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# Movement Of The People: The Relationship Between Black Consciousness Movements, Race, and Class in the Caribbean

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Movement Of The People: The Relationship Between Black Consciousness Movements,  
Race, and Class in the Caribbean

by

Deborah G. Weeks

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Liberal Arts  
Department of Africana Studies  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

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## Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Dr. Trevor Purcell, without whose motivation and encouragement, this work may never have been completed. I will always remember his calm reassurance, expressed confidence in me, and, of course, his soothing, melodic voice.

I also dedicate this thesis to my family. To my mother, Jean Gerace, as someone I have always been able to count on for support. I would never have been able to continue my education financially, mentally, or physically without her behind me, holding me up. And to my three wonderful children, Jessica, Jeremy, and Maisha, for the many nights and weekends that I have spent hitting the books instead of spending time with them, I thank them for their understanding with all my heart. I can only hope that they are half as proud of me as I am of them. Also, to my father, Dr. Donald Gerace, and his wife, Kathy, who would not let me give up. By sharing their own stories, they made me feel that I was right on track and could make it through. I also want to thank my cousin, Robin, who has been my own personal cheerleader for the past three months.

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Movement of the People: The Relationship Between Black Consciousness  
Movements, Race, and Class in the Caribbean

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Black Power in Jamaica, Trinidad, and The Bahamas, comparing and contrasting the ability of the movements to garner the support of the people in these different locales. The primary focus of this work is the Caribbean Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Detailed responses to the movements are presented as those responses relate to not only race, but also class, and the response of local political leadership to the presence and methods of the movements. Following a brief overview of the history of European colonialism and the drive of the colonized for independence from colonial powers, Black Power is studied in greater detail.

In this thesis three issues are addressed that relate to the popularity of Black Power. The first is the impact of racial identity and ethnicity on the acceptance of Black Power. This is done through a comparison of Black Power in Jamaica, an independent country with a predominantly black population, and in Trinidad, an independent nation with a diverse population. The Bahamas provides an excellent comparison, as a colony with a large resident white population. The second issue is the political status of each country, and the effect of political status on the ability of Black Power to gain support and momentum. The status of the location as either an independent state, or a colonial

state, may have had an impact on the success, or at least the stated objectives, of the Movement as it evolved in that locale. Lastly, issues of class are addressed through an examination of the impact of the economic status of the individual within the society, and then secondarily the overall economic conditions of the country at a given time.

## Introduction

Many might wonder about the relevance of black consciousness movements in a region where there exists a black majority. The history of the Caribbean region did not include the overt, legalized racism of the United States. Nevertheless, the British Caribbean, both under colonialism and in the post-independence era, was marked by discriminatory systems in which there was a high correlation between race and class. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the region experienced a range of social changes including the right to organize labor, universal adult suffrage, and self-government. When these changes failed to provide relief from high rates of unemployment and poverty, the people hoped that relief would come via independence. However, independence once again failed to relieve the region of racialized economic disparity.

Even as independence from the British Empire failed to realize the socio-economic aspirations of the masses, the people continued relentlessly in their quest for equality and increased educational and economic opportunity for all members of Caribbean society. Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s sought to free Caribbean nations of foreign imperialism, and to reveal discriminatory systems hidden behind a facade of multi-racial harmony. The first use of the phrase "Black Power" is typically attributed to Stokely Carmichael as he used the phrase in rallying support during a protest march in Mississippi in 1966. Black Power symbolized a movement away from peaceful demonstrations for civil rights, towards militant demands for equal power.

Black Power emphasized black pride, as well as the rights of black people to share in economic and political power. The ideology of Black Power spread beyond the United States, as movements developed throughout the African Diaspora. While there were many similarities within the Caribbean nations and their respective Black Power movements, it is interesting and informative to examine these protest movements as they worked to institute Black Power in locations of varied demographic compositions and different stages of political and economic development.

This thesis investigates Caribbean Black Power movements in Jamaica, Trinidad, and the Bahamas during the 1960s and 1970s. This study compares and contrasts the ability of the movements to garner the support of the people in these different locales. Jamaica, with the largest population in the Anglophone Caribbean, was selected for this study as a predominantly black independent nation. Jamaica was the first of the former colonies to gain independence in 1962, followed shortly thereafter by Trinidad. Trinidad was chosen for comparison as an independent nation with a plural population, rather than a black majority. Ethnicity was also a factor in selecting the Bahamas for this study, as a location with a significant white population. The Bahamas also remained a British colony until 1973. This thesis details the goals of the Black Power movements in these regions, the responses to these movements, and the response of local political leadership to the presence of the movement.

### Research Questions

As I investigated the Black Power movements in the Caribbean, I found that there were three issues that needed to be addressed in further detail. First, whether the efforts of the movements were hindered in societies where the population was ethnically or

racially diverse. Did the movements attempt to reach out to other ethnicities, and if so, were these attempts successful? Second, how did the political status of a country affect the ability of the movement to gain support and momentum. Did the status of the location as either an independent state, or a colonial state, have an impact on the success, or at least the stated objectives, of the movements as it evolved in a particular locale? Thirdly, how did the economic status of a particular locale influence the popularity of the movement? This issue has two aspects: the individual economic status within the society and the overall economic conditions of the country at a given time.

## Resources

The resources used to examine the evolution of Black Power and other related movements in the Caribbean region were primarily secondary sources, gathered through library research, including books, essays, and published articles. Much of the available published research is concentrated on two locations in the Caribbean - Jamaica and Trinidad. The prevalence of research and data on these two locations likely stems from the fact that these two nations have the largest populations in the Anglophone Caribbean. Jamaica and Trinidad also host campuses for the University of the West Indies, affording them increased opportunity for conducting academic research. Trinidad and Jamaica also provide an interesting comparison due to drastic demographic differences. Although there is not an abundance of literature dedicated to the topic of Black Power in the Bahamas, Bahamian history is also well documented in secondary sources and offers an interesting perspective in relation to its demography.

## Terminology

In studies of the Caribbean the terminology used to designate ethnicity varies widely, often dependent on common usage of the day, and the national origin of the writer. For the purposes of this thesis I avoid the use of the term “Negro” to refer to people of African descent, unless included in a direct quote from an authoritative source. Instead, the more contemporary term “black” is used in reference to peoples of African descent, while “colored” is used to designate those of African descent with a “mixed” heritage. In Chapters 3 and 4 the term “African” is also used to describe those of African heritage. Use of the term “Indian” in this thesis refers to migrants from India and their descendants. Discussions of the *Caribbean* region are designated as such, and will generally refer to events or characteristics that apply to the Caribbean basin as a whole. “West Indies” is commonly used to refer to the Anglophone Caribbean unless otherwise specified.

## Organization

This thesis includes four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter provides a brief historical overview of the British West Indies, including colonialism, resistance and black consciousness movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, decolonization, and the onset of nascent independence. This background information is crucial to the establishment of the historical context out of which Black Power comes evolves in the 1960s. Similarly, each of the three successive chapters begins with a brief overview of colonialism and progress towards independence as specifically related to the country or colony addressed in that chapter. The second chapter details the Black Power Movement in Jamaica.

Following a brief overview of the objectives of Black Power in Jamaica, the Walter Rodney Riots of October 1968 are discussed in detail. The third chapter examines Trinidad, an independent nation with an ethnic composition approximately equally split between Asian Indians and people of African descent, with small minorities of whites, Chinese, and other ethnic groups. The diversity of Trinidad in contrast to the predominantly African-descended populations found in Jamaica provides an excellent opportunity to investigate the impact of ethnic diversity on the focus and success of Black Power. The relationship between the black and Indian groups will be explored, much through a discussion of the February Revolution of 1970. Moreover, Chapter four discusses Black Power in the Bahamas, a British colony until 1973, and the limited appeal and success of the movement in this area. Moreover, it compares the response and reaction to Black Power in the Bahamas to that seen in Jamaica and Trinidad. The thesis concludes with a summary account of the information presented in the second, third, and fourth chapters. In this section a final, overall comparison addresses each of the three primary research questions regarding racial composition, political status, and class.

## Chapter One

### The Footprint of Colonialism

The effects of British colonization are complex, and encompass a myriad of socio-political and economic issues. The objective of this chapter is to provide an overview of the major events that led up to the rise of Black Power in the late 1960s and early 1970s in this region. This chapter will provide an overview of the colonization of the Caribbean region by the British beginning with the settlement in the 1600s, the rise of the plantation economy, and the consequences of African slavery and emancipation. The discussion then moves to the Crown Colony System, the rise of West Indian nationalism, and the organization of labor in the 1930s. The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the events leading up to the independence of the vast majority of the former colonies in the 1960s.

#### Colonization

Spanish explorers initiated the extension of Europe into the Caribbean region in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. The arrival of the Spanish in 1492 disrupted the seemingly quiet existence of the indigenous people of the Caribbean, who rapidly dwindled in the region within the first century of Spanish colonization of the area. For the first century of colonial occupation, the Spanish and the Portuguese dominated the Caribbean region. The British, French, and the Dutch arrived after the Spanish, intending to develop the

colonies as extensions of their homes in Europe, as well as potential commercial empires.<sup>1</sup> Life was harsh for the settlers in the region, and soon settlements began to fail, sending many of the settlers back to Europe or to the mainland colonies of North America. The commercial interests remained, and seared an indelible imprint on the colonies.

During the time of Spanish settlement of the Caribbean region in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, other powers of Europe were anxious to reduce the strength of the Spanish empire. England, France, and Holland worked in allegiance to defeat the Spanish monopoly in the West Indies.<sup>2</sup> The Dutch played a major role in the reduction of the power of the Spanish American Fleet, which rendered Spain incapable of preventing further European expansion in the Americas. After several failed attempts, and many years of piracy and warfare, the first successful English and French settlements were established on Saint Christopher (St. Kitts) in 1624. Using St. Kitts as a springboard, the British and French expanded their occupation of the Caribbean.<sup>3</sup> Colonies changed hands among the four major Caribbean interests through battles in the Americas and Europe and were exchanged like prizes in treaties and compromises.<sup>4</sup>

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the British continued to take possession of territories in the Eastern region of the Lesser Antilles including Barbados, Nevis, Antigua, and Montserrat.<sup>5</sup> Of great significance was the conquest of the Spanish colony of Jamaica in 1655. The Treaty of Madrid formally ceded Jamaica, along with the nearby Cayman Islands, to the British in 1670. British strongholds in the Caribbean continued to build when France ceded her territory in St. Kitts to England in 1712, and the Crown further laid claim to the Dutch Leeward Islands of St. Thomas and St. John in 1722.<sup>6</sup> By the

early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain was a formidable power in the region, with the further occupation of Dominica, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Tobago, and the mainland territories that would become British Guiana and British Honduras.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 1.1 Map of the Caribbean Region<sup>8</sup>**



Early 17<sup>th</sup> century British colonizers established small farms to cultivate tobacco, indigo, and cotton.<sup>9</sup> Tobacco farms had been established in North America by the early 1600s, and had been highly profitable.<sup>10</sup> Initial efforts in the Caribbean also proved quite rewarding; however, the ever-increasing supply from mainland plantations drove the price downward and, along with the rise of large landholding sugar interests, squeezed the Caribbean tobacco farmers out of the market.<sup>11</sup> Indigo, cotton, and ginger realized considerable profits for settlers throughout the region, however these industries were also

marginalized by the high price of sugar as an export commodity. Small farms were consolidated into large plantations, the importation of slave labor increased dramatically, and sugar became king in the Caribbean. (See Table 1.1) Barbados quickly became the jewel of the British crown, with the other islands in the British West Indies soon following their example.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 1.1 Barbados Land Holdings**<sup>13</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Proprietors</b>	<b>Land Holding</b>
1645	11,200	10 acres
1665	745	200-1,000 acres

### The Rise of Sugar and Slavery

By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the sugar industry dominated the Caribbean region, although some non-sugar crops continued to be produced. Some colonies did not produce any exportable quantities of sugar at all, while others, such as Jamaica, possessed a topography that allowed the use of land unsuitable for cane production to diversify exports, as well as the production of staple goods. The colonies of the Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, Bahamas, Barbuda, Anguilla, and much of the Virgin Islands never established sugar production, but were instead engaged in maritime, lumber, or other agricultural industries, such as the production of subsistence crops and livestock.<sup>14</sup> Plantations on St. Kitts, Antigua, and Barbados produced cotton as well as sugar, while Jamaica continued to produce tobacco, coffee and indigo, and maintain a sizeable livestock industry even after the rise of large-scale sugar production.<sup>15</sup> Despite some level of diversity in production, in colonies where sugar was produced, sugar dominated the economy. In 1832, sugar and related industries accounted for 76% of the total

receipts in Jamaica. In Barbados, where the dominance of sugar was greater, the industry accounted for 97% of all exports.<sup>16</sup>

Sugar was a highly profitable industry, making wealthy men of the plantation owners. While sugar dominated the economy of much of the West Indies, it could not have done so without the enslaved labor of Africans provided by the Atlantic slave trade. Throughout the Caribbean it can be shown that the importation of large numbers of slaves occurred when and where sugar plantations were established.<sup>17</sup> When sugar was on the rise in the mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century, some effort was made to import white laborers as indentured labor. For some time the Lesser Antilles labor force was primarily comprised of convicts, Irish revolutionaries, and thousands of English indentured servants.<sup>18</sup> The supply of the white labor force was not able to meet the ever-increasing demand for labor on the sugar plantations. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, sugar and African slavery were dominant, and were inter-dependent elements of the West Indian economy.<sup>19</sup> As plantation slavery became dominant in the region, the captive African population became the majority. Even in locations such as Barbados where the white population was more than five times the black population prior to sugar production, whites were quickly outnumbered as thousands of slaves were imported to work in support of the sugar industry.

**Table 1.2 Pre and Post Sugar Population of Barbados and Jamaica<sup>20</sup>**

<b>Barbados</b>			<b>Jamaica</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Slave</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Slave</b>
1643	25,000	6,000	1658	4,200	1,400
1650	17,000	37,000	1698	6,800	40,000

The European plantation system exploited captive African laborers to enrich, in most cases, the minority white European interest.<sup>21</sup> The European system created a hierarchy of economic class and social status which generally formed along racial lines, although there were most certainly exceptions in the absence of a rigid caste system.<sup>22</sup> Wealth determined economic class, whether through occupation, accumulation of property, or by inheritance, all of which are very real, and tangible attributes. Social status was more variable and elusive in comparison, it was determined by societal values and expectations, and was influenced by a variety of factors such as kinship, religion, education, and language, as well as certain aspects of occupation and economic standing.<sup>23</sup> Given the many variables of social status, it is clear that it would have been very difficult to attain a high status level based on wealth or skin color.

The upper class was comprised of the white elite, a small group of those in control of large amounts of wealth and political power. Many members of the elite were absentee landholders residing in England or residing away from the colonies for long periods. The upper class also included a lesser group of white merchants, professionals, and small farmers and landholders. The door to elite status was open to this secondary group, some who accumulated wealth on small ventures and then invested in sugar or rose in status as government officials. This opportunity became increasingly available by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when a large number of elite proprietors left the islands. There were also poor whites that were lacking in both economic means and status, making the reach to the upper class difficult, yet not impossible. Despite lack of wealth, poor whites occupied an elevated social status when compared to that of free people of color.<sup>24</sup>

Primarily free blacks and free coloreds occupied the middle tier of society.<sup>25</sup> This segment of society had accumulated some amount of wealth and property; however, they were generally not socially accepted by the white upper class, and were often subjected to laws that limited their civil rights.<sup>26</sup> The formation of a freed black or colored population was of concern to the plantocracy who were opposed to the development of a large population that might favor emancipation or assist in slave rebellions.<sup>27</sup> Throughout the Leeward Islands, freedmen could not hold public office, vote, serve as jurors, or stand as witnesses in a court of law.<sup>28</sup> The fears of the planters may have been unfounded, however, as there is little evidence of wide-scale cooperation between freedmen and the enslaved.<sup>29</sup> In fact, it has been suggested that in an effort to address their own denigrated status within West Indian society, free people of color made every effort to distance themselves from the enslaved Africans that occupied the lowest level of the social structure.<sup>30</sup>

Although the social structure is most commonly discussed as three distinct units, each layer of the structure encompassed diverse segments of the population. Particularly within the opposed extremes of society, there were factions that were frequently at odds with each other.<sup>31</sup> Within the upper class, there was contention between small and large proprietors for available resources as well as local political power.<sup>32</sup> Local planters were often at odds with colonial officials and the imperial government, particularly in matters that addressed slavery, amelioration, and abolition.<sup>33</sup> Despite their differences, racial solidarity among whites increased during the 18<sup>th</sup> century as this segment of the population increasingly feared slave insurrections, and fought to ensure continued economic and political dominance over the colored and black populations.<sup>34</sup> The

enslaved African population that occupied the bottom of the social pyramid was also diverse, as it encompassed groups of African and creole slaves as well as a variety of African ethnicities. Despite differences in language and custom, the common condition of Africans and creoles united the enslaved population.<sup>35</sup>

The anxiety experienced by the white population was not completely unfounded. Most forms of resistance were expressed by individual acts of non-cooperation, sabotage, or arson. The latter generated significant fear among the planters, as they learned that cane field fires were often used to signal the start of larger rebellions and uprisings.<sup>36</sup> One of the most common forms of resistance was that of running away or *marronage*. Maroon communities were found throughout the colonies, but were most common in Jamaica where the physical geography was favorable for runaway groups to be able to conceal and sustain themselves.<sup>37</sup> Many of the early slave revolts and rebellions were led by African slaves seeking to escape the plantation and form free maroon communities, while later rebellions plotted to overthrow the plantation system.<sup>38</sup> By the late 1700s, the planters were faced with opposition from both sides, in the form of slave revolt and resistance within the region, as well as from an increasing abolitionist movement in England.<sup>39</sup>

British abolitionists formed the Anti-Slavery Society and pressured Parliament to abolish the slave trade in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>40</sup> The French Revolution delayed a decision on the matter. However, in 1807 the British abolished the slave trade.<sup>41</sup> Amelioration codes were passed in 1820 that were intended to improve the working and living conditions of the slaves by limiting work hours and restricting punishment; however, the implementation of the reforms were severely delayed.<sup>42</sup> West Indian

assemblies were outraged at the intrusion of the British Government into local affairs, and argued each point of the codes, but were particularly opposed to the right of manumission that the code granted to slaves able to purchase their freedom.<sup>43</sup> Planters complained that natural increase of the slave population was not sufficient to keep a sufficient labor force on the plantation, and that unrest among the slave population was on the rise due to the increased workload.<sup>44</sup> In 1831, fresh leadership revitalized the abolitionist movement, and there was a dramatic increase in public support. At the same time, the Crown was growing tired of the resistance shown by the legislative colonies.<sup>45</sup>

Rumors circulated among the slaves that the King had granted emancipation but that planters had refused to comply. These rumors sparked a major insurrection involving some 60,000 slaves in Jamaica in December of 1831. As a result the West India Committee was created and charged with determining if it would be possible to continue to withhold freedom from the slaves without fear of further revolt.<sup>46</sup> Up to this point abolitionists had focused on slavery reforms and ameliorative acts. However, after the Jamaican revolt they began to push for absolute emancipation.<sup>47</sup> After much debate, the Abolition of Slavery Act was passed in 1833. The Act called for gradual emancipation commencing August 1, 1834. On that date slavery was legally ended in British colonies, however, all freedmen were required to serve an apprenticeship period of six years for agricultural workers, or four years for domestic servants. Former slaveholders were compensated £20,000,000 by the British Parliament. Apprentices were required to work 45 hours per week for their former owners without pay. In exchange, the apprentices were provided with legally established allowances of food and clothing, along with lodging and medical care.<sup>48</sup> Neither party was content with the apprenticeship

system. The slaves resented the continuation of forced labor, while the planters feared that emancipation would lead to a deterioration of status and authority.<sup>49</sup>

### Post-Emancipation

In theory, the apprenticeship period was to be used to provide a smooth transfer from slavery to freedom for the former slaves as well as the planters that were dependent on their labor. In reality little changed in the relationship between the former slave and the planter, with most benefit to the latter. Children under the age of six were excluded from apprenticeship, and were immediately freed, as were all children born after August 1, 1834. Since the children were not under apprenticeship, planters were not required to provide them with food, clothing, or shelter.<sup>50</sup> Limitations on the number of work hours required of the apprentices did provide some time for apprentices to work for wages, which allowed them to purchase plots of land or their manumission. Manumission fees as dictated by the Abolition Acts were to be set at a fair price, determined by a board comprised of two planters and an independent judge. The boards tended to demonstrate bias toward the planter and would routinely set the appraisal at an exorbitant amount.<sup>51</sup> If there was one advantage gained by the former slaves it was the ability to purchase property. In the larger territories, the former slaves were able to purchase land individually, or as members of cooperatives.<sup>52</sup> For the planter the benefits of the apprenticeship system were more numerous.

The primary concern of the planters was to maintain the white oligarchy and social structure that they had enjoyed prior to emancipation. The apprenticeship period allowed time for local assemblies to establish a new legal system, a banking industry, and

to explore new technology and labor management techniques that would improve the efficiency of production processes and reduce labor costs.<sup>53</sup> Stipendiary Magistrates (SMs) were sent to the colonies to oversee the administration of the apprenticeship system and protect the apprentices from abuse. The grossly underpaid SMs were easily wooed by the planters, which corrupted their objectivity when they were required to intervene.<sup>54</sup> Abolitionists that had opposed the apprenticeship system continued to complain that those paid by the Crown to oversee the system were corrupt and biased in favor of the local elite. Early in 1837 the abolitionists delivered petitions to the Government declaring that the apprentices were suffering under a system that was incapable of protecting them and that the former slaves were deserving of immediate and total freedom. If the planters remained adamant about sustaining the existing apprenticeship system, the Government was prepared to introduce a reform bill that would increase the power of colonial executives and reduce the authority of the local assembly. Word of the proposed reforms reached the West Indies and left the planters with little choice if they hoped to maintain their dominance of the local assemblies. Faced with persistent resistance on the part of the apprentices and the threat of increased agitation by the abolitionists, the planters conceded to requests from the Government to end the apprenticeship period on August 1, 1838.<sup>55</sup> The end of the apprenticeship period brought what was supposed to be full freedom to the former slaves. What remained to be seen was the reaction of the former slaves to their freedom, and their willingness to continue to participate in the plantation system as free laborers.

