It was with deep sadness that we received the news on April 9, 2014, that Jamaican economist, public intellectual and Pan-Caribbeanist Norman Girvan had died in Cuba where he was receiving medical attention following a tragic accident in Dominica some three months earlier. Amidst the outpouring of grief and shock, and as we still struggle to come to terms with the fact that Norman Girvan is no longer physically with us, with the unbearable missing, we take comfort in the knowledge that he has left us with an extraordinary gift, a template of connection, solidarity and love for this region, these spaces we call home, these neighbours across sea and river and border and language. And we will keep him close, never far from thought and heart, by drawing from, enriching and extending the wellspring of his outstanding contributions.

One tribute perfectly captured the commitment to region that was at the heart of Norman Girvan’s intellectual and political work: “It is perhaps poetic that Norman, the Caribbean man who was born in Jamaica and lived in Trinidad, would sustain his injuries in Dominica and die in Cuba.” In an autobiographical essay, Girvan notes that he entered the Mona, Jamaica campus of the University College of the West Indies (UCWI) in 1959 (strikingly, the very year that the ill-fated West Indian Federation was formed) “as a Jamaican nationalist and left as a Caribbean regionalist. I have never recognized a contradiction between the two; the one melds into the other seamlessly; and I believe that

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1 This reflection is adapted from a tribute that was first run as an ‘In the Diaspora Column,’ in the Stabroek News, Guyana, May 5th, 2014.
2 The Institute of International Relations at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, where Norman Girvan was Professor Emeritus, dedicated its June 2014 IIR journal issue (17) to tributes to him.
anyone who thinks otherwise either does not know our history, or chooses to deny it. Regionalism is a passion and a recurring subject of my work.”

It was a passion that would be reflected at several institutional levels. Norman Girvan was based at the University of the West Indies for most of his professional life, returning there after stints in Dakar, New York and elsewhere. He served as Director of the Consortium Graduate School of Social Sciences at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI) and as the first Director of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies, and at the time of his passing he was Professor Emeritus and Professorial Research Fellow at the Institute of International Relations at UWI’s St. Augustine Campus. An active champion of regional integration, he was openly frustrated with the slow pace with which CARICOM, the 15-member organization serving the English-speaking Caribbean, was proceeding, authoring several studies on the challenges of implementation, including reports commissioned by CARICOM Heads of Government. Girvan also emphatically believed in what he called the Greater Caribbean, a definition of region that refused imperial and colonial logics that set the Anglophone Caribbean apart from her neighbours. He would serve as the second Secretary-General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), a 25 member-state grouping with a regional mandate to enhance “consultation, cooperation and concerted action.” He played a leading role in the establishment of the Association of Caribbean Economists and was involved in efforts to develop a graduate programme in Caribbean Studies that would see the joint participation of several universities across the hemisphere. Given the highly sensitive matter of the Guyana-Venezuela border controversy, it was testimony to the principled reputation that Girvan had established across the Caribbean and Latin America that the United Nations Secretary General would nominate him as the Good Offices

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5 In the mid 1970s Girvan also worked as head of the National Planning Agency during the most turbulent years of the democratic socialist administration of Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley. See Norman Girvan (1985) Prospects for Jamaica’s Political Economy, New York: Institute for Caribbean Education and Culture.
6 Norman Girvan (2013), ‘Constructing the Greater Caribbean,’ Keynote Address, Rethinking Regionalism: Beyond the CARICOM Integration Project, SALISES Regional Integration Conference, University of the West Indies, October 2013
representative in ongoing efforts to resolve the dispute, a position he held at the time of his death.

