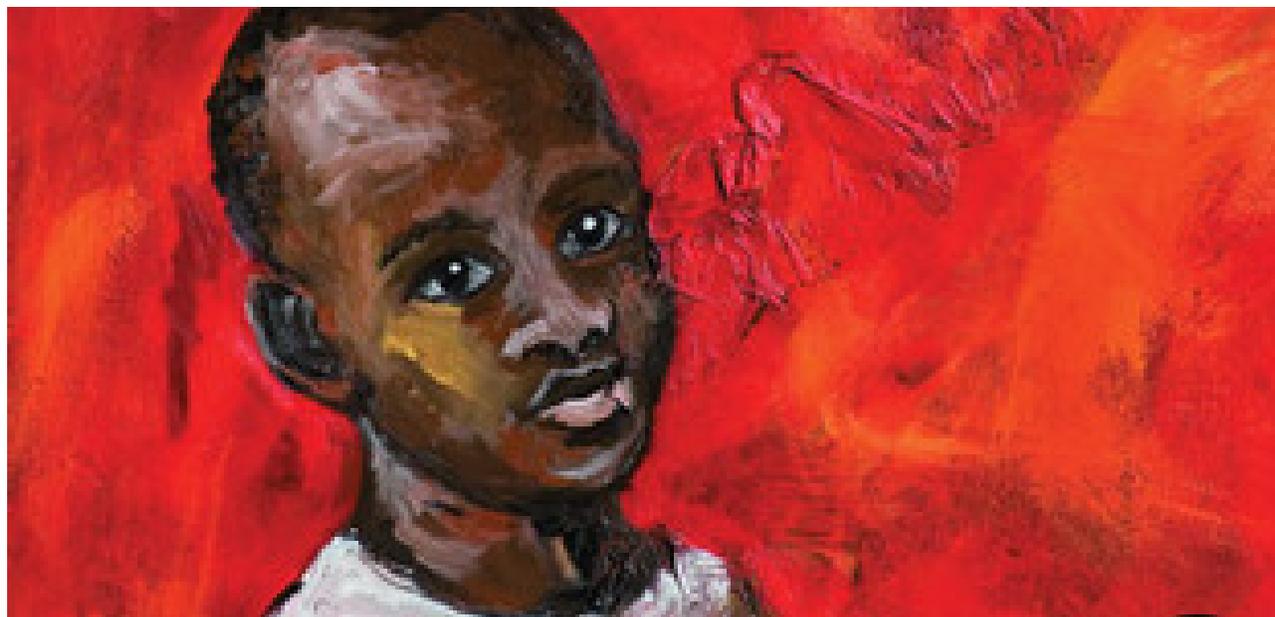

The Haves and Have-Nots: Class, Globalization and Human Rights in Diana McCaulay's *Dog-Heart*

Robin Brooks



Source: amazon.com, Book cover for *Dog-Heart* by Diana McCaulay.

Human rights, whose application is a transnational process, offer guidelines for consciousness raising and social praxis within global civil society.

—Faye Harrison, *Resisting Racism and Xenophobia* 12

Diana McCaulay, a native and lifelong resident of Jamaica, does not shy away from the many controversial issues affecting Jamaican society within the pages of her narratives. Her debut novel, *Dog-Heart* (2010), is a prime example, as it tackles class prejudices and the gap between different classes, specifically Kingston's "uptown" (middle-class) and

“downtown” (working-class) inhabitants, or those who make up the so-called “Two Jamaicas.”¹ The award-winning *Dog-Heart* is set in present-day Kingston, Jamaica, and chronicles the association between two protagonists: a middle-class woman, Sahara, and a working-class, inner-city youth, Dexter. The association between Sahara and Dexter creates what is best described as a cross-class relationship, which contributes to the novel’s use of this trope. A recurring literary theme in a number of contemporary novels of the African diaspora, the cross-class relationship pairs two characters from different class backgrounds, typically working-class and middle-class characters.² While McCaulay explicitly explores class prejudices in *Dog-Heart*, she also alludes to the effects of globalization on the lives of her Caribbean characters, and the human rights violations that some of them endure. Through the portrayals of Sahara and Dexter, whose association represents the larger relationship between middle-class and inner-city residents in Jamaica, McCaulay’s novel acts as a cultural lens through which to view the intersections of class relations, globalization and human rights. More specifically, this article argues that the use of the cross-class relationship trope in *Dog-Heart* operates to identify and foreground human rights violations as a demonstration of the limited efficacy of human rights treaties in contemporary Jamaican society.

McCaulay’s inclusion of the term ‘globalization’ early in the novel alerts readers to its significance and its impact on the lives of her characters. When Sahara details her duties as the manager at Summer Lion, a restaurant that her friend owns, she mentions their use of fresh Jamaican produce. She remarks that using only Jamaican produce has “become a challenge—globalization meant it was now easier to buy seedless grapes than mangoes from local vendors” (McCaulay, *Dog-Heart* 20). This is ironic to her, given that Jamaica is home to several kinds of mangoes. Although cognizant of the way that globalization influences her particular market choices, Sahara fails to see the ways in which globalization and accompanying (or worsening) structural constraints have affected others in the nation, especially those in Dexter’s community. Due to the organization of the novel, however, readers have access to the worlds of both Sahara and Dexter, and are privy to the conditions each faces. Organized around a cross-class narrative structure, *Dog-Heart* reinforces the juxtaposition between Sahara’s and Dexter’s lives by using the two protagonists as alternating first-person narrators throughout the novel.³ The novel’s arrangement facilitates comparisons and contrasts between their personal environments, particularly their material realities, family structures and worldviews. Furthermore, McCaulay effects a parallel between the lighter-skinned Sahara and the darker-skinned Arleen (Dexter’s mother), who are both single mothers; so even though *Dog-Heart* is narrated in the voices of Sahara and Dexter and they present the primary cross-class relationship, Dexter’s family is also implicated in that relationship. By exploring Sahara’s relationship with Dexter and his family members, the novel provides a fuller view of various predicaments facing working-class Jamaicans. According to a number of globalization and human rights scholars such as Faye Harrison, the conditions surrounding many downtown Jamaican households exemplify human rights abuses; I argue here that McCaulay’s novel, depicting examples of these abuses in the scenes that feature Dexter and Arleen, represents advocacy of human rights.

