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### Granada, Is it Pronounced Gruh-NAY-duh or Gruh-NAH-duh: I Don't Know, but Reagan's Foreign Policy Sucked

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Grenada: Is it pronounced Gruh-NAY-duh or Gruh-NAH-duh

I don't know but Reagan's foreign policy sucked

A paper on the US invasion of Grenada, 1982.

Austin Clements

Under the direction of Dr. Myra Houser

History of the Caribbean

November 13, 2017

## **Abstract**

The history of the Caribbean is one infested with slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and coups d'état. While these are all very important when considering the history of these island nations, what is also equally important is considering that these islands are often seen as tokens and means to convey a message by world superpowers, not as genuine nations that should be respected just as much as any European power. This is especially evident in the history of Grenada, an island nation in the eastern Caribbean. Grenada, throughout its history, has been used as a political pawn and has been bullied by much larger and more powerful nations into cooperating with those nations' aims. This paper seeks to explore how Grenada has been treated as a lesser nation throughout history, specifically in reference to the United States invasion of Grenada in 1982. While Grenada is a country rich in history and imperialist exploitation, often the reason that anyone has heard of the nation is because of the invasion of 1982 and the "triumph over communism" that it symbolized.

## **The Precolonial Years**

Grenada's marginalization in global politics and global attitudes can be traced back to its earliest years. Arawak people had lived on the island since at least 400 CE, and Carib peoples had lived there since at least 1000 CE<sup>1</sup>. The Taino, as the Arawak people would come to be known, would be at conflict with the Carib people on the island for years, continuing after Europeans arrived in the Lesser Antilles. Grenada's history of being marginalized goes back even to when Columbus first sighted the island. When Columbus sighted the island, he named it *Concepción* and it was assumed to be Spanish territory, even though it is widely believed he

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<sup>1</sup> "About Grenada: Historical Events," Government of Grenada, last updated May 7, 2013.  
[http://www.gov.gd/historical\\_facts.html](http://www.gov.gd/historical_facts.html)

never even landed on the island<sup>2</sup>. This indicates that even though this is fresh territory that the Spanish have never even explored, Columbus just viewed it as more territory to add to the Spanish empire and did not even see it necessary to see if anyone inhabited the island before claiming it for the Spanish. Furthermore, Columbus did not see it necessary to land as Grenada, he just passed by, claiming it for Spain as he went. This plays into the theme that Grenada is just seen as a pawn or an insignificant place. Following the sighting of the island, British merchants attempted to settle on the island but were repelled by the Carib peoples inhabiting the island in 1609<sup>3</sup>. Where the British failed however, the French saw an opportunity to show the British who was better at colonizing places that had no intention of being colonized. The French were much more organized in their approach to colonize the island and in 1674 by orchestrating several successive assaults and a more centralized invasion of the island, the French were able to colonize Grenada. Following French colonization, Grenada became a hub for growing sugar cane, like many other Caribbean nations. Sugar cane harvesting is very intensive and backbreaking work. Laborers, who were most always slaves, had to cut the sugarcane from the base of the stalk while the bristles would slice their hands until they were bleeding most of the time<sup>4</sup>. The climate was very hot, water was not always provided to the slaves, and they were beaten quite regularly<sup>5</sup>. The slaves were, at first, mostly Native Americans from the island but soon the French began to import thousands of African slaves<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Crask, Paul. *Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique*. (Chalfont St. Peter: Bradt Travel Guide, 2009.)

<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth, "Grenada: History," accessed November 10, 2017.

<http://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/grenada/history>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, "Slave Labor," accessed November 10, 2017.

<http://slaveryandremembrance.org/articles/article/?id=A0056>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> The Commonwealth.

