



# WRITERS IN CONVERSATION



Photo: Michael Vicens

## **'Love Where You Live!' A Conversation with Diana McCaulay**

**Russell McDougall and Sue Thomas**

*Diana McCaulay is an award-winning Jamaican novelist and short-story writer. Her first novel, Dog-Heart (Peepal Tree Press, 2010) won a Gold Medal in the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission's National Creative Writing Awards (2008), and was shortlisted for the Guyana Prize (2011), the IMPAC Dublin Award (2012) and the Saroyan Prize for International Writing (2012). She won the Regional Prize for the Caribbean Commonwealth Short Story competition in 2012 for 'The Dolphin Catcher'. Her second novel, Huracan (Peepal Tree Press, 2014) was also shortlisted for Saroyan Prize for International Writing. In April 2014, she won the Hollick Arvon Caribbean Writers Prize for a non-fiction work in progress, entitled Loving Jamaica: A Memoir of Place and (Not) Belonging. At the same time she is working on her third novel, which at the time of this interview was tentatively called The Dolphin Catcher.<sup>1</sup>*

*McCaulay is the also founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET), focusing on environmental education and advocacy. Before that she worked in the general insurance industry for eighteen years, in various senior management positions. She is a Chartered Insurer qualified by the Chartered Insurance Institute in the United Kingdom. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Management Studies from the University of the West*

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<sup>1</sup> The new novel, *Gone to Drift*, will be published by Papillote Press early in 2016.

*Indies, and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Washington, with majors in environmental policy and international development. She served on the Board of Jamaica's Natural Resources Conservation Authority from 2003 to 2005, and again in 2008, and is a past Chair of the National Environmental Societies Trust and past Vice Chair of the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica.*

*This interview took place in Kingston, Jamaica, June 2015 and was conducted by Russell McDougall. Questions prepared in advance and interspersed contextual notes added after the transcription were prepared in collaboration with Sue Thomas.*

**Russell McDougall:** With your new project, *Loving Jamaica*, you've said you are charting the personal journey you have made into environmental activism, writing and 'not belonging.' Does this suggest you are coming to terms with your own racial privilege as a white woman in Jamaica? How do you manage to remove yourself from complicity with the social and political institutions of which you disapprove but find yourself associated with nonetheless? Can you articulate for me this sense of belonging and 'not belonging' in relation to your desire to find a place to simply *be* in Jamaica.

**Diana McCaulay:** I had very strong connections to place in my childhood. I had two sisters. My parents took us to the sea and they took us to the hills. I had this experience of Jamaica as a place. That was very important to me. I think it really was tremendously valuable. I had a start in life that could hardly have been better. And so I identify as Jamaican, very strongly. But then there was this growing realisation – I would say it was about high school age, just about when I was leaving my prep school to go into high school [St. Andrew High School] – of this 'other' kind of Jamaica. For instance, I rode horses, and I would be riding around Kingston and children would run up behind me, and call out one of two things: 'Is boy or gal dat?' ('Is it a boy or girl?'); or they would call out 'white gal,' or 'pork'. And I hated that, you know? Then I went to high school and became a racial minority. In Jamaica, you probably know, education is still very divided by skin colour. It's now more 'shade-ism' than it is white and black. Still, if you go to an uptown prep school you will see a lot more white faces and light-skinned faces than you would in an inner city school. When I was 12 or 13 and went to high school I went from a white or light-skinned environment in my prep school into my high school with much fewer white faces. I was a racial minority, and people would ask where I was from. I had friends who were part-English, part-Jamaican, and I was assumed to be an expatriate – somebody who did not belong. So, from a very young age there was this kind of push-back from others about my being Jamaican, and it's still interrogated to this day. You know, I remember, when I went away to do my Masters Degree in Seattle and the Research Student Admin Office sent someone to meet a Jamaican at the airport, and I walked right up to this woman who had my name on a big sign and said 'Hello, I am Diana McCaulay,' and she kept looking over my shoulder obviously thinking, 'Get out of the way! You cannot be a Jamaican.' So I would say that's something that has attended my life. As a young woman, I wasn't politically active really. I lived the life that I was born to, I suppose, that my racial inheritance provided, you know? You didn't really engage with the society; you had a very, very limited number of friends; you moved in the same circles; you talked on verandas, potentially you might have voted, but that was about it. And then I had this dawning realisation about the physical environment. It was very painful to me, you know, to see places that I loved being destroyed. And that took me on the journey that I am now on. I just

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started reading. It impelled me to read more widely and to become more engaged in my society. I didn't know anything about the environment, but I just started reading about it, and eventually formed an environmental group and left my job. And, of course right away my interest in the environment was framed as a way of keeping other people out of these places and keeping those barriers in place: it was an elitist observation and I was out of touch with the realities of other Jamaicans. *Real* Jamaicans, you know? – the implication being that I am not a real Jamaican. And what I'm trying to work through in the book, which is not finished yet, is the damage I might have caused, the fact that although this issue has meant so much to me, I am simply the wrong messenger. It doesn't matter what the message would be. I am the wrong messenger to say *anything* about Jamaica, because of the colour of my skin and the sort of inheritance and baggage that a light-skinned Jamaican has. So it's been ... *[there is a pause]*

**RMcD:** Painful?

**DMcC:** Painful. Alienating. I alternate between wanting to hide, in a sense, and retreat to the way most people of my class live in Jamaica. But I never really did well, with the not-seeing thing. There's a lot of not-seeing and not-belonging that you have to do. To *not* belong you have to *not* see, you have to turn your eyes away from a whole lot of Jamaica. And it's hard for me to do that. I think it is the creative impulse – which starts with observation, with paying attention to the world, and *seeing* it, and being moved in some way. And so, I found not-seeing impossible.

**RMcD:** Turning away would make you almost like a tourist in your own homeland.

**DMcC:** Yes. And I have thought about this. I've now been a full-time environmental activist for almost 25 years (24 years a few days ago), and I'm not going to do this for the rest of my life. I'm thinking in a way about what it will be like when I'm no longer with the Jamaica Environment Trust; and it's going to be very difficult, because I do not think you can 'un-see'. And I don't think you can 'un-engage', really. At least now I have a platform to act, and I find acting energising, as opposed to ... wallowing – which I find depressing. I think I'm not going to be able to 'un-see', and without a platform to act on I am going to find it hard to be a bystander. So I'm working through that, you know? I think if you were interviewing a black Jamaican, you might find they have the very same feeling, of not belonging, that somehow the society is controlled by *some* of us, whether defined by skin colour or class or whether they are government people or the 'big man'. I suspect black Jamaicans would also feel much of what I'm saying, that it is not really their country, and that they are alienated from it as well. And so I wonder if this is part of the colonial experience in Jamaica, where everybody came from somewhere else.