Through a layered narrative with multiple plot threads, McCaulay enters a discourse on various types of disparities, as a brief summary elucidates. Dexter’s opening scene in the novel, in which he narrates how he and Sahara initially meet, is what first illuminates their contrasting life experiences. This scene immediately outlines the unequal relationship for readers. Sahara and her teenage son Carl are leaving a movie theatre at Sovereign Plaza in uptown Kingston, a place with mainly middle- and upper-class patrons. In contrast, Dexter is at the Sovereign Plaza, the place where he thinks “plenty rich people go” (14), to beg money of the patrons, which is how he helps to feed his family. Dexter cannot imagine being able to frequent the movie theatre as a pastime, while Sahara not only pays to see a

movie but also has enough money left over to give Dexter five hundred Jamaican dollars. Speaking in the Jamaican language, Dexter exclaims, “Me can’t believe it, no way at all. Nobody ever—*ever* give me five hundred dollar” (17; emphasis in original). Though this amount is roughly equivalent to five US dollars, Dexter’s excited reaction lets readers know how large a sum of money this is in his world. The narrative goes on to chronicle Sahara’s decision to help Dexter’s family and to find sponsors to pay the educational expenses for Dexter and his siblings to attend uptown schools. Still, the overall differences in their worldviews present major obstacles for their relationship, and Sahara’s preconceived notions about Dexter and his family serve as additional barriers. Despite Sahara’s haphazard efforts to help Dexter and his family, the novel closes with Dexter assisting in the kidnapping of Sahara as part of a gang initiation. Ultimately, however, Dexter rebels against his accomplices and allows Sahara to go free.

The literary criticism on the novel (which exists overwhelmingly in the form of book reviews) is united in pointing out that the central issue in the novel is class, but the scholarship is limited and does not present substantive analyses of class or its interconnections with other issues.⁴ Perhaps one of the most thorough reviewers, Lorna Down suggests that McCaulay’s greatest achievement in the novel “is that she helps us see that there are no easy answers to questions of class structures and class relations, to poverty and violence” (108). However, presumably because of the restricted format of the book review, Down does not detail specifics concerning the difficulties between classes. In her review of *Dog-Heart*, Lisa Allen-Agostini also points out the serious issues raised by the novel concerning education for inner-city children. While in attendance at the uptown schools, Dexter experiences prejudice from school officials and other students, which hinders his educational success. While my article is in conversation with these discussions of the novel, it distinguishes itself by underscoring *Dog-Heart*’s position within a larger framework of not only contemporary literature but also globalization and human rights discussions.

Over the past few decades, literary artists and an increasing number of scholars from various disciplines have been active participants in the growing debate over the interconnections between globalization and human rights. Defining the terms ‘globalization’ and ‘human rights’ continues to be complex; however, most definitions of these terms overlap. Alison Brysk defines human rights as “a set of claims and entitlements to human dignity, which the existing international regime assumes will be provided (or threatened) by the state” (1). Elaborating on this definition, Faye Harrison explains human rights as “the morally and legally justifiable claims to dignity, liberty, personal security and basic well-being that all persons can make by virtue of being human” (“Introduction” 11). The contemporary phase of globalization—or what Brysk defines as “the growing interpenetration of states, markets, communications, and ideas across borders” (1)—has generated a substantial amount of scholarship concerning the benefits and costs associated with its transnational interactions. One great concern is that the conditions of globalization have led to an increase in human rights violations throughout the world.⁵ Both Brysk and Harrison argue that the correlation between the two is not a simple matter, as various factors ranging from the dynamic processes of globalization to the policies of international institutions and corporations play a role. These issues and other socioeconomic and political questions raised in *Dog-Heart* are also part of a larger literary conversation; along with novels like Garfield Ellis’s *For Nothing at All*, Olive Senior’s *Dancing Lessons*, Oonya Kempadoo’s *Tide Running*, Edwidge Danticat’s *The Dew Breaker*, and Marlon James’s *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, *Dog-Heart* belongs to a rich tradition of contemporary fiction interrogating such issues in the context of neoliberal iterations of globalization in postcolonial Caribbean societies. Focusing specifically on Jamaica, Harrison contends that there is reason for serious concern about the human rights of citizens: “Jamaica has a human rights crisis, according to reports from international human rights organizations (e.g., Amnesty International,

Human Rights Watch)” (“Everyday Neoliberalism” 7). Deteriorating human rights influence class, and some scholars posit that globalization has contributed to the present-day growth in class inequalities (Scholte 323). Thus, there is a strong scholarly consensus about the relationship between class relations, globalization and human rights.

Moreover, this article builds on Harrison’s scholarship, which asserts interconnections between fiction and other disciplines. In a study on Alice Walker’s novel *The Temple of My Familiar*, Harrison emphasizes parallels between Walker’s work and other disciplines: “[t]he interrelationship between the use of historical and anthropological literatures as sources for facts and ideas, and the writing of culture in fictive rhetoric, is salient in Walker’s work, which strongly resonates with discourses in a number of scholarly disciplines” (*Outsider* 124). She further declares that ethnic/minority fiction “represents a rich mode of *writing the cultures, cultural politics, and history* of our multicultural world structured in relations of dominance” (119–20; emphasis in original), and that ethnographic writers should recognize its value for their work. I contend that *Dog-Heart* also fits Harrison’s argument, in that McCaulay draws on various subject areas and addresses many real-life issues throughout her narrative. Let me qualify my contention by stating that I am not suggesting McCaulay’s novel is a case study of the problems of classism, globalization and human rights abuses in contemporary Jamaica, as it is not. Such issues are also not new to Jamaica, as many scholars of the Caribbean, including Stephen Vasciannie, Tracy Robinson, Verene Shepherd and Rhon Reynolds, have written on these topics. Still, *Dog-Heart* participates in these discourses by sketching them in fictive form, thus offering another perspective and potentially raising these issues with audiences who may not be privy to this information when presented in modes such as case studies in history or the social sciences. The novel presents an alternative to such studies and is a “representation of truth-telling” (McClennen and Moore 14). McCaulay’s novel aligns with Evelyn O’Callaghan’s description of the ways that “imaginative writing challenges, reframes and fills in the gaps in narrative accounts of these statistical and ‘fact’ based disciplines” (1).⁶ My own contention is that literary artists creatively perform what scholars in fields such as sociology, anthropology and economics research in their publications—an analysis of the state of affairs in given societies. Similarly reinforcing the primacy of fiction, Harrison writes, “*Fiction encodes truth claims—and alternative modes of theorizing—in a rhetoric of imagination that accommodates and entertains the imaginable*” (*Outsider* 121; emphasis in original). Fiction, in short, has the potential to add to social-science discourses by revealing another way of theorizing real life.

