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The Legacy of Cooperatives among the African Diaspora

The Cases of Haiti and Grenada

ABSTRACT According to the International Co-operative Alliance, more than 12 percent of the global population belong to the world's three million cooperatives. The African diaspora has contributed to this legacy. Many Caribbean people view cooperatives as trustworthy because these institutions put people's local needs first. Both Haiti and Grenada have deeply embedded cooperative values and identities that are rooted in the ancient African systems of Sol and Susu. The African diaspora has a strong history of organizing solidarity financial economies to counter exclusion in business and society. This article draws on interviews with 138 direct users of cooperative institutions, bankers, and experts. Based on the findings, it argues that the African diaspora has had a key role in cooperative development and that Susu and Sol are the preferred financial institutions because they give people a way to help each other in times of adversity. This research uses the theory of the Black Social Economy to analyze Caribbean cooperators and their use of informal and formal cooperatives to stymie exclusion in business and society. Documenting the Haitian and Grenadian people's cooperative legacy reveals that the choice of the people of the Black diaspora to politicize their economic solidarity, and this has been a major contribution to the global cooperative movement. **KEYWORDS** credit unions, Susu, development, Black Social Economy, political economy, Grenada, Haiti, African diaspora, Global South, cooperatives

INTRODUCTION

Cooperative economies ensure equitable access to goods and services, especially for marginalized people. The seven principles of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) are dividend sharing; one-member, one-vote for democratic control; equality; equity; education; social capital development; and community stewardship of the environment.¹ The ICA defines cooperatives as people-centered enterprises that are “based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity” (ICA website 2016). It is therefore reasonable to expect that cooperatives—operating on a conceptual framework that promotes democracy and the redistribution of profit/dividends to its members and the community—would adhere to social values that are important to most people (Steward 1984).

Cooperative banks are very important for self-employed and low-income people running micro and small enterprises (MSEs), cottage industries, and farms, as they often have a hard time accessing credit from commercial banks. There is a need to “set the record straight”—that is, to credit the African diaspora for their significant contributions to cooperative development in the world today. The cooperative past of Black people, and specifically those

with a history of enslavement, has not been recognized. In this article, I argue that the informal cooperatives known as “Susu” and “Sol” are precursors to formal cooperative development and that these institutions are in fact the preferred financial institution for Caribbean people. Notably, Susu and Sol are the banking systems trusted by every direct user I interviewed (n = 62) in this study. These informal cooperatives are especially preferred by women because they are able to meet the livelihood needs of those most excluded.² Banker cooperatives ensure equity and well-being among members when formal lenders cannot.

Cooperating through an informal design challenges the Western fixation on individualism and formality. Despite this, the impact of the worldwide use of cooperatives, particularly in the Global South, is clear. The UN declared 2012 the year of cooperatives to recognize the role of cooperatives and credit unions as a viable solution to development issues (IMF 2013; Ashe and Neilan 2014; Hossein 2016). This article offers insights into the experiences of the African diaspora people of Haiti and Grenada, a region often ignored in the canon of published scholarly records and discourse about cooperatives. I argue that the cases of Haiti and Grenada show how women have collectively organized for generations with a sense of purpose and urgency.

Unlearning European Bias: Learning about Caribbean ROSCAs

The history of cooperatives often begins with the Eurocentric story of the Rochdale weavers in Lancashire, England, in 1844 (Hossein 2020; ICA 2016; Fairbairn 1994). Historical accounts of credit unions also typically focus on Europe, specifically Germany, where in 1849 the lawyer Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch formed the Raiffeisen credit union to help working-class people avoid loan sharks (Guinnane 2001). In the Americas, historians attribute the cooperative movement to Alfonse and Dorimene Desjardins, who brought credit unions to Lévis, Québec, in the early 1900s to reach the Catholic and French-speaking minority in Canada (MacPherson 2012).

These starting points, however, ignore the fact that African descendants in the Americas also had cooperative banks. They took the form of informally organized mutual aid groups known as rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs), such as Susu and Sol. These financial models were brought to the Americas by enslaved people, predating the European beginnings. This history is noteworthy. It is important to challenge its erasure in discourse and to underscore that the development of credit unions and self-help groups was deeply rooted in African traditions and non-white spaces even before they were named (Hossein 2015, 2018).

African people everywhere use cooperative systems to meet their needs in various ways. Throughout the Caribbean, these cooperatives are locally known by many names, such as Susu, Sol, Partner, Meeting-turn, and Box-hand. These are long-standing traditions that historically took a bold stand against the pressure to take on debt. The ROSCAs in Grenada and Haiti have been instrumental in co-op development in the region and are

the mainstay financial cooperative of women. Knowledge of this cooperative history of Black people shows it to be a valid contribution to the global cooperative movement.

I set out to understand the role cooperative institutions play in the lives of Caribbean people. Cooperative banks matter because they counter much of the exclusion that takes place in neoliberal banking systems. The barriers to finance that people in my surveys cited included limited access to saving deposits, the absence of affordable credit, and the denial of business training because of lack of collateral required by commercial institutions. Frustration over business exclusion in Haiti and Grenada has driven those excluded from formal financial institutions to organize their own economic alternatives. They do this in autonomous ways that are premised on thinking about grassroots community solutions to meet the needs of people. These economic alternatives are informal institutions that finance business ventures, smooth consumption, encourage discipline in saving, prevent predatory lenders, and develop social capital among people from the same social classes.

Organization of This Article

This article has four sections. Following this introduction, the second section discusses the Black Social Economy theory I use to understand cooperative development of the Black diaspora, locating why this theory is relevant to economic development alternatives. The Black Social Economy has emerged as a means of inserting voices from a Black political economy perspective that address solidarity economy systems. The Black Social Economy captures the Black experience, which is a site of struggle. Theories take note of the Black Social Economy as a space that politicizes collective economic activity to counter various forms of exclusion and inequities. In the third section, I detail my methods and approaches in carrying out this project to understand why Caribbean people join cooperative institutions: specifically, my interviewing of 138 people in Grenada and Haiti. I also present a brief overview of the political history of Haiti and Grenada, correcting the absence of Black people as cooperators in the region. The fourth and final section discusses nine key findings that help us understand why cooperatives, and specifically Susu and Sol, are people's preferred lenders in both cases.

