

# Troubling an Unjust Present: Kareem Mortimer's Filmmaking Ambition for The Bahamas

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This essay explores the relationship between cultural projects and questions of social justice, taking as its starting point a conversation I had with Kareem Mortimer at the first “Caribbean Queer Visualities” symposium, held at Yale University in 2014.<sup>1</sup> Here, I reflect on Mortimer’s filmmaking practice, especially the films *Children of God* (2011) and *She* (2012), a feature-length fiction film and a short documentary, respectively, which I explore within the wider context of Mortimer’s work and vision for filmmaking in The Bahamas. His projects currently include establishing and extending film programming and strengthening filmmaking production in The Bahamas. These backstories are significant to sustaining debates and creativity in the Caribbean, where the work involved is often undertaken by artists whose efforts as autonomous, active agents of cultural change influence national debates and sensibilities.

In a similar approach to the discussion I had with Mortimer, this essay reflects a more creative enterprise in style and manner, making more of relevant news items revealing new and renewed forms of protest, attempted coups, shootings, and other regimes of violence. Writing about Mortimer’s work at this particular time and within this particular conjuncture is significant. The writing, conversation, and “Caribbean Queer Visualities” project

have been timely, acknowledging the increasingly significant contribution that queer visual expression makes to the debate and definition of Caribbean sensibility and culture.

My writing comes from a feminist and situated perspective in exploring the work, making apparent a personal and partial narrative. As a London-based feminist of the Caribbean diaspora, I am caught in the United Kingdom, within the current highly globalized quasi-European space in a dystopian political and cultural climate that is perceived as “post-Brexit,” postfactual, socially divisive. Mortimer’s filmmaking and efforts represent important challenges, providing cinema as alternative spaces for voices emergent from southern, majority world perspectives and landscapes associated with the present and future. I also approach this essay with Rinaldo Walcott’s writing in mind, aware of “the trip wires of speaking from here to there” that he acknowledges: “I thus speak as an ambivalent ‘extension’ of the Anglo-Caribbean collectivity conditioned by a diasporic experience . . . I speak among others whose practices, desires and politics inform my own.”<sup>2</sup>

The sections of this essay explore Mortimer’s filmmaking as an embodied practice. “Queer Flesh” explores his film *Children of God*, particularly the end sequence, looking at the question of pathos in queer stories and characters. “Queer Bodies and Relational Space” notes the ways transnational relationships, migration, and questions of home are embedded into Caribbean culture. “Bahamian Queer Bodies in Performance” focuses on Mortimer’s film *She*, a short documentary that pays tribute to the Miss Drag Bahamas beauty pageant as an event establishing itself more fully in Bahamian culture.

## Queer Flesh: Between Hope and Despair

In “Desire through the Archipelago,” the introduction to his anthology *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*, Thomas Glave describes his editorial project:

Walking though slowly, and increasingly aware of its flesh taking shape, the book began to ask questions—pester, even. Through all the hours of its more groggy, wobbly-kneed state, it wanted to know the same things I did. . . . People “out there” who also gazed across that water that simultaneously divided and united us all and who dreamed—yearned their way through those emotions and all that desire: women for women, men for men, women and men for women-men. That erotic-emotional desire for people of our own gender that it seemed no one—not anyone at all—ever spoke about, much less wished to hear about unless in the realm of “scandal” and “disgrace.”<sup>3</sup>

Glave’s text provides an artistic and nuanced narrative for introducing his thinking (and aesthetics) about queer projects and queer perspectives. What is central to queer knowledge here is the metaphorical presence of the body as a site of knowledge production as it mobilizes and performs. Other writers such as Sara Ahmed, Tony Ballantyne, Antoinette Burton, Laura Marks, and Fred Moten perceive the corporeal and queer body as an active and affective site of reflection and becoming. Glave evokes the body to describe ideas in formation and production, the creation of a project as a living, breathing, active process. The violated racialized, subaltern, Southern body in various conditions and states of being is constituted as flesh, bones, blood, or skin. As metaphors, these latter terms evoke questions of memory and history of the fugitive body, or are deployed to engage with film analysis and cinema, or are used to create theoretical frames as affective, associated with tactility, haptic, and sensory experiences. The use of the body as a knowledge-generating site *in process* has become more central to postrepresentational thought, emergent from and associated with feminist, postcolonial, and queer epistemologies.<sup>4</sup> As Ballantyne and Burton suggest, in inscribing the body as central to knowledge making, we can identify different narratives of history and storytelling as “bodies evoke birth and death, work and play, disease and fitness; they carry germs and fluids as well as a variety of political economies and the pretext for intrusion, discipline, and punishment at both the individual and the collective levels.”<sup>5</sup>

