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# 'It's Only Leftist Women Who Talk that Damn Nonsense About Women Being at a Disadvantage': Eugenia Charles's Gender Politics in Dominica

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## ABSTRACT

Born in 1919 in Dominica and educated in Grenada, Canada and Britain, Eugenia Charles became the islands first female barrister, head of a political party and in 1980, Prime Minister. With political views on the right of the spectrum, her close alliances and friendships with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan as well as her own defiant personality, Charles gained the title of 'Iron Lady of the Caribbean'. This moniker, however, obscures more than it reveals, especially when it relates to Charles's gender politics. This article examines her speeches, interviews and policies and argues that a politics of contradiction and ambivalence characterised Charles's gender politics. This ambivalence partly explains the resilience of andocentric masculinist ideologies present in Caribbean political structures. Moreover, it demonstrates the continuity of 'first-wave' Caribbean feminism in the late twentieth century and the pragmatism of women in politics.

Iron Lady we admire you

Only good things that you say and do

Iron Lady you so rough

Iron Lady you so tough

Iron Lady you try all your best

And your country really need progress

Even though they talk

Even though they mock

You solid, solid as a rock

Mamo you so solid.<sup>1</sup>

In 1990, the popular calypso singer Albert 'De Man Himself' Mendes released 'Iron Lady' as a praise song to Dominican Prime Minister Eugenia Charles in the year she stood for her third election, which she won. The song bolstered Charles's image as the 'Iron Lady' of the Caribbean, a term popularised globally following her press conference with US President Ronald Reagan on the morning of the US invasion of Grenada in October 1983. Yet the moniker 'Iron Lady', used more widely to describe Charles's ally and friend, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, obscures more than it reveals about Charles's politics. Although a conservative, Charles's political policies were not strictly wedded to ideology. Indeed, in 1993 Charles's biographer, Janet Highbie, described her as 'a curious mixture of revolutionary and conservative'.<sup>2</sup> When attention is turned to Charles's gender politics, a curious mixture is also evident.

Born in 1919 in Dominica and educated in Grenada, Canada and Britain, Charles became the island's first female barrister, head of a political party and, in 1980, at the age of sixty-one, prime minister. She simultaneously also became Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs. Charles remains one of the longest serving prime ministers in the region, winning three consecutive elections. The later 1980s saw Charles's and her party's, the Dominica Freedom Party's (DFP), popularity wane. The increased support for the opposition Dominica Labour Party (DLP) and the growth of the United Workers Party weakened Charles's power. But she continued to receive international acclaim, receiving a damehood in October 1991. At this time, however, Charles became increasingly unable to control her cabinet, leading to internal strife within the DFP. In 1993, she stepped down from her position as head of the party, and in 1995 officially retired from politics.

This article focuses on Charles's gender politics through an exploration of interviews, speeches and policies. A key aspect of Charles's politics was of deliberate contradiction, and this was pronounced in her gender politics. On the one hand, Charles expressed sentiments about women not being at a disadvantage, while, on the other, she sought to address women's inequality. This contradiction reflects what I argue was the politics of ambivalence that characterised Charles. This ambivalence partly links to what political science scholars have described as the resilience of androcentric masculinist ideologies present in Caribbean political structures.<sup>3</sup> Charles offers a unique case study of how a woman in power ultimately maintained structures of inequality. It demonstrates *how*, as activist-scholar Gabrielle Jamela Hosein has stated, some 'women politicians remain deeply ambivalent about feminist politics, instead combining liberal conceptions of individual advancement and respectability politics with welfarist programmes for women'.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, the politics of ambivalence that underpinned Charles's views on feminism, women's rights and gender equality demonstrate the complex relationship between first- and second-wave Caribbean feminism.<sup>5</sup> While feminist scholars over the last twenty years have critiqued the wave metaphor within feminist history, I employ it here as a useful way to understand Charles's relationship with Caribbean feminism.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that the history of Caribbean feminism 'is a long and contradictory one with autochthonous roots that reveal the conflicting realities of Caribbean women'.<sup>7</sup> The roots of a distinct Caribbean feminist movement can be traced to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period that saw the rise of middle-class Caribbean women writers and activists from the Anglophone region, such as

Catherine McKenzie, Elma Francois, Una Marson, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Audrey Jeffers and Amy Bailey, amongst others, who began to articulate feminist views within labour, Pan-African, black nationalist and Caribbean nationalist movements.<sup>8</sup> They drew inspiration locally and regionally, but they were also inspired by, and helped to shape, through travel and migration, the broader feminist internationalist movements gaining momentum in Europe and North America. Yet, many preached a politics of respectability, did not challenge class divisions, evidenced in some of the women's refusals to extend the franchise to all women, and sought colonial reform rather than its end. Scholar Rhoda Reddock has described these 'first-wave' women as proponents of liberal feminism 'which sought integration of black women (and men) into the established system rather than a more radical politics'.<sup>9</sup>

Although Charles never acknowledged so, she was a beneficiary of their activism, as they demanded that women's roles be expanded outside the home into the professional world. Charles would also express similar sentiments to first-wave feminists as a way to undermine second-wave feminism that developed out of the 1960s' Black Power, nationalist, New Left, decolonisation and larger Third World freedom struggles. In addition, Charles would express similar sentiments to these women in her advocacy of what Maxine Molyneux has described as 'practical gendered interests' that stem from women's traditional roles as wives and mothers, rather than strategic demands advanced by left wing and radical feminists.<sup>10</sup> While Molyneux's use of the concept was in relation to Nicaragua and has been applied to feminists in Latin America, Charles's adoption of the strategy demonstrates the overlapping connections of feminism within the English- and Spanish-speaking Americas.<sup>11</sup> A closer look at Charles's gender politics underscores the capaciousness and complexities of Anglophone Caribbean feminism that remain contested, by highlighting the continuity of first-wave feminism among, in this case, a conservative female head of state in the late twentieth century.