In the now classic text, Independent Thought and Caribbean Freedom, Trinidadian economist Lloyd Best asserted that “thought is the action for us,” setting out one of the clearest cases for intellectual decolonization in the region. I invoke it here not simply because Norman Girvan would come of age as part of that same radical generation at UCWI, involved in the New World Group and the publication of *New World Quarterly*, but in order to emphasise that his professional life and institutional contributions bear the imprint of, indeed were driven by his politics, specifically his unwavering belief in the capacity of the Caribbean’s peoples to find alternatives to the seemingly unending script of racial subjugation, of colonial and neo-colonial/neo-liberal domination.

In his autobiographical reflection, Girvan defined his field as the political economy of development, with an interest in understanding and challenging the distortions imposed upon economies in the Global South by metropolitan institutions (multinational corporations, banks, international financial institutions etc.). It would remain an ongoing preoccupation, one that found its earliest scholarly expression in his doctoral work at the London School of Economics in the 1960s where he examined the effects of foreign capital on the Jamaican post-war economy, a period in which formal learning was equally matched by Girvan’s participation in CLR James’ London Study Group. Girvan would go on to focus on mineral-export economies and multinational corporations, becoming an integral part of a set of conversations about colonial legacies and dependent development in the Caribbean – most influentially represented by the plantation economy studies initiated by Lloyd Best and Kari Levitt to which he contributed.

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9 Girvan’s work on bauxite would significantly shape government policies in Guyana and Jamaica, including the initiative of then Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley to establish the International Bauxite Association in the 1970s. Kari Levitt is a Canadian economist who at the time was Director of the Centre for Developing Area Studies at McGill University.
This pathbreaking work was the stuff of many university classrooms in later years. At York University’s Latin American and Caribbean Studies programme in the 1980s, for example, political economy classes would regularly assign readings on Raúl Prebisch and the Latin American economic structuralists, alongside plantation economy and dependency theorists from the Caribbean like Lloyd Best, C.Y. Thomas and Norman Girvan. Sadly, it is not clear how much of this material remains on the syllabi of economics departments at UWI today. Girvan’s revisiting of the dependency theory debates less than a decade ago led him to conclude that many of the insights from that period remained relevant, and to caution that while the Caribbean faces new and different challenges, we should not throw out the baby with the bathwater.¹⁰ Before a capacity audience gathered for a University of the West Indies conference to mark the 50th Anniversary of Jamaican Independence in 2012 - which Girvan pointedly described as In-Dependence - he compellingly argued that what we were facing in the region was policy recolonisation, providing us with the incredible example of how this played itself out in the IMF requirements that the Jamaican government provide daily reports “on 13 items, weekly reports on 6 items; monthly reports on 22 items, and quarterly reports on 10 items.”

Norman Girvan gave us a language beyond the failed state discourse that he so disliked, in identifying what he called the “existential threats” facing the region. Existential threats were defined as “systemic challenges to the viability of our states as functioning socio-economic-ecological-political systems; due to the intersection of climatic, economic, social and political developments,” and challenged us to adopt a multi- and inter-disciplinary approach to grapple with “connections among seemingly unrelated phenomena.”¹¹ One example would be his recognition of the significance of climate change to the viability of the region, and his participation in a workshop with the Climate Change Centre in Belmopan, Belize a few years ago to discuss an integrated approach to and the importance of economic modeling for discussions of environmental sustainability.

Norman Girvan also played a crucial role mobilizing critical discussion of the negotiations between Cariforum (Caricom – the 15 member regional integration grouping of the Caribbean plus the Dominican Republic) and the European Union (EU) that led to the signing of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in 2008. The EPA replaced the preferential trade arrangements that were part of the Cotonou Agreement with former colonies of Europe with the principle of reciprocal trade preferences. The Caribbean faced the possibility that the EU would impose tariffs on banana, sugar and other exports if Cariforum members did not sign onto the EPA by the end of 2007 – when the Cotonou Agreement would expire.

