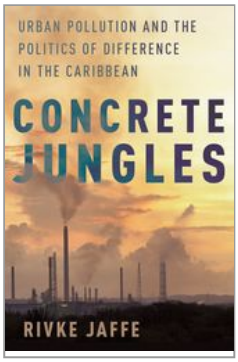

Concrete Jungles: Urban Pollution and the Politics of Difference in the Caribbean
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Fragmented Cities

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines how historically shaped geographies of exclusion are experienced and narrated in twenty-first-century Caribbean cities, based on an ethnographic exploration of the discursive construction and social use of urban spaces. It discusses how residents of Kingston and Willemstad differentiate between sections of the urban landscape and forms of urban mobility, and how these differentiations are central to the reproduction of urban inequalities. To understand how the fragmentation and segregation of these cities come to seem natural, the chapter considers the complex ways in which raced, classed, and gendered bodies are emplaced within the broader urban landscape and within micro-places. Urban privilege is emplaced and embodied, involving both physical distance from, and insulation against, the dirty and violent spaces of the urban poor. The chapter considers how, in their everyday spatial practices and narratives, residents of Caribbean low-income neighborhoods both reproduce and subvert these dominant spatial and bodily regimes.

Keywords: urban space, inequality, emplacement, embodiment, violence, race, class, gender, intersectionality, mobilities

Through my husband, who worked in Jamaica’s heritage sector, I became acquainted with a wealthy White Jamaican couple who would occasionally invite us to brunch and dinner parties at their country estate or their Uptown Kingston residence. The wife was both astonished and amused by my fieldwork in Downtown Kingston, and particularly in Riverton. She repeatedly encouraged me to describe to other guests how I spent time on and around the garbage dump, and took evident pleasure in hearing me recount how I would hitch rides

on garbage trucks to the nearby transport hub of Three Miles. The guests, most of whom were also White or Brown Jamaicans, would also react with surprise at my evident transgression of the imagined borders of where a White-identified woman could go. Why would a respectable person want to go to such a place? How would she negotiate the dirt and danger? While in most countries, of course, trips to the garbage dump might well elicit similar surprise, these incidents mark some of the ways in which raced, classed, and gendered identifications are entangled with urban space.

Although Riverton is certainly extreme in terms of pollution, this type of reaction to my presence in Downtown Kingston more broadly was not an exception. In fact, I encountered similar reactions of astonishment and amusement in both Riverton and Rae Town. On various occasions, inner-city residents would ask me, "Aren't you afraid to come down here?" Patrolling police officers pulled over to ask me whether I was lost and needed help. Similarly, many Curaçaoans also considered my presence in Willemstad's "marginal" *barios* to be very unusual. A friend in Wishi/Marchena told me that initially residents had thought I must be a missionary. Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons were the only White people who would enter the neighborhood on foot, **(p.70)** and my behavior—walking around with a bag full of papers, entering people's yards to engage in long conversations—seemed to confirm their suspicions. While I never experienced any safety-related problems during fieldwork in either Wishi/Marchena or Seru Fortuna, wealthier Curaçaoans would warn me: "Never go there alone! Never wear jewelry or take your cell phone with you when you go there—those people are dangerous!"

In both Kingston and Willemstad, urban space is fragmented along intersectional fault lines of race, class, and gender and anchored by strong normative ideas about who can and should access which parts of the city. This urban fragmentation reflects historically shaped geographies of exclusion, but it is also shaped and reshaped in everyday ways by contemporary perceptions and social uses of city spaces. Colonially derived urban hierarchies both persist and are prone to destabilization—some residents reproduce older associations between social positioning and urban geographies in the stories they tell about their city and through their everyday movements as they negotiate the urban landscape, while others contest these associations. Raced, classed, and gendered social positioning is expressed, reinforced, and subverted through urban narratives and spatial strategies.

Anthropologists have traditionally been concerned with the ways that social difference along lines of gender, ethnicity, and class is expressed through and inscribed on the body. Historically, much of this work studied forms of bodily adornment and modification, from fashion and jewelry to hairstyles and tattoos. In recent decades, research has focused on the performativity of social identities, pointing to the work involved in constructing gendered and sexual

categories (Butler 1990, 1993). Caribbean feminist scholars have emphasized the ways in which these categorizations always intersect with ethnicity, race, and class (see, e.g., Barrow 1998; Mohammed 2002). I propose that increased attention to the spatial aspects of bodily adornment, modification, and performance can enrich our appreciation of how power works on and through the body. Embodied practices and performances both reflect and reinforce the meanings of the spatial contexts in which they take place. Bringing work on self-disciplining, self-styling, and the body into more direct dialogue with critical geographical research, this chapter seeks to focus our attention on emplaced bodies. Studying the complex ways in which bodies are always emplaced, both within the broader urban landscape and within micro-places, can help us understand how urban fragmentation and segregation become naturalized.

The socio-spatially differentiated ways in which social life is regulated across the urban landscape can be understood through the concept of **(p.71)** "everyday spatial regimes" (Jaffe and de Koning 2016). These regimes are varying sets of norms, rules, and social identifications that work to organize public space by shaping our ideas and norms about comportment, propriety, and who belongs where. Varying across the urban landscape, these regimes organize how specific people and behavior are interpreted and ascribed social identities: the spatial context will determine whether, for instance, an unaccompanied young woman is assumed to be a prostitute or a middle-class professional (cf. Secor 2002). This spatial ordering of how we recognize and ascribe social identities enables certain interactions and inhibits others. Working from this concept, I want to explore how such regimes intersect with what we might term "everyday bodily regimes." By this I mean not only the different sets of norms and ideas about bodies that guide our reading of markers such as skin color, hairstyle, or clothing, but also "regimes" in the sense of everyday routines, mundane yet political practices of self-styling through bodily care and comportment. By emphasizing the spatiality of such bodily regimes, I seek to highlight their role in producing bodies that fit "naturally" into certain environments, and to emphasize how a lack of fit between bodies and spatial context can produce an acutely physical sense of discomfort.

