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SEEING RACE, SEEING NATION: CONCEPTUALIZING A 'UNITED WEST INDIES' IN THE BRITISH CARIBBEAN AND DIASPORA

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ERIC D. DUKE

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Ph.D. degree in HISTORY

Laurent Dubois
Major Professor's Signature

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SEEING RACE, SEEING NATION: CONCEPTUALIZING A 'UNITED WEST INDIES' IN THE BRITISH CARIBBEAN AND DIASPORA

By

Eric D. Duke

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

SEEING RACE, SEEING NATION: CONCEPTUALIZING A 'UNITED WEST INDIES' IN THE BRITISH CARIBBEAN AND DIASPORA

By

Eric D. Duke

This dissertation investigates the multiple conceptualizations and expectations attached to the idea of forming a "united West Indies" through a federation of British Caribbean colonies in the twentieth century. While ideas for various configurations of regional unity date back to the seventeenth century, in the twentieth century, such ideas reemerged as a crucial issue within many discussions of the "West Indian future". Despite an ostensibly common goal, the push for a Caribbean federation in the twentieth century embodied numerous and often competing concerns reflecting the region's lengthy history as a crossroads of European colonialism, creole nationalism, and black diaspora activism.

Moving beyond the short-lived West Indies Federation (1958-1962) and rooted in both Caribbean and diasporic contexts, this study examines how colonial power brokers in the West Indies and metropole, Caribbean peoples living in the West Indies, United States, and United Kingdom, as well as other black peoples on both sides of the Atlantic (especially those involved in black diaspora politics), envisioned and debated such a West Indian nation from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. While many colonial officials and local oligarchies believed federation could provide administrative efficiency and economic prosperity via a "united status quo", West Indian nationalists and black diaspora activists often viewed federation as a nation-building venture embodied with varying notions of liberation and self-determination. By

approaching the history of Caribbean federation in this manner, this study provides a key example of how Caribbean nation-building simultaneously existed as an imperial, regional and diasporic nation-building project, as well as transracial and racialized ventures.

This project is dedicated to my daughter Mya Gabrielle Duke.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In many ways the acknowledgements in a dissertation are among the most important aspects of one's study. As anyone who has completed a dissertation knows, the completion of the project cannot be done alone. For that reason I am happy to offer a series of "thanks" to many people.

I would like to thank all of the departments, programs, archives, and libraries that were instrumental in this dissertation. First, I would like to acknowledge the Department of History at Michigan State University who gave me the opportunity to pursue the PhD. I am especially thankful for the Comparative Black History program in which I studied. Much appreciation is due to the various sources of funding that enabled me to attend graduate school and complete the research and writing of my study. At Michigan State I would like to thank the History Department, Comparative Black History Program, Graduate School, College of Arts & Letters, and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. In addition, I would like to thank the University of Florida Library Travel Grant Program and the American Historical Association for additional grants. I would like to acknowledge the work of the various librarians and archivists at all of the archives I visited in the United States, Great Britain, Trinidad, and Jamaica. Finally, I must also give a hearty thank you to the interlibrary loan staffs at Michigan State University and the University of South Florida who tracked down numerous pamphlets and other "small publications" scattered across the globe in various libraries over the years.

I am also happy to offer my sincere appreciation to all of my committee members who worked with me. It is rare to find a program with genuine "experts" in so many fields, who were all approachable, supportive, and sincerely interested in comparative history. They provided the environment in which so many of us thrived. I would like to thank David Robinson (African History) and Curtis Stokes (African American Studies) for their efforts on my committee. I also thank Peter Beattie (Latin American History) for his work as a committee member, and especially for his help when I first arrived at Michigan State. I offer special acknowledgment to Darlene Clark Hine (Comparative Black History). She was truly an inspirational and supportive mentor, who provided the leadership for our CBH program and shared her numerous resources and years of wisdom with all of her CBH students. I am proud to be part of her family of former students. Finally, I offer incalculable gratitude to my advisor Laurent Dubois (Comparative Black History). His calm and supportive demeanor over the years proved to be an indispensable source of encouragement and wisdom. Moreover, his expertise across fields and disciplines, as well as his own academic successes, provided a true role model throughout my time at Michigan State. I truly could not have completed this project without his guidance and support.

Next, I have to thank my family of friends who were with me through it all. I must mention the undying support of my lifelong friends from my hometown of Mobile and me years at Florida State University. The vast majority of them could never understand why anyone would voluntarily go to school, and at times likely thought I was crazy for doing so. However, they have stood by me through the years, helped me grow to be who I am, offered encouragement along the way, and often took more pride in me

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going to college more than I did. Heard, Kitt, Nick, Sylvester, Alex, Dante, Shadia, and so many others. Yes, I am finally finished with school! I must also mention my friends and colleagues at Michigan State – especially the Comparative Black History family. This was one of the most dynamic groups of individuals I have ever met. We supported and challenged each other through the years, and they played a key role in my development as a scholar. I want to thank Marshanda Smith, John Wess Grant, Dawne Curry, and Matthew Whitaker for their support and friendship through the years. I want to give a special thanks to Kenneth Marshall and Sowande Mustakeem – both of whom offered academic encouragement, but also many fun times outside of academia. Finally, Meredith Roman and Kennetta Hammond Perry deserve my perpetual gratitude for their friendship on and off of campus for the past few years. Both of these women are true role models in terms of their scholarship. And as friends, they have offered their time and unrelenting encouragement through the ups and downs of this project. They picked me up when I was down, listened to me complain repeatedly, and offered poignant critiques of my project. Kennetta, you were my dissertation writing partner up the end, and I doubt I could have finished when I did without you support. Meredith, you and I took comps together, made research trips to New York and DC together, entered the job market together, and encouraged each other throughout our time at Michigan State. Thank you so much! Again, all of these people are dear to me, and I consider them my family.

Finally, I come to my "actual" family. I must thank my mother Alice and father Billie, as well as my sisters Angela and Katrina for their support over the years. Their love and encouragement means the world to me. I also must thank my in-laws who were

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also a great source of support: Moyne Perkins, Merlin Perkins, Chelsea, Floyd, Lando, and Val. "Auntie Val" receives extra gratitude for giving me a place to stay and many satisfying Jamaican meals during my several months in London. To my daughter Mya, you turned my word upside down when you arrived in 2004. You are my joyous distraction and I love you so much. While you were more than a handful at times, I would not give up one minute I've had with you. You are truly a blessing. I hope you grow to love your history too! And finally to my wife Jody – I'm finally done! You have been with me more than anyone else through the rollercoaster ride of classes, comps, research, and writing over the past several years. I know I drove you crazy at times, but your support of me is priceless. I could not have done any of this without you. I thank you. I love you. And I look forward to many more years with you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Introduction

> Caribbean Unity is once again in focus. The question which now must be posed is what kind of unity? Here we come immediately to a clash of interests - what the people want, what the governments want, what the Chamber of commerce want and what the imperialists want.[1]

Writing in 1968, Cheddi Jagan, one of the leading politicians of the Caribbean, emphasized the issue at the center of any discussion of regional cooperation or unity between the various nations of the British Caribbean. Why unite, and for who or what? Though Jagan's comment referred to the inauguration of the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) in 1968, his concerns over the shape and character of "Caribbean unity" address centuries-old questions. Such questions form the basis of this dissertation.