Girvan was one of the most vocal critics of the proposed EPA. Arguing that the shift from the principle of preferential trade to one of reciprocity would introduce a new set of challenges that the Caribbean is ill equipped to face, he set up and managed a list-serv that kept people informed of the issues: the meaninglessness of trade reciprocity when the playing field is so uneven; the divide and rule logic framing the EU’s decision to pursue separate EPAs with African-Caribbean-Pacific members; the fuzzy chain of command, particularly with regard to the Caricom Secretariat’s relationship with the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) that was tasked with finalizing the agreement; the dangerous precedent the EPA has set for future trade negotiations with Canada and the US. Girvan was also at the forefront of a campaign that was carried in the regional media calling for a full and public review of the EPA and that included a petition signed by individuals and organizations in the Caribbean and diaspora. He supplied memorable terms to describe the three card trick that the region was played: sweetification, the dangling carrot that came in the form of hollow promises of development funds; treatyfication, binding legal documents that arguably contravene elements of the Caricom Single Market and Economy itself; and technification, the dense language over hundreds of pages of the Agreement that mystified the entire process. On this last point Girvan was deeply reflective of the way in which the anti-EPA campaign – with the exception of Haiti where there was popular mobilization – remained largely at the level of an intra-elite disagreement, removing from plain view the devastating effects the agreement could potentially have on people’s everyday lives:
...[the protests relied] ... on a more or less technical discourse in the form of memoranda and blog postings sent to governments, media commentaries and opinion makers. But technical arguments by themselves were insufficient to sway the governments. The technical issues were often complex and inaccessible to non-specialists; the negotiators insisted that the critics were mistaken and that they (the negotiators) had more authoritative knowledge of the technical intricacies of the negotiations; and there were major political risks to the governments from changing course. To have impacted decision-making, the protests would have had to command strong political support; such as massive street protests, defections from the ruling party in parliament, vocal opposition from the business community, or pressure from powerful external trading partners (Girvan, 2010: 106-107).

The lessons to be drawn are many, as we were reminded in April 2014 when at a meeting in Guyana, the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce (CAIC) noted that the EPA “has not allowed us full access [to the European market] that we have envisioned.” At the time of signing, and largely as a result of the concerns raised only by then President of Guyana Bharrat Jagdeo, a review clause was included to evaluate the EPA after an initial five years – meaning that a full and frank public accounting was due to the people of the region in 2013. CAIC’s comments underline the fact that little to nothing has been done by Caricom, or the CRNM, or the Heads of Government to ensure that systematic information was being collected to enable meaningful evaluation of the effects of the EPA in the region. As Girvan observed, the review clause included a reference to the EPA’s impact on different groups in the society, including young people, farmers, workers, women and a number of identified groups...but in order to take advantage of this there has to be research, there has to be monitoring of its consequences, there has to be a great deal of technical preparation, but more than anything else there has to be a mindset that says

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this agreement in its totality may not really have been in our best interests but we were forced to do it because of the threat of cutting off export markets but we need to use the time to basically prepare the case for a different kind of agreement and that mindset is not present…that mindset which is a critical reflection on the overall assumptions of structure and architecture of the agreement and the way in which a different kind of agreement or a modified agreement could be crafted to be supportive of development…I know of no mechanism which has been set up certainly not regionally and I don’t believe nationally with that in mind…So that is where our weakness is a self-imposed one.14

Addressing this shameful lapse head-on is part of the work to be done, while also engaging Girvan’s efforts (rooted in his idea of a Caribbean beyond the narrow insularities of the Anglophone countries) to think about different kinds of integration arrangements outside of the neoliberal free trade logic of the EPA, and his cautious optimism about the possibilities for social development, concessional financing, non-reciprocal trade and South-South co-operation represented by the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA) and PetroCaribe.15