## The Colonial Years

Grenada would go on to change hands several times during its tenure as a colonial state. As mentioned before, Grenada began as a French colony in the seventeenth century. Many powers would possess Grenada, including the Dutch in the late seventeenth century<sup>7</sup>, the French once again, and then the British following the Treaty of Paris in which the French ceded most of their American holdings after the Seven Years War<sup>8</sup>. British rule was similar to the rule of the French, in which the main crop remained sugar until nutmeg was introduced in 1843 (which would continue to be a main crop of the island even until the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where it produced 40% of the world's supply of nutmeg in 2017.) There was an attempt to usurp British control by Julien Fédon, known as Fédon's Rebellion, in 1795. Fédon, a free black man, sought to secure citizenship for slaves, to restore French colonial rule, and "create a black republic just like in Haiti."<sup>9</sup> The Haitian Revolution, which occurred in 1793 (only two years before the Fédon Rebellion), was a revolution in which the Haitian people won their independence from France. The Haitian Revolution inspired many revolutionaries in the Americas, not simply because it occurred close to home, but because it was led entirely by slaves and free blacks (which is the first and still only successful slave-led revolution). Fédon modeled himself after Toussaint Louverture, the Haitian general who was a "consummate tactician and a tireless negotiator, whose brilliant military and political strategies shaped the insurrection into a powerful, even unstoppable force."<sup>10</sup> Fédon took over all of Grenada except for St. George Parish, where the

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<sup>7</sup> Beverly Steele, *Grenada, a History of its People*. (London: Macmillan, 2003), 55.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Treaty of Paris, 1763" accessed November 11, 2017.  
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1750-1775/treaty-of-paris>

<sup>9</sup> Caldwell Taylor, "The Fedon Rebellion," accessed November 12, 2017.  
<http://bigdrumnation.org/notes/fedonrebellion.html>

<sup>10</sup> Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. (New York: Picador, 2012,) 27.

seat of government, St. George's, was and still is located. In April of 1796, Fédon's forces were defeated at the battle of Mt. Qua Qua, and Fédon's rebellion came to an end without securing citizenship for slaves and eliminating British rule<sup>11</sup>. Following Fédon's Rebellion, Grenada would stay a British colony for almost another 200 years. In 1834, slavery was abolished across the British Empire, and thus Grenada transitioned from a slave-based society, albeit very slowly. In fact, it was designed to be this way in the Slavery Abolition Act, the act of British Parliament that set slaves free in the West Indies.<sup>12</sup> Britain did not want its sugar supply to be too badly damaged following the emancipation of the slaves so that it would inconvenience them, thus the British put into place the mandatory apprenticeship program. This program required that former slaves instead become indentured servants for a period specified under what sort of labor the slaves were performing. The apprenticeship program was just "slavery by another name,"<sup>13</sup> as apprentices would have to work over forty-five hours a week to receive any pay.<sup>14</sup> So Grenadians would remain in servitude while many across the world thought they were free. This is yet another indication of Grenada's role as a pawn in global politics and another example of great powers using Grenada to achieve a political aim, which in this case was for the British to have the appearance to support emancipation when the British still only cared about their sugar crop. Nutmeg was introduced to Grenada by the British planter Frank Gurney in 1834<sup>15</sup>, and it has

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<sup>11</sup> Grenada Cultural Foundation, "Julien Fedon," accessed November 12, 2017.

<http://culture.gd/index.php/aunty-tek-spiceword-festival-gallery/16-hry/228-julien-fedon>

<sup>12</sup> Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade Since 1807*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007,) 148.

<sup>13</sup> Henrice Altink, "Slavery by another name: apprenticed women in Jamaican workhouses in the period 1834-8," *Social History Vol. 26*, no.1 (2001): [https://www.jstor.org/stable/4286722?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4286722?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents), 40.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 41.

<sup>15</sup> John Groome, "The Nutmeg Story," accessed November 12, 2017.

<http://www.grenada-history.org/nutmeg.htm>

become Grenada's leading crop since its introduction (Grenada today produces 20% of the world's supply of nutmeg<sup>16</sup>.)