Numerous plans for varying degrees of regional unity amongst some or all of the British West Indies existed between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Federation, confederation, closer union, and other versions of a "united West Indies" were popular solutions to a range of problems or desires put forth by disparate and often competing groups concerned with the Caribbean. The lengthy push for and varied ideas of a united West Indies represents one of the longest and most sustained efforts of nation-building in the British Caribbean, stretching before and after the 1930s labour uprisings which usually receive prominence as the genesis of West Indian nationhood. In both the historiography as well as popular memory, however, the history of federation is largely remembered simply as the failed West Indian Federation of 1958-1962. It is too often studied or remembered as a static, monolithic movement. Nevertheless, the broader

[1] Cheddi Jagan, *Caribbean Unity and Carfita* (Guyana: Education Committee, People's Progressive Party, 1968), p.26.

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history of Caribbean federation is characterized by diverse conceptualizations, embodied with different expectations and basis of support, dependent upon the particular group questioned and the time and space in which they operated.

A study of Caribbean federation is not simply a study of the "history of a failure", as several people, both academics and non-academics, suggested during the research of this project. Moreover, ideas and efforts to create a united West Indies cannot be solely categorized as an imperial or even regional project. Given the historical role of the Caribbean as a sort of "crossroads" for European colonialism, black diaspora activism, and even pan-American activities, the range of parties interested in the Caribbean was indeed wide. It is in this comparative context in which this dissertation is based.

Rather than a detailed history of the various political configurations involved in the numerous federation schemes, or a study of the short-lived West Indian Federation of the 1950s, this study analyzes the multiple perceptions and expectations attached to the idea of forming a "West Indian nation" through a federation of British Caribbean colonies from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Rooted in both Caribbean and Diasporic contexts, it examines how colonial power brokers in the West Indies and metropole, Caribbean peoples living in the West Indies, United States, and United Kingdom, as well as other black peoples on both sides of the Atlantic (especially those involved in black diaspora politics), envisioned and debated federation. It expands on traditional studies of federation, which have overwhelmingly focused on Caribbean union as simply a regional, political endeavor within Caribbean and British Imperial histories, by emphasizing its broader relevance to the history of the black diaspora.

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This dissertation seeks to address various questions embedded in the comparative context in which Caribbean federation was debated. How and why was federation envisioned and supported within the context of British colonialism, internal West Indian political movements (particularly the West Indian nationalist movement), as well as within black diaspora politics? What were the aims and justifications for such notions of Caribbean unity? How was this new "West Indian nation," and "West Indians" themselves, characterized and imagined within these different paradigms? Was Caribbean federation simply a regional project, or was it tied to larger issues of diaspora activism and nation-building? Given the omnipresence of race within almost all discussions of the future of the West Indies during the era under review, what was the place of race within visions of and support for West Indian federation, and the accompanying discussion of West Indian identity? More precisely, was federation to be a transracial venture, or was it a racialized project connected to issues well beyond the bounds of the Caribbean seascape? In answering these questions, this study seeks to explain how the West Indies and West Indians have long existed as both examples of transracial cooperation, as well as crucial portions of larger race-based black diaspora movements.

Brief Literature Review

In spite of the numerous debates and plans for Caribbean federation put forth in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the historiography of the subject remains both dated and limited. Unfortunately, the vast majorities of these studies neglect the lengthy history of the idea of federation, and instead focus primarily on the rise and fall of the

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West Indies Federation (1958-1962). Much of this can be attributed to the boom of federation studies in the 1950s and 1960s prior to, during, and following the spectacular rise and demise of that particular federal experiment. These studies, including an array of books, articles, and dissertations, primarily examine the post-World War II planning of the federation-to-be with minimal or brief summations of the more lengthy visions of a united West Indies in the previous decades. Following the collapse of the West Indies Federation, such works principally investigate the reasons for its failure.[2] In both instances, these studies were far more concerned with the structural, constitutional, and financial aspects of federation than the various hopes embodied in the dreams of a united West Indies.

Numerous examples of such texts exist. For instance, Sir John Mordecai's *Federation of the West Indies* (1968) provides excellent coverage of the negotiations, creation, and fall of the actual West Indies Federation. Unfortunately, his focus on the structures of federation overwhelms any discussion of the idea itself. Moreover, he dedicates less than fifty pages of a nearly five hundred page text to the federation movement before the 1950s.[3] Gordon Lewis' classic *The Growth of the Modern West Indies* also provides insightful examination of Caribbean federation alongside coverage of the various other political developments in the West Indies during the twentieth century.[4] Though Lewis briefly mentions how federation came to be adopted by different groups in the West Indies with different agendas, he offers no details or analysis of these

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[2] These works will be addressed throughout this study in subsequent chapters.

[3] Sir John Mordecai, *Federation of the West Indies* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

[4] Gordon K. Lewis, *The Growth of the Modern West Indies* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1968).

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issues. The bulk of the articles on federation from this era also summarize the pre-1940s ideas of federation, with most of these discussions restricted to imperial visions of federation, followed by examinations of the post-war meetings leading to the West Indies Federation and/or a discussion of the problems which lead to its downfall. While such works are important in detailing the history of Caribbean federation, they generally overlook, or only superficially mention the multiple motivations and conceptualizations of a united West Indies. This is particularly true in relation to diasporic visions of a federation and the place of race within both regional and diaspora support for West Indian nation-building.

Within the larger historiography of Caribbean federation, there are a few studies that touch upon these subjects. Two particular good studies are the dissertations of Herbert Franklin Curry, Jr. (1958) and Surjit Mansingh (1972).[5] While both of these works briefly address the place of race within the federation movement in some of their chapters, neither addresses the diasporic dimensions of such a project. Jason Parker's recent dissertation ""Ripples in the 'American Lake': the United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962" offers some impressive coverage of federation within international politics in the World War II and post-war eras; federation, however, is not his primary focus.[6] Two articles by Jesse H. Proctor, Jr. move beyond the typical studies of federation to inquire about the motivations and conceptualizations of federation. His "Britain's Pro-Federation Policy in the Caribbean: an Inquiry into

[5] Herbert Franklin Curry, Jr., "The Movement Toward Federation of the British West Indian Colonies, 1624-1945" (PhD Diss, University of Wisconsin, 1958); Surjit Mansingh, "Background to Failure of the West Indies Federation: an Inquiry into British Rule in the Caribbean, 1920-1947" (PhD Diss, American University, 1972). Mansingh's name is actually listed as Surjit Mansingh Heimsath on some copies.

[6] Jason Parker, "Ripples in the 'American Lake': the United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962" (Ph.D. Diss, University of Florida, 2002).

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Motivation" and "The Development of the Idea of Federation of the British Caribbean Territories" proved useful to my project.[7] Ed Cox's 2002 *Journal of Caribbean History* article offers a fascinating glimpse into the early work of two West Indian and Pan-African activists in Grenada, while Jason's Parker 2004 article in the *Journal of African American History* also mentions federation within the work of black diaspora activists in 1940s Harlem.[8] Though federation was not the primary focus of either article, both of these works, which appeared during the research and writing of this dissertation, were influential and helpful to my current study. In many ways, my project connects their two eras, filling in and expanding upon some of their insights into the movement for a Caribbean federation.

Given the limited historiography of the federation, I was actually more influenced by non-federation studies. Some of the most important sources have been the growing studies of Caribbean radicals involved in black diaspora movements of the early twentieth century, especially the work of Winston James.[9] I have also been influenced by recent studies of African American participation in the various anticolonial movements in the mid-twentieth century, including Penny Von Eschen's *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism* (1997) and James Meriwether's *Proudly We Can Be*

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[7] Jesse H. Proctor, Jr., "The Development of the Idea of Federation of the British Caribbean Territories," *Caribbean Quarterly* 5, no.1 (1957): 5-33; Jesse H. Proctor, Jr., "Britain's Pro-Federation Policy in the Caribbean: an Inquiry into Motivation," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 22, no.3: 319-331.