THE BLACK SOCIAL ECONOMY FOR BLACK COOPERATORS

The concept of the Black Social Economy underscores what I mean by radicalizing, changing up, and making the economy more inclusive. Drawing on the body of literature that speaks to the 200 million people of African descent living in the Americas—where violence, racism, and discrimination against Black people are well known—is a prerequisite to understanding their place in business and society.

Many recent books on cooperatives and solidarity economies, however, have ignored Black people's contributions. One exception is Dean Spade (2020), who acknowledges the role of African Americans in using mutual aid systems to push against hostile environments, arguing that trying to upset unequal systems means doing away with aid and charity. In an era of anti-Black racism and awareness, it is no longer acceptable to

write books and spread knowledge about cooperative and solidarity economies without documenting the experiences of Black scholars. Nor can scholars examining the lives of Black and racialized people continue to draw only on Eurocentric ideas—they cannot understand the lived experiences of Black people, and especially women, without drawing on local theories from thinkers who hail from these backgrounds.

What I suggest here will not be provocative to Black political scientists. But those who draw on mainstream Eurocentric theories to explain the underdevelopment of Black and racialized people, and in doing so they have a limited understanding of the lived experience of racially excluded people in business and society. While Black political economy scholarship was once hidden, much of it is now available to be read.³ Scholars, especially those who promise radical economics and alternatives, should do the homework and read those philosophies. This may mean unlearning what they think is radical and reading works that speak to the lived experience of excluded people.

I draw on scholarship that engages in narratives about cooperatives with the understanding that these forms of business were always known to African people. A great deal of what I currently know about the Black political economy comes from Africana studies, history, economics, and sociology. Eric Williams, the former prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, wrote *Capitalism and Slavery* in 1944, setting the record straight about the immoral beginnings of European capitalism. Capitalism is rooted in white colonial trade in Black people to make profits on plantations through forced labor. This hostile system was allowed to carry on because white men believed they had a right to use Southern people as they saw fit, viewing them as inferior and even less than human (Escobar [1995] 2012). Today, the slave forts in El Mina in Ghana and Goree Island in Senegal are reminders of the inhumane and torturous treatment and deep-seated hatred of African people. In 1992, Stuart Hall's *West and the Rest* defined the colonial discourse that subjugated non-white people to an inferior position and elevated the culture and ideas of white people.

Theorizing for Politicized Cooperation

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we should be looking to informal cooperative spaces to meet our daily needs. In other words, we need to revamp the future of giving and cooperating toward a design that is thoughtful, efficient, and mindful of the knowledge and expertise beyond the white expert.⁴

This is why the theory of Black Social Economy is useful. It draws on Black feminist concepts of lived experience and intersectionality to reveal the interlocking oppressions occurring in our economic and social lives. The takeaway in *Downtown Ladies* by Black feminist professor Gina Ulysse (2007), for example, was that Jamaican higglers (market vendors or traders) use informality to create business opportunities that work for Black women. The concept of intersectionality was coined by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), who analyzed case laws that overlooked the impact of being both Black and female. To counter those inequities, historically oppressed women of the African diaspora have always politicized their networks in ways that combat political and economic exclusion (Hooker 2009; Gordon Nembhard 2014; Wright Austin 2018).

As noted above, theories and documentation on the African diaspora experience in the

social and solidarity economy are absent from the literature. To understand the Black experience, we need to ensure that lived experience is integral to how we examine social economics (Hossein 2016, 2018). The Black Social Economy politicizes cooperation in a way that allows us to undo the exclusions occurring in our world. It provides an endless supply of knowledge-making for cooperativism, and scholars should reread this economy in the context of racial capitalism. Development canons cannot be stagist, linear projects that assume that all groups can interact with the state and private sectors. Many people of African descent are being harmed—and as a result they self-exclude and participate in their own cooperative economies.

Animating the Black Social Economy, members of Sol and Susu are living proof of a double movement⁵ or resistance quietly taking place. Using Black feminist theory is a way to understand the Black Social Economy. It is a framework through which to consider the thousands of Black and racialized women who lead co-ops and who are remaking economies despite the traumas they endure every day. The Black Social Economy pushes back against this very one-dimensional view. If theorists and practitioners of solidarity economics do not read the existing literature—delving into the lived experience and histories of Black Caribbean people—then they miss ways to correct the global anti-Black racism active in today’s world. Black people in the Americas are one of the most disadvantaged groups in business and society. A theorizing that speaks to how Black diaspora women cooperatively organize and seek refuge is vital.

METHODS AND APPROACH

I set out initially to understand why credit unions—and, more generally, cooperatives—are used by Caribbean people. A literature review of scholarly articles, books, and other publications on cooperatives uncovered those few studies that reference the Caribbean. The study is empirical, with interviews and focus groups carried out in the two countries. The main research question is, “Why are cooperatives the preferred lender?” Sub-questions include: “How did the idea of cooperatives coming into being here?”;⁶ “What is the relevance of informal cooperative banks?”; “Why do people in your country join cooperatives at a high rate?” A total of 138 Grenadian and Haitian people were interviewed about cooperative banks, both formal and informal. Many interviews were conducted where people worked, in and around bus terminals or open-air markets, and in their homes and offices.

Why These Two Cases?

The political science literature has done little investigation of Haiti and Grenada’s cooperative experience. Both islands gained independence over a hundred years apart. Yet their political and economic history is worth comparing and may explain each country’s attachment to cooperatives. Both countries experienced slavery and colonization by white Europeans as well as US occupation, and they both experienced revolutions. Colonization and imperialism resulted in racially tiered economic systems: with whites at the pinnacle and people of darkening shades of skin color tiered downward. The light-

skinned citizens, *mulatre* (Haitian term for mixed-race/light-skinned) or *red* (Grenadian term for mixed-race/light-skinned) are better off economically than very dark-skinned people, who are clustered at the base of the pyramid (Thomas 1988).

Both cases—Haiti and Grenada—have relevance for Black political scientists, expanding their knowledge about how people who share a common history politically organize on similar issues (Wright Austin 2018). Oppenheim (1993) argues that poverty is not just about economic deprivation but also about social justice, how people are dehumanized, how individual and collective identities are built on misogynistic narratives, and how power is constructed and operationalized. Access to finance is based on neoliberal policies and social relations of market capitalism captured in a rationality of divided social relations that are “historically rooted in prejudices which interfere with the allocation of loans” (Hossein 2016) to Black and racialized people. It is within this framework that I conceptualize poverty in these two Caribbean nations.