An interdisciplinary approach to McCaulay’s *Dog-Heart* also serves to further the emancipatory project of exposing human rights violations in order to rectify them. If we want a comprehensive understanding of how societies are addressing human rights failings, the discussion must include the influences of a wider range of fields—including literary studies. Since the 1970s, literature has been central to human rights advocacy, being frequently featured in campaigns across the globe (McClennen and Moore 10).⁷ Sophia A. McClennen and Alexandra Schultheis Moore assert that “[t]he use of literature as a vehicle for human rights advocacy is at once a way to illuminate the humanity of the speaking subject as it is a mode of reflecting a true ‘story’ that has been erased [or ignored and undervalued] by official ‘history’” (12). A reading that places McCaulay’s fictional representation of Jamaica in the context of human rights discourse helps exemplify how novels can be a crucial site of inquiry in human rights studies and demonstrates that fiction can be just as critical in the fight for human rights justice as documents and studies within the social sciences. Rather than a broad and abstract plot, McCaulay’s novel offers a realistic and comprehensible storyline that can be used in confronting the intricate nature of human rights injustices. Thinking of literature as making a critical intervention into contemporary injustices and imbalances can work well, both to advance thinking

around socioeconomic abuses and to strengthen the analysis of literary texts. Literature adds emotional depth and complexity to statistics, policy documents and reports. *Dog-Heart* demonstrates what is at stake for segments of Jamaican society in the continued absence or neglect of human rights justice; the book brings attention to inequities in an attempt to destabilize an unjust status quo, and this is a step toward facilitating positive change.

McCaulay's *Dog-Heart* participates in a discussion of human rights as they are outlined specifically in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These rights have been jeopardized greatly under globalization.⁸ Specifically, the book engages conversations that question the effectiveness of human rights treaties at the domestic (national) level.⁹ A part of the International Bill of Human Rights, the ICESCR highlights rights related to having "an adequate standard of living," including access to essentials such as food, housing and employment (Articles 6.1, 11.1). The novel's allusion to this covenant is particularly important because global discussions of human rights tend to pay less attention to the rights outlined in the document; instead, a great deal of conversation tends to focus on civil and political rights (Harrison, "Global Apartheid" 53). The novel does not allow the rights expressed in the ICESCR to be overshadowed, and it sheds light on the continued violations of these particular rights today. McCaulay also depicts the more internationally recognized violations of civil and political rights in Jamaica, such as incidents of Jamaican police killing innocent civilians. Like many others, she emphasizes that, in this current period of globalization, Caribbean nations face crises ranging from severe unemployment to inadequate education to violence. Ultimately, tracing these instances and showing how characters' situations fit under the ICESCR standards highlights interconnections between fiction and literary studies (and the humanities more broadly) and the social sciences. While the ICESCR standards are not beyond challenge and some standards may differ slightly depending upon geographical location, they offer a valuable lens through which to view McCaulay's narrative.

Given that Jamaica ratified the ICESCR in 1975 and all the rights within it are still, to a large extent, not protected, *Dog-Heart* also facilitates a critique of a key human rights monitoring mechanism, which is state reporting. Approximately every four to five years, nations who have ratified human rights treaties must submit a report on their implementation of the treaties to a committee of experts (a treaty body). The committee offers recommendations for improvement known as Concluding Observations (COs) in response to the report. While this monitoring system has been in use for decades, the continued failure of some nations to protect human rights raises a question about its relevance and effectiveness. Jasper Krommendijk notes that, despite the process of state reporting being "one of the most important international mechanisms to monitor the implementation of UN human rights," there are only a few studies that examine its effectiveness (490).

Like a number of scholars, including Deborah Thomas, who notes the class segregation of Kingston's residential districts in her work on violence (103), McCaulay underscores the stark contrasts between the uptown and downtown areas of Kingston and their different standards of living. She aligns her characters within contemporary, real-life class structures, and the juxtaposition between Dexter's and Sahara's private lives points out the vast differences between them.¹⁰ Through the descriptions of key elements, such as their family structure and relations, homes and daily activities, including their means of securing money, readers are able to discern the gravity of the discrepancy between their lifestyles. Quite succinctly, the descriptions and information about their living situations present a bleak predicament for Dexter and his family; in fact, they suffer human rights abuses while Sahara and those

in her sphere tend to fare much better. The novel invites a key inquiry about who will ensure that all Jamaicans' human rights are protected.

The Right to Adequate Housing and Food

While human rights treaties should protect every citizen in the nation once ratified, McCaulay's novel shows that people are affected in different ways even within the same nation, resulting in a situation where the aim of human rights work to guarantee adequate housing and food remains "unrealized in practice" (Goldberg 61). The novel's middle-class protagonist, Sahara, represents, for lack of a better phrase, the control group in McCaulay's narrative exploration of human rights effectiveness, while working-class Dexter represents the experimental group that is radically affected by the failure to ensure that human rights are upheld. The novel shows how the middle class experiences a level of security against the "escalated cost of living" during the current phase of globalization (Thomas 10). McCaulay uses the actual Kingston neighbourhood of Mona as Sahara's locale, stating in an interview that "Mona is, by definition, a middle-class address. Middle-class, professional" ("Uptown and Downtown" 96). Moreover, McCaulay draws our attention to the issue of colour and class: Sahara is of mixed heritage, her father an "English missionary" (*Dog-Heart* 26) and her mother an Afro-Jamaican schoolteacher.¹¹ Sahara's lighter hue and her parents' positions in the society afford her benefits that many others are not granted. Besides being white, her father is also a pastor, a position of authority in her childhood community. Although he eventually abandons his family after having an affair with one of the members of his congregation, Sahara continues to have a level of privilege, as her mother raises her with the aid of household helpers in the Mona neighbourhood. Sahara inherits the Mona house after her mother's death.

By portraying Sahara as a person of middle-class rather than upper-class status, the novel reinforces the idea that human rights disparities in Jamaica are not simply a matter of extremes, susceptible to an easy fix. Rather, McCaulay's more nuanced representation suggests that a more detailed and complex monitoring mechanism is needed, because rights violations are not clear-cut. Sahara's descriptions of her belongings disclose that she is not at the top of the social hierarchy. The description of her house, which she labels "modest" (29), and the changing circumstances in the community illuminate her somewhat vulnerable position within middle-class Jamaica. Sahara narrates:

The house itself was unremarkable, three small bedrooms, a living/dining room, small porch, two bathrooms and a kitchen. Terrazzo tile floors ... I painted every room a different colour, tore down the dingy drapes and lace curtains, bought and refurbished flea-market furniture, hung my collection of carved calabashes, tried to give the boring rooms personality. (37)

The house is not lavish, but she is happy with it, and her right to housing appears not to be violated. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNCESCR), whose job it is to make sure nations are adhering to the covenant, notes in its General Comment 4 that "the right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the shelter provided by merely having a roof over one's head.... Rather it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity" ("Right to Adequate Housing" para. 7).¹² According to this description, however, Sahara may or may not have adequate housing. She expresses displeasure about items being stolen on a regular basis from the houses in her community, and she claims to be

grateful that her car is older because it can serve as a deterrent to potential thieves. Eric Posner, in *The Twilight of Human Rights Law*, discusses how ambiguous language in some human rights treaties is a hindrance to their implementation. McCaulay's novel places Sahara in an ambiguous position within the middle class, highlighting the problematic nature of some of the ICESCR terminology, as well as its application. Earlier in the narrative, when Sahara drives away in her old Volkswagen from the Sovereign Plaza where she meets Dexter, he comments that most uptown people drive SUVs. Her ordinary car sheds additional light on her place within middle-class Jamaica. Nevertheless, although Sahara is not at the top of the hierarchy, she admits that she and Carl enjoy a level of security and privilege that many others in Jamaica do not.