[8] Edward L. Cox, "'Race Men': the Pan-African Struggles of William Galwey Donovan and Theophilus Albert Marryshow for Political Change in Grenada, 1884-1925," *Journal of Caribbean History* 36, no. 1 (2002): 69-99; Jason Parker, "'Capital of the Caribbean' the African American-West Indian 'Harlem Nexus' and the Transnational Drive for Black Freedom, 1940-1948," *Journal of African American History* 89, no.2 (Spring 2004): 98-117.

[9] Among the most important studies of James is his *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Verso Press, 1998).

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Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961.[10] Recent studies of "race and nation", particularly those that demonstrate the coexistence of racialism and transracialism within anticolonial struggles and national identities, have been useful models. Some of the best works in this field focus on Cuba, including the work of Ada Ferrer and Alejandro de la Fuente.[11]

Several works also influenced my views and use of race as an analytical tool in this study. Thomas C. Holt's "Marking: Race, Race-Making, and the Writing of History" and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race" were important sources for understanding the construction of racial ideologies and identities.[12] On a similar note, Anthony Bogues' discussion of the dual nationalist traditions in Jamaica (black nationalism and brown creole nationalism) was important for understanding the West Indian duality discussed in many sections of this dissertation.[13] Finally, Paget Henry' discussion of Caribbean historicism as often competing Pan-African and Marxist tendencies was particularly helpful in conceptualizing Caribbean federation as both a racial and transracial project.[14]

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[10] Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); James Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[11] Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

[12] Thomas C. Holt, "Marking: Race, Race-Making, and the Writing of History," *American Historical Review*, 100, no.1 (Feb 1995): 1-20; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17, no.2 (Winter 1992): 251-274.

[13] Anthony Bogues, "Nationalism and Jamaican Political Thought," in *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom: History, Heritage and Culture*, eds. Kathleen E.A. Monteith and Glen Richards (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), 363-387.

[14] Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

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Sources and Methodology

My study of Caribbean federation employs a comparative framework, and generally avoids much of the "official" political discussions of Caribbean federation. This was primarily done so as to avoid simply recreating previous studies, and to approach federation from as broad a framework as possible. Interestingly, this approach led to some amusing exchanges with librarians, archivists, and scholars who occasionally attempted to steer me towards more "designated" collections dealing with federation, or questioned why I wanted to look at alternate sources that supposedly had nothing to do with federation.

While I did examine popular (or designated) collections related to federation (including various colonial records), one of my primary goals was to investigate sources related to West Indian nationalists and black diaspora activists. This included various personal and organizational records, government surveillance reports, periodicals, pamphlets, and other contemporary materials of West Indians, African Americans, and black diaspora activists. Some useful "printed primary" collections of these groups also proved to be important and helpful sources.

In many cases, I searched blindly through random collections and newspapers intentionally seeking to stretch the history of federation by finding random mentions of Caribbean federation. Rather than seeing a passing mention of federation as unimportant, this study tries to analyze such references to federation within the broader work of particular activists or organizations. For instance, in some cases federation was supported by a range of black activists with relatively little discussion in comparison to colonial debates. However, instead of reading this as if colonial powers were more

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interested in federation, in many instances it seems there was less discussion because diaspora activists saw Caribbean federation as so logical as to not warrant lengthy debates. Such an approach allowed for a truly comparative discussion of the disparate motivations and goals embodied in ideas of a federation in the West Indies.

Terminology

Numerous terms in my study have fluid meanings, and may be defined differently by others. I use them, nevertheless, in specific ways. *Transracial* refers the idea of moving beyond race, i.e., to a raceless form of organizing or political identity. Multiracial, in contrast, implies a mixing or coexistence of races. *Black* refers to (supposedly) "un-mixed" persons of African-descent, *coloured* (with the British spelling) in reference to peoples of African decent with a "mixed" heritage, and *peoples of African descent* as a label including both black and coloured peoples. This study does not use colored/coloured as a broad label including everyone except white people (unless in a direct quote). Instead, it uses *non-whites* for such a designation. This is an important distinction, since the more racially-conscious efforts of some black diaspora activists should not be assumed to always include all colonial peoples on an equal level, even if there was much cooperation between non-white peoples.

Two of the most important terms this study employs are *black diaspora politics* and *black diaspora organizations/activists*. The dissertation generally avoids the term pan-African (or Pan-African) unless a direct quote or the formal name of a meeting of organization. Though my definition of black diaspora politics is similar to many definitions of pan-Africanism, I feel the latter term offers a more monolithic image

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whereas black diaspora politics presents itself as an umbrella term able to better encompass the wide-ranging activities and goals of many organizations and activists. Moreover, "black diaspora politics" helps to highlight the periphery of the anticolonial struggle (e.g., black nation-building outside of the African continent).[15] In general I refer to people/organizations as *black diaspora activists/organizations* if they are involved in international, intraracial causes beyond their own national concerns. For instance, I would not classify a Trinidad organization in London as a black diaspora group, unless that group cooperated in causes beyond their own national/colonial goals.

Finally, various British colonial terms are employed throughout the dissertation. *Representative government* refers to a colony with an elected legislature (or at least an extensive portion of it being elected). *Responsible government* refers to a representative government in which the Executive is actually responsible to the legislatures and not the Crown. *Self-government* is often used in the same manner as responsible government and represents greater local control. A *Dominion* or *dominion status* refers to a self-governing nation that is essentially independent but voluntarily tied to the British Commonwealth of Nations. Finally, my use of *West Indies* refers to the English-speaking portions of the Caribbean, including the mainland colonies of British Guiana and British Honduras, but excluding Bermuda. West Indies is used interchangeably with British Caribbean, while other sections of the region are differentiated if discussed.

[15] Among the key components of black diaspora politics, I include: (a) ideas of a common ancestry with contemporary relevance (b) race pride (c) demands for equal and non-exploitative treatment at the hands of Europeans or Americans (d) firm belief racial liberation and self-determination, especially in areas where the majority of the population is of African-descent (e) equality treatment and opportunities where peoples of African-descent are minorities.

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Chapter Breakdown

The dissertation consists of six chapters and a brief conclusion. Chapter one provides an extensive overview of British Colonialism in the West Indies before the twentieth century. It establishes the important connections between race and region which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Chapters two, three, and four establish the three trajectories in which this comparative study of federation revolves: colonial, regional, and diasporic. Chapter two discusses ideas of federation among colonial officials and various merchant groups in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It examines how federation was often used as a control measure by these groups. Chapter three investigates the idea of federation among the local West Indian population in the same era and the place of race within those conceptualizations. This chapter's primary focus is upon the vast black and coloured populations, particularly the emerging West Indian nationalist movement. This chapter also includes a comparison of the place of race within the West Indian nationalism of two leading nationalists figures in this era. Chapter four discusses the racialization of West Indian migrants (and their homelands) via their migration into the black diaspora in the early twentieth century. It also considers the cause of federation within black diaspora politics in this era. Chapter five brings all of these trajectories (empire, region, and diaspora) into a single chapter and offers a comparative study of federation in the 1930s and early 1940s. Finally, chapter six discusses the post-World War II planning and official creation of the West Indies Federation in 1958. While the various details of this process are detailed, the primary focus is upon continued debates over and conceptualizations of a "West Indian nation" and accompanying notions of West Indianness. Finally, the brief conclusion summarizes

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the collapse of the West Indies Federation. This discussion is intentionally succinct as to not get bogged down in the all too familiar debates over the failure of federation in 1962.