Empirical Methods

The research on Haiti was conducted during several trips between March 2008 and December 2013, primarily in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. In Port-au-Prince, people were interviewed in what are known as *les bidonvilles*, such as Cité Soleil, Carrefour, Martissant, Bel Air in Centre-Ville, and Jalousie and Flipo in the hills of the chic Petionville. It was important to interview users in the major towns of Les Cayes and Le Cap Haitian, north of the country. I carried out two month-long trips after the earthquake, in 2011 and in 2013, to understand its impact on business enterprises and the mechanisms of financial alternatives being considered.

TABLE 1. Interviews with direct users of cooperative banks

Method	Haiti	Grenada	Total
Focus groups	45	0	45
Individual interviews	0	17	17
Percentage of women	96 (43)	59 (10)	69 (53)
Total director users of cooperatives	45	17	62

Source: Data collected from author’s fieldwork in Haiti in 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2013 and Grenada in 2013.

TABLE 2. Interviews with bankers and regional development experts

Method	Haiti	Grenada	Regional Experts	Total
Individual interviews with regional experts	35	9	10	54
Individual interviews with bankers	13	5	4	22
Percentage of women	61	15	4	
Total sample	48	14	14	76

Source: Data collected from author’s fieldwork in Haiti in 2009–2013 and Grenada in 2013.

The direct users are people who self-identify as “cooperators” in either formal or informal co-op systems. The subset of cooperators selected were those who were self-employed and relied on co-op banking to run their businesses. In Haiti, I interviewed 45 direct users. Many of the women I interviewed were *Madan Saras* (cross-country traders) or *ti-machanns* (market sellers), ranging in age from their late 20s to early 50s. In Grenada, I interviewed 17 traders and members of cooperatives in the St. George bus terminal, central market, and Grand Anse Valley, with a slightly older group from their mid-30s to late 60s (see table 1 below.) Most of the cooperators had many years’ experience in business (usually informal), and in the Grenada case everyone had completed their secondary education (this was not the case among the Haitian participants).

I used semi-structured interviews for cooperative participants and structured interviews for bankers and other community experts and stakeholders. The interviews were handwritten and not recorded. I noted the nuances of speech, gesticulations, and expressions as a way to garner, as much as possible, the respondents’ voices and the meanings of their lived experiences. In Haiti, people often spoke French mixed with Kreyol. I addressed this language barrier by hiring a local translator who was fluent in Haitian Kreyol.

Table 1 shows the 62 interviews with direct users of cooperatives. Impromptu questions were also asked to learn why people preferred cooperative banks. I made every effort to allow subjects to tell their stories freely and to articulate their personal views relating to cooperatives and their use of Susu and Sol. The interviewees were found through snowballing, where one interviewee suggests other people to be interviewed. Both cases provided substantial empirical evidence, but the findings mostly focus on the views of the direct users (n = 62), with the insights of experts helping to triangulate a better understanding of the global co-op system. In contrast, Hossein (2016) focuses on the views of bankers and regional experts as well as borrowers in the microfinance study. Table 2 shows that women were extremely well represented in Haiti due to the emphasis on credit unions and activists; in Grenada, the interviews were with commercial lenders who tended to be male.

POLITICAL HISTORY OF COOPERATIVES IN HAITI AND GRENADA

Haiti and Grenada are two island nations with distinct historical backgrounds. Grenada, called the “Spice Isle,” is an English-speaking eastern Caribbean island of approximately 112,003 people (World Bank 2019). It was colonized by England and became independent only in 1974. It is the only English-speaking Caribbean country to have experienced a coup d’état; and like Haiti, Grenada was invaded by the United States. These two islands experienced slavery and colonization as well as violent dictatorships, with death squads such as the Ton Macoutes under dictator François “Papa Doc” Duvalier. Grenadians had a revolutionary moment under the New Jewel Movement. To cope in these difficult political environments, Haitians and Grenadians formed collective institutions.

In these two countries, the legacy of slavery, colonization, and American occupation has institutionalized structural practices of exclusion and marginalization of people of African descent throughout the entire financial ecosystems. This has pushed ordinary

people to rethink the kind of economies they want. People have had to make conscious decisions to engage in member-owned collectives/group economics to counter the exclusionary practices of formal commercial banking institutions (Hossein 2016). They also join these groups to resist the economic logic of an imperialistic banking system that excludes Black and racialized individuals because they supposedly lack creditworthiness. This exclusion has resulted in the unsettling intersectional relationship between race, class, and capital that “replicate(ed), reconstitute(ed) racial stereotypes to further the expansion of white supremacist control in the region” (Hudson 2017, 331), cementing poverty and economic insecurity among certain populations.⁷

Telling the Story of Why Cooperation Matters

An alternative reading of Caribbean history makes it clear that colonial elites robbed much of the South of its resources. Guyanese historian Walter Rodney (1982) has exposed how the grievous acts of thieving, extraction, and raping of Global South people led to the underdevelopment of the South. What Rodney (1982) saw firsthand in his own country of Guyana was the Dutch, French, and English pillaging the country for gold and diamonds. He later documented similar behavior in Jamaica and Tanzania, where Europeans could take resources from these lands because of the power they possessed. For hundreds of years, white people enslaved Black people in Brazil, the Caribbean, Colombia, and the United States to attain plantations.

Also correcting history is Trinidad’s C.L.R. James in his book *The Black Jacobins* ([1938] 1989). He recounts the story of how the Haitian people, with leaders like Toussaint and Dessalines, won the fight against slavery and claimed independence in 1804. Michel Trouillet ([1995] 2015) suggests that Haitians did the unthinkable when they won their war with Europeans and freed themselves. The payback for rejecting slavery, however, was complete isolation and ostracization for a hundred years, as well as a bill of billions of dollars owed to the French state.

Many Black diaspora leaders, such as Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois, argued for cooperative economies as a form of resistance for oppressed people. Pan-Africanist Garvey, who grew up under colonization in Jamaica and worked as a migrant worker in Panama and Costa Rica, promoted the theory of self-reliance and entrepreneurship based on his own lived experience as a member of an oppressed racial group (Martin 1983; Lewis 1987). Garvey pushed for member-owned enterprises—such as factories, grocery stores, restaurants, printing factories, shipping companies, Black doll factories, and laundromats in Harlem—as ways to economically empower Black Americans (Martin 1983; Bandle 2010; K’adamwe, Bernard, and Dixon 2011). As early as 1907, Du Bois talked about capitalism’s need for cheap labor, and he advanced the theory of economic cooperation among Black people to withstand a racist power. Economist Jessica Gordon Nembhard (2014), in her book *Collective Courage*, argues that African Americans cooperatives were viewed as subversive. This need to be self-sufficient worried the dominant power. It is this power that motivates Black people’s need for cooperative economies.