While a major political leader, relatively little scholarly research has been conducted on Charles. In 1993, Higbie's biography appeared, which drew heavily on close access to Charles and was aimed at a general, public audience.<sup>12</sup> Over a decade later, an edited collection by Eudine Barriteau and Alan Cobley was published that provided a much more nuanced exploration of Charles in relation to citizenship, Caribbean integration, leadership, economic philosophy and development, to name a few.<sup>13</sup> The collection also analysed gender with Alicia Mondesire's chapter exploring Charles's attitude towards feminism.<sup>14</sup> Mondesire described Charles as a 'reluctant feminist' and traced the ways in which her leadership impacted the lives of Dominican women.<sup>15</sup>

Various reasons account for the dearth in scholarship on Charles. At present, research on Anglophone Afro-Caribbean conservative women has not received as much attention as works on radical or liberal figures who explicitly challenged colonialism, racism and sexism. The paucity of scholarship further relates to a lack of first-hand sources. Unlike Charles's male Caribbean counterparts, who after leaving office wrote autobiographies detailing their public lives, Charles did not follow suit.<sup>16</sup> In fact, Charles once quipped that she 'didn't think she was interesting enough to write a book about'.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the relative obscurity and small size of Dominica, which did not play a chief role within wider colonial or postcolonial Anglophone Caribbean

politics compared with states such as Guyana, Trinidad, Barbados and Jamaica, partially explains why little work on Charles has been conducted.

Building on and extending previous research on Charles, the paper is structured into three sections. The next examines Charles's life and sexism; the second feminism, equal pay and motherhood; and the third her policies and their impact.

### Charles's life and sexism

Charles's attitude towards sexism stemmed from her own life experience and illustrated the contradictions in her gender politics. Born into a Catholic family in Pointe Michel, Charles was the youngest child of prominent business owner and later politician John-Baptiste Charles and housewife Josephine Charles. As with most Caribbean middle-class families, the Charles's placed a premium on education. In 1921, the family relocated to the island's capital, Roseau, and a few years later Eugenia began attending the Convent of the Sisters of the Faithful Virgin. Charles left the convent school in December 1936 with the Cambridge School Certificate and began working as a secretary using shorthand typing at the High Court and later served as junior clerk in the Treasury Department, where she started teaching herself Latin with the aim one day of studying law.<sup>18</sup> In need of an institution where she could sit matriculation examinations, in June 1941, aged twenty-two, Charles moved to Grenada to attend the convent St Joseph of Cluny.<sup>19</sup>

The onset of the Second World War curtailed Charles's chances of studying law in London, which was home to a large number of West Indian students. But the opportunity to study in Canada was available, and she received acceptance into the University of Toronto's degree programme, arriving in November 1942 and completing her degree in 1946.<sup>20</sup> Next, she moved to London where she attended the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and took postgraduate classes in common, contract and tort law, as well as juvenile delinquency.<sup>21</sup> Charles was then called to the Bar at Inner Temple on 7 November 1947, becoming the first Dominican woman to do so. On return to the Caribbean, Charles was called to the Bar in Barbados and Dominica in 1949, where she set up her own practice representing both working-class and elite Dominicans.<sup>22</sup>

While her focus in the 1950s was on her legal work, Charles was connected to and kept up to date with national politics, and as the daughter of J. B. Charles was well known and respected among political circles. This period saw rapid change on the island. With the banana trade boosting the island's economy, new roads, the growth of trade unions and the DLP, the introduction of universal suffrage in 1951 and a ministerial system in 1956, political and social transformation was afoot.<sup>23</sup> She often wrote letters to the editor of Dominica's leading newspaper *Chronicle* mocking the DLP for its authoritarianism and its leader Edward O. Le Blanc for incompetence.<sup>24</sup> But it was in 1968 when Charles seriously entered politics when she co-founded the DFP. The party emerged in response to efforts by the DLP to pass the Seditious and Undesirable Publications Act of 1968, nicknamed the 'Shut-your-mouth-bill', which was an attempt to silence criticism of the government. Newspaper editors, political opponents and many others formed considerable opposition to the DLP's plans, calling themselves 'Freedom Fighters', and tried to petition the repeal of the act. In response to Le Blanc's rejection of the petition, at a demonstration Charles spontaneously announced

the establishment of a new political party, the DFP, that sought to undermine and oust the DLP from power. Two years later she was elected to the House of Assembly and, in 1975, she assumed the role of Leader of the Opposition.

The DFP consisted mainly of 'Freedom Fighters', former members of the DLP and the Dominica United People's Party (DUPP), most of whom shared ties to business and urban occupations. Many members came from the middle class, with some of mixed African and European heritage. This combination often led to Charles, due to her family background, and the DFP more broadly facing accusations of being interested only in the bourgeois middle class to the detriment of the working classes. This hindered the DFP's ability to be an effective political opposition and partly explains why it took twelve years for them to win a national election. But it was the combination of events later in the decade that toppled the government. These included: the draconian 'Dread Act', independence from Britain in 1978, economic turmoil, divisions within trade unions and the DLP, attacks on freedom of the press, and the creation of a defence force that attacked demonstrators and contributed to widespread unrest in 1979. This ignited a constitutional crisis and instigated new elections that saw the DFP sweep to victory.

As soon as Charles entered the political fray, she faced a barrage of sexist and ageist abuse from DLP opponents who criticised her femininity and stressed her masculine traits. For instance, male opposition politicians attacked Charles's spouse- and child-free status, with one, Ronald Armour, calling her 'the eminent professional virgin'.<sup>25</sup> Charles's ability to have compassion and care for all Dominicans was also called into question when she was asked, 'What do you know about the grief of people, a woman who has never felt the pangs of birth!'<sup>26</sup> Charles was aware of 'the fact that I was single and childless seemed to them a particularly good field for abuse of myself'.<sup>27</sup> Yet, she explained her single status, often saying that she never found a man who she wanted to marry. Also, she was conscious of how useful her singleness was for her political career, noting that, 'I am sure that if I were not single and childless I would not have continued and persevered for twenty-five years.'<sup>28</sup> Further still, Charles faced discrimination related to her appearance and her character. She was called 'yard fowl', 'hen fowl' and 'mother fowl', all names used to delegitimise the voices of opinionated women by comparing them to animals. In addition, Charles was described as 'aggressive' and the 'Danger Lady', common racist stereotypes of the supposed 'Angry Black Woman'.<sup>29</sup> The insults Charles faced confirm Barriteau's argument that 'when women are involved in politics, the convention is still to evaluate their public performance and relevance against the values and virtues of women in the private sphere'.<sup>30</sup>