Mortimer’s filmmaking practice straddles both fictional and documentary genres, creating feature-length works and shorts.<sup>6</sup> In the case of both *Children of God* and *She*, his creative aesthetic works within the stylistic conventions and boundaries of film production aimed at the independent filmmaking global circuit. This is concerned with fund-raising from established film funds and using film festivals as the predominant mode of distribution and recognition. As a filmmaker, Mortimer works within the confluence of an earlier generation of Caribbean filmmakers, including Horace Ové,

Euzhan Palcy, Raoul Peck, and Perry Henzel. Mortimer's films are also in direct dialogue with those of other contemporary filmmakers from the Caribbean and the Caribbean diaspora, including Lisa Harewood, Maria Govan, Alrick Brown, Mary Wells, Lucien Jean-Baptiste, Campell Ex, Richard Fung, and Isaac Julien.<sup>7</sup>

Cinema, says Teresa de Lauretis, is "one of the modes in and through which public fantasies are taken up and rearticulated."<sup>8</sup> Experimentation is apparent in the narratives of Mortimer's films as he takes up the familiar heterosexual and homophobic tropes associated with queer culture. His work is concerned with the misperceptions and phobic fantasies about homosexuality and LGBT matters. Filmic fantasies, de Lauretis proposes, is an activity "based on the capacity for imagining and imaging" aimed at transgressing boundaries between what is perceived as real and the phantasmatic. Mortimer's film innovation lies in the narrative and subject matter, with a specificity and nuanced reflection about

homophobia, gay rights, and homosexuality that have until more recently been persistently unspoken, silenced, and invisible in the Caribbean. Mortimer's queer stories and characters navigate a complex rhetoric about being queer, providing a sonic and visual focal point in which queer black bodies "pester" and quarrel with Caribbean heteromascularity and its associated violence and abuse. His films are cultural punctums, if you like, emergent from queer ideologies that sustain the possibility and hope of a plurality and future.

Shot in Nassau Eleuthera, *Children of God* is a romantic drama/tragedy based on the attraction and growing love between two Bahamian characters, Johnny and Romeo, and is generally considered to be the first Caribbean feature film to explore homophobia and gay issues. There is an interlocking narrative of a Bahamian heterosexual couple (and their child) who, as Christian church elders, lead the Save the Bahamas campaign against gay rights on the islands.<sup>9</sup> Other significant characters are Reverend Ritchie and a character nicknamed "Purple" — "Because my heart is so black, it's purple," he explains.<sup>10</sup> The Reverend Ritchie is the local minister on the island of Eleuthera who is characterized by his moderate Christian values; to him, everyone is God's child, regardless of race, sexuality, or gender. Purple, who leads the homophobic taunts and beatings, and beatings, fatally stabs Johnny in the penultimate scene of the film.



Figure 1. Still from "Bike Scene," *Children of God*, 2011. Director, Kareem Mortimer; Director of Photography, Ian Bloom.



Figure 2. Still from “Dance Scene,” *Children of God*, 2011. Director, Kareem Mortimer; Director of Photography, Ian Bloom.

