

# Editorial: Gender, Violence and Conflict: University of the West Indies and University of Leicester International Summer School, 27–31 May 2024

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Held from 27–31 May 2024 at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, the latest iteration of the University of the West Indies and University of Leicester International Summer School brought together a vibrant and interdisciplinary cohort of postgraduate candidates and early career researchers from across the Caribbean, Canada and the UK. Centered on the theme of Gender, Violence and Conflict, the week-long programme invited participants to engage critically and creatively with some of the most pressing social challenges of our time, through lectures, seminars, and a culminating researcher-led mini-conference.

This special issue, a product of that intellectual and creative exchange, draws together contributions that span genres, geographies, and disciplinary perspectives. From academic essays to poetry, the pieces published here reflect the spirit of the summer school: collaborative, courageous, and committed to decolonial and context-sensitive approaches. The works explore a wide range of intersecting concerns, from gender-based violence to Afro-German identity, to ecological grief, to Caribbean cultural practices and literary imaginaries. In their form and content, these contributions speak to the multiplicity of voices, methods, and lived experiences that animated the 2024 programme. Together, they demonstrate the continued importance of centring global south epistemologies and creative modalities in tackling the layered entanglements of gender, violence and conflict.

Our issue begins with Sabrina Bowen’s discussion of ‘liming’, calling back to the idea briefly presented in the editorial of the previous special issue that this Caribbean cultural practice ‘captur[es] the spirit’ of the summer school’s intended experience (Ayres et al.,

2024, p. 2). Here, liming has specific relevance for the 2024 UWI/UoL summer school's focus on gender, violence and conflict, as Bowen's paper outlines the transformative potential of liming's 'informal, conversational nature' for creating a non-judgmental space in which men and boys can engage with the prevalence of gender-based violence in the Caribbean. She emphasizes the importance of using Caribbean cultural practices in the process of addressing social issues in Caribbean communities, affirming the necessity of decolonial approaches.

Shareed Mohammed's article also asserts the significance of Caribbean frameworks. Reading Guyanese writer Wilson Harris's novel *Carnival* through Harris's conceptualization of 'the shamanic womb of nature', Mohammed's analysis posits that Harris's work subverts binary thinking and offers a fluid understanding of gender, centering Caribbean thinking to destabilize dominant patriarchal cisheteronormative narratives.

The next piece focuses even more closely on Guyana. In her examination of Guyanese news reports of suicide, Lisa Edwards highlights the ways in which gender, ethnicity and regional contexts underline the language and imagery used in media narratives about suicide. These narratives can distort and even erase the nuanced realities of suicide, which, as Edwards points out, not only affects general public awareness of this issue in Guyana, but also impacts the framing and implementation of suicide prevention policies and strategies.

In contrast to sensationalized media approaches, Fatmata K Daramy's poem 'Flash Forward' and its accompanying primer is an exercise and exemplar of self-care, without losing its power to unsettle and challenge the reader. In our current global climate, a poem that explores memories of war and home is a reminder of the capacity of creative writing to touch a nerve often desensitized by clinical news and academic reports, and thus it serves as the first creative interjection of the issue.

While 'Flash Forward' escapes academic conventions in search of creative healing, Lizette Gerber's found poem 'Oublie / Moi' weaves the two together by turning quotations from scholarly and literary sources into a poem that addresses power and sexual violence. In an accompanying reflection, Gerber shares the journey behind this creation and demonstrates how using the words of others can help to find your own.

Following this personal expression of trauma and its aftermaths, Nicola Hamer's article 'On Loss, Language, and Poetry: Reading Ecological Grief in Kamau Brathwaite's "scarscape"' presents a theorization of 'the grief of ruptured relationality.' She suggests that Brathwaite's 'scarscape' neologism not only emphasizes the violence of colonial and capitalist histories of ecological destruction, but also offers a praxis for survival and healing. Through this lens, Hamer's work attentively reads and listens to the moments and soundscapes of shared loss in Brathwaite's poetry, demonstrating the generative possibilities of 'collaborative meaning-making' for ecological grief.

Collaborative meaning-making takes a different form in Ashley Williams-Leon's reflective essay on what it means to be a Black woman living in a provincial German town. Her own

experiences, and those of the Afro-German/Black German people she interviews, inspire two poems: ‘Oh Woman’, an ode to Caribbean women of the so-called Windrush Generation (‘As nurse and mother, doubled are your labour pains’), and the poem ‘Boxing Blackness’, in which Afro-Germans are still asked ‘how is your German so good?’ Together, the three pieces are a powerful articulation of ‘resilience – not the outdated “strong Black woman” trope, but the strength needed to survive and challenge systemic injustice.’

Carinya Sharples’s analysis of Astrid Roemer’s novel *Off-White* is similarly invested in critiquing and dismantling systemic anti-Blackness. Her reading highlights the novel’s nuanced engagement with racial mixedness and gender-based violence in Suriname, an engagement that rejects oppressive stereotypes without flattening the intersectional complexities of the story’s characters.

We conclude our issue with Limor Augustin’s ‘Other, please state; an insider/outsider account of taking up space’. Inspired by her experience at the 2024 UWI/UoL International Summer School, the piece is a vulnerable yet at the same time empowering exploration of positionality, conveying the discomfort and difficulty of claiming space as a third (or fourth) culture researcher and researching a community that you are not seen as belonging to. Her reflection on the complexity of identities framed by disconnection is both a return to the generative conversations of the 2024 UWI/UoL summer school in Trinidad and a bridge to the overarching theme of the 2025 Summer School: Migration, Diaspora and Mobile Identities.

The pieces gathered in this special issue exemplify the intellectual richness and creative bravery that the 2024 UWI/UoL Summer School sought to cultivate. Whether through poetry, cultural critique, or reflective essay, each contributor engages with the complexity of violence and conflict not as abstract concepts, but as lived realities shaped by histories of colonisation, systemic inequality and resilience. As we look ahead to the 2025 summer school in Leicester, this issue stands as testament to the power of interdisciplinary dialogue, collective reflection, and the urgency of transnational solidarity in academic and activist spaces alike.

## References

Ayres, T., Bucknor, M. A., & Halliwell, M. (2024). Editorial. *LIAS Working Papers*, 11(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.29311/lwps2024114740>.

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