Most recently and at the time of his tragic accident, Norman Girvan was actively involved in a campaign that brought together colleagues from the Caribbean, North America and Europe, outraged by the discriminatory and racist Ruling 168-13 of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Dominican Republic (DR) of September 23rd 2013 that effectively stripped citizenship from potentially hundreds of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent. The position that Caricom eventually took after an initial and hesitant statement expressing regret at the ruling cannot be understood outside of this activism that pressured the region’s governments to take a stand. Girvan’s online blog kept readers abreast of ongoing developments, and took care to engage and feature criticisms emanating from within the Dominican Republic, thus highlighting the mobilization that was taking place on the ground and led by Dominicans who refused to let the ruling stand

14 Norman Girvan (2012), comments made in response to questions following keynote, SALISES 50-50 Conference, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, April. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92Qupw1vypw&feature=youtu.be&t=18s, last accessed October 27, 2014.
in their name. In late November, in what was perhaps his last public appearance to be captured online, he participated on a panel hosted by the Institute of International Relations (IIR) on Ruling 168-13, opening the event with a clear and passionate outlining of why it was politically, ethically and morally imperative to oppose it.

The following day Girvan was member of a small delegation appearing before the Caricom Bureau in Port-of-Spain and presenting two petitions from Jouvay Ayiti and Concerned Caribbean Citizens. The delegation’s statement read:

We support the call by Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves for the Dominican Republic’s non-admission to CARICOM under the present circumstances, suspension from CARIFORUM and from the PetroCaribe oil concessions; and for the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to issue a strong statement of condemnation. These have now been adopted or largely endorsed by the Organisation of East Caribbean States. Their adoption by the entire Caribbean Community would carry significant weight and could not be ignored. CARICOM is 14 of the 15 member states of CARIFORUM, 12 of the 18 members of PetroCaribe, and 14 of the 33 members of CELAC, with a permanent seat on the Troika plus One. CARICOM must present a united front on this issue, and speak with one voice. In addition to the four actions above, we would propose that CARICOM (i) provide continued support within the OAS for the in loco visit by the IACHR (ii) request an advisory opinion from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; and (iii) consider the introduction of a resolution of condemnation within the UN General Assembly.

Significantly, in the press conference called at the conclusion of the Breau’s deliberations, Caricom Chairman and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago Kamla Persad Bissessar noted that:

16 Coming out of the University of the West Indies, Jouvay Ayiti is a collective that draws on the oppositional history of carnival/mas’ in Trinidad and Tobago to stage arts based interventions, and led number of protest actions in downtown Port-of-Spain around the ruling. The second petition was initiated by two women and social activists in Guyana – Andaiye and Danuta Radzik – and circulated with the support of students from the University of Guyana and Groundation Grenada. Gathering more than 2,0000 signatures, it was presented to the Caricom Secretary-General on the eve of the Caricom Bureau meeting.

17 Statement to the CARICOM Bureau on the Dominican Republic’s TC 168-13, November 26, 2013. Other members of the delegation to the Bureau were Mike James, Asha Kambon and Sunity Maharaj.
CARICOM is calling on the Dominican Republic to ensure the immediate protection of those persons negatively affected by the ruling and to adhere to its international human rights obligations under the Inter American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the American Convention on Human Rights, among others. CARICOM is ready to support any process that results in the reinstatement of the basic human rights of those affected and welcomes the views of the civil society representatives with whom the Bureau met this morning and those who met with the Secretary General of CARICOM who submitted a Region wide petition on behalf of concerned citizens of the Community. In the circumstances and in light of the values and principles which have underpinned in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, CARICOM has determined that it will defer consideration of the application by the Dominican Republic for membership in the Caribbean Community. As Chair of CARICOM, I will raise this matter for action by several bodies of which we are members such as the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and will maintain our interest and active participation at the Organisation of American States (OAS). We look forward to the outcome of the visit to the Dominican Republic of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) which will travel to that country in early December.18

It was a rare success. And just two weeks later, Girvan would attend the annual Conference organized by the Caribbean Chair of the University of Havana in December, where he emphasised the importance of Cuba and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) speaking out against the ruling. He understood that only continued pressure would keep this in the public eye and deliver justice for the women, men and children of the DR facing civil death. We must extend this work, in the face of

