

The Jamaican Oligarchy in the 21st century

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The work of Stanley Reid titled: “An Introductory approach to the concentration of power in the Jamaican corporate economy and notes on its origin” published in 1978 remains the standard for analysing this Jamaican reality but it is dated as it studied the period 1969-1973. The task of this work is to review Reid's work and present an analysis of the Jamaican reality today guided by Reid's work.

Reid (1978) states: “It is the contention of this study that the concentration of power and control of the corporate economy lies in the hand of minority ethnic elites and is mainly dispersed through 21 families and their interest groups. The ascendancy of these groupings-Jews, local whites, Syrians and Chinese-closely followed and in some ways anticipated the transition of the plantation state to independent nation.” (Reid 1978 Pf 15). Reid states that there are no African Jamaicans within this elite group of families. Power over and control of the corporate sector of Jamaica is in the hands of 21 specific families who are all race minorities in Jamaica. There has then been with independence in 1962 a relationship between black politicians and this small non-African elite that worked to the benefit of this group. Reid posits a pyramid of dominance within the elite group with the Jews being at the apex followed by the local whites trailed by the Arabs and the Chinese. It is noteworthy that the Arabs and Chinese are comparatively recent arrivals unlike the Africans, Jews and whites but they have created space within the group of elite families but the Africans have not. The pressing sociological question is: has this picture painted by Reid in 1978 changed appreciably in 2016? The question then is: after over 50 years of independence and African domination of the political process and the state are they now occupying space in the ranks of the oligarchy of Jamaica?

Reid (1978) continues as follows: “Clearly allied with Colonial Governments, the group's early genesis came from the plantation system, some owners of large plantations, others engaged in a tradition of import-export trading and ancillary commercial activities as insurance while others pioneered early industry of soft consumer goods and some heavy equipment.” (Reid 1978 Pg 16). The elite 21 group of families is then the product of the colonial economy and the state. The question then is: “what was the mechanism of survival and replication with independence in 1962”? On this Reid is silent as the whole of Caribbean academia. Reid (1978) states: “They intermarried, usually arranged to keep family wealth intact, occupied important roles in major organisations of the state, enjoyed an unusual intimacy with the law and legal institutions and played an important role in their development. With the island's independence in 1962, the situation remained unchanged. The logic which united families, professional and financial interests and occupation of important institutional hierarchical roles continued.” (Reid 1978 Pg 16). The black politicians of the independent state then embraced the group of 21 families and replicated their power across time. Independence in 1962 posed no threats to their privilege in fact the black politicians of the independence era enabled the amassing of wealth and power that grew the elite into an oligarchy that is sacrosanct even untouchable. Reid states: “by the post-war period commercial interests had emerged who had not only appropriated for themselves considerable financial leverage by virtue of ownership of land and property and domination of trade but who had initiated a tradition of occupying important economic roles in the Jamaican community. That this elite were of considerable political importance goes without saying...” (Reid 1978 Pg 17). Reid is saying that faced with the power this elite wielded under colonial domination the black politicians of the independence era simply capitulated. This is the instrumental position but capitulation of the extent Reid describes demands a worldview that saw the group of 21 as being of singular strategic importance to the development of Jamaica and their electability over time.

Reid's study conducted on the annual reports of public companies for the period 1969-1973 revealed the dominant shareholding of public companies by specific individuals and companies. The elite group of 21 families therefore held dominant shareholding in each other's companies. This strategy was adopted to prevent hostile takeovers from entities external of the group of 21 families indicating the existence and operation of a cartel of 21. Reid states: “The community of interests which

dominate the corporate economy and occupy the major hierarchical roles cannot be considered a large family. Twenty-one family groupings are easily identifiable as the major centres of power and account for 125 of the existing 129 directorships in the corporate economy and nearly 70% of the chairmen. Within this context one can also talk of a 'supergroup', family groupings who are represented on a variety of corporations and share a large number of directorates. Ashenheim, Desnoes-Geddes, Hart, Henriques and Matalon can be considered as super groups occupying 1 out of every 3 available directorships. The issue is further complicated by extensive inter-marriages between the 21 groupings. One finds that Ashenheim and Henriques are linked by marriage and the Desnoes-Geddes, Hart and Henriques are similarly linked.” (Reid 1978 Pg 24). For the period of the study the group of 21 families dominate the public corporate sector of Jamaica. The bonds that bind especially the apex of the group of 21 have been intensified by blood ties formed through intermarriage between family members of the apex group. The period 1969-1973 is then the halcyon age of the oligarchy of Jamaica.