While Charles's political foes attacked her supposed lack of feminine traits and her manliness, her allies remarked differently upon the duality of these two gendered constructs. In 'Iron Lady', for example, Mendes admired Charles's masculine traits of being 'tough', 'rough' and 'solid as a rock', while also celebrating her as a motherlike 'mamo' of the nation. Charles's friend John Compton, who also studied at the LSE and later served as Prime Minister of St Lucia, went so far as to state that she 'transcended womanhood. She was an intellect, in woman's clothes'.<sup>31</sup> While Compton may have intended his remarks to be a compliment to Charles, the underlying sexism in them – that women and intellectualism are incongruous – reflect alongside Mendes's lyrics the complex interplay of both femininity and masculinity that shaped how Charles

was represented. It also informed her own response to sexism and how she viewed the significance of gender to her identity.

Despite the blatant misogyny of her male colleagues, Charles was not afraid to challenge sexism with her own characteristic wit. In 1971, Charles opposed the introduction of a formal dress code, the National Dress Act, that Edward LeBlanc leader of the DLP signed into law. The act stipulated that only smart suits were appropriate clothing in parliament. Charles ridiculed this by attending parliament with a green flowery swimming costume worn under her black barrister robes, causing those in the public gallery to burst into laughter.<sup>32</sup> Her controversial action was met with further abuse. Armour remarked, 'You are an old woman! Do you want me for a husband? I will make you wear minis!'<sup>33</sup> Armour later called Charles 'a savage old woman'.<sup>34</sup> In response, Charles quipped, 'You're calling me old, but I am going to outlive you. You are burning the candle at both ends, and I am very careful with my life.'<sup>35</sup> The confidence with which Charles was able to confront the stream of sexist and ageist insults won her support among women who came to regard her as an inspiring role model, especially after she became prime minister.<sup>36</sup>

Although she was aptly able to defend herself against constant sexism, Charles did not see her gender as having much effect on her political life, often stating, 'I do not feel any different than a male Prime Minister.'<sup>37</sup> Similarly, she insisted: 'I do not wish to be known as a "woman Prime Minister" but as a leader who looked after the people's interests in the best way that was possible to me.'<sup>38</sup> These sentiments reflect Charles's desire to soften the significance of gender. This was also clearly evident when Charles was asked how she felt about being described as the 'Iron Lady'. She answered that she understood it to 'mean that I have had some tough decisions to make and I have made them although I knew they were tough [...] I am forthright and outspoken I am happy to be considered like that'.<sup>39</sup> Here Charles embraced the masculine strength inherent in the moniker. In contrast to work conducted on other female political leaders, such as former Israeli prime minister Golda Meir, Charles did not practice what scholars Zvi Triger and Kenji Yoshino have called the 'covering' of her femininity 'to succeed in the public sphere'.<sup>40</sup> Still, while Charles attempted to avoid the focus on her gender, she acknowledged the benefits of femininity within politics, remarking that 'I think being a woman is an advantage. The men, they respect you more than their fellow men so long as they don't disagree with you.'<sup>41</sup> Charles's words belie the reality of her experiences. They reflect the contradictions in her bid to underemphasise the importance of her gender, which shaped her focus on practical gendered interests that saw her promote limited women-centred policies.

Moreover, Charles's attempts to downplay the relevance of her gender had the effect of minimising and individualising the sexism she experienced. She understood her entry into the political arena as a unique struggle against authoritarianism and the anti-democratic policies promoted by the DLP, which made it relatively easy for her to argue that her gender was insignificant. This was a similar but not identical framing used by other female politicians, including Thatcher.<sup>42</sup> Yet, from the outset, Charles's gender did inform her political career. She was able to gain a prominent platform as J. B. Charles's daughter and the familial ties to a prominent male politician. This afforded her proximity to powerful formal and informal networks that paved her entry into law and politics. Charles was not a direct beneficiary of Caribbean feminists'



work to advance women's political leadership that began in the 1970s, and this fact alongside her attitude toward sexism deeply shaped her ambivalence to feminism.<sup>43</sup>

### **Feminism, equal pay and motherhood**

On numerous occasions, Charles publicly stated her opposition to feminism with the repeated proclamation, 'I don't think I am a feminist.'<sup>44</sup> But her definition of feminism was circumscribed. She defined a feminist as a 'person who thinks that because you're a woman you should be in charge of things'.<sup>45</sup> Charles's simplistic understanding of feminism partially explains the ambiguities in her thinking. For example, when she criticised the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), she did so by arguing that:

I have never considered that the small courtesies extended by men to women pointed to our inferiority or demonstrated that we were the weaker sex. At the time that these demonstrations of what was known as Women's Lib I felt [...] we were fighting the shadow and not the reality of inequality.<sup>46</sup>

Here, Charles misrepresents, perhaps knowingly, the focus of the WLM while simultaneously recognising that gender inequality did exist. Her comments reflect how she attempted to distort feminism in order to distance herself from it, making her more agreeable for conservative audiences.

While not numerically large, what can be described as the second-wave Caribbean feminist movement in the late twentieth century consisted of small groups of women meeting to discuss a range of issues, including domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse, the division of labour, and equal pay.<sup>47</sup> Larger regional organisations, such as the Barbadian-based Women and Development Unit (WAND) and the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) established in 1986, supported smaller nationwide groups.<sup>48</sup> As women's issues began to gain wider traction within the media following the United Nations Decade For Women, starting in 1975, more Caribbean nation-states began to react to women's issues.

