

Negative effects of tourism in the caribbean



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Question 1: Kincaid, Strachan *and others* have argued that tourism hardly benefits the people of the Caribbean. At best it creates low levels of employment, workers' alienation, and teaches little more than servility which is compensated with menial wages. At worst, it fosters the "ethics of materialism" in a population that can hardly afford the global North lifestyles paraded in their faces daily by tourists and the media. Discuss.

The Caribbean has a history of being an earthly paradise which encourages consumption, voyeurism and luxury. Tourism is the most important economic activity for many Caribbean economies. It exists within a political and economic framework that is characterized by neoliberal capitalists and transnational monopolies that control the industry within nations of the Caribbean economy. Whenever one thinks of tourism it is essential to keep in mind the colonial pattern of capital accumulation, since global inequality is at the center of this neoliberal endeavor. Therefore, Caribbean tourism represents what sugar signified over a century ago - a monocrop product, controlled by foreigners and a few elites for the maintenance of global capitalism. Within the tourism industry the capitalist system expands by accessing to cheap labor, land, resources, and markets in the Caribbean. While tourism generates foreign capital and employment in Caribbean islands, it marginalizes, commodifies, deskills and devalues workers in the industry. A majority of workers in the industry are relegated, to positions of servitude in low-paid seasonal jobs in the formal sector and unemployment, or craft and trade jobs in the informal sector.

The Caribbean was conceptualized by the first colonizers as "paradise". However, this Edenic experience for colonizers was made possible through

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the development of plantations; the opposite of paradise for the colonized Amerindians and later the slaves from the West (Strachan, 2003). Tourism advertisements presents the Caribbean as an exotic place and the region is promoted as accessible and ready to serve the Global North. Caribbean islands must therefore sell themselves and their people to tourists from the Global North in order to earn foreign exchange and remain competitive. Thus, Caribbean tourism relies on the packaging of natural assets such as sun, sand, sea friendly people, music and other cultural forms to support economic growth. Systematized issues associated with globalization and economic liberalization contributed to the vulnerability of Caribbean islands and reduced them to a state of dependency on countries in the Global North. The shift in the means of production from sugarcane, tobacco, cotton, etc. toward tourism and free-trade meant that Caribbean economies would need funds for tourism development. Globalization for the Caribbean therefore, meant implementation of economic policies stipulated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) for “ stabilization” of the economy and structural adjustment programs for integration in the global market. Tourism became an indispensable part of the plantation since paradise is now determined by the Global North which institutionalizes structures to disempower countries of the Caribbean (Strachan, 2003).

Tourism replicates the unequal distribution of power and economic resources between the Global North and islands of the Caribbean (Kincaid, 1988; Strachan, 1995). Kincaid (1988) declares, “ Every native of every place is a potential tourist, and every tourist is a native of somewhere. But some natives? most natives in the world? cannot go anywhere. They are too poor.

They are too poor to go anywhere” (p. 18-19). Time, resources, economic and political power have been essential in the growth of tourism. Caribbean governments and the neoliberal States such as, the International Monetary Fund promote tourism as a viable option for economic and social development while the poor, marginalized workers, in host countries, are taught how to be servile in order to satisfy tourist (Enloe, 1990; Alexander, 2005; Jordan, 2003). Tourism thus, shapes cultural and national identity of the people in a fundamental way because of its importance to the economy. It is incorporated into the educational system where people are formally being taught how to be servile this drastically influence how culture is produced. Despite this, Strachan (2003) states that as a coping mechanism there are subtle ways workers in the industry resists servility in the industry just as how slaves resisted on the plantation (p. 10).

Tourism ensure that Caribbean countries are economically dependent and vulnerable. This is evident, in the ways transnational corporations use their technology and resources to control tourist arrivals in destination countries in the Caribbean and how spaces are segregated in host countries and controlled by monopoly capitalist. This not only limits access of traders and small business owners in the informal sector to tourist markets but also these exclusive spaces keep tourists from seeing the local poverty that might make them uncomfortable and discourage from staying in the country. The exclusive tourist areas have electricity, sewerage, paved roads, and running water to ensure tourists pleasure and comfort, but basic infrastructure development in Caribbean islands like Jamaica and Antigua remains chaotic, lacks planning, development, and environmental control

(Kincaid, 1998). This illustrates where the interest of the government lies; for the tourists.