Reid (1978) continues as follows: “It is not difficult to conceive of the racial and economic exclusiveness of such relationships. Nearly half of the 53 corporate directors which make up the group of 21 families are Jews. Each minority group is represented in the corporate economy, viz., Chinese in N.C.C and Lai Corporation, Lebanese and Syrians in C.M.P, Jamaican white in Desnoes & Geddes, and Jews in I.C.D. Notably absent are blacks, not one corporate firm is controlled by blacks, who represent 90% of the population; and of the 6 blacks on corporate boards two were government-appointed, the others providing a face lift.” (Reid 1978 Pg 25). Reid states that whilst Jamaican Jews dominate the group of 21 families all of Jamaica's ethnic minorities are represented in the group of 21: Jews, whites, Chinese and Arabs but the African Jamaican majority is absent in the group of 21 which raises the question: is the African majority deliberately shut out? Reid's position on intermarriage within the group of 21 is as follows: “Intermarriage could be viewed as a means of extending corporate ownership, as a strategic instrument for linking the factors of production, land, skill and capital and thus retaining the power and influence of the ethnic groupings.” (Reid 1978 Pg 25). Intermarriage is then a strategy by powerful ethnic minorities to shore up their positions of power from external and internal assaults and to ensure their power is sustainable across time. But this is selective intermarriage and Reid does not deal with selective breeding to ensure that the genetic codes of race minorities are maintained. Selective intermarriage within the group of 21 has a dimension of selective breeding involved.

Reid (1978) in dealing with the impact of the activities of the group of 21 on the social order of Jamaica states: “Given the concentration of power and wealth that has been outlined; it is not surprising that one finds in Jamaica a very serious mal-distribution of income. Since only profits or high incomes can be saved, it is evident that further wealth accrues to those who have and will continue to distort the distribution of wealth and consequently power in the society.” (Reid 1978 Pg 35). The result then is arrested development for the majority of Jamaica's citizens whilst the elite evolves comparatively into Jamaica's super rich. Without state intervention the power of the group of 21 is self-perpetuating and wealth is amassed to the detriment of the life chances of the majority. Reid (1978) ends his work with this position: “Implicit in this domination by small ethnic familial elites of strategic sections of the economy, is their continued usurping of the political process and retention of a diffuse but nonetheless real political power.” (Reid 1978 Pg 36). The group of 21 families is then an oligarchy within the bounds of a formally democratic state.

In 1978 when Reid's study was published the corporate sector of Jamaica was experiencing the dislocation visited upon Jamaica by the first oil shock of 1973 and worst would follow with the second oil shock of 1979. The price of imported petroleum products into Jamaica rose appreciably whilst the world prices for bauxite and alumina collapsed spawning balance of payments crises that sent the Jamaican governments of the day into the structural adjustment shock therapy prescribed by

the IMF. Structural adjustment was premised on the liberalisation of the economy, the shrinking of the expenditure of the state and its role in the economy and the decade of the 1990s the attempt to liberalise the financial market of Jamaica with ineffective and minimal oversight/regulation created a speculative bubble that burst in this decade with deadly effect on the Jamaican financial structure and markets forcing the state to intervene and acquire these distressed assets in specific cases. This financial distress facilitated the entry of Sagikor of Barbados and Guardian Holdings of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) into the Jamaican insurance market as top tier players. From the decade of the 1970s to today the level of demand in the Jamaican economy continues to be depressed compared to pre-oil shock levels and the Jamaican dollar continues to weaken against the US dollar compared to pre-oil shock values. At the time of writing the J\$ was in excess of 122 to 1 USD and the impact of this is seen in the cost of food, personal care products and pharmaceuticals. This cost of living must be placed in the context of the wages and salaries earned and the withdrawal of the state from the provision of quality health care, education, housing and infrastructure in an environment where the cost of living and the wages and salaries earned place these necessities of life and progress out of the reach of many Jamaicans.