Scholars have identified differences among Caribbean feminist groups in this era. Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen has argued that feminists in the 1970s and 1980s understood themselves to be distinct from institutionalised women's groups that focused on social welfare links within business or religious sectors.<sup>49</sup> But by the 1980s and 1990s, more cohesion between different groups, as well as university-based Gender and Development Studies centres, women's groups within political parties and region-wide coalitions such as CARICOM (Caribbean Community), occurred.<sup>50</sup> Although vibrant, the feminist movement was far from united and inclusive. Given the class, ethnic, racial and religious diversity among women in the Caribbean, the feminist movement was accused of being too focused on middle-class concerns and dominated by women of African descent. Women of East Indian origin found themselves and their concerns, some of which overlapped but also differed from those of Afro-Caribbean women, marginalised, leading to groups such as the Guyanan Red Thread explicitly trying to cleave the division.<sup>51</sup> It is important to note that feminism in the Caribbean was distinct on each island.

The feminist movement within Dominica gained momentum through the role of Phyllis Shand Allfrey.<sup>52</sup> The white, feminist and Fabian socialist Allfrey helped establish the DLP in 1955. Although Allfrey was unsuccessful in gaining a political seat

in Dominica, in 1958 she won the election to become Minister of Labour and Social Services in the newly established West Indies Federation.<sup>53</sup> Allfrey supported women within the DLP to create the Women's Guild, which rose to prominence, becoming a significant part of the labour movement. The guild was established to address the dearth in women within executive levels within the party.<sup>54</sup> It 'gathered together politically and socially, and their activities (most of them gender-bound) varied from cooking [...] to singing at Christmas'.<sup>55</sup> While their activities tended to focus on women's domestic roles, they also held demonstrations concerning political and economic conditions on the island.<sup>56</sup> Through her role as vice-president of the feminist Caribbean Women's Association, Allfrey helped in making the guild one of its members.<sup>57</sup> By the 1960s, Allfrey became disillusioned with the DLP and joined the steering committee, alongside Charles, of the DFP.<sup>58</sup> Although the two women became political allies, they differed on the issue of feminism.

Mabel Moir James also played a role in promoting feminism on the island through the guild.<sup>59</sup> The daughter of a Scottish man and Afro-descended woman, James first entered politics in 1961, and although she lost with the help of funds from the guild, in 1967 she won. She made history as the first woman minister on the island and served as Minister of Communications and Works and Minister of Home Affairs.<sup>60</sup> In the latter position, James addressed a range of issues, including domestic violence, 'secured an increase in child maintenance, and promoted women's rights to employment and wages, decent housing and water supply'.<sup>61</sup> In 1970, after feeling that Le Blanc's nationalism and adamant stance against increasing foreign investment on the island was problematic, James, along with two other ministers, N. A. N. Ducreay and W. S. Stevens, tried to challenge the leader. Their plan was unsuccessful, and Le Blanc dismissed all three.

Due to the work of Allfrey and James, feminism in Dominica became situated within leftist politics. Charles's antipathy to the left and her elite-class status shaped her unfavourable attitude toward feminism. Her disapproval of feminists was based on her view that their calls for equal rights were a call for special rights. According to Charles, she had seen 'women who are the loudest proponents of "equality of the sexes" seek to avoid certain duties by the plaintive plea "I cannot do this, that or the other because I am a woman or mother or wife"'.<sup>62</sup> She stressed that 'it is important for us women to be consistent and not claim special privileges while at the same time insisting on equality between the sexes'.<sup>63</sup> For gender equality to be achieved, Charles claimed that women needed to fight their own inferiority complex. She insisted:

that while we have the task to teach men that it is to the advantage of all to allow women to develop their full potential, it is an even more imperative task on our part to teach women like ourselves to stop pretending, to stop putting forward assertions of their weaknesses and to adopt an attitude of self-confidence rather than one of belligerence or at the other extreme self-pity.<sup>64</sup>

This individualistic view painted women as holding back equality through their attitude and behaviours.

The emphasis Charles placed on individual women needing to change their ways reflected more broadly her inability to see gender equality as a collective issue. Charles was arguing a similar view shared by right-wing women across Latin America. Historians Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power have argued that right-wing women in the twentieth century 'engaged in *individual empowerment practices*' in contrast to left



wing or radical feminists who in attempting to improve conditions for all women can be described as '*collective empowerment actors*'.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, at the same time that Charles emphasised individualism, she also advocated liberal feminism in comments such as: 'I just felt that women had the right to do what they wanted to do. Men couldn't think they had the world in their pocket.'<sup>66</sup> Charles also opined that 'women must have the right to be involved in everything, from the top to the bottom'.<sup>67</sup> These comments reveal Charles's use of empowering feminist rhetoric. They demonstrate how her gender politics combined a mixture of liberal feminism that 'seeks to remove barriers to women's advancement' and conservative feminism 'that argues that aspects of modernity undermine the position of women'.<sup>68</sup>

Charles negotiated feminism due to not wanting to encourage attacks by her opponents, her desire to remain universal in her position as prime minister, and also because of her belief that women were not unequal in society. When it came to the issue of equal pay, for instance, Charles argued that this was already evident on the island. During a newspaper interview, she reflected on a visit she undertook to Australia in 1965, remembering that 'the women there were fighting for equal pay. In our country we never had to fight for such things. As far as I remember my father (who was also in politics) did not raise the issue so, even during his time, I guess, we did not have this problem'.<sup>69</sup> Charles's dismissal of equal pay being an important division between men and women based on her father's political career reflected her myopia and desire to paint a positive portrayal of her father's political legacy. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Dominican women, especially working- and middle-class professionals such as teachers, were not consistently paid on the same basis as men, and campaigns for equal pay formed a major part of 1970s, Caribbean feminist activism.

Yet, in the same interview, Charles conceded that unequal pay existed, stating that 'The men who do manual labour are paid more than the women.'<sup>70</sup> Although Charles admitted that in some sectors equal pay was not distributed, she did not see this as problematic. Her admission was quickly followed up with assurance to her readers that 'The women in Dominica are quite career orientated. In fact almost all assistants to the permanent secretary's are women. I find that women work harder'.<sup>71</sup> Here, Charles praised women for their career-driven industriousness while pointing out the fact that most women were sidelined into subordinate roles to men. Charles's comments reveal how she tried to avoid the issue of equal pay by stressing the positive attributes of Dominican women. Her evasion, at times, turned to blatant denials. In an address to a conference on the status of women in Dominica, Charles stated that, 'As far as I know the tenet of "equal pay for equal work" is respected in the Caribbean. Long before the more advanced countries adopted the rule we have had the same level of pay for men and women performing the same tasks.'<sup>72</sup> The negations and inconsistencies in Charles's thoughts on equal pay demonstrate not only ambivalence or the combination of conservative and liberal feminism, but also her attempt to paint the Caribbean as a seemingly path-breaking region more advanced than wealthy states in terms of equal pay. This was part of a postcolonial narrative of difference and success that many independent states took up to challenge the notion of their inherent backwardness or lack of development.

