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Various people have migrated to the Caribbean over the past millennia. These groups of people contributed to Caribbean tradition and culture. The indigenous people, or the Amerindians, migrated to the Caribbean the earliest. They searched for optimal environments for their growth and survival. After the advent of Columbus, the Europeans arrived in pursuit of wealth. Trade routes were then established after finding ideal conditions for agriculture. The Europeans brought slavery from Africa to the Caribbean. This began a new trade – the slave trade. After the abolition of slavery, the Europeans needed labor desperately and therefore bought and brought the Indians and Chinese on contract or indentureship. These horrendous acts of oppression have shaped the current Caribbean societies.

Though the arrival of Europeans caught the Tainos off-guard, they promptly resisted the Spaniards. From when the Europeans began to mistreat the women of their ethnic groups, a series of conflicts ensued between them and the Spaniards. Though the Spaniards had military might, the Tainos used runaway tactics, escaping both genocide and brainwashing through the encomienda system. Sabotage and suicide were also popular at the time. The resistance by the Tainos is scarce in our historical records. This may have led to the myth that most Tainos were “peaceful” whereas the Caribs were “warlike”. The Caribs responded to the situation with relentless combat. The terrain aided their tactics be it in using the mountains to exhaust their foes or using the waters to flexible evade their captures. Despite this, the Europeans had great numbers from Spain, Britain, France and Holland and forced the Caribs into the interiors. The Caribs were unyielding and continued to attack European settlements sometimes even forming alliances with one European power against another. The heavy weaponry of the Europeans eventually drove the Caribs out of their islands and into strongholds like Dominica. The Black Caribs were a mixture of the Caribs and the Africans that rebelled against the British in St Vincent. They were ultimately deported to Belize. The Caribs are now largely found in Dominica and Belize. In these days, treaties exist to protect their survival.

The millions of Africans slaves were tortured and indoctrinated to keep the multitude in control. When the slaves felt they had no power, they had to passively resist against the planters by damaging property, malingering, deliberate misinterpreting commands, suicide, and inducing abortion. In mountainous terrains, fleeing from the slave masters was dominant and this also gave rise to communities such as the Maroons that actively staged attacks on the colonial powers. The Europeans’ brainwashing left a lasting effect on African culture and made them governable. The captives on the other hand incorporated hybridized African religions in Christianity, restored folklore and denounced the whites through their songs. The Europeans banned drumming to prevent war instigation. The Africans practiced their culture in seclusion as a form of resistance. The Africans also staged active rebellions repeatedly making life difficult for the Europeans slave masters. The ensued rebellion and high cost of maintenance made the plantations uneconomic. This eventually led to the abolition of slavery. Nowadays, there is still resistance by Africans in the Caribbean to replace the European ideas and ideals such as the reparations movement.

The Indian laborers could not escape the cruelty on the plantations. Though there was a Protector of Immigrants appointed to each colony, bias towards the planters’ interests was prevalent. This led to protests against the plantation owners mostly in Guyana and Trinidad. The British set up a commission of inquiry but this did not address fully the issue of the laborers. Most of them responded by refusing to work or running away from the plantation. They also established small businesses instead of working on the plantation and this was an effective form of resistance. They eventually became independent of the plantations and worked for their own benefits.

After the end of colonialism, Caribbean people began to enforce political enfranchisement – “the rights of a people or nation to determine their own affairs”. Migrations across different regions exposed workers to new ideas and philosophies. This saw the formation of the independent Caribbean countries of today. Also notable is the financial crisis that ensued in the 1930s which attributed to major riots, strikes and protests. Trade unions were raised to improve working conditions and better social-welfare. Due to economic crisis and the vast number of riots and protests, the “old representative system” was eliminated. The universal adult suffrage – “means one person, one vote”, replaced the old system in 1944. The age of the voter is the only restriction for this political system. This is the leading political system of most Caribbean countries to this day.