This chapter, then, explores these intersecting regimes by analyzing how residents of Kingston and Willemstad use and imagine urban space, both through their movements around the city and through their differentiations of the urban landscape and of various forms of mobility. I focus on the emplacement of bodies to understand the everyday reproduction and contestation of inequality, segregation, and exclusion. The chapter starts with a discussion of the intersectionality and co-production of race, class, gender, and space, focusing on how different identity markers can be mutually constitutive and how intersecting forms of privilege are distributed in the two cities. The next two sections consider the role of fear and social distancing in urban fragmentation in Kingston and Willemstad, focusing on residents' everyday

urban narratives and spatial strategies. The final section connects these urban and neighborhood-level processes to the idea of emplaced bodies, discussing how micro-level processes can both reproduce and subvert dominant spatial and bodily regimes.

Intersectional fault lines

In both Jamaica and Curaçao, as throughout the Caribbean region more broadly, there has been a strong historical relationship between social class and skin color. On both islands, slavery produced a more or less three-tiered **(p.72)** social hierarchy, with European Whites occupying the higher strata, enslaved African Blacks the lower strata, and mixed-descent Browns in between. This structure of stratification was of course always complicated by exceptions and by other immigrant groups, including Chinese, Lebanese, Jews, Portuguese, and Indians, who did not fit the schematic division. Indeed, historians such as Mimi Sheller (2012, 136) have emphasized the inattention of post-independence nationalist historiography to the "fault lines … that cross-cut presumed racial categories with complex patterns of ethnic identification, landholding, family formation, and class identity." More schematic conceptions of racial categories and their relation to class also obscure the gradual increase in possibilities for social mobility that followed the nineteenth-century abolition of slavery and the acceleration of this process through twentieth-century political autonomy and migration (Thomas 2004). However, throughout the Caribbean, class power and prestige still remain associated with race—or skin color, with distinctions often framed in terms of "complexion." In Jamaica, where the population of White Jamaicans has become extremely small, the differentiation is now mostly between Brown and Black Jamaicans. In Curaçao this distinction in skin color and descent tends to be expressed in terms of *koló skur* and *koló kla*, dark-skinned and light-skinned, rather than as Black and Brown.

This differentiation between Blacks and Browns, or between *koló skur* and *koló kla*, is not based on skin color or phenotype alone. As the Latin American expression goes, "Money whitens." Skin color can be "mediated" through education and middle-class consumption patterns. A darker-skinned individual wearing an expensive suit and speaking Dutch rather than Papiamentu, or "proper English" rather than Jamaican Creole, may be classified as Brown. Similarly, a light-skinned person displaying adornments and behavior considered lower class may still be read as Black. These raced and classed forms of adornment and behavior are also strongly gendered, with strong norms guiding "appropriate" feminine and masculine attire and conduct. Class, race, and gender, then, are co-produced in simultaneous, intersecting processes that reflect everyday bodily regimes, a point I return to in more detail later.

The flexible co-production of race and class extends to space. Like many other postcolonial cities, the socio-spatial hierarchies that characterize Kingston and Willemstad reflect the legacy of colonialism and, in the case of the Caribbean,

slavery. In my fieldwork I encountered a widespread perception of ethno-racial segregation that was not entirely supported by demographic data. Regarding Kingston, for instance, an analysis of census **(p.73)** data by Colin Clarke (2006) indicates that the city's residential segregation along lines of skin color decreased significantly during the twentieth century. Nonetheless, I found that the relationship between color, class, and space remained prominent in how many residents from a range of social backgrounds narrated Kingston. Such narratives tended to map a combination of class and color onto a largely bipolar socio-spatial structure (see Verrest and Jaffe 2012).

During my research, I found that Uptown and Downtown Kingston were broadly understood as, respectively, Brown and Black spaces. As outlined in Chapter Two, this division developed in the second half of the twentieth century. The historically impoverished areas of West Kingston, those hit hardest during the cholera epidemic described in Chapter Three, continued to bear the stigma of poverty and pollution, but even formerly elite areas have become known as ghettos. A description by Omar, a fisherman from Rae Town, of his neighborhood's historical development indicates the racialization of such shifts in class. "Rae Town is a nice community," he told me. "It used to be pure Jews living here, Colored people. Me as a Black man could not come. *Nega* [Black] people got what was left after the Colored people moved up into the hills." Up in the hills remains the place for middle-class Jamaicans to reside, even those who identify as Black. As Soldier, another Rae Town fisherman, declared, "Every community have a couple people come out good. But if you start to earn some money they move Uptown. They make a little money, you have to go up. People get jealous, you have to go up." Social mobility, then, required a move Uptown.

Demographic and urban geographical shifts have challenged this historically constructed dichotomy somewhat. While Jamaica's lower socio-economic strata have remained largely Black, the wealthier classes and the places they frequent have become increasingly diversified (Clarke 2006a). This dynamic was reflected in a growing sense of Kingston's Uptown areas as mixed, rather than Brown per se. Many Kingstonians still saw Downtown, Blackness and poverty as coterminous, but over the years I encountered an increasing recognition of Uptown as a more ethno-racially mixed space, which included a Black bourgeoisie. Notwithstanding these changing dynamics, to a large extent the production of difference in Kingston continued to be articulated through bipolar oppositions between Brown and Black, rich and poor, Uptown and Downtown. As Charles Carnegie (2014, 74) argues, "even though the geographic and social markers of the Uptown/Downtown divide have always been inexact and have varied over time … they nonetheless retain powerful metaphorical force: meaningfully secured **(p.74)** through acts (and perceived acts) of transgression." The urban isomorphism of lines of class and skin color is established linguistically when geographical designations—Downtown, or "inner city"—become adjectives that are taken to self-evidently mean lower class and

Black. These dichotomous frames work as everyday spatial regimes that shape differential readings of bodies across the urban landscape.

In Willemstad, where low-income and high-income neighborhoods are interspersed across the urban landscape, I encountered less symmetrical correlations among class, color, and space. Paralleling processes of decolonization in Jamaica, in the twentieth century, new pathways to social mobility opened up for darker-skinned Curaçaoans. Through education, migration to the Netherlands, and the "Antilleanization" of the civil service, the visible presence of wealthier, educated Afro-Curaçaoans increased significantly, even as the minority of White Curaçaoans maintained their elite position. Formerly homogeneously White neighborhoods such as Emmastad or Julianadorp gradually became more ethno-racially diverse, although new forms of racial enclaving have emerged in recent years with the rapid development of gated communities dominated by White Dutch expats.

