



URBAN KICKSTART AWARD 2026

The Aubrey Barker Fund is excited to announce that Dorraine Duncan, an urban planner and co-founder of Jamaica-based research think-tank [Island City Lab](#), has been awarded the 2026 Urban KickStart Grant. Her research project aims to re-surface Jamaica's history of communal land tenure systems with the goal of reintroducing them as viable instruments for sustainable land regularization, prevention of community displacement, and the safeguarding of affordable housing and livelihoods across Jamaica's urban areas.

Instruments of collective land ownership/stewardship have existed throughout Jamaica's history, protecting and providing affordable housing. Post-Emancipation, these tenure systems have effectively de-commodified housing and land by removing them from the emerging globalized real estate markets and prioritized collective needs over individual profit and macro-economic abstractions.

Over the next year, Dorraine will unearth the breadth of communal land tenure forms, explore how existing land tenure instruments have manifested in practice, and generate public discourse around the legitimacy of communal land tenure instruments as a solution to land regularization and affordable housing in the island. Whether it's female housing cooperatives of the 70s, post-hurricane housing trusts from the 50s, or the semi-sovereign communal tenure of the Maroons, these examples offer valuable lessons on the legal and governance frameworks, social and political supports necessary for the mainstreaming of communal alternatives for the future.

The project will result in a number of reports, a peer-reviewed journal article, presentations at relevant conferences and events, and the development of a communal land practitioners' virtual network.

The Urban KickStart Grant is a new initiative for the Aubrey Barker Fund, working with Geoffrey Payne of GPA Associates. The scheme aims to improve secure access to land and housing by supporting research and other activity which advances and disseminates knowledge and skills in land management and related disciplines. We will do this by providing opportunities for young graduates to undertake research or other assignments that can help meet the needs of vulnerable urban communities for access to land and adequate housing on affordable terms. Grantees will also receive mentoring from international experts with expertise relevant to the product scope and location.