### **Transition to Independence**

Grenada began to work toward independence in the twentieth century, albeit very slowly. Grenada transitioned to a form of Crown Colony government in 1925, and universal suffrage was introduced before the 1951 elections<sup>17</sup>. Crown colonies were forms of colonial government in which a governor was appointed for the colony by the British. However, the populace of the colonies did have some say as they were able to elect members to a council, called the Legislative Council in Grenada. With the introduction of universal suffrage and a legislative council, Grenadians began to form political parties. One of these was the Grenada's People Party (which would become the Grenada United Labor Party) under Eric Gairy. GULP sought to gain support from rural workers and did so by rallying for workers' rights.<sup>18</sup> While Gairy and his party were ignored by most of the ruling class, they were not ignored by the general population, and in the 1951 elections GULP won 6 of the 7 elected seats on the legislative council. Gairy would go on to win the 1954 elections and the 1957 elections, although his party would lose 4 of the 6 seats in the Legislative Council that they held in the 1957 elections. Gairy would lose his seat for an election violation (he led a steel band through one of his opponents' political rallies.<sup>19</sup>) Gairy would win back his seat later and be named Chief Minister but he would lose all of that once again after a financial scandal referred to as "Squandermania."

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<sup>16</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Nutmeg and mace – world overview," accessed November 12, 2017. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/v4084e/v4084e0b.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Caldwell Taylor, "1951 and the Coming of tFirst General Elections on the Basis of Universal Adult Suffrage," accessed November 12, 2017. <http://www.bigdrumnation.org/comments/1stgeneralelection.html>

<sup>18</sup> Gregory Sandford and Richard Vigilante, *Grenada: The Untold Story*, (Lanham: Madison Books, 1984,) 21.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

During the mid-1970s, another political party was gaining traction known as the New JEWEL Movement (NJM henceforth). This party, originally led by the charismatic Maurice Bishop, was a mostly socialist, anti-imperialist, and black nationalist party, opposed Eric Gairy because he no longer represented the people and was more concerned with maintaining his status as the wealthy leader of the country. Seeing this, Gairy began to call on Britain very urgently for independence, most likely so he could increase his personal power to quell the opposition to his rule. The Grenadian people did not yet want independence, and so when Gairy moved on to open talks with the British about independence (there was no referendum called as the British were quite eager to grant independence because the colony had become quite expensive to maintain) he was met with mass protests led by the NJM. The NJM began to accrue resources, both militarily and economically, throughout the 1970s in preparation to stage a coup against Gairy's elitist government. The NJM also forged alliances with Cuba, Guyana, and the leftist government Jamaica, which allowed it to have support in the region as well as economic agency<sup>20</sup>. These ties, however, began to raise suspicions that the NJM was not just socialist and they sought to establish a communist state in Grenada that would support the aims of the USSR. This specifically began to catch the eye of everyone's favorite imperialist who claims they are not an imperialist, the United States of America. The United States was led to believe that a Grenada led by the NJM would allow Cuba and the USSR to consolidate their power in the Caribbean and threaten US national security. Yet again was Grenada just seen as a pawn of someone else and not an actual actor in an event that only concerned Grenada. In 1979, the NJM overthrew Gairy's government and began to turn Grenada into a socialist state.

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<sup>20</sup> Sandford and Vigilante, 43.



The NJM would not hold elections following their seizure of power, as they believed they needed to rewrite the Grenadian Constitution first.<sup>21</sup>The NJM feared that Gairy, who was now living in the US, would try to retake Grenada through a mercenary coup. The NJM filed a request for arms with both the United States and Cuba. The United States, through the ambassador to the Lesser Antilles Frank Ortiz, suggested they would consider the request but cautioned the NJM and Bishop against seeking any sort of aid from Cuba. Maurice Bishop claimed in a later statement that the ambassador “uttered veiled threats against Grenada’s tourist industry, ignored the [NJM’s] plea for massive aid, brushed off concerns about the very real danger of a mercenary invasion by Gairy.”<sup>22</sup>