The Jamaican corporate elite described by Reid was particularly vulnerable to the realities that manifested themselves in the decade of the 1970s and thereafter in Jamaica. They all had an addiction to foreign exchange that was not generated in the volume required by the operations of their enterprises and they were also totally dependent on the level of demand in Jamaica and by extension internal demand driven markets. Faced with shortages of foreign currency and the rising cost of foreign exchange driven by the weakening J\$ and the collapse of the level of demand on the internal market the corporate sector was now for the first time in its existence faced with extinction as business as usual was no longer possible. The survival drive then calls for to this day enterprises that earn foreign exchange and business activity in markets with much higher levels of demand than Jamaica the ideal is then business activity in the North Atlantic markets. Those with a footing in the hotel sector of the Jamaican tourism industry had a chance of survival as demand was external of Jamaica and rooms were paid for in USD but the key was managing costs whilst maintaining marketability and even in this sector many fell by the wayside but the most threatened sector of the corporate sector was the import/distribution sector that had no enterprises earning foreign exchange of their own. The Jamaican \$ has depreciated constantly over time from 1 USD= 0.77 J cents in 1972 to 1 USD= 122.05 J\$ selling on March 23, 2016 whilst Jamaican government debt to GDP from 1999 to 2014 averaged 119.62% of GDP and in 2014 was 132.72% of GDP. This was the environment of collapse that impacted the group of 21 necessitating the formulation of a new survival strategy. The group of 21 was then forced to remake themselves into brand new entrepreneurs never seen before in Jamaica and those who failed to respond their enterprises will fail to survive and their footprints on the landscape of Jamaica will become a fading memory. This is what in fact happened as the culling of the corporate herd over decades opened spaces for new entrepreneurs to emerge whilst the opening up of Jamaican markets enabled transnational corporations to pick off those Jamaican products with global appeal as Red Stripe Beer and Appleton Rum. The collapse of the financial sector in the 1990s enabled the entry of Pan-Caribbean insurance companies Sagikor of Barbados and Guardian Holdings of T&T via the purchase of distressed portfolios. The globalisation of transnational corporations with operations in Jamaica such as the assets of energy companies as Shell and Texaco etc who sold their assets in Jamaica enabled the entry of another group of transnational and Pan-Caribbean companies into Jamaican markets. The change after three decades is then palpable in light of Reid's study but the singular question remains: is the new Jamaican indigenous private sector still dominated by the minority race groups of Jamaica?

The analysis of the indigenous private sector of Jamaica today has revealed the following: the disappearance of the public corporations Reid analysed as the majority of the dominant players today have resorted to private companies owned and operated by founding families, families listed in Reid's

study have disappeared from the companies listed on the Jamaica Stock Exchange index in 2016 and said families do not appear in the press reports as owners of dominant companies of the private sector today, families not listed in Reid's analysis have now joined the elite and are now dominant players in this elite, specific families have survived the culling of the herd and have maintained their position within the elite and a person of mixed race has entered the elite but the African remains absent from the ranks of the elite. The 'supergroup' of families Reid wrote about no longer dominate the corporate landscape of Jamaica. The Ashenheims, Desnoes-Geddes, Hart and Henriques have disappeared as dominant players with only the Matalon family in a position of recognition but in an entirely different business structure that Joseph Matalon controls, a private company, in an environment where public companies owned by the elite are now in a minority. The group of 21 families is clearly today history thereby creating the need to understand the new discourse of power. Two examples are instructive: Lascelles de Mercado a public company owned the brand and the assets of the operation of Appleton Rum. Ashenheim and de Mercado two dominant shareholders of the company agreed to accept the offer made by Angostura Holdings Ltd of T&T a subsidiary of C L Financial for the purchase of the assets and brand of Appleton Rum. With the collapse of C L Financial the brand and the assets were sold to Grupo Campari of Italy. Jamaica lost one of its premier global brands as the dominant shareholders settled for the offer from C L Financial that was very enticing to them. Lascelles de Mercado is no longer listed on the JSE and has no traction in the present Jamaican private sector. Desnoes & Geddes (D&G) owned the brand and assets of Red Stripe Beer the dominant family shareholders decided to sell D&G to Diageo where the brand D&G and its non-beer drinks operations passed to Diageo as well as Red Stripe Beer. Heineken International has acquired from Diageo the brand and assets of D&G and Heineken International has moved to delist D&G from the JSE on March 31, 2016. Two Jamaican iconic brands with international traction gobbled up by globalised transnationals because two long standing public companies of the group of 21 failed to capitalise on their assets by investing in their effective globalisation. The major shareholders of both companies have now with these sales added to their personal wealth but lost their businesses and their membership in the Jamaican corporate elite. The listing of Reid now reads as follows: NCC not listed on the JSE, Lai Corporation not listed on the JSE, CMP not listed on the JSE, D&G listed on the JSE to be delisted, Lascelles de Mercado not listed on the JSE and ICD not listed on the JSE.