**RMcD:** And yet people here are very proudly patriotic. They wear the Jamaican colours; a lot of them have the Jamaican flag; they are proud of their sportsmen and women. In conversations on the street, very often someone clearly poor and black will proudly point me to the Jamaican motto: 'Out of many, one people.' How do you explain that?

**DMcC:** I think we are delusional! There's a very strong denial in Jamaica about its realities. And if you start talking about its realities, you will immediately be branded as negative, or

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**anti-government, or something that's ... not good. I have friends that would tell you the same thing: there is *no* race problem in Jamaica; we all live in one happy family. It's a complete fiction! It's just a story we tell ourselves to make ourselves feel better. We are proud of some aspects of our culture, we're proud of our music, even our food ...**

**RMcD:** ... all of which I love.

**DMcC:** We will tell you that Jamaica is the most beautiful place on earth. But, actually our love does not extend to the place where we live. That's not how we *behave* – and that's not how we behave to each other either. So we have these fictions about Jamaican life, about the progress we've made, and that we live in paradise ... and it's just not true.

**RMcD:** On your website for *Loving Jamaica*, you speak of the real and perceived risks of taking a stand against the powerful narratives of national development, standing up for an idea against the interests of your own class and dominant cultural values. What is the connection between the ideas you stand up for in your environmental activism and the ideas in your fiction, the risks of speaking out on a public platform as opposed to the risks of writing and publishing?

**DMcC:** My two existing books are not overtly environmental.

**RMcD:** No.

**DMcC:** But they hopefully have a very strong sense of place.

**RMcD:** They do.

**DMcC:** That's something I want. I want a reader to really *feel* Jamaica, whether it's an urban setting or not. But they don't really carry an environmental line. The third book, the new fiction, is much more overtly environmental.

**RMcD:** Yes, it starts with pollution - dirty water.

**DMcC:** I think fiction is kind of a safe place for me to say these things, because I just say: 'It's a story! It's fiction, you know?' I've found writing novels to be a relief. Of course people might criticise your novel. But there is a sort of distance. They are criticising the work. I read a lot. There are some famous books, critically well-received, that I have mightily disliked. I know we bring a lot of ourselves to our writing. But for me fiction is a safe place really from which to say what I want to.

**RMcD:** Do you find you can say things in fiction that you wouldn't say elsewhere?

**DMcC:** Not that I *wouldn't* say ... but I would be afraid ... and I would fight within myself ... and it would be hard. Often I am saying it face to face, you know? Very often I am in a public meeting, somewhere in the country: I'm the only white face in the room, there's a bunch of young men, you know, 18 years old, who've been imported to speak for jobs; they're loud, they're threatening ... and I'm going to stand up and say 'but what about some fern' or something ... I mean, you're doing it in person, right? And I do understand how if you are

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**unemployed a fern or a turtle is completely unimportant. It's hard to speak for nature in the face of poverty and desperation – except, environmental degradation affects poor people most. But they might not see that themselves.**

**RMcD:** In *Huracan* your character Leigh McCaulay thinks of Jamaica, 'Bogat, born, abiding in violence'. Edward Said suggests that intellectuals and writers need to be attuned to the 'gravity of history'. How do you think the gravity of that history of violence informs your environmental activism and fiction?

**DMcC:** I feel the weight of history in a very tangible way. I see its influence on modern Jamaica every day. My fiction is an attempt to understand that history, to describe it, to create empathy in my readers for others who have a very different experience and a very different starting point. I remember one email I got after *Dog-Heart* was published which said that the writer of the email could not look at street boys in the same way after reading my novel. That's what I want. For my environmental work, I think Jamaica's entire history is one long, sad story of exploitation and destruction of the land and the sea and the people. It's time we stopped that model.

**RMcD:** Your fiction (*Dog-Heart*, *Huracan*, 'The Madman of South Avenue') is keenly concerned with the ethics of relation across social divisions produced by racial and economic stratification. How do you think fiction might particularly enable readers to consider the ethics of that relation and historically responsible positions toward it?

**DMcC:** To state the obvious, fiction is the telling of stories. People respond to stories. So I seek to tell stories of people who are separated by race, class, economic status or history, to show how very different the world looks on opposite sides of those divides. I don't seek to bring about guilt, but to bring about understanding. Empathy, as I said. To bring out thoughtful consideration of privilege. To give voice to people who often don't have a voice. People ask me how do I know how 'those people' think – I have not lived their lives. I tell them: I can do the work of imagining other lives. All of us can.

**RMcD:** I read somewhere that *Dog-Heart* is based on Tavern Gang leader, 'Dog Paw' Linton?

**DMcC:** *Dog-Heart* is loosely based on a relationship I had with Christopher Linton's family, but it was really his older brother, Jeffrey, whom I met begging in a shopping plaza. Jeffrey was eventually beaten to death while in prison. So I had this experience of becoming involved with a family of young boys and trying to help, which really made me think about what form such help should take and brought me into confrontation of the different world we occupied. But most of the events and people in *Dog-Heart* are entirely fictional.

*[At the time of Dog Heart's publication gang leader Christopher 'Dog Paw' Linton was at the top of the Jamaican Constabulary Force's 'most wanted' list. Allegedly a key figure in a gang war in Bedward Gardens, August Town, over control of a sand-mining operation to fund the illegal gun trade, he and his men had ambushed and attacked a police team that had gone into the area to investigate. In December 2010 the police posted a \$250,000 reward for information leading to the arrest; and in January 2011 he was captured and sentenced to fifteen years in prison for*

*shooting with intent and the illegal possession of a firearm. Later he was charged with three murders, including a woman and child.*

*At the time of this interview, however, his trial for those crimes had been postponed six times – the witnesses in the matter were always unavailable – and the seventh trial date was looming. Since then the trial has again been postponed, for the same reason.*

*Through the 1990s, Diana McCaulay tried for several years in vain to rehabilitate a family of young street children. She wrote about that experience in a column in *The Gleaner*, confiding her despair when the boys reverted to the streets. Christopher Linton was one of them. He was eight when she first encountered him. The character of Marlon in *Dog-Heart* is loosely based on him.*

*In an interview with Jamaican journalist Annie Paul in 2011, McCaulay said: ‘I knew this young man, Christopher Linton — Damien was his pet name — from [when] he was about eight, until he was nearly 15 or so, and he was a sweet, very intelligent little boy with great potential, and he was failed in every way by our society. We need to stop pretending that such men are merely irredeemably evil and are simply to be exterminated. We need to understand what made the boy Christopher Linton become the man he is ... Like most Jamaicans, I am deeply concerned about the levels of crime in our society. I am as afraid as the next person, especially as I get older, and I do not want to face a young man with a gun who is prepared to take my life without thought. But also, I want to challenge us as a people to examine the reasons for the genesis of a young man like Christopher.’ <http://anniepaul.net/2011/01/26/dog-pawdog-heart/>*

*Christopher’s elder brother, Jeffrey – the main source for the character of Dexter in *Dog-Heart* – was beaten to death by warders after a prison riot in 2005. RMcD & ST]*

**RMcD:** Are you making a commentary about charitable actions, that they are doomed to fail?

**DMcC:** ‘Doomed to fail’ is a strong phrase, and I wouldn’t go as far as that, but what I want to say is this form of assistance needs a lot of prior thought. Often, poverty arises out of inherently unfair structures and economic systems and is not amenable to any form of quick fix.