Cooperatives can be viewed as a form of economic liberation—a concept that resonates with the African diaspora, whose people have endured historical oppressions

stemming from enslavement and slavery (Haynes 2019; Du Bois 1907). Morgan State historian Maurice St. Pierre (1999) found that enslaved African Guyanese people created buying clubs as a way to mobilize savings to buy freedom and later used these clubs to buy farms so that Blacks could limit their work with the racist planters. The roots of cooperatives in both countries are traced to an African legacy: enslaved people brought traditions of alternative economies based on collective organizing to the Americas. Robin Kelley (2002) reminds us that the Quilombolas and maroon societies were created by Black people who refused to be enslaved and built up their own cooperative systems while in hiding. In this regard, people in the African diaspora have created cooperatives in inhospitable environments for centuries. African traditions of collectives reveal that Black people have a long cooperative history of helping people thrive in commerce, including during the times of slavery and colonization when they were oppressed, subjugated, and excluded from formal banking institutions.

The Haitian Caisse Populaires System

Haiti, a French-speaking country, is the largest Caribbean island, with over 11 million people; it was also the first Black liberated country in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti was invaded and occupied by the United States between 1915 and 1934 (Faton 2002, 2007). According to Haitian cooperative scholar Montasse (1983), it was during this period that formal caisses populaires targeted excluded persons. Haiti has experienced many setbacks to its development, starting with imperialism, enslavement, and coups d'états. The extreme levels of poverty and natural disasters—including the 2010 earthquake, which affected over three million people and killed over one hundred thousand people (see Shamsie 2006)—have contributed to the exodus of many skilled Haitians.

Haitian political scientist Robert Faton (2002, 2007) has studied the country's authoritarian regimes, led by *élites noirs* (Black elites) and *mulâtres* (mixed-race) with financial backing by the *blancs* (local whites) against the *moun andeyo* (Black masses). Faton makes a point that democracy-building occurs in the local arenas where *gwoupmans* (Kreyol term for associations) and *kombit* (Kreyol term for organizing) are active. Big business is the domain of a few families, and generations of people are born and raised in the slums. The tradition of *kombit* predates formal cooperatives (Montasse 1983).

Haiti's cooperative development began under enslavement. Financial cooperatives emerged in 1937 in Port-a-Piment du Nord, near Gonaïves, just after the US occupation (Montasse 1983, 18). Credit unions, financial cooperatives, and caisses populaires were formed in La Vallée (Jacmel) in 1946 and in Cavaillon (South) and Sainte Anne in Port-au-Prince in 1951, during the times of the Duvaliers' repressive politics. When the Duvaliers made it illegal for citizens to form associations, Haitians continued to organize life around cooperatives as they had under US occupation (Maguire 1997). Montasse (1983, 29) reported a growth of credit unions between 1951 and 1983, as during these years people were deprived of basic services. As far back as 1953, the Conseil National des Cooperatives (CNC) supervised cooperatives (Young and Mitten 2000, 2). By the time of the violent Duvalier dictatorships—the regimes of François “Papa Doc” and Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier from 1957 to 1986 (N'Zengou-Tayo 1998;

Fatton 2002)—people had created firm networks of *caisses populaires* around the country to meet their needs.⁸

The country's development bias toward Port-au-Prince since the 1950s has led to 40 percent of the population now living in the *bidonvilles* (shantytowns). Haitians created *caisses populaires* to meet their financial obligations. Commercial banks catered exclusively to the white elites and *elites noirs* (educated Blacks), ignoring the business needs of the *moun andeyo*. Local cooperative systems such as Sol and *caisses populaires* helped people navigate life while coping with economic insecurity. Eurocentric notions of “livability” and “modern development” have failed to consider the shape of the local economies of the African diaspora (Rodney 1982; Escobar 2020). US and European powers have complicated development, and local leaders have harmed the people. This has resulted in internal conflicts, corruption, and crime, hindering economic development in the country. For the past two years, the Haitian people have been taking to the streets through organized collective protest of the late President Jovenel Moïse (Associated Press 2021; Hu 2021).

Haiti's cooperative development has been exceptional. The model has been part of a long-standing cultural tradition, carried on by enslaved people when they arrived in Haiti in the sixteenth century. Benin and Togo, French-speaking West Africa, are countries with strong traditions of ROSCAs, which Haitians claim as their ancestral lands. Out of respect for people's demand for collective institutions, the state elevated cooperative status into the nation's constitution (in Preamble 4), and Haiti has been declared a cooperative republic.

Grenada's Cooperative Story

Grenada has a population of approximately 112,718, with the majority of people living in rural areas. It is one of the smallest countries in the world. Its economy is dependent on tourism and the export of spices. Approximately 82 percent of Grenadians are descendants of enslaved Africans, 5 percent of Indian descent, and the remaining 13 percent of mixed descent (World Population Review 2021). Thirty-eight percent of the population lives below the poverty line and has the highest unemployment rate in the Caribbean, and 98.6 percent of the population is literate (UNESCO 2019).

During the colonial period, British banks in Grenada did not lend to the local people. In the 1930s, nutmeg and cocoa were important cash crops for Grenada, and the colonial state created boards to manage these exports. In 1947, the Grenada Cooperative Nutmeg Association was formed to help farmers increase their incomes, allowing them to bypass the middlemen. In 1951, the Colonial Welfare and Development fund provided financing to organize production and improve its quality (Steele 2003, 337). In 1954, the Banana Cooperative Society was established to assist in trade with the Canadian Banana Company (ibid., 338). All of these colonial cooperative projects helped administrators manage the locals. But many Grenadians also turned to what they knew: African indigenous informal banks called Susus. The Susu system—a means for people to save money with those they know and trust—has been handed down through generations. The Grenadian cooperative experience was developed in reaction to the racist colonial experience, which denied them access to formal banking services.