Similarly, there existed ambiguities in Charles's thoughts on motherhood, evident in both her actions and words. During her time as prime minister, Charles's

government introduced measures to ensure that 'mothers out of wedlock receive maintenance for their children'.<sup>73</sup> This policy was an important step in amending the stigmatisation of illegitimate children who during and after the colonial era received blame for their poverty and were scapegoated for increasing levels of juvenile delinquency in the Caribbean.<sup>74</sup> It was also a significant move in supporting single mothers, a group too often blamed for their supposed loose sexual mores and as signifiers of disreputable and disrespectful behaviour. According to Charles, in Dominica, 'women were always able to take men to court to make them support children who were born out of wedlock. That was all there long before I came into being'.<sup>75</sup> However, as sociologist Cecilia A Green has shown, numerous challenges faced women, especially those of lower-middle-class background, in seeking financial aid from former sexual partners, which Charles ignored.<sup>76</sup>

While Charles's policy may appear like she was operating as 'mamo', it did not sway her somewhat traditional views on motherhood. Charles admitted that she did not see herself as 'one of those women who consider the adage "a woman's place is in the home" outmoded'.<sup>77</sup> She insisted, perhaps given her own experiences, that "'a woman's place is not only in the home"<sup>78</sup>. Yet, she stressed the biological significance of women as caregivers and was 'convinced that a woman is by nature the better of the sexes to look after infant children'.<sup>79</sup> Incidentally, her opinions on motherhood shaped her respect towards Meir, who Charles admired 'for putting politics before family life'.<sup>80</sup> Although Meir and Charles's other close friend, Thatcher, had children, Charles seemed to imply that a marker of a successful female head of state was that she put the political before the personal. This notion indicates Charles's unwillingness to accept that a woman with a household to tend was capable of effectively leading a country and merged with her conventional views on motherhood.

Yet, Charles stressed the importance of families, ensuring that they 'order their lives so as to enable the woman in the family to follow her bent, her aspirations and exploit her talents in the most effective way possible'.<sup>81</sup> In addition, she tried to support working mothers. In her words, 'I realized women had to go out to work, so one of the first things I did was arrange to have a day centre where children could be dropped off in the morning and picked up in the afternoon'.<sup>82</sup> Charles's opinion on motherhood reflects a combination of a type of compassionate conservatism when it came to aiding single and working mothers and their children, a traditional view on the importance of women's place within the domestic sphere, as well as the promotion of women's choice to be involved in realms outside the home.

Still, Charles felt women needed protection in certain professions, and she played a role in limiting women's career progression within the police force. During the 1970s, the number of female police officers grew, but Charles issued a directive to prevent this trend, halting the promotion of women beyond the category of sergeant.<sup>83</sup> Her reasoning was based on her argument that policewomen experienced abuse from policemen and she did not want to encourage this.<sup>84</sup> Her actions, however, demonstrate both her unwillingness to address male sexism within the police force properly and her belief that male privilege should go unchallenged in male-dominated professions.

Charles's intervention can also be read as a response to the larger narrative of black male marginalisation evident in 'the endangered black man' trope that grew in circulation in the United States and Caribbean during the 1980s, which was replicated

in academic scholarship.<sup>85</sup> This trope related to the supposed notion that women's rights had advanced too much and to the detriment of black men. Those in academic, political and policy circles shared these views, 'despite the fact that many Caribbean men do not experience economic, political, institutional, familial, religious, legal or other forms of "marginalisation" especially in relation to women'.<sup>86</sup> Charles can be understood as trying to show that she was aiding black men by enabling them to keep traditionally masculine jobs and thereby undermine the notion of women's increasing progress.

### **Policies and Charles's impact on women and politics in Dominica**

Despite her rhetoric and actions, Charles's government did make several changes to promote women and support gender equality.<sup>87</sup> In 1982, the Women's Bureau was established, enhancing the efforts of the women's guild.<sup>88</sup> During her second term in 1989, ratification of the National Policy on Women occurred.<sup>89</sup> In 1990, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was also passed.<sup>90</sup> According to Charles, these implementations placed women at the 'centre of the party' (the DFP).<sup>91</sup> She also praised the fact that 'a man, the Minister of Home Affairs, is in charge of women's issues' as a sign of men promoting women's rights.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, Charles appointed more women to political roles and helped inspire other women to enter electoral leadership. For instance, she put forward two female speakers of the house: Marie Davis Pierre (a cousin of Charles) and Neva Edwards.<sup>93</sup> In addition, Cynthia Butler became mayor of Roseau. The impact of these changes was mixed, and the lived experiences of women were not vastly improved. CEDAW, for instance, never produced a report.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, Charles's neo-liberal economic policies and the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s had a negative impact on women, decreasing income levels and employment. By 1989, women's unemployment reached levels double that of men.<sup>95</sup>

Charles also faced counter-attacks for helping more women enter politics. Unsurprisingly, she faced claims of tokenism and nepotism for the appointments of Pierre and Edwards. In 1985, Charles remarked that, following Pierre's appointment, 'men Parliamentarians said that they were getting a little concerned about things in Dominica, and they felt that they should ask me to create a Men's Desk to look after the affairs of men because women were already so well looked after in Dominica'.<sup>96</sup> Again, this was reflective of the backlash surrounding women's access into politics. Charles did not entertain the notion of a men's desk and refuted accusations that she was promoting women, stating: 'the first speaker I chose was a woman. But she was a very good speaker and did a very good job. And the second speaker was also a woman [...] she was very good'.<sup>97</sup> Charles was against the practice of positive discrimination for women in politics and in defending her actions, placed more importance on the quality of the speaker rather than their gender. Although women served as speakers, it is important to note that there remained a small number of female MPs and Charles appeared uninterested in seeking solutions to redress the imbalance.