**RMcD:** Could you please say something about your choice of epigraphs for *Dog-Heart* – and for *Huracan*? Of course epigraphs usually provide some kind of comment on the narrative, but they also speak to an author’s sense of literary affiliation.

**DMcC:** For *Dog-Heart*, I loved Olive Senior’s image of someone of greatness being rudderless. It said something to me about the squandered potential, squandered futures of our children. *Huracan* grapples with ‘disordered ancestry’ and the Great House is set near Cockpit Country, so again, Olive’s *Cockpit Country Dreams* seemed perfect. I also liked the Mark Twain quote, that every people, every tribe, occupies stolen land – I wanted to say, this is the human story.

**RMcD:** In *Huracan* your protagonists – Zachary McCaulay, John McCaulay and Leigh McCaulay – are buffeted by emotional and moral hurricanes. You refer to Lloyd Lovindeer’s song ‘Wild Gilbert’ in the novel and you would obviously know Olive Senior’s ‘Hurricane Story, 1903’, ‘Hurricane Story, 1944’, ‘Hurricane Story, 1951’ and ‘Hurricane Story, 1988’ from *Gardening in the Tropics*. In writing *Huracan* how conscious were you of earlier hurricane writing from the Caribbean? Do you think that earlier writing helped shape your novel?

**DMcC:** I didn't specifically read around the theme of hurricanes at the time of writing *Huracan*. I didn't start out with the idea that hurricanes were a metaphor I wanted to use – it does run the risk of being overused. I have read some of the works you refer to. The hurricane book I remember most is Andrew Salkey's *Hurricane*, which I read when very young. But while doing the research for the historical periods, I noticed how many times hurricanes hit Jamaica and I had a vague idea of telling stories from different centuries – about 100 years apart. Zachary McCaulay, who is a historical character, came to Jamaica in the 1780s and I thought, gosh, that might take me to 1988; and then I thought I'd have Hurricane Gilbert in there – because I lived through that too, and I remember it very vividly – and then I thought so the hurricanes would tie the whole story together. Plus, it's a great metaphor for so many things: circling the same problems and never coming out of them; the huge storms, these huge changes that were happening, the violence that was done, the precariousness of these societies; and the inherently dramatic element, which novelists are always looking for.

**RMcD:** Why did you decide on the Taino word in the novel's title?

**DMcC:** Because I was trying to tell a big story of Jamaica's history and they were left out of the book. And so I wanted just a little acknowledgement that Jamaica's original inhabitants were not there.

**RMcD:** I think it is Leigh McCaulay, in the novel, who says that there is a 'noisy vibrancy' about life in Kingston: people are noisy and unbroken, impossible to constrain or discipline, singing and dancing as they walk. Did that 'noisy vibrancy' influence your decision to structure the novel as three interwoven narratives?

**DMcC:** Not really. I actually had this idea of archetypes: one was an abolitionist; one was a missionary ... and I didn't want to tell a plantation owner story. I wanted to come at the slavery period sideways. I didn't want to tell a story where the main character would be either a plantation owner or a slave and it would be all about the plantation. But obviously the slavery period is a hugely important thing. So I wanted an abolitionist and a missionary, but what I was most concerned about was the modern Jamaican's role. The hardest part to write was the modern Jamaican, because it seemed to me: yes we had the missionaries, and we had the plantation owners, and we had all of these inherently dramatic events, but a woman comes back to Jamaica in the 1980s – and so what? What's so very interesting about that? And it eventually came to me that it was also a story of people who came. I've always been obsessed with why people came to Jamaica. A lot of people came in chains, of course. But there were a lot of other people who came, and why did they come? I used to badger my father endlessly about that. So then I thought, well, why don't we have it as a Jamaican who comes home? And she's now trying to find out where she belongs, what's her place in the world, you know? So we have the two who come early – one moves back to the UK, the other drowns – but she stays. The modern Jamaican comes home and she finds something that suits her in that 'noisy vibrancy', in the absence of discipline, and in the despair – and she *claims* it. In the end that was the insight I wanted to relay: feeling connected to place, feeling connected to a country, or a nation, or a landscape or a family, is a matter of claiming. Because actually, our blood and our ancestry and our place of birth are less important than this claiming that goes on at some point in our lives. It can happen very early and we might

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not be at all aware of it, but I wanted her to come home and claim it, and *not* leave, because in a lot of Caribbean literature people leave. They are writing from the metropole, and they are looking back.

**RMcD:** The diaspora seems to have become the main structural model for talking about Caribbean identity.

**DMcC:** Yes. And there's a nostalgia about that writing that I want to challenge, as somebody who hasn't ever left here, except for school, because there is a kind of a film between the reality of Jamaica and their remembering of it in a particular period which is long gone. So I wanted to very much say: 'This is a person who is staying. She is claiming it with its problems, and its problematic history and all its warts, and she's claiming it.'

**RMcD:** I think there is a bit of a surge of interest now in (so-called) 'reverse migration', in the people who come back. In fact, quite a lot of people come back.

**DMcC:** Lots of people come back! They go, they educate their children, they make a little money, they get health care ... and then they suddenly wake up one morning and it's not home.

**RMcD:** The Caricom Reparations Commissions Committee is currently pursuing reparations for genocide and slavery. How much do you think in the environmental sphere about reparation?