Reid on page 73 of his study presented a list of the public companies for the period 1972-1973. This is the reality today for specific companies I have chosen: Jamaica Public Service: listed on the JSE but 80% of the company now foreign owned, D&G listed now owned by Heineken International to be delisted, Carib Cement Ltd listed now owned by Trinidad Cement Ltd, Wray and Nephew not listed, Lascelles de Mercado not listed, National Continental Corp. not listed, Pan Jamaican Investment Trust listed, ICD not listed now a private company, Jamaica Citizens bank not listed, Hardware & Lumber listed, Royal Bank (Ja) Ltd not listed, CMP not listed, Lai Corp. not listed, KIW Group not listed, Life of Jamaica not listed. The impact of continuing balance of payments deficits and the depressed level of demand for decades have taken their toll on a powerful yet economically vulnerable elite. The change in the membership of the Jamaican oligarchy is then immediately obvious and the group of 21 no longer exists.

The reality in 2016 is the existence of dominant conglomerates that are owned by Jamaican families of minority race origin. These conglomerates are privately owned and the sectors of the economy they are involved in they are not obliged by law to make public their annual reports of these conglomerates. These powerful private companies owned by specific minority families dominate the sectors of the economy they are involved in or dominate Jamaican involvement in specific sectors as hotels and resorts. These families are: the Stewart family, the Scott and Blades families, the Issa clan, the Hendrickson family, the Matalon family and the Mahfood family. Families in control of public

companies are: the Facey family and the Lacey family and the single individual who owns the dominant shareholding in a public company National Commercial Bank Jamaica (NCBJ) but all his holdings are held in a private company Michael Lee-Chin of Canada. The Stewart family, the Scott and Blades family and Michael Lee-Chin are all newcomers to the Jamaican elite as their families have no history being in the group of 21 in Reid's study. The Issa family, the Hendrickson family, the Matalon family, the Levy family, the Mahfood family and the Facey family were all listed as part of the group of 21 of Reid's study indicating that with the appropriate strategy applied backed by the wealth amassed before the collapse of the Jamaican economy members of the group of 21 survived and maintained their elite positions across time. The distribution of the minority races of Jamaica in this group is as follows: Stewart (Jamaican white), Scott and Blades (Jamaican and Barbadian white), Facey (Jamaican white), Issa (Jamaican Arab), Mahfood (Jamaican Arab), Matalon (Jamaican Jew), Levy (Jamaican Jew), Hendrickson (Jamaican Chinese) and Michael Lee-Chin (Jamaican Mixed race: African and Chinese ancestry). The minority race mix has only changed with the entry of Lee-Chin a mixed race individual who belongs to a minority group in Jamaica and African Jamaicans continue to be absent from the elite in 2016.