Nonetheless, for Dominican women in politics, Charles served as symbolic inspiration. Edwards noted that 'We used her as a role model in activities of Dominica National Council of Women (DNCW)', of which Edwards once served as president.<sup>98</sup>

Established in 1986, the DNCW was a 'voluntary umbrella organization representing women's groups on the island' that 'seeks to advance the cause of women and ensure the integration of women in all aspects of society', but it did not explicitly embrace feminism.<sup>99</sup> Edwards explained that Charles:

never took sides for women particularly, because she wanted to be fair and deal with men and children as well. However, she supported women's programs through the DNCW and through the Social League. Sometimes it was financial support in the form of a subvention from government. She made it easy for women to opt for prominent positions, as permanent secretaries, magistrates, judges and bank managers.<sup>100</sup>

Charles's actions show her willingness to support and work alongside women's groups considered not particularly radical or leftist, but more interested in practical gendered interests such as women's uplift and widening the professions available for women. Her unwillingness to take 'sides', however, elucidates her idea that women should not be singled out for special attention.

Despite the repeated ambivalence and contradictions surrounding Charles's attitude and policies towards women's rights and gender equality, she was adamant that she had worked hard to address problems that women faced. In 1990, she exclaimed: 'What more could I have done for women?'<sup>101</sup> In her opinion, 'It's only leftist women who talk that damn nonsense about women being at a disadvantage. The women are stronger than the men here I find.'<sup>102</sup> Charles's censure of left-leaning women's incessant calls for equality by underscoring the strength of Dominican women saw her use the framing that women in the Caribbean are too strong to be lacking or underprivileged. Charles's frequent praise of the strength of Caribbean women was based on both the past and the present. On the one hand, it was a recognition of the historical strength of Caribbean women who endured transatlantic slavery and who passed down to future generations the importance of hard work, thrift and independence. This rhetoric was certainly embraced by many Caribbean women, both working and middle class. On the other hand, it was an endorsement of the 'strong black woman' trope that grew in circulation across the Black Atlantic. As political scientist Melissa Harris-Perry has argued, the strong black woman narrative is useful in inspiring black girls and black women to have resilience, but it can also be damaging by preventing them from asking for help or seeking redress from the state or public institutions in times of need, an issue that Charles did not acknowledge.<sup>103</sup> In Charles's case, it was also a reflection of her conservative thinking that women were not victims of sexist inequality.

## Conclusions

In 2002, three years before her death, Charles reflected on her gender politics. She admitted that 'I did not particularly advocate for women's issues'.<sup>104</sup> But Charles maintained that she 'spoke out, never kept back. I made utterances. I didn't think I had to pretend about that and not say where I stood on those things'.<sup>105</sup> She reiterated 'that a woman had as much right as a man'.<sup>106</sup> These reminiscences signify the complex contradictions that lay at the heart of Charles's thoughts and policies on women, gender and feminism. This article has argued that a politics of elusiveness underpinned Charles's gender politics, which only partly explains the 'resilient androcentrism, consistent hetero-patriarchal resistance and the structure of masculinized democracy' that

remain present in Caribbean politics.<sup>107</sup> Charles's stance on gender politics was reflective of a reality common among conservative women politicians across especially the Anglophone and Hispanic Caribbean and Latin America, but she was unique in being a figure who held a powerful political position.

While she is not often recognised as being part of Caribbean feminism, Charles's contradictions saw her voice similar perspectives made by Caribbean feminists of the colonial era. This article calls for further scholarship to explore the continuities and changes that occurred in Caribbean feminism between the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. It calls also for additional research on the relationship that higher middle-class and elite women had to feminism.

It must be stressed that the ambiguities present in Charles's ideas about gender formed part of her politics more broadly. Undoubtedly a conservative, Charles was also very much a pragmatic politician who sometimes chose to ally herself to causes on the left when she felt it suited the needs of Dominica. She was far from dogmatic but practiced a politics that was decidedly flexible. This flexibility earned her much clout and success, but it played a part towards the end of her political career in her downfall.

Symbolically, Charles had a wider influence on increasing the number of women in politics throughout the Caribbean. By 1990, more women became involved in political participation, with some reaching high levels, including Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, who served as the first female president of Haiti between 1990 and 1991.<sup>108</sup> In later years, more women, such as Guyanese-American Janet Jagan, Trinidadian Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Jamaican Portia Simpson-Miller and Barbadian Mia Amor Mottley, would also become prime ministers. Most of these women would face similar experiences to Charles's, responding to them with varying degrees of difference. Notwithstanding, Charles left a complicated legacy of gender reform and future research is needed to assess the seemingly still controversial Dominican prime minister.

## Notes

1. Albert 'De Man Himself' Mendes, 'Iron Lady' [1990 lyrics], in Janet Higbie, *Eugenia: The Caribbean's Iron Lady* (London: Macmillan, 1993), n.p.
2. Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 5.
3. Gabrielle Jamela Hosein and Jane Parpart (eds), *Negotiating Gender, Policy and Politics in the Caribbean: Feminist Strategies, Masculinist Resistance and Transformational Possibilities* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).
4. Gabrielle Jamela Hosein, 'A Will to Power: The Anglophone Caribbean Struggle to Advance Women's Political Leadership', in Hosein and Parpart (eds), *Negotiating Gender, Policy and Politics*, pp. 23–43.
5. For more on Caribbean feminism, see Patricia Mohammed, 'The Future of Feminism in the Caribbean', *Feminist Review* 64 (2000), pp. 116–19; Patricia Mohammed, 'Like Sugar in Coffee: Third Wave Feminism in the Caribbean', *Social and Economic Studies* 52:3 (2003), pp. 5–30; Judith Soares, 'Addressing the Tensions: Reflecting on Feminism in the Caribbean', *Caribbean Quarterly* 52 (2006), pp. 187–97; Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen, 'Issues of Difference in Contemporary Caribbean Feminism', *Feminist Review* 59 (1998), pp. 74–85; Gabrielle Jamela Hosein, 'Caribbean Feminism, Activist Pedagogies, and Transnational Dialogues', *Feminist Review* conference proceedings (2011), pp. 116–29; Rhoda Reddock, 'Women's Organisations and Movements in the Commonwealth Caribbean: The Response to the Global Economic Crisis in the 1980s', *Feminist Review* 59 (1998), pp. 57–73; Peggy Antrobus, 'The Rise and Fall of Feminist Politics in the Caribbean Women's Movement, 1975–1995' [The Lucille Mathurin Mair Lecture, Phillip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts, University of West Indies, Mona, 9 March 2000] (Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of West Indies); Rhoda Reddock, 'Diversity, Difference and Caribbean Feminism: The Challenge of Anti-Racism', *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies: A Journal of Caribbean Perspectives on Gender and Feminism* 1 (2007), pp. 1–24.