While Sahara's circumstances may complicate ideas of the effectiveness of human rights treaties, the living experiences of her counterpart Dexter and his family on the other side of town in the Jacob's Pen community establish that the existence of human rights treaties alone cannot correct injustice. In the scenes displaying Dexter's housing and access to food, McCaulay's narrative severely interrogates, as a number of scholars do, the relevance of the rights outlined in the ICESCR, given the reality that they are not being upheld for everyone. Even when nations complete the periodic report and conceal or admit their failure to secure specific rights, the report results in yet another document (the CO) but does not translate into fulfilled rights. Dexter and his family members appear to be in a near-helpless situation and unable to improve their circumstances truly. They are struggling just to survive, and their chances of having a better standard of living or achieving upward mobility seem dismal. Harrison asserts that "[w]hile the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights may lend legitimacy to those rights ... in reality socioeconomic rights are being repudiated within the 'New World Order'" ("Expanding the Concept" 6). In other words, although the rights are outlined, they are often not being protected.

The descriptions of Dexter's community display, in fictive form, examples of human rights abuses that even the most recent CO document notes are still happening in Jamaica. Drafted in 2013, the CO from the UNCESCR mentions the continued "acute housing situation" ("Concluding Observations" 8). To improve the conditions, the Committee recommends that Jamaica "adopt a comprehensive national housing strategy with a view to ensuring access to adequate and affordable housing with legal security of tenure for everyone ... [and that the strategy be] developed based on a systematic needs assessment and consultation with and participation by affected individuals" (8). One problem with such a course of action, however, is that the perspectives of those in communities like Dexter's tend to be ignored. As a way not to offend any inner-city communities in Kingston, McCaulay creates a fictitious name, Jacob's Pen, for Dexter's neighbourhood. That name in itself is a point of analysis. A pen represents a holding place, usually for animals, and it references a spatial structure dating from slavery, where a pen was used on a type of estate (usually for coffee). Whether or not this is the author's intention, this name symbolizes the harsh conditions in Dexter's community and the devaluing of its residents.

Dog-Heart mimics the type of language present in COs, highlighting the redundancy of certain terms in descriptions of Jamaican housing and contesting the effectiveness of the repeated COs that continually use such phrases. Within the 2013 CO document, the Committee mentions "overcrowded, unsafe and dilapidated housing" (UNCESCR, "Concluding Observations" 8). McCaulay's narrative echoes such terms and is unsparing in its upsetting descriptions of Dexter's surroundings. Not only do the descriptions of Dexter's neighbourhood paint a picture of a below-average standard of living, but they also depict an environment that looks like a war zone, which obviously does not meet the standards

of adequate housing outlined in the covenant: “The place looked bombed—buildings were windowless and defaced with political graffiti. The rich ones in Jacob’s Pen lived in unrendered concrete houses, half constructed, with steel emerging from flat roofs—a second floor planned, even though the ground floor was unfinished” (46). A roof over one’s head is not sufficient to merit the term ‘housing’; yet Dexter and his family seem to have only a little more than that.

Developing the visual imagery, McCaulay invokes Habitat for Humanity, a global non-governmental organization originating in the United States that has worldwide networks to build low-cost housing for less-fortunate people. Dexter’s family lives in a one-room Habitat for Humanity house built by foreigners, and the inside is bare and lacks basic amenities. The role of Habitat for Humanity in addressing human rights concerns in Jamaica is an interesting point to interrogate. Frankly, this organization is not the answer to solving Jamaica’s inadequate housing. This is not its job and the Jamaican government cannot outsource its responsibility to its citizens to Habitat for Humanity, especially because this non-profit is limited in its ability to provide adequate housing for the many Jamaican residents needing it. In Habitat for Humanity’s 2017 annual report, it reported that, for the entire region of Latin America and the Caribbean, it completed 44,365 new and rehab construction projects (*Global Impact*). Jamaica’s population alone encompasses nearly three million people. Habitat for Humanity simply does not have the resources to meet the needs of those in the population needing better housing.

Another significant issue concerning Habitat for Humanity’s feasibility for being a major part of the answer for meeting housing rights is its selection criteria. Those selected must demonstrate the “ability to repay a mortgage through an affordable payment plan” (Habitat for Humanity, “Frequently”). What if a person is chronically unemployed and unable to pay a mortgage? Furthermore, the UNCESCR General Comment 4 clarifies that “the right to adequate housing” includes “adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities—all at a reasonable cost” (para. 7). Habitat for Humanity’s website informs readers about the modest sizes of its houses, “Habitat houses are modestly sized. They are large enough for the homeowner family’s needs, but small enough to keep construction and maintenance costs affordable.” What happens if the family grows? Among its other inadequacies, Dexter’s family’s home does not fully accommodate the family’s size, and Dexter’s narration reveals how the house contrasts with the UNCESCR’s normative description of ‘housing’:

This is what is in our house. Front room—one three-quarter bed. One cot. One cardboard barrel where clothes keep. One little gas stove with big gas cylinder. One nice dresser Mumma say she find on the side of the road before I born and her uncle fix up. TV on top of that. TV is very small and show only black and white picture. I shame of that and never tell anybody at Nightingale All Age is only black and white TV we has. Small igloo in another corner... Calendar from last year and picture a Jesus on wall. One lamp on dresser near TV. That is where we steal the light. Marlon father—him a ’lectrician—he take light from public service pole on that side a the house. (McCaulay, *Dog-Heart* 59)

Here McCaulay plays on the common illegal practice of stealing electricity that the Jamaica Public Service Company, which is the only electricity distributor in Jamaica, has reported as increasing in recent times.¹³ The father of Dexter’s younger brother, Marlon, represents the many who use this method due to adverse circumstances that render them unable to pay for electricity. Dexter, who is twelve years old at this point in the narrative, describes a house that survives on theft and is filled with barely

functional, decrepit items. He recognizes the subpar nature of his home and is ashamed as a result.