Taken as a whole this dissertation seeks to show the multiple histories of Caribbean federation, particularly its history as a colonial, regional, and diaspora project embodying notions of control and liberation, alongside transracial and racial visions of the Caribbean and its people. In closing, I quote from West Indian journalist and activist A.M. Wendell Malliet (who quoted from philosopher William Ernest Hocking):

> Since books are no longer supposed, either by author or public, to contain the final and finished truth, no book need apologize for being unripe. One's hope is, not to close discussion, but to open it. What I have here aimed to do is the work rather of the quarryman with his blasting powder than that of the sculptor with his chisel.[16]

I hope that this study successfully dismisses perceptions of Caribbean federation as simply a failure, and that readers come to see the more complex and dynamic history of this nation-building project.

[16] A.M. Wendell Malliet, *The Destiny of the West Indies* (New York: Russwurm Press, 1928), p.4.

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Chapter 1

An Inextricable Question: Race and Region in the Nineteenth Century British Caribbean

> If the British people and their Government fail to place their black fellow subjects in the [British] West Indies on an equal footing within the Empire with the white races, they will be using their position to perpetuate a wrong, or rather to prolong it, for in all human probability to perpetuate it they will not be able.[1]

When he wrote this sentence in 1888, C.S. Salmon, a former British colonial official, highlighted the central political and social issue in post-emancipation West Indian colonies: the status of African-descended peoples. This issue, of course, was not only a concern within the circles of the colonial administration. It was a pressing and pervasive question that directly shaped the economic, social, and political standing of the vast majority of the British Caribbean population. A half-century after the "final abolition" of racial slavery in the British West Indies in 1838, after a five-year period of "apprenticeship," the new black and coloured "citizens" of the colonies found themselves confronting lingering racist ideologies bolstered by the developments of new scientific racisms. The promises of British liberalism trumpeted at the time of emancipation, which promised a new era of egalitarianism in the West Indies, proved limited and insufficient as a means to insure the full and equal inclusion of the black and coloured masses into West Indian society.

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1 C.S. Salmon, *The Caribbean Confederation: a Plan for the Union of the Fifteen British West Indian Colonies preceded by An Account of the Past and Present Condition of the Europeans and the African Races Inhabiting Them with a True Explanation of the Haytian Mystery* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1971), preface. Salmon's career included stints as President of Nevis (British West Indies), Colonial Secretary and Administrator of the Gold Coast, and Chief Commissioner of the Seychelles Islands.

From the early decades of the nineteenth century, when the bulk of the West Indian colonies remained slave societies, through the transition of emancipation, and into the Crown Colony era, British policies in the Caribbean were shaped by political and ideological debates over the capacity of peoples of African-descent to participate as equals within colonial society. Therefore, all movements seeking to reform colonial rule were forced to address questions of race and racial exclusion. This chapter examines the British colonial system in the nineteenth century British West Indies in order to explore how ideas about race and region were formed through ideological debates about the possibility of black-majority rule. The chapter begins with a discussion of the genesis of the British West Indian colonies, and the rise and fall of plantation slavery. It then explores the post-emancipation era and the rise of Crown Colony rule. Finally, the chapter closes with an exploration of the debates surrounding the political capacities of the British West Indies black and coloured population in the nineteenth century.

Birth of the British West Indies

British colonization of the West Indies was but one part of a broader European expansion into the Caribbean. Beginning in the 1620s and 1630s, the British, French, and Dutch Empires broke the monopoly of the Spanish Empire in the Caribbean, and established their own colonies alongside the older Spanish communities created in the sixteenth century. Over the course of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, these Caribbean colonies increased in both number and importance as the region became a source of great wealth and power for the various European empires.

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The British ultimately become one of the major colonial powers in the Caribbean with a range of island and mainland colonies established over approximately two hundred years. The majority of the British colonies of the early seventeenth century were located in the Lesser Antilles of the Eastern Caribbean, including St. Kitts, Barbados, Nevis, Antigua, and Montserrat. The British continued to expand their Caribbean holdings in this century with further settlements in Anguilla, the Cayman Islands, the Virgin Islands, and Turks and Caicos. The most significant addition was the conquest of Jamaica, a former Spanish colony, in 1655. From the 1760s-1790s, other Eastern Caribbean islands, including Dominica, Grenada, St. Vincent, and St. Lucia changed hands several times between the British and French Empires. By the early nineteenth century, Great Britain controlled all of these islands, as well as Trinidad, Tobago, and mainland areas that were to become British Guiana and British Honduras.[2]

Though European colonization of the Caribbean cannot easily be categorized into fixed patterns, in general, these colonies evolved from "settler societies", in which Europeans sought to recreate European societies abroad as a site for their own populations, to "exploitation societies" created for the production of various export goods for global markets.[3] The overt economic orientation of the latter led to the development and expansion of the plantation system in the region. This system, overwhelmingly based on forced labor extracted from millions of enslaved Africans, grew exponentially

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2 For an overview of the settlement and expansion of the British Empire in the West Indies, see Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), chapters 2-3; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997), chapter 6.

3 See, Knight, *The Caribbean*, chapter 3. Of course, as Franklin Knight notes in this work there was some overlap between these two societies as "every settler society had its exploitation component and every exploitation society had its settler dimension" (Knight, *The Caribbean*, p.74). Nevertheless, his contention of a move from settlement to exploitation provides an appropriate overview of colonization patterns.

through the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[4] These events transformed the majority of the Caribbean colonies into "slave societies", and the Caribbean as a whole into a crucial component of what Charles Wagley called "Plantation America".[5]

The transition from settler to exploitative societies, and the rise of a plantation system based on African slavery, were especially important to the development and expansion of the British West Indies. Early settler efforts in areas like Barbados and the Leeward Islands proved limited, if not outright failures, after only a few decades. As Franklin Knight notes, "By 1650, Barbados and the Leewards abandoned their settler destinies to pursue the lucrative path of the tropical plantation society."[6] The chief factor in these changes was the explosion of the "sugar revolutions" that engulfed the Caribbean

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4 It is important to note that while slavery and the plantation system did expand throughout these centuries, the various Caribbean colonies did not necessarily develop concurrently or at the same rate. For instance, during much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Spanish Empire was more concerned with the settlement and exploitation of their massive mainland holdings than their Caribbean colonies. Therefore, while the British and French Caribbean colonies developed under the plantation system in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was not until the nineteenth century that Cuba (the largest island colony in the Caribbean) evolved into a plantation system overwhelmingly worked by enslaved Africans. See Franklin Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba During the Nineteenth Century* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970). For an example of a comparative study which takes into account the development of the colonial Caribbean over different periods of time, see Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Social Control in Slave Plantation Societies; a Comparison of St. Domingue and Cuba* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971). Finally, for a useful, multinational overview of the rise of slavery in the Americas, see Robin Blackburn, *Making of New World Slavery*, especially chapters 3-8. For a more Caribbean-focused overview of European colonization and the rise of Caribbean slave systems, see Knight, *The Caribbean*, particularly chapters 2-5.

5 Scholars like Ira Berlin have differentiated slavery in the Americas as "societies with slaves" and "slave societies". Briefly, in a "society with slaves", slavery was peripheral to the central production process, with slaves as only one form of labor alongside indentured and free laborers, and slaveholders as only one portion of the white, propertied elite. In contrast, "slave societies" were characterized by their central reliance on slave labor under a white planter oligarchy, with the master-slave relationship the model of all social interactions. See Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: the First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998). Charles Wagley divided the Western Hemisphere into Meso-America, Euro-America, and Plantation America. The term "Plantation America" encompassed some coastal areas of South and Central America, the US South, and all of islands of the Caribbean. See Charles Wagley, "Plantation-America: A Culture Sphere," in *Caribbean Studies: A Symposium*, ed. in Vera Rubin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), pp.3-13.

