup> I am indebted to Alexander for the concept of "white imperial heteropatriarchy," also operationalized with respect to the history of British imperialism in the Caribbean. See Alexander 1997, 66.

<sup>12</sup> In addition, this derives from Maurice Tomlinson (Legal Advisor, "Marginalized Groups," for AIDS-Free World), written interview over email by author, July 23, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> "Sodomy" and "buggery" are often used interchangeably to denote anal sexual intercourse, sometimes in the same legal context. See Kinsman 1987, 92, 126. Such statutes took on new meanings associated with the regulation of male homosexuality (rather than mere sodomy between men) in the late 1800s in Canada and British/British colonial contexts, and were joined at that time by more specifically anti-homosexual legislation such as "gross indecency." See Kinsman 1987, 92-94.

<sup>14</sup> Reilly, Emma. 2008. "Military joins Pride parade." *The Toronto Star*, June 29. [http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2008/06/29/military\\_joins\\_pride\\_parade.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2008/06/29/military_joins_pride_parade.html).

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