18 This position was restated at the conclusion of the 35th annual Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community held in Antigua in July 2014, where a communiqué reiterated that “it would not be business as usual in the Community's relationship with the Dominican Republic and that they would maintain their pressure in all fora on the continuing challenges to the human rights of the Dominicans of Haitian descent, including obtaining an advisory opinion of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.”
the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights hearings in Peru in March 2014 where Juliana Dequis Pierre (whose application for a Dominican identification card is the act that triggered the court case and the ruling) was prevented from leaving the DR to appear before the Commissioners; in the face of the fact that although Pierre’s birth certificate was finally returned to her, which will enable her to apply for her identification card, such documents have to be regularly renewed, in a context in which Ruling 168-13 still stands; in the face of the fact that notwithstanding Caricom Heads July 2014 statement, there has been no follow-up of decisions taken by the Bureau in November;¹⁹ and in the face of the possible withdrawal of the Dominican Republic from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.²⁰

About seven years ago, Norman Girvan started a blog (www.normangirvan.info), which now stands as a remarkable archive. It is a living trace of his recognition of the importance of engaging publics beyond the narrow confines of the academy (at one talk in Jamaica, he returned to his seat to a standing ovation and even before he was approached for copies of his paper he had already uploaded it to his blog!), challenging us to critically consider and take on the academic-industrial complex so many of us are positioned in and by. In a revealing exchange on the contemporary economic crisis, Girvan spoke to the political imperative of this kind of work:

One of the big challenges with globalization is the technical way in which issues in trade and finance are communicated and the way in which this discourse is conducted…and the people who are in that world use that knowledge and use that language to befuddle the rest of us…one of the big challenges for the academic community is to really understand what are the social relationships which lie behind these technical terms. For example what a bailout really means is to compensate lenders for their bad lending decisions by taking the money from taxpayers, from workers, from children, from schools from teachers, that is what a bailout means but the terms is used and it sounds like the boat is sinking, we’re going

¹⁹ In fact, in September 2014 it was reported that the Minister of Tourism, Economic Development, Investment and Energy of Antigua & Barbuda paid an official visit to the Dominican Republic to discuss bilateral matters as well as the DR’s interest in pursuing relations with Caricom. For a scathing critique, see journalist Rickey Singh’s column, http://www.nationnews.com/articles/view/our-caribbean-flying-in-caricoms-face/, last accessed October 28, 2014.
to bail it out, it sounds like a good thing to do. So that business of technification and of exposing what lies behind these technical terms is a real challenge for the academic and intellectual community.\textsuperscript{21}

The blog was a highly interactive space, one in which lively exchanges on a wide range of topics affecting the Caribbean took place regularly, indeed an extension of ‘Groundings’ (knowledge for liberation not mystification) in a digital age!\textsuperscript{22} Given Girvan’s facility with social media, a group of us asked him once how as young scholar-activists, they operated in the days of New World in the 1960s when computers were not around. His response – he quipped that they would do things like stuff their suitcases full of copies of New World Quarterly when they were moving between islands, or ask people who were travelling to take pamphlets and other material for them to distribute – underlined how e-connectivity was nothing more than a contemporary way to practice and deepen connections born out of a decades-old commitment to the region. That is to say, the politics was everything. Public intellectual work, in this formulation, was a loving obligation and form of giving back, a process that involved not just putting what one learned at the service of a wider community, but crucially of being enriched by the conversations this act of sharing initiated. It is an approach that demands both rigour and humility.

A fitting tribute is to nurture this regional initiative, and in so doing to honour Norman Girvan’s unshakeable belief in young people and the inter-generational collaboration that was such a significant part of his life. Just over a year ago a small group of faculty and students (headed by Girvan and social activist Alex Gittens) launched \url{http://www.1804caribvoices.org}, a web forum intended to connect groups and

\textsuperscript{21} Norman Girvan (2012), comments made in response to questions following keynote, SALISES 50-50 Conference, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, April. See \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92Qupw1vypw&feature=youtu.be&t=18s}, last accessed October 29, 2014. All of Girvan’s written work referenced here can be found on his blog.