Beyond the impact of social mobility, the diversity of the migrants who came to Curaçao in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries disrupted established ethno-racial hierarchies. In the mid-twentieth century, the arrival of impoverished light-skinned migrants from Portugal and Madeira, and of darker-skinned Afro-Surinamese who found relatively advantageous employment as skilled laborers within the oil refinery, began to complicate the schematic association of a darker skin color with a disadvantaged class position. In recent decades, the co-production of class and color has been challenged further, and perhaps more dramatically, by the presence of many light-skinned Latin American migrants. These immigrants, many of whom are undocumented, often work under relatively exploitative labor conditions and tend to reside in low-income *barios*. These processes are often gendered; Latina women, in particular, are associated with sex work and suffer significant stigmatization (Ministry of Social Development, Labor and Welfare [SOAW] 2014). In comparison to these migrants, the Dutch passport that *koló skur* Curaçaoans possess tends to be a stronger factor in the construction of social status than their skin color.

Projecting a bipolar division has also been less tenable in Willemstad than in Kingston because of the former's spatial development. Much more so than Kingston, Willemstad has developed into a heterogeneous agglomeration of **(p. 75)** neighborhoods that vary in historical background, ethnicity, income level, and infrastructure quality. The urban planning instigated by Shell, which differentiated neighborhoods according to migrant origin—White Dutch, Portuguese, Surinamese—did cement associations between space and ethno-racial belonging, but in a multipolar rather than dichotomous fashion. While the dynamics have changed over time, specific neighborhoods are still associated with different ethnic groups, such as Kanga or Buena Vista with Jamaicans, and Souax with Dominicans and Colombians.

While racialized patterns of differentiation played a role in their discussions of Willemstad's different neighborhoods, most of the residents I spoke to in Wishi/Marchena and Seru Fortuna tended to go beyond skin color to refer to specific ethnic groups as they distinguished between different *barios*. They associated the wealthier *barios*—the *lujo* (luxurious) or *riku* (rich) areas—with White Dutch (*makambas*), Jews, and East Indian (*hindu*) businessmen, as well as with *koló kla* Curaçaoans. In contrast, they characterized the so-called *marginal* neighborhoods as the home of *koló skur* Curaçaoans and of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants. Especially in Wishi/Marchena, which has a long history of migration, residents had a negative impression of all types of foreigners, speaking disapprovingly of Dominican, Haitian, Colombian, and Jamaican immigrants, and of wealthy European Dutch expatriates.

Urban narratives of fear and exclusion

Throughout the Caribbean, colonially derived hierarchies of class, color, gender, and space have become destabilized. Precisely because these hierarchies have become less stable—and because the categories of class and race are never fixed—different strategies have been needed to maintain structures of urban privilege, and new tactics have emerged by which these structures are challenged and subverted. The stories people tell each other about their city and its different parts can be understood as discursive interventions into socio-spatial hierarchies. Such urban narratives both reproduce and subvert these hierarchies, not only justifying but also questioning the segmentation of urban space and spatial separations of people.

Anthropological inquiries into the exclusionary effects of the socio-cultural production of urban space have tended to focus more closely on the discourses and practices of middle classes and elites. Teresa Caldeira's (2000) classic work on São Paulo, for instance, studied the retreat of the **(p.76)** upper and middle classes into fortified enclaves: privatized spaces of residence, work, consumption, and leisure. This retreat is linked to increased insecurity, but also to the pervasive "talk of crime." Drawing on research in Managua, Dennis Rodgers (2004) has built on this work, pointing to the rise of the fortified networks that are created when such enclaves are connected by an exclusive transport infrastructure. Where fortified enclaves lead to increased urban fragmentation and segregation, fortified networks signal the disembedding of an entire layer of elite space from the urban fabric. Charles Carnegie (2014) analyzes such processes for Kingston, describing how the city's postcolonial elites have restricted their circuits of movements in a retreat from formerly cross-class spaces and institutions. He recognizes this shift as occurring also at the smaller scale of the house, symbolized by the loss of the verandah, as elites have moved "from a domestic architecture more open to the outdoors and to the street, where ample verandahs served as important spaces for socializing, to an architectural ethos now more closed-off, centered on interiorized sociability, lived within gated communities, and with verandahs attenuated or altogether

absent" (2014, 64). However, non-elite discourses and practices also impact on urban fragmentation, as I found during my research in Kingston and Willemstad, which involved spending considerable time discussing the differentiation of urban space with residents of the low-income neighborhoods of Riverton, Rae Town, Wishi/Marchena, and Seru Fortuna.[1]

Kingston's Uptown citizens considered Riverton and Rae Town to be dangerous ghettos, while elite Curaçaoans regarded Wishi/Marchena and Seru Fortuna as criminal havens. On both islands, the residents of these neighborhoods also described the broader urban landscape as characterized by social distance and danger. Histories of intentional ethnic, class, and political segregation, combined with current conditions of violence and fear, were evident in residents' portrayals of their cities as fragmented, divided into accessible and safe parts and no-go areas plagued by problems. Despite short physical distances between different communities, many inner-city residents seemed to have developed a limited mobility that was to some extent self-imposed. Many people I spoke to were truly familiar with only a limited range of places and felt uncomfortable or unsafe outside of those areas.

While I approached both cities as coherent urban areas, in these local constructions Kingston and Willemstad emerged as archipelagoes of loosely connected neighborhood islands, whose residents had far less than unrestricted access to each other's territory. Barry Chevannes (2001, 133) has called **(p.77)** Kingston "an overlapping congeries of communities," and to a large extent this typifies Willemstad as well. The concept of a cohesive urban entity—a "Kingston metropolitan area" or "greater Willemstad"—seemed to be largely absent. I rarely observed feelings of ownership for, or identification with, the urban area as a whole. What planners would define spatially as a unified urban entity did not appear to function as such in the minds of most residents. Rather, they experienced and narrated the municipality as a number of separate communities or *barios*, loosely connected but often lacking in physical and symbolic interaction. Although many of my interlocutors expressed a strong identification both with their neighborhood and with the nation, they identified much less readily with the city as a whole. People rarely spoke of themselves as "Kingstonians" or "from Willemstad." Rather, they identified themselves as coming from one neighborhood community, or as Jamaicans and Curaçaoans; their identifications were focused on either smaller or larger levels of scale than the urban.