## Rise of Crown Colony

The early end to the apprenticeship system caught the plantocracy off guard, and unprepared to contend with a black majority that could easily earn the right to vote through property ownership. For the freedmen of Barbados and the Leeward Islands, there was little place else for them to live than on the estate. Nearly all of the available land was in use, and consumed by commercial agricultural production.<sup>56</sup> In the larger colonies where land was available for peasant settlement, the former slaves left the estates and formed peasant settlements. By 1846 only one third of the former slaves continued to reside on the plantations of Jamaica, the rest had either purchased land, or were squatting on vacant land.<sup>57</sup> The local assemblies and the Colonial Office agreed on two points: the colonies should continue to pursue plantation agriculture and political control of the colonies was safest if kept out of the hands of the uneducated former slaves.<sup>58</sup> The departure of the laborers from the plantations and their elevation of status to that of freeholder threatened both of those objectives. Most of the British West Indies was administered under the Representative System of government. The Representative System most often consisted of a Crown appointed governor, an executive council of 12 appointed positions that comprised the upper house, and a local assembly elected by freeholders of the colony.<sup>59</sup> The plantocracy dominated the assemblies, enabling them to assert considerable political power through their control of the economy. Upon emancipation, the assemblies scrambled to tighten franchise laws to restrict the participation of black freeholders in the election process, knowing that the black majority could easily remove the white elite from power.<sup>60</sup> During the first decade of

emancipation, the planters received little sympathy from the liberal controlled Colonial Office; however, in 1846 imperial policy began to change.<sup>61</sup>

The Colonial Office sympathized with the proprietors and supported changes to legislation that allowed for increased taxation, the import of indentured labor from Africa and India, and stricter enforcement of vagrancy laws and the eviction of squatters on Crown lands.<sup>62</sup> Discontent mounted among the former slaves, many living in conditions that resembled pre-emancipation. Most colonies experienced protests or violent expressions of frustration and dissatisfaction. Perhaps the most significant was the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica in 1865. In October of 1865, disturbances began in Morant Bay when peasants protested the prosecution of a local man for assault. Government officials ordered the arrest of one of the protestors for disruptive behavior; however, the peasants rescued the man and fought with the police.<sup>63</sup> Several days later the police attempted to arrest the alleged leader of the protestors, Paul Bogle, a Baptist preacher that was popular with the local peasantry. A large group from the village that would not allow Bogle's arrest thwarted the police once again. On October 11, Bogle and several hundred supporters marched into Morant Bay with sticks and machetes and besieged the town. The violence spread toward neighboring Port Antonio and lasted several days before British troops and maroons were called upon to crush the rebellion. Troops were ordered to give no quarter to rioters, who were shot on sight.<sup>64</sup> The maroons caught Paul Bogle, and hanged him from the courthouse. George William Gordon, an outspoken Assembly member and leader of Bogle's church, was quickly court-martialed and executed. In all over 400 men and women were shot down during the insurrection or executed, with another 600 brutally flogged.<sup>65</sup>

According to William A. Green, “The Morant Bay uprising was not simply a conflict of race, but in that affair as in all aspects of life and struggle in the West Indies, race was a significant factor.”<sup>66</sup> The Morant Bay Rebellion was a clear sign to the local assembly, as well as the Colonial Office, that the black majority was ready to wage war against the oppression of the white minority.<sup>67</sup> In the wake of the Rebellion, Governor Eyre, who was under investigation for his brutal response to the Rebellion, appealed to the assembly to dissolve itself in favor of strong executive government. The Assembly, still shaken by the events in Morant Bay, responded favorably to Eyre’s suggestion. The Colonial Office, which had long wanted constitutional change in the colonies, also responded positively and immediately transformed Jamaica into a Crown Colony.<sup>68</sup> Over the next few years the vast majority of the colonies of the British West Indies would be transitioned to Crown Colony rule.

Transition to Crown Colony government established a wholly nominated legislature and dissolved the elected Assembly. This form of Crown Colony rule was referred to as a “pure Crown Colony.” The Bahamas, British Guiana, and Barbados were the only British colonies in the West Indies to retain representative government. All other colonies in the British West Indies transitioned to pure Crown Colony rule before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some colonies transitioned from representative government to a “semi-representative Crown Colony” rule before becoming pure Crown Colonies. Although this form of government included some elected members of the assembly, the Crown appointed Governor and his nominated members outnumbered them, and so could do little to effect legislation.<sup>69</sup> The elimination of local participation in the political process relieved the fear of a black majority electorate.

## West Indian Nationalism

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century found the British West Indies in much the same state as the region had been at the onset of Crown Colony rule. Sugar remained an important export staple; however, coffee, bananas, tobacco, and cocoa in some colonies supplemented the agricultural economy.<sup>70</sup> The West Indian sugar industry had gone into a depression in the late 1800s, causing many planters to abandon their plantations.<sup>71</sup> Many of the planters that remained bought up the newly available land, and consolidated their land holdings. Much of the peasantry that remained in the rural areas participated in agricultural production through sharecropping or other rental arrangements, with most of the available land still either in sugar production or in the hands of large landowners. Others made their way to the growing urban areas in search of wage employment, but there was little work available.<sup>72</sup> Although the colored and black middle class continued to grow, the white upper class remained entrenched, and the masses continued to suffer under colonialism and desperate living conditions.<sup>73</sup>

A rash of riots protesting low wages and high unemployment erupted in St. Kitts, Trinidad, Jamaica, British Guiana, Dominica, and Montserrat between 1893 and 1903.<sup>74</sup> A British Royal Commission sent to the region in 1897 determined that the root of the problem was the lack of available land for the formation of a rural peasantry and recommended the establishment of smallholder settlements. Small landholders in Jamaica increased from 50,000 in 1860 to 133,169 in 1902. These small proprietors not only produced subsistence crops, but export staples such as coffee, bananas, ginger, and logwood as well.<sup>75</sup> Strong peasantries also developed in Grenada, Tobago, Nevis, and Dominica.<sup>76</sup>

Many West Indians not involved in agricultural endeavors migrated to Panama to work on the construction of the Panama Canal or to Central America to work for the large fruit companies on banana plantations in search of wage employment.<sup>77</sup> In the Leeward Islands of St. Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla, and Antigua, mass numbers of men would migrate for six months of the year to the Dominican Republic, leaving their families behind dependent on cash remittances. Each year when they would flood back to their island homes, they would encounter the frustration of joblessness and poverty. Slowly the circle of migration widened outside of the Caribbean region, and the United States became a popular destination. Between 1901 and July of 1924, when the US enacted quotas restricting immigration, 102,000 black West Indians entered the US. Many West Indians that migrated to the US settled in New York, where they organized and fought for occupational opportunities previously reserved for whites only. Of particular note was the 1916 arrival in Harlem of Jamaican Marcus Garvey.<sup>78</sup>

Anti-colonial sentiment had continued to grow in the Caribbean region at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the working class began to organize under the leadership of educated middle class intellectuals.<sup>79</sup> The white upper class hesitated to antagonize the metropole in fear of their fate at the hands of the black majority, while the black and colored middle class remained torn between nationalist sentiment and the fear of loss of status if they aligned themselves with the black masses. These rifts and divisions along class lines and among the middle class caused nationalist organizations to form along racial lines, with the broadest support coming from the black lower class.<sup>80</sup> “These ‘racial’ movements sought to instill self pride and self worth in blacks and browns, and also formulated specific plans for the concrete betterment of those that they defined as

their brethren and sistren.”<sup>81</sup> The emergence of Black Nationalist organizations in the Caribbean coincided with the development of the Pan-African Movement throughout the African Diaspora.<sup>82</sup>

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) established by Garvey in Jamaica in 1914 launched a new wave of Black Nationalism and consciousness.<sup>83</sup> Many considered the UNIA to be one of the more radical movements of the early 1900s. Following the relocation of the headquarters of the UNIA from Jamaica to New York in 1916, the leadership was primarily composed of Caribbean men that had migrated to the US. Some 78% of the UNIA branches were located in the US, however, only 25% of its leadership were African Americans, the rest were of Caribbean origin. Many African Americans, as well as Africans throughout Africa and the Diaspora, supported Garvey’s ideas of pride in African heritage, and his back to Africa platform. The movement had some 4 million supporters worldwide at its peak, with branch offices located throughout the world, including the US, the Caribbean, England, Africa, and Australia. Some link the effects of this movement to the beginnings of decolonization struggles throughout the Caribbean and Africa.<sup>84</sup> The middle class of the Caribbean embraced Garvey’s ideas as they voiced demands for equal opportunity in civil service, the right to vote, and increased political power on a local level.<sup>85</sup> The UNIA was particularly popular among West Indian soldiers after their return home from World War I.<sup>86</sup>

### The Inter-War Era

Black West Indian soldiers had experienced severe racial discrimination and humiliation during their military service in the British West Indies Regiment in World

War I. They returned home disgusted with European imperialism.<sup>87</sup> Thousands of volunteers throughout the British Caribbean joined two battalions of the British West Indian Regiment (BWIR) to fight overseas in World War I. The battalions were only allowed to fight in Palestine and Jordan, and were treated primarily as labor battalions relegated to handling ammunition, digging trenches, and cleanup duties.<sup>88</sup> The British War Office dictated that all officers of the Regiment must be white, and determined that black West Indian soldiers were not eligible for pay increases given to white British soldiers. This treatment further increased racial and class consciousness among the soldiers.<sup>89</sup> As soldiers returned home from abroad they brought back a heightened awareness of the colonial system under which they lived, and saw that the system must be changed for them to reach their aspirations. The returning soldiers became the political agitators that laid the groundwork for future generations of politicians that would dismantle the colonial system.<sup>90</sup>

**Table 1.3 World War I Volunteers in the British West Indian Regiment<sup>91</sup>**

<b>Colony</b>	<b>Volunteers (including officers)</b>
Jamaica	10,280
Trinidad and Tobago	1,478
Barbados	831
Bahamas	441
Mainland colonies of Belize and Guiana	1,233
Leeward Islands	229
Windward Islands	1,109

The Colonial Office was well aware of the growing racial tension and discontent among the black soldiers of the BWIR.<sup>92</sup> They so greatly feared the outbreak of

disturbances upon the soldier's return home that they warned the colonial Governors and had destroyers standing by to quell any disturbances. While disturbances were not widespread, the returning soldiers were at the heart of demonstrations that broke out in Belize, Honduras, and Trinidad.<sup>93</sup> The World War I veterans, confronted by unemployment and low wages, founded some of the first labor organizations and political parties.<sup>94</sup> The first organized labor rebellions of the 1900s swept through the Caribbean in 1918 and 1919 aimed to improve working conditions and employment opportunities for the poor. During this time there was also an increase in nationalist tendencies and the desire of the mass population to be out from under the repressive colonial power of the Crown Colony.<sup>95</sup> It was clear that in order to achieve social and economic justice, it would be necessary to control local government.<sup>96</sup> Some felt that effecting change in the political structure would have to be done through revolution and rebellion, as many residents of the colonies lacked the right to vote.<sup>97</sup>

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. E.F.L. Wood, was sent to the colonies to investigate the possibility of constitutional reforms toward self-government and to assess the possibility of federation.<sup>98</sup> Wood noted the divisions in the population along color lines and determined that there was not sufficient leadership in the colonies representative of a cross segment of society to grant representative government. Wood did recommend moderate reforms in some colonies that would increase the number of elected unofficials; however, the nominated officials retained majority status. Jamaica was the only colony for which Wood recommended making elected members of the Assembly the majority. Wood's recommendations were implemented in Trinidad, Dominica, and the Windward Islands, though not in Jamaica.

Wood's report cautioned that there seemed little local support for federation at that time, and the region was much too diverse for a successful implementation. The results of Wood's investigation did not satisfy those seeking representative government, who continued to request further constitutional reform from the Crown. The Crown declined a proposal for the creation of a federation of the colonies in the Lesser Antilles, however, constitutional reforms increased the number of elected officials, and some expansion of the franchise was implemented in the Leeward and Windward Islands during the 1930s.<sup>99</sup>

The 1930s were watershed years for the development of labor organizations as the desperation generated by the worldwide Depression revitalized demands for political freedom and economic opportunity. West Indian workers that had found employment in Latin America also returned home at this time, increasing the population, while there were simultaneously decreased opportunities for local employment.<sup>100</sup> Unemployment and underemployment was rampant throughout the colonies. Where work could be found the wages were low and the hours were long. Families, often without adequate housing, suffered from malnutrition and related illnesses as living conditions declined.<sup>101</sup> In response to economic and social pressure, labor rebellions exploded to new levels between the years of 1934 and 1939.<sup>102</sup>

The rebellions of this era took on a more militant flavor as violence and property damage took their toll.<sup>103</sup> In 1935, the sugar workers in St. Kitts and British Guiana went on strike, followed by the coal workers in St. Lucia. Oilfield workers went on strike in Trinidad in 1937, sparking labor unrest that spread to Barbados, St. Lucia, British Guiana, and Jamaica.<sup>104</sup> Demands of labor leaders were not confined to improved working conditions, as they agitated for universal suffrage, elected legislatures, and a

reduction of the powers of the governor.<sup>105</sup> Within three years the labor revolts had reached dangerous levels, prompting London to dispatch a Royal Commission, headed by Lord Moyne, to investigate the social conditions of the British territories.<sup>106</sup>

**Table 1.4 1930s Labor Rebellions<sup>107</sup>**

Colony	Year(s)
Belize	1934 <sup>108</sup>
Trinidad	1934, 1937
St. Kitts	1935
St. Lucia	1935, 1937
British Guiana	1935, 1937
Barbados	1937
Jamaica	1937, 1938
St. Vincent	1935
St. Lucia	1935

The ten-member Moyne Commission visited most of the British West Indian colonies between October 1938 and April 1939 to investigate the social and economic conditions present in each colony. The Commission's findings were detailed in the Moyne Report, which was signed and submitted on December 2, 1939, shortly after the onset of World War II.<sup>109</sup> The details of the report were so dismal that the Government opted to keep the report unpublished until 1945, lest it be used as negative propaganda against the Crown during World War II. Aside from detailing wretched social conditions in the colonies, the Moyne Report cited that the primary causes of the labor unrest were increasing nationalism and ethnic identity and a heightened awareness of Caribbean poverty.<sup>110</sup> The Commission urged the British Government to establish a West Indian Welfare Fund, financed by an annual grant of funds to be used for education, public health services, housing, and social welfare services. The Commission also advised that

legislation should be established that would allow the growth of trade unionism and moderate constitutional reform. While the Commission recognized the wide spread support for increased self-government, it advised that Crown control over finances was essential while social reforms were established. Although the Commission recommended an expansion of the electorate, it also recommended a decrease in the number of elected representatives, but that nominated officials should more accurately reflect all elements of the society.<sup>111</sup> Welfare and social reforms were implemented as quickly as possible to avoid further unrest in the colonies, although the amount made available to fund the improvements was substantially diminished by the expense of the war.<sup>112</sup>

#### World War II Era Reforms

Following the upheaval of the late 1930s, labor organizations sprung up throughout the colonies. In Jamaica the Bustamante Industrial Trades Union was formed, in Trinidad the Oilfield Trade Workers Union, Barbados formed the Barbados Workers Union and the British Honduras established the General Workers Union. Much more than trade unions, these organizations spawned the early political parties of the colonies.<sup>113</sup> The onset of World War II amplified the need for a strong labor movement as economic conditions throughout the region continued to decline. Wages continued to drop while unemployment and the cost of living continued to rise. The Colonial Office kept a watchful eye on the conditions in the colonies, however only band-aid reforms and solutions were implemented to prevent mass protest, with little offered in the form of substantive change for several years. Some labor and political leaders put anti-colonial agitation on hold until the end of the war, although particularly in Jamaica, Trinidad, and

Barbados, advances toward universal suffrage and representative government were made during the wartime years.<sup>114</sup>

World War II disrupted the importation of consumer goods that the region relied upon so heavily, forcing those countries with the ability to do so to begin producing their own commodities and to become more dependent on imports from the US. For the smaller colonies and those with shortages of arable land, there were real worries of starvation and malnutrition.<sup>115</sup> Where possible, import-substituting industries began to spring up to fill the void of the now unavailable imported food, beverages, and other consumer goods. Food production in Trinidad and Tobago at the end of World War II was two and a half times what it was prior to the war. It is also during this period that a direct US presence began to be felt in the region. Through lend-lease arrangements between the US and British governments, the US military established bases within the region to protect US interests.<sup>116</sup> Thousands of West Indian workers flocked to Trinidad, Antigua, British Guiana, and St. Thomas to fill the demand for unskilled laborers for the construction and maintenance of military facilities. For many, the employment was short-term: however, it did offer some relief.<sup>117</sup>

Dire economic conditions precipitated by the war certainly hampered, but did not stop, the progress toward self-government. During the war years in Trinidad, British Guiana, and British Honduras achieved some amount of constitutional reform. Jamaica, as predicted by Mr. Wood, was at the forefront of political organization, with the advancement of universal suffrage and a bicameral legislature dominated by a wholly elected House of Representatives in 1944.<sup>118</sup> Similar reforms toward majority elected representation were achieved in Barbados in 1947, with most of the colonies following

their lead by the early 1950s.<sup>119</sup> The Colonial Office and West Indian politicians continued to discuss federation, an idea that had been brewing since the turn of the century.<sup>120</sup> Supporters of federation saw it as advancement towards self-government, while detractors feared that a governing body comprised of diverse representatives would never be able to form a consensus on critical issues and the loss of financial support from the Crown.<sup>121</sup>

### The Road to Independence

During the 1950s constitutional reform continued to advance toward self-government and talks of federation intensified. Reports to the Crown in the 1920s and 1930s regarding federation indicated that there was a lack of qualified leadership in the colonies and that attempts to advance regional cooperation would only impede social development. However, advances made toward self-government during the 1950s, along with improved literacy rates, increased leadership from the educated middle class, and the establishment of the University of the West Indies,<sup>122</sup> rebutted most of the previous arguments.<sup>123</sup> Plans for federation lacked popular support, but were nevertheless hammered out between the Colonial Office and West Indian political leaders during conferences held in 1945, 1953, and 1956.<sup>124</sup> In 1958, the West Indies Federation incorporated the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and all the British colonies of the Leeward and Windward Islands. Inter-island bickering commenced at the inception of the Federation, with argument over where the official capital should be located. Arguments plagued the Federation, mostly between the larger territories of Jamaica and Trinidad and the smaller territories. Through popular

vote, the Jamaican people opted for independence, and relinquished membership in the Federation in September 1961. Trinidad soon followed suit and the Federation was dissolved in 1962.<sup>125</sup> Most of the smaller colonies reverted to Associated Statehood with Britain, while Barbados and Guyana<sup>126</sup> followed Jamaica and Trinidad into independence during the 1960s. Much had been accomplished thus far in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it remained to be seen whether the West Indies could shake the social and economic repression of colonialism.

**Table 1.5 Independence Status of the British West Indies<sup>127</sup>**

<b>Country Name</b>	<b>Independence</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
Anguilla		Territory of the U.K.
Antigua and Barbuda	1981	
Bahamas	1973	
Barbados	1966	
Belize	1981	
British Virgin Islands		Territory of the U.K.
Dominica	1978	
Grenada	1974	
Guyana	1966	
Jamaica	1962	
Montserrat		Territory of the U.K.
St. Kitts-Nevis	1983	
St. Lucia	1979	
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1979	
Trinidad and Tobago	1962	
Turks and Caicos		Territory of the U.K.

### Summary

By the 1960s, nationalist strategies had been unable to combat vulnerability to foreign interests and continued to be viewed as largely unsuccessful in satisfying the

masses, thereby prompting the development of social, political, and civic organizations focused on creating fundamental social change.<sup>128</sup> Still of primary concern was the stratification that had produced a strong correlation between race and class. Although black people had been successful in gaining political advantage, as a group they were still straggling economically.<sup>129</sup> Neo-colonialism developed beyond independence because new black and colored elites, educated by a colonial system, failed to sufficiently break the ties to colonial powers. Black Power attempted to break those ties by elevating black consciousness and dignity.<sup>130</sup>

Black Power movements were rooted in the premise that before black people can obtain some of the power and wealth that they had helped to create, they must learn to love and respect themselves.<sup>131</sup> To do this it would be necessary to eradicate the ideology that pervaded society dictating that goodness and worth were white and worthlessness was black. Some would give credit to US leaders of Black Power for inspiring West Indian Black Power leaders, such as Walter Rodney, who placed the movement in a Caribbean context, and spread it throughout the academic world. The most powerful US influences on Black Power movements in the Caribbean came from Black Nationalism as represented by Malcolm X and Black Power with its Trinidad born leader, Stokely Carmichael.<sup>132</sup>

Although the Caribbean was not characterized by the blatant and cruel systems of racism and racial injustice that existed within the US, there was nearly an equal correlation between blackness and poverty.<sup>133</sup> By encompassing the objectives of many of the previous Black Nationalist movements, Black Power movements in the Caribbean garnered support from organized labor and other groups that were critical of foreign

control and the newly formed elite bowing to the multinational corporations that dominated Caribbean economies.<sup>134</sup> The common aims of Black Power movements in the Caribbean included:

- Reorganize Caribbean economies with black people in positions of power and economic control, and release the region from the control of imperialism and foreign ownership.
- Reorganization of the political system to remove control from the “Afro-Saxons” that had fought for independence, and replacing them with those that would facilitate the rise of the disadvantaged.
- Remove any alignment between Caribbean governments and the colonial powers of Britain, France, Holland, and the neo-colonial United States.
- Restructure the educational system to teach black pride and advance ideas of a Black Diaspora.
- Democratize decision making so that the people would have a say in their own liberation and economic development.<sup>135</sup>

Massive strikes and street demonstrations associated with Black Power erupted in Curacao, Bermuda, Jamaica, Trinidad, Aruba, and Anguilla from 1968-1970. Most governments of the island nations sought to restrict, if not ban entirely, the events of the movement as it was unfolding in the United States, fearful of the form that it would take in the Caribbean. Although it might surprise those unfamiliar with the Caribbean economic and political structure that black governments would ban the works of black leaders, people familiar with the history of social development and the state of the economy in the region were hardly surprised by the attempts to censor the movement.<sup>136</sup>

The remaining chapters of this thesis will examine events surrounding Black Power as they unfolded in Jamaica, Trinidad, and the Bahamas. These three locations were selected for comparison based on differences in demographic composition, political status as an independent or British colony, and state of economic development. While all three of these locations experienced colonialism in much the same way, there exist differences between each of the locations that set them apart from each other and make them an interesting focus for this study.

Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Knight, Franklin W., *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 5-56.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, Eric, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969* (1970; London: Andre Deutsch Ltd.; New York: Vintage Books, 1984) 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> Knight 36-37.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of the changes in West Indian possessions, see Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro*, Chapter 7.

<sup>5</sup> Duke, Eric D., *Seeing race, seeing nation: Conceptualizing a 'united West Indies' in the British Caribbean and diaspora*, Diss. Michigan State University, 2007, ProQuest Digital Dissertations (ProQuest. USF Library, Tampa, FL 3 Mar. 2008) 15.

<sup>6</sup> Williams 91.

<sup>7</sup> Duke 15.

<sup>8</sup> Knight 7.

<sup>9</sup> Williams 111-112.

<sup>10</sup> Batie, Robert C., "Why Sugar? Economic Cycles and the Changing of Staples in the English and French Antilles 1624-1654," *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy*, ed. Dr. Hillary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (New York: The New Press, 1991) 39.

<sup>11</sup> Batie 42.

<sup>12</sup> Williams 112.

<sup>13</sup> Williams 112.

<sup>14</sup> Shepherd *Diversity* 176-177.

<sup>15</sup> Verene A. Shepherd, and Kathleen E. A. Monteith, "Non-Sugar Proprietors in a Sugar-Plantation Society," *Plantation Society in the Americas* Vol. 5.2-3 (1998): 206. See also Shepherd *Diversity* 176-177. For further discussion of production diversity and its impact on slave society, please see Shepherd, Verene, *Slavery Without Sugar: Diversity in Caribbean Economy and Society Since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Shepherd *Diversity* 178.

<sup>17</sup> Williams 40.

<sup>18</sup> Mintz, Sydney W., *Caribbean Transformations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 66.

<sup>19</sup> Goveia, Elsa V., *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) 104-105.

<sup>20</sup> Craton, Michael, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 105. See also Williams 137.