Grenada came into independence in 1974—much later than most islands in the region. Its first head of state was Eric Gairy (1967–79). He was the first political figure on the island to come from a modest rural background and share the African features of many Grenadians (Sandiford and Vigilante 1984). In the early years, Gairy was anti-imperialist and committed to increasing the incomes of rural farmers, and he supported the people’s admiration of cooperatives. However, over time Gairy’s anti-local elite and white colonizer rhetoric became clouded by his misuse of power. In the mid-1970s, opposition grew against Gairy’s undemocratic control and the violence of his secret police, the Mongoose Gang (Steele 2003). To cope with the harsh politics of the day, people participated in cooperatives.

Young, educated Grenadians from middle-class backgrounds, influenced by the US Black Power movement and the Cold War, rallied dissenters against the Gairy regime. The 1979 bloodless coup d’état by the New Jewel Movement (NJM) installed the left-wing People’s Revolutionary Government (1979–83). This government, run by educated middle-class Grenadians, was a left-wing experiment during the Cold War era. Its leader, Maurice Bishop of the NJM, was impressed by Tanzania’s concept of *ujamaa* (a Swahili word for unity, collectivity, or oneness), which involved moving villagers onto collective farms. This idea was adopted in the NJM’s manifesto. Political leaders like Bishop recognized that Grenadians have a strong affection for cooperatives, and they created a top-down cooperative system that inevitably failed. People still tapped into their own localized Susu systems. American leaders had concerns about colonized peoples organizing, seeing it as subversive and anti-American. As a result of this experiment, the US occupation under the Reagan administration defeated any leftist government in the region during the Cold War period (Meeks 2001; Benjamin and Hall 2010).

To address social and economic issues in the 1980s, Grenada adapted neoliberal policies that promoted open market competition and liberalization. This opened a wide gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” resulting in class stratification and institutionalized poverty (Klak 1998). The period after the 1983 US invasion, which followed the assassination of Maurice Bishop and members of the NJM, was one of cooperative development. The Reagan administration (1981–89) was determined to bring Grenadians in line as an ally. The American aid agency, USAID, created the National Development Foundation, and the local people who were hired wanted to emphasize cooperative groups, but the donor did not allow this to happen (Interviews in country 2013). One could argue that the US invasion and turbulent local politics were also catalysts for the creation of the Grenville Cooperative Credit Union.

The Cooperative Way

Haiti and Grenada stand out in terms of their historical inclination for cooperatives. A significant number of citizens on both islands rely on credit unions and other financial cooperatives to organize their society and businesses in ways that prioritize the needs of human beings. A 2018 World Council of Credit Unions report stated that there are 85 credit unions in Haiti, with a membership base of 826,072, representing 7.2 percent of its citizens, or a population penetration of 12.29 percent. Grenada has 10 credit unions

with a membership of 66,451. Sixty percent of its citizens, or a population penetration of 93.25 percent, belong to these credit unions or cooperative banks (World Council of Credit Unions 2018).

Neoliberal politics has undoubtedly increased privatization, with high social costs for Black people. This is particularly true for those in the Global South, such as small island countries like Haiti and Grenada. Women and children are left to fend for themselves, creating kitchen gardens and similar projects (Molyneux 2002). According to the *World Population Review* (2021), Haiti, with a population of 11,402,528, is a very young country, with approximately 54 percent of its population below the age of 25. More than 95 percent of Haitians are descended from enslaved Africans, 4.3 percent are European, with traces of East Indians (World Population Review 2021); but race is complicated by class in the country. Haiti is considered the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere; 59 percent of people live below the poverty line (World Bank Statistics, 2020) and 78 percent live in rural communities and rely on subsistence farming for survival (World Bank 2014).

Cooperatives provide a way for people to be independent from corrupt leaders. The development literature tends to overcredit colonizers for introducing cooperatives to colonies (Develtere 1993). While this may be the case in some countries, it is certainly not the case everywhere. And the literature misses that the African diaspora make a conscientious decision to formalize their own cooperatives and to continue their indigenous collectives (Hossein 2015). Some informal cooperatives remain outside the purview of any oppressor. Structural and systemic inequalities around the world have also reinforced skepticism about the ability of economic growth models based on individualism to address the economic injustice (Kothari 2006; Wilson 2012). In these two Caribbean cases, the people interviewed believed that cooperatives can help them meet their social and economic needs better than commercial businesses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: INFORMAL COOPERATIVES TRUMP FORMAL COOPERATIVES

Knowing the legacy of cooperatives in the Caribbean region can correct the erasure of Black people in the cooperative sector. The cooperators I interviewed (n¼ 62), and especially the women (n¼ 53), were aware of this cooperative history and the legacy of group economics. I had to stop asking Black women whether co-ops were a colonial import because all of them refused to even consider this as a question.

Black Caribbean cooperators are actively engaged in cooperatives. They said (56, n¼ 62) that their (political) engagement in ROSCAs has democratized financial economies, including formal cooperatives. Sharing these findings on why cooperatives matter to Caribbean people is one way to start acknowledging the reasons why such a very large number of Caribbean people participate in informal and formal cooperative institutions. It also dispels the myth that colonizers taught Black people in the Americas about economic cooperation.

TABLE 3. At a glance: Nine key findings about the logic of cooperation (n ¼ 62)

Findings	The Logic of Cooperation and Analysis of What People Said
1. Voice and a sense of purpose	Members want to feel that they belong and are able to voice their concerns and contribute to sustained development. This goal of voice and purpose is part of the seven cooperative principles.
2. Pride in African economic traditions	Cooperators in the African diaspora know about collective money systems and know the history of why oppressed people choose to participate in informal co-op banks.
3. A moral way to bank	Cooperators value the collective and choose to share money as a group, through either formal or informal cooperatives. They view this model as moral and just because members are involved in the rule-making in their co-ops, especially Susu and Sol.
4. Local roots in economic cooperation	People see the co-op system as grounded in the community. They know and trust the members in the group. The localizing of the banks means they are attentive to people's needs in terms of when to meet and how.
5. A strong cooperative culture	Members have an inclination and personal connection to co-op systems. Commercial banks are the intruder, and the co-op banks are culturally relevant to people.
6. Learning the mechanics of these trusted systems	Cooperatives are decided on by their members, and no cooperative is run the same way in terms of payment cycles and duration. The members elect a "Banker Lady" who works with the members through consensus and meetings to agree on a system.
7. Strengthening cooperative development	Members are committed to helping one another and to fostering cooperative development. This is most obvious in ROSCAs. The education and work to build strong co-op systems is part of the cooperative principles.
8. More than business	Cooperativism is more than mainstream business; it is about active social capital and giving time to people who feel cut off from commercial business systems. Cooperatives are conscientious and focused on helping and sharing goods with others.
9. Trust in the collective	Trust in the collective is vital when it comes to standing up to commercial and individualized forms of banking. It is about respect and knowing people's worth in the group. People bond because they share similar class origins: "they are like us." Co-op systems do not need to fix people; rather, the group can come together and build.