Awareness of segregation along class, ethnic, and political lines came out clearly in residents' urban narratives. In addition, fear of violence was an important factor in differentiations of urban space in both Kingston and Willemstad. While both cities have suffered from high rates of violent crime, Kingston in particular has been plagued by exceedingly high homicide rates, resulting in geographies characterized by fear of violence. I repeatedly encountered representations of

Kingston as a crazy-quilt where patches of peace, cool, and calm alternated with no-go zones raging with urban warfare. Fear of violence segregates and isolates both rich and poor citizens. David Howard (2005, 98) notes that “whether [Kingston’s] differences are visible or verbal, one of the most divisive forces is that of fear, separating and dividing people into their imagined citadels of safety…. Anything or anyone outside the norm, in an uptown suburb or downtown neighbourhood, elicits cause for concern or outright anxiety.”

Riverton and Rae Town residents spoke repeatedly of the area stigmatization they experienced on the basis of such geographies of fear. As Shelly-Ann, a young woman from the neighborhood, explained, “Riverton is nice, but if you tell them at work you from Riverton you don’t have a chance. People outta road [from outside Riverton] think we evil and all that.” The stigma attached to residence in these communities complicated the task of finding work, unless an individual lied about his or her address, and Riverton residents told me that some schools would not take students from the area, based on its reputation. Residents from both Riverton and Rae Town did, however, use comparable schemata to differentiate between Kingston’s neighborhoods, **(p.78)** describing certain areas with low crime rates as peaceful and “free and safe,” while other areas were characterized as “war zones” and the people who lived there as “messed up and wicked.” They characterized other Downtown neighborhoods such as Tivoli Gardens and Trench Town as “gunmen town,” characterized by “cussing and fighting” or, worse, killings and “pure gunshot.”

Differentiations on the basis of safety connected to the Uptown–Downtown divide. Many inner-city residents spoke of Uptown communities with admiration, praising them as safe, clean, cool, and organized “residential areas” where “top of the top people” lived in pretty houses. In contrast, fewer people voiced resentment of Uptown, expressing feelings of exclusion. On the whole, most people I spoke to referred to Downtown Kingston, the half of the city where they resided, in negative terms. They described Downtown as characterized by “war,” sweltering heat, crowded streets, and zones that were inaccessible to strangers. Downtown was the part of the city where poor Black people and “ghetto youth” resided. Many people did make smaller differentiations within this Uptown–Downtown dichotomy, distinguishing between different types of ghetto on account of their level of violence, infrastructural development, or location. Hence residents described August Town, a low-income neighborhood on Kingston’s northeastern fringe, as a “cool hill ghetto” or a “more nature ghetto” in contrast to Trench Town, a true “inner-city ghetto,” or Tivoli Gardens, a “developed ghetto.”

In Willemstad, crime also featured prominently in discourses on the city. Seru Fortuna had one of the island’s worst reputations for crime, and residents complained about the negative effects area stigmatization had on their lives. Though shootings, stabbings, and drug deals were not uncommon occurrences,

most residents seemed to be more concerned with the area's reputation than with their personal safety. They explained to me that they knew where they could and could not go, or that they were safe because they were known and respected in the neighborhood. However, living in the area made it harder to find work: "If you apply for a job and you write your address on the application form you know you won't get the job," residents would tell me. "They don't want people from here." In addition, because of the area's reputation, mini-buses, the main form of transport for those without a private vehicle, would often refuse to take passengers there at night, limiting residents' mobility. Yet many residents of Seru Fortuna and Wishi/Marchena were similarly fearful of other low-income neighborhoods. They described Koraal Specht, a neighborhood where the island's main prison as well as a large public housing complex are located, as "like Dallas, with gunfights," a violent place where drug dealers ruled the streets. Other areas, such **(p.79)** as Scharloo, in the old city center, were portrayed as overrun by drug addicts, prostitutes, and foreigners. As in Kingston, residents associated violence, crime, and dilapidation most closely with poor neighborhoods and poor people. However, in contrast to Kingston, their descriptions of wealthier *barios* were rarely positive. Elite neighborhoods such as Mahaai or Emmastad were seen as spaces with less *ambiente* (atmosphere) than their own *humilde* (humble) neighborhoods, and many people perceived rich people as arrogant and racist.

One day I was sitting on a bench in Seru Fortuna near the community center, talking to Mario, a *koló skur* man in his mid-thirties. He had just told me that he felt rather different from others in the *bario*, because he had a higher level of education: he had completed the HAVO level of secondary school, which has more academic content and is considered more prestigious than the LBO level, which has a stronger vocational focus. It was true that many of the residents I had interviewed in Curaçao had not gone beyond an LBO-level education, and Mario distinguished himself from them with a certain pride. In Curaçao, as in Jamaica, increased educational opportunities from the middle of the twentieth century on have facilitated social mobility for many darker-skinned, working-class citizens. As Mario and I began to discuss Willemstad and the differences between its various neighborhoods, the corners of his mouth drooped. Speaking of the wealthy *bario* of Mahaai, he told me: "I can't get in there." He was not referring to being able to afford a residence there, but to actually entering the neighborhood on foot. While I had been to Mahaai a number of times to visit a colleague's relatives and had noticed that many of the houses had gates and watch dogs, it was not a gated community, nor had I seen any kind of guards in evidence. Yet Mario explained to me, "Its a very protected *bario*. If I walk in there on foot, with my [dark] skin color, someone would be sure to call the police within five minutes." When I asked whether he had visited Mahaai and experienced this treatment, he told me he hadn't, but this was really just the way things were. His understanding of the hierarchies that structure access to

the wealthier parts of Willemstad, then, connected skin color and specific forms of mobility to patterns of fear.

These representations of different parts of the city are colored by the geographies of fear that emerge in the context of urban violence, geographies that connect to spatial and ethno-racial othering. Inner-city residents challenged the ways in which racist and classist practices of exclusion restricted their mobility. Specifically, they contested the processes of area stigmatization by which their own neighborhoods were misrepresented and their opportunities **(p. 80)** for social mobility impaired. Yet in other, more subtle, ways their own urban narratives reproduced patterns of social distancing, sometimes by replicating dominant socio-spatial discourse, and sometimes by deflecting it onto other areas or social groups.