6. For a critique of the wave metaphor, see, for instance, Nancy A. Hewitt (ed.), *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010).
7. Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, 'Decolonizing Feminism: The Home-Grown Roots of Caribbean Women's Movements', in Consuelo López Springfield (ed.), *Daughters of Caliban: Caribbean Women in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 3–17.
8. Reddock, 'Diversity, Difference and Caribbean Feminism', pp. 6–12.
9. Reddock, 'Diversity, Difference and Caribbean Feminism', p. 11.
10. Maxine Molyneux, 'Mobilization without Emancipation?: Women's Interests, the State and Revolution in Nicaragua', *Feminist Studies* 11 (1985), pp. 227–54; Patricia Hipsher, 'Right- and Left-Wing Women in Post-Revolutionary El Salvador: Feminist Autonomy and Cross-Political Alliance Building for Gender Equality', in Victoria González and Karen Kampwirth (eds), *Radical Women in Latin America: Left and Right* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), pp. 133–216.
11. Victoria González and Karen Kampwirth (eds), *Radical Women in Latin America: Left and Right* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001). For more on conservative women in Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean, see Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power (eds), *Right-Wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists Around the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 1–15; Margaret Power, *Right-Wing Women in Chile: Feminine Power and the Struggle against Allende, 1964–1973* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002); and Elizabeth S Manley, *The Paradox of Paternalism: Women and the Politics of Authoritarianism in the Dominican Republic* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017).
12. Higbie, *Eugenia*.
13. Eudine Barriteau and Alan Cogley (eds), *Enjoying Power: Eugenia Charles and Political Leadership in the Commonwealth Caribbean* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2006). For other works on Charles, see Markson Gill, 'Eugenia Charles: A Biographic Overview of Her Public Life', in Cynthia Barrow-Giles (ed.), *Women in Caribbean Politics* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2011), pp. 147–57; Marion Dowe and Lennox Honychurch, *Mamo!: A Personal Portrait* (a booklet printed by Tropical Printers Ltd, Roseau, Dominica, 1989); Gabriel J. Christian, *Mamo!: The Life and Times of Dame Mary Eugenia Charles*, intro. by Irving W. Andre (Roseau: Pont Casse, 2009).
14. Alicia Mondesire, 'The Reluctant Feminist: Eugenia Charles on Women and Gender', in Barriteau and Cogley, *Enjoying Power*, pp. 259–81. See also Carmen Hutchinson Miller, 'Stereotyping Women's Political Leadership: Images of Eugenia Charles in the Caribbean Print Media', in Barriteau and Cogley (eds), *Enjoying Power*, pp. 239–58.
15. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', pp. 259–81. In recent years there has been an increase in scholarship on gender and political leadership; e.g., Christine Kawakami, Judith B. White and Ellen J. Langer, 'Mindful and Masculine: Freeing Women Leaders from the Constraints of Gender Poles', *Journal of Social Issues* 56 (2000), pp. 49–63. For a brief comparison of Charles with other female political leaders, see Rebecca S. Richards, 'Cyborgs on the World Stage: Hillary Clinton and the Rhetorical Performances of Iron Ladies', *Feminist Formations* 23 (2011), pp. 1–24.
16. For example, James Mitchell, *Beyond the Islands: An Autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 2006); and Edward Seaga, *My Life and Leadership: Hard Road to Travel 1980–2008 II* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2010).
17. Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 7.
18. Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 47.
19. Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 47.
20. Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 48.
21. London School of Economics and Political Science Archive, London, LSE\STUDENT FILES\CHARLES EUGENIA.
22. Higbie, *Eugenia* p. 67.
23. Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 69.
24. Higbie, *Eugenia*, pp. 80–1.
25. Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 89.
26. Discussion between Janis and Raj Darbari and Mary Eugenia Charles, Prime Minister of Dominica, in the Dame Mary Eugenia Charles (MEC) Collection, Special Collection, University of West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados, Box 106, n.p., n.d. The collection holds many documents relating to Charles's political life as opposition leader and prime minister. This article also draws on interviews held with Charles and the contributors of *Enjoying Power* cited in the text, some of which are held on deposit at the Main Library, University of West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados.