There are other shame-inducing circumstances in Dexter's home situation; for instance, they have to defecate and urinate in a bucket out back. Since they do not have running water in their house, Dexter and Marlon also have to go every morning, like so many other children, to a water stop in the neighbourhood to retrieve water. This is no small task, but Dexter is relieved that "at least where [he] live[s] is close to standpipe" (24). Still, the safety and cleanliness of the water is uncertain. McCaulay illustrates here that one of their human rights is compromised, as the "human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses" according to General Comment No. 15 (UNCESCR, "Human Right to Water" para. 2). Again, this human right is on the books, but is it really effective in the lives of those like Dexter and his family? Dexter and his family exert much effort to address their needs, but they still fall short due to circumstances beyond their control.

The narrative's use of the cross-class relationship trope also lays the ground for critiquing another provision outlined in the ICESCR, as Sahara and her family have access to "adequate food" and the enjoyment of being "free from hunger" (United Nations General Assembly Article 11.1, 11.2), while Dexter's family does not. While the Committee has been collecting reports from nations concerning the right to adequate food since the late 1970s, in 1999 it saw the need to add UNCESCR General Comment No. 12, which expounds on food rights, because "only a few States parties have provided information sufficient and precise enough to enable the Committee to determine the prevailing situation in the countries concerned with respect to this right and to identify the obstacles to its realization" ("Right to Adequate Food" para. 2). It took the Committee a couple of decades to recognize that the monitoring mechanism was not working and to commit to making a change. Simply having ratified these treaties does not erase the lack of agricultural education, the high cost of importing food, the lack of employment or the occurrence of environmental conditions such as hurricanes, droughts and floods—all of which affect food security.

In her portrayals of Sahara's family, McCaulay details scenes of food consumption in a family kitchen setting; such portrayals are absent in scenes featuring Dexter's family. Sahara and her now teenage son Carl are living alone in the Mona house, where the availability of daily meals is not a concern. Carl experiences a far more comfortable life than Dexter, which is evident in the descriptions of Carl's material assets, such as his electronics and pricey sneakers, as well as in his complaints that they are having chicken again for dinner instead of steak (McCaulay, *Dog-Heart* 26). According to Sahara, who chastises him, Carl is seemingly ungrateful for the things in his life. She admits that Carl is taking his circumstances for granted when she thinks about the day she met Dexter: "Carl probably ate more than [Dexter] does in a week" (22). On another day, when Sahara asks Carl if he wants salad, he responds, "No. I want french fries, swimming in oil and smothered in salt. With a steak. But I know what I'm going to *get* is an omelette and a salad" (124; emphasis in original). Here, Sahara not only makes sure Carl has food but also that he has healthy eating habits. Food insecurity is not a serious concern for this family. In fact, Sahara is secure enough that she is able to bring bags of food to Dexter and his family on a regular basis, which further emphasizes her own family's access to food.

In addition to the lack of electricity and running water in his low-quality housing, Dexter becomes the novel's poster child for food insecurity, as his family's struggle to obtain food, or rather, to exercise their right to adequate food, exemplifies a continued history of insufficient human rights implementation. In 2013, the UNCESCR recognized that Jamaica's difficulties in guaranteeing this particular right were "due to the frequency of natural hazards, inefficient farming practices, lack

of suitable land, and increases in commodity prices” (“Concluding Observations” para 26). Yet its suggestion for ways to improve is vague and deficient, recommending that Jamaica “adopt effective long-term strategies aimed at improving domestic productivity in a sustainable manner and building the capacity of local farmers, taking into account the Committee’s General Comment No. 12 (1999) on the right to adequate food” (para 26). In other words, the document says that it recognizes Jamaica is not fulfilling this right, so Jamaica needs to come up with a strategy to fulfill this right. Neither the UNCESCR nor the state of Jamaica seems to have found a solution, however, and McCaulay’s novel reveals the cost: Dexter, the oldest of Arleen’s three children, is largely responsible for providing for the basic needs of his family. In fact, Arleen, who is unemployed, sends him to beg for money every day after school so that they can eat. Without the money that he collects, the family would be left hungry on many nights.

Unlike Carl who complains of having chicken instead of steak for dinner, Dexter and his family are grateful for cheap fish and dumplings. They express joy when Sahara begins to bring food, a “big plastic bag with mackerel, corn beef, corn meal, rice, flour, sugar, saltfish, [and] condense milk” (McCaulay, *Dog-Heart* 53). Their great appreciation for these basic ingredients adds to the novel’s foregrounding of human rights injustices. Concerning food, General Comment 12 from the UNCESCR stipulates that the “right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement” (para. 6). By depicting that this is not the case in this Jacob’s Pen household, McCaulay’s novel challenges the practical relevance of General Comment 12 in people’s everyday lives, as the descriptions reveal that Dexter and his family do not have “the availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the[ir] dietary needs” (para. 8). Reviewing Jamaica’s compliance and non-compliance with regard to rights every few years, without meaningful suggestions and provisions for their effective execution, will continue to prove a futile endeavour. Overall, the novel’s depiction of this family’s lack of human rights—access to basic needs such as housing, water, and food—further claims about the limited interventions treaties make on the national and individual levels. They will continue to be limited if steps beyond written law are not taken.

The Right to Work and Its Dilemmas

While the pairing of the two protagonists allows McCaulay to show that Sahara is gainfully employed, it also reinforces “the global silencing and denial about the true costs of global capitalism” by underscoring Sahara’s enjoyment of a sense of security that is absent among Dexter and his family (Goldberg 63). Once Sahara becomes the breadwinner of her family, she finds employment “at a real estate firm doing their books” (McCaulay, *Dog-Heart* 29). She does not make an exorbitant amount of money there, but it is enough to take care of herself and Carl. The covenant’s provisions call for people to be able to make a “decent living for themselves and their families,” so readers clearly see that Sahara’s “right to work” (United Nations General Assembly, Articles 7(a), 6.1) is being satisfied. McCaulay reveals that Sahara is able to secure employment at the firm without prior experience or any formal education beyond “a good early education” (*Dog-Heart* 29); arguably, this is a blatant example in the novel where her skin colour plays a role in her circumstances. Esther Figueroa declares that Sahara is able to secure this type of employment, despite being a single mother with no advanced education, because of her light skin colour and her class:

One unmentioned gift is Sahara's light skin; her father was an English missionary. Arleen is a country-girl who came to town to work as a maid, got pregnant and was thrown out, but had no house in Mona to move into; her education was only primary school [as] she can barely read and write, and as a black skinned poor Jamaican even with 'a head for figures' there is no way a real-estate firm would have hired her to do their books. (5)

Figuroa parallels Arleen and Sahara and notes that the greatest distinguishing factor between them is class and colour. In an interview, McCaulay notes that class and skin colour are still very much connected in contemporary Jamaica: "If you're middle-class, you're more likely to be light-skinned. It's not a perfect correlation, of course, but if you walk around a downtown Kingston community, most people are going to be dark-skinned" ("Uptown and Downtown" 96). Sahara's light skin colour and middle-class status "positions" her for the job at the firm. In *Downtown Ladies*, Gina A. Ulysse outlines a four-tier class structure in Jamaica: the lower class, middle class, upper class, and elites. While explaining that this outline is not definitive, she notes that the majority black population is largely a part of the lower class, while the middle class consists of a brown population (Ulysse 13). For Sahara, skin colour "operates as a form of capital" (Ulysse 19).¹⁴