<sup>21</sup> Knight 58.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis, Gordon K., *The Growth of the Modern West Indies* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968) 20.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, M. G., *Stratification in Grenada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965) 234-238.

<sup>24</sup> Goveia 204-212.

<sup>25</sup> Duke 19.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis 72.

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<sup>27</sup> Handler, Jerome S., *The Unappropriated People* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974) 41.

<sup>28</sup> Goveia 218-219.

<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that this varied between the colonies. Michael Craton suggests that there was greater cooperation between the freedmen of Barbados and the slaves than was to be found in Jamaica. He accredits this to the much smaller free colored population of Barbados, and the more rigid social structure that served to reinforce racial solidarity rather than social affinity. Craton 256.

<sup>30</sup> Goveia 223. See also Beckles, Hillary McD., "Freedom without Liberty: Free Blacks in the Barbados Slave System," *Slavery Without Sugar: Diversity in Caribbean Economy and Society Since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. Verene A. Shepherd, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002) 199. Also Green, William A., *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 22.

<sup>31</sup> Duke 19.

<sup>32</sup> Shepherd and Monteith 225.

<sup>33</sup> Stinchcombe, Arthur L., *Sugar Island Slavery in the Age of Enlightenment: The Political Economy of the Caribbean World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) 180-181.

<sup>34</sup> Goveia 212-213. See also Beckles 199.

<sup>35</sup> Duke 19-20.

<sup>36</sup> Craton 53.

<sup>37</sup> Craton 61.

<sup>38</sup> Craton 99. See also Duke 21. African in this context refers to enslaved Africans that had been imported to the region, as opposed to creole slaves which had been born into slavery.

<sup>39</sup> Duke 21.

<sup>40</sup> Williams 256.

<sup>41</sup> Green 100.

<sup>42</sup> Turner, Mary, "The 11 o'clock flog: Women Work and Labor Law in the British Caribbean," *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom*, ed. Verene A. Sheperd (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 249.

<sup>43</sup> Green 104-105.

<sup>44</sup> Craton 163.

<sup>45</sup> Green 112.

<sup>46</sup> Green 114.

<sup>47</sup> Craton 318.

<sup>48</sup> Green 119-122.

<sup>49</sup> Green 130-131.

<sup>50</sup> Stinchcombe 265.

<sup>51</sup> Green 133.

<sup>52</sup> Knight 141-142.

<sup>53</sup> Green 130.

<sup>54</sup> Green 136-144.

<sup>55</sup> Green 154-161. See also Duke 26.

<sup>56</sup> Craton 324.

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- <sup>57</sup> Green 171.
- <sup>58</sup> Green 164.
- <sup>59</sup> Duke 28.
- <sup>60</sup> Green 177.
- <sup>61</sup> Green 186.
- <sup>62</sup> Green 187-188.
- <sup>63</sup> Craton 325-328.
- <sup>64</sup> Green 389.
- <sup>65</sup> Craton 328.
- <sup>66</sup> Green 391.
- <sup>67</sup> Duke 32.
- <sup>68</sup> Green 396-397.
- <sup>69</sup> Duke 32-33.
- <sup>70</sup> Kevin A. Yelvington, and Bridget Brereton, "The Promise of Emancipation," *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition* ed. Kevin A. Yelvington and Bridget Brereton (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999) 10.
- <sup>71</sup> Richardson, Bonham C., *The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492-1992: A Regional Geography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 61.
- <sup>72</sup> Yelvington and Brereton 10-12.
- <sup>73</sup> Richardson *Wider World* 62.
- <sup>74</sup> Richardson *Wider World* 179.
- <sup>75</sup> Bryan, Patrick, *The Jamaican People 1880-1902: Race, Class and Social Control* (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 1991) 131.
- <sup>76</sup> Yelvington and Brereton 12.
- <sup>77</sup> Yelvington and Brereton 14. For a more thorough discussion of West Indian migration, see Bonham C. Richardson, *Wider World*, Chapter 6.
- <sup>78</sup> Richardson *Wider World* 141.
- <sup>79</sup> Yelvington and Brereton 12.
- <sup>80</sup> James, Winston, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (New York: Verso, 1998) 108.
- <sup>81</sup> Yelvington and Brereton 15.
- <sup>82</sup> Rodney Worrell defines Pan-Africanism as "a movement and an ideology of African peoples globally, which is concerned with the social, political, and psychological upliftment, as well as the protection of Africa and African peoples worldwide." Worrell, Rodney, *Pan-Africanism in Barbados: An Analysis of the Activities of the Major 20<sup>th</sup> Century Pan-African Formations in Barbados* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, LLC, 2002) 4. Yelvington and Brereton 15.
- <sup>83</sup> Worrell suggests that Black Nationalism is highly associated with Pan-Africanism in the Americas, and that it "resulted from the desire of a subject people to break away from foreign rule, and to unite traditionally disunited people." He further states that "Black Nationalism is unique in that its adherents are not united by a common geography nor a common language, but by the concept of racial unity." Worrell 8.
- <sup>84</sup> James 134-137.
- <sup>85</sup> Richardson *Wider World* 180.
- <sup>86</sup> Richardson *Wider World* 179-180.

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- <sup>87</sup> Ryan, Selwyn, "The Struggle for Black Power in the Caribbean," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: a Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R. University of the West Indies, 1995) 32-33.
- <sup>88</sup> Bolland, O. Nigel, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001) 196. See also Richardson *Wider World* 179.
- <sup>89</sup> Bolland *The Politics of Labour* 197-199.
- <sup>90</sup> Knight 178-180.
- <sup>91</sup> Bolland *The Politics of Labour* 196.
- <sup>92</sup> Richardson 179.
- <sup>93</sup> Richardson 179. See also Bolland *The Politics of Labour* 199.
- <sup>94</sup> Yelvington and Brereton 18.
- <sup>95</sup> Thomas, Clive Y., *The Poor and the Powerless: Economic Policy and Change in the Caribbean* (1988; London: Latin American Bureau; New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988) 71-72.
- <sup>96</sup> Knight 177-179.
- <sup>97</sup> Thomas 56.
- <sup>98</sup> Proctor, Jesse Harris Jr., "British West Indian Society and Government in Transition 1920-60," *The Aftermath of Sovereignty: West Indian Perspectives*, ed. David Lowenthal and Lambros Comitas (New York: Anchor Books, 1973) 31-34.
- <sup>99</sup> Proctor 38-45.
- <sup>100</sup> Bolland, O. Nigel, *On the March: Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean, 1934-1939* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers Limited, 1995) 191.
- <sup>101</sup> Bolland *The Politics of Labour* 358.
- <sup>102</sup> Bolland *On the March* 193-194.
- <sup>103</sup> Ryan 34.
- <sup>104</sup> Knight 179.
- <sup>105</sup> Proctor 48.
- <sup>106</sup> Brisk, William J., *The Dilemma of a Ministate: Anguilla* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1969) 15.
- <sup>107</sup> Bolland *The Politics of Labour* 212-368, Richardson *Wider World* 180.
- <sup>108</sup> O. Nigel Bolland argues that the rebellions in Belize and Trinidad in 1934 were related to the labor rebellions, and were significant to the political histories of those colonies, although it is generally accepted that the labor rebellions of the 1930s began in St. Kitts in 1935. *The Politics of Labour*, Chapter 5.
- <sup>109</sup> Bolland *The Politics of Labour* 385.
- <sup>110</sup> Brisk 15.
- <sup>111</sup> Proctor 48-50.
- <sup>112</sup> Bolland *The Politics of Labour* 386-387.
- <sup>113</sup> Knight 179.
- <sup>114</sup> Bolland *The Politics of Labour* 395.
- <sup>115</sup> Richardson *Wider World* 108.
- <sup>116</sup> Thomas 48-49.
- <sup>117</sup> Richardson, Bonham C., "Caribbean Migrations, 1838-1985," *The Modern Caribbean*, ed. Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 216.

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- <sup>118</sup> Proctor 37-38  
<sup>119</sup> Proctor 53-54.  
<sup>120</sup> Lewis 352.  
<sup>121</sup> Proctor 52-53.  
<sup>122</sup> Originally named the University College of the West Indies.  
<sup>123</sup> Proctor 62.  
<sup>124</sup> Lewis 351.  
<sup>125</sup> Richardson *Wider World* 194.  
<sup>126</sup> Formerly known as British Guiana.  
<sup>127</sup> *World Factbook*, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Database Online, 17  
November, 2006 < <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook>>.  
<sup>128</sup> Thomas 184.  
<sup>129</sup> Purcell 49.  
<sup>130</sup> Matthews, Harry G., *Multinational Corporations and Black Power*  
(Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1976) 28.  
<sup>131</sup> Newman, Richard, *Black Power and Black Religion: Essays and Reviews*  
(West Cornwall: Locust Hill Press, 1987) 21.  
<sup>132</sup> Kambon, Khafra, "Black Power in Trinidad & Tobago: February 26-April 21,  
1970," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: a Retrospective*, Ed. Selwyn Ryan and  
Taimoon Stewart. (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R. The University of the West Indies,  
1995) 222.  
<sup>133</sup> Ryan 40.  
<sup>134</sup> Matthews 50-53.  
<sup>135</sup> Ryan 46-47.  
<sup>136</sup> Ryan 25-26.

## Chapter Two

### The Case of Jamaica

It is only fitting to begin a study of Black Power in the British West Indies in Jamaica. Throughout the history of the British West Indies, revolts and rebellions in Jamaica often precipitated change in the administration of the colonies. From the slave revolt in 1831 that hastened the move toward emancipation, to independence in 1962, Jamaica has frequently been at the forefront of the evolution of the West Indies. Jamaica was the first colony to achieve universal adult suffrage in 1944, and the first to achieve independence in 1962.

Of particular importance to this thesis is the presence of a majority black and colored population that continued to be dominated economically by the minority white elite and foreign economic control years after political power had been acquired by the masses. Although still heavily dependent on agriculture, internal migration to the urban areas of Jamaica increased the concentration of the poor and the unemployed in the metropolitan areas of the country. Black Power leader Walter Rodney garnered significant support from the poor urban youth, as well as students at the University of the West Indies, which proved to be the spark that ignited the first significant expression of the Black Power Movement in the Caribbean. This chapter will briefly review the colonial history of Jamaica and some of the important events that brought Jamaica to the forefront of resistance once again. The Rodney Riots of 1968 will be discussed as an

illustration of Black Power in Jamaica. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of the changes that followed.

## Colonial History

Jamaica was a Spanish colony in the Greater Antilles when conquered by the British in 1655.<sup>1</sup> The physical geography of Jamaica was conducive to the development of a more diverse agricultural industry than could be found in the smaller colonies of the Leeward and Windward Islands. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Jamaica had a substantial livestock industry that expanded with the growth of the sugar industry. As discussed in Chapter One, and illustrated in Table 1.2, the rise of sugar brought a rapid increase in the enslaved population of Jamaica. Smallholders, including many free coloreds, were able to participate in the livestock industry as well as in the production of coffee and subsistence crops. Although other agricultural endeavors were quite profitable they were dependent on the sugar industry, and the “country” farmers never rose to the status level of the white elite that dominated the Jamaican economy in the sugar industry.<sup>2</sup>

The physical geography of Jamaica was also favorable for the establishment of maroon communities, where groups of runaways could hide in the mountainous terrain and establish settlements.<sup>3</sup> Existing freedmen and Spanish slaves that were freed in exchange for their resistance against the British in 1655 established the original maroon communities. Although the Spanish maroon communities rejected runaway slaves from the sugar plantations at the outset, eventually alliances were formed as British development began to encroach on their settlements. By the 1720s the number of

maroons in Jamaica was estimated to be in the thousands, and their settlements had evolved into complex societies.<sup>4</sup> Bands of maroons, angered by violations of treaty agreements made with colonial government officials, were formidable opponents in battles with colonial military forces.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, after much bloodshed, the maroon communities established cooperative relationships with planters and colonial government officials. Government officials called upon the maroon communities to assist in the capture and return of runaways as well as to aid the local militia during uprisings, such as the rebellion of 1831 and the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865.<sup>6</sup>

The Jamaican rebellion of 1831, sometimes referred to as the Christmas Rebellion, is credited by many with hastening the move toward emancipation in the British West Indies.<sup>7</sup> Jamaican planters resisted the implementation of amelioration codes enacted by the Colonial Office in 1820 and continued to protest the intrusion of the imperial government into local affairs when the codes were incorporated in Jamaica in 1831. The planters made no secret of their opinions and soon rumors began to circulate in the slave community that the Crown had granted emancipation, but the Jamaican plantocracy refused to free their slaves. What was initially planned as a peaceful protest to demand wages in return for labor escalated to wide spread rioting that lasted from late December, 1831, to early February, 1832. During the riots, over 200 plantations were damaged, hundreds of slaves were killed, and several hundred more were tried and executed in the aftermath. The majority of the rebels were rural slaves, with little to no support received from urban slaves or the free black and colored populations.<sup>8</sup> In May of 1832, a committee was established to report on the measures necessary to eliminate slavery in the British colonies.<sup>9</sup> The Crown was optimistic that emancipation of the

slaves would quell unrest in the colonies; however, the renewed dissatisfaction of the former slaves with living and social conditions after emancipation provoked continued unrest throughout the British West Indies.

As detailed in Chapter One, the Morant Bay Rebellion was a violent manifestation of the failure of emancipation to secure freedom and equality. The violence and brutality of the Rebellion increased the fears espoused by the Jamaican white elite of an increased franchise and elected representation among an electorate comprised of an overwhelming black majority.<sup>10</sup> Constitutional reform in 1866 immediately transformed Jamaica into a pure Crown Colony, administered by a Crown appointed Governor and a nominated Legislature. Crown colony rule completely disenfranchised black and colored Jamaicans, and diminished the power of the white oligarchy. The Jamaican elite was quick to establish relationships with the new administration, but remained dissatisfied with colonial bureaucracy that, in their opinion, was not always representative of their interests.<sup>11</sup> Following years of political agitation by the white upper class, constitutional reforms were enacted in 1884 that returned nine elected members to the Legislative Council and severely limited the franchise to adult male tax-payers. Subsequent imposition of a literacy requirement in 1893 further restricted voter eligibility causing the number of registered voters to drop from 42,266 in 1887 to just over 16,000 in 1900.<sup>12</sup> Few changes were made to significantly alter the political and economic dominance of the white plantocracy until universal suffrage was granted in 1944, following another period of protest and violence throughout the British colonies.

## Towards Independence

In the early 1930s, the black masses demanded reform of the existing system and fought for better working conditions and universal adult suffrage. In response to increased unrest in the labor sector in the 1930s, which correlated with economic decline in the region, the British insisted on a supervised transition to locally controlled government that would be implemented over time to effect a smooth conversion from the existing imperialistic system. The first phase of the process granted universal adult suffrage in 1944, followed by a gradual transition to elected representation and increased self-government in 1953 and 1959.<sup>13</sup> Jamaica became part of the West Indies Federation in 1958. The Federation was plagued by insular differences and posturing. In 1961, the Jamaican people voted to abandon the Federation and seek independent statehood, which was achieved in 1962.<sup>14</sup> Many of the political leaders that guided Jamaica's transition from Crown Colony to independent state had come into popularity during the labor struggles of the 1930s. Several attempts had been made to organize labor in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but by the mid-1930s, none of them remained. Between 1936 and 1939 lasting labor organizations were formed that were instrumental in shaping Jamaican politics for decades to come.<sup>15</sup>

Widespread poverty, low wages, and high rates of unemployment in 1930s Jamaica sparked a series of street demonstrations, strikes, and riots that began in 1935, and climaxed in 1938.<sup>16</sup> The influence of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA had contributed greatly to an increase in race and class-consciousness, and had been instrumental in politicizing the masses. During the mid-1930s, workers began to organize, and in 1936 formed the Jamaican Workers and Tradesmen Union (JWTU). Alexander Bustamante,

an outspoken member and former officer of the JWTU, emerged as the labor leader of choice among the working class during the labor riots of 1938.<sup>17</sup> Norman Manley, a leading Jamaican attorney, had been asked several times to assist in the formation of early political parties, and had refused. During the riots of 1938, Manley made every effort to represent the striking workers, but was soundly rejected by the workers as a representative of capitalist interests.<sup>18</sup> In the aftermath of the riots, Manley conceded labor leadership to Bustamante and turned his attention to the formation of the People's National Party (PNP).<sup>19</sup> Bustamante, bolstered by the support he had received from the workers during the strike, broke away from the JWTU to form his own Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU), which later came to be affiliated with the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP).<sup>20</sup>

Manley and Bustamante initially expressed loyalty to the Crown and agreed to put political agitation on hold during World War II. Widespread food shortages and sharp increases in the cost of living prompted the leaders to reverse their previous stance and renew efforts to secure universal suffrage and self-government for Jamaica.<sup>21</sup> In 1944, constitutional changes were implemented that granted universal adult suffrage and transitioned Jamaica from Crown Colony rule to a bicameral legislature with an elected majority in the House of Representatives.<sup>22</sup> Although the PNP was instrumental in drafting constitutional changes, the party was unable to garner popular support. Bustamante remained popular among the masses of the working class, which allowed Bustamante and the JLP to win the first election under universal suffrage in 1944.<sup>23</sup> The JLP remained popular in the election of 1949 and retained a strong political position;

however, by the election of 1955 the PNP had risen in popularity, and was able to defeat the JLP by a wide margin.<sup>24</sup>

Jamaica's constitution was further modified in 1953 and again in 1959 when full internal self-government was achieved.<sup>25</sup> As the effects of the Cold War were felt in the region, the activities of Caribbean political parties were scrutinized by the US and British governments, and the PNP shed its left wing leanings.<sup>26</sup> The Colonial Office increasingly urged the federation of the West Indies to simplify the administration of the islands.<sup>27</sup> Manley worked closely with colonial officials and other political leaders of the West Indies to create the West Indies Federation; however, he declined a leadership within the federal structure.<sup>28</sup> In 1961, Manley, as Prime Minister of Jamaica, held a referendum to determine whether Jamaica should continue to participate in the Federation. By popular vote, Jamaicans decided to abandon the Federation and become an independent state.<sup>29</sup> Jamaica's two rival political parties, the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP), worked together to draft the first independent constitution for the country in 1962. Jamaica followed the British political design of parliamentary democracy, with a prime minister holding executive power. Sixty members of parliament that were elected for five-year terms by constituencies throughout the country controlled the House of Representatives. The governor general appointed twenty-one members of the Senate: thirteen of these based on recommendations from the prime minister, the remaining nine seats by recommendation from the leader of the opposition. The island was then further broken down into 12 parishes and 1 municipal district in Kingston, each of which elected a local government.<sup>30</sup>

The government structure adopted in 1962 remains intact, and the PNP and the JLP continue to be the dominant political parties of Jamaica. Voter turnout and party loyalty have been high in Jamaica since universal suffrage was gained in 1944, with party membership in both the JLP and the PNP dominated by those of the lowest economic classes, and party leadership dominated by the middle class professional sector. As alliances have been formed between middle class political leaders and the lower class membership of Jamaica's political party system, the elite felt somewhat excluded from political representation, a situation that they have been quick to publicly criticize.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, poor Jamaicans claimed that their political leaders were not black, but Afro-Saxons who spoke to gain the support of the masses, but in reality represented the interests of the elite.<sup>32</sup> Although representative government was long awaited and nationalist sentiment was on the rise, many Jamaicans feared the loss of financial support and developmental leadership that the British had long provided.<sup>33</sup>

### Black Nationalism Confronts Jamaican Nationalism

During the period between emancipation from slavery in 1838 and independence from colonial power in 1962, the local elite and the British imperial representatives demonstrated their reluctance to grant control to the black majority. For many years they had feared revolution and an overthrow of the plantation economy and the existing system of white and colored privilege that might accompany universal suffrage and elected representative government. The elite justified their selfish motives using the rationalization that the masses were illiterate, and incapable of self-government. Many, with mindsets trained by colonialism and notions of racial superiority, believed that the

existing political structure was necessary to protect the poor and uneducated from certain downfall if left to their own devices.<sup>34</sup> When Jamaica became independent from the British in 1962, the national motto “Out of many, one people” was fashioned to proclaim to the world that Jamaica was proof that racial harmony could be achieved.<sup>35</sup> Not only did the middle and upper class Jamaican population embrace this ideal, the general population also broadly supported the notion.<sup>36</sup> Despite such sentiments, many black Jamaicans continued to be torn between their nationalist identity and the reality that the poor, general population in Jamaica was nearly always black, and the middle and upper class population was nearly always white or colored.<sup>37</sup> The correlation between race and economic class in Jamaica belied the myth that racial equality had been achieved.<sup>38</sup>

By 1964, two years after independence, the movement away from an agrarian economy and towards an urban economy continued, with little change to the overall economic reality in Jamaica. (See Table 2.1, 2.2) A minority elite comprised of urban entrepreneurs and professionals that dominated the private sector had merely replaced the wealthy minority plantocracy. Occupational opportunities had increased in the public sector, which was dominated by members of black and colored families that had been poised to advance and had been prepared with the necessary training and education to do so.<sup>39</sup> Although access to upper management still exhibited strong racial bias, increased access to tertiary education had improved economic opportunity for blacks, and allowed the formation of a black middle class.<sup>40</sup> Public sector employees increased in number from 4,500 in 1943 to 57,000 in 1968.<sup>41</sup> Despite the increases in public sector employment, between 1960 and 1970, the percentage of the general population that was unemployed increased dramatically. (See Table 2.3) Sugar and banana farms were

failing, leaving hundreds of workers jobless when they collapsed.<sup>42</sup> The significant decreases in numbers among those employed in farm and agricultural work and service positions contrasted sharply with the modest increases in the numbers among those employed in professional and clerical work.<sup>43</sup>

**Table 2.1 Population Growth and Urban Migration 1943-1960<sup>44</sup>**

	Kingston – St. Andrew 1943	Jamaica 1943	% of Ethnic Group Residing in Urban Kingston 1943	Kingston – St. Andrew 1960	Jamaica 1960	% of Ethnic Group Residing in Urban Kingston 1960
<b>Black</b>	113,570	965,960	12%	307,387	1,236,706	25%
<b>Colored</b>	61,804	227,141	27%	69,595	271,520	26%
<b>White</b>	4,627	13,809	34%	6,940	12,428	56%
<b>Chinese</b>	3,350	6,886	49%	6,667	10,267	65%
<b>East Indian</b>	3,634	21,393	17%	6,679	27,912	24%
<b>Other</b>	1,468	2,941	50%	22,148	30,981	71%

**Table 2.2 Percent Contribution to GDP 1938-1968<sup>45</sup>**

	Agriculture	Bauxite Mining	Manufacturing
<b>1938</b>	36	0	6
<b>1950</b>	31	0	11
<b>1957</b>	14	9	14
<b>1968</b>	10	10	15

**Table 2.3 Labor Force Distribution and Unemployment (in percent)<sup>46</sup>**

Occupation	1943	1960	1970
<b>Professionals, Technical and Administrative</b>	2	4	7
<b>Clerical and Sales</b>	11	11	15
<b>Service</b>	19	20	16
<b>Farmers and Farm Workers</b>	44	41	30
<b>Production Workers</b>	13	20	26
<b>Laborers</b>	11	4	6
<b>Unemployed</b>	25	13	19

Rastafarian beliefs proved particularly appealing to many of the unemployed black workers displaced by the shift from agriculture to capitalism.<sup>47</sup> The coronation of the new emperor of Ethiopia, Ras Tafari, in 1930, had turned the eyes of Jamaica toward Africa with a renewed interest in their African identity.<sup>48</sup> Rastafarians believe that Emperor Haile Selasse I of Ethiopia fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy that a king would rise out of Africa and liberate all the oppressed peoples on earth.<sup>49</sup> One of the basic tenets of the religion is a pride in being African people. The Rastafarian movement gained popularity and strength during the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>50</sup> Jamaican nationalism and Rastafarianism were at odds with each other. The idea of Jamaican oneness and the strong sense of nationalism that the Jamaican government had tried to instill in the people clashed with the Rastafarian premise that Jamaica was Babylon and that African people must return home to Africa. Some Jamaicans that had been taught that they were Jamaican, not African or black, did not like the movement's emphasis on the blackness of Jamaican people.<sup>51</sup>

Many lower class Jamaicans had sought to achieve a stronger sense of pride in their African heritage, along with economic, political, and social advancement for the masses.<sup>52</sup> However, the very vocal white and colored upper class and much of the colored middle class openly made derogatory remarks that referenced African culture and people. They used the term "Congos" to refer to Jamaican people deemed primitive or barbaric, and the African history classes proposed by Black Nationalists as "Bantu education" that would denigrate Jamaican education and compromise the achievement of literacy.<sup>53</sup> These same proud Jamaican nationalists would claim that the only race in Jamaica was human, and that the country was an exceptional example of racial harmony.