Self-representation and social distancing

The ways in which residents of stigmatized areas relate to their urban surroundings can be analyzed as a form of agency. Urban space shapes and is shaped by social behavior, through processes in which spatial practices are established and spatial meanings are assigned and negotiated. Place sustains social difference and hierarchies, “both by routinizing daily rounds in ways that exclude and segregate categories of people, and by embodying in visible and tangible ways the cultural meanings variously ascribed to them” (Gieryn 2000, 474). Notwithstanding structural constraints, some of which are embedded in urban geography, the urban poor are agents capable of strategically “using space,” by, for instance, establishing place-related identifications, building spatially defined social networks, and developing economically functional forms of spatially circumscribed interaction and movement (Gotham and Brumley 2002). Kingston and Willemstad’s inner-city residents used space in a multifaceted way and to various ends, primarily to counter stigma, negotiate contexts of urban violence, and create a spatial basis for social and material support.

A number of studies have found that residents of stigmatized communities can internalize prejudices and hold negative attitudes toward their own places of residence (e.g., Blokland 2008; Wacquant 2007). However, the opposite reaction is also possible: I found that rather than engaging in self-stigma, both Jamaican and Curaçaoan residents tended to collectively develop positive neighborhood narratives that can be understood as oppositional place images (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). This discursive strategy of rejecting stigma through place-based narratives of unity and support was bolstered by collective material and social interventions into the neighborhood environment. Residents sought to redress widely held ideas about their neighborhood by organizing *bario* days and by caring for community spaces, for instance by engaging in beautification efforts. Residents rhetorically constructed their own neighborhood as a safe space within a violent, unwelcoming city by contrasting it favorably with other

urban places. In so doing they posited themselves as respectable citizens unfairly subjected to stigma. This **(p.81)** use of space, the assigning of meaning and value, the owning and disowning of urban places, serves to order and understand the larger city while claiming and redeeming a place-based social identity.

Like other *marginal* neighborhoods in Curaçao, both Wishi/Marchena and Seru Fortuna made concerted efforts to improve their reputation by organizing a *dia di bario*, a neighborhood day on which outsiders were invited to visit and enjoy musical performances, food, and children's games. In Seru Fortuna, which is located farther from the center of Willemstad, this day did not attract many visitors, but in Wishi/Marchena the strategy appeared to be working. The *dia di bario* I visited there was well attended and featured performances by some of the island's most famous musical acts. Vendors sold food and drinks, while the *bario* organization ran a stand selling t-shirts decorated with the neighborhood's name in large letters and a stylized image of a hill and the oil refinery, the area's two main geographical features. Following significant lobbying efforts, another major accomplishment in the effort to improve Wishi/Marchena's reputation had been the successful alteration of the route of the annual Carnival parade, one of Curaçao's biggest events, so that revelers now passed through the community. Residents held up the fact that the parade and revelers were willing to come to Wishi/Marchena as evidence that this was a safe, low-violence area, and that the area's stigmatization was misplaced.

In the Jamaican neighborhoods of Riverton and Rae Town, many residents heatedly rejected the negative reputation that plagued their neighborhood. While they generally emphasized the need for development—more and better employment, housing, and educational opportunities, and improvements in environmental services and infrastructure—they would claim the neighborhood as a space to be proud of. Riverton's peripheral location as the municipal dumpsite had certain benefits, as Mosiah, a Rasta farmer from the community, explained: "Riverton is a blessed community. In other inner-city communities you can't raise pigs, you can't raise cows, or get a little plot of land." Indeed, visiting his plot of farmland was like entering a small green oasis, away from the smell and dust of the landfill that dominated the neighborhood. Even those residents whose livelihoods involved "hustling" on the dump—collecting recyclables for resale—were proud of the neighborhood; Johnny, for instance, described Riverton to me as "the number one ghetto, a top of the top ghetto." Rae Town residents praised their neighborhood's location on the harbor, with the fishing beach as a breezy spot to cool off. In particular, many residents spoke with pride of "Ole Hits," the Sunday night reggae dance the neighborhood was known for. In addition to providing **(p.82)** income to many locals, the dance also attracted Uptown visitors and Japanese tourists. Similar to the role of the Carnival parade

in Wishi/Marchena, this presence of outsiders confirmed to residents that Rae Town was a safe, respectable place.

Of course, some of these positive portrayals can be read as strategic narratives, part of struggles to control representation. Outsider researchers such as anthropologists are potential resources in reshaping a stigmatized neighborhood's reputation. At one point, I met a group of University of the West Indies (UWI) geography students doing a housing survey in Rae Town. Their survey included a question about how many toilets the interviewee's house had. This question was rather intrusive and potentially embarrassing, as many people in the neighborhood lived in tenement yards where several households shared one toilet. Rather than report this humble situation to light-skinned, middle-class students, I heard Janice, a young woman from the area, tell them breezily, "Oh, my house has three toilets." Daniel Goldstein (2004) has pointed to the ways in which residents of low-income marginalized urban areas in Bolivia both resent and desire outside attention, balancing intrusive government and NGO efforts to produce legibility by using encounters with these outsiders to influence representations of their neighborhood. Residents have various reasons to represent their neighborhood's social and economic situation as either better or worse than it actually is. They fear that any information they pass on to possibly influential researchers on informal economic activities or levels of crime may lead to increased taxation or repression, but they also seek to portray their neighborhood in ways that might encourage positive government or NGO interventions and lead to an improved reputation.

Obviously such considerations will color residents' representations. However, the pride and comfort I perceived residents as feeling went beyond verbal assertions. In both Riverton and Rae Town, the strong identification residents felt with their own community was evident in their behavior. Janice, for instance, left Rae Town to live with her mother in the nearby town of Portmore, in a lower-middle-class neighborhood with "real houses." However, a year later she returned to Rae Town, which she felt was more sociable and lively. She explained that while Portmore was a more developed place to live, it was very boring, as everyone stayed inside their houses and nobody talked to each other; her move back to the inner city confirmed her attachment to Rae Town. Residents also demonstrated their emotional and material commitment to these stigmatized spaces through material interventions. No matter how dilapidated the private residences and yard spaces, these domestic **(p.83)**

environments featured colorfully painted walls, carefully tended plants, or decorations such as plastic flowers and porcelain knickknacks. Similarly, residents expressed their positive feelings toward their surroundings in collective, public spaces such as the street, where murals and whitewashed tires or cement containers filled with plants were proof of micro-scale beautification efforts (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Beautification efforts in Rae Town

The creation of such spatial markers is part of a larger process of creating urban meaning. As Christien Klaufus (2012) notes in her research on urban Ecuador, interventions in the domestic built environment can be read as performances that seek to communicate social prestige and well-being. Her work on architecture shows that residents of neighborhoods on the peripheries of Ecuadorian cities actively use the appearance of their homes to counter area stigmatization, incorporating international and upper-class architectural references. More broadly, throughout cities across the world, people draw on urban markers, from gates to graffiti to garbage, to distinguish between urban segments and to guide their mobility. Mario Luis Small (2004, 102) speaks of the "ecology of group differentiation," by which an area's spatial features become inextricably associated with class or ethnic features. This process reinforces differences between residents and nonresidents and spatializes boundary work, the construction of group differentiation and mutual exclusion that I encountered in Kingston and Willemstad. By physically creating **(p.84)** elements in their built environment, and assigning meaning to those created by others, residents both write and read urban spatial texts.