**DMcC:** I think about it less in the environmental sphere than I do in the context of slavery. And I think it is just a difficult question. Have you read that article that was in the *Atlantic Monthly* a few months ago?<sup>2</sup> I think obviously reparations should be made. You can go to London or Glasgow and you can see the fortunes that were built on Caribbean slavery. They exist today. The issue I have with reparations is how is it actually going to be done? Who is going to get the money? Is it going to come to the governments? Because that does *not* necessarily mean that the people who have suffered and continue to suffer are going to benefit. So that has really been my problem, the mechanics of it: how is it going to work out. And I also feel, ok, so you are a 25 year old woman in England with two children and maybe you're not very well educated and you've got a job and your tax rate is going to go up or something, and I mean, you didn't enslave anybody either, you know? I wish there was a way to make the generation that did it pay, but there isn't. But that doesn't mean that we couldn't work out the mechanics of how the reparation should work to ensure that it just doesn't just get sent to Swiss bank accounts. That's the part that I think is important. In terms of the environment, the major reparation issue is the one of climate change. We've had the whole Industrial Revolution with the wealth it created at the expense of the climate, and now other countries which did not benefit from that are being asked to not have those benefits *ever*. And that is where climate reparations need to be paid. And I really think they need to be paid rather quickly - because I would *not* argue that countries that have not yet

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<sup>2</sup> 'The Case for Reparations,' by Ta-Nehisi Coates, June 2014, whom the *New York Observer* describes as 'the single best writer on the subject of race in the United States,' author of *The Beautiful Struggle* and *Between the World and Me*.

had benefits from the Industrial Revolution should press on and bring the entire planet to catastrophe. There has to be another way to go forward. The US and the UK and other European countries, they want to continue their lifestyles; they don't want to give up *any* of it. But they want other countries *not* to have those things that they have already.

**RMcD:** I'd like to ask you about some particular environmental issues. The first one I know was a very important one for you: Pear Tree Bottom.

**DMcC:** Yes.

**RMcD:** How do you think about it now?

**DMcC:** In writing *Loving Jamaica*, I set it around places, and I told the story of my childhood experiences with them, if they existed, and then of the environmental fight, if you like; and it turned out to be really boring, because the environmental story is the same story, over and over again. Somebody wants to come to build a hotel or a road or a mine or something, and a bunch of people say no, you can't do that, eventually it goes ahead ... and everybody cries, you know. So, I actually selected Pear Tree Bottom as the main environmental story, as a stand-in for the others, so that a reader won't have to struggle through the same story five times. There's a piece of the Pear Tree Bottom story that was very difficult. It came about because we made a film, Esther Figueroa and I, called *Jamaica for Sale*.

**RMcD:** Yes. It's quite famous. It won major awards, as I recall, at the Africa World Documentary Film Festival, at the Mexico International Film Festival, the Canada Film Festival and a number of others.

**DMcC:** Well, we were filming it, and we went to Pear Tree Bottom and filmed the gate where people could no longer get to the beach, and then we went up to talk to one of the people that they had relocated off the beach. Her name was Ivy. She was a squatter (so-called). She lived in this very, very poor circumstance upon the hill with an *amazing* view of the coast. But of course, she didn't see that. It was completely irrelevant to her. And she told us her story. Her story was she had lived nowhere else in the world – at all, in Jamaica. Her family, to the extent that she knew, had worked on the plantation that Pear Tree Bottom was a part of – the place was called Belair. After Emancipation, her family settled in little dwellings around Belair Plantation and continued to work on the plantation while sugar was grown there. Then it became coconuts. Coconuts died. But she had lived nowhere else. And yet, she was regarded as a squatter. And that just seem to me to say everything, not just about the way we regard the environment, but the way we regard our *people*, our history, our *connection* to the land. So of course there was nothing about the land that she valued. She could be moved off it at any time, and *had* been – so this was her second place of settlement. She used to be down on the beach, and she had a cook shop, and it was bulldozed. One day she was in court, actually trying to establish prescriptive rights, and it was bulldozed. She came back to find everything gone. That was a real moment for me, when I realized the disconnection that we have, and the failure to acknowledge the claims people have to land they have occupied for generations if they were not plantation owners – and *they* received no compensation at the end of slavery, they were just thrown off and left to get on with it.

**With regard to the natural resources of Pear Tree Bottom, all the promises that were made about monitoring and enforcement were not kept. The reefs are heavily silted. In writing *Loving Jamaica* I interviewed a scientist who has been studying there since the 80s – not way back to the 50s, but since the 80s – and she says now it's kind of a mixed picture. She says there are places where there is some recovery; she says in front of the hotels it is very, very degraded. So I went to Tripadvisor, and there you can find people writing about their experience of the hotel that was built there: one of the entries I thought told the whole story. He was a diver obviously – most people who are serious divers come to Jamaica – he'd been diving, and he said the reef was scraped clean, there was no fish, but they'd sunk a boat, and a plane and a bar with Red Stripe bottles in 30 feet of water for you to look at.**

**Pear Tree Bottom was the first time we went to court against the government, and that was *hard*.**

**RMcD:** Yes, I thought that was the first time.

*[The St. Ann Environment Protection Association (STAEPA) – now the Northern Jamaica Conservation Association (NJCA) – and other resident groups began to voice their concerns about the environmental and social impacts of the proposed development of the coastland of Pear Tree Bottom in 1992. It was then a pristine forest area, sloping from the hills down to freshwater marsh and mangroves to a series of sandy bays interspersed with rocky shoreline. It provided a habitat for a wide variety of birds, including the native Yellow-billed Parrot, and was one of the few remaining important nesting sites left in St Ann for the hawksbill turtle. It was also home to the endangered Jamaican Yellow Snake (or Jamaican Boa). The Environmental Impact Statement described the coral reefs off Pear Tree Bottom as 'one of the best dive sites in Jamaica' and noted also that its wetlands played an important role as a nursery for fish and estuarine species as well as being 'a unique feature' of the north coast. Despite all of this, in 2005 the redevelopment of the area began. The shallow back-reef area was dredged to provide swimming areas; artificial beaches were being created with crushed marl; and five large groynes to keep those beaches in place had commenced construction. In October 2005, the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET), the NJCA and four individual members of that organisation took legal action against the Government of Jamaica, filing a judicial review case in the Supreme Court to challenge the Environmental Permit granted to the Spanish hotel chain for Phase 1 of its proposed 1,918-room resort at Pear Tree Bottom. This was a landmark case, not only because it was the first time that a Jamaican environmental NGO had initiated such proceedings, but also because of its outcome. The Court found that the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) and the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) had failed to meet the legal requirements for consultation and that a critical element of the Environmental Impact Assessment - the Marine Ecology Report – had not been made available to the public. The Environmental Permit was quashed. RMcD and ST]*

**DMcC:** It was the first time we filed a lawsuit against government. It was a successful lawsuit in a sense, because the court ruled that the public conservation process had been flawed and it quashed the permit, and it really did change the whole public consultation procedure in Jamaica. Environmental groups were regarded as merely a nuisance before it. In the end, though, the judge overturned – or 're-issued' his judgment, I guess is the best way to say it – after the hotel filed asking to be heard on the basis that they would have lost many million