Table 3 provides a list of this study's nine findings on why cooperatives are the preferred banker. The nine key findings are derived from the views of 62 cooperators, who are members of various forms of cooperatives. Below the table are details on this list of findings.

Voice and a Sense of Purpose

The most cited reason for joining a cooperative was the idea of “voice” and “vote.” These are also ICA principles: one-member, one-vote, and democratic control.

In interviews with Haitians and Grenadians, women subjects said (46, n¼ 53) they felt they “belonged” and/or “valued” their membership in cooperatives because they could vote on issues. “Nicole” in Milot, in the northern part of the country, reasoned, “In the Sol it the group who has the power because we vote to say what we want. It is the group who decides how things will run here” (interview, “Nicole,” focus group, Milot, 13 December 2013).

The Black Social Economy contains the ideas that business should be conscious of exclusion and that coming together to build up community is part of managing inequities. Problems cited about mainstream and commercial banks were that they are not interested in clients and that they exclude large segments of the population.

People actively in a cooperative also reported (n¼ 62) that being a member of a cooperative was important because cooperatives gave them a “sense of purpose” and the feeling they “could decide on how to use the profits to help the community.” These ideas were reported repeatedly. The matter of dividends (the institution’s profits) was also key to cooperators (55, n¼ 62) because they had a role in discussing how the money would be used. “Miss Beatrice” suggested, “I may not get my way for the things I want, but we all can say what we think” (Grand Anse Valley, 12 July 2013) and “No (commercial) banker cares what I think.” All of the cooperatives interviewed cited the vote as being extremely important to them, as well as being able to decide on pertinent issues and how the surpluses are invested into communities.

Pride in African Economic Traditions

Haitians were quick to credit the Dahomey (today Benin and Togo) as countries that taught them about the power of collectivity (*kombit*) and Sols. (The term Tontines is commonly used, but many people refer to them as the *caisses informelle*). The cooperators (n¼ 62) I met with in both countries knew the history of Susu and Sol; and the question about “invention” or “how they learned about co-ops as a people” seemed to be understood by all people as a local creation. More than 78 percent (59, n¼ 76) of the bankers and experts felt that this understanding was correct. The Haitian direct-users and stakeholders I interviewed referred me to the country’s constitution, which describes Haiti as a cooperative republic. Cooperative banks also demonstrate that people participate in traditional economic systems for their ancestral value. As one *ti-machann*, “Miveline,” explained, “No one has to tell me what caisses populaires are, I know them from long time ago . . . before I was even here. We have been doing these ‘caisses’ all the time” (interview, “Miveline,” focus group, Bon Repos, 9 October 2010). The statement of “Miveline” speaks to the institutional memory, or “second nature,” that poor business people have when it comes to credit unions. They grow up with and are accustomed to using them because poor families have been using *caisse populaires* for generations. Associations were banned during the brutal Duvalier dictatorships, but Haitians organized and persisted with the culture of cooperatives (Fattou 2002; N’Zengou-Tayo 1998). Today, more than

half a million Haitians belong to cooperatives to meet their needs because commercial banks cannot (Hossein 2016).

A Moral Way to Bank

The cooperators interviewed referred to Susus and Sols as “self-funding collectives” and “my bank.” This idea of having a stake in the bank matters to cooperators, and especially to the women members (47, n¼ 53), who often own little because of bias against them. The Susu or Sol is a way for people to think morally about how to do things together to save for their future purchases. The cooperators and experts interviewed knew the history of ROSCAs; in that light, asking basic questions about ROSCAs did not seem appropriate. With this knowledge and expertise, these cooperators (51, n¼ 62) said there was also a strong sense of responsibility.

A number of Haitian women interviewed (41, n¼ 45) in focus groups and individually who are involved in cottage industries and micro and small enterprise businesses indicated that access to credit was a prime concern for them. Most women (33, n¼ 45) doubted commercial banks would reach them. In fact, “Marcelle Marie,” who worked for years in cooperative micro-banks and grew up seeing family members using Sol, said that Sol was concerned about people:

Sol is for the women because it is by the women themselves. Others are here to take, take, take... Il font leurs beurres (they are interested in their personal gain)... and the commercial bankers, those who work in big financial companies, only care about money. (interview, “Marcelle Marie,” Port-au-Prince, 14 October 2010)

The point here is that ROSCAs prioritize the needs of women. Sols also allow women to “avoid predatory lenders” or banks that charge high interest rates. It was clear in the meetings that Haitians cooperators want to do banking that is fair and just and to share the financial goods with each other.

The concept of moral banking was clear to those who choose cooperatives over commercial and shareholder banks. In a focus group, Haitian women (27, n¼ 43) explained that they do not humiliate members by asking them for collateral because, as community people, they want to help people. Asking people to list what they own was “rude” and “makes people feel bad” or that “they don’t own the right things.” The general sentiment in this study (113, n¼ 138) was that commercial banks did not value “non-traditional collateral such as inventory” and dismissed them because they “do not own land and real estate.”

Local Roots in Economic Cooperation

Most interviewees (119, n¼ 138) referred to credit unions as the “poor man’s bank.” This should not be viewed negatively. It was stated with respect, as people found the cooperative nature of these banks, especially ROSCAs (130, n¼ 138), were rooted in community. At the time of doing this research, Haiti had nine commercial banks, six of which were in the capital city Port-au-Prince and other large urban centers. This exacerbates the problem of access for most people in rural communities. *Madan saras*



FIGURE 1. A member of a coffee cooperative (or *gwoupman*), which also participates in a Sol in the nearby areas of Cap Haitian (photo by author, December 2013).

are tradewomen who are vital to Haiti's economy (2021 *Madan Saras* film; Mintz 2011). The *madan saras* in Cap Haitian explained that they work long hours and travel a great deal and that having "flexible systems" with Sol was key to running their businesses (see figure 1).