Those that espoused the belief that racial equality had been achieved in Jamaica saw no need for racial solidarity, and considered the glorification of African heritage over the multi-racial Jamaican national ideal as divisive.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his integrationist platform earned the respect and admiration of a wide cross-section of Jamaican society. Many Jamaicans applauded his successes and severely mourned his death upon his assassination in 1968. The Jamaican parliament observed two minutes of silence as a show of respect for a man that had stood for racial equality and justice for all people. Black Power did not have the same level of mainstream support as that shown for the work of Dr. King in Jamaican society. Many considered Black Power divisive because it denied that the multi-racial ideal of Jamaican oneness had been attained. Those that believed that Jamaica had been successful in removing race as a factor looked to the civil unrest in America with pride that they had raised above such chaos.<sup>54</sup> Whereas Jamaican nationalists saw Jamaica as a multi-racial nation where everyone had equal opportunity to succeed, Black Nationalists viewed Jamaica as a black nation that continued to suffer under white and foreign oppression.

### Black Power

Black Power in the Caribbean context encompassed many of the objectives of preceding Black Nationalist movements. Leaders of Black Power, as those that had come before them in the form of Garveyites, Pan-Africanists, and Rastafarians, saw the multi-racialized structure of Jamaican society as an extension of European colonialism and oppression.<sup>55</sup> Many of the basic premises of these movements were the same: namely, that the current government did not represent the people, and was not in control of the

country but was a mere puppet of foreign imperialism.<sup>56</sup> Black Power further aimed to alleviate the problematic circumstances of the poorest members of Caribbean society by making black people equal beneficiaries of any economic development strategy employed by the countries in the Caribbean region. Perhaps this aim frightened the white and colored elite the most, as Black Power leaders sought to take ownership of all major means of production in the region out of the hands of the current elite, and put it into the hands of the masses.<sup>57</sup> Black Power often focused on the big industries, such as sugar, tourism, and bauxite, as the profits from these industries tended to be foreign-owned and controlled.<sup>58</sup>

By encompassing the objectives of the previous Black Nationalist movements, Black Power in the Caribbean garnered support from organized labor and other groups that were critical of foreign control and the newly formed colored elite bowing to the multinational corporations that dominated Caribbean economies.<sup>59</sup> While the labor movement had achieved greater political power, as well as some economic advancement for the working class through collective bargaining, it had failed to provide black Jamaicans with a pathway to management and ownership of the workplace.<sup>60</sup> Many, including the urban youth of Jamaica, saw that in their society most of the unemployed were black, while most of the privileged members of Jamaican society continued to be white or colored.<sup>61</sup> Jobless, and with little prospect of change, the young unemployed black population had become increasingly impatient with the existing two-party political structure that seemed to offer no relief.<sup>62</sup> Some members of the middle and lower middle class were also advocates of Black Power, many of whom only recently ascended from the black peasantry and could still identify with the plight of the poor in Jamaica. Many

young intellectuals in the established middle class, the same group that had provided political leadership for the labor movement, also supported and sought to advance the cause of Black Power.<sup>63</sup> The campus of what is now the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies was constructed in Jamaica in 1948, the first of its kind in the colonies. Initially the University faculty was quite conservative; however, the campus became an essential element of the Black Power movement in Jamaica.<sup>64</sup>

Most Jamaican government officials feared that the Black Power movement would divide the Jamaican population and create a racial atmosphere that they had tried so hard to suppress. To combat the potential popularity of Black Power, the 1968 JLP government publicized their beliefs that Black Power was merely an adaptation of foreign ideas that did not apply in Jamaica, where color-based discrimination had been eliminated.<sup>65</sup> Leaders of Black Power in Jamaica countered the government's attempts to write off Black Power as a foreign idea by claiming that it had begun when the first slaves were brought to Jamaica and resisted the brutality of slavery and the oppression of the Europeans. While the slogans might have been imported from the US, the ideas were merely a continuation of black struggles that had come before in Jamaica and throughout the African Diaspora. Black Power in Jamaica traced its roots back to the teachings and ideas of Marcus Garvey. Since Garvey had been declared a Jamaican national hero, proclaiming him as the father of Black Power gave legitimacy to the movement that had previously been lacking. This also denied the government's claim that Black Power was an American import. Jamaican Black Power leaders claimed that Garvey had coined the phrase Black Power many years earlier, so Black Power was essentially Jamaican.<sup>66</sup>

In an attempt to censor the controversial teachings of Black Power advocates, the Jamaican government voted to ban the works of Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and Elijah Mohammed, deeming their work too radical and provocative.<sup>67</sup> One of the most important figures in Black Power movements in the Caribbean was Walter Rodney. Rodney was a young Guyanese lecturer employed by the University of the West Indies (UWI), on the Mona campus in Jamaica. Rodney had used his position at the University to spread his ideas about pride in African people and heritage, and the history and accomplishments of African people that had been overlooked in an educational system that emphasized the history of the colonizer.<sup>68</sup> Rodney made this particularly poignant statement:

“Conscious blacks cannot possibly fail to realize that in our own homelands we have no power, abroad we are discriminated against, and everywhere the black masses suffer in poverty.”<sup>69</sup>

Strongly worded calls to reform the government and social structure of the island made Jamaican officials fearful of Rodney’s foreign influence on the Jamaican people. On October 15, 1968, the Jamaican government not only banned Rodney from speaking at the University of the West Indies campus, but also from re-entering the country.<sup>70</sup> Rodney was returning from a trip to Canada where he had attended the Black Writer’s Conference when the decision was made to label Rodney as an undesirable person and refuse his re-entry to the country.<sup>71</sup> The act of banning Rodney backfired on the Jamaican government, solidifying the Black Power movement.<sup>72</sup> It also sparked riots that would prove to be the most significant Black Power event that occurred in Jamaica.

## The Rodney Riots

Walter Rodney enjoyed popularity with many students at the Mona campus of UWI, as well as with members of the intelligentsia, and the poor urban youth of Kingston. Much of middle class Jamaica agreed with Prime Minister Shearer when he stated that Rodney's ideas were irrelevant in Jamaica, where racial harmony had already been achieved, and racial discrimination had been eliminated. In the aftermath of the riots that erupted upon Rodney's banning from Jamaica, the government declared that the riots were a consequence of the external influences of Rodney. Shearer claimed that Rodney's true agenda was a "Castro Revolution" and that Rodney used the auspices of Black Power to disguise his real objective. Representatives of the government said they would excuse Jamaican students' reactions to Rodney's banning, as the government proposed that many of the students had been duped by Rodney's attempt to cloak his subversive motives. "When students were joined by demonstrators from the ghetto areas and the violence erupted, the government identified the Black Power movement, Rodney, and the non-Jamaican students as the villains, and refused to recognize the horrendous problems of the urban poor and the depth of their alienation from the larger society."<sup>73</sup>

The October 17, 1968, front-page headlines of *The Daily Gleaner* screamed "CAMPUS ROW BRINGS OUT VANDALS" in the wake of a day of violent protests. The protesters were labeled as "thugs" and "hooligans" on a rampage as incidents of damage and violence were reported. Classes at the university were suspended, and commerce and transportation disrupted in the city as government officials asked for public support of Shearer's decision to prevent Rodney from entering the airport.<sup>74</sup> The Kingston Public Hospital reported a backlog of patients seeking treatment as commuters

were injured when public transportation buses were stoned and smashed with iron pipes. Several buses and taxicabs throughout the island had been set on fire, with drivers reporting that they had been robbed of their cash collections.<sup>75</sup> Jamaica Omnibus Services (JOS), Ltd., reported that 12 buses had been completely destroyed, and 33 others severely damaged. Bus services were discontinued until JOS deemed it safe to put their remaining busses back on the street.<sup>76</sup> The hospital itself was in danger from fires burning as nearby businesses were set ablaze by protestors.<sup>77</sup> In response to the blazes, the Jamaican Gasoline Retailers Association advised all retailers that selling gasoline in containers would be considered a violation of their contract. Gasoline was only to be dispensed directly into motor vehicles.<sup>78</sup>

The Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Sir Philip Sherlock, released a statement expressing great disappointment in the government in preventing Rodney's return to his job, wife, and child in Jamaica without opportunity to defend himself in a proper judicial proceeding.<sup>79</sup> Sir Philip also denied any prior knowledge of the government's intentions, and expressed concern for the ability of the University to attract intellectuals to the island in the present political climate.<sup>80</sup> Prime Minister Shearer admonished the statements made by Sir Philip, declaring his assertions improper and unconventional, and insisted that the Vice Chancellor had advance knowledge of the government's impending action against Rodney.<sup>81</sup>

Norman Manley, leader of the opposition People's National Party (PNP) at the time, also lodged his protest against the actions of the government in banning Rodney. Manley's statements were quoted in *The Daily Gleaner*:

“As Leader of the People's National Party I protest on behalf of the party against the outrageous conduct of Government in barring Dr. Walter

Rodney from entering Jamaica he being a lecturer at the University of the West Indies still employed to them and sending him back to Canada leaving his wife and child behind.”<sup>82</sup>

The responses to the government’s actions were not confined to Jamaica.

Students attending the University of the West Indies, at the Cave Hill campus in Barbados also staged a sit-in to protest the actions of the Jamaican government. The students sent a cable to Jamaica’s Home Affairs Ministry:

“Students at UWI Cave Hill campus deplore the arbitrary and high-handed action of Jamaican Government. We support Rodney and students at Mona. Rescind decision in the interest of human rights.”<sup>83</sup>

Students at the UWI St. Augustine campus in Trinidad also staged a boycott of classes in support of Rodney and intellectual freedom. The students vowed to refrain from attending classes until Jamaica had rescinded the ban on Rodney. They returned to classes on October 22, after the faculty and student organizations worked together to make plans for a solidarity day demonstration that they hoped would be staged throughout the Caribbean.<sup>84</sup>

The ban also prompted protest from the University of Guyana. Two cables were sent from the Staff Association, one to the Jamaican Home Affairs Minister, and one to the West Indian Group of University Teachers, requesting that efforts be made to overturn the decision to ban Rodney. The Attorney General of Guyana declined to communicate an official protest to the government of Jamaica, stating that it would be inappropriate to comment on Jamaica’s immigration policy, despite any views that he may hold as an individual.<sup>85</sup>

Prime Minister Shearer addressed the Jamaican House of Representatives on October 17, showing them evidence that had been gathered regarding a plot, led by

Rodney, which detailed a Castro-type revolution in Jamaica. Shearer reported that the violence the country had witnessed on October 16, as devastating as it had been, was mild in comparison to the plot that had been thwarted. Shearer read a pamphlet to the members of the House that had allegedly been prepared on the UWI Mona campus and circulated to Rodney's supporters. The pamphlet detailed an insurrection reportedly devised to inflict maximum violence and destruction, including the burning down of university buildings. The pamphlet was said to be in the hands of the Jamaican police as evidence of Rodney's planned overthrow of the Jamaican government.<sup>86</sup>

The Prime Minister claimed the Mona campus, under Rodney's influence, had been turned into a "hot-bed of anti-Jamaican organization." Shearer very clearly stated that the root of the problem was the presence of "non-Jamaicans" and the influence of foreign ideas. Following the presentation of the evidence, opposition leader Norman Manley conceded that certainly a decision had to be made on what course of action should have been taken to protect the people of Jamaica; he did however stop short of accusing the students of participating in a premeditated organized response.<sup>87</sup> Manley walked a fine line between the condemnation of the violent eruption that had taken place, and his continued support of the University, Sir Philip, and the students.

As the government released bits of information, criticism of their actions began to wane as support for the government's decision was received and reported by *The Daily Gleaner*.<sup>88</sup> Frequently letters to the editor of the *Gleaner* included references to Rodney's alleged call for black supremacy, and the removal of all white and colored people from positions of political and economic power. Rodney refuted these statements,

claiming only that he called for “black people to throw off white domination and resume the handling of their own destinies.”<sup>89</sup> He further states that:

“Black Power is not racially intolerant. It is the hope of the black man that he should have power over his own destinies. This is not incompatible with a multi-racial society where each individual counts equally.”<sup>90</sup>

Rodney claimed that he looked forward to a time when that society was a reality in Jamaica, making distinction between ethnic groups irrelevant, but that day had not yet come.<sup>91</sup>

Shortly after the events of October 16, 1968, Norman Manley retired after 30 years of political service. In his farewell speech on November 11, 1968, Manley spoke his mind on recent events, including the banning of Walter Rodney. Manley condemned the JLP and the *Gleaner* for their vicious attacks against himself, as well as Vice-Chancellor Sherlock and the students of the University of the West Indies at Mona.<sup>92</sup> Manley went on to denounce violence fervently, but stated that peaceful civil disobedience must always be allowed as a means for the people to instigate change. While he did not excuse the violent events of October, Manley stated that anyone aware of the level of frustration and alienation felt by the poor and unemployed youth of Jamaica should have expected such a response. During the course of his speech Manley noted several times that an ideology of white superiority still existed in Jamaican society, and he advocated the promotion of Black Power to further evolve Jamaica into a nation that could and must truly achieve racial equality. Manley closed his speech encouraging those that were still disadvantaged in Jamaican society:

“I salute Black Power. I say to those who know how much is wrong in this country and to those who suffer from those wrongs, join together to use political black power to make the black man free in his own country to live a decent, a civilized and happy life.”<sup>93</sup>

Michael Manley became president of the PNP when his father, Norman Manley, retired in 1969.<sup>94</sup> During his campaign, the younger Manley declared himself a “sufferah’s man,” and borrowed symbols from the Rastafarian culture that would enhance this image.<sup>95</sup> The events of October 1968, had been short-lived, but had brought a new wave of black consciousness to the surface. Manley and the PNP were able to tap into the momentum of Black Power, and transformed the image of the PNP with a leftward shift.<sup>96</sup> Michael Manley and the PNP came in on a landslide victory in 1972. The PNP came into power with five goals that were aligned with the stated objectives of Black Power:

- Reduce economic dependence on external sources.
- Create a mixed economy under increased state control.
- Reduce social inequalities.
- Increase political democracy.
- Create an independent foreign policy.<sup>97</sup>

Many of the programs Manley implemented early in his administration were successful, as unemployment fell for the first time in years with the creation of 35,000 new jobs. However, the cost of the new programs was high, and Manley struggled to pay for his reforms.<sup>98</sup> One of the weaknesses of Manley’s program was that he attempted to implement mass social reforms to meet the high expectations that he had created among the masses, without having developed an economic structure that could support them. The lower class was driven deeper into poverty, and the upper class despised any moves towards socialized structure.<sup>99</sup> Manley was unable to find an alternative solution to the country’s dire financial circumstances, and was forced to turn to the IMF in 1977, which

was the start of the downfall of his administration.<sup>100</sup> With the country still in economic despair, the nationalist sentiment that had swept the country 10 years earlier gave way to renewed and persistent neo-colonialism.

## Summary

Six years after independence, the poor masses of Jamaica demonstrated their continued frustration and disappointment in black leaders that had promised change. Political leaders had been unable or unwilling to deliver on the promise of improved opportunity for all Jamaicans. Historically the masses had expected change first with emancipation, once again with self-government and participation in the electoral process, and then finally with independence from imperialism. Each measure that had been endeavored had been accomplished much due to the support and persistence of the black lower class; however, this group had yet to be the beneficiary of their own efforts. Political leaders that had stepped forward from the middle class to lead the masses had succumbed to neo-colonialism in the eyes of the poor and disadvantaged. In his farewell speech, Norman Manley spoke with pride of the progress that Jamaica had made. Manley believed that his generation had accomplished the mission of adult suffrage and self-government, and with that, he passed to the next generation of leaders the task of transforming the social and economic structure of Jamaica.<sup>101</sup> Manley was clearly of the opinion that the masses should once again push for reform with the hope that the situation of the lower class would change. The events of October 1968 serve to demonstrate that the slow and steady pace of the previous 20 years was unacceptable to many among the masses that continued to suffer from unemployment, underemployment, and lack of upward mobility.

The social structure of the Caribbean, as has been previously discussed, most often correlates race and class, with the black masses relegated to the lowest tier. It is important to note, however, that the structure is dynamic to some degree. There are certainly some black Jamaicans that have risen to the status of the wealthy elite, and many that have risen to the middle class. The middle and upper class, comfortable with their position in society, demonstrated limited support for movements that used the rhetoric of racial solidarity. The elevation of black consciousness leader Marcus Garvey to the status of national hero had made the notion of racial pride among African people an accepted idea among many Jamaicans. In his condemnation of Rodney, Prime Minister Shearer was quick to clarify that Rodney's subversive plan was executed under the guise of Black Power, and was not associated with the Black Power that Jamaicans understood to mean "the dignity of the black man."<sup>102</sup> Despite Shearer's statements, Black Power had been associated with the devastation and violence of the Rodney Riots in the minds of many Jamaicans. Black and colored Jamaicans that had been convinced that racial prejudice had ceased to exist in multi-racial Jamaica were quick to dismiss Black Power as a foreign import with little relevance in Jamaican society.

Given the limited level of support of the Black Power movement among black and colored Jamaicans in the middle and upper class, it would be easy to attribute the relevance of the movement in Jamaica to class disparity as opposed to race-based oppression. Many of those involved in the Rodney Riots were indeed members of the young urban poor angered by the appalling living conditions under which they suffered, however a primary objective of Black Power reached beyond economic relief and public works projects as stopgap solutions to the plight of the unemployed. In the late 1960s, as

much as 50% of the Jamaican economy was controlled by 1% of the population, and that 1% was comprised of non-black Jamaicans and foreign corporations.<sup>103</sup> Black Power sought to assume control of Jamaican resources, and place that control in the hands of the Jamaican people, a measure that would clearly benefit a cross-section of Jamaican society. If racial equality had been achieved in Jamaica economic disparity could be blamed on poor economic conditions and government mismanagement. However, the persistent correlation of race and class melds economic issues with race and color-based discrimination in Jamaican society.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis 167.

<sup>2</sup> Verene A. Shepherd, and Kathleen E. A. Monteith, "Non-Sugar Proprietors in a Sugar-Plantation Society," *Plantation Society in the Americas* Vol. 5.2-3 (1998): 205-217. For further discussion of production diversity, its impact on slave society, and the status of non-sugar proprietors, please see Shepherd, Verene, *Slavery Without Sugar: Diversity in Caribbean Economy and Society Since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Craton, Michael, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 61.

<sup>4</sup> Craton 81.

<sup>5</sup> Craton 65.

<sup>6</sup> Craton 311, 328. See also Knight, Franklin W., *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 72-73.

<sup>7</sup> Green, William A., *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 113.

<sup>8</sup> Craton 301-316.

<sup>9</sup> Green 114. See also Craton 323.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis 96-97.

<sup>11</sup> Bryan, Patrick, *The Jamaican People 1880-1902: Race, Class and Social Control* (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 1991) 11-12.

<sup>12</sup> Bryan 13-15. See also Stone, Carl, *Class, State, and Democracy in Jamaica* (New York: Praeger, 1986) 15-16.

<sup>13</sup> Stone 22.

<sup>14</sup> Richardson, Bonham C., *The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492-1992: A Regional Geography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 194.

<sup>15</sup> Bolland, O. Nigel, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001) 300.

<sup>16</sup> Bolland 299-300.

<sup>17</sup> Bolland 310.

<sup>18</sup> Bolland 308.

<sup>19</sup> Bolland 328.

<sup>20</sup> Stone 100.

<sup>21</sup> Bolland 398-399.

<sup>22</sup> Stone 11. See also Proctor, Jesse Harris Jr., "British West Indian Society and Government in Transition 1920-60," *The Aftermath of Sovereignty: West Indian Perspectives*, ed. David Lowenthal and Lambros Comitas (New York: Anchor Books, 1973) 53-54.

<sup>23</sup> Bolland 412.

<sup>24</sup> Bolland 583.

<sup>25</sup> Stone 11.

<sup>26</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the effects of the Cold War on the West Indies, see Bolland, Chapter 7.

<sup>27</sup> Clive Thomas 304.

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- <sup>28</sup> Lewis 368.
- <sup>29</sup> Thomas 305. For discussions of Manley's perceived abandonment of the Federation see Lewis, Chapter 15, as well as Bolland 507-509.
- <sup>30</sup> Stone 11-12.
- <sup>31</sup> Stone 49-52.
- <sup>32</sup> Ryan, Selwyn, "The Struggle for Black Power in the Caribbean," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: A Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R., The University of the West Indies, 1995) 41.
- <sup>33</sup> Stone 22.
- <sup>34</sup> Stone 17-18.
- <sup>35</sup> Palmer, Colin A., "Identity, Race, and Black Power in Independent Jamaica," *The Modern Caribbean*, ed. Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 111.
- <sup>36</sup> Nettleford, Rex, *Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1972) 163.
- <sup>37</sup> Nettleford 24-25.
- <sup>38</sup> Palmer 114. See also Nettleford 163.
- <sup>39</sup> Stone 32-33.
- <sup>40</sup> Stone 113. Racial bias in the Caribbean context cannot be viewed through the dichotomy of black and white. Bias in the Caribbean is "...based on a social system characterized by strongly entrenched class-colour correlations...shade prejudice, whereby colour discrimination was so ingeniously practiced that specific degrees of discriminatory treatment were frequently prescribed with reference to even marginal differences in pigmentation..." Lewis 191.
- <sup>41</sup> Stone 42.
- <sup>42</sup> Rodney, Walter, *The Groundings with my Brothers* (London: The Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1969) 14.
- <sup>43</sup> Stone 34.
- <sup>44</sup> Clarke, Colin G., *Kingston Jamaica: Urban Development and Social Change, 1692-1962* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975) 144, 152.
- <sup>45</sup> Stone 30.
- <sup>46</sup> Stone 34.
- <sup>47</sup> Lewis 4-6.
- <sup>48</sup> Lewis, William F., *Soul Rebels: The Rastafari* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1993) 1.
- <sup>49</sup> Nettleford 41.
- <sup>50</sup> Lewis 2-12.
- <sup>51</sup> Nettleford 42.
- <sup>52</sup> Palmer 111.
- <sup>53</sup> Palmer 112-113.
- <sup>54</sup> Palmer 115-116.
- <sup>55</sup> Nettleford 129.
- <sup>56</sup> Nettleford 119.
- <sup>57</sup> Ryan 46.
- <sup>58</sup> Nettleford 139.