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**US dollars. The hotel was by then up to the third floor. So the hotel went ahead. It was a Pyrrhic victory. But it did change the whole dynamic of environmental approvals in Jamaica.**

*[Although the developer did succeed on appeal in having the Phase 1 Environmental Permit reinstated, the NRCA rescinded its approval of the permit for Phase 2, which would have allowed a further 900 rooms (in addition to the original proposed total of 734-rooms). The five-star Victorian-style Grand Bahia Principe Hotel at Runaway Bay opened for business on 20 January 2007. It contains 812 rooms, and advertises itself as being located 'in a privileged location on the north coast of Jamaica.' RMcD & ST]*

**RMcD:** OK, well here's another long-running issue for you: bauxite mining in Cockpit Country.

**DMcC:** My paternal grandmother was from Cockpit Country. She was from Ulster Spring. I've got no memory of ever going there as a child. In 2006, I think, we suddenly heard they were going to be mining it. So we joined with others to oppose that. I think the Government is going to announce boundaries soon and close the area inside the boundaries to mining, but it hasn't happened yet, and I've learnt not to celebrate until it happens. But I think that it is going to happen before the end of July.

*[It would indeed have been premature to celebrate at this time. Several months later, and still the fate of Cockpit Country is undecided.]*

*The Cockpit Country is Jamaica's largest remaining wet limestone forest area, covering more than 500 square miles, mostly located in Trelawny Parish, but also expanding into the neighbouring parishes of St Elizabeth and St James. For thousands of years its rugged and rare karst (eroded limestone) topography and its dense forests have made it almost impenetrable and entirely isolated from the rest of Jamaica, an 'island within an island'. Hundreds of endemic plant and animal species have survived there in isolation. It contains 27 of Jamaica's 28 endemic bird species (including the critically endangered Jamaican Blackbird and both species of Jamaica's endemic parrots), three endemic species of bat (including the Jamaican flower bat), a rare and endangered endemic frog species, the Jamaican giant swallowtail (one of the largest butterflies in the world) and hundreds of endemic plant species. It is also home to the Maroon community of Accompong, formed by runaway slaves and granted self-government by British peace treaty in 1739. Identifying as a sovereign nation, the Maroons claim Amerindian ancestry; and the United Nations recognises them as an indigenous people. The confusion over the official boundaries of Cockpit Country stems in large part from the history of its settlement by the Leeward Maroons. While the original land grant of 1500 acres outlined the limits of the Maroon territory, it could not map its boundaries, because of the impassability of that area. It could only articulate those boundaries discursively (and therefore approximately). As a result, many Maroons today dispute any effort to impose any boundary that would limit their access to the adjoining forest reserve. It would be an insult, they say, to their heritage, if any part of the Cockpit Country were opened to mining. Scientists at the Windsor Research Centre concurred: any degree of mining would threaten the biological and geological diversity of this entire unique ecosystem. One final consideration – particularly resonant in the midst of the prolonged drought that Jamaica has been experiencing – is that Cockpit Country is the main watershed for ten of Jamaica's rivers, and provides 40% of its freshwater resources.*

*But the Cockpit Country is rich in bauxite (aluminium ore), which is integral to Jamaica's economy. In May 2004 the government granted special prospecting licenses to both Alcoa and*

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*Clarendon Alumina Production (CAP), allowing them to search for bauxite in Trelawny and St Ann. Under Jamaican law, prospecting does not require an environmental permit, although prospectors have to blast open roads through the forest in order to drill and test bauxite deposits in the soil. Of course, if the prospects prove favourable and mining goes ahead, the network of roads is expanded, and so is the mining's footprint in the forest.*

*In late 2006, JET together with the Jamaica Environmental Advocacy Network (JEAN) and the newly formed Cockpit Country Stakeholders Group (CCSG) launched a major campaign to protect the entire region from bauxite mining. As a result of the public outcry, the government suspended all prospecting licenses and commissioned a boundary study to be done by the University of the West Indies (UWI). Although this was completed in 2008, it was not released until September 2013, when the public consultation finally began. Its finding was that the government should not authorise any form of mining or quarrying activity, primarily because 'the level of emotion [was] too high' and '[the] level of opposition and resistance by community members and leaders, CBOs, NGOs and civil society organizations, some Government of Jamaica agencies and members of the academic community' was likely to scare off potential investors. The government backed off, and things quietened down, until May 2015, when without warning the Noranda Jamaica Bauxite Partnership (NJBP) invaded the Cockpit Country, building a haul Road in preparation to commence mining.*

*The Noranda Aluminum Holding Corporation ('Noranda HoldCo') is a US company, but it holds the minority share in the NJBP, with the Jamaican Government holding the majority (51%). After the Noranda invasion McCaulay, as JET's CEO, issued a strong statement accusing the government of 'a betrayal of good faith.' There was still no boundary or protection regime in place; and the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) had not issued an Environmental Permit. McCaulay called on the government to identify and declare the boundaries and close Cockpit Country to mining once and for all.*

*At the time of this interview, however, it had not yet become public knowledge that the government had already granted a Special Exclusive Prospecting License to the NJBP to expand its operations 'westward through St Ann into Trelawny and the Cockpit Country, including 3,900 hectares or some 10,000 acres of Forest Reserves.' Community groups are applying pressure to have the license rescinded, as Cabinet is yet to decide between the six different boundary proposals it has before it. RMcD & ST]*

**RMcD:** I read somewhere that over the last thirty years the Long Bay coastline has eroded by 30 metres. I love that end of the island. The Seven-Mile Beach at Negril is so beautiful. But I've seen for myself that is under threat.

**DMcC:** I do have childhood memories of Negril. It's very, very sad what has happened to Negril. It is the best example we have of really poor planning. Montego Bay and Ocho Rios weren't well planned either, but that happened much earlier and the problems evolved more slowly. They started developing Negril in the '70s - not the '20s, not the '40s - and yet they did *exactly* the same thing. Now there is all this beach erosion, and the reef is in a really bad state, and the connections between the beach and a large wetland area called the Negril morass have been lost. Yet still you cannot get anyone to talk about a moratorium on more development – more hotel construction - although the overdevelopment of the place, and the inability to handle the garbage and the sewage, is *absolutely* evident.

*[At present Negril has only has a secondary sewage facility, which, even when it was built in the mid-1990s, was not adequate to the community needs. In May this year 2015, the Environment Minister announced a new Development Order permitting the construction of four-storey buildings, where only two storeys had been permitted in the past. This would increase individual hotel capacity from 200 to 600 rooms. The Negril Chamber of Commerce (NCC) responded by calling for an immediate moratorium on all large-scale developments in the town until the necessary infrastructure had gone in. RMcD & ST]*

**RMcD:** Are the new breakwaters likely to save the beach? I know that many of the local stakeholders oppose their construction, but NEPA has said that they *will* go ahead anyway.