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28. Charles, 'Experiences of the First Female Prime Minister', p. 2, as cited in Miller, 'Stereotyping Women's Political Leadership', p. 254.
29. Meryl James-Bryan, 'A Woman Making a Difference: Eugenia Charles', *Essence* September (1994), p. 73; MEC Collection, Box 100.
30. Eudine Barriteau, 'Enjoying Power, Challenging Gender', in Barriteau and Cobley (eds), *Enjoying Power*, pp. 3–27, here p. 6.
31. Compton quotation from an interview between John Compton and Alicia Mondesire, Castries, St Lucia, 11 July 2002; MEC Collection. The Compton quotation is cited in Barriteau, 'Enjoying Power, Challenging Gender', pp. 3–27, here p. 15.
32. James-Bryan, 'Woman Making a Difference', p. 74.
33. Armour quotation, in Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 110.
34. Armour quotation, in Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 120.
35. James-Bryan, 'Woman Making a Difference', p. 74.
36. See the comments from the interview with Neva Edwards and Keturah Cecilia Babb. Notes, Roseau, Dominica, 5 July 2002; interviews in MEC Collection, as cited in Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', pp. 277–8.
37. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica; MEC Collection, unlabelled box, file women, n.d., p. 2.
38. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 2.
39. *Sunday Sun* (1988), p. 32, as cited in Miller, 'Stereotyping Women's Political Leadership', p. 253.
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41. Janis and Raj Darbari discussion with Mary Eugenia Charles.
42. Anneke Ribberink, "'I don't think of myself as the first woman Prime Minister": Gender, Identity and Image in Margaret Thatcher's Career', in Richard Toye and Julie Gottlieb (eds), *Making Reputations: Power, Persuasion and the Individual in Modern British Politics* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005) pp. 166–79.
43. Hosein 'A Will to Power', p. 24.
44. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 259.
45. Christian, *Mamo!*, p. 217.
46. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 1.
47. Baksh-Soodeen, 'Issues of Difference', pp. 80–1.
48. Baksh-Soodeen, 'Issues of Difference', p. 82.
49. Baksh-Soodeen, 'Issues of Difference', p. 82.
50. Baksh-Soodeen, 'Issues of Difference', p. 82.
51. Reddock, 'Diversity, Difference and Caribbean Feminism', p. 20.
52. For more on Allfrey, see Elizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Phyllis Shand Allfrey: A Caribbean Life* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996).
53. Keturah Cecilia Babb, 'At Home in the House of Parliament: Mabel Moir James', in Cynthia Barrow-Giles (ed.), *Caribbean Women in Politics* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2011), pp. 53–59.
54. Babb, 'At Home in the House of Parliament', p. 54.
55. Paravisini-Gebert, *Phyllis Shand Allfrey*, p. 193.
56. Paravisini-Gebert, 'Decolonizing Feminism', pp. 10–11.
57. Paravisini-Gebert, *Phyllis Shand Allfrey*, pp. 187, 193.
58. Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 97.
59. Babb, 'At Home in the House of Parliament', p. 55.
60. Babb, 'At Home in the House of Parliament', p. 54.
61. Babb, 'At Home in the House of Parliament', p. 56.
62. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 2.
63. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 1.
64. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 2.
65. Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power, 'Introduction', in Bacchetta and Power (eds), *Right-Wing Women*, pp. 1–15.
66. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 259.

67. James-Bryan, 'Woman Making a Difference', p. 74.
68. David Swift, 'From "I am not a feminist, but" to "call me an old-fashioned feminist ...": Conservative Women in Parliament and "Feminism" 1979–2017', *Women's History Review* (2018), pp. 1–20.
69. Janis and Raj Darbari discussion with Mary Eugenia Charles.
70. Janis and Raj Darbari discussion with Mary Eugenia Charles.
71. Janis and Raj Darbari discussion with Mary Eugenia Charles.
72. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 1.
73. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 1.
74. For more on illegitimacy in the Caribbean, and principally Jamaica, see, for instance, Brain L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865–1920* (Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 2004) and Henrice Altink, *Destined for a Life of Service: Defining African-Jamaican Womanhood, 1865–1938* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).
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76. Cecilia A. Green, 'To the Scandal of the Public: Sexual Misconduct and Clashing Patriarchies in 1930s Dominica, British West Indies', *Journal of Caribbean History* 47 (2013), pp. 73–109.
77. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 2.
78. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 2.
79. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 2.
80. 'Iron Lady of the West Indies', interview with Polly Pattullo and Eugenia Charles, *Observer* (8 April 1984), p. 66; MEC Collection, Box 106. For more on Meir's complex feminist politics, see Triger, 'Golda Meir's Reluctant Feminism', pp. 108–33.
81. Message from M. Eugenia Charles, p. 2.
82. Interview with Dame Eugenia Charles and Alicia Mondesire, Roseau, Dominica, 2 July 2002; MEC Collection, as cited in Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 276.
83. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 276.
84. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 276.
85. Errol Miller, *Marginalisation of the Black Male: insights from the teaching profession* (University of West Indies, Mona, 1986); Errol Miller, *Men at Risk* (Kingston, Jamaican Publishing House, 1991).
86. Gabrielle Jamela Hosein and Jane Parpart, 'Feminist Strategies, Masculinist Resistances and Gendered Transformations in Caribbean Perspective', in Hosein and Parpart (eds), *Negotiating Gender, Policy and Politics*, pp. 1–21.
87. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 272.
88. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 272.
89. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 272.
90. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 272.
91. 'Iron Lady of the West Indies', p. 66.
92. 'Iron Lady of the West Indies', p. 66.
93. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 275; Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 197.
94. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 272.
95. Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 273; figures are from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Bureau Five-Year Action Plan, 1989, p. 14.
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97. Interview with Dame Eugenia Charles and Alicia Mondesire, Roseau, Dominica, 2 July 2002; MEC Collection, as cited in Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 276.
98. Interview with Neva Edwards and Keturah Cecilia Babb. Notes, Roseau, Dominica, 5 July 2002; MEC Collection, as cited in Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 277.
99. As quoted on <http://www.ngocaribbean.org/dominica-national-council-of-women/>.
100. Interview with Neva Edwards and Keturah Cecilia Babb. Notes, Roseau, Dominica, 5 July 2002; MEC Collection, as cited in Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', pp. 277–8.
101. Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 218; interview with Higbie and Charles on 'women', 4 June 1990.
102. Higbie, *Eugenia*, p. 218; interview with Higbie and Charles on 'women', 4 June 1990.
103. Melissa Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women in America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 183–220. Although the United States served as Harris-Perry's focus, these stereotypes apply to other black diasporic women.

104. Interview with Dame Eugenia Charles and Alicia Mondesire, Roseau, Dominica, 2 July 2002; MEC Collection, as cited in Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 276.
105. Interview with Dame Eugenia Charles and Alicia Mondesire, Roseau, Dominica 2 July 2002; MEC Collection, as cited in Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 276.
106. Interview with Dame Eugenia Charles and Alicia Mondesire, Roseau, Dominica 2 July 2002; MEC Collection, as cited in Mondesire, 'Reluctant Feminist', p. 277.
107. Hosein, 'A Will to Power', p. 38.
108. 'Caribbean Women, today's leaders', *Sunday Sun* (22 April 1990); MEC Collection, clipping Box 100.

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