*Children of God* is rendered as intimate, romantic, and melancholic, created through the use of subdued lighting, muted colors, frequent close-up compositions, and narrow depth of field, allowing for visual focus and emphasis on the performance in the foreground. Amplified diegetic sounds often accompany intimate or interior scenes, which are contrasted by the booming and yet tinny male voice as the preacher uses the cheap microphone of a public address system. Particularly noticeable too is the use of cello music, often associated with evoking and sustaining pathos. The film is in keeping with Judeo Christian mythic metanarrative of the Christian belief system that rages a moral war between the forces of good and evil. The film underlines and addresses head-on the way Christianity dominates a mainstream Bahamian society and everyday experience. Mortimer imbues the film with Christian moral judgment, sentiment, and knowledge, confirmed in the details: the choice of film title; the use of archive news footage of antigay protestors (as if the angry crowd is at a crucifixion); the preacher’s voiceover of antigay rhetoric, rationalized through biblical knowledge that runs repeatedly through the film’s soundtrack; and various religion-focused scenes and acting. This includes the church and the reverend’s house and office as spaces for confession, for praying, and for everyday social events, with the reverend’s bedroom as the location to practice sexual abstinence and control. Recurring visual and sonic tropes associated with biblical narratives and characters are seamlessly incorporated into the film’s narrative. One example is Johnny’s symbolic unaccompanied journey of self-discovery to Eleuthera and more specifically his continuing on to Lighthouse Point at the southern tip of the island, clearly serving as the metaphor to “finding one’s way” through the wilderness. Johnny is construed as the tragic victim, awkward and scared to “touch” or be “touched.” The use of the visual and sonic trope of the ocean and water is conventionally used as the place of revelation, calmness, and transformation, involving Romeo’s challenge to Johnny to jump off the cliff into the sea and his learning to float in the sea—a baptism of trust in others.

*Children of God* presents Caribbean queer matters as eminently more complicated once the “surface or skin” of the film is pierced. Or, put another way, once the flesh and body has succumbed to self-awareness, self-confidence, confession, redemption, and loss. Mortimer addresses the specifics of racism, race, and tropical tourism in the dialogue, referring to the racialized, black bodies of Romeo and Purple in their encounter and relationship to Johnny as the deeply unhappy white Bahamian:

ROMEO: I don't know too many skinny white Bahamians boys and besides I never forget no body's face.

JOHNNY: I am not white.<sup>11</sup>

Sara Ahmed's writings on “queer point[s]” of view about happiness, optimism, and pessimism are pertinent to exploring Mortimer's *Children of God* as a poetic, romantic, and yet dystopian film magnified by its futile and fatal conclusion. In her analysis of the film *Children of Men* (2006; dir. Alfonso Cuarón), Ahmed reflects on the state of happiness as being affective and visceral. The tragic ending to Mortimer's film, in which the character Johnny dies from his stab wounds, is of interest here. Ahmed wonders why it is that we often encounter the figure of the “unhappy queer.” She suggests that perhaps the “queer point” is that we do not have to “choose between pessimism and optimism.” A starting point, according to Ahmed, would be to engage with the “messiness of the experiential” as being the “‘drama of contingency,’ how we are touched by what comes near.”<sup>12</sup> Mortimer shot two endings, and while the film ends on a pessimistic note, the very last scene—Johnny's five-minute dreamscape—induces more ambivalent feelings and emotions. The concept of the dreamscape is introduced by Johnny's character and is described to Romeo as a tale of shared fantasy. This is related in the earlier scene set in a beach cove, when the two, after swimming, share an intimate moment and their first kiss. Johnny's story is based on a fantasy he constructs in his head after his heart stops but before his brain stops being active. He imagines himself as lying prostrate on the beach at Eleuthera. The camera goes in and out of focus, taking up Romeo's point of view as it lingers longingly over Johnny's body, which is unmarked by any stab wound that occurred earlier. There is no bright sunlight; rather, the light is overcast and subdued. Romeo invites Johnny for a swim, reaching out to him. We see a close up of Romeo's black hand outstretched toward Johnny. Central to the dreamscape are their bodies: touching, caressing, romantically holding on and longing. We see them walking away together toward the sea's horizon, holding hands tightly, their backs to the camera as they walk away into the ocean. As they enter the water, the camera pans away and fades to black. Mortimer presents this final scene to evoke loss, tragedy, and despair, while providing a contradictory state of elation, relief, and life beyond the “real” world. This contradictory condition or emotional space, Ahmed argues, can work also to intensify feelings of pleasure. “[In this way] we can interrogate the belief in alternatives as a fantasy that defends against the horrors of the present,” she suggests. “In other words, the belief that things ‘will only get better’ at some point that is always just ‘over the horizon’ can be a way of avoiding the impact of suffering in the world that exists before us.”<sup>13</sup>