6 Knight, *The Caribbean*, p.80.

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beginning in the mid-late seventeenth century.[7] "Imposed on the initial settler societies, the sugarcane agro-industrial complex changed fundamentally the basic economy, the demographic structure, the internal politics - as well as the relationship of the region to the wider world."[8] Barbados lead the way in this shift, as the lands and population of the island quickly evolved from a white majority focused on tobacco cultivation with a mixture of white indentures and small numbers of enslaved Africans (like their North American brethren in the Chesapeake), to a majority of African slaves centered on the sugar industry.[9] Other British Caribbean colonies followed the success of the Barbadian sugar plantations. Though they initially lagged behind the scale and productivity of sugar in Barbados, Jamaica and the Leeward Island colonies also changed into similar slave societies in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[10]

Sugar became the source of great wealth and power for the white planters and merchants in the British West Indies, and for many other European powers in the

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7 Franklin Knight defines sugar revolution as "a series of interconnected fundamental changes in agriculture, horticulture, landholding, demography, society, and economy ... [which] began in Barbados in the 1640s, spread to Jamaica, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Saint-Domingue by the 1740s, and to Cuba and Puerto Rico by 1800." Franklin Knight, *Race, Ethnicity, and Class: Forging the Plural Society in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, Markham Press Fund, 1996), p.36.

8 Knight, *Race, Ethnicity, and Class*, p.37.

9 Michael Craton estimates that in 1643, Barbados contained approximately 6,000 enslaved Africans and 25,000 whites. By 1650, with the rise of the sugar industry, Craton says there were 37,000 enslaved Africans and only 17,000 whites. See, Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), p.105. For an example of the transition from white indentured servitude to chattel slavery, see Hilary Beckles, *White servitude and Black slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

10 See Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: the Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), chapters 4-7.

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Caribbean, well into the nineteenth century.[11] More importantly, for our discussion, "sugar and slavery developed hand in hand in the English islands".[12] While numerous other crops continued to be grown in the British West Indies for the wider Atlantic economy (including coffee, cacao, cocoa, cotton, and various tropical fruits and spices), sugar, with its high demand of labor and potential for great riches, provided the primary impetus for the influx of enslaved Africans who became the vast majority of the British Indian colonies.

Table 1.1 – Estimated Populations of the British Sugar Islands, 1660-1700 [13]

Year	Barbados (White)	Barbados (Black)	Jamaica (White)	Jamaica (Black)	Leewards (White)	Leewards (Black)
1660	22,000	20,000	3,000	500	8,000	2,000
1670	20,000	30,000	7,000	7,000	8,000	3,000
1680	20,000	40,000	12,000	15,000	11,000	9,000
1690	18,000	50,000	10,000	30,000	10,000	15,000
1700	15,000	40,000	7,000	40,000	7,000	20,000

The institution of the plantation system in the British Caribbean produced a hierarchy of race, colour, and class. At the top of society was a small white population consisting of planters (both local and a great number of absentees), merchants, small

11 There are numerous studies of sugar cultivation in the Caribbean. See for example, Elsa V. Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965); Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba*; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*; Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: an Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *The Sugarmill: the Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976); Francisco A. Scarano, *Sugar and Slavery in Puerto Rico: the Plantation Economy of Ponce, 1800-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: the Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986); Dale W. Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar: Martinique and the World Economy, 1830-1848* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

12 Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p.189.

13 This data is taken from Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p.312.

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landholders, colonial officials, and in some islands (notably Barbados) small numbers of poor white laborers. Free people of African-descent, including free coloureds and free blacks, occupied an ever-expanding middle ground. Finally, enslaved Africans formed the extensive bottom of the social pyramid. There were, of course, rivalries and further divisions within all of these sections of plantation society, especially within its two poles. Differences in class and, in some islands that passed between various European hands, national origin, divided the white community. Tensions also existed between planters, colonial officials, and smaller white landowners.[14] Likewise, the enslaved population was not monolithic, but instead, consisted of a range of different African ethnicities, as well as divisions between African-born and Creole populations. Nevertheless, the racialized character of the plantation system created some sense of solidarity within the broader social categories. For instance, the demographic imbalance within the British West Indian slave societies forged a sense of solidarity among many, though not all, of the white community. The broader fears of, and sense of superiority over, the enslaved populations (and to a lesser extent, the free coloured and black populations) helped forge a sense of racial solidarity in many respects. As Robin Blackburn argues, "Fear and privilege, both constituted with reference to black slaves, possessed the ability spontaneously to 'interpellate' white people, making them see themselves...as members of a ruling race – and thus to furnish them with core elements of their social identity."[15] Similarly, despite continued divisions among the enslaved populations, there were several

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14 For discussions of some of these white divisions prior to the nineteenth century, see Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*; Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands*.

15 Blackburn, *Making of New World Slavery*, pp.323-324. A similar take on racial solidarity among whites can also be found in the classic work of Elsa V. Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands*.

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inter-ethnic plots and rebellions, as well as cooperation between African and Creole slaves, who often found some basis for solidarity in their common enslavement.[16]

Such racialized social divisions created an ongoing cycle of fear, control, and resistance within the colonial British West Indies. Various control measures (such as slave codes) appeared throughout the region in an attempt to ease the fears of the white communities, limit the lives of the enslaved, and maintain the required workforce for the plantation system. Aware of the growing demographic imbalance in the British West Indies, some colonies adopted "deficiency laws" that required a predetermined ratio of whites to enslaved Africans, which, if not met, required an estate to pay a penalty tax. However, the success of such deficiency laws proved limited, as limiting the numbers of enslaved would have meant losing labor and therefore potential profits.[17] Economic concerns, then, often outweighed security concerns in many of these colonies.

Even if many whites held exaggerated fears of the allegedly violent and savage nature of enslaved Africans existed among many whites, the fear of the enslaved population that whites imported and relied upon was not completely unfounded. Given the historical record and breadth of slave resistance, white colonials were justifiably paranoid about losing their workforce, and in some cases, even control of the colony. Resistance to slavery was indeed widespread and seemingly omnipresent. Both enslaved men and women participated in a range of activities. Everyday forms of resistance

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16 The ethnic breakdown of the various forms of resistance and rebellion are beyond the scope of this project. However, see Craton, *Testing the Chains*, for an overview of resistance to slavery within the British West Indies.

17 Charles H. Wesley, "The Negro in the West Indies, Slavery and Freedom," *Journal of Negro History* 17, no.1 (Jan. 1932): pp.55-56; Ronald V. Sires, "Government in the British West Indies: an Historical Outline," in *Federation of the West Indies*, ed. H.D. Huggins (Mona, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1957), p.113; Morley Ayearst, *The British West Indies: the Search for Self-Government* (New York: New York University Press), p.19.

included sabotage and work-slowdowns. Running away incorporated both short-term absences (*petit marronage*) and a more permanent removal (*grand marronage*) from the plantation.[18] There were also numerous plots and rebellions throughout the region which ranged from earlier rebellions aimed at escaping plantation slavery to later rebellions designed to overthrow plantation slavery.[19]

In addition to the continuous resistance of the enslaved population, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, proponents of plantation slavery in the British West Indies found themselves increasingly under attack from a burgeoning anti-slavery movement in England. From the 1770s through the 1830s, the abolitionist movement became a powerful force in the British Empire, and a potent threat to the British West Indian slave societies.[20] The planters, therefore, faced both continued slave resistance to the plantation system and a lengthy ideological debate with the anti-slavery movement.[21]

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18 The literature on slave resistance in the British Caribbean is rich. For a general overview of resistance to slavery in the British West Indies, see Craton, *Testing the Chains*. Especially helpful is Craton's appendix on the Chronology of Resistance, 1638-1837. For information on marronage, see Richard Price, *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1996); Werner Zips, *Black Rebels: African-Caribbean Freedom Fighters in Jamaica* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999). For studies of slave women resistance, see Hilary Beckles, *Afro-Caribbean Women and Resistance to Slavery in Barbados* (London: Karnak House, 1988); Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

19 Specific studies on plots and rebellions in the British West Indies can be found in Craton, *Testing the Chains*; David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood: the Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). For a discussion of the shift in the goals of slave resistance, from withdrawal to the overthrow of plantation slavery, see Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the New World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979).