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- <sup>59</sup> Matthews, Harry G., *Multinational Corporations and Black Power* (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing, 1976) 50-53.
- <sup>60</sup> Nettleford 124.
- <sup>61</sup> Ryan 41.
- <sup>62</sup> Rodney 15.
- <sup>63</sup> Nettleford 126.
- <sup>64</sup> Lewis, Gordon K., *The Growth of the West Indies* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968) 189.
- <sup>65</sup> Nettleford 116.
- <sup>66</sup> Nettleford 118.
- <sup>67</sup> Nettleford 128. See also Rodney 13.
- <sup>68</sup> Palmer 117.
- <sup>69</sup> Rodney 19.
- <sup>70</sup> Palmer 117.
- <sup>71</sup> "Shearer says Govt. will not withdraw order; statement today in House," *The Daily Gleaner*, 17 October, 1968: 1.
- <sup>72</sup> Nettleford 117.
- <sup>73</sup> Palmer 119-120.
- <sup>74</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, 17 October, 1968: 1.
- <sup>75</sup> "Breakdown in city transportation," *The Daily Gleaner*, 17 October 1968: 1.
- <sup>76</sup> "No buses until protection assured," *The Daily Gleaner*, 18 October, 1968: 1.
- <sup>77</sup> "Several places in West razed," *The Daily Gleaner*, 17 October, 1968: 2.
- <sup>78</sup> "Offense to sell gasoline in containers," *The Daily Gleaner*, 18 October, 1968: 1.
- <sup>79</sup> "Sir Philip: Dr. Rodney remains UWI staffer," *The Daily Gleaner*, 17 October, 1968: 1.
- <sup>80</sup> "Sir Philips denies part in lecturers exclusion," *The Daily Gleaner*, 17 October, 1968: 27.
- <sup>81</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, 17 October, 1968: 1.
- <sup>82</sup> "Manley: Arbitrary use of power," *The Daily Gleaner*, 17 October, 1968: 1.
- <sup>83</sup> "Students demonstrate at Cave Hill," *The Daily Gleaner*, 17 October 1968: 2.
- <sup>84</sup> "Classes resume at St. Augustine campus of UWI," *The Daily Gleaner*, 25 October, 1968: 3.
- <sup>85</sup> "Students demonstrate at Cave Hill," *The Daily Gleaner*, 17 October, 1968: 2.
- <sup>86</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, 18 October, 1968: 1.
- <sup>87</sup> "Cannot question fact a decision had to be taken," *The Daily Gleaner*, 18 October, 1968: 1,10.
- <sup>88</sup> Stone 145-146.
- <sup>89</sup> Rodney 24.
- <sup>90</sup> Rodney 29.
- <sup>91</sup> Rodney 29.
- <sup>92</sup> "Text of Manley's speech," *The Daily Gleaner*, 11 November, 1968: 8.
- <sup>93</sup> "Text of Manley's speech," *The Daily Gleaner*, 11 November, 1968: 8.
- <sup>94</sup> Meeks 121.
- <sup>95</sup> Lewis, William F., *Soul Rebels: The Rastafari*. (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1993) 12. See also Meeks 121.

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<sup>96</sup> Meeks 121.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas 212.

<sup>98</sup> Meeks 123.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas 217-223.

<sup>100</sup> Meeks 124.

<sup>101</sup> "Text of Manley's speech," *The Daily Gleaner*, 11 November, 1968: 8.

<sup>102</sup> "Shearer tells House details of Guyanese's 'Castro plot': Govt. Acted to Save Nation" *The Daily Gleaner*, 18 October, 1968: 1.

<sup>103</sup> Lux 216.

## Chapter Three

### Black Power, Trinidad Style

Trinidad, perhaps best known for lively calypso music and the soothing sounds of the steel drum, was born of a fusion of European, African, and Asian cultures.<sup>1</sup> The economy of Trinidad, much like many other colonies of the British West Indies, was originally developed around the cultivation of sugar. Following emancipation in 1838 the industry was near collapse due to the lack of a sufficient labor force. Indentured laborers were imported to the colony to salvage the industry, most from India in Southern Asia. The Indian workers settled in the rural regions of the colony, many remained tied to the sugar industry. The African people of Trinidad tended to migrate to the urban areas, where many found employment in the oil industry that developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The dichotomy of rural Indian and urban African remained with the colony, and created a culture of competition between the two largest ethnic groups in Trinidad.

In the late 1960s, Trinidad was an independent nation under the leadership of a black Prime Minister. The Indian population felt discriminated against in the public sector, while the black population complained of underrepresentation in private enterprise. When Black Power came to Trinidad, leaders of the movement struggled to include the Indian segment of the population, aware that the presentation of a united front would improve their chances of success. The goals of the movement in Trinidad were much the same as Jamaica; however, the impact of the ethnic diversity of Trinidad on the

Movement provides an interesting comparison to Jamaica with its black majority population. This chapter opens with a brief discussion of the colonization of Trinidad and the events that led to independence in 1962. The February Revolution of 1970 will then be studied, with an overview of the changes that followed as the Williams government attempted to satisfy the demands of the people. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the movement in Trinidad and a comparison with Black Power in Jamaica.

### Colonial History

Trinidad, an island just seven miles off the coast of Venezuela, was originally colonized by the Spanish and remained under Spanish rule until the British took possession of the island in 1797.<sup>2</sup> Columbus had “discovered” the island for the King of Spain in 1498, but little was done to develop the island as a settlement. Spain’s primary interest was in mining precious metals. When no gold was found, the Spanish Crown lost interest in the island until 1783.<sup>3</sup>

In 1783, the King of Spain offered land grants in Trinidad to Catholic settlers willing to come to the colony, an offer that was attractive to the French.<sup>4</sup> At the onset of the French Revolution in 1789, and the Haitian revolution in 1791, French planters fled the French colonies of the Caribbean. Many went to Trinidad where there was still room to grow and develop plantation economies.<sup>5</sup> When the British took the island in 1797, it was seen as a hostile conquest by the French settlers, the reaction created a strained relationship between the two groups that persisted until the late 1800s.<sup>6</sup>

The Treaty of Amiens officially ceded Trinidad to England in 1802; however, the British retained the Spanish judicial system until the abolition of the African slave trade in 1807 when Trinidad was placed under Crown Colony rule.<sup>7</sup> Local planters and merchants repeatedly asked the British government for elected representation, and were denied. The reason given by the British officials was that the non-white population, if given the right to vote, would greatly outnumber the white population, and would dominate politically, a situation that they were not prepared to contend with. The older British colonies, such as Barbados, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands had assemblies partially comprised of elected officials until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the British government decided to administer Trinidad as a Crown Colony without elected representation until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

Sugar was the dominant industry in Trinidad for most of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Absentee British interests largely controlled sugar, with the exception of the French Creole planters still residing in the colony.<sup>9</sup> With the emancipation of the enslaved Africans beginning in 1834, the sugar industry was under the threat of collapse due to the loss of the labor force. In the aftermath of emancipation in 1838, there were several waves of migration to the colony, the most significant of which included an imported indentured labor force needed to sustain the plantation economy following emancipation.<sup>10</sup>

In 1838 the importation of indentured labor began, and continued until 1917. Between 1838 and 1917 nearly 500,000 Indians were brought from Asia to the Caribbean, 145,000 of them to Trinidad to supply planters with an inexpensive labor source.<sup>11</sup> (See Table 3.1) A small number of indentured laborers were also imported

from China. Many Chinese laborers abandoned their indenture and left the plantations to establish small businesses or independent freeholds, making the Chinese workers an expensive and unsuitable labor force.<sup>12</sup> By the mid-1870s, 90% of the labor force on the sugar plantations was Indian.<sup>13</sup> Many Indians considered Trinidad a temporary workplace and returned to India at the end of their contracts, particularly if they were entitled to free return passage.<sup>14</sup> The planters suffered under the high costs of housing, feeding, and providing medical care for the laborers, not to mention the price of the return passage. In 1898, the practice of offering return passage was abolished, and plots of land were made available for sale to the Indians in an effort to retain more of the workers in Trinidad beyond their indenture.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 3.1 Immigration of Indian Indentured Laborers 1838-1917<sup>16</sup>**

<b>Colony</b>	<b>Indian Indentured Laborers</b>
Trinidad	145,000
British Guiana	238,000
Jamaica	21,500
St. Lucia	1,550
St. Vincent	2,570
Grenada	2,570

As in other parts of the Anglophone Caribbean, there was a stratification of social and economic status that correlated race and class in Trinidad. The upper class of Trinidad society was comprised of the wealthy and predominantly white, land and commercial interest holders, salaried professionals, and government officials. Membership in the upper class did not guarantee inclusion in the social status of the elite. There were caste distinctions between the wealthy planters, and those that had earned their wealth as salaried employees. Also excluded from elite status were the Portuguese,

Jews, Syrians, and Lebanese of the merchant class.<sup>17</sup> While many in the merchant class had achieved upper economic class, they were not admitted to the social status of the elite, although they certainly enjoyed a higher social status than the African and Indian groups. When oil replaced sugar as the dominant sector of the economy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the industry was primarily under the control of the British and the Americans. Nearly all of the skilled and professional workers in the industry were imported. French Creoles displaced by the fall of sugar were placed in supervisory or managerial positions in the petroleum industry.<sup>18</sup>

The middle class was comprised of mostly white and colored white-collar workers in the oil and banking industries as well as government workers and merchants, while Africans and the rural Indian people of the island primarily occupied the lower class.<sup>19</sup> Historically the African and Indian groups had not formed alliances and were often in conflict with each other. The Africans regarded the Indians as interlopers that had reduced their bargaining power with the planters.<sup>20</sup> The Indians, especially those that were new arrivals to Trinidad, brought stereotypes fostered by a rigid caste system. Those that came as indentured labor frequently regarded their stay in Trinidad as temporary and were committed to preserving the “purity” of the Indian race. Some Indians did move to urban areas and joined the ranks of the middle class. However for the most part the Indians remained entrenched in rural Trinidad and worked in the sugar industry, or joined the agricultural peasantry, while many Africans migrated to the urban areas or worked in the oil industry.<sup>21</sup>

## The War Years

Between World War I and World War II, members of the upper and middle class that had previously supported government reform now seemed content to remain a colonial state. The black working class, many of whom had served in the British West India Regiment (BWIR), was ready to fight for political and economic reform. Much like in Jamaica and other regions of the British Caribbean, Trinidadian soldiers that had served in the war had suffered severe racial discrimination. When the soldiers returned home, they were faced with high levels of unemployment and poverty.<sup>22</sup> According to Selwyn Ryan, “it is difficult to overemphasize the war’s effect in generating revolutionary ideas among West Indian workers.”<sup>23</sup> The first organized movement of the working class was established in 1897, in the form of the Trinidad Workingmen’s Association (TWA). The TWA formed an alliance between the black urban working class and the colored middle-class professional sectors of Trinidadian society.<sup>24</sup> The Association fought for elective municipal government in Port of Spain and the end of indentured labor, which it claimed reduced employment opportunities and thereby degraded the living conditions of African workers. Membership in the TWA dwindled during the early 1900s, and by the end of World War I it was nearly non-existent.<sup>25</sup>

In November 1919, the tensions between government officials and dockworkers came to a head, and sparked a series of riots that broke out throughout the island.<sup>26</sup> The working class marched through the streets in protest of low wages and high levels of inflation, forcing stores to close. Over a thousand men were said to have marched, including Indians from the usually quiet agricultural sector. Murmurs of the rebirth of the Workingmen’s Association soon became a reality. By the end of 1919, the

Association was 6,000 members strong, much to the dismay of many white businessmen.<sup>27</sup> The black working class had organized and selected a young white planter of Corsican descent named Captain Arthur Cipriani as their leader.<sup>28</sup> The former soldiers of the BWIR had great respect for Cipriani, who had defended the troops against racism during World War I.<sup>29</sup> Between 1919 and 1934 Cipriani transformed the TWA from a trade union to a political party, the Trinidad Labor Party (TLP), which became a significant left wing political force.<sup>30</sup>

Political reform remained a popular topic in the post-World War I era. The Colonial Office sent a commission under the leadership of Major Wood to the British West Indies in 1921, charged with investigating the feasibility of a certain amount of political reform.<sup>31</sup> On Wood's recommendation, Trinidad remained under Crown Colony rule; however, elected officials were introduced to the Governor's Legislative Council for the first time in 1925.<sup>32</sup> Generally, the Governor and his appointed members operated as a majority, and thereby retained control, since the elected members rarely formed a consensus.<sup>33</sup> At this time, the right to vote was restricted to those with large land holdings, and significant wealth. Despite the lack of voting rights amongst the broadest sector of TWA supporters, Cipriani was able to secure a seat due largely to the amount of support that he received from the non-white middle class.<sup>34</sup>

In 1932 limited legislation was enacted which allowed the formation of trade unions, something Cipriani and other labor leaders had argued in favor of for years. A harsh blow was dealt to Cipriani's leadership when in 1935 he was not able to win the battle for minimum wage protection, an issue of great importance to the working class that was confronted with high unemployment, high levels of inflation, and global

economic decline.<sup>35</sup> Cipriani's followers abandoned the TLP in favor of organizations that were willing to take aggressive steps against the colonial order. Two of Cipriani's lieutenants, Adrian Rienzi and Uriah Butler, left the TLP in 1936, and went on to become labor leaders in their own right.<sup>36</sup>

Butler founded the British Empire Workers and Citizens Home Rule Party when he split from the TLP.<sup>37</sup> A Grenadian by birth, Butler had served with the BWIR in World War I. Butler had come to Trinidad in the 1920s with the oil boom, and had quickly become involved with left-wing politics. In 1937, when labor riots were sweeping the Caribbean, the Home Rule Party was the only significant organization tasked with voicing the grievances of the laborers. Butler had tried to obtain concessions from the government on behalf of oilfield workers without resorting to protest. However, it became clear that the workers would have to strike to be taken seriously. On June 18, 1937, Butler planned a peaceful sit-down strike on behalf of the oilfield workers, but when the police challenged the laborers, the event turned into a full-blown riot. The enraged masses fought, burned, and looted, resulting in 14 deaths, many injuries, and substantial property damage.<sup>38</sup> On June 21, dock, sugar, and government workers joined the fray, as a general strike that lasted several weeks spread throughout the island.<sup>39</sup>

Following the riots there was an elevated class-consciousness among the workers, and an increased interest in establishing strong, well-organized trade unions.<sup>40</sup> The oilfield workers called upon Adrian Rienzi to assist them in organizing. Under Rienzi's lead the Oilfield Worker's Trade Union (OWTU) and the All Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factory Workers Trade Union (ATSE&FWTU) were founded, and quickly gained

membership. The participation of the Indians, who dominated the sugar industry workers, was limited despite the presence of an Indian leader in Rienzi.<sup>41</sup>

The riots and the advance of organized labor were of concern to the British government. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Moyne Commission toured the Anglophone Caribbean in 1938 in the wake of the 1930s labor rebellions. The Commission evaluated the state of affairs, and made recommendations as to what should be done to improve the situation. In the case of Trinidad, the Moyne Commission recommendations were anticlimactic, and did not satisfy the laborers or the conservatives. As outlined in the report, the Commission advised that the elected members of the Council should be allowed to participate in government, in an advisory capacity. The Commissioners recommended the introduction of universal adult suffrage. However, they did not set a deadline for this task. The reaction of the Indian population on the issue of adult suffrage was mixed. While some supported the notion, most remained fearful that the black majority would overrun them.<sup>42</sup> The Council appointed a Committee in 1941 to debate the issue of adult suffrage, the question of requiring a literacy test, and the qualifications required for membership in the Legislative Council.<sup>43</sup> The committee did not report until 1944, which delayed the passage of universal suffrage until the election of 1946.<sup>44</sup>

During World War II, the US presence was felt heavily in Trinidad as bases were established on the island.<sup>45</sup> The bases provided increased occupational opportunity, and full employment for the working class was reached.<sup>46</sup> Initially Trinidadians enjoyed the presence of the US personnel and the economic boom that they had brought with them, although many locals reported rude treatment by the service personnel.<sup>47</sup> When the war ended many of those that had migrated from the rural to the urban areas to work on and

around the bases remained. This complicated the already critical problem of unemployment in the cities and the oil belt.<sup>48</sup> Many labor and political leaders began to press for constitutional reform toward responsible government that would allow the colony to assume control of post-war reconstruction.<sup>49</sup>

### The Path to Independence

During the 1950s, the issue of constitutional reform was hotly contested between various factions of Trinidadian society as a strong nationalist movement confronted colonialism. The more conservative middle class, along with the Indians, feared the combination of an elected responsible government and universal suffrage. Political allegiance tended to form along racial lines, which would give the majority vote to the black segment of the population.<sup>50</sup> (See Table 3.2) Constitutional reforms were made in 1950, 1953, and 1959 that gradually transitioned Trinidad to a ministerial government structure.<sup>51</sup> Political parties that represented the many factions of Trinidadian society were formed, the most notable of which was the People’s National Movement (PNM), led by Dr. Eric Williams.

**Table 3.2 1960 Census Information**<sup>52</sup>

	<b>% of Total Population 1960 Total = 827,957</b>
Black	43.5
Indian	36.5
White	2
Chinese	1
Mixed	17

In the 1956 election, 8 political parties and 39 independents vied for 24 seats.<sup>53</sup> The independent candidates that had formerly dominated politics in Trinidad took only two. One of the four parties that failed to win any seats in the election was the Party of the Political Progress Group (PPG).<sup>54</sup> The PPG was comprised of mostly white and colored members of the upper and middle class that supported moderate economic and constitutional reform.<sup>55</sup> The TLP, the party founded by Cipriani, had campaigned on an anti-intellectual platform that appealed to rural voters, and won two seats. The masses of the Indian community found leadership in the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which won 5 seats.<sup>56</sup> Predictably, the PDP maintained a stronghold in the predominantly Indian sugar belt, while the Butler Party managed to hold on to two seats in the predominantly black oil industry districts. The PNM proved to be the dominant party, taking 13 of the 24 seats with 39% of the popular vote.<sup>57</sup> The nationalist platform of the PNM had done well with voters in the urban and suburban areas, where Williams proved popular with the black masses as well as the middle class.<sup>58</sup> One year after the PNM dominated the elections in Trinidad, Williams supported the colony's participation in the West Indies Federation as a means to achieve independence.<sup>59</sup>

In an effort to present a united front as an opposition party to the PNM, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) was formed in 1957 through a coalition of the PPG, the PDP, and the TLP.<sup>60</sup> The first opportunity for the DLP to confront the PNM was in the Federal election of 1958. The allocation of delegates to the Federation's House of Representatives was based on population, which granted Trinidad 10 seats.<sup>61</sup> The DLP reached out to the masses, and attacked the PNM as the party that represented middle and upper class interests. The PNM won only 4 seats in the Federal election, but were

consoled by wins in the rural areas where they had previously failed.<sup>62</sup> Trinidad seceded from the Federation shortly after Jamaica in 1961.

When Eric Williams and the People's National Movement (PNM) defeated the Political Progress Group (PPG) in 1956, much of the political power of the white oligarchy was broken.<sup>63</sup> By the time the PNM again soundly defeated the PPG in 1961 bureaucratic power once enjoyed by British ex-patriots and French Creoles had been broken, and this group retreated to the private sector or left Trinidad altogether.<sup>64</sup> On March 22, 1961, Premier Eric Williams delivered his famous campaign speech, "Massa Day Done." During the course of the speech, Williams proclaimed that "Massa" was not a racial term, that "Massa Day Done connotes a political awakening and a social revolution." Williams detailed his plans to increase local food production and his intended investigation into banking practices.<sup>65</sup> Williams stressed the multi-racial, multi-class composition of the PNM and appealed to the dispossessed masses for support.

The PNM and Eric Williams guided the country to independence in 1962, stressing a nationalist ideology built on an interethnic identity. Despite attempts to represent Trinidad and Tobago as a nation of one people, a non-ethnic society, the party is most closely associated with Afro-Trinidadians.<sup>66</sup> The PNM appeared to have thought that the Indian population had been included in the discourse of nationalism when in fact they had not.<sup>67</sup> The national motto, "Together we aspire, together we achieve," similar to the sentiment of Jamaica's "Out of many, one people," reflected the ethnic unity that the PNM was attempting to develop.<sup>68</sup> Indians, however, have long claimed that governmental policies with respect to national identity, culture, employment, education,

and social services have clearly advantaged the African population while the country has been under an African affiliated political party's control.<sup>69</sup>

Just as did the people of Jamaica, the people of Trinidad learned that political independence did not bring true independence from imperialism. Eight years after independence, 80% of manufacturing investment was foreign, banking and insurance were under complete foreign ownership, and 43% of construction revenue went to foreign firms.<sup>70</sup> In the late 1960s unemployment remained at around 14% for the labor force as a whole, and as high as 20% among those in the 20-24 year old age group.<sup>71</sup> Unlike the predominantly uneducated, unemployed urban youth of Jamaica, Trinidad was experiencing high levels of unemployment among the young university graduates.<sup>72</sup>

Indians that had migrated to the urban areas of Trinidad had been successful at entering the middle and upper class through business ownership and professional occupations, such as medicine and law.<sup>73</sup> However, in 1960 the Indian population as a whole occupied the lower end of the income scale and suffered greater income disparity than any other group. This was much because 80% of the Indian population remained in the rural areas, dependent on low wage agricultural occupations.<sup>74</sup> Based on the 1960 Census, the median income of whites was five hundred dollars per month, for Africans it was one hundred and four dollars per month, and for Indians it was only seventy-seven dollars per month.<sup>75</sup> Ownership of the agricultural and petroleum industries remained in the control of foreign corporations and the local white elite, while the local labor force remained confined to lower level occupations.<sup>76</sup> A study done in 1969-1970 showed that 68% of the executives of locally owned companies were white or near white, and that

95% of people hired for high-level positions despite low educational qualifications were also white.<sup>77</sup>

Prime Minister Williams instituted programs to distribute land ownership to small and medium sized farmers in an effort to promote local food production and reduce imports of foreign staple goods. Soft loans and incentives were made available to combat the lack of affordable housing and to stimulate growth in the housing market. Although the intention of the PNM may have been for these programs to aid the black masses, in the end, the incentives most benefit the traditional elite.<sup>78</sup> Racial discrimination in employment, housing, and education continued throughout the 1960s despite the government's measures to redistribute wealth following independence.<sup>79</sup> During the late 1960s Eric Williams attempted to increase educational opportunity for the children of Trinidad. In this effort, he was largely successful. However, as these newly educated young people emerged from school and were met with lack of opportunity to put their education to use, their having been educated only served to increase their dissatisfaction with the social, political, and economic structures.<sup>80</sup>

### Black Power

As in Jamaica, Black Power supporters in Trinidad sought to discredit the notion that Trinidad and Tobago had achieved multi-racial harmony and bring to light the reality of discrimination in occupational and economic opportunities.<sup>81</sup> Two Black Power groups rose to prominence in 1970, the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), and Tapia Group.<sup>82</sup> Lloyd Best, an economics lecturer at UWI, headed the more conservative Tapia Group. Tapia was active in agitating for economic reform in no uncertain terms,

however he preferred to work within the system and used intellectual argument over demonstration and protest.<sup>83</sup> Students associated with UWI formed NJAC in 1969 under the leadership of Geddes Granger. Granger, President of the Guild of Undergraduates, formed the organization as a coalition of several smaller groups that ranged in their methods from radical to conservative.<sup>84</sup>

The membership of NJAC was not confined to student organizations. Several community-based Black Power groups as well as trade unions were associated with the coalition. Of great significance was the affiliation with the OWTU, as well as the Transport and Industrial Workers Union, and the National Union of Foods.<sup>85</sup> The primary grievances voiced by NJAC included high rates of unemployment, particularly among the young black population, in a society controlled by a small white minority and foreign interests.<sup>86</sup> Beyond unemployment and underemployment, there were great inequalities in economic ownership and wealth.