Bishop went on in the same speech to say that “[Grenadians] are in no one’s back yard and we are definitely not for sale.”<sup>23</sup>This is alluding to the fact that ever since the Monroe Doctrine in the US, the Caribbean and Latin America had been labeled as “America’s Backyard.” This is very representative of the thesis of this paper not just in relation to Grenada, but in relation to the whole of Latin America. Great Powers will often see lesser countries, not as their equals, rather they see them as pawns that are completely dependent on the superpower near them. US-Cuban relations are a perfect example of American willingness to bully nearby states into cooperation with their agenda. In 1959, Fidel Castro came to power and established a communist state in Cuba with strong relations with the USSR. To the United States, Cuba was just a pawn of the Soviets, not an actual nation with its own foreign policy aims. The US imposed strict sanctions on the nation, cut diplomatic ties, and in 1961 attempted to invade the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Sandford and Vigilante, 54.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

nation at the Bay of Pigs invasion (which would fail.)<sup>24</sup> Following the Bay of Pigs invasion, there was a major diplomatic crisis known as the Cuban Missile Crisis in which the US and USSR negotiated almost exclusively with one another about the placement of nuclear arms on Cuba. The US claimed that it was being threatened by the proximity of the missiles while at the exact same time the US had missiles placed in Turkey, a neighboring country to the USSR. Cuba was largely portrayed as a puppet of the USSR and hardly ever examined as its own country. An article from the *New York Times* on October 23, 1962 (which was the beginning of the Cuban Missile Crisis), says that “[President John F. Kennedy] treated Cuba and the Government of Premier Fidel Castro as a mere pawn in Moscow’s hands and drew the issue as one with the Soviet Government.”<sup>25</sup> Grenada was no different than Cuba, there could not possibly be another island in the Caribbean that desired a socialist form of government. So, the US saw an opportunity to take another try at invading a small Caribbean nation to prove that capitalism prevails over communism in the Western Hemisphere.

Meanwhile, back in Grenada, Maurice Bishop was struggling to stay in power. Not only was Bishop facing pushback from external pressures like the United States, but he also faced a power struggle within his own party. His Deputy Prime Minister, Bernard Coard, had been requesting that he and Bishop assume a dual-leadership role. Some will speculate that Bishop was considering accepting Coard’s offer as many members of his leadership had begun to lose faith that Bishop was “socialist enough.”<sup>26</sup> Bishop then traveled to Havana where, perhaps encouraged by Castro, declined Coard’s request for a dual leadership role.<sup>27</sup> When Bishop

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<sup>24</sup> Danielle Renwick, “US-Cuba Relations,” Center on Foreign Relations, last updated September 29, 2017. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-cuba-relations>

<sup>25</sup> “U.S. Imposes Arms Blockade on Cuba Finding Offensive Missile Sites; Kennedy Ready for Soviet Showdown,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 1962. <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/10/19/home/crisis-23.html>

<sup>26</sup> Peter Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars* (New York: Penguin, 2003,) 70.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

returned to Grenada from Cuba he was put under house arrest by Coard, later freed because of mass protests, and then ordered to be executed by Coard himself on October 19, 1983.<sup>28</sup>

Following Bishop's execution, Coard installed himself as the leader of Grenada and cut all communications with the outside world. The Chairman of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Eugenia Charles, who was known to be staunchly anti-communist, called a meeting and at that meeting it was suggested that OECS with assistance from the UK and the US intervene in Grenada. There was no call for help from inside Grenada, or anything for that matter, as the Revolutionary Military Command established by Bernard Coard and General Austin was unrecognized. On October 23, 1983, just four days after the assassination of Maurice Bishop, President Ronald Reagan authorized the invasion of Grenada to restore order to the island and protect American people and assets there.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Invasion of Grenada, 1983**