Despite the negative standing of their "ghetto" neighborhoods, Rae Town and Riverton residents obviously felt safe and at home in them, with both men and women walking the streets freely at all hours. Many residents explained their feelings of security by mentioning that the murder rate was very low, as well as by referring to their feelings of ownership: these were places they knew and loved, they were *their* places, and therefore nothing could happen to them there. A relatively low murder rate did not imply an absence of crime or violence. One day, while I was having a drink with a few residents in Rae Town, a woman from the neighborhood was caught stealing a bunch of bananas in the adjacent, slightly wealthier Manley Meadows, only to be stabbed by the security guard on duty so badly that "them no know if she a go make it," that is, they were not sure she would survive. This was widely condemned as an excessive reaction on the

part of the guard, and in revenge he was attacked—kicked and stabbed—by a group of women, friends and sisters of the woman he had wounded. While this incident indicated the speed with which conflicts could become violent, the fact that the woman's stabbing was revenged so quickly can also be read as indicative of the closeness of the community. Especially in Rae Town, many residents were "born and raise" in the community. They hung out together, outside or in each other's yards, and they generally felt similar to one another, because, as Janice put it, "me and them grow up together."

Beyond the countering of stigma through positive neighborhood narratives, another reaction to territorial discrimination that I encountered was a rejection of the stigma through what Loïc Wacquant (2007, 68) calls "lateral denigration and mutual distanciation." In Seru Fortuna and Riverton in particular, residents would apply internal differentiation to the neighborhood, categorizing the larger space into "micro-locales" and applying "micro hierarchies" (Wacquant 1993): "*This* street is fine, but be careful as soon as you turn the corner." In Seru Fortuna, such micro-hierarchies played out within Seru Papaya, the section of Seru Fortuna where more recent residents lived in public housing, in contrast to the families who had been living in "Old Seru Fortuna" for several generations and owned their houses and the land they were built on. The newer residents felt that their street or block was safe and occupied by good people, but that this did not hold for the entire *bario*. Maria, one of these more recent residents, warned me: "Miss, you know you must always be very careful elsewhere in this *bario*." She continued, however, by checking this assertion: "But I am sure you have noticed that this street is **(p.85)** very nice, haven't you?" While such strategies of internal differentiation and distancing can have a negative effect on interpersonal trust and solidarity, they can also increase social ties and spatial bonds within the smaller spatial sub-units of the street, the block, or the corner.

The same mechanism writ large can be identified within the larger space of Downtown Kingston or *marginal* Willemstad. While residents in all four of the neighborhoods where I worked were keen to put their own area's reputation into perspective, they often expressed fear and aversion with respect to other "bad" areas. In Curaçao, people from Wishi/Marchena saw Seru Fortuna as a problematic, violent *bario*. Richenel, a young man from Wishi/Marchena, described Seru Fortuna as "a dangerous *bario* with gunfights and rapes. … You can't walk there, it's scary." Similarly, Seru Fortuna residents described Wishi/Marchena as a very aggressive *bario* with nothing but problems, though they conceded that it had improved in recent years. In Jamaica, people in Rae Town spoke with pity and disgust of Riverton, describing its residents as crazy people who ate off the dump. Through such deflections of stigma, residents of marginalized neighborhoods resort to a form of socio-spatial distancing that strengthens local ties but reproduces urban hierarchies of place.

Emplaced bodies

The discursive and material forms of place-making and social distancing described previously are part of how residents of Kingston and Willemstad negotiate their neighborhood and the larger urban landscape. These place-based negotiations of status intersect with embodied forms of social positioning and self-presentation in everyday spatial and bodily regimes. In both cities, the racialization or ethnic labeling of urban space means that as bodies move, their ethno-racial designations shift. During the fifteen years that I have been working in Kingston, I have repeatedly been called Chinese. The first time I took notice was when a group of schoolchildren boarded the public bus I was riding. Once they spotted me, they started jumping up and down, pointing at me and shouting, “Chinee! Chinee!” excitedly. Being referred to as “Miss Chin,” another common designation for Chinese women, also became a common occurrence. While my mother is of mixed Dutch and Indonesian descent, I had rarely been “recognized” as Asian outside of Jamaica and was initially confused as to why I was being identified as such. Such remarks made me aware of the apparently ambiguous character of **(p.86)** my ethnicity. Walking across the Parade, near Downtown Kingston’s central market, a passerby shouted at me, “Whitey or Browning? Which one, tell me nuh!” Another time, while driving through West Kingston, three different people shouted, “Whitey,” “Browning,” and “Miss Chin” at me as I passed by, all within the space of a minute.[2] At a certain point I realized that these interpretations of my appearance were related to my location in the city. I would be called Chinese or Brown far more frequently in places where White people were not presumed to dwell: on public transport, on sidewalks, and, more broadly, in Downtown Kingston and its so-called ghettos. Here, the most common groups of non-African descent are Chinese, who own the numerous wholesales and corner shops, followed by Lebanese. More generally, my designation as White, which was taken for granted in Uptown Kingston, was called into question as I moved into other spaces.

This variable racialized reading of my body points to the importance of everyday spatial regimes. Ethno-racial designations are not just formed on the basis of skin color or classed markers such as dress and speech; the spatial context is also highly significant in the interpretation of people’s physical markings. Similar to my becoming identified as Chinese more readily when in Downtown Kingston, a light-skinned person who lives in a Downtown “ghetto” will be more likely to be read as Black than a person of similar complexion living Uptown—and vice versa, a person with a supposedly Black complexion may become Browner by moving from Downtown to Uptown. Gina Ulysse (2007) emphasizes the ways in which these spatial mappings of color and class are always gendered through dichotomous notions that contrast socially privileged White and Brown “ladies” who live Uptown with working-class Black “women” who live Downtown. She focuses on the role of informal commercial importers, who transgress these boundaries to refashion themselves as “Downtown ladies.”

