

# Caribbean political thought essay sample

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“ Where is our philosophy?” a question repeatedly asked by Tim Hector, an Antiguan journalist. From the early historical beginnings in the late 15th century, there has been uncertainty in regards to both the geographical and cultural aspect of the Caribbean region. G. K. Lewis (1983) documents that even after the geographical puzzle was fixed, a cultural puzzle continued. It is clear that the question given pertains to the debate on whether Caribbean Political Thought exists as an independent body of thought and to a greater extent requires the identification of any scholastic work that explains the nature of Caribbean Thought. Within this presentation, an effort will be made to identify arguments raised against the existence of Caribbean Philosophy such as its Western origin, the absence of intellectual tradition, its and universality. Furthermore, this presentation seeks to explore the contributions of G. K. Lewis, Paget Henry and Charles Mills as it relates to the explanation of Caribbean thought.

One argument raised to denounce or disregard the existence of Caribbean Political thought is that Philosophy was largely a Western European invention. It is important to note the relevance of the Enlightenment period which was an intellectual movement dominating the world of ideas in Europe in the 18th century. It dealt with specific approaches to religious, social, political and economic issues. Hence philosophy is said to be an attribute of Western cultural tradition. However, the argument here is not necessarily that philosophy is of European invention but the Caribbean is an offspring of the western civilization and thus the Caribbean is western cultured. Hence, a distinction is not necessary between western philosophy and Caribbean philosophy.

Another argument raised is the epistemological challenge of universality. G. K. Lewis (1983) highlights the traditional idea of philosophy in the west as systematic, unequivocal, unified, coherent, universal enterprise where universality is deemed an attribute of genuine philosophy. Furthermore, there is said to be certain attributes of Pure Philosophy such as Ontology (questions of nature), Epistemology( theory of knowing), Ethics( morality) and Logic (science of reason) . Such traditional ideas aforesaid disregards anything that has not been declared universal and thus cannot be genuine philosophy. Charles Mills explored this claim from an remarkable perspective that is dealt with later in this presentation.

Additionally, there is also the notion that the Caribbean has an absence of intellectual tradition and there is a perception that the Caribbean is a cultural desert. There's a widely held view of the Caribbean which is, it is characterized by sea, sun and sex upon which the tourism industry has been constructed. Thinkers of conventional minded writers strongly believed that the Caribbean was a backward area and required guidance from the West as to modernize it (G. K. Lewis 1983). Furthermore, it is argued that a society lacking documented thought cannot claim philosophical thought. It is also argued that there is no pure Caribbean intellectual thought that can be traced. This claim was counterchallenged by G. K. Lewis and Paget Henry.

Now that three main arguments against the existence of Caribbean political thought were indentified , the latter of my presentations seeks to present a case explaining the nature of Caribbean philosophy using G. K. Lewis is Main currents In Caribbean Thought Is key to the contribution of Caribbean political thought as he was the first to shed light on such discourse and <https://assignbuster.com/caribbean-political-thought-essay-sample/>

declared there was in fact something called Caribbean political thought.

Lewis argues that despite the many misconceptions of the Caribbean, it still possesses distinctive and idiosyncratic characteristics. These include social forms, political institutions, and ethnic formation.

He further deposits that these characteristics were shaped through the architectonic forces of conquest, colonization, slavery, sugar monoculture, and racial and ethnic admixture. There are also characteristic problems such as poverty, unemployment, political fragmentation and weak social identity. Lewis argues that owing to the economic and social conditions in which the Caribbean endured prohibited the establishment of an effective community based on shared values. Despite the varied influences, such occurrence validates the concept of a collective socio cultural character.

Paget Henry . Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy

responded to the notion that there is an absence of intellectual tradition and cultural dessert. Henry asserts that Caribbean Philosophy has been carefully embedded in the practice of non-philosophical discourse almost to the point of concealment. It was not developed in an intellectual vacuum. Henry holds that Afro- Caribbean philosophy is an intertextual embedded discursive practice and not an isolated or absolutely autonomous one. However, it is usually referenced or has its roots in the production of answers and problems that are being framed in non-philosophical discourses. It is open but diverse discursive field in which the aforementioned attributes flow into one another.

Henry strongly believes that Caribbean philosophy is rooted in social realities and lived experiences. Henry seems to place Caribbean philosophy outside

the universal criterion. The earliest expression of Euro-Caribbean philosophy was that of Las Casas who helped to shape the new images of Amerindians in European imperial vision of itself. The philosophical productions of the Euro Caribbean were aimed at effecting European political and social hegemony as was also documented by G. K. Lewis. While in contrast, the philosophical undertakings of the other groups were aimed at destroying European hegemony. For example, mention was also made to poetists such as Derek Walcott (a Nobel prize winner) and historians such as Marcus Garvey and CLR James.

Charles Mills response to universality ' social contract

As aforementioned, universality is deemed as a pertinent attribute of genuine philosophy as declared by western philosophers. However, Mills argues that sometimes what purports to be objective definitions of the appropriate limits of the world of philosophical inquiry and authoritative pronouncement about what is conceptually interesting in that world have a more questionable provenance. Universality and objectivity used by Western Philosophy would then seek to marginalize Caribbean philosophy and maintain that it is subjective and lacks universality. Nonetheless, Mills introduced the concept of particularity and argues that Western Philosophy is particular as it is caught up in racial bias- racial exclusion. In support of such claim, G. K. Lewis deposits that slavery involved a dual inequality- that of economic and racial.

Chastellux summarises this particularity and I quote ' it is not only the slave beneath the master but the negro beneath the white man. Western

Philosophy is deemed hypocritical as an acclaimed universal and subjective body of work as it only seems to reflect them. Paget Henry even agreed that Western Philosophy reflected solely the white man.

Hence, this constitutes the particularity within western philosophy.

Subsequently, Mills was able to attack the foundations of w. p and seems to show that philosophy is particular that is particular to social reality and lived experiences. He thus resolves the authenticity of Caribbean philosophy. Mills is able to dismantle what can and what cannot constitute philosophy by simply identifying the particularities of both w. p and c. p.

Conclusively, Paget The earliest traditions of Caribbean philosophy were so clearly linked to the reality of imperial history and related fields like anthropology and exotic literature, that by its very nature – the notion of philosophy in and for the Caribbean must be widened to include the intrusions from other fields of inquiry

Bob marley The power of philosophy floats through my head light like a feather , heavy as lead.