The Musson Group of companies owned by the Scott and Blades families is the premier Jamaican owned company of the indigenous private sector of Jamaica. This is a diversified, globalised conglomerate with a telecommunications division that is the basis of the globalisation that sets it apart from the existing Jamaican owned private sector companies. The original company was created in 1963 by Desmond Blades and presently it is under the control of his grandson P B Scott. The conglomerate spans the following divisions: Consumer which comprises Musson Trading a distribution company. Geddes Grant a distribution company. Facey Commodity a distributor of food and pharmaceuticals and a telecom logistics provider and Seprod a publicly listed company that specialises in manufacturing corn, oil and fats based products for the Jamaican and export markets. Manufacturing comprises: Acme Spices. The Ketchup Plant manufactures sauces and tomato ketchup for the Jamaican and Caricom markets sauces and ketchup are manufactured for private labels and the plant is also involved in contract packing. Musson Food Factory manufactures canned food for private labels and the plant is also involved in contract packing. Reliable Packaging Co. Ltd imports paper pulp and converts it into paper products for the Jamaican market and Seprod. Services comprises: Eppley Ltd a publicly listed investment company and General Accident which provides all classes of non-life insurance. Technology comprises: GRA Inc. a master distributor for Xerox products in Latin America and the Caribbean based in Miami, Florida. Productive Business Solutions supplies printing and IT business solutions in Central America and the Caribbean. Telecommunications comprises: Facey Telecom Division is one of the largest distributors of mobile handsets in the Caribbean and Central America. Sky Solutions is a mobile phone handset logistics provider in Central America. Oceanic Telecom is a distributor of mobile handsets across the Pacific region based in New Zealand. Radius Communications Ireland is a leading mobile phone distributor and fulfillment solutions provider in Ireland. Transactions E-Pins Ltd is the electronic mobile phone top up vendor selling Digicel and Cable and Wireless airtime in Jamaica. Musson Group as it is today evolved during the period of the collapse of the Jamaican economy eventually becoming globalised in this period of collapse.

The Appliance Traders Ltd (ATL) Group of companies created and owned by Gordon 'Butch' Stewart is another private company created during the years of economic collapse by an individual whose family was not a member of Reid's listing of the corporate elite. The ATL group comprises of the following: Appliance Traders Ltd, Sandals Resorts, Beaches Resorts, Grand Pineapple Beach Resorts, Fowl Cay Resort, Private Villas by Sandals and Beaches, Red Lane Spas, the Sandals Foundation, Sandals Life Style, Island Routes Caribbean Adventure Tours, Jamaica Observer newspaper and ATL Automotive. Stewart's stock of resorts is structured as follows: Sandals Resorts Jamaica 7, St Lucia 3,

The Bahamas 3, Grenada 1, Barbados 1 and Antigua 1. Beaches Resorts: Turks and Caicos Isles 1 and Jamaica 2. Grand Pineapple Beach Resorts: Antigua 1 and Jamaica 1. In June 2016 ATL Group will end its involvement with the resort in Antigua. Fowl Cay Villas, The Bahamas 6 villas, Sandals Private Villas Jamaica 3. Stewart is then the premier owner/operator of resorts owned by a Jamaican and a Caribbean person in the Caricom region. The imperative of Gordon Stewart and his son Adam is to put in place the strategy that enables the resort chain sustainability in light of the vagaries of the international tourism market in the Caribbean.

Michael Lee-Chin born in Jamaica left in 1970 to pursue tertiary education in Canada where he stayed after graduation became a Canadian citizen and amassing his personal wealth in the Canadian financial services sector. In 2002 through his private company that he fully owns, Portland Holdings Inc., Lee-Chin purchased 75% of the shareholding of the National Commercial Bank of Jamaica (NCBJ) from the then government. In a Jamaican retail banking sector dominated by Scotiabank and NCBJ Lee-Chin personally owns a bank of national importance to the economy of Jamaica. Portland Holdings Inc. is headquartered in Canada and is an investment company which manages private and public equity as well as a portfolio of diversified businesses that it directly owns. The operating sectors of Portland Holdings Inc. are: Media which comprises CVM Communications Group in Jamaica. Consumer goods which comprises Wallenford Coffee Co. of Jamaica. Tourism which comprises Trident Hotel Jamaica, Trident Castle Jamaica and the Reggae Beach property. Health Care which comprises the Medical Associates Hospital Jamaica. Financial Services which comprises Banking: NCBJ and the NCB Group. On November 30, 2015 NCBJ and on December 1, 2015 Guardian Holdings Ltd (GHL) both announced that NCBJ had agreed to purchase 29.9% of the shareholding of GHL. The dominant shareholder of NCBJ Lee-Chin now controls 29.9% of the shareholding of the leading insurer in the Caribbean and the market leader in Jamaica and T&T. Investment Advisory Services which comprises Portland Private Equity, AIC Financial Group (Trinidad) and Mandeville Group. Investment product Manager which comprises Portland Investment Counsel. Lee-Chin the Canadian citizen and Portland Holdings Inc., is headquartered in Canada which means that all investment in Jamaica is made from and managed from Canada but being an individual who owns exclusively Portland Holdings Inc., Lee-Chin then personally wields power over all investments in Jamaica especially the NCBJ group of companies placing him in the ranks of the Jamaican oligarchy. A situation very much like the case of the power the super rich who reside in the UK wield in spite of being not citizens of the UK. Jamaica has then come of age in the era of globalised neo-liberal capitalism.

