

Selections from the two texts:

1. From C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 1938

The slaves worked on the land, and, like revolutionary peasants everywhere, they aimed at the extermination of their oppressors. But working and living together in gangs of hundreds on the huge sugar-factories which covered the North Plain, they were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time, and the rising was, therefore, a thoroughly prepared and organized mass movement. [...] Voodoo was the medium of the conspiracy.

2. From Beverley Mullings, 'Caliban, social reproduction and our future yet to come', *Geoforum* 118 (2021), pp. 150-158.

There is something quite compelling about the current moment, that suggests that our futures as workers may be moving closer to the conditions of precarity that Caribbean populations have faced throughout history. I say this because the forms of economic insecurity and uncertainty that have been oppressive forces throughout the region's history, resemble the forms of precarity that are now becoming a standard feature of work in much of the global North.

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I think there is much to be gained from juxtaposing how people have worked to maintain themselves as social, emotional, and intellectual humans in conditions of extreme uncertainty and precarity across different historical periods. I do so in this essay by exploring how racialization and unfreedom in 18th and 19th century plantation economies produced forms of precarity that resemble the post-work futures that scholars have begun to write about.

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It is my contention that if we examine how men and women in the poorest urban communities negotiate Jamaica's economic landscape we will see traces of the past – forms of work in conditions of great precarity that blur the separation of reproductive and productive work, and offer extended possibilities for Black life (McKittrick, 2011). I will illustrate this with reference to the current efforts of residents in one of Jamaica's inner city neighbourhoods to socially and economically reproduce their communities through art, food and conscious reasoning.

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I've used the unified category 'life-work' to describe the socially transformative role that arts-based, sustainable, community-based work is beginning to play in one of Jamaica's poorest urban communities.

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Thinking through the worlds of informality and precarity occupied by racialized communities in the Caribbean in the past and in the present, deepens our understanding of the ways that work that builds collective human life can enable modes of wealth-creation that need not conform to the free market fundamentals that have come to dominate our lives. Ultimately, paying attention to the blurred boundaries that constitute 'life-work', offers new ways of thinking about worker agency in increasingly precarious economic landscapes.