Similarly, drawing on research on women's informal work, Winnifred Brown-Glaude (2011) points to Kingston's enduring if increasingly contested social and spatial order that locates women differently according to class and color.

However, the co-production of race, class, gender, and space goes beyond these Uptown–Downtown, *bario lujo–bario humilde* urban divides. Diane Austin-Broos (1994) has pointed out how, for Jamaica, the class–color dualism corresponds with another spatial differentiation, that between inside and outside. Brown, middle-class, or elite Jamaicans are associated with "inside" life: they work inside buildings such as offices; they socialize inside; they shop inside supermarkets and shopping malls; their offspring are "inside," legitimate children. Black, lower-class Jamaicans, in contrast, are associated with **(p.87)** outside work in the open air (whether as street vendors or manual laborers); they socialize in the space of the street; they shop in open-air markets; and their children are often "outside," illegitimate. This spatial differentiation works in a remarkably similar fashion in Curaçao. In the popular imagination, lower-class Afro-Curaçaoans socialize and consume in outside spaces, while men have *byside* relationships and children. In contrast, *hende haltu*, "high people," are expected to display more closed, "inside" types of behavior and relationships. This similarity came out in a discussion I had with Lorena, a long-time resident of Wishi/Marchena. She described wealthier Willemstad neighborhoods such as Mahaai to me as "pretty, big houses but they're all closed up [*será*], they're separate, isolated." In contrast, she described Willemstad's poorer areas as "normal" and open.

Increasingly, however, the spatiality of race, class, and gender is not only related to the distinctions between inside and outside. Extending Austin-Broos's work, we might analyze contemporary Caribbean social positioning fruitfully by focusing on the distinction between bounded and open spaces. Making this analytical distinction points to the micro-spatial strategies that are central to everyday bodily regimes. Beyond the social situatedness of bodies within the larger urban landscape, different forms of emplacement at the micro level also shape their categorization and, correspondingly, become important sites for self-styling. In both Kingston and Willemstad, boundedness and openness are characterized by different sets of norms and ideas, structuring different possibilities for embodied and emplaced forms of social positioning. A higher position in the color–class hierarchy is associated with a life spent mostly within bounded spaces: a car with its windows up and its doors locked; a sealed-off, air-conditioned office with a security guard at the entrance; a house with a grille and a fence; or a gated community.

This boundedness ties to the notion of everyday bodily regimes. To perform a higher social status, these bodies, and in particular female bodies, *need* to be spatially bounded to maintain their social status. Apart from security concerns, practical issues related to climate inform the emphasis on bounded spaces. In

both Jamaica and Curaçao, looking professional often involves wearing suits, button-down shirts, pantyhose, and other outfits that tend to be uncomfortably hot if worn outdoors, and this dress code is maintained much more strictly than in the European countries that originally introduced it as a set of colonial norms. These professional dress requirements mean that the windows and doors of most office buildings are sealed shut, so that air-conditioning systems can maintain a sufficiently low temperature. **(p.88)** This chill also serves to mark social boundaries, to condition the climatic fit between "professional" bodies and spaces. The frigid temperature at which the air conditioning is set in many offices makes visitors dressed in outdoor attire—those people whose self-styling does not fit the bounded locale—feel physically uncomfortable and out of place. Conversely, people who have styled their bodies to conform to these bounded bodily regimes may feel physical discomfort in less bounded, outside spaces. For women in particular, to dwell in opener spaces means exposing one's body and one's social status to pollution, a point I also return to in the next chapter.

Mobilities are another crucial aspect of the intersecting everyday bodily and spatial regimes (cf. Cresswell 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006). Different sets of ideas and norms determine the "proper" form of transport for various social categories, with the various forms of public and private transport representing mobile micro-locales that can shield or expose men's and women's bodies as they traverse the city. The ascription of color–class identities relies not only on where you are in the city, but also on how you move through it. Black/poor people are those who share route taxis, take the public bus, or, worst of all, walk. Brown/rich people are those who travel by air-conditioned private car, increasingly SUVs—a defensive form of mobility that locks off its passengers from the street, cushioning them from potholes and literally placing them above pedestrians. As Gina Ulysse observes, "Walking on the street not only brings [a "lady"] into a public arena, but also results in the unladylike conditions of being dusty and sweaty. Contact with the hot sun not only induces perspiration, but also damages and darkens sensitive white or light skin. Hence ladies use private cars with air conditioning" (2007, 43). However, walking or even cycling can be part of the performance of more privileged social identities if it takes place in elite urban areas or outside the city for exercise or recreational purposes. In both Kingston and Willemstad, women in particular increasingly have begun to walk or jog to stay fit, if only in certain circumscribed areas.

In my first six years of visiting Kingston, I traveled through the city almost exclusively on public transport. During fieldwork, I would stay with a host family in a peri-urban community to the northeast of the city. To reach Riverton and Rae Town, I would first take a shared minibus or route taxi down to the commercial hub of Papine. There I would catch one of the large Jamaica Urban Transport Corporation (JUTC) buses and transfer to another bus to reach my destination. A one-way trip from home to my research neighborhood would often take an hour and a half, especially in rush hour traffic. On the whole I did not

mind this commute; I was rarely in a hurry, and the **(p.89)** city's public transport system proved an important site for observing and participating in Kingstonians' interactions in public spaces. Moreover, I did not have a driver's license, and given my limited budget I did not consider taking private taxis a viable option. When I moved to Jamaica in 2006 to take up a position as a lecturer at the University of the West Indies, several colleagues offered advice on how to settle in and make my way around, and much of this advice was related to transport. One colleague advised me: "Make sure you get a big car. You can't have a little car. Those little Smart cars they have in Europe? That can never work in Jamaica, you need a *big* car." Another suggested I take down the name of a man who would wash my car for me in the faculty parking lot —"Everybody uses him." When I told university colleagues that I was used to getting around by bus, they would react with amusement or, more often, concern. A female colleague admitted that she had never in her life taken a bus. At one point, when she was younger, she had found herself standing at a bus stop, waiting for her father to pick her up. Before he arrived, however, friends of her parents who happened to be driving past spotted her standing there and pulled over: "You're not taking the *bus*, are you?" They were only willing to leave her standing there once she had reassured them she had no intention of taking public transport and would soon be picked up by car. Such expressions of concern, dismay, or amusement in response to "inappropriate" modes of mobility are central in solidifying the association between particular social identifications and particular spatial practices.