The profile of the companies owned or controlled by families listed in Reid's study of the Jamaican elite that are in operation today are as follows: Jamaica Broilers Group (JBG) a publicly listed company controlled by the Levy family is a globalised vertically integrated company involved in broiler production and ethanol. Every single process involved in broiler production and processing including the supply of the necessary equipment JBG is involved in. JBG is present in the US sourcing and supplying equipment for the industry and in the production of fertile hatchery eggs for sale in the US. In Jamaica and Haiti chicks are hatched from fertile eggs produced by the group and fed by feed produced by the group until harvest where broilers are processed into various forms of protein whilst in Haiti table eggs are produced. These operations result in JBG being the largest producer/processor of chicken protein in the Caribbean. The US production and sale of fertile hatchery eggs in the US provides the foreign exchange the operations of the group in Jamaica and Haiti require to remain sustainable.

Pan Jamaican Investment Trust (PanJam) is the final public company on the list dominated by a family in this case the Facey family. The company's main sources of income are: property income including rental and income derived from associated and joint venture (JV) companies. In 2014

property income was reported at J\$ 1,551 million and income from associated and JV companies at J\$ 2,693 million of which PanJam's share of the net profit of Sagicor Jamaica was J\$ 2,663 million. PanJam holds some 32% of the shareholding of Sagicor Jamaica. PanJam's strategic alliance with Sagicor on Sagicor's entry into the Jamaican insurance then the financial services market has buttressed the company's earning potential in light of Jamaica's economic realities and has enabled the Facey family to maintain their position and enhance their power within the Jamaican oligarchy of the 21st century.

Of the four remaining families who all own private companies: Issa, Matalon, Hendrickson and Mahfood the Hendrickson family headed by Karl Hendrickson own and manage personally the most diverse conglomerate in this group. The Hendrickson business model is not based on the norm of a holding company commanding a group of companies. The four children of Karl Hendrickson and his married wife own specific sections of the body of companies owned by the family obviating any possibility of strife over succession when the need arises. Gary Hendrickson owns National Bakery Ltd the largest supplier of baked goods in Jamaica and Coconut Bay Hotel, St Lucia. Kevin Hendrickson owns the Yummy and Holsum bakeries, the largest portfolio of hotel rooms in Kingston, Jamaica, the Courtleigh Corporate Centre and the Holiday Inn Hotel, Montego Bay. Lori Ann owns CB Group a vertically integrated company involved in the production of broilers, table eggs and chicken and pork products. Cathy Kerr owns the Sunset Group of Resorts with three resorts in Jamaica. The Hendricksons built a multi-market mix of resorts and business traveler rooms unlike other Jamaican actors in the tourism sector as a result they dominate the provision of rooms for the business traveler market in Jamaica. The foreign exchange needs of the operations of the Hendrickson companies are then addressed internally by the foreign exchange generated by the companies of the family.