## Queer Bodies and Relational Space: Institutional/International Frames in Bahamian Filmmaking

The *PhillyVoice* newspaper reported on the film *Play the Devil* by Bahamian film director/scriptwriter Maria Govan and Trinidadian producer Abigail Hadeed, which picked up the jury award for best feature film of qFLIX 2016, Philadelphia's annual LGBT film festival.<sup>14</sup> In line with the global recognition since the late noughties of successful Caribbean visual artists in the international art market, Caribbean filmmaking, distribution, education, and audience development are also expanding and consolidating. Film festivals taking place in the Caribbean have been strengthened and have become more international. An example of this is the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival (ttff), which has expanded in budget, sponsorship, and reputation over the last five years to include the Caribbean film mart and community cinema screenings.<sup>15</sup> The first Caribbean film distribution company, Caribbean Tales Worldwide Distribution, was launched in Barbados in 2010. This organization received funding for two years (2014–16) from the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States and the European Union for establishing more effective income-generating streams for film production and distribution.<sup>16</sup> The Caribbean Film Database representing the largest single source of information of films produced in and about the Caribbean, was launched in 2015, conceived and implemented by ttff, in association with the Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo, in the Dominican Republic; the Association for the Development of Art Cinema and Practice, in Guadeloupe; the Foundation of New Latin American Cinema, in Cuba; and the Festival Régional et International du Cinéma de Guadeloupe.<sup>17</sup> The Caribbean Film Academy (CaFA), a nonprofit organization based in Brooklyn was founded in 2012 by Justen Blaize and Romola Lucas. CaFA was established for the “promotion and support of Caribbean filmmaking and filmmakers, in the region and the diaspora” and benefits from attracting funding from US arts and state

councils in addition to other emergent transnational diasporic institutions.<sup>18</sup> Cameron Bailey, a significant film critic and writer, is one of the few individuals of the Caribbean diaspora to artistically lead an international film festival (Toronto International Film Festival).

The recognition of filmmakers, and the infrastructural development of film distribution and audiences, represents the burgeoning transnational economic, intellectual, and cultural relationship being developed between the Caribbean, the United States, and Canada. North America is competing and responding to increasing threats (perceived or otherwise) to its global and economic dominance as China and other countries compete. First- and second-generation Caribbean visual artists and filmmakers who have been and continue to be educated in the United States and Canada often act as catalysts to these robust North American projects.

Similar to other filmmakers of his generation, Mortimer carefully and cogently negotiates the economic benefits *and* cultural and political limitations of living in close proximity to the United States and Canada. This cultural sojourning between the Caribbean islands and North America is an important method and means of survival for many Caribbean practitioners. With a film company formed in The Bahamas, and having been involved in making films since 1998 (producing Bahamas Games documentaries), Mortimer has won more than twenty-five awards for his last three film projects and has had films distributed in more than forty countries. This work includes *Chance* (2005) and *The Eleutheran Adventure* (2006), as well as *Float* (2007), which won five international awards and distribution in five countries. The development of *Float* led to the feature-length film *Children of God*, which has won eighteen awards and was screened on the television channel *Showtime* and distributed to more than twenty-four countries. Other recent films include *She* and *Passage* (2013). In December 2015, Mortimer finished shooting in Nassau for the feature-length film *Cargo*, taken from the earlier short film *Passage*, which explores Haitian human trafficking. The *Cargo* film project is the result of support from CaribbeanTales and the Toronto International Film Festival in 2012 and 2013.

Mortimer is currently appointed as the cinema programmer for the recently built forty-eight-seat cinema as part of the boutique hotel complex, the Island House in Nassau. Programming cinema screenings in The Bahamas, according to Mortimer, is concerned with being “creatively involved in a cutting-edge theater that showcases first-run, independent, main-stream, foreign, art and family films.” As he explains, “The cinema will provide attendees with consistent, diverse and entertaining films. . . . Every person has a favorite film that has transformed the way they see the world, which is testament to the fact that the moving image is the most powerful art form of our time.”<sup>19</sup>

Mortimer’s film initiatives and efforts stand in contrast to a local political and religious backdrop that is still marked by regressive queer politics and antigay rights, despite The Bahamas being one of the leading Caribbean nations in legalizing same-sex marriage in 1991.<sup>20</sup> State legitimacy of

heterosexuality as it occurs in The Bahamas and Trinidad, Jacqui Alexander notes, still determines citizenship:

Not just (any) body can be a citizen any more, for some bodies have been marked by the state as non-procreative, in pursuit of sex only for pleasure, a sex that is non-productive of babies and of no economic gain. Having refused the heterosexual imperative of citizenship, these bodies, according to the state, pose a profound threat to the very survival of the nation. Thus, I argue that as the state moves to reconfigure the nation it simultaneously resuscitates the nation as heterosexual.<sup>21</sup>

The question of equality of citizenship of queer bodies has increasingly been contested in contemporary Caribbean spaces as gay rights agendas and bodies become more visible, advocating for equality and justice. Alexander attributes these contradictory and fractured contemporary perspectives and actions to the “complicated process of decolonization and reconstruction,” in which postcolonies as nation-states have naturalized the perceptions of heterosexuality, represented in forms of black masculinity and nationalism. This is exacerbated by the way black nationalism seamlessly associates queer bodies and activism as forms of physical and “cultural contamination from the ‘West.’”<sup>22</sup>

## Bahamian Queer Bodies in Performance

Live performances and arts events as globalized commodities that are integral to tourism development have been created by a proliferation of summer or year-long festivals in most cities under the guise of economic growth and wealth creation. Festivals have various shapes: exhibition blockbuster summer shows and biennales, such as the survey exhibition *About Change: Art in Latin America and the Caribbean* of more than 350 artworks that opened at the World Bank headquarters in July 2011; music festivals, including the *Nevis Blues Festival* and *Moonsplash* in Anguilla; street parades and carnivals, such as *Notting Hill Carnival* in London, *Caribana* in Toronto, and gay pride events across a range of cities; and spectacular attractions, including sporting events and internation-

al meets such as the *Hero Caribbean Premier League 20-20* cricket tournament. Common to these big businesses is a gargantuan appetite for more of the same, conditioned by a need to scale up and mass produce their form and content to accommodate the sheer scale, volume, and capacity of each idea. The “branded” event is marked by particular colors, logos, and wearable products, usually involving the audience in regular synchronous participatory performance that are often moderated by instruction and rhythmic beats calling to the crowd. Celebrity endorsement of and “big names” in attendance at such events are crucial to their success. Events like these also require policing, both physically and electronically, using wristbands, nametags, and swipe cards under the guise of security measures and to ward off any potential risk of attack from extremist groups or individuals. Participants as performers and audience are also controlled for the purposes of insurance, since companies underwrite the risk of damage and liability to buildings and property. These complex and grand arrangements help determine the “bodies” that constitute the event, helping to determine who is welcome to (and has paid for) the “party” and who is (has) not. The events are carnivalesque and spectacular because they are selective and exclusive.<sup>23</sup>

During the summer months, LGBT/pride events have increasingly become an integral part of the global calendar of festivals, despite being banned or prohibited by some religious or authoritarian governments.<sup>24</sup> Jamaica’s first gay pride event, *Pride JA*, which was held in August 2015 and became the first in an English-speaking Caribbean nation (a planned Bahamian event was canceled in 2014 because of death threats made to the organizers). The festivals as displays of global capital seen as “eating” itself have produced inevitable and ironic twists and counternarratives from radical and progressive activists.



Figure 3. Still from *She*, 2012. Director, Kareem Mortimer.

Mortimer's film *She* is a short documentary based on a small unique amateur event the Miss Drag Bahamas beauty pageant, produced by Anthony Stubbs, who also runs the nightclub where the pageant takes place. Stubbs is interested in developing the drag pageant into a more commercial enterprise and to opening the pageantry beyond the gay community to a general public, that is, to "take drag pageantry to another level." The film compliments his ambition of making the drag queen pageant public. This pageant is small, independently run, and organized largely by the Bahamian gay community. *She* is concerned with making represented and visible the previously less familiar and unknown community of Bahamian persons who perform in drag. The film is stylistically observational in approach. The camera is often hand held and animated, getting up close, tracking and focusing on the numerous bodies as they physically prepare for taking on and developing a more female form dressed in women's clothes. Most interviewees either speak directly to the camera or their interviews are voiceovers during film footage showing the preparations for the pageant.