NJAC viewed the PNM government as completely corrupt and in allegiance with white imperialist interests.<sup>87</sup> Williams and the PNM had followed the model of “Industrialization by Invitation” to encourage foreign investment in the manufacturing sector to create employment and increase retention of capital in the domestic market.<sup>88</sup> Transnational Corporations (TNCs) accepted the invitation to invest in manufacturing establishments in Trinidad and Tobago, but did not generate employment at the levels anticipated by the government or the people.<sup>89</sup> By the late 1960s Williams’ plans to combat unemployment had not been effective, with unemployment rates at 14 % for the general labor force, and as high as 20% for those aged 20-24. Foreign corporations and the local white elite controlled the industries that provided the highest return, petroleum,

and agriculture.<sup>90</sup> As support for Black Power grew, NJAC became more radical in their methods, and sought the complete removal of the government by any means necessary.<sup>91</sup>

### Black Power as a Revolution

Some term the events that occurred in the spring of 1970 in Trinidad a revolution. Others say it was a continuation of the labor rebellions that took place in the 1930s and 1940s. Many definitions of the term “revolution” require an overthrow of the government and many dictate that this takeover must be a violent one.<sup>92</sup> The activities of 1970 would not qualify as revolutionary by such a definition, as violence was low, and arguably, there was not a significant change in the ruling political party. Despite this, Selwyn Ryan states that it was indeed a revolution, although a small one, and “was the culmination of a revolutionary process that began with the struggle of African slaves for emancipation.”<sup>93</sup>

The first public appearance of Black Power in Trinidad came at Carnival 1970. But the rumblings of a movement had begun in 1968 when nearly all the students of the Trinidadian campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI) marched in support of Walter Rodney and the students on the UWI Mona campus.<sup>94</sup> During the 1970 Carnival festivities, Black Power supporters and protest bands marched in the parade alongside the traditional festival costumes and steel bands.<sup>95</sup> The marchers carried large banners portraying the images of Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, and Stokely Carmichael.<sup>96</sup> The band “Truth” mesmerized the crowds with drums, chants, and banners while “King Sugar” dramatized the hardships of the workers in the sugar industry, the band’s banner proclaiming “Black blood: Black sweat: Black tears – white profits.”<sup>97</sup> The participants

used the parade as a stage to voice their protest of the Trinidad and Tobago government's banning of Trinidad born Black Power leader Stokely Carmichael.<sup>98</sup>

In his Address to the Nation in February 1970, Prime Minister Eric Williams endeavored to preempt a Black Power movement in Trinidad by promising major reforms that would elevate the nation to a higher level of integration and promote a strong sense of nationalism.<sup>99</sup> In an article in *The Express* on February 16, 1970, entitled "New PNM search on for Black Dignity," the PNM outlined their reforms initiative to address many of the protestors' issues. The initiatives aimed to equalize economic power, provide increased entrepreneurial opportunities, and promote a greater recognition of the proud African and Indian history and culture.<sup>100</sup> NJAC saw the concessions as more promises from a government that had previously failed to deliver, and a full-blown protest at a revolutionary level evolved on February 26, 1970.<sup>101</sup>

NJAC had rejected the PNM's concessions as more rhetoric meant to quiet the Movement and accused Williams of practicing tokenism to appease the masses, while little or no substantive change was made in the existing power structure.<sup>102</sup> February 26, 1970, marked the one-year anniversary of the arrest of a group of West Indian students that were attending St. George Williams University in Canada. The students were arrested while protesting racial discrimination at the Canadian school.<sup>103</sup> In Port of Spain, NJAC staged a solidarity march in support of the arrested students, many of whom were still being held awaiting trial in Montreal.<sup>104</sup>

The PNM government quickly moved to preempt further intensification of the Movement, alarmed by the potential alliance between the young protesters and the working class. Deputy Prime Minister A. N. R. Robinson, representative of the PNM,

voiced support for Black Power as an expression of black pride, but labeled the demonstrators a small group of extremists within the Black Power movement.<sup>105</sup> The DLP was more willing than the PNM leadership to voice their disapproval of Black Power. The DLP officially announced that they did not believe the accusations of racism in Canada and the US and could not support the movement's oppositional position to foreign investment.<sup>106</sup> The response of the Trinidadian government further angered the protestors, and increased the momentum of the movement.

On March 4, 1970, more than 10,000 people were reported as peacefully marching through Port of Spain chanting Black Power slogans, singing, and beating drums. The march began as a protest of the arrest of nine NJAC leaders at the February 27 demonstration for "disorderly conduct in a place of worship," but during the six-hour demonstration shifted to a call for black unity to fight the "white racist power structure."<sup>107</sup> The groups that joined NJAC in the movement included several community-based groups, such as the Black Panthers, the African Unity Brothers of St. Ann, the African Cultural Association of St. James, the Afro-turf Limers from San Juan, the National Freedom Organization from Arouca, and the Southern Liberation Movement from San Fernando.<sup>108</sup>

On March 5, 1970, the movement took more radical and violent turn. During the trial of the nine NJAC leaders, supporters were chased away by police with batons. As the demonstrators fled the police, they smashed shop windows, and, during the night, a Molotov cocktail was thrown into the home of the Minister of Education and Culture. This was but the first of such responses, as reports of Molotov cocktails thrown into banks, businesses, and the homes of political targets began to increase amidst reports of

police brutality. Most of the violence was confined to the night, while peaceful protests were executed during the daylight hours. On March 6, another peaceful demonstration led by NJAC marched with some 14,000 to 20,000 supporters from Port of Spain to San Juan, some five miles away. Lloyd Best of Tapia Group urged the NJAC to steer away from violent protest, and, instead, to prepare a feasible proposal for reconstruction of the country.<sup>109</sup>

By March 12, the government pulled the limited support they had previously demonstrated for Black Power and condemned it as a radical, violent movement.<sup>110</sup> To combat the increasing opposition from the PNM and accusations that the Movement was anti-Indian, leaders of the Movement sought to fortify alliances with the Indian population.<sup>111</sup> The first attempt to include the Indian segment of the population was during a march through the primarily Indian village of Caroni on March 12.<sup>112</sup> Caroni was the center of the sugar industry, which was heavily dependent on Indian labor.<sup>113</sup> Indian students at the UWI campus had been fighting resistance from the University administration to gain recognition of the Hindu holidays and festivals and were concerned about the lack of respect for Indian culture. The students had formed the Society for the Propagation of Indian Culture (SPIC) to organize and coordinate their efforts to promote Indian culture.<sup>114</sup> NJAC approached SPIC members and asked their assistance in organizing the march through Caroni. Whether there was cooperation or contention between SPIC and NJAC during the 1970 Movement has been debated. However some members of SPIC did serve as liaisons between NJAC and the villagers.

In the days prior to the march, representatives of SPIC went through the villages and schools in and near Caroni that were along the planned route of the march. The

representatives encouraged the residents to show their support of the Black Power movement. SPIC organizers held meetings in each village to address any concerns that the villagers had regarding the march. As the SPIC members traveled through the villages they were closely followed by groups of armed guards who represented the interests of local politicians that were strongly opposed to Indian participation in the Movement. The guards stopped at each household visited by the SPIC members and were reported to have threatened villagers that considered support of the march.<sup>115</sup> Despite the threats, the villagers showed their support by leaving food and drink for the marchers all along the route.<sup>116</sup> There was very little active participation in the movement by Indians for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the reluctance of the Indian population to identify with a movement called “Black Power.”<sup>117</sup>

The symbols of the movement were strongly rooted in the African culture, such as the wearing of dashikis, the image of the clenched fist, and the assumption of African names.<sup>118</sup> Most of the organizations associated with the movement to date were African based, including NJAC, the OWTU, and the Transport and Industrial Workers Union (TIWU).<sup>119</sup> It was popular opinion among Indians that full participation in the Movement would mean an abandonment of their Indian culture.<sup>120</sup> Indians had fought to preserve their culture and identity for decades and they were not prepared to abandon their ancestral heritage.<sup>121</sup> Ken Parmasad, a member of SPIC, not only expressed his understanding and support of the Black Power movement, he and other members of SPIC worked to ensure the success of the march through Caroni. However, a letter from SPIC published in Embryo, March 21, 1970, painted a much different picture of the

organization's attitudes toward NJAC and the Movement. The letter, addressed "To the Black People of Trinidad" said:

"Don't call me Black. No Indian likes being called Black ... My characteristics are well known, I have always thought of myself as a human being, an Indian. You, the Black man want us to join you. How can we be sure that you do not want the place of the White man for yourself alone? ... Every Indian is united today because of your struggle. We are closer together because we have been for centuries. We look at you as a threat. You are bringing out the Indian power which you did not know existed."<sup>122</sup>

If the movement had chosen another name and had created symbols for representation that were not identified with Black Power, more support might have been garnered from the Indian people. If nothing else the march through Caroni sent a message to the Indian community that the NJAC and Black Power leaders in Trinidad wanted to form alliances that would benefit both groups.<sup>123</sup>

In response to the continued unrest, Williams again addressed the people of Trinidad on March 23, 1970. Williams reiterated his support for black dignity, but accused the demonstrators of ignorance of what the government had already done for the country. Williams presented three concessions in an attempt to appease the protestors. The first was a 5% tax on corporations that would generate \$10 million dollars to be used for unemployment relief. The second concession was the appointment of a commission that was to investigate charges of racially discriminatory business practices. Lastly, Williams proposed the purchase of a majority share of the Bank of London and Montreal to localize the financial industry. The response from the demonstrators was far from favorable; however, the NJAC had not yet secured enough popular support for the movement to confront the government.<sup>124</sup>

What some 200 students and supporters had started in February had grown to incorporate tens of thousands of primarily black, unemployed youth.<sup>125</sup> This is not to say that all of the demonstrators were either students or the uneducated poor. Much support for the movement came from the educated black youth that, despite their education, were increasingly frustrated that they could not find employment. Just as some members of the middle class supported the movement in Jamaica, the movement in Trinidad garnered support from a cross-section of the working and middle class as well.<sup>126</sup> A major breakthrough came on April 4 when the primarily African membership of the Oilfield Workers Trade Union (OWTU) pledged their support for Black Power.<sup>127</sup> George Weekes, leader of the OWTU, declared that the government needed to take control of the petroleum industry and transfer the power of this great economic resource into the hands of the Africans and Indians of Trinidad.<sup>128</sup> The working class entered the movement with the addition of several significant trade unions, soon to be joined by the Indian sugar workers.<sup>129</sup> Demonstrations were now on the level of the labor riots of the 1930s as workers went on strike, effectively bringing commerce to a halt.<sup>130</sup> Many public utilities and industries had already been hit by strikes and demonstrations and now the sugar industry was at a standstill. The addition of the trade unions to the movement and the associated work stoppages, forced Williams and the PNM to take action. Williams declared a state of emergency in Trinidad and Tobago on April 21, 1970.<sup>131</sup>

The revolution had reached its peak, as demonstrations and violence broke out throughout the island.<sup>132</sup> The military was called in to subdue the protestors, but many of the junior officers refused to take up arms against their “black brothers.”<sup>133</sup> One-half of the military force, some 800 men, mutinied against the government.<sup>134</sup> Raffique Shah,

one of the leaders of the officers stated that the government was no longer representative of the majority of the people. After hearing that the officers had refused to follow orders, Venezuela sent two warships to Trinidadian waters, and called for additional support from the United States. The US, with approval from the Williams government, responded with troops from Puerto Rico immediately to intervene in Trinidad. Two thousand US marines along with six warships, several helicopters and weaponry were dispatched to evacuate one thousand American citizens from the island.<sup>135</sup> After the arrest of the mutineers, the revolutionary movement slipped quietly away, but the effects lingered.<sup>136</sup>

Following the revolt, the PNM government created the National Commerce Bank by acquiring the assets of The Bank of London and the Canadian banks implemented a plan to improve their recruitment and management training programs.<sup>137</sup> Entry-level banking positions were opened to African and Indian people in unprecedented numbers, and change could be noted in the middle and upper levels of management.<sup>138</sup> Discriminatory lending practices, previously rampant in the industry, also decreased.<sup>139</sup> When the banking industry shifted to local, or state, ownership, the rate of minority participation in business ownership and partnership increased, largely due to the availability of credit.<sup>140</sup>

## Summary

As Williams addressed the people of Trinidad in his famous “Massa Day Done” speech of 1961, he promised an end to foreign imperialism and outlined development programs that would promote the growth of local industry.<sup>141</sup> However, eight years after the PNM led Trinidad to independence, the oil and sugar industries were still under

foreign control, and control of the economy remained firmly in the hands of the white elite. The PNM platform of racial unity and Williams' call for an end to white privilege had failed to change the highly racialized structure that relegated many blacks and Indians to the working class, with little opportunity for advancement. Just as in Jamaica, the masses of Trinidad remained disillusioned with independence and doubtful of the ability of political leaders to implement substantive change that would eliminate imperialism and racial discrimination.

Indo-Trinidadians were certainly victims of foreign imperialism and discriminatory hiring practices just as were the Afro-Trinidadians. The Indian community had approached universal suffrage and representative government with much trepidation, uncertain and wary of their position under black political leadership. Post-independence, with a black government in place, Indians complained of discrimination in the public sector and little improvement for opportunity in the private sector. The contention that continued post-independence between the two groups certainly hampered efforts by Black Power leaders to gain support from the Indian community. The amount of support for Black Power, particularly during the march through Caroni, is debated. There is evidence that members of SPIC were split in their support, with some acting as liaisons between Black Power groups and the Indian community, while other members remained adamant that they would not be included in a movement that strongly identified with African heritage. What remains questionable is the impact of the lack of support from the Indian community on the movement. Most of the activity related to the February Revolution was concentrated in the urban areas, rather than in the rural sugar belt where there was a high concentration of Indian residents. Although the movement

might have been accelerated had the sugar workers joined the efforts earlier, it is doubtful that the end result would have differed greatly with the support of the Indian community.

Much like the movement in Jamaica, Black Power in Trinidad garnered much support from the ranks of the unemployed youth. Williams and the PNM had implemented strategies to improve educational opportunities; however, the educated youth remained frustrated by high levels of unemployment. As in Jamaica, limited levels of support were given to the movement from the middle class, however the affiliation of the working class with Black Power groups in Trinidad proved critical to the success of the movement. Similar to the labor rebellions of the 1930s, the February Revolution forced the government to sit up and take notice, much due to the actions of organized labor. The PNM could no longer attribute the unrest to the actions of a small group of radicals when faced with widespread strikes and work stoppages staged by the trade unions. Although the movement was halted by military intervention, the PNM had been motivated to accelerate reforms that would make good on the promises made in 1961.

Despite the rhetoric of change used by Williams in 1961, there had been little change in the power and control of the white elite until the Black Power movement of 1970.<sup>142</sup> The Black Power movement as it took place in Trinidad accelerated social change on a revolutionary scale.<sup>143</sup> Following the events of 1970, efforts to redistribute wealth in Trinidad were accelerated and renewed efforts were made to provide opportunity for the masses.<sup>144</sup> If the success of a revolution is determined by a change in political power, then perhaps the revolution in Trinidad was not successful or could, at best, be termed incomplete.<sup>145</sup> While the movement failed to garner sufficient support to continue, changes that Black Power was striving for were seen in Trinidad. In Trinidad

the movement is credited with creating not only ideological change in large segments of the population, but also in stimulating dramatic reform in the PNM.<sup>146</sup>

Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Trinidad is the larger of two islands that make up the country of Trinidad and Tobago. Tobago will not be discussed in this thesis.
- <sup>2</sup> Braithwaite, Lloyd, *Social Stratification in Trinidad: A Preliminary Analysis*, (Kingston, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1975) 2.
- <sup>3</sup> Ryan, Selwyn, *Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972) 4.
- <sup>4</sup> Ryan 1972 4.
- <sup>5</sup> Braithwaite 2.
- <sup>6</sup> Brereton, Bridget, "The White Elite of Trinidad, 1838-1950," *The White Minority in the Caribbean*, ed. Howard Johnson and Karl Watson (Oxford: James Curry Ltd., 1998) 46. See also Braithwaite 2.
- <sup>7</sup> Braithwaite 3.
- <sup>8</sup> Ryan 1972 24.
- <sup>9</sup> Brereton 35.
- <sup>10</sup> Ryan 1972 17-18.
- <sup>11</sup> Knight, Franklin W., *The Caribbean, the Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 143. See also Williams, Eric, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984) 348.
- <sup>12</sup> Green
- <sup>13</sup> Bolland, O. Nigel, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2001) 61.
- <sup>14</sup> Braithwaite 4.
- <sup>15</sup> Knight 144.
- <sup>16</sup> Williams 1984 348.
- <sup>17</sup> Ryan 1972 19.
- <sup>18</sup> Brereton 41.
- <sup>19</sup> Ryan 1972 19-20.
- <sup>20</sup> Richardson, Bonham C., "Caribbean Migrations, 1838-1985," *The Modern Caribbean*, ed. Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 208.
- <sup>21</sup> Ryan 1972 21.
- <sup>22</sup> Bolland 2001 196-197.
- <sup>23</sup> Ryan 1972 28.
- <sup>24</sup> Bolland 2001 138. See also Ryan 1972 26-27.
- <sup>25</sup> Ryan 1972 27.
- <sup>26</sup> Bolland, O. Nigel, *On the March: Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean, 1934-1939* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers Limited, 1995) 30-32.
- <sup>27</sup> Ryan 1972 29.
- <sup>28</sup> Brereton 50-51. See also Ryan 1972 5.
- <sup>29</sup> Bolland 1995 35.
- <sup>30</sup> Bolland 1995 36. Ryan 1972 30.
- <sup>31</sup> Ryan 1972 30.

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- <sup>32</sup> Proctor 39.
- <sup>33</sup> Ryan 1972 33.
- <sup>34</sup> Ryan 1972 34.
- <sup>35</sup> Ryan 1972 40.
- <sup>36</sup> Bolland 2001 254-256.
- <sup>37</sup> Bolland 2001 257.
- <sup>38</sup> Ryan 1972 45-47.
- <sup>39</sup> Bolland 1995 93-96.
- <sup>40</sup> Ryan 1972 58.
- <sup>41</sup> Ryan 1972 59.
- <sup>42</sup> Ryan 1972 65-68.
- <sup>43</sup> Bolland 2001 458. See also Ryan 1972 68.
- <sup>44</sup> Bolland 2001 459.
- <sup>45</sup> Braithwaite 119-120.
- <sup>46</sup> Braithwaite 129.
- <sup>47</sup> Bolland 2001 446-447.
- <sup>48</sup> Ryan 1972 72.
- <sup>49</sup> Ryan 1972 78.
- <sup>50</sup> Ryan 105-106.
- <sup>51</sup> Proctor 56-62.
- <sup>52</sup> Ryan 1972 3.
- <sup>53</sup> Premdas 9.
- <sup>54</sup> Also referred to as the POPPG.
- <sup>55</sup> Ryan 1972 87.
- <sup>56</sup> Ryan 1972 164.
- <sup>57</sup> Premdas 9. Ryan 1972 163.
- <sup>58</sup> Ryan 1972 164.
- <sup>59</sup> Williams, Eric, *History of the people of Trinidad and Tobago (Port-of-Spain, Trinidad: PNM Pub. Co., 1962) 256.*
- <sup>60</sup> Ryan 1972 175.
- <sup>61</sup> Springer, Hugh W., "Federation in the Caribbean: An Attempt That Failed," *The Aftermath of Sovereignty*, ed. David Lowenthal (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973) 199.
- <sup>62</sup> Ryan 1972 189.
- <sup>63</sup> Ryan, Selwyn, "Social Stratification in Trinidad and Tobago: Lloyd Braithwaite Revisited," *Social and Occupational Stratification in Contemporary Trinidad and Tobago*, ed. Selwyn Ryan (St. Augustine, Trinidad: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, 1991) 60.
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- <sup>65</sup> Williams, Eric, "Massa Day Done: (Public Lecture at Woodford Square, 22 March 1961)," *Callaloo*, vol. 20, no. 4 (1997): 724-730
- <sup>66</sup> Yelvington, Kevin, *Producing Power: Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in a Caribbean Workplace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995) 59.

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- <sup>67</sup> Gosine, Mahin, *East Indians and Black Power in the Caribbean: The Case of Trinidad* (New York: Africana Research Publications, 1986) 18-19. See also La Guerre, John Gaffar, "The Indian Response to Black Power," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: a Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R., The University of the West Indies, 1995) 279.
- <sup>68</sup> Yelvington 59.
- <sup>69</sup> Gosine 20. See also La Guerre 298.
- <sup>70</sup> Daaga, Makandal, "The Making of Seventy," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: A Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R., The University of the West Indies, 1995) 185.
- <sup>71</sup> Stewart 727.
- <sup>72</sup> Stewart 727.
- <sup>73</sup> Ryan 1972 145.
- <sup>74</sup> Yelvington 66. Ryan 1991 69.
- <sup>75</sup> Kambon, Khafra, "The Vibrations of 1970," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: A Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R., The University of the West Indies, 1995a) 257.
- <sup>76</sup> Stewart 728.
- <sup>77</sup> Brereton 43.
- <sup>78</sup> Stewart 729-730.
- <sup>79</sup> Stewart 728-729.
- <sup>80</sup> Millette, James, "Towards the Black Power Revolt of 1970," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: A Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R., The University of the West Indies, 1995) 59-97.
- <sup>81</sup> Ryan 1995 695- 696.
- <sup>82</sup> Lux, William R, "Black Power in the Caribbean," *Journal of Black Studies* 3.2 (1972), 214. The Tapia Group is also referred to as Tapia House in some documents.
- <sup>83</sup> Meeks 150-151. See also Lux 215.
- <sup>84</sup> Kambon BP in T&T 216
- <sup>85</sup> Kambon Vibrations 250.
- <sup>86</sup> Meeks 149-150.
- <sup>87</sup> Meeks 150.
- <sup>88</sup> Stewart, Taimoon, "The Aftermath of 1970: Transformation, Reversal, or Continuity?," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: a Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R., The University of the West Indies, 1995) 722.
- <sup>89</sup> Stewart 722.
- <sup>90</sup> Stewart 727-728.
- <sup>91</sup> Meeks 150.
- <sup>92</sup> Ryan, Selwyn, "1970: Revolution or Rebellion?," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: A Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R., The University of the West Indies, 1995) 692-694.
- <sup>93</sup> Ryan 1995 694.
- <sup>94</sup> Meeks, Brian, "The 1970 Revolution Chronology and Documentation," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: A Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R., The University of the West Indies, 1995) 137. See

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<sup>95</sup> Meeks 137-138.