20 For a classic study of the rise of the abolitionist movement in Europe and the Americas, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966). An abridged, chronological account of the rise of British abolitionism can also be found in David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.234-238.

The issue of slave resistance became a key topic of debate between proslavery defendants and antislavery movements. The continuous resistance and general discontent among the enslaved populations fueled both the antislavery movements and proslavery defenses of the plantation system.[22] For many abolitionists, slave resistance proved the inherent evils of slavery, the need for immediate reforms, and eventually, the abolishment of that institution. The antislavery lobby cited not only the harmful effects of slavery on the enslaved, but also the moral degradation of proslavery whites in the West Indies whom they labeled as despotic and generally 'un-English". Conversely, proslavery representatives cited the "rebellious nature" of the enslaved as proof of the need to maintain slavery as a means to control the black population, lest the respective colonies be lost to the allegedly inferior black masses. Moreover, they stood firm on their rights as Englishmen, including the right to own property (including slaves).[23]

While the abolitionists and proslavery apologists debated the future of plantation slavery within the British West Indies, enslaved peoples continued to take matters into their own hands. Despite the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, as well as subsequent efforts to improve slave conditions, there was neither a dramatic alteration of slave conditions, nor a cessation of slave resistance.[24] In fact, no less than three major

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21 For a discussion of proslavery and antislavery ideology in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Caribbean, see Gordon K. Lewis, *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: the Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in Its Ideological Aspects, 1492-1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), chapters 3-4.

22 Such simultaneous uses of slave resistance within antislavery and proslavery circles can also be found in late-eighteenth century St. Domingue. See for instance, Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), chapter 2.

23 Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 241-243; David Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity During the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.1-2.

slave rebellions occurred in the British West Indies between the end of the slave trade and the formal end of slavery: Barbados in 1816, Demerara in 1823, and Jamaica in 1831-1832.[25] In the aftermath of these rebellions, planters noted how many of the slaves were emboldened in their actions by rumors of abolitionist decrees from the King, Parliament, or Colonial Office, which the local planters supposedly withheld to delay emancipation.[26] This was not necessarily an exaggeration from the planters, as some slaves in Barbados, Demerara, and Jamaica "defended their rebellions as efforts to support the Crown in its struggle with planters to end slavery".[27] Despite the staunch resistance of the planters, such continued slave resistance combined with an increasingly potent abolitionist movement, was a major factor, though not the only one, in the gradual death of plantation slavery in the early nineteenth century British West Indies.[28]

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24 Gad Heuman, "From Slavery to Freedom: Blacks in the Nineteenth-Century British West Indies," in *Black Experience and the Empire*, eds. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.142-147.

25 For further information on these rebellions, see: Craton, *Testing the Chains*, chapters 19-22. For a monograph on the Demerara Rebellion, see Da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood.* For further information on the so-called Baptist War in Jamaica (1831-1832), see Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: the Disintegration of Jamaica Slave Society* (Kingston, Jamaica: The Press University of the West Indies, 1998), chapter 6.

26 Craton, *Testing the Chains*, pp.243-244.

27 Sean Hawkins and Philip D. Morgan, "Introduction" in *Black Experience and the Empire*, p.11.

28 An in-depth discussion of the motivations for British abolitionism is not of primary concern for this study. However, it is important to note that this issue has long been a heated debate within the historiography of the British Empire, especially the West Indies. One popular belief for the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, especially within British historiography, was that the British Empire, heavily influenced by the broad reach of the abolitionist movement, made a humanitarian gesture to end their slave trade and slavery. Then, the virtuous example of British abolitionism led the way for other European empires (and the United States) to abolish their slave trades, and eventually, slavery.

This notion had various critiques who noted the economic considerations embedded in the emancipation debates and procedures. Most famous was Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944). Williams dismissed the humanitarian basis of emancipation, and instead claimed that the rise of industrial capitalism and a decline in the profitability of West Indian slavery lead the British Empire to abolish plantation slavery, as well as their subsequent efforts to convince (or force) other European powers to do likewise. As will be noted in subsequent chapters, Williams challenge was not solely a historical treatise, but also a nascent West Indian nationalist position

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Whatever the ultimate reason for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery in the British West Indies, "Britain moved quickly from being the world's leading purchaser and transporter of African slaves" to outlawing the slave trade in 1807, and ultimately slavery itself in the 1830s.[29] In August 1833, a compromise was reached between the antislavery movement and West Indian planters with the Slavery Abolition Act in the British Parliament. This act, which became law on 1 August 1834, emancipated approximately 750,000 – 800,000 enslaved people, though a forced apprentice system delayed final emancipation until 1838. In return, former owners were paid twenty million pounds sterling.[30] Seemingly, the abolitionist movement won a major victory with such a peaceful concession. However, numerous issues remained unresolved, and the transition to a "free society" in the post-emancipation era held many roadblocks.

The Post-Emancipation Era & the Rise of Crown Colony Rule

Designed as a "half-way covenant" between slavery and freedom, the introduction of an apprenticeship period as the final step before final emancipation was neither

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which challenged the historical record of the British Empire as a faithful, paternalistic body which its various colonials could trust to make changes when the proper time had come. Williams also discusses the support for the humanitarian myth of abolition, as purported by British historians in particular, in Eric Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1972).

As for the historiographical responses to the "Williams Thesis", it remains a matter of much debate sixty years after its publication. See for instance: Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: the Legacy of Eric Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Selwyn Carrington, "The State of the Debate on the Role of Capitalism in the Ending of the Slave System," in *Journal of Caribbean History* 22, no.1-2 (1988): pp.20-41; Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Many of these works are highlighted in Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, chapter 12.

29 Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p.233.

30 Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p.234; Heuman, "From Slavery to Freedom", pp.147-148.

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peaceful nor successful it is original goals to reeducate former slaves as wage laborers and transform them into citizens. Especially troubling for the ex-slaves was the fact that "the relationship between the planter and the worker was much the same as that between master and slave."[31] While the newly "freed" populations of the British West Indies did not react immediately with open violence in opposition to their forced apprenticeships, both men and women in St. Kitts, Dominica, Trinidad, Jamaica, and other colonies made their displeasure known via work slowdowns, work stoppages, marches, and general strikes. On some occasions, the disgruntled apprentices believed the new system of forced labor was but another ploy by the planters (and Governors) to delay the freedom granted to them from the King and Parliament.[32] In response to such resistance, the planters and colonial authorities often reacted swiftly with force (even corporal punishment) to suppress the apprentices as a means to maintain social order, including the preservation of social hierarchies and the plantation system, especially sugar production.[33] Such actions clearly demonstrate the different notions of freedom held by the masses, in comparison to the ideas of the former masters and various other officials. While the apprentices sought a broader freedom, rather than simply new forms of coerced labor, the planters and colonial officials sought to ensure the continued availability of a subservient laboring population.