**DMcC:** I'm not in favour of breakwaters, because I think it is continuing the same approach that got us into the problem we're in, with hard structures that accrete sand on one side and deplete sand on the other side, and that transform a natural coastline into something manmade. This has been really well studied. And we don't have experienced implementing agents for putting in breakwaters. Our National Works Agency (NWA) has *absolutely* no track record of running good projects. Things like: the stones are supposed to be washed. They're not going to be washed, they're just going to be thrown in the sea and the silt is going to build up on the reefs.

*[Excessive silt accumulation often causes problems down drift of the breakwater, such as the formation of sandbanks, which can actually increase erosion by starving the beach of sand. RMcD & ST]*

And so, I think what needs to be done in Negril is a re-trenching - and a retreat from the beach! This is the thing nobody wants to face, right? They basically allowed the development *too close to the beach*. The road is in the wrong place. They need to restore the connections to the morass, and have a managed retreat from the beach, as they are doing in some parts of the US. I don't know if they are doing it in Australia, but in 10 or 20 years, in lots of places, they're going to have to.

**RMcD:** Managed retreats *have* been initiated in some places in Australia: for example, at Lakes Entrance in Victoria, and at Byron Bay in NSW. Byron, I think, was one of the first, in terms of policy at least. The policy there goes back to the 1980s. In practice, though, it was contested not so long ago in the NSW Land and Environment Court, which ruled that the local Council, having approved development in the first place, should subsequently be liable to maintain coastal defences to offset the effects of coastal erosion.

**DMcC:** Negril is faced with a crisis in the future. Let's move some of the construction on the beach *now!* Let's move the docks and the gazebos - perhaps the swimming pools - and gradually give the beach a bit more space. Restore the native vegetation, restore the mangroves, restore the sea grass. That is the approach I'd like to see. Of course, tourism officials have short time horizons. We really need it done by tourist season this year! But they don't want to hear that, they just want a quick fix.

**RMcD:** It sounds a bit like the situation at Port Macquarie in Australia. The local Council engaged a private consultant to investigate the various options to restore the beach, and a

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managed retreat was one of them. But of course the community was overwhelmingly *not* in favour. It preferred the usual short-term solutions, like beach nourishment.

*[This is also the preferred option of Negril's Chamber of Commerce. The hoteliers of Negril are not in favour of any disruption to their business. It's likely that the breakwater construction could take more than a year, and the presence of heavy equipment at the mouth of the river in the centre of town, it is said, might harm the tourist industry on which the town depends. Of course, the boulders have to be quarried from somewhere too, and the likelihood is that this will cause long term scarring of the hillsides. Hoteliers see tourism being damaged for years to come. Of course, the hotels are even less in favour of retreating from the beach. The answer to the problem, as far as the commercial stakeholders are concerned, is (once again) continued beach nourishment. RMcD & ST]*

**RMcD:** Another environmental issue pressing at the moment that I know you have been particularly really concerned about is the Goat Island Project at Portland Bight, which of course is Jamaica's largest Protected Area.



*Black Bar Creek, Portland Bight Protected Area (2014). Photo Brooke Benjamin.*

**DMcC:** That really is a very, very sobering event. This is arguably our *most* protected area of land *and* sea. It's protected under different laws and various international conventions. How the Goat Islands Project was announced was that one day the Jamaican Minister for the

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**Environment while in Beijing said that the Jamaican Government was giving - very serious consideration – to building a big port in the Portland Bight Protected Area, near to the two Goat Islands. The Park Manager, an NGO contracted by the Jamaican Government to manage the Portland Bight Protected Area (PBPA) under a delegation agreement, heard about it along with the rest of us. The Government has never really come clean about what is planned. So there's been this secrecy about it. And there are very valuable natural resources that any large country would want to protect.**

**RMcD:** Like the mangroves?

**DMcC:** Yes, it includes the largest area of healthy mangroves left in Jamaica!

**RMcD:** And the fish-breeding grounds?

**DMcC:** There is at least one Fish Sanctuary, and probably two that could be affected. They are in a shallow bay, very prone to flooding. Who knows, maybe if they put all these hard structures ...

*['There are several rare, threatened and endangered species of animals and plants found in the Portland Bight Protected Area. Among the vertebrates endemic to the Portland Ridge Area are the Portland Ridge tree frog, two species of thunder snakes, the dwarf snake, the blue-tailed galliwasp and the Jamaican fig-eating bat. The invertebrates are represented by five species of blind cave dwelling shrimp. In addition to skinks, the Hellshire Hills are the home of the highly endangered Jamaican Iguana and signs of the Jamaican Coney, previously considered extinct, have been reported. Over 271 plant species have been identified in the Hellshire Hills. These include 53 which are endemic to Jamaica and fifteen (15) species which are endemic to the PBPA. Within the PBPA, Portland Ridge and Hellshire Hills are host to a number of important rare, threatened and endangered species of animals and plants and are critical conservation sites that require an effective management plan and the appropriate levels of resources for sustainability. Large sea grass beds and coral reefs represent the major marine ecosystems in the area. The low-lying coastal wetlands support mangrove and sea grass growth and are important as marine nurseries and as sources for harvesting of shellfish among other things.<sup>3</sup>']*

**DMcC:** It's a Taino site too you know, Great Goat Island. Christopher Columbus took one of his boats into Galleon Harbour [*as it's called now*] to careen it. It is very sheltered. You can see why they want it. When Columbus looked up at Great Goat Island it was 90 metres tall; it's no small island - it's big! He looked up at the island and he saw a Taino settlement. And no one has done a proper archeological exploration.

*['On August 18, 1494, Christopher Columbus on his second voyage was beset by storms on the south coast of Jamaica. He spent a day off the coast of St. Catherine in Portland Bight (probably in Galleon Harbour) where he found many Taino villages and, by his own words, the most*

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<sup>3</sup> Port Authority of Jamaica, *The Environmental Management Scoping of the Portland Bight Area, including of the Goat Islands* (October 2013), Summary, 6.

*civilized people he had met on his travels. He named the bay Bahia de las Vacas because of the many manatees (sea cows) he found there. Few are seen today.<sup>4</sup>]*

**RMcD:** I gather there are quite a few sites of potential archaeological significance within the PBPA. Taino artefacts have been found in several places. I've seen a photograph of a petroglyph in one of the caves in the area, which was apparently a Taino burial site. I think from memory the report prepared by the Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (C-CAM) listed around 60 caves in the PBPA, many of which have not been explored or assessed.