When they can, Haitian women will choose work that values them as humans. In the documentary *Poto Mitan: Haitian Women, Pillars of a Global Economy* (2009), women in Cité Soleil are shown rejecting low-paid hazardous factory work and turning to Sol as a way to own their time, support each other, and develop their cooperative businesses. In *Madan Sara*, a film released in 2021, Haitian director Etant Dupain shows that the *Madan Saras* (traders) have always remade business in an inclusive, collective way. In working this way, women have time to raise and work on social issues, like domestic violence. Banking co-ops such as Sol are local. These institutions are made up of members who know and trust each other, such as close friends, co-workers, church members, and relatives. They are united in their passion to make banks community-centric and ethical.⁹

The flexibility of ROSCAs helped members to come to meetings (44, n/4 62) and to access funds (59, n/4 62) when they needed it (e.g., a few people noted that delays affected their business). In one focus group, participants explained that ROSCAs are usually located in the communities where people live, and they can walk door to door or send their children. Commercial banks, in contrast, are not located where poor people live. For example, I found that 37 percent of the microfinancing institutions and formal credit unions operating in Haiti were located in cities. This can make it difficult for the rural poor and those who live in the suburbs with limited public transport to physically access these institutions.

A Strong Cooperative Culture

A recent International Monetary Fund report (2018) found that financing in Haiti is sustained by microfinancing institutions, but mostly by the local credit unions and informal cooperatives focused on the rural poor, the *ti-machanns*, and self-employed women. In *Politicized Microfinance*, Hossein (2016) finds that the microfinance sector in Haiti is dominated by formal and informal cooperative institutions (caisses populaires) and informal associations and Sol. Nongovernmental organizations in the country also provide microfinance. The successful ones do this through a group and cooperative model (Hossein 2016). A leading microfinance provider, Fonkoze, located in many parts of the country, used the group approach for their microfinance program. Because local people understood Sol and preferred group projects, the major microfinance lenders have adapted the cooperative system. Even commercial banks in Haiti have downscaled finance to increase lending to small entrepreneurs; and Sogebank has introduced Mama Sol, copying the informal ROSCA used by the majority of Haitians.

In Grenada, the five main commercial banks are concentrated in the capital city of St. George even though 65 percent of the population live in the countryside. A 2018 International Monetary Fund report on Grenada found that the geographical distance and high interest rates are barriers to financial access (IMF 2018). The country has a mass cooperative culture, and people belong to both formal cooperatives and Susus. One of the largest credit unions in Grenada is Grenville Cooperative Credit Union, founded in 1983, with over 8,000 members.

Learning the Mechanics of These Trusted Systems

In Susu and Sols, the members decide on the structure. The ROSCA is usually managed by a “Champion” or “Mama Sol” or “Banker Lady,” who sometimes has an executive to assist in managing the money. In the interviews with both users and experts (n¼ 138), it was explained that members contribute a fixed sum of money at regular intervals into a pool over a predetermined period of time. The accumulated funds are collected at a meeting and the money is paid out to a member in turn on a weekly or monthly rotational basis until each member has received their “hand” or contribution.

ROSCAs sometimes require a small fee to be paid to the Banker Lady, but this is determined by the group’s membership. Generally, fees in a Sol are nominal, and there is no interest charged. Most Haitian members (38, n¼ 45) complained about the high interest rates charged by mainstream banks, especially following the earthquake, when the per annum interest rates at these institutions increased from 16 to 40 percent. Because of these hurdles, one respondent, who works in a commercial bank, explained that small farmers and MSE operators usually turn to Sol, which she described as

a system where you make weekly or monthly contributions . . . not more than fifteen persons max. This money we give to the Mama Sol or Papa Sol, who takes off a small amount for themselves . . . this usually runs for between six to ten months, and everyone throws a hand. (interview, commercial banker from Petionville, 17 October 2010)

For members who receive payments early, the accumulated amount received is like an interest-free loan. For the others, it is forced saving. The “position” members hold in the ROSCA is usually rotated every cycle, so that everyone eventually receives the benefits of an interest-free loan.

Susu and Sol are organized in cycles and they function based on trust. The issue of trust was the primary reason people had participated in ROSCAs for decades. Since these money-organizing mechanisms are not based on legal contracts, new members of a ROSCA would likely be relegated to one of the last draws because they would not have built up a relationship of trust with the members. After participating in a number of cycles, trust is developed and the person’s position may be pushed forward based on their financial health, determined by their timeliness in contributing to the pool.

Strengthening Cooperative Development

Haiti’s cooperative lending dominates the banking sector, having more than 600,000 members, a number far larger than the commercial sector (in 2016). In 2000, a corruption scandal in the caisses populaires sector followed on the heels of the pyramid scheme crisis.¹⁰ Unregistered credit union managers, offering high returns on deposits of 10 to 12 percent per month (thus the “*dix douze*” crisis), absconded with US\$250 million in people’s savings (Tucker and Tellis 2005; UNCDF 2003). Despite the scandal, Haiti’s government invited the Quebec-based credit union Desjardins to strengthen the credit union sector and create a regulatory framework for Haiti’s member-owned institutions, both informal and formal. The assistance was to strengthen the local network, Le Levier, to be able to train and to develop the capacity of 340,000 cooperative members (Kerlouche and Joseph 2010; USAID 2008).

The then–Canadian International Development Agency (now Global Affairs Canada) hired Desjardins, Canada’s leading credit union, to assist Haiti’s cooperative sector (Hossein 2016). In the early 2000s, the Inter-American Development Bank also hired Desjardins to build the capacity of cooperatives in the region. As part of the cooperative values system, these funding supports help spread cooperativism. Haitians, because of their historical and cultural ties to community organizing, continue to have confidence in these collective lenders.

More than Business

Members (62/62) reported that they joined a Susu or Sol because friends or family invited them to. Many cooperators, especially women, said they joined a ROSCA for the “social connection” and “sense of belonging.” Seventy percent of the women cooperators (38, n¼ 53) referred to ROSCAs as a space they can go to and not worry about menfolk. ROSCAs give women a place to socialize and to discuss domestic and personal issues (Ardenner and Burman 1996; Alabi, Alabi, and Akrobo 2007). The importance of solidarity is aptly expressed in the words of an anonymous interviewee:

Caisses populaires belong to the Haitian people. These caisses are accessible, grassroots, and embedded into people’s hearts, because they focus on people’s community, collectivity, and helping each other out, which are very important traits for us

[Haitians], especially those of us who are poor. (interview, civil society activist, Port-au-Prince, 2 October 2010)

Membership in a Susu is a way to build up positive forms of active social capital because people could rely on each other, and not elites (Krishna 2002). All of the Grenadian cooperators (17) said Susu was a way people helped themselves and others. This finding matches those of Ardener and Burman (1996), who carried out studies in a dozen cases in which women confessed that at ROSCA meetings, they found social support and felt free to complain and seek advice about marital issues. Of the cooperators interviewed, 81 percent (50, n¼ 62) attested to the fact that formal banks, whether cooperative or commercial, do not consider the social aspect that people want. Cooperators (n¼ 62) explained to me in the interviews that they organized ROSCAs in familiar places, such as members' homes or yards or church basements, so they could hold meetings and then eat together.