With the continued disruptions in the apprenticeship period, as well as the renewed activities of some abolitionists in opposition to apprenticeship, it became

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31 Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992), p.56.

32 Heuman, "From Slavery to Freedom", pp.148-152. A more detailed investigation of this era can be found in Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, especially chapters 2-3.

33 Heuman, "From Slavery to Freedom", pp.150-151.

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necessary to end the apprenticeship system prematurely on 1 August 1838. With this act, "full freedom" finally arrived. However, the end of apprenticeship failed to address the deep divisions and inequalities established during the reign of plantation slavery. Moreover, the abolition of the apprenticeship system did not answer the obviously disparate notions of freedom and the future of the British West Indies held by the black and coloured masses, the white elites, and the colonial office. As Gad Heuman notes, "Although the planters were willing to end the Apprenticeship System early, they did not envision emancipation altering either the hierarchical nature of society or their political dominance."[34]

In 1838, therefore, a series of central questions remained unresolved: What was to be the place of the black and coloured masses in the post-emancipation British West Indies? How were they to be integrated into their societies as citizens? Such issues were central in all post-emancipation societies.[35] However, the situation in the British West Indies contrasted with that of many other Caribbean and Latin American post-abolition societies, in which the end of slavery had gone hand-in-hand with the emergence of independent states. In Haiti, the former slaves participated in a successful revolution that

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34 Heuman, "From Slavery to Freedom", p.152.

35 There has been a great proliferation of post-emancipation studies since the 1980s. At one point, many of these studies were centered at the University of Michigan, under the guidance of Frederick Cooper, Rebecca Scott, and Thomas C. Holt on the faculty. These scholars also produced numerous graduate students who went on to generate numerous other post-emancipation studies. See for example: Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890-1925* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: the Transition to Free Labor, 1860-1899* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*; Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Save Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

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overthrew and defeated the French, as well as subsequent attempts by the British and Spanish to take control of the island. In doing so, they created an independent black nation state, which secured their citizenship.[36] During the various colonial Latin American revolutions of the nineteenth century, many slaves won their freedom and established their claims to citizenship via military service with both colonial and rebel forces.[37] While former slaves in these areas faced substantial difficulties and opposition to their claims of citizenship, their service in creating new nation states did provide a significant basis for their citizenship claims. In the British Caribbean, however, such military struggles did not take place. Moreover, the region remained colonized, rather than independent nations. Therefore, they had to rely on promises of British Liberalism rather than on nascent nationalist ideologies as the basis of their integration as citizens.

The interjection, and eventual rejection, of British Liberalism in the former British West Indian slave societies began shortly before the end of the apprenticeship system and continued over the next few decades. In 1837, colonial secretary Lord Glenelg wrote, "the apprenticeship of the emancipated slaves is to be immediately succeeded by personal freedom, in that full and unlimited sense of the term in which it is used in reference to the other subjects of the British Crown."[38] Glenelg also called for

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36 See for example, Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; CLR James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938); Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1991).

37 See for example, George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*; Peter Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1992); Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*; Leslie B. Rout, Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America, 1502 to the Present Day* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976); John V. Lombardi, *The Decline and Abolition of Negro Slavery in Venezuela, 1820-1854* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corp., 1971).

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the various governors of the West Indies to remove all remnants of racial discrimination ("disguised or overt") to insure the former slaves' freedom existed in economic, social, and political forms.[39] Despite the optimistic tone of Glenelg's decree, many in the Colonial Office knew that such a proposal would confront serious opposition from the local assemblies in the British Caribbean.

From the seventeenth to mid-nineteenth century, the overwhelming majority of the British West Indies operated under the Old Representative System. With few exceptions, this consisted of three institutions in each colony: a Crown-appointed governor (representing the king), a nominated executive council of twelve men (acting as an upper house), and a local assembly, ranging in number from a dozen in some smaller colonies to over forty in Jamaica, elected by a limited number of freeholders.[40] The local assemblies, originally designed to be subservient to the respective colonies' governor and executive council, instead became formidable forces within the colonies, acting as a local House of Commons.[41] Through the years, the local assemblies increasingly became the domain of the local planters, or, in the case of colonies with a great number of absentee planters, their agents and associates. Given the "fantastically limited franchise...they represented, at best, only the planter, merchant, and legal classes." These oligarchical

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38 Glenelg quoted in Thomas C. Holt, "The Essence of the Contract: the Articulation of Race, Gender, and Political Economy in British Emancipation Policy, 1838-1866," in Cooper, Holt, and Scott, *Beyond Slavery*, p.34. The same quote can also be found in Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p.179.

39 Holt, "The Essence of the Contract", p.34; Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p.179.

40 Hume Wrong, *Government of the West Indies* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), pp.37-41.

41 Wrong, *Government of the West Indies*, p.41.

assemblies saw themselves as the legitimate colonial power against the alien and imposed governors and executive councils.[42]

In the post-emancipation era, the small white elite remained determined to maintain their dominance of the local assemblies, and West Indian society in general. They were leery of Glenelg's vision of the post-emancipation West Indies. Though the franchise remained severely restricted, there were new opportunities for black and coloured political representation after emancipation. Given the numerical superiority of the recently freed black and coloured population, the possibility of any black participation in colonial and local affairs made many planters worry that they would soon be overwhelmed.[43] Acutely aware of these attitudes, some government officials in the metropole openly questioned whether it would be possible to successfully create free societies in the British Caribbean colonies if local colonial power remained in the hands of former masters determined to retain the colonial hierarchy. However, local whites in the British Indies were not the only ones concerned by the prospect of black majority rule. Indeed, by mid-century, even the Colonial Office, which was often at odds with local planters, retreated from the liberal experiment and sought ways to "blunt the impact of black political participation".[44]

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42 Gordon K. Lewis, *The Growth of the Modern West Indies* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), pp.95-96. The extent of this local power can be seen in the fact that despite the supposed supreme position of the governor, he was often rather impotent, torn between his responsibilities to the Crown, and the reality of a powerful local assembly, which on occasion forced governors out of office, and in one case even killed a Governor. See: Wrong, *Government of the West Indies*, pp.37-38.

43 Such worries were not completely fanciful as there were some challenges to the white monopoly of power, including a coloured majority in Dominica's Assembly, and growing numbers of black and coloured representatives in Jamaica. See: Heuman, "From Slavery to Freedom", p.156.

44 Holt, "The Essence of the Contract", p.36.

Some colonial officials believed that the only possible solution to the problem of local government in the British West Indies, with its social divisions between an undemocratic white oligarchy on one hand and a black majority whose political capacity was questioned on the other, was the abolition of the Old Representative System, and the installation of a more direct rule from the Crown. Such a system had been debated in previous years within some circles, but the proposals were generally shelved as the Assemblies were not expected to relinquish willingly their powers and the metropole was not ready to force such concessions.[45] This changed in 1865, however, when a major rebellion at Morant Bay in Jamaica sparked a remarkable voluntary dismantling of the local Assemblies, and opened the door to widespread changes in colonial governments throughout the British West Indies.

The Morant Bay Rebellion was a watershed moment in British Caribbean history. Like many other West Indian colonies, there was much discontent in Jamaica in the decades following the formal end of slavery. Low wages, high taxes, land alienation, poor living conditions, and the continued general domination of the island's economic, social, and political institutions by the small white oligarchy created enormous anger within the black peasant class in the island. While there were sporadic protests and even small episodes of violence before the 1860s, the crescendo came in October 1865 in Morant Bay, the main city of St. Thomas in the East parish.[46] On 11 October 1865, after a turbulent weekend during which there were small-scale confrontations between

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45 For an example of such discussions in the 1840s, see: Wrong, *Government of the West Indies*, p.64.