The film visually focuses on the performance of the male body being adorned, masquerading in a woman's body in public. Masquerading is inextricably linked to mimicry involving masking, deception, and illusion. "[The pageant] create[s] the illusion that creates confusion," says one of the contestants, a self-declared (unidentified) transsexual (the first and only transsexual from The Bahamas, she notes in the interview).<sup>25</sup> The mask of femininity and womanliness is in play, an identity created that is malleable and associated with performativity.<sup>26</sup> While we see quick edits of the pageant in the opening sequence, the film is not concerned with reveling in the spectacle of the pageant itself. Instead it is centered on two main characters, the transsexual just mentioned and transgendered person, an entertainer and a make-up artist, who identifies as a woman in public. As viewers, we are transported and visually enveloped by the atmosphere of the nightclub's room—a dress rehearsal and preparation space, with contestants performing feminine transformations. As Vivian Sobchack notes about cinema, it is as if we are "able to touch and be touched by the substance and texture of images." *She* visually connects us with queer bodies as they are transformed; we are viscerally absorbed by scenes of contact between bodies touching, smoothing, caressing, patting down. In this sense, Sobchack continues,

We might wish to think again about processes of identification in the film experience, relating them not to our secondary engagement with and recognition of either "subject positions" or characters but rather to our primary engagement . . . with the sense and sensibility of materiality itself. We, ourselves, are subjective matter: our live bodies sensually relate to "things" that "matter" on the screen and find them sensible in a primary, prepersonal, and global way that grounds those later secondary identifications that are more discrete and localized.<sup>27</sup>

*She* frames the drag beauty pageant performance as a "site of agency," echoing Patrick E. Johnson in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. He offers *quare* as a term and a "theory in the flesh" for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people of color. Johnson's *quare* studies is "a praxis that speaks to the material existence of 'colored' bodies" and sees performance as self-reflexive and a transformative experience of "self in relation to the world."<sup>28</sup>



Opposite Page:

Figure 4. Still from *She*, 2012. Director, Kareem Mortimer.

Mortimer also uses the jump cut and zooming out as camera techniques to cut away from the caring/caressing space of the nightclub to a street protest. In this way, he continues to pester away at the ongoing debates that are central to the politics of location and orientation (which way we face and make strange)<sup>29</sup> that bring together the specificity of geography, history, and memory in which the queer Bahamian is marked as the outsider. Mortimer includes similar footage of a religious gathering as seen in *Children of God*, providing space in the film for an antigay Christian rhetoric of “unnaturalness” to interrupt the narrative. This rhetoric is masterfully countenanced by a clearly articulated argument made by the transsexual in voiceover: “Anytime you find a person has so much hate or so much animosity for gay people, they have an inner struggle within themselves.”<sup>30</sup>

The combinations of the footage of the religious gathering and the intimate preparations for the drag queen pageant places value on the importance of recognizing local and everyday struggles that Bahamian lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people experience. It also identifies the pageant as a mode and strategy in dealing with dominant ideologies. José Esteban Muñoz advocates that this mode “works on and against” a “cultural logic from within,” trying to transform and “enact permanent structural change.”<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusion: Unjust Present

Mortimer’s keenly observed and insightful explorations of queer life in The Bahamas through feature and documentary filmmaking firmly commits to the ways cinema may re-create and imagine individual and collective fantasies that are often unspoken, unacknowledged, or unchallenged.

Current demonstrations, performances, and protests dominated by feminist and queer bodies of color, whether in North America, the Caribbean, or other nations in the global South, have brought urgent questions of equality, justice, protection from violence, state duty of care, and compassion into sharp relief. Recent reports include Black Lives Matter–Toronto protestors refusing to move, blocking the July pride parade in Toronto for around thirty minutes, publicly “calling out” the organizers by demanding a set of changes to recognize marginalized communities as the central focus for the festival. “It’s sadly obvious that many white mainstream queers have been numbed into passivity by the ongoing rhetoric of having come so far,” Rinaldo Walcott writes in response to the event. “This rhetoric has kept many from noticing some of the most urgent political questions of our day. . . . Their insensitivity to contemporary struggles after all the rhetoric of being able ‘to love who you want’ . . . is a fundamental part of the problem.”<sup>32</sup> The “urgent political questions of our day” are based on what Jack Halberstam, in his introduction to *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, describes as a response to the “brokenness

of being, a brokenness . . . that is also blackness, that remains blackness.”<sup>33</sup> Mortimer’s films are cinematic forms of theories in the flesh that provoke and reflect both the concept of brokenness of being and blackness. Racialized queer and black bodies have become central to urgent debates and current civil movements. As queer life stories and imagined narratives, the films are collective statements, registering what is necessary and pertinent to creating a just present.