Many will speculate on why Ronald Reagan chose to invade Grenada and why he chose the date when the US invaded Grenada. The day that Reagan chose to invade, October 23, was the same day that the US Embassy in Lebanon was attacked. Some may say that this was a show of composure on Reagan's part to invade Grenada when he did. However, it could also be to draw attention away from the fact that many people did not support the ongoing intervention in Lebanon as well as provide morale to a public that had previously been demoralized by failures in Nicaragua and Vietnam.<sup>30</sup> A main critique of the Grenadian invasion is that the planning was

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>29</sup> Huchthausen, 75.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Kinzer, "30 years on: The legacy of Reagan's invasion of Grenada," *Al Jazeera America*, October 25, 2013. <http://america.america.com/articles/2013/10/25/invasion-grenadaronaldreagan.html>

very hasty, which resulted in more loss of life.<sup>31</sup> This hasty planning shows that there was a real sense of urgency in when the invasion occurred. Reagan sought to prove that the US could still successfully invade a nation to impose what they believe was the proper form of government and governing style and Grenada was an opportunity to do so. The invasion of Grenada was yet another way Grenada itself and Grenadians have been marginalized throughout most of modern history. Grenadians sent no request for aid and there was no major catastrophe to invade the nation besides the execution of Maurice Bishop. If the U.S. had invaded Grenada on the grounds that it believe that Grenadians were being mistreated under the current form of government, that is an entirely different issue altogether. Except, that was nowhere to be found in Reagan's explicit war goals. The goals of the invasion that were given were: to rescue Sir Paul Scoon (the Governor General of Grenada and the last remnant of the former government), secure Pearls Airport (the only completed airport on the island), secure the construction site of the new international airport in Point Salinas and use it to evacuate American medical students, and secure the campus of the American medical school.<sup>32</sup>None of those objectives even remotely pertained to the Grenadian people. Also, Reagan frequently cited anti-communist rhetoric to justify the Grenadian intervention. In an address made to a joint session of Congress on Central America, Reagan said of Grenada, "If we cannot defend ourselves [in Central America], we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere. Our credibility will collapse, our alliances would crumble, and the safety of our homeland would be put in jeopardy."<sup>33</sup> Additionally, the US military placed a press embargo on the island, not allowing any reporters onto Grenada at all. The military claimed the press embargo was to make sure the reporters did not get in the way of troops still

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>32</sup> Sandford and Vigilante, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Address on Central America," given April 27, 1983 to a joint session of US Congress. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-27-1983-address-central-america>

trying to secure the island. However, it was also clear that the US wanted to control the message coming out of Grenada, and since the invasion was so hastily planned the military did not have a censorship apparatus in place for the press yet.<sup>34</sup> It is obvious that the US was invading Grenada not out of genuine concern for Grenadians, but to prove that the US was still capable of peacekeeping following Lebanon. To an extent, the invasion of Grenada did improve the US' self-image. According to the Undersecretary of Defense at the time, Dov Zakheim, "The cumulative impact of Grenada on America's self-image should not be underestimated. It represented a clear-cut military success – something that the American public had not witnessed since Vietnam."<sup>35</sup>

### **The post-invasion years to now**

The invasion was a success for the US, but how did the rest of the world and Grenadians feel? The United Nations condemned the invasion of Grenada with a vote of 108 to 9, describing the invasion of Grenada a "flagrant violation of international law and of the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of [Grenada]."<sup>36</sup> Grenadians way of life also deteriorated following the invasion. American invaders expelled many foreign doctors, teachers, and civilians providing aid to the people, leading to a medical personnel crisis. There were no pediatricians left on the island following the invasion, even though 60% of the population was under twenty-five.<sup>37</sup> Grenada also lost its main buyers of nutmeg, which accounts for much of the nation's economy. Following the Grenadian invasion, the Grenadian government expelled all Russian

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<sup>34</sup> Huchthausen, 83.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations General Assembly, "General Assembly Resolution 38/7," <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/38/a38r007.htm>