<sup>96</sup> Meeks 138.

<sup>97</sup> Kambon 1995b 220-221.

<sup>98</sup> Meeks 138.

<sup>99</sup> Meeks 136, 138-139.

<sup>100</sup> Qtd. in Meeks 138-139.

<sup>101</sup> Meeks 140.

<sup>102</sup> Ryan 1995 696-697.

<sup>103</sup> Bennett, Herman L., "The Black Power February (1970) Revolution in Trinidad," *Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, ed. Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996) 549.

<sup>104</sup> Meeks 140-141. See also Bennett 134.

<sup>105</sup> Meeks 142.

<sup>106</sup> Meeks 144—145

<sup>107</sup> Oxaal, Ivar, *Black Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Race and Class in Trinidad* (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1982) 215. See also Meeks 147.

<sup>108</sup> Meeks 146.

<sup>109</sup> Meeks 150-151.

<sup>110</sup> Meeks 153.

<sup>111</sup> Best, Lloyd, "The February Revolution," *The Aftermath of Sovereignty*, ed. David Lowenthal and Lambros Comitas (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973) 309.

<sup>112</sup> Meeks 154-157.

<sup>113</sup> Parmasad, Ken, "Ancestral Impulse, Community and 1970: Bridging the Afro-Indian Divide," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: A Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R., The University of the West Indies, 1995) 314.

<sup>114</sup> Parmasad 313.

<sup>115</sup> Parmasad 314-315. See also Meeks 154.

<sup>116</sup> Parmasad 316.

<sup>117</sup> Meeks 155.

<sup>118</sup> La Guerre 285.

<sup>119</sup> La Guerre 285.

<sup>120</sup> Parmasad 316-317.

<sup>121</sup> Parmasad 313.

<sup>122</sup> Qtd. in Gosine 166.

<sup>123</sup> Meeks 157.

<sup>124</sup> Meeks 158-161.

<sup>125</sup> Meeks 145.

<sup>126</sup> Kambon 1995b 230-231.

<sup>127</sup> Meeks 162 1995..

<sup>128</sup> Qtd. in Ryan 1995 696.

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- <sup>129</sup> Kambon 1995b 237.  
<sup>130</sup> Meeks 167.  
<sup>131</sup> Meeks 167.  
<sup>132</sup> Kambon 1995b 227.  
<sup>133</sup> Meeks 168.  
<sup>134</sup> Lux 213.  
<sup>135</sup> Meeks 168-172.  
<sup>136</sup> Meeks 173 1995.  
<sup>137</sup> Scotland, Leslie H., "The Impact of the 1970 Black Power Revolution on Banking," *The Black Power Revolution 1970: A Retrospective*, ed. Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart (St. Augustine, Trinidad: I.S.E.R., The University of the West Indies, 1995) 347.  
<sup>138</sup> Scotland 348.  
<sup>139</sup> Kambon 1995b 241.  
<sup>140</sup> Daaga 187.  
<sup>141</sup> Williams, Massa Day Done.  
<sup>142</sup> Brereton 43.  
<sup>143</sup> Ryan 1995 703.  
<sup>144</sup> Stewart 730.  
<sup>145</sup> Meeks 135.  
<sup>146</sup> (Millette 60 1995)

## Chapter Four

### Waiting for the Bahamas to Reach

The previous two chapters have discussed the evolution of Black Power in Jamaica and Trinidad, culminating in a climactic event born of continued frustration. In the Bahamas, there was no climactic moment similar to the February Revolution in Trinidad or the Rodney Riots of Jamaica. The Bahamas lagged behind most of the West Indies in the organization of labor, universal suffrage, and education. Formation of a political consensus was inhibited by a conservative culture, geographic disparity, absent or difficult communication systems, and the illiteracy of the constituents. By the late 1960s the majority of the population had migrated from the Out Islands to the economic and political center of the colony and had just begun to organize and speak up for change.

This chapter will discuss the development of the Bahamas as a British colony, highlighting the aspects of development that differ from most of the British West Indies. The discussion will then move to the formation of labor organizations and political parties in the 1940s and 1950s before examining in greater detail the party that led the Bahamas to independence. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Black Power in the Bahamas and an evaluation of why Black Power did not achieve the popularity in the Bahamas that it did in Jamaica and Trinidad.

## Colonial History

The Bahamas are often excluded from discussions of the British West Indies, although they share much of the same colonial history. The Bahamian archipelago consists of 700 islands and several thousand rocks and cays that extend from just 50 miles off the east coast of south Florida southward toward Cuba, roughly paralleling the Florida coast.<sup>1</sup> Most of the islands are small, with only 22 of the 700 inhabited by permanent residents. Unlike the mountainous islands of the Antilles, the Bahamas are relatively flat, with the highest elevation on Cat Island just 206 feet above sea level.<sup>2</sup> Columbus made landfall in the Bahamas on his first voyage in 1492 on an island once known to the indigenous Lucayans as Guanahani. Columbus renamed the island San Salvador, and claimed the land for Spain.<sup>3</sup> Spain did not occupy the islands, although they formally remained Spanish territory until the Treaty of Paris in 1783.<sup>4</sup>

In 1647 a group of Bermudians supported an effort to form a British colony where they would be free from religious persecution. In 1648, a group of about 70 Bermudians set out for the Bahamas, and settled on Eleuthera. The majority of the original “Eleutherian Adventurers” returned to Bermuda, but some remained and were joined by other whites, slaves, and free blacks that were deported from Bermuda as undesirables.<sup>5</sup> The early settlers enjoyed a seafaring lifestyle on the northern islands while in the drier islands of the south, salt production was established for export to the North American Mainland and the Caribbean.<sup>6</sup> What are now the Turks and Caicos Islands, at the southernmost end of the island chain, were governed as part of the Bahama Islands until 1848.<sup>7</sup>

Large numbers of conservative Loyalists came to settle in the Bahamas beginning in 1784 as they fled from the US following the American Revolution.<sup>8</sup> Families came to the islands to try their hand at cotton cultivation in the Bahamas, bringing with them horses, livestock, and slaves.<sup>9</sup> More than half of the new settlers remained on the island of New Providence. The rest settled in the southern islands and began cotton production.<sup>10</sup> Along with the planters, merchants, lawyers, and government officials settled in New Providence. The cash-poor planters, exchanging cotton or wood to purchase staples, merchandise, and slaves from the emerging mercantile class in New Providence, used the barter system for the purchase of merchandise.<sup>11</sup>

The plantation system that was prevalent throughout the US south and the West Indies was never firmly established in the Bahamas.<sup>12</sup> The period of cotton production in any significant quantity was short-lived. Cotton production began in earnest with the arrival of the Loyalists in the mid to late 1780s and was in decline by the mid to late 1790s. The poor quality of the soil greatly hindered the establishment of export industries based on agricultural endeavors.<sup>13</sup> Planters in the Out Islands, after the failure of cotton, turned to provision agriculture and raising stock animals, which resulted in a labor surplus in those locations.<sup>14</sup> Planters that were without an alternative means of earning a living often found that hiring out their slaves for a fee was the only way to stay afloat.<sup>15</sup> Under a system of labor negotiation commonly referred to as the self-hire system, many slaves were able to arrange for their own employment. By 1816, the system of self-hire was expanded to include the “liberated” Africans held in apprenticeships.<sup>16</sup>

Between the years of 1811 and 1860, approximately 6,000 Africans were released into the Bahamas.<sup>17</sup> Most of these Africans were “liberated” from slave ships destined for Cuba that were intercepted by the British Royal Navy after the slave trade was made illegal for British subjects in 1807.<sup>18</sup> Africans that arrived in the Bahamas were placed “under the control and at the disposal of the Lieutenant Governor for several years according to their age.”<sup>19</sup> The liberated Africans were held “re-captive” in either the West India Regiment, the British Royal Navy, or as apprentices for the purpose of learning a trade.<sup>20</sup> Through grants of small plots of land, particularly in Nassau, the liberated Africans helped to form the Bahamian peasantry.<sup>21</sup>

In Nassau the import-export industry injected cash into the economy, however there was hardly any circulation of cash in the Out Islands to be used to pay laborers in wages.<sup>22</sup> Dependence on a system of credit during the late 1800s was pervasive among the lower classes of the Bahamas across all industries, while the merchant class maintained control over the import-export industry and the credit system.<sup>23</sup> “In the Bahamian context, the merchants had replaced slaves with a dependent laboring population susceptible to their economic and social control.”<sup>24</sup> These systems remained in place until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the opportunity for wage labor in New Providence increased.<sup>25</sup>

The Prohibition era in the US provided an opportunity for the Bahamas to profit from the questionable activity of smuggling alcohol into US ports.<sup>26</sup> The boom from smuggling operations continued until the repeal of Prohibition laws in 1933.<sup>27</sup> When prohibition ended, the Bahamas entered a period of rapid development, resulting in a real estate boom as American capitalists acquired large tracts of land on the west end of New

Providence.<sup>28</sup> The prohibition boom and related land development provided a quick accumulation of capital for the white elite of Nassau.<sup>29</sup> White investors and workers from outside the Bahamas migrated to Nassau, forming a group of immigrant whites that comprised up to 5% of the Bahamian population in total.<sup>30</sup> As this economic boom for whites in the Islands of the Bahamas progressed, so did segregation and discrimination against Bahamian blacks, increasing racial tensions throughout the islands.<sup>31</sup>

The Bahamas, along with Barbados and Bermuda, were known for their open and blatant systems of racial discrimination. Large resident white populations that crossed class lines characterized these colonies.<sup>32</sup> Historically much of the white population of the Bahamas resided in Eleuthera and Spanish Wells, Harbour Island, and the Abacos. The white residents of these islands lived a sea faring lifestyle that earned them the label of “Conchy Joes.”<sup>33</sup> White settlers on Abaco remained segregated from the black population due to fear of racial “contamination.”<sup>34</sup> Similar segregation and discrimination was present in Eleuthera, where black residents were outlawed in the village of Spanish Wells.<sup>35</sup> Compared to their counterparts in New Providence, the Out Island whites were not particularly affluent.

Social stratification in the Bahamas was similar to that of most of the British West Indies, with the exception of the large white population that occupied the lower class. The resident white elite held their position as the upper class, while the middle class was dominated by descendents of the Africans,<sup>36</sup> blacks, and coloreds that had profited from either property ownership, or education.<sup>37</sup> In the 1930s, white Out Islanders migrated to Nassau and were preferred for positions as shop assistants and clerks in Bay Street businesses, which increased the numbers of the white middle class.<sup>38</sup> New Providence

was the only island in the Bahamas with a sizeable black middle or upper class, as perpetual poverty continued throughout most of the Out Islands.<sup>39</sup>

The white population in Nassau, which represented about 10% of the total population of the Bahamas, increasingly practiced discrimination after contact with those from the southern US in the early 1900s. Black children were not accepted at some schools, many churches were completely segregated or dictated that blacks and coloreds had to enter the church through the back door, and separate cemeteries were maintained for blacks and whites.<sup>40</sup> Until the 1950s, blacks were barred from all hotels in New Providence, along with many restaurants and movie houses.<sup>41</sup> According to Gail Saunders “The development of and growing dependency on tourism and American investment during the 1920s and 1930s hardened the already existing colour line in the Bahamas.”<sup>42</sup> The growth of the tourism industry during this time period generated jobs and wage labor in New Providence, however most of the wealth remained in the accounts of the mercantile elite while the masses lived in poverty and declining social conditions.<sup>43</sup>

Opportunities for Bahamians to work in the US were restricted by the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924, which placed a quota on the number of immigrants allowed into the US from any one country. Men from the Out Islands that had relied on employment in the US began to migrate to New Providence where the economy was booming from the development of tourism and bootlegging.<sup>44</sup> Between 1921 and 1931 the population of New Providence increased by 52.3%. Less than a quarter of the total population of the colony lived in New Providence in 1921. By 1931 one third of the people of the Bahamas were residing there. The incoming Out Islanders, most of whom were unskilled laborers, flooded the job market. Many could not find employment,

particularly in the tourist industry due to discriminatory hiring practices.<sup>45</sup> As can be seen in Table 4.1, the migration of people from the Out Islands to New Providence and Grand Bahama who were seeking employment, health care services, and education continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>46</sup>

**Table 4.1 Distribution of Population by Islands<sup>47</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>New Providence (%)</b>	<b>Grand Bahama (%)</b>	<b>Family Islands (%)</b>
1901	53,735	23.33	3.31	73.36
1911	55,944	24.23	3.26	72.51
1921	53,031	24.47	3.20	72.33
1931	59,828	33.02	3.75	63.23
1943	68,846	42.69	3.39	53.92
1953	84,841	54.37	4.83	40.80
1963	130,220	62.13	6.32	31.55
1970	168,812	60.13	15.32	24.55
1980	209,505	64.65	15.80	19.55

The educational system in the Bahamas lagged far behind the rest of the West Indies. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were 44 government schools throughout the islands of the Bahamas. All of these schools were primary schools.<sup>48</sup> Education on the Out Islands was carried out in small one-room schoolhouses until the late 1960s. Teachers were untrained and scarce, particularly on the Out Islands where hundreds of children did not go to school at all.<sup>49</sup> The Government High School was established in 1923 as the first and only public secondary school in the Bahamas at that time.<sup>50</sup> Throughout the Bahamas as late as 1957, the ratio of primary to secondary school students was 67:1 due in part to the lack of secondary schools on the Out Islands.<sup>51</sup> The availability of secondary education in New Providence in the mid-1900s contributed to

the growth of the black middle class, particularly for those that were able to further their studies abroad and obtain degrees in areas such as medicine, law, and engineering. Many that returned to the Bahamas from studying in England came back with a strong nationalistic sentiment, and ideas about decolonization.<sup>52</sup>

### Signs of Organization

The government of the colony had remained fundamentally unchanged between 1729 and 1964. The tight control maintained by the white oligarchy made it unnecessary to transform the representative government of the Bahamas to Crown Colony rule. The government of the Bahamas consisted of an appointed Governor and an advisory Council of ten members appointed by the Governor.<sup>53</sup> The elective House of Assembly represented each district, which in the case of the Bahamas was done per island among the Out Islands.<sup>54</sup> The famous “Bay Street Boys,” the white mercantile oligarchy of Nassau, dominated the black majority in such a way that “marked it out as perhaps the most narrow-minded ruling class in the entire English-speaking Caribbean.”<sup>55</sup> Political corruption, practiced by the white elite, made it difficult for colored and black politicians to win seats in the Assembly.<sup>56</sup> “White control of the House of Assembly was maintained by the use of the open ballot and bribery of the electorate rather than by a restrictive franchise.”<sup>57</sup> The secret ballot, implemented temporarily in New Providence in 1939, was not adopted permanently into law until 1946.<sup>58</sup>

Bahamians that had served in the British West Indies Regiment in World War I returned home with a heightened sense of racial consciousness after exposure to blatant discrimination while serving overseas, just as did their West Indian counterparts.<sup>59</sup> There

is evidence that Barbadians and Jamaicans that came to the Bahamas to serve in the police force in the 1920s encouraged Bahamians to establish trade unions and resist white social and political domination.<sup>60</sup> However, the geographic disparity of the Bahamas inhibited the growth of a cohesive, organized movement.<sup>61</sup> The colored leadership of the Bahamas was quite conservative and favored gradual change over protest and rebellion.<sup>62</sup> Unlike Jamaica and Trinidad, no leaders emerged from the black middle class to organize labor in the 1930s, postponing the first labor protest in the Bahamas until 1942.<sup>63</sup>

In May of 1942 the Federation of Labour was formed, headed by Charles Rhodriquez, a colored merchant.<sup>64</sup> Racial consciousness had been slowly growing in the Bahamas, but until 1942, the population had not organized to protest against the oppression of the entrenched white power bloc. Following the 1942 labor riot, a special committee was appointed by the governor to determine the cause of the labor revolt. The committee found that political inequalities, economic difficulties, and the lack of labor legislation were at the root of the unrest displayed by the poor and laboring classes.<sup>65</sup>

On the recommendation of the committee, Trade Union legislation was passed that allowed for limited labor organizations to become established.<sup>66</sup> In 1950 there were five labor organizations registered in the Bahamas, with a membership of only 333. By 1956 12 unions had been formed, membership had nearly tripled, and disputes had become more frequent.<sup>67</sup> Randol Fawkes, a black lawyer, and former resident of the Over-the-Hill<sup>68</sup> area of Nassau was instrumental in the organization of labor in the Bahamas. Fawkes had formed the Bahamas Federation of Labor in 1955 and succeeded Rhodriquez as the leader of Bahamian labor unionists.<sup>69</sup> The labor movement finally became active in the Bahamas in the 1950s under Fawkes, who regularly held public

meetings condemning colonialism and touting the benefit of organized labor. On June 1, 1956, Fawkes and the BFL organized the first Labour Day Parade, where approximately 20,000 supporters marched through Nassau. One week later Fawkes was elected to the House of Assembly where he continued to fight for political and social change.<sup>70</sup>

### The Rise of the PLP

The Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) was formed in 1953 as the first political party in the Bahamas.<sup>71</sup> The PLP was founded by middle class whites, or near-whites, intent on reducing the power of the white elite. Race soon became a divisive issue in the PLP, as black members of the party sought to appeal to the oppressed black majority. White leaders of the party strongly opposed racialization of the party's platform; however, intellectual black leaders soon assumed control of the PLP. The Bay Street Boys, who previously had no need for the organizational structure of political parties, became concerned over the popularity of the PLP in the 1956 elections and formed the United Bahamian Party (UBP).<sup>72</sup>

The PLP, similar to the PNM under Eric Williams in Trinidad, claimed to reach out to all Bahamians regardless of class or color and called for political as well as social change that would improve the situation of the masses.<sup>73</sup> Little support was received from the moderate or conservative colored middle class, who were leery of the racial overtones of the PLP.<sup>74</sup> The PLP garnered much support from Out Islanders by holding meetings throughout the islands and providing education to the masses on political organization, labor issues, and current affairs.<sup>75</sup> The role of the PLP in the General Strike

of 1958 further increased support of the PLP from trade union members as well as from the black middle class.<sup>76</sup>

The PLP, anxious to increase support and membership, worked with Fawkes, the Taxi-Cab Union, and the BFL to orchestrate the General Strike of 1958.<sup>77</sup> Negotiations between the Airports Board and the Taxi-Cab Union had completely broken down, prompting the Taxi-Cab Union to turn to the BFL for assistance. At a meeting held on January 11, 1958, the BFL voted to call a general strike.<sup>78</sup> On January 12, 1958, an orchestrated work stoppage was put in motion with the support of the Hotel Workers' Branch Union. At 8:30 in the morning, effectively, all hotel workers stopped work, forcing a closure of all hotels in New Providence that would last for nearly 3 weeks.<sup>79</sup> Construction workers, airport porters, garbage collectors, and employees of the Electric Company and Public Works Department followed suit and the general strike was in full swing. Tourism was essentially shut down not only due to the closure of the hotels, but also due to the closure of the airport for 19 days.<sup>80</sup> The strike prompted the Colonial Office to send the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Nassau in April of 1958 to investigate the incident and to make recommendations for change. In the meantime, the governor met with the workers and was able to negotiate a settlement between the Airports Board and the taxi drivers.<sup>81</sup>

Secretary of State Alan Lennox-Boyd held meetings with the PLP, UBP, and the BFL before making recommendations for constitutional reform. The Secretary informed the Assembly that constitutional reform that would support majority rule was to be implemented.<sup>82</sup> A Labour Department Board was also created immediately, which enacted the Trade Union and Industrial Conciliation Act that gave every Bahamian

worker the right to unionize.<sup>83</sup> Electoral reforms were introduced by 1959, enfranchising all males over 21 years of age and eliminating the company vote. The plural vote, which allowed property owners to vote in multiple districts, was limited to two, and four additional seats in predominantly black districts of New Providence were created.<sup>84</sup> Although structural changes to the constitution were not made right away, the modifications put into place following the general strike of 1958 paved the way for future reform.

The general strike that took place in 1958 was significant in that cooperation between labor and political representation was finally established. Although still running 25 years behind Jamaica, the strike and subsequent events greatly increased political awareness and participation of black Bahamians.<sup>85</sup> Universal adult suffrage was late in coming to the Bahamas. Voting was limited to male property owners until the General Assembly Election Act of 1959, which extended the franchise to include all males of the Bahamas.<sup>86</sup> Universal adult suffrage was achieved in 1961 when women were finally enfranchised, allowing them to go to the polls for the first time for the general election held in November 1962.<sup>87</sup>

The PLP, still outnumbered in the Assembly by the white dominated United Bahamian Party (UBP), pushed for constitutional reform toward increased self-government during the elections of 1962. In May of 1963, representatives of the PLP and the UBP, along with Independents and members of the Legislative Council, met with officials from the Colonial Office in London to draft a new constitution.<sup>88</sup> A new constitution was ratified that established internal self-government for the Bahamas and a Ministerial government system. Sir Roland Symonette, representing the UBP, became

the first Premier of the Bahamas, with Lynden Pindling of the PLP the Opposition Leader.<sup>89</sup>

During a meeting of the House of Assembly on April 27, 1965, Lynden Pindling expressed his frustration with unfair district boundaries. This dramatic display has come to be known as “Black Tuesday.”<sup>90</sup> In the election of 1962, the PLP had garnered 44% of the popular vote, however because of the unequal allocation of seats per district, won only 8 of 33 seats in the House of Assembly. The UBP, with only 36.6% of the vote, had won 19 seats.<sup>91</sup> In a dramatic display during a debate over the constituencies, Pindling proclaimed that the current government was a dictatorship and threw the mace<sup>92</sup> out the window. Pindling proclaimed that the mace was a symbol of authority and the authority rightly belonged in the hands of the people outside.<sup>93</sup> The crowd below shouted their support. Pindling’s performance had “polarized Bahamian politics as never before, convincing many uncommitted blacks that the PLP was the only party with the dynamism to achieve substantial change.”<sup>94</sup>

The 1967 election resulted in a tie between the conservative UBP and the PLP. Randol Fawkes representing the BFL and Independent Alvin Braynen threw their support behind the PLP to break the tie, and for the first time the Bahamas were under the political control of a black majority. Lynden O. Pindling was named Premier.<sup>95</sup> Following the death of one of the members of the Assembly, Pindling called for an election in 1968.<sup>96</sup> The result was an overwhelming victory for the PLP, with a majority of 29 seats in the House, and the UBP taking only 7.<sup>97</sup>

In 1969, the Bahamas further advanced toward self-government and became the Commonwealth of the Bahamas under Pindling’s leadership.<sup>98</sup> With the change, the

Premier became the Prime Minister, and the government was given increased responsibility for its own affairs.<sup>99</sup> One of the first efforts of the Pindling government was to address the immigration loophole provided by the Hawksbill Creek Agreement as part of Pindling's program of "Bahamianization."<sup>100</sup> In 1955, Wallace Groves had founded the Grand Bahama Port Authority with plans to develop a shipping and industrial port. Groves signed the Hawksbill Creek Agreement with the Bahamian Government, which was modified in 1960 to include the development of a tourist center.<sup>101</sup> The agreement authorized the Port Authority to bypass immigration regulations when importing key personnel.<sup>102</sup> Large numbers of non-Bahamian workers filled positions that could have been filled by Bahamian workers.<sup>103</sup>

Bahamianization provided increased opportunities for Bahamians by restricting the number of work permits issued to foreigners.<sup>104</sup> The white elite feared that changes to the Hawksbill Agreement would stall the development of tourism on Grand Bahama due to a lack of skilled laborers. On March 6, 1970, a compromise was reached in the form of the Immigration (Special Provisions) Bill. The Bill returned control of foreign labor to the Bahamian government, nullifying sections of the Agreement as they pertained to the importation of labor.<sup>105</sup> Having accomplished their goals of labor organization, revision of the educational system, and constitutional reform, the PLP began to assess the support of the people for independence.<sup>106</sup>

When the PLP won by a significant majority in the election of 1972, it was taken as a sign that the people desired independence. Representatives of the government traveled to London to draft a constitution for the new independent Bahamas. On July 10, 1973 the Commonwealth of the Bahamas became an independent nation and a member of

the British Commonwealth of Nations. Sir Lynden O. Pindling served as the first Prime Minister in independence.<sup>107</sup> Although the PLP had subtly used racial solidarity to unite the masses against the Bay Street Boys and the UBP, a Black Power movement never developed.