In Reid's study ICD dominated by the Matalon family was a public company under the massive changes in the structure of the group forced by the collapse of the Jamaican economy in successive waves and the resulting need to service the debt the group became burdened with the assets of the group were sold. Under the direction of Joseph Matalon the ICD Holding Company died and de-listed from the JSE and the ICD Group as a private company emerged with a new portfolio of enterprises structured for survival in the 21st century Jamaican economy. What must be understood is that the shrinkage of business activity by specific families listed by Reid does not necessarily mean that these families lost the personal wealth they amassed over time. The reality is to determine how they managed their personal wealth since the economic collapse. Is it in the North Atlantic? Are they investing their wealth in Jamaica and the Caribbean? The present configuration of ICD Group under the control of Joseph Matalon is a private holding company that manages diverse businesses in the Caribbean and North America. Advantage Communications is a joint venture with the Canadian company Advantage Communications Inc. which specialises in outsourced contact centers for corporate clients. British Caribbean Insurance Co. which is affiliated to Victoria Mutual of Jamaica. CGM Gallagher Group an insurance broker to the English speaking Caribbean: Jamaica, Barbados, St Vincent, St Lucia and St Kitts and Nevis. Gustazos a joint venture in Jamaica with Gustazos which offers via website various services and products for sale via the web. WIHCON: property developers, home construction, infrastructure construction and schools and the construction of luxury homes for the retail market. WIHCON Property is a specialised property manager and it owns/manages more than 1,400,000 sq ft of real estate in Jamaica with more than 320 tenants. WIHCON has now become part of the 21st century enterprise dominated by the Jamaican elite: real estate property development for the luxury end of the market. The land assets owned by the Matalon family enables this investment in both niches of the market and one can always form ventures with property owning families that in some cases were plantations of the colonial era. WIHCON on its website is advertising the following housing stock for sale : Bermonde at Portmore is a gated townhouse development with units at 955 sq. ft each with a sale

price of \$J 14,196,050.00. Forest Ridge situated at Kingston 8, St Andrew is a 24 hr. gated community comprising apartments and condominium units ranging in size from 625 sq. ft to 1675 sq. ft priced from \$J 13,722, 922. 32 to \$J 29,202,059.76 with the upper end in the luxury range. The Meadows Phase 2B-3 Montego Bay, St James comprises not gated Medici two bedroom semi-detached units of 547 sq. ft at a cost of \$J 6,631,000.00 each. The Meadows Phase 4 Montego Bay comprises not gated detached units ranging in area from 658 sq. ft to 1,049 sq. ft configured as Tuscany 2 bedrooms with 1 bathroom detached unit, Verona 2 bedrooms with 2 bathrooms detached unit and Milan 3 bedrooms with 2 bathrooms detached unit ranging in price from \$J 7,446,000.00 to \$J 12,590,299.70. The Matalon flagship today is property development and management which illustrates the dramatic changes that followed the economic collapse of the Jamaican economy.

The Issa family consists of the heirs of Abe Issa who own and manage Couples Resorts headed by Elias Lee Issa which encompasses four resorts in Jamaica: two in Ocho Rios and two in Negril. Elias Issa is also involved in the construction and sale of luxury homes situated within gated communities with community services through his company Richmond Development Co. of Richmond, St Ann at the Richmond Housing Development Richmond, St Ann on the north coast of Jamaica. Which is Elias Issa's entrance into luxury housing communities that are placed on the coast and practically self-sufficient in the availability of services including medical care. At present the development has commenced with the offer to purchase Fern Court Apartments configured as two bedrooms with two bathrooms apartments with an area of 1,100 sq. ft with a cost of \$J 17,980,000.00 per unit with top floor apartments costing \$J 19,480,000.00. The other units up for sale are Coolshade Patio Homes 3 bedrooms with 2 bathrooms homes with an area of 1,468 sq. ft on 5,000 sq. ft of land starting at USD 208,393.00 or \$J 21,840,000.00 with corner units at \$J 23,340,016.00. Elias Issa also owns Lee Fifth Avenue stores. John Issa owns the Superclubs brand which has shrunk appreciably commencing in 2012 and on its website the following hotels, resorts and villa are listed: two Rooms on the Beach hotels in Jamaica, one Superclubs Breezes resort and spa in The Bahamas and the Negril Beach Villa in Jamaica. The son of John Issa, Joseph Issa owns the Cool Group of Companies which is involved in the sale of a range of goods and services in Jamaica and the Caribbean. The dated nature of the postings on the website of the Cool Group did not enable a recent picture of the activities of the group.