\textsuperscript{22} ‘Groundings’ comes from Guyanese political activist and historian Walter Rodney, assassinated by agents of the Guyanese state on June 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1980. A lecturer at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica in the 1960s. Rodney refused to confine his work to the rarified spaces of the campus. Groundings refers to the reasonings he engaged in with Rastafari and other communities marginalized by the emerging neo-colonial power structures in Jamaica, exchanges that would lead to his deportation from the island in 1968. See Walter Rodney (1969) \textit{The Groundings With My Brothers}, London: Bogle L’Ouverture Publications.
individuals across the linguistic divides of the Pan-Caribbean. In fact shortly after his accident Girvan would even take pains to ensure that a message was circulated requesting his colleagues, comrades in arms continue to visit, share, and send relevant material to the new site. Aleah Ranjitsingh, one of his doctoral students, put it best when she noted simply that he will always be her teacher and that she is (not was) his student. Cuban economist and lecturer at the University of Havana, Laneydi Martínez Alfonso spoke of being afraid to meet Girvan at first because of his international reputation, and of being overwhelmed when she finally did by “his infinite curiosity, his humbleness, his fearlessness and also carefulness, his endless spirit for collaboration and help, especially with young people, his extremely beautiful and genuine humanity.”

“La Deuda es Impagable” was how Norman Girvan paid tribute to the living example of the Cuban Revolution when he received the Honoris Causa Doctorate from the University of Havana in December 2008. “La Deuda es Impagable” were the words that his colleagues and friends in Cuba, that country that he loved so much and where he spent his last days with his family and being cared for before his passing, have gifted him back, paying tribute to his own unceasing contributions for a united and independent Caribbean:

The idea of not having him walking the streets of Havana again; talking about Cuba and its place in the Caribbean, or fighting for making the possibility of regional integration an everyday reality still makes us mournful, and always will. But remembering Norman with sadness is not what he would want us to do. This is why we prefer to remember his legacy by pushing his dreams forward, by studying his inspiring work, by building Caribbean unity, by making our region a place for solidarity, for prosperity, for respect and for peace.

In his keynote speech at the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies to mark the 50th anniversary of Jamaican Independence in 2012, Norman Girvan concluded on a personal note:

23 In 2008 I started editing a column, In the Diaspora, that now runs weekly in a Guyanese daily The Stabroek News. The column is indebted to Norman Girvan’s mentorship and encouragement. He has contributed several pieces and ideas over the years, and we have jointly published a number of articles as well as co-ordinated pieces that would be run jointly on his blog and in the column.
24 Personal correspondence, April 11th, 2014.
My son, Alexander, is also presenting at this Conference. You, and your generation, stand on the cusp of your own life’s journey as Jamaica faces the challenge of its second independence; as I and my generation did on the cusp of Jamaica’s first, half a century ago. It is like the handing over of the baton. But I want to remind you all that the runner who passes the baton, doesn’t stop running; he keeps on for a while longer, and cheers on his successors!

It was a moving and public affirmation of how he was shaped by his commitment to his family, of the ways in which the familial, the national and the regional were deeply interwoven in his life’s journey. We thank his partner and wife Jasmine, and his children Ramon, Alexander and Alatashe, for sharing him with us, and whose grace and positive spiritual energy over the months between his accident and his transition have been an example, comfort and inspiration. May you all now continue to find support in the outpouring of love and respect. For we know, amidst our unspeakable sorrow, that Norman Girvan continues to cheer us on with his unceasing optimism and excitement for the incredible promise and joy that is the Greater Caribbean, a promise only to be made real through our collective labour and commitment.