### Black Power

The Bahamas has historically been influenced greatly by the United States, perhaps more so than the rest of the British West Indies due to geographic proximity, tourism, and migration patterns.<sup>108</sup> Bahamian migrants traveled frequently between Florida and the Bahamas in the early 1900s, and were active in the South Florida chapters of Garvey's UNIA. For instance, in 1921 it was estimated that the majority of the membership and officers of the UNIA branches in Miami, Coconut Grove, and Homestead were Bahamians. Some of these early activists returned to the Bahamas and established branches of the U.N.I.A in New Providence. However activities of the organization were not well received by Bay Street and publications related to the group were soon banned. The UNIA managed to stay active until 1930, but had relatively low support in the Bahamas.<sup>109</sup>

Similar to the middle class of Jamaica and Trinidad, the conservative black middle class of the Bahamas generally rejected racial ideas as radical imports from the US, and considered the PLP quite extreme in their use of Black Power jargon.<sup>110</sup> Many Black Power leaders, particularly in Jamaica, traced their roots to Garveyism and Black Nationalism. The Bahamas did not share in this history. Garveyism certainly had some

support in the Bahamas; however, “no leader emerged to galvanize growing black consciousness into a political movement.”<sup>111</sup>

Much of the support for Black Power in Jamaica and Trinidad originated with the youth of UWI campuses, with guidance from the black middle class. Young Bahamians at home on vacation from school abroad generally formed the Bahamian youth organizations, making support of black consciousness movements sporadic at best.<sup>112</sup> The base of Rodney’s support in Jamaica was at the University of the West Indies, just as NJAC was headquartered on the UWI campus in Trinidad. Had there been a college campus in Nassau where young Bahamians could have gathered and organized, Black Power groups in the Bahamas might have formed.

Even after the rise of the PLP, the people of the Bahamas were not prepared to support Black Power. Much of the Bahamian population considered Black Power dangerous and violent and unnecessary in the multi-racial Bahamas.<sup>113</sup> Initially Pindling had campaigned strongly, based on racial affiliation, which not only alienated many conservative Bahamians, but members of his own party as well. Following a major loss for the PLP in 1962, the party changed tack, fearing that some support for the PLP had been lost by its racial overtones. “The main reason for the PLP’s 1962 setback, however, was almost certainly a fear of the consequences of black majority rule, shared not only by the white minority and the nonwhite middle classes but by many blacks themselves.”<sup>114</sup> While the party continued to reach out to the masses, care was taken to demonstrate knowledge of political process over racial solidarity.<sup>115</sup> The election of 1962 made it clear that the PLP could not garner support based on racial affiliation alone.

The Civil Rights Movement of the US, as well as the nationalist movements of the West Indies, greatly influenced the leadership of the PLP.<sup>116</sup> Lynden Pindling and the PLP united the black majority of the Bahamas using the rhetoric of Black Power, which included calls to overthrow the white oligarchy of the Bay Street Boys and the United Bahamian Party (UBP). The PLP voiced opposition to the corruption and exploitation of the Bahamas by the Bay Street Boys, who comprised the core of the UBP, and of foreign investors firmly situated in Nassau and Freeport.<sup>117</sup> Once in power, the PLP further solidified their constituents under a flag of Bahamianization. The objectives of Bahamianization were much the same as those of Black Power in the Caribbean, but with a label that was much more acceptable to the Bahamian people. Pindling sought to increase educational and occupational opportunities for Bahamians, reduce foreign control of the Bahamian economy, and advance Bahamian nationalism.

Pindling and the PLP worked to reduce the number of white elites in legislature, and to completely remove Bahamian Belonger status and tighten immigration controls. The Immigration Act of 1964 had created the official residency status of “Belonger” which could be granted to foreigners after five years of residency. Belonger status was equal to that of citizenship, including the right to vote. Pindling took aim at Freeport, causing the exodus of white foreign investors and residents. As the foreign investors took their leave, Bahamian investors readily took their place in Freeport; particularly notable was the increase in black Bahamian investment in the area.<sup>118</sup>

Although Pindling had addressed many of the PLPs objectives prior to independence, some accused Pindling of neo-colonialism. In 1972 the Vanguard Nationalist and Socialist Party (VNSP) was formed out of concern for deteriorating social

conditions under Pindling's leadership. Supporters of the VNSP and critics of Pindling's government accused the party of being a "black version of the UBP." The VNSP, led by John McCartney, supported socialism as a means to eliminate the economic disparity that had persisted under Pindling's administration. The VNSP, modeled after the US Black Panther Party, advocated a program of social reform that would achieve full employment, improved education, low cost housing, and an end to racism.<sup>119</sup> Many Bahamians were skeptical of the VNSP and alleged ties to the Cuban government. Although the VNSP was not alone in its accusations of Pindling's failings, party membership in the VNSP remained low, and it ceased to exist in 1987. Pindling is still remembered by some as a charismatic black leader that ousted the Bay Street Boys. However, in 1992 Pindling and the PLP were soundly defeated in the election amidst accusations of patronage, corruption, and overspending.<sup>120</sup>

## Summary

The history of the Bahamas closely resembles that of Bermuda, with both often left out of discussions of the British West Indies. The Bahamas, like Bermuda, was dominated by conservative commercial interests, a large resident white population, and an economy based on maritime and mercantile industries rather than plantation style agriculture.<sup>121</sup> A striking difference between the Bahamas and other islands of the Caribbean is, of course, geographic. Until the 1930s most of the population was concentrated on the Out Islands, making communications difficult between Out Islanders and the political and economic center of New Providence.<sup>122</sup> The development of labor organizations and political parties was quite possibly delayed by the disparity of the

majority of the population. Once laborers had migrated from the Out Islands to New Providence in the mid-1900s, labor organizations and political parties began to form.

The US has had a strong influence on the development of the Bahamas economically, politically, and socially.<sup>123</sup> Proximity to the United States and separation from the West Indies, has linked Bahamians more closely with the US than with the West Indies.<sup>124</sup> There have been many times throughout the history of the Bahamas that links with the US have been their saving grace, however the influence of US race relations has not always been positive. West Indians that migrated to the Bahamas from Jamaica and Barbados in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had attempted to nudge the Bahamas toward political organization. Perhaps if the Bahamas had developed stronger ties with the West Indies, the people would have shed their conservatism sooner.<sup>125</sup>

In both Jamaica and Trinidad, the disillusionment of the working class with independence provided much of the motivation for the Black Power movements. However, during the 1960s and early 1970s, black majority rule was still new to the Bahamas, and the people were still optimistic that the PLP and independence would make good on their promises of social reform. The delay of universal suffrage, labor organization, secondary education, and the development of a strong black middle class may also have hampered the growth of Black Power in the Bahamas. When the Bahamian black middle class was ready to lead, there was still much work to do to ready the people for change, and to convince them that black Bahamians were capable and worthy of positions of power. In a span of 20 years, the Bahamas caught up to Jamaica and Trinidad in civil rights, education, and political organization.

Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Durrell, Zoe C., *The Innocent Island: Abaco in the Bahamas* (Brattleboro, VT: Durrell Publications, 1972) 5. See also Johnson, Howard, *The Bahamas from Slavery to Servitude, 1783-1933* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996) 1.

<sup>2</sup> H. Johnson 1.

<sup>3</sup> San Salvador was also referred to as Watling's Island, as it was known during the peak of British colonialism. It is now named San Salvador.

<sup>4</sup> The Treaty of Paris 1783 ended the Revolutionary war between Britain and the United States and consisted of several agreements. The Bahamas, formerly Spanish territory, were granted to the British, while Florida was given back to Spain. H. Johnson 3.

<sup>5</sup> H. Johnson 4.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis, Gordon K., *The Growth of the West Indies* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968) 309. See also H. Johnson 4.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, Whittington B., *Post-Emancipation Race Relations in The Bahamas* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006) 11.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis 308.

<sup>9</sup> Durrell 27.

<sup>10</sup> H. Johnson 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> H. Johnson 13.

<sup>12</sup> Storr, Virgil Henry, *Enterprising Slaves & Master Pirates: Understanding Economic Life in the Bahamas* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004) 1.

<sup>13</sup> W. Johnson 40.

<sup>14</sup> H. Johnson 32.

<sup>15</sup> Storr 91.

<sup>16</sup> H. Johnson 37.

<sup>17</sup> Saunders, Gail, *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2003) 76. See also H. Johnson 63.

<sup>18</sup> H. Johnson 62.

<sup>19</sup> W. Johnson 115.

<sup>20</sup> H. Johnson 55.

<sup>21</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 77. See also H. Johnson 59-61.

<sup>22</sup> W. Johnson 36-37. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 3.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis 312. See also H. Johnson 101.

<sup>24</sup> H. Johnson 115.

<sup>25</sup> H. Johnson 116.

<sup>26</sup> Storr 49.

<sup>27</sup> Durrell 32.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis 319.

<sup>29</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 113.

<sup>30</sup> Craton, Michael, "Bay Street, Black Power and the Conchy Joes: Race and Class in the Colony and Commonwealth of the Bahamas, 1850-2000," *The White Minority in the Caribbean*, ed. Howard Johnson and Karl Watson (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998) 80.

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- <sup>31</sup> Craton 85.
- <sup>32</sup> Brereton, Bridget, "Society and Culture in the Caribbean," *The Modern Caribbean*, ed. Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 89, 92.
- <sup>33</sup> Craton 74.
- <sup>34</sup> Durrell 31. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 67.
- <sup>35</sup> Lewis 310.
- <sup>36</sup> In this context Africans refer to the liberated Africans who were important to the development of the social structure in the 1800s.
- <sup>37</sup> W. Johnson 58. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 1.
- <sup>38</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 11.
- <sup>39</sup> W. Johnson 30.
- <sup>40</sup> Lewis 324. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 131, 159.
- <sup>41</sup> McCartney, Timothy O., "What is the Relevance of Black Power to the Bahamas?," *Is Massa Day Dead? Black Moods in the Caribbean*, ed. Orde Coombs (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1974) 170-171. See also Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People Volume 2: From the Ending of Slavery to the Twenty-First Century* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998) 309.
- <sup>42</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 131.
- <sup>43</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 133.
- <sup>44</sup> H. Johnson 159.
- <sup>45</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 113-114.
- <sup>46</sup> Jenkins, Olga Culmer, *Bahamian Memories: Island Voices of the Twentieth Century*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000) 212.
- <sup>47</sup> Jenkins x.
- <sup>48</sup> Jenkins 180.
- <sup>49</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 162.
- <sup>50</sup> Jenkins 180.
- <sup>51</sup> Lewis 319. See also Durrell 54.
- <sup>52</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 193.
- <sup>53</sup> Durrell 37.
- <sup>54</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 60. See also Durrell 24.
- <sup>55</sup> Lewis 312.
- <sup>56</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 129.
- <sup>57</sup> W. Johnson 16.
- <sup>58</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 129.
- <sup>59</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 7.
- <sup>60</sup> Tinker 110.
- <sup>61</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 7.
- <sup>62</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 14, 172.
- <sup>63</sup> Bolland, Nigel O., *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2001) 433. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 12, 172.

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- <sup>64</sup> Bolland 431-432. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 152.
- <sup>65</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 158-163.
- <sup>66</sup> Bolland 433.
- <sup>67</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 196.
- <sup>68</sup> The Over-the-Hill section of Nassau was occupied primarily by poor black Bahamians, many descendents of the “liberated” Africans.
- <sup>69</sup> Craton and Saunders 309.
- <sup>70</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 197-198.
- <sup>71</sup> Jenkins 171.
- <sup>72</sup> Craton and Saunders 308-310.
- <sup>73</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 178.
- <sup>74</sup> McCartney 175. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 178.
- <sup>75</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 178.
- <sup>76</sup> Saunders, Gail, *The ‘Race Card’ and the Rise of the PLP* (Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, 2-6 April 2001), 11-12.
- <sup>77</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 189.
- <sup>78</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 201.
- <sup>79</sup> Jenkins 172. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 201.
- <sup>80</sup> Jenkins 172.
- <sup>81</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 203.
- <sup>82</sup> Jenkins 172.
- <sup>83</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 204.
- <sup>84</sup> Jenkins 172. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 205.
- <sup>85</sup> Lewis 322. See also Jenkins 171.
- <sup>86</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 204-205.
- <sup>87</sup> Jenkins 173.
- <sup>88</sup> Durrell 38.
- <sup>89</sup> Saunders *The ‘Race Card’ and the Rise of the PLP* 17.
- <sup>90</sup> Saunders *The ‘Race Card’ and the Rise of the PLP* 17.
- <sup>91</sup> Jenkins 173.
- <sup>92</sup> A mace is a club that is a ceremonial symbol of authority
- <sup>93</sup> Saunders *The ‘Race Card’ and the Rise of the PLP* 18.
- <sup>94</sup> Craton and Saunders 340.
- <sup>95</sup> Jenkins 174.
- <sup>96</sup> Saunders *The ‘Race Card’ and the Rise of the PLP* 21.
- <sup>97</sup> Durrell 40.
- <sup>98</sup> Durrell 41.
- <sup>99</sup> Jenkins 174.
- <sup>100</sup> Tinker 206.
- <sup>101</sup> Tinker, Keith Lamont, *Perspectives on West Indian Migration to the Bahamas: Pre-Columbian to Bahamian Independence in 1973*, Diss. The Florida State University, 1998, [ProQuest Digital Dissertations](#) (ProQuest. USF Library, Tampa, FL 3 Mar. 2008) 205.
- <sup>102</sup> Jenkins 170-171.

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- <sup>103</sup> Jenkins 171.
- <sup>104</sup> McCollin, Evelyn, *Resistance and Afro-Caribbean Influences in the Development of Bahamian National Identity* (Annual Conference of Caribbean Historians, Nassau, Bahamas, 7-12 April 2002) 44.
- <sup>105</sup> Tinker 207.
- <sup>106</sup> Jenkins 174.
- <sup>107</sup> Jenkins 175.
- <sup>108</sup> McCartney 169.
- <sup>109</sup> Saunders, Gail, "Garveyism and the Growth of Racial Consciousness in the Bahamas," *Journal of the Bahamas Historical Society*, 24 (2002): 33-38.
- <sup>110</sup> McCartney 179.
- <sup>111</sup> Saunders *The 'Race Card' and the Rise of the PLP* 23.
- <sup>112</sup> McCartney 179.
- <sup>113</sup> McCartney 178.
- <sup>114</sup> Craton Saunders 314.
- <sup>115</sup> Saunders *The 'Race Card' and the Rise of the PLP* 16.
- <sup>116</sup> Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 178.
- <sup>117</sup> Craton 82-83.
- <sup>118</sup> Craton 83.
- <sup>119</sup> McCartney, John T., "The Influences of the Black Panther Party (USA) on the Vanguard Party of the Bahamas (1972-1987)," *New Political Science*, 21.2 (1999): 205-214.
- <sup>120</sup> Craton and Saunders 384-386.
- <sup>121</sup> Lewis 308. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 171.
- <sup>122</sup> Lewis 309. See also Saunders *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* 164.
- <sup>123</sup> Lewis 308-310.
- <sup>124</sup> McCartney 169.
- <sup>125</sup> Lewis 308.

## Conclusion

As Black Power was studied in each country, several commonalities were observed, as well as some differences. Although the three countries studied share much of the same colonial history, some aspects of their development created differences that had an impact on the popularity of Black Power. The goals of Black Power were nearly the same in each country that has been discussed. Black Power aimed to improve opportunities for employment by eliminating race or color prejudice as well as to increase opportunities for advancement. Many Black Power supporters tied racially-based hiring preferences to economic dependence on foreign corporations and sought to nationalize ownership of the country's most profitable industries. In Jamaica and Trinidad, an objective of Black Power was to remove neo-colonialist political leaders and replace them with leaders that would break ties with imperial powers, and develop new economic plans that would eliminate economic disparity. This objective was slightly different in the Bahamas, which was still a colony when political leaders began to take aim at the white power bloc. One of the fundamental goals of Black Power was to increase black pride, and eliminating notions of racial superiority that persisted in the minds of white, colored, and black members of Caribbean society.

This study sought to examine the impact of independence, colonial state, ethnic demographics, and class on the momentum of Black Power in the Caribbean. Did the country's status as a colony or independent state alter the objectives of the movement in

that country? Did the plural society of Trinidad alter the course of Black Power or impede the efforts of Black Power groups in Trinidad? Was Black Power able to acquire support from a cross-section of society, or were the supporters primarily found in the lower or middle classes? This chapter will summarize the findings of each of the previous three chapters by examining the commonalities and differences observed between each of the three countries studied.

The political status of the country as a colony or an independent state did seem to influence the development of a Black Power movement in the countries studied. In Jamaica and Trinidad the disillusionment with independence added to the frustration of the black masses. Many were disappointed in leaders that had promised reduced rates of unemployment, an end to foreign dominance of the economy, and social reform under their leadership, but had yet to produce substantive results. The Rodney Riots of Jamaica demonstrated that the urban poor were tired of deplorable living conditions and high levels of unemployment. The PNP and the JLP, despite ties to the middle class, had appealed to the lower and working classes for support, but had failed to deliver on campaign promises of economic reform. Prior to the February Revolution in Trinidad, Williams had outlined reforms that were in line with the objectives of Black Power, however the implementation seemed protracted and did not satisfy the demands of labor organizations and Black Power supporters. Williams accelerated the implementation of social reform programs after the Revolution, and some positive change was seen in Trinidad. In the Bahamas, the masses were still filled with the optimism of independence and faith in the Pindling government to provide equal opportunity and advancement. Bahamians that might have organized behind Black Power to remove the white oligarchy

of the Bay Street Boys had thrown their support behind the PLP and had yet to be disappointed by his leadership during the time period studied.

The second question addressed by this thesis was the impact of a diverse population on the development of a movement based on racial solidarity. Trinidad was selected for this aspect of the study, as a country with a population that was nearly equally divided between two ethnic groups. Both the African and Indian groups in Trinidad suffered from discriminatory hiring practices, unemployment, and low wages. Despite their similar circumstances, Indians and Africans in Trinidad were more often in contention than in cooperation with each other. Historically the Indians of Trinidad had hesitated to support universal adult suffrage and the end of Crown Colony rule for fear of domination by the black majority. With the PNM in power, the Indian group complained that their fears had been realized, as they were subjected to discriminatory hiring practices in the public sector as well as industry. Support for Black Power among the Indian population was minimal, although the Indian dominated sugar workers union did join the protests of 1970 just prior to the end of the unrest. Certainly, the Black Power movement would have benefitted from the support of the Indian population, as there is power in numbers; however, there is little evidence that the lack of support from the Indian group hampered the movement in any way.

Closely related to the ethnic composition of the country is the issue of racial identity. Each of the countries studied had endeavored to establish strong state nationalism based on inter-ethnic unity and racial equality. Notions of Black Power threatened those that believed that this harmonious lifestyle had been achieved. Particularly in Jamaica, those opposed to the Black Power movement blamed local

support for Black Power on foreign ideas that had no place in multi-racial Jamaica. In the Bahamas the PLP quickly learned that an election could not be won on the basis of racial solidarity alone. Although there was a large resident white population, the black population was well in the majority. However, conservative black Bahamians were not attracted to the rhetoric of Black Power. The PLP found that an appeal to the Bahamian people would have to couple subtle racial overtones with a demonstration of the ability of party leaders to effectively govern.

Many Jamaicans and Trinidadians were supportive of Black Power as an expression of black pride, but feared the actions of “radical” Black Power groups. While there was some support for Black Power to be found in a cross section of society in both of these nations, members of the lower class were the most active in the movements. In Jamaica, students and Black Power leaders that had organized the protests were quickly overshadowed by the involvement of the “ghetto” youth. The violent turn of events during the Rodney Riots was blamed on the actions of the urban youth, under the foreign influence of Walter Rodney. The association of Black Power with the Rodney Riots detracted from the message of Black Power and confirmed the fears of the middle and upper classes that Black Power was a radical and violent movement. In contrast, the February Revolution in Trinidad was an organized series of protests, many of which, though certainly not all, were peaceful demonstrations. Students of the UWI campus, with cooperation from community-based Black Power groups, and the trade unions, orchestrated the movement in Trinidad. In contrast to the burst of violent protest in Jamaica, the active involvement of the working class in the movement in Trinidad forced government officials to take notice by impeding commerce. Neither movement had

garnered significant support from the middle class; however, the participation of the working class in the February Revolution in Trinidad was critical to the movement's success.

Another segment of society in Jamaica and Trinidad that was essential to the development of Black Power was academia. Black Power leaders and supporters were often tied to the University of the West Indies. Walter Rodney was a lecturer at the Mona campus of UWI, where he garnered significant support from the student population. Jamaican Prime Minister Shearer blamed the actions of the students on the foreign influence of Rodney, as well as the influences of foreign students at the university. In Trinidad the central Black Power organization was NJAC, which was founded on the UWI St. Augustine campus. This group coordinated the efforts of the trade unions and the community-based Black Power groups in Trinidad, and was at the center of the February Revolution. The Bahamas did not have a local college or university campus until 1974, which forced young Bahamian students to obtain their education abroad. Many of the young Bahamians that attempted to organize Black Power groups were college students; however, the amount of time that they could spend organizing in the Bahamas was limited by their time spent abroad.

Many great scholars have recognized that African people will only be able to rise up after they have gained a respect for themselves and recognize their self-worth. As Rex Nettleford says so concisely, "For a people who do not believe in themselves cannot hope to have others believing in them."<sup>1</sup> One of the objectives of Black Power was to increase pride in African heritage and eradicate ideologies of white supremacy. Black Power supporters hoped to open the eyes of all members of society to the persistence of the

hierarchy of race and class maintained by racial preference in employment, finance, and society. In the aftermath of Black Power, there has been an increased affiliation with African ancestry and an improved social perception of “blackness.”<sup>2</sup> It was in this objective of Black Power that the broadest support could be found in all of the nations studied.

*Notes*

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<sup>1</sup> Nettleford, Rex, *Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica*, (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1972) 33.

<sup>2</sup> Reddock, Rhonda, "Social Mobility in Trinidad and Tobago," *Social and Occupational Stratification in Contemporary Trinidad and Tobago*, Ed. Selwyn Ryan (St. Augustine: I.S.E.R., University of the West Indies, 1991) 212.

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