**DMcC:** **There's a cave in the forest somewhere near the top of Great Goat Island. It's a very high quality forest on Great Goat Island. Little Goat Island was cleared and ripped.**

**RMcD:** I guess that must have happened when the US established a sea-plane base on Little Goat Island during the Second World War. There was some suggestion a while ago that the US might still hold that lease. It was a 99-year lease, after all. But apparently the US agreed to release Goat Island back to Jamaica in 1961, when it gave up most of its Caribbean leases.

**DMcC:** **Yes, so Little Goat Island is highly degraded. But Great Goat Island is good forest, good habitat for dry limestone forest creatures, long proposed to be a sanctuary for dry limestone forest wildlife. And after the Goat Islands project was declared, the Government just removed these plans for a wildlife sanctuary out of their reports to the UN Biodiversity convention. If you're going to declare protected areas you have to be serious about them. You can't just say, I'm going to protect an area, but you want a bauxite mine? You want a port? Fine, go right ahead.**

**RMCD:** Do you think the project will go ahead?

**DMcC:** **I don't know. If you had asked me a couple of weeks ago I would have said that I don't think so. But now online is the government's Letter of Intent to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a recent one, which said it's going ahead.**

*[The Jamaican government seems to be moving ahead with its plans to sell the Goat Islands to the China Harbour Engineering Co. to build a mega-freighter seaport and industrial park. In October 2015 it approved 'an extension to the Framework Agreement for the Development of a Transshipment and Logistics Facility in the Portland Bight Area.' It is unclear why the extension is needed. RMcD & ST]*

**RMCD:** Obviously the big debate here is always development versus environment. It goes on around the world.

**DM. Sure.**

**RMcD:** But you've got an intensified version of it on a relatively small island ...

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<sup>4</sup> Leonard P. Howell Foundation, *Brief History of Jamaica*. Online. <http://lphfoundation.org/brief-history-jamaica-chapter-1-1-brief-history>. Accessed: 19 October, 2015.

**DMcC: A relatively desperate small island!**

**RMcD:** Yes. But what I don't see much evidence of in Jamaica is the debate that is becoming more and more important in Australia between environmentalists and animal rights people. For example, we have wild horses, which have been in Australia since settlement, and wild water buffalos, which have also been with us a long time. The water buffalo has actually been incorporated into Aboriginal Dreaming in parts of the Northern Territory. But these creatures in the wider community, and in environmentalist discourse, are generally considered to be invasive. In the case of the wild horses, the animal rights people have realised that they couldn't compete effectively against the environmentalist discourse arguing that we should eradicate the horses from the national parks because they are a threat to native vegetation, and were not part of the pre-settlement ecology. So they have re-named these horses - which we generally call 'brumbies' - as 'heritage horses.' This is a strategic reminder of their role in the making of the nation - they are descendants of the horses that came out on from England on the same ships as the convicts and first English settlers; they served with Australian soldiers in the Boer War and both the First and Second World Wars; and so on. Calling feral horses 'heritage horse' makes people think about them very, very differently. So now the environmentalists who, historically have often been the ones supporting animal rights, find themselves up against another powerful discourse that makes them seem 'un-Australian' in their indifference to the destinies of animals who arrived in Australia after 1788, which is the point zero for benchmarking the 'pristine' in national parks, as if the environment never changed before then. Do you see any indication in Jamaica of animal rights issues coming into tension with environmentalist agendas?

**DMcC:** No. We are very hard on animals in Jamaica. There are times when I am standing up in front of people that I have to take a deep breath – when I'm talking about biodiversity issues, why some kind of fern is important or whatever. It's also about animals. Our view seems to be that animals don't have feelings, they don't have rights, they are just to be killed. We don't really have the animal rights debate in Jamaica, although I am aware of it. T.C. Boyle wrote a book called *When the Killing's Done*, about taking invasive pigs off one of the islands off the West Coast of the US. And I've had the experience of going into iguana bush near the Goat Island. Scientists and NGOs have managed to bring the Jamaican Iguana back from near extinction, and how they did it was by trapping the predators – mongoose, feral pigs and feral cats. So we climbed up to see the iguana. It was really amazing forest. One of the iguana traps had a pig in it, a bloodied and hurt pig, which was then thrust up onto the boat to be taken back to Port Royal where it was going to be butchered and eaten that night. It had probably spent the night in this trap, and it was a very clear in-my-face example of an animal that was in pain and suffering for the greater good of the iguana's survival as a species. It's not that human beings are not part of nature and it's not that they don't bring changes. They do. But it is the order of the changes that are problematic. And if you have an animal or a plant that is threatening the entire viability of the ecosystem, then unfortunately that animal or plant has got to go. We brought ourselves to this place, which is a bad place to be in, and we should try not to keep doing it.

**RMcD:** Can I ask you about some of the people that I know in the past you have said you admire? Like E.O. Wilson, for instance, the myrmecologist ...

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**DMcC:** I think he's a great writer. So, he's writing about the environment, he's writing about science, he's writing about, you know, small organisms ... in a very beautiful and accessible way. I've heard him speak. He's an excellent speaker as well. You know science and academia, my apologies, but they speak to themselves, right? They go to conferences and they speak to themselves. These are people who are experts, and they have levels of knowledge and understanding that a regular person does not have. They need to speak to some regular people, and I think E.O. Wilson tries to do that.

**RMcD:** You are talking about the importance of the public intellectual, of course.

**DMcC:** Yes.

**RMcD:** We don't have enough of them in Australia either. I wish I could be that kind of person. But it's a different kind of skill.

**DMcC:** It's a real skill! You have to talk to people, engage their hearts. I think E.O. Wilson does. You can't challenge his scientific credentials, and yet he manages also to communicate at a level that touches your heart.

**RMcD:** David Brower, who was an early director of the Sierra Club in the US?

**DMcC:** He was an inspiration for a whole generation of environmentalists. There's a book written by John McPhee called *Encounters with the Archdruid [1971]*, where he goes hiking in the wilderness with David and a mining guy [*Charles Park, Professor of Geology at Stanford University, a mineral engineer who was for many years Geologist in Charge of the Metalliferous Deposits Section of the U.S. Geological Survey*]. So, they went into this wilderness [*the Glacier Peak Wilderness of Washington's northern Cascades*] and he recorded this kind of Socratic dialogue between David and the mining guy. David's just a very effective and inspiring person, because you know if you're talking about a movement, you can't have a movement of one. So I guess I admire people who have inspired other people to come with them.