46 For an overview of post-emancipation protests in the British West Indies, see Michael Craton, "Continuity Not Change: Late Slavery and Post-Emancipation Resistance in the British West Indies", in *Empire, Enslavement, and Freedom in the Caribbean*, ed. Michael Craton (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1997), pp.324-347. For a more specific focus on Jamaica in these years, see Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, chapter 8.

peasants and authorities over an assault case and a trespassing case, Paul Bogle, a Baptist preacher and small landowner, led several hundred protestors into Morant Bay, where the local militia confronted them. After clashing with the militia, the protestors took control of the city, killing approximately eighteen people, wounding thirty-one others, and losing seven of their own members. Over the next few days, hundreds of others joined the rebellion, ransacking area plantations and killing two planters.[47] As Thomas Holt writes: "At its peak, the rebellion involved an estimated fifteen hundred to two thousand people, men and women, African and creole, estate workers and settlers."[48]

In response, Governor Edward John Eyre dispatched British troops and Maroons against the rebels, and declared martial law in the parish. These forces swiftly and brutally suppressed the rebellion – shooting, hanging, and flogging the rebels (and suspected rebels). In addition, several hundred were arrested, court-martialed, and eventually executed, including the rebel leader Paul Bogle. Moreover, in a controversial step, Governor Eyre ordered the arrest of George William Gordon, a local coloured Assembly member who was known as a critic of the current colonial government and as a religious leader associated with Bogle's church. Gordon was arrested outside of the martial law zone in Kingston, taken into the martial law area, then quickly and unjustly tried and executed.[49] Estimates for the tally of the Morant Bay repression include 1000 houses burned, approximately 600 men and women flogged, between 439 and 608 rebels

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47 A detailed account of the Morant Bay Rebellion can be found in Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, chapter 8. However, a more exhaustive study of these activities, especially its classification as a rebellion rather than simply a riot, can be found in Gad Heuman, *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1994).

48 Quoted in Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p.299.

49 Wrong, *Government of the West Indies*, p.75. These actions are further detailed in Heuman, *The Killing Time*.

killed, as well as numerous others sentenced to death through the courts after martial law ended. The rebels, in contrast, killed none of Governor Eyre's troops.[50]

The authoritarian and violent repression of the rebels under the orders of Governor Eyre, and especially the questionable trial and execution of Gordon, became a topic of much debate in the metropole; however, the immediate fallout within Jamaica and the other West Indies proved more far-reaching.[51] While there is little doubt that there were both race and class elements to the Morant Bay Rebellion, to many of the island's whites who still controlled the local assembly, as well as some officials in England, this was the beginning of a larger race war which many had long feared.[52] This fear, as well as the general fear of the black majorities eventually gaining power within colonial assemblies, led the Jamaican Assembly to abdicate voluntarily all of its powers for a more direct rule from the Crown, which was known as Crown Colony rule.

The term "Crown Colony" describes a system in which "all executive powers [were] in the hands of the Crown-appointed Governor...[as well as] control of general policy and legislation because the legislature consisted of officials, subordinates of the Governor plus some colonists nominated by the Governor."[53] In a Crown Colony, the Crown abolished the local assembly. It was replaced by either an entirely nominated legislature (i.e., "pure Crown Colony"), or, in some cases, a legislature with both

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50 The exact tallies of the repression vary. See: Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p.302; James Patterson Smith, "The Liberals, Race, and Political Reform in the British West Indies, 1866-1874", *Journal of Negro History* 79, no.2 (Spring 1994): 135.

51 The metropolitan controversy over the actions of Governor Eyre will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.

52 As James Patterson Smith notes, "From the start Eyre viewed the situation in almost purely racial terms." Smith, "Liberals, Race, and Political Reform", 134.

53 Ayearst, *British West Indies*, p.18.

nominated and elected members (i.e., "semi-representative Crown Colony"). The loss of a representative element was obvious in a "pure Crown Colony", while in a "semi-representative Crown Colony" the representative element was little more than window-dressing since the nominated members invariably outnumbered any elected numbers.[54]

As was noted above, before the Morant Bay rebellion the crown had considered taking on a more direct colonial rule as a solution to an array of West Indian problems. In fact, Trinidad and St. Lucia, two late additions to the British West Indies, had been Crown Colonies since their acquisition.[55] In some other islands, the Old Representative System had slowly evolved towards Crown Colony rule in the mid-nineteenth century. This process took years in some islands, with stages between the Old Representative System and a wholly nominated Legislature, but the change in Jamaica was immediate after Morant Bay (see Table 1.2). Therefore, Jamaica's transition is often remembered as the "beginning of the end" for the Old Representative Systems. From 1866-1898, all of the British West Indies (with the exception of Barbados, British Guiana, and the Bahamas) became "pure Crown colonies" under a wholly nominated legislature. Jamaica's status as a "pure Crown Colony" lasted less than two decades, with its transition to a "semi-representative Crown Colony" in 1884 when an elective element returned to the legislature.[56] British Guiana maintained its Dutch-based, semi-

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54 See: Wrong, *Government of the West Indies*, p.71.

55 For a study on the early establishment of Crown Colony rule, see: James Millette, *The Genesis of Crown Colony Government: Trinidad, 1783-1810* (Curepe, Trinidad: Moko Enterprises Ltd., 1970).

56 Before 1884, the Jamaican Legislative Council consisted of the Governor, nine officials, and nine nominated unofficial members. In 1884, the unofficial members became elected seats. However, since the Governor carried a double vote, the Crown was still assured of control. See, Wrong, *Government of the West Indies*, pp.123-135.

representative system until 1928, at which time it also became a "pure Crown Colony", while Barbados and the Bahamas never lost their original local elected Assemblies.[57]

Table 1.2 – Rise of Crown Colony Rule in the British West Indies [58]

Colony	Old Representative System	Single Chamber, Elected Majority	Single Chamber, Nominated Majority	Wholly Nominated Legislature
Antigua	1663-1866	---	1866-1898	1898
Barbados	1663	---	---	---
Bahamas	1728	---	---	---
British Guiana	---	1803	---	1928
British Honduras	---	1853-1870	---	1870
Dominica	1775-1863	1863-1865	1865-1898	1898
Grenada	1766-1875	---	1875-1877	1877
Jamaica	1663-1866	---	1884	1866-1884
Montserrat	1663-1861	1861-1866	---	1866
Nevis	1633-1866	---	1866-1877	1877
St. Kitts	1663-1866	---	1866-1878	1878
St. Lucia	---	---	---	1803
St. Vincent	1766-1868	---	1868-1877	1877
Tobago	1803-1874	1874-1877	---	1877
Trinidad	---	---	---	1797
Virgin Islands	1773-1854	1854-1859	1859-1867	1867

Supporters of Crown Colony government cited various reasons for these constitutional changes in the British West Indies. Many noted a variety of colonial inefficiencies, fiscal and political. To some officials of the Colonial Office, "the white oligarchies [who controlled the local Assemblies] proved to be incapable not only of

57 For more detailed discussions of the constitutional changes in the late nineteenth century, see: Wrong, *Government of the West Indies*, chapters 5-9; H.A. Will, *Constitutional Change in the British West Indies, 1880-1903* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); Denis M. Benn, *The Caribbean: an Intellectual History, 1774-2