The Mahfood family owns the private company WISYNCO Group of Companies a leading distributor and manufacturer that imports and distributes food, beverages and paper products, manufactures Jamaican brands of soft drinks, bottled water, flavoured water and an energy drink, manufactures and distributes locally and in the Caribbean its brand of 'Sweet' synthetic packaging products, manufactures and distributes global brands locally of soft drinks, juice drinks and juices: Coca Cola, Sprite, Welch's, Minute Maid and Hawaiian Punch. WISYNCO distributes 100 brands and 4,000 different products. It also holds the franchises in Jamaica for Domino's Pizza, Wendy's and Haagen Daz. The Mahfood family has invested in the public company Jamaica Teas Ltd which is dominated by the Mahfood family.

The structure Reid described has changed drastically as a result of the economic collapse of Jamaica but the race structure of the oligarchy has persisted across time in spite of the collapse. New families have entered the oligarchy and have risen to its apex but African Jamaicans remain excluded as in Reid's study. The single entry of a mixed race player who made his fortune in Canada and then intervened in Jamaica as a foreign investor in 2002 is instructive. His family involved in the supermarket sector in Jamaica are yet to amass the wealth and power necessary to enter the ranks of the oligarchy. There is then an order that reinforces the dominance of minority races in the ranks of the Jamaican oligarchy.

The final noteworthy development since Reid's study is the rise to prominence of Grace

Kennedy (GK) in the Jamaican private sector. GK a diversified conglomerate is a public company not under the control of a family as it is a model of the North Atlantic public company with a diverse body of shareholders and it is listed on the stock exchanges of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. GK's size and scale of operations in Jamaica dominates space that in the absence of GK would have most likely been filled by members of the oligarchy. GK now faces the reality of the limitations of its operational base in the Caribbean and it has now embraced the task of becoming a global company with manufacturing plants in the North Atlantic to serve the ethnic markets of this region with emphasis on the Caribbean Diaspora. This global reach is vitally necessary given the structural economic problems of the Caribbean region.

An analysis of the daily selling rate of the US\$ in Jamaica compiled by the Bank of Jamaica (BoJ) presents the evolution of collapse of the Jamaican economy from the 1970's to 2015. On December 31, 1972 the USD sold for 0.77 cents J by December 31, 1979 the USD sold for \$J 1.78. The depreciation of the \$J accelerated in 1978 and continued. On December 31, 1989 the USD sold for \$J 6.50 indicating a trend where between 1978 to 1989 there was no defensible rate of exchange of the \$J to the USD which highlighted the inability of the BoJ to defend a chosen exchange rate. On December 30, 1999 the USD sold for \$J 41.42 which meant that in the decade of the 1990s the depreciation of the \$J not only accelerated but was significantly out of control creating Jamaica's lost decade. In this decade those with foreign exchange resources were able to acquire prime assets at fire sale prices opening the way for Caribbean investors. On December 31, 2010 the USD sold for \$J 85.86 more than doubling its selling price on the final day of sales in 1999. The Jamaican economy after the lost decade became even more vulnerable to international economic events that impacted its major earners of foreign exchange first it was the impact of the attack on New York then the meltdown of the financial sector of the North Atlantic and finally the rise in energy prices in this decade. But such vulnerability points to the structural imbalances of the economy especially the failure to create export driven growth. On December 31, 2015 the USD sold for \$J 120.42 as the slide continues and today Jamaica is under yet another IMF agreement for balance of payments support. The message is then clear to those enterprises that fail to globalise their operations thereby creating foreign exchange earners that they will soon fall prey to a rate of continued devaluation of the \$J that will render their operations unsustainable. What is necessary is a new investment worldview.

As the \$J lost value unchecked in the forex market the ratio of Jamaican government debt to GDP rose steadily in 1999 the ratio was 87.31%, by 2006 it rose to 117.76% and in 2014 it was 132.72% as government debt was used to prop up an economy that was structurally unsound and uncompetitive dominated by a worldview of investment that is in denial seen in the drive to build and sell luxury homes in USD. The recurring balance of payments crises of Jamaica is the result of the refusal to invest in export driven growth when it was an ongoing and dynamic path to growth now that bus has left the terminal. Lumpen bourgeois can only generate lumpen development.

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