Sahara also receives additional benefits that Dexter and his family do not because of her associations with other middle-class people. After the real estate job, Sahara becomes the manager of her friend's restaurant in Liguanea, an uptown Kingston area. Sahara did not have funds to attend a university, but her childhood friend Lydia went abroad to attend the University of Florida; she later decided to drop out of school to pursue her dreams of being a chef. When Lydia returns to Kingston to turn a building on family land into a restaurant, she recruits Sahara to manage it. Such connections are vital, especially in a time when jobs are scarce. Not only does the job provide Sahara with stability, but it is also a source of enjoyment for her, which is not what Dexter and people in his area experience concerning employment.

By way of contrast with Sahara's job opportunities, McCaulay's novel demonstrates that the existence of the ICESCR is not alleviating the reality that employment in this period of globalization is increasingly difficult to find for a large percentage of Jamaican citizens, as represented by Arleen (Harrison, *Outsider*, 185–86). Among Sahara's greatest frustrations with Arleen is her lack of formal employment; completely exasperated, Sahara questions in her interior monologue, "Why couldn't she get a proper job?" (McCaulay, *Dog-Heart* 186). Her inability to comprehend Arleen's situation leads Sahara to contemplate trying to take Dexter and his siblings from their mother's care: "I was impatient with her ineptness, her unsuitability as a parent. Often I thought about getting the children away from her" (186). Sahara is irritated by and does not understand Arleen's actions, especially why she is not providing more for Dexter and his siblings. Her interior monologues, full of misunderstandings, cause readers to assess Sahara's complaints, scrutinize Arleen more closely, and consider what other factors could be contributing to the current state of Arleen's and her family's lives. Despite Sahara's frustrations, readers can see that Arleen is doing the best she can. In a compassionate description of his mother, Dexter recounts the type of work she does to help him and his siblings: "Sometime I feel sorry for Mumma, like today. I know she do her best to look after the three a we. Mumma sew 'til her finger cramp and her eye run water" (63). Although much of her work is confined to the domestic realm, Arleen appears to gain some money from her sewing. Eudine Barriteau discusses the history of working-class Jamaican women doing seamstress and domestic work (196); often, these are poorly paid jobs, and the women can barely provide for their children. Figuroa expounds on Arleen's troubling state of affairs, claiming that "She sews, she tries to make ends meet but she is defeated by her sense of

helplessness and dependency, and has put the great burden of feeding the family on her twelve year old son Dexter” (5). As a result, Dexter has responsibilities incommensurate with his age.

Sahara appears oblivious to the structural constraints that contribute to Dexter’s and his family’s situation, and how such hardships are characteristic of an increasingly globalized Jamaica that finds itself unable to guarantee every right within the ICESCR. For many in Jacob’s Pen, a real problem is a lack of available jobs, and the people have no other options due to little or no structural support. This is perhaps the greatest misunderstanding in the cross-class relationship: Sahara does not comprehend that the gravity of the circumstances in Dexter’s community is not simply a matter of behavioural impediments. There is a long-standing scholarly debate regarding whether social inequalities are due to individuals’ behaviours or social structures; Cornel West, in his well-known *Race Matters*, argues that a balance in this debate is necessary because the two cannot be separated. He explains that “how people act and live are shaped—though in no way dictated or determined—by the larger circumstances in which they find themselves” (West 12). Presenting this reality in a literary format, McCaulay displays the complexities of her characters and their situations, highlighting the need for more ways to measure the effectiveness of human rights treaties. Sahara believes that getting an education will resolve all of Dexter’s problems, but, actually, “the whole question of education is an example of the class divide in that, for the middle-class person, for Sahara, education is the answer” (McCaulay, “Uptown and Downtown” 97). The educational system itself is closely tied to class and it, in some ways, perpetuates class divisions, in that those who live in communities with more money attend schools that are better equipped to help students succeed. Sahara fails to see the intricacies in Dexter’s family situation and acts as if behavioural factors alone contribute to their predicament. Ironically, readers learn the complexity of Dexter’s life and community through Sahara’s failure to see the complexity, thus disqualifying her from being the unquestionable moral voice of the novel.

Although she, too, is a single female who is heading her household, Sahara finds it difficult to sympathize with Arleen who, like many other Jamaican women, is being undercut in the job market under the conditions of contemporary globalization. A recent CO notes that “despite the higher educational attainment of women, their unemployment rate remains more than twice that of men” (UNCESCR, “Concluding Observations” para 13); yet the topic of gender inequality in Jamaica pervades Caribbean feminist scholarship, so this news is not new. It has been a part of the society for generations and the ratification of ICESCR has not moved the dial to complete equality, although many women have progressed substantially through the years. Sahara and Arleen share the fact that their colour influences their gender vulnerability (Sahara as brown and Arleen as black), and, as single mothers, they also share the gendered position and experience of being vulnerable to men’s exploitation. Mirroring a trope that occurs elsewhere in Caribbean women’s writing, Carl’s father’s family, a white family from old money, rejects Sahara because of her colour and class, and she is thus abandoned with her son: “In no time I was pregnant and Lester’s horrified family had shipped him off to England” (McCaulay, *Dog-Heart* 28). She has no choice but to raise Carl alone.

Arleen, black and impoverished, is even more vulnerable to men’s sexual exploitation and abandonment. None of her three children’s fathers are assisting her. Building on the work of A. Lynn Bolles, Harrison explains that “[t]hose bearing the heaviest burden in coping with the social and economic austerity are women, a large proportion of whom have the responsibility—whether they are formally employed or not—to support households and family networks” (*Outsider* 186). Put differently, women bear the brunt of the struggles, and McCaulay encapsulates these experiences via Arleen’s and Sahara’s characters. However, although they are both single mothers, the various

intersections in Arleen's and Sahara's lives cause them to experience different life trajectories and, perhaps because their situations are so different, Sahara does not recognize the similarities between them. Sahara fails to see Arleen truly, and her observations indicate that she believes Arleen simply needs to change her actions, which is a very limited perception that does not consider the larger factors at work. Maria Thorin, in her research on gender and globalization, illuminates these larger factors when she asserts that "after the positive impacts have been balanced against the negative impacts in the various dimensions of the globalization process, women's material well-being is generally found to have deteriorated and gender inequality to have increased as a consequence of globalization, thereby intensifying the marginalization of women and the 'feminization of poverty'" (13). Thorin describes a troubling and unhealthy cycle that is becoming all too familiar in contemporary Jamaican society, and McCaulay captures it in *Dog-Heart*. Yet Sahara simply does not think Arleen is a good mother, since Sahara cannot imagine being in such dire straits. No one in her world has circumstances like those who live in Jacob's Pen.