In Curaçao, I also traveled around mostly by public transport. While middle-class locals would rarely take a minibus, much less the larger state-run buses, public transport was less stigmatized than in Jamaica, perhaps because tourists and Dutch interns would occasionally use this mode of travel. During one stay, I shared a house and a car with a colleague who had many relatives in Curaçao. At one point, we drove her light-skinned, middle-class aunt Tanchi to the airport. As the car was a cheap model without air conditioning, we usually drove with the windows open. Disappointed at the lack of comfort, Tanchi still insisted we roll the windows up, not only to avoid the smell of the oil refinery as we drove past it, but also to prevent her carefully straightened hair from becoming frizzy and tangled. Her investment in being a middle-class *koló kla* Curaçaoan woman, which had become apparent to me in other conversations and remarks, suggested a reading of her discomfort with traveling in our car in terms of gender, class, and color. A closed-off mode of transport was central to the maintenance of her social position. Similarly, Tanchi insisted on watching Curaçao's annual Carnival from her home in an elite **(p.90)** suburb, where it was cool and quiet, rather than joining in the action on the streets of central Willemstad. Her emphatically asserted decision *not* to participate in what is arguably Curaçao's most important festive event—a time of year during which class, ethno-racial, and sexual boundaries are temporarily suspended—

underlined the significance she placed on maintaining a specific, bounded form of physical integrity.

Like residential and professional location, urban mobilities mediate classed, gendered, and racialized identifications. They structure our understanding of where others fit within urban hierarchies and offer opportunities for styling our own bodies to display a desired social status or match a specific environment. Whether these practices are carried out in an SUV in Kingston or a Carnival parade in Willemstad, they can produce physical sensations of discomfort or dislocation when we venture across socio-spatial borders. As Greg Noble (2005) argues, feeling comfortable in public space is directly connected to the acknowledgement of belonging there, of having a right to claim a part of urban space. By encouraging conformity to everyday spatial and bodily regimes, and deterring transgression from them, such embodied sensations of comfort and discomfort are a critical factor in the construction and legitimization of social hierarchies.

Conclusion

Urban inequalities are reproduced through the discursive construction and social use of space. The spatial stories and strategies that residents develop in cities characterized by fear of crime and violence often exacerbate the urban fragmentation produced through histories of colonial segregation. In Jamaica and Curaçao, the historical co-production of race, class, gender, and space continues to inform city-dwellers' notions of where they and others are supposed to live, work, and play. Individuals' experiences of a city are influenced by how they are positioned within the broader urban landscape, a positioning that relies heavily on interpretations of physical features, bodily adornment, and comportment. Widely shared socio-spatial norms delineate which types of users and forms of behavior are regarded as appropriate, and which are considered to be illegitimate. The ability or inability of differently positioned individuals to conform to such norms can produce distinctly physical and psychological experiences of discomfort. These normative associations among people, places, and behavior are reproduced in everyday micro-level narratives and mobilities. Understanding how urban privilege is obtained **(p.91)** or maintained requires attention to emplaced and embodied micro-politics. Being or becoming a respectable, middle-class Brown or *koló kla* man or woman involves an embodied fluency in specific social spaces, from the office to the supermarket to the restaurant. For women in particular, maintaining a "professional" appearance that is still significantly influenced by Eurocentric ideals of hair and beauty involves restricting oneself to bounded, air-conditioned buildings and cars. More generally, an elite social position is predicated on physical distance from, or insulation against, the dirty and violent spaces of the urban poor.

Across lines of color and class, however, urban residents engage in processes of social distancing and place-making in a context of general insecurity. Both the visible barriers of the gated communities of the rich and the more subtle boundaries isolating low-income areas limit intra-urban mobility and interaction. Many of my lighter-skinned, middle-class friends and colleagues in Jamaica and Curaçao were fearful to venture beyond their “safe,” socio-economically circumscribed spaces of work, home, and leisure, scared by narratives of crime that depicted low-income, racialized neighborhoods as loci of danger and desperation. In the face of these processes of area stigmatization, in which poorer and “Blacker” neighborhoods were branded as deviant and dangerous, residents of low-income areas displayed a strong sense of place attachment to their own neighborhoods, demonstrating a shared emotional connection to the space of their Downtown or *marginal* communities.

Although intra-community tensions were occasionally discernible, these residents tended to express loyalty to and pride in their neighborhood. The majority of those I spoke to in the areas where I did most of my research had developed a strong place-based identity and relied on the neighborhood for social and material support. Simultaneously, they were hesitant to move around the rest of the city, feeling afraid or unwelcome outside their own area, and reproducing narratives about other groups, neighborhoods, and communities that were based on stereotypes and media reports rather than on their own experience. The discursive and material construction of safe, defensible spaces offers order and logic in chaotic and threatening urban surroundings, but limits movement to different places and interaction with different people. The imagining and social use of space in inner-city Caribbean neighborhoods challenged the area stigmatization produced by existing hierarchies of socio-spatial value. Yet the strategies of socio-spatial distancing and the lateral deflection of stigma also reinforced patterns of urban exclusion and fragmentation in comparable ways to middle-class and elite practices of maintaining distinction.

Notes:

(1.) In researching how residents of these four neighborhoods perceived and constructed the urban environment and its various neighborhood components, I drew on two specific research methods. The first was repertory grid methodology, a quantifiable sorting method that I used to “identify the dimensions of appraisal that were employed in evaluating and comparing areas or environments” (Potter 2000, 104–105) and that used small cards with the names of neighborhoods to elicit concepts used to distinguish different urban areas. A second method involved sentence completion, a qualitative method also aimed at determining the manner in which different neighborhoods were perceived and constructed. On the whole, the way sentences were completed corresponded broadly with the categories found in the repertory grid method.

(2.) These experiences also reflect a broader Jamaican tendency to verbalize visual difference in public space. Others with a nonnormative appearance will go through public space accompanied by calls of “Tall Man,” “Mawga Gyal” (if a woman is skinny), or “One-y” (if a person is missing an arm or a leg).