Tour operators and the media in the Global North have the ability to control the flow of visitors to the Caribbean islands through the promotion of tourist packages and the news updates. Tourist packages are usually all-inclusive deals that controls the tourist experience from type of transportation to the destination country's attractions, hotels to restaurants and recreational facilities. Transnational hotels, like the Hilton, also use these amalgamated strategies to strengthen their position in local markets in the Caribbean. These tourism services are purchased online directly from the hotel's or airline's website or through third-part websites like as Expedia. Such strategies restrict the participation of local players and keeps profits circulated among companies in the Global North.

There are a number of other operational issues are associated with the susceptibility of Caribbean islands and the hindrances to their benefiting from growth in tourism. A major concern is profit leakage in foreign exchange earnings either through the reparation of profits and income by the transnational company or through the importation of consumer goods that is needed to sustain tourism. This becomes problematic because tourism accounts for a high percentage of Caribbean islands gross nation production and such heavy dependence on one industry makes the islands even more vulnerable to external markets force. Another problem lies with the generous tax concessions and other negotiated conditionalities between the local government and the transnational company or the local government and the IMF, often times leads to stimulated foreign investment

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with the aims of producing employment, paying off the foreign debt, and generating revenue. However, in the long run this approach will fail to enhance the well-being of the working-class population in the industry as the majority of the population has been relegated to positions of servility in a competitive labor market that provides principally low-paid, seasonal, and unstable jobs as mid and upper level management are usually person from the transnational cooperation. According to Alexander (2005) a country that is driven by foreign currency and its government's that is complicit with this practice complicity creates a culture defined by its service rather than by its own sense of autonomy and development. Kincaid echoed this sentiment when she stated " The government is for sale; anybody from anywhere can come to Antigua and for a sum of money can get what he wants" (1988, 47). Here, she is highlighting the state of misery and devastation in which Antiguan lives. According to Kincaid this is the remnants of colonialism.

The labor force in the tourism industry is primarily made up of women. Women are virtually absent from supervisory and management positions. Globally, women also experience income disparities as opposed to men at all levels of hotel, catering, and tourism employment. They generally occupy the lower echelons in the tourism labor market, with few career opportunities and low levels of remuneration. Resorts are usually managed by foreigners, many of whom do not appreciate the cultural, social, and economic realities of the host countries in which they work. Workers often times become frustrated by the lack of respect accorded them by for foreigners and the severe competition for the tourist market meant that they could easily be replaced. June Jordan *Report from the Bahamas* as a middle-class African

American tourist in the Bahamas was forced to rethink some of the most commonplace and comfortable assumptions about sisterhood and black solidarity during her encounter with several women in the industry like her maid, the desperate vendors trying to sell her Bahamian trinkets and her encounter with the graduate student. This shows how women in the black community are often invisible and that oppression weakens solidarity.

Tourism has its roots in heteropatriarchal capitalism since the 17th century that was exclusive to upper-class European men and later women (Enloe, 2000: 21). However, during the 20th century tourism has changed in many respects and has lost its original elitist characteristic. Tourism is aimed fulfilling the tourist's expectations and desires without much regard of how it affects the lives of the citizens and the impact on the host country. The imagery of various Caribbean countries as exotic island along with tourists being tended to their every need and handed drinks with tiny umbrellas in them highlights seasonal cultural erosion of the citizens identity.

Heteropatriarchal capitalism creates labor hierarchies within hotels. Men are excluded from management, but gender stereotypes also give them access to positions with more opportunities for gratuities, such as bartender and luggage handler. Women, in contrast, are employed in gender-designated positions of domesticity such as housekeeping. There are few opportunities for resort workers to participate directly and independently in the tourism economy. To escape this dilemma, many cultivate relationships of companionship, friendship, and romance with tourists and other foreigners as a way to access the global economy, travel to the global North, and improve their lives and that of their families. (Cliff and Carter, 2010). Many

relationships between local women and foreign men are affective relations with economic activity, but others emphasize payment for sexual services.

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