The role of the government in helping citizens is at the forefront of answers to the questions of why there is a lack of available jobs and why human rights treaties are limited in their effectiveness. Governments are supposed to ensure the productivity of their nations and their citizens. In a scene narrated by Dexter, McCaulay alludes to Jamaica's former Prime Minister Michael Manley and his Land Lease Program:

That same Prime Minister everybody love, Michael Manley, him give land to poor people for growin food. Old people say everybody love that. But instead a farmin, the people sell off every bit a the land and Jacob's Pen don't have not even one piece a dirt leave that could grow a patch a callaloo. People not supposed to sell the land and now the government say everybody who live in the land leases part a Jacob's Pen is a squatter. (*Dog-Heart* 96)¹⁵

A major purpose of the program was to increase employment for small farmers by providing them with land and resources. It was not enough to bring and keep many people out of poverty, regrettably. Although the Jamaican government, as represented here, is not perfect (as no government is), many scholars reveal that the Jamaican government, like many other Caribbean governments, is quite limited in what it can do to assist its citizens because of the regulations of international monetary institutions to which it is beholden. For example, Harrison asserts that "Postcolonial Jamaica, like many other Third World and Southern Hemisphere countries, is beset by a serious case of debt bondage" (*Outsider* 185). In other words, Jamaica's hands are tied. In his book, *Twilight*, which emphasizes there is little evidence that human rights treaties have improved people's well-being (Posner 7), Posner discusses how some nations simply are "not wealthy enough or well organized enough to comply with the treaty obligations" (32).

In searching for answers concerning the Jamaican government's quandary, many scholars point to neoliberal policies, which encourage deregulation, privatization and unrestricted marketization. Jan Aart Scholte maintains, in his study on globalization, that many of the international institutions (e.g., the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organization), which are supposedly helping countries such as Jamaica, promote neoliberal policies and have been doing so since the 1980s (324). Scholte is unconvinced of the overall effectiveness of these policies and discusses the disadvantages: "Fiscal austerity to improve 'global competitiveness' has often meant reductions in the amount and quality of state-provided education, housing, nutrition, health care, pensions and unemployment insurance. In sum, neoliberalist globalization has tended to erode the protective shield of the redistributive state" (324). In other words, provisions are diminishing and there is no safety net

for citizens who experience hard times. The Jamaican government, like governments of similar debt-ridden nations, has been unable to create sustainable alternatives to the policies suggested and imposed by the international institutions (Harrison, “Introduction” 14). Harrison further explicates that

these policies are responsible for the slashing of social provisioning and for eliminating the public sector jobs that poor people once had access to through political patronage. The denationalization and privatization thrust so central to current policies of economic restructuring eliminated that category of work, leaving many even more dependent on the informal and often the illegal economy. (“Everyday Neoliberalism” 7)¹⁶

Harrison shows how these policies affect employment, housing and food provisions, and her explanation clarifies why Dexter and his family engage in illegal or underground activities.¹⁷

Having little to no other options because of the limited ability of the Jamaican government to assist, Dexter, like many others in his community, turns to illegal undertakings and participation in an underground economy. Quite simply, the residents of Jacob’s Pen are trying to secure money to eat and to live. Later in the novel, Dexter contemplates the type of employment he may be able to secure when he becomes older; his list of legal options is limited and includes being a grocery packer, car washer and security guard (119). Since the novel sets up Carl as a foil for Dexter, readers surmise that Carl’s journey in life ultimately will end better than Dexter’s, just as Sahara’s life path is set to be more fulfilling than Arleen’s. The ultimate significance of this structural comparison between Dexter and Carl is to reiterate the key point of the limited efficacy of human rights treaties. Dexter’s begging or panhandling is an informal way to get money, and many use begging as a means to try and meet their needs. Many do not qualify for the jobs that may be available because the jobs require some level of skill or education that they lack. The schools in their communities do not prepare them as well as schools in the uptown communities or enable them to thrive and possibly experience upward mobility, which is another way McCaulay represents human rights injustices concerning the right to education, outlined in the ICESCR (United Nations General Assembly Article 13). They also do not have adequate transportation to school because of a lack of buses, so some children have to alternate who will go to school. Although he does gain access to an uptown school, Dexter comes to believe that an education will not help him and that he needs to seek other means to improve his circumstances.

At the same time, Dexter fears he is getting too old to beg, recognizing that people are less sympathetic the older he becomes. This reality—coupled with the constant humiliation from school officials and other students in the uptown school in which Sahara enrolls him—causes Dexter to turn to friends who are engaged in illegal and gang activities. These males and their performance of masculinity become a model of manhood for Dexter; as Michael A. Bucknor clarifies, “Jamaican masculinity is a matter of social construction and not biological determination” (1).¹⁸ Dexter begins to conform to the models he sees, and he acknowledges that his “life start split in two—the daytime and the night-time. The schoolboy and the big man” (McCaulay, *Dog-Heart* 178). It appears that Dexter comes to equate manhood, money, and power with criminal activity, and to the detriment of many, Dexter becomes caught up with people who embody this view. In an interview, McCaulay comments on Dexter’s downward spiral: “Who has money in an inner-city community? The local don or somebody who’s selling drugs or another illegal activity. In the case of this novel, it’s somebody who’s doing illegal sand mining” (“Uptown and Downtown” 98). From this point where Dexter becomes involved in illegal activity, his life begins to go down a dark road, as he and his associates are eventually caught by the police and put in jail. Another casualty is Marlon, Dexter’s younger brother, who is caught in the crossfire when the police raid their home in search of Dexter.¹⁹