# Endnotes

- 1 The symposium “Caribbean Queer Visualities I” was convened by David Scott (Columbia University; editor of *Small Axe*) and Erica James (Yale University), in November 2014 at Yale University. It was the first of two events that were part of a *Small Axe* initiative to explore aesthetic provocations about queerness through dialogues between scholars, contemporary Caribbean visual artists, and the audience. (“Caribbean Queer Visualities II” was held at Columbia University in March 2015.)
- 2 Rinaldo Walcott, “Queer Returns: Human Rights, the Anglo-Caribbean, and Diaspora Politics,” *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, no. 3 (2009): 3.
- 3 Thomas Glave, “Desire through the Archipelago,” introduction to Thomas Glave, ed., *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 2–3.
- 4 See Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, “Grammars of the Fugitive,” lecture, Black Study Group, Goldsmiths, University of London, 6 December 2014, [archive.org/details/Blackstudiesgrammarsoffugitive/](http://archive.org/details/Blackstudiesgrammarsoffugitive/); Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); and Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).
- 5 Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005) 7.
- 6 See “Kareem Mortimer,” Caribbean Film Academy, [caribbeanfilm.org/kareem-mortimer/](http://caribbeanfilm.org/kareem-mortimer/); and “About the Company,” Mercury Rising Media, [mercuryrisingmedia.com/www.mercuryrisingmedia.com/Home.html](http://mercuryrisingmedia.com/www.mercuryrisingmedia.com/Home.html) (accessed 21 April 2016).
- 7 See the Caribbean Film Database (CFDb) at [www.caribbeanfilm.com](http://www.caribbeanfilm.com).
- 8 Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 61.
- 9 “The LGBT Debate: A Historic Perspective,” *Nassau Guardian*, 17 March 2014, [www.thenassauguardian.com/national-review/45916-the-lgbt-debate-a-historic-perspective](http://www.thenassauguardian.com/national-review/45916-the-lgbt-debate-a-historic-perspective).
- 10 Kareem Mortimer, *Children of God*, TLA Releasing, 2010, 144 min.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Sara Ahmed, “Happy Futures, Perhaps,” in E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen, eds., *Queer Times, Queer Becomings* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 161, 162.
- 13 Ibid., 170.
- 14 Brandon Baker, “A Chat with Maria Govan, Director of Standout Qflix Film *Play the Devil*,” *PhillyVoice*, 7 July 2016.
- 15 See Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival (ttff), [www.ttffilmfestival.com](http://www.ttffilmfestival.com).
- 16 For further information, see “The ‘3D’ Distribution Project: Digital, Domestic, and Diaspora Distribution of Caribbean-Themed Audio-Visual Content,” *ACPCultures+*, [www.acpculturesplus.eu/?q=en/content/%C2%AB-3d-%C2%BB-distribution-project-digital-domestic-and-diaspora-distribution-caribbean-themed](http://www.acpculturesplus.eu/?q=en/content/%C2%AB-3d-%C2%BB-distribution-project-digital-domestic-and-diaspora-distribution-caribbean-themed); and “3D Distribution Project,” *CaribbeanTales Worldwide Distribution*, [www.caribbean-antales-worldwide.com/3d-distribution-project](http://www.caribbean-antales-worldwide.com/3d-distribution-project).
- 17 See the Caribbean Film Database (Cfdb), [www.caribbeanfilm.com](http://www.caribbeanfilm.com).
- 18 See the Caribbean Film Academy (CaFA), [caribbeanfilm.org](http://caribbeanfilm.org).
- 19 “Bahamian Director Kareem Mortimer Appointed to Run the Island House, Nassau,” *ARC Magazine*, 27 November 2014, [arcthemagazine.com/arc/2014/11/bahamian-director-kareem-mortimer-appointed-to-run-the-island-house-nassau](http://arcthemagazine.com/arc/2014/11/bahamian-director-kareem-mortimer-appointed-to-run-the-island-house-nassau).
- 20 “Death Threats over GB Gay Pride Event,” *Nassau Guardian*, 1 September 2014, [www.thenassauguardian.com/news/49937](http://www.thenassauguardian.com/news/49937).
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