

Life & Debt is a 2001 documentary film by director Stephanie Black. The film uses familiar narration from Jamaica Kincaid's 1988 text *A Small Place* to articulate the effects of globalization on Jamaica. As we watch clips from the film, take some time to respond to the questions below. Your responses will be useful as you begin outlining your research paper.



Clip 1: Opening Montage

Take notes about what you see and hear. How might these images and sounds suggest the film's purpose?

Clip 2: Welcome to Jamaica, WTO Background, Voices in Conversation

What kinds of information are we presented in this section? Paraphrase each character's perspective(s) and concern(s).

Character	Position on WTO's involvement w/ Jamaican economic affairs
Michael Manley, <i>Former Prime Minister</i>	
Stanley Fischer, <i>Deputy Director of IMF</i>	
Michael Witter, <i>Economics Professor at University of the West Indies</i>	

How do these characters feel about the perspectives held by the other two? What effect does the filmmaker create by juxtaposing these different testimonies?

Clip 3: Agricultural Dilemmas (Pt. 1 Potatoes, etc)

Briefly summarize the concerns of local farmers. (*Hint: Much of this information can be found toward the beginning and end of the clip.*)

David Coore, former Minister of Finance, says “He holds the handle; you hold the blade.” What does this expression mean given the context of this conversation?

What is the perspective of the World Trade Organization here? How does it justify its policies?

Clip 4: Agricultural Dilemmas (Pt. 2 Milk)

This clip addresses the complexity of working with multiple money-lending institutions, especially the WTO and the IMF. Why is this process difficult for Jamaica’s government?

How does powdered milk from the U.S. eventually lead to the destruction of Jamaica’s dairy industry? What’s at stake with the loss of these local providers?

Briefly summarize the concerns of local dairy farmers/workers.

Clip 5 & 6: Agricultural Dilemmas (Pt. 3 Bananas)

How did the Lome agreement benefit the banana industry in Jamaica and other ACP (African, Caribbean, Pacific) countries?

How did Chiquita (along with U.S. pressure on the WTO) work to change this policy? Who was affected and what is at stake with such a change?

Clip 7: Native & Tourist Life

Summarize the narrator's commentary on the tensions of tourism and the gaze of native peoples.

Clip 8: Outsourcing & Free Trade Zones

What exactly is a Free Trade Zone?

What are the potential benefits of such an operation? Who receives these benefits?

What are the potential *drawbacks* of such an operation? Who stands to be negatively affected?

One labor policy commentator says, "The free trade and NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] agreements have impacted very badly on Jamaica. ...Low wage jobs do gravitate to low wage areas. This is happening throughout the world, especially with the new [global economic] order." What sorts of opportunities exist for workers to resist these policies that so negatively affect them? To what degree are these workers successful?

Clip 9: Power in the IMF

Briefly summarize how policy decisions are made within the IMF. Who are the winners and losers of such a policy?

Clip 10: McDonald's v. McDonald's

Director Stephanie Black uses this section of the film to create a virtual dialogue between interested parties in the debate between resisting outside forces and lowering trade barriers to invite global competition. (Barber would frame this as "Jihad v. McWorld" btw.) Briefly paraphrase each side's argument.

IMF	
Local Farmers	
Local Governmental Leaders	
Local Academics	

What is the director's implicit argument in structuring the clip this way? Is it effective, in your opinion? Why or why not?

Clip 11: Poultry Industry

Briefly summarize the effects of globalization on Jamaica's poultry industry.

Reflect on the director's use of juxtaposition toward the end of this clip. What are the implications of Jamaica's prime industry being tourism and hospitality? If most other industries are wiped out, what opportunities are left for citizens of this country?

Clip 12: The Journey Home

Below, write down everything you notice about what is happening in the final scene.

Considering what you wrote above, what is the effect of this scene on viewers? Does it crystallize the film's goals, or does it seem heavy-handed or out of place? Be specific.

FINAL QUESTION ON BACK→

Finally, consider the narrator's voiceover at the film's conclusion. Given the economic, political, and cultural dilemmas faced by the people of this country, how might such a quote work to communicate the director's ultimate message? Write your reflection below.

“Jamaica was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1493. Not too long after, it was settled by human rubbish from Europe who used enslaved but noble and exalted people from Africa to satisfy their desire for wealth and power. Eventually the masters left, in a kind of way. Eventually the slaves were freed, in a kind of way. Of course, the whole thing is, once you cease to be a master, you are no longer human rubbish; you're just a human being and all the things that adds up to. So, too, with the slaves. Once they are no longer slaves, once they're free, they're no longer noble and exalted. They're just human beings.”