Ultimately, McCaulay's *Dog-Heart* uses a cross-class relationship trope to express the fact that the mere existence of international human rights law does not guarantee the protection of human rights, and she thus adds a literary approach to discussions that interrogate the effectiveness of human rights treaties. McCaulay's fictive account of contemporary life for some communities in Jamaica reveals ways in which some rights outlined in the ICESCR are disregarded. The result of inadequate employment opportunities and other circumstances is that some people's basic necessities are not met. McCaulay's narrative enlightens readers to the fact that Dexter faces critical circumstances, including sometimes not having enough to eat, which will not be solved by simply attending school in uptown. In fact, Dexter thinks, "Miss Sahara think she can make us into uptown children. She think if we learn how to read and count, learn how to behave, get expose to *opportunity*—she always talkin about *opportunity*—make uptown friend, then we will be like uptown people. I sure it not going go like that" (118; emphasis in original). Dexter cannot imagine how attending school will help him have a better life because it does not provide the immediate results, such as adequate housing and food, which he needs and desires. Thus, a disconnect exists between Sahara and Dexter concerning his needs and the avenue to have them met. Yet beyond their relationship looms portrayals of pressing national circumstances that are tangibly affected by the ever-changing global community. While the narrative suggests that an alternative approach to guarding human rights is necessary, it does not present that approach, thus highlighting the continued need for multidisciplinary perspectives on the human rights enterprise. Harrison makes, perhaps, one of the most chilling statements concerning the conditions in contemporary Jamaica when she writes, "Jamaica's debt crisis, the IMF's imposition of a structural adjustment policy climate, and export driven pattern of economic development have produced conditions of economic austerity that have resulted in a quality of life that may be worse than what enslaved people faced two hundred years ago" ("Everyday Neoliberalism" 6). It is troubling, to say the least, that contemporary conditions could rival those under the institution of slavery. In the end, McCaulay's *Dog-Heart* promotes deeper understanding of the limited role of human rights treaties in alleviating substandard conditions and evokes the real-life human rights concerns that Jamaica and many other nations in the Global South are facing.

Notes

- ¹ The trope of the "two Jamaicas" has an extensive history with broad significance, and it has been used to mean divisions along racial as well as class axes. See Philip Curtin's *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830-1865*, for more on the subject. In this article, the use of "two Jamaicas" refers to the reality that the lived class experiences in uptown and downtown areas are so different that it is as if these spaces are two different nations. McCaulay explains in an interview that she wanted to write about a collision between the two, although she is aware this is an oversimplification ("Uptown and Downtown" 95). See Gina A. Ulysse, *Downtown Ladies* (162–65) for more on socioeconomic uptown/downtown divisions in Kingston. Additionally, McCaulay uses the term "inner-city" to describe those in downtown communities or members of the working classes ("Uptown and Downtown" 96); thus, I use that term throughout this article.
- ² Some other novels with this trope include Oonya Kempadoo's *Tide Running*, Paule Marshall's *The Fisher King* and Olive Senior's *Dancing Lessons*.

- ³ The cross-class relationship trope is distinct from narrative structure, although it is related to McCaulay's narrative structure in this particular novel, as *Dog-Heart* alternates between the two protagonists who are from different class backgrounds.
- ⁴ The novel's low sales may be one reason for the lack of scholarship. While the novel created favourable interest among locals, it did not sell many copies and its popularity did not translate internationally (Scafe 217).
- ⁵ Harrison notes, "Many advocates and researchers argue that human rights appear to be in increased jeopardy under the conditions of globalization, especially the neoliberal form dominant today" ("Introduction" 11). In discussing the effects of globalization, Brysk asserts that "different elements and levels of globalization may produce distinct elements of empowerment, exploitation, and evolution" (7).
- ⁶ Alison Donnell also discusses how "literature in the Caribbean has been a vital mode of re-describing received reality" (422). Glyne Griffith, moreover, discusses literature and its possibilities for changing the world (290–91).
- ⁷ McClellan and Moore discuss "the centrality of literary expression as a key part of human rights advocacy" (10). They also note that "starting in the 1970s, there was clear and direct attention to the connections among human rights, literature, and personal stories, as well as to the ways in which these connections emerge out of geopolitical contexts. Following that, we note that by the 1990s, the production of life narratives—especially memoirs — had become a central, if not ubiquitous, feature of human rights campaigns" (10).
- ⁸ Human rights are outlined in the International Bill of Human Rights, which consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). These documents were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly after the devastation of World War II. The latter covenant, the ICESCR, is under discussion in this essay; the essay's focus is primarily on Article 11, which delineates "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions," and Articles 6 and 7, which discuss the right to work. Unless otherwise noted, the ICESCR is the covenant being referenced in this essay.
- ⁹ See Eric A. Posner, *The Twilight of Human Rights Law*; Oona A. Hathaway, "Do Human Rights Treaties Make a Difference?" and Daniel Hill, "Estimating the Effects of Human Rights Treaties on State Behavior" for more on the effectiveness of legislating human rights.
- ¹⁰ Other scholars have examined class within Caribbean societies, including Gordon K. Lewis in *Gordon K. Lewis on Race, Class and Ideology in the Caribbean*.

- ¹¹ Dexter describes Sahara as a “browning,” a lighter-skinned woman. Several scholars note that the browning is the ideal woman of beauty in Jamaica. For instance, Patricia Mohammed discusses “the ‘browning’ who represents the ‘uptown’ middle-class ideal woman of mixed race” and that “the origin of this ideal [comes] from the ‘mulatto’ woman bred in slavery” (26–27).
- ¹² The General Comments by the CESCR are documents that expound on and clarify parts of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- ¹³ A Jamaica Public Service (JPS) news article, “JPS Reduces Service to Communities With High Levels Of Theft, Says It Has Tried Everything,” published on May 12, 2014, states: “In 2013, JPS removed over 197,000 illegal lines, carried out more than 113,000 account audits and meter investigations, and facilitated the arrest of more than 1200 persons for theft of electricity.” JPS is implementing several initiatives to halt electricity theft.
- ¹⁴ In recent times, Jamaica has experienced an increase in darker-skinned citizens bleaching their skin, and the government is trying to stop the sale of illegal bleaching products, according to the Ministry of Health. Some believe that lighter skin—gained by artificial products lightening (and, unfortunately, damaging) their skin—will provide access to things they feel are closed to them as dark-skinned people, including employment. However, there are not always easy class/colour distinctions in the novel or in real life. Sahara’s successful friend Lydia, the restaurant owner, is black, and so is the principal of Dexter’s school. Dexter explains, “Uptown people can be black, brown, white, chiney, coolie or syrian” (14). A considerable body of Caribbean scholarship theorizes class and colour in Jamaica (e.g., see Ulysse, *Downtown Ladies*).
- ¹⁵ Michaeline A. Crichlow discusses Project Land Lease in *Negotiating Caribbean Freedom: Peasants and the State in Development*.
- ¹⁶ Documentaries such as *Life and Debt* and *Jamaica for Sale* highlight the predicament.
- ¹⁷ Scholte further explains that globalization has caused changes in already existing inequalities in nations around the world (322–23), while Thorin also claims that the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organization ignore pre-existing inequalities (14).
- ¹⁸ Also, Ian G. Strachan’s documentary, *I’s Man: Manhood in the Bahamas*, explores manhood and crime in the contemporary period.
- ¹⁹ This leads to discussion of another human rights issue emerging during the contemporary era of globalization—police violence. Dexter’s community is overrun by crime (committed by dons and police), and he describes often having to hide under the bed to escape stray bullets. This issue is addressed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which outlines the obligation of law enforcement officials to respect the human rights of all people.

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