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Zunes, "The US Invasion of Grenada," The Global Policy Forum, 2003. <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/155/25966.html>

diplomats. The main buyer of Grenadian nutmeg was Russia, and after Grenada expelled Russian diplomats they inadvertently expelled their main nutmeg buyer.<sup>38</sup> While a few western buyers sought to fill the void left by the loss of Russian investment, it did not stop Grenada's gross domestic product from plummeting. Herbert Blaize, a staunch supporter of Reagan, was voted into office during the first elections following the elections. While he was an elder statesman, Blaize was seen by many as authoritarian and lacking in communication. Under Blaize and the provisional government set up by the United States, the tax code was modified to attract foreign investment and reduce taxes on the wealthy, in accordance with Reagan's idea of "trickle-down" economics, which sees that if tax breaks are given to the wealthy the poor will receive the effects through job creation and improved opportunities. This may seem good for the development of Grenada, but trickle-economics have been proven not to work in several instances like the US state of Kansas<sup>39</sup>, the US during and following the Great Depression<sup>40</sup>, and various other examples, mostly inside of the United States. Following Blaize's tenure as the prime minister, Grenada opened a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC). TRCs were widely used throughout the 1990s and the 2000s to help provide closure to families and those affected by the NJM and the invasion by the US. This TRC just dredged up old memories and honestly did not provide much closure for the people of Grenada. In 2007 Grenada was hit by a massive hurricane, Hurricane Ivan and then were hit by another hurricane, Hurricane Emily, less than a year later. Following these two hurricanes, the nutmeg industry was devastated, and over 90% of buildings were damaged or destroyed. However, Grenada recovered quickly, and homes were

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<sup>38</sup> Seth Mydans, "Nutmeg Diplomacy in Grenada: The Aftermath of the Invasion," *The New York Times*, January 22, 1984. <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/01/22/business/nutmeg-diplomacy-in-grenada-the-aftermath-of-invasion.html?pagewanted=all>

<sup>39</sup> Eugene Robinson, "Trickle-down economics is a nightmare. Kansas proved it," *The Washington Post*, June 12, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trickle-down-economics-is-a-nightmare-kansas-proved-it/2017/06/12/c2d7aae0-4fa6-11e7-91eb-9611861a988f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trickle-down-economics-is-a-nightmare-kansas-proved-it/2017/06/12/c2d7aae0-4fa6-11e7-91eb-9611861a988f_story.html)

<sup>40</sup> Will Rogers, "And Here's How It All Happened," *St. Petersburg Times*, November 26, 1932.

repaired quickly, with exception to the nutmeg industry which needed time to regrow its trees and supply.

There should be a moment to acknowledge the disproportionate ratio of non-Grenadian sources to Grenadian sources. This is due to the lack of reliable, by American standards, Grenadian sources. For example, the National Archives of Grenada's website address is [www.grenadanationalarchives.wordpress.com](http://www.grenadanationalarchives.wordpress.com) and I am hesitant to cite any source that has WordPress in its title. It is my belief that Grenada should receive assistance not only from its own government, but other governments and international bodies to help build a reliable network of historians and historical sources from Grenadians. I do believe there is plenty of information that could be useful in these webpages, but they should be formatted in a more formal way and with the proper resources, Grenada would be able to compile a very good constructivist history of Grenada with the sources they have now.

Grenada, throughout its history, has been just a pawn in the game of geopolitics. Even since its discovery, Grenada has never been fully seen as its own fully sovereign nation or people. Columbus paid it no mind when claiming it for Spain just as Reagan paid it no mind when ordering the invasion of Grenada. Grenadians should be given their long overdue respect by external powers and finally treated as an equal player in the world. The culmination of Grenadian marginalization occurs when the US invaded the island as an effort to "rollback" communism in the Western Hemisphere. While many Grenadians supported the NJM, the US saw it necessary to invade to restore what they believed was the best form of government in Grenada, with little to no care for the Grenadian people in their invasion goals.

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