Trust in the Collective

One of the largest credit unions in Grenada is Grenville Cooperative Credit Union, founded in 1983, with over 8,000 members. This large membership is the result of people's trust in the values of this organization. According to its general manager, Devon Charles, "Community banks are not concerned about blowing their trumpets, but are there to help people . . . and (people know that) cooperatives are not going away" (interview, Devon Charles, 11 June 2013). Melvin Edwards (2009), a cooperatives scholar, referred to cooperatives as "homegrown microfinance" institutions, where local people, and not an expatriate institution, decide how financial services will be carried out. The members interviewed for this study (16, n¼ 17) said they "trusted credit unions because of their social commitments." "Jingle," a business owner of a pizza and food shop, stated he was skeptical that state and banking elites help vendors:

Government and them [commercial banks] say they would help business in market and [bus] terminal. But they only talk, talk, and give no help to us. They fear we can't pay. So, I don't worry with [their] empty promises and I go to my Communal [refers to Communal credit union]. (interview, "Jingle," St. George, Grenada, 13 June 2013)

"Jingle," like other interviewees, prefers credit unions because they focus on savings and building assets rather than on debt. Hill Collins (2000) finds that building people's savings is important to growing the Black economy. The socioeconomic culture of Grenadians supports Hill Collins's (2000) finding that investing in each other is a way for people to support one another. The cooperative way of life is deeply entrenched in the lives of individuals on the small island. People are connected to each other through the groups they form, whether they are for banking, fishing, or selling at the market.

Almost all of the Haitian cooperators I interviewed (43, n¼ 45) stated that the people managing the Sol and cooperatives "are like us"—meaning that the frontline staff came from the same economic backgrounds. On both islands, the credit unions sector is usually staffed by bankers with similar class origins to the people they work with and extend credit to.

This idea—“they are like us”—meant that most of the cooperators (42, n¼ 45) found that staff would support them in their business affairs without any class or racial bias. In addition, cooperative lenders possess a race- and class-consciousness that reveal they understand the experiences of those on the receiving end (Hossein 2016). During this fieldwork, the vast majority of cooperative lenders and experts (72, n¼ 76) found that co-op banks embraced a political philosophy to fit the reality of their poor and working-class clients. One clear example is in Haiti, where staff members speak Kreyol, the national language spoken by the majority of the people (Field visits, 2008 and 2010). This strong local connection is why caisses populaires are a banking institution that perseveres despite national and international scandals.

CONCLUSION: POLITICIZED ECONOMIC SOLIDARITY AND THE BLACK DIASPORA

There are reportedly at least 200 million people of African descent living in the Americas, and the UN has dedicated the decade (2014–23) to observing the contributions of the African diaspora. As the decade draws to a close, it is important to note the cooperative experience of the Black diaspora. Millions of Black people in the Americas are vested in cooperative institutions. Black Social Economy theory helps to orient our activist thinking toward viewing the use of ROSCAs not only as community development but also as politicized work to reach the excluded (Hossein 2015; 2016). Much work remains, given that, as of 2021, the global International Cooperative Alliance does not have a dedicated representative for the African diaspora in the Americas.

Our findings reveal that people value cooperatives—both formal and informal—for their principles of one-member, one-vote, education, and trust-making. Informal cooperatives like ROSCAs push against neoliberal business norms as a way to reduce the need for exclusionary collateral requirements, and group economics have rationalized the value of collective businesses (Ashe and Neilan 2014). The Haitian and Grenadian people are strongly influenced by the indigenous banking systems of Susu and Sol because of their focus on equity. Members pool goods, voice their opinions, and seek consensus, and these are all ways to show that business can be embedded in community. The Haiti and Grenada cases debunk the development arena’s preoccupation with the “modernity” project. They show that ROSCAs, mutual aid, and cooperatives have been part of the survival of enslaved and colonized Black people in the Americas for a very long time. n

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NOTES

- 1 Visit the ICA website: <https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>.
- 2 Business professor K'wife K'adamwe, Mona School of Business, University of West Indies, suggested that not only do the Partner or Susu systems predate formal cooperatives but that they are the most valued financial bank (Mona School of Business and Management, "Connecting the Dots: Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development" conference, 9–11 November 2016, Kingston, Jamaica).
- 3 See economist Nina Banks's (2021) recent work unearthing the economic writing of Sadie Alexander, the first African American woman to receive a PhD in economics.
- 4 This section has been influenced by fieldwork on Black cooperators in the Canadian context, a project funded by the Province of Ontario's Early Researcher Award.
- 5 See Polanyi (1944).
- 6 This question became unhelpful after a while because people made it clear that the co-ops they participate in do come from Africa, such as Susu or Sol, but I felt I needed to keep this question because this "idea of inventing co-ops" is not what is understood in the larger co-op movement.
- 7 See also Hudson (2014).
- 8 Greene's book *The Comedians* (1965) provides insight into the horrors of the Tonton Macoutes terror under Francois Duvalier.
- 9 See Mullings (2021) for an excellent paper on the African diaspora's cooperative economies to confront exclusionary capitalist systems.
- 10 Girard (2010, 196) notes that the scandal unfolded in 2002, but my fieldwork in the interviews verified it was in 2000.

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- Chandra Davis, GCL [général manager], St. George, Grenada, 4 June 2013.
- Devon Charles, Grenville Credit Union, St. George, Grenada, 11 June 2013.
- "Jingle," St. George, Grenada, 13 June 2013.
- "Miveline," in a focus group, Bon Repos, Haiti, 9 October 2010.
- Commercial banker, Petionville, Haiti, 17 October 2010.
- "Miss Beatrice," Grand Anse Valley, Grenada 12 July 2013
- "Nicole," in a focus group, Milot, Haiti, 13 December 2013.