*[The issue at the time of Brower's hike through the Glacier Peak Wilderness with McPhee and Park was a proposal to establish an open-cut copper mine in the area. The environmental movement won the day and the mine did not go ahead. RMcD & ST]*

**RMcD:** So I have to ask: Rachel Carson?

**DMcC:** I loved her book! *Silent Spring [1962]* See, I'm sort of a split person, because I love books, and I am literary, but then I'm a person also wanting to act, to stand up and say no, no, no, no! And Rachel, she went up against very powerful forces, and they vilified her and they ridiculed her. Her book about the sea is a beautiful lament. But she was a scientist too, and I guess her writings formed the modern environmental movement in the West.

**RMcD:** What about 'That Woman'?

**DMcC:** Yes, a lot of times that's what people call me. 'That Woman! That environmental woman!' Sometimes when I'm having a good day it's a badge of honour, and some days it's

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... like recently I was called an environmental extremist. There was a newspaper editorial. So this is an editorial, not a letter, right? I often feel, I wish they could meet an environmental extremist, because I'm sooo NOT one. *[Laughter]*. I've necessarily developed a somewhat thick skin, but there are times when I do want to say to people: 'So hold on a little. The air that you breathe and the water that you drink and the food that you eat and this land that we occupy, that's a trivial matter? Because that's what you're doing. You're belittling. You're saying that for someone to leave a lucrative private-sector job and enter public life and build an institution and educate children on environmental issues for decades: this is 'That Woman?'

RMcD: It's an objectification, isn't it?

DMcC: Yes, it is. And often there's also a big liberal dose of sexism in there, you know. That's why columnists talk about their 'wet dreams' about me. It's been hard sometimes. They don't want to deal with the issues. So there's a lot of that in Jamaica. It happens everywhere of course, but there's a lot of it in Jamaica. They don't want to deal with the issue so they attack you. So they say that you're white, you're elitist, or you're 'out of touch' with Jamaican life, or all you want to do is keep people out of your favourite places, or you're just anti-development, anti-people, anti-jobs. That's just not dealing with what you're saying.

RMcD: What is your own view now about the achievement of JET?

DMcC: I'm really proud of JET. Today we are testing a waste containment boom. You know we have a lot of problems with litter coming down into the gullies. If you look at the Jamaican gullies, they are disgusting! Never mind the public health impacts of that! Whenever it rains it ends up on the reefs. Obviously the government is not going to move everybody off every gully in my lifetime. I will never see that. Maybe my child will never see that. So we thought, what could we do? And then we built this boom out of old plastic bottles; and we've actually put it across a small gully to see if it's going to work. I don't know yet if it's going to work. But you know, it was just two young men who worked for us briefly, more in a consulting relationship than in a direct staff relationship, and they're still often in the office: they thought of this themselves, and they actually *did* it themselves! I'm proud of that. People talk about the problem but no one has tried to fix it until them. Now we are moving. We've gotten notice from the office we've occupied for the last fourteen years and we've had to move into a space that's one third of the size. So I've been going through and throwing away a lot of stuff ... and it has taken me back through the twenty-four years of JET's existence ... the photographs and documents of so many children, young people, students who have had education projects from us, who have taken on field trips with us. You know, we've gone to court against the government four times. It's not an easy thing to do! And the Court has ruled in our favour. Public consultations have *not* been properly done. There's a sewage plant – one of the places I went to that got me on this journey – the Harbour View Sewage Treatment Plant, which hadn't worked at the time I first saw it for about ten years. And the raw sewage was just going straight into the sea. We went to court over that – and the plant is fixed! They built an entire new plant. I can go there and stand on Palisades Beach, which again is a place I went to as a child, and there is *not* raw sewage flowing into the sea. And it's because of the JET lawsuit. And I've had many young people

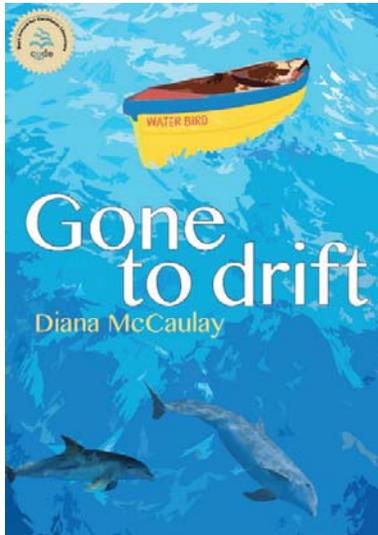
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come through the organisation, worked there for two years, then left – some stayed – and I think we've been good for Jamaica. I'm proud of JET.

RMcD: I'm glad you are. It is important. It is special.

DMcC: Yes. I think so. But some decisions that we've been talking about now – about our land, and about our *people*, for that matter – we are going to bitterly regret.

RMcD: Let's close on a high note. Perhaps you could give us a few teasers relating to *The Dolphin Catcher*?



DMcC: So it's not going to be called *The Dolphin Catcher* ...

RMcD: Oh!

DMcC: It's now called *Gone to Drift* - which is a Jamaican phrase that means 'lost at sea.' So imagine it: You're a fisherman, and you're out in the ocean in your boat, your engine cuts, and you're lost at sea. Jamaican fishermen call that 'gone to drift'. And you're drifting aimlessly, your engine can't start, and you're at the mercy of the sea. It's my first young adult novel. You might have noticed, I seem to be wanting to occupy the mind of a young boy. *Dog-Heart's* protagonist is a 12-year-old boy. Zachary was 16. And my protagonist in *Gone to Drift* is a 12-year old again. So, there's probably some psychiatrist ... But threaded throughout the grandson's search for his grandfather lost at sea are the

grandfather's own memories of growing up in a fishing village in Jamaica in the 40s and 50s. So it's about a way of life that is disappearing – if not *has* already disappeared – a way of life that was independent and self-sufficient, that built strong communities, and respected the resources that they were using: the sea, and the fish in the sea. A way of life that slowly has been corrupted by, I guess, modernity. And so we have the grandfather's recollections, the boy searching for him, and this contrast between the boy's world in urban Kingston and the rural village his grandfather grew up in, and through, over all is the sea. The book is dedicated to my husband but also to what I've called 'the much-abused Caribbean Sea', because sometimes in my work it amazes me that we've even managed to mash up the sea! And that is somehow *not* a big problem? The sea??? Are you kidding me??? We've mashed up the sea? *[Laughter]* So, it's a lot about the sea; it's a lot about fishing; it's a lot about the relationship between a grandfather and a grandson, and the forces that conspire to make good people carry out crimes – against human beings, and against the sea.

RMcD: Thank you very much, Diana. I enjoyed our talk very much.

DMcC: You're welcome. Thanks for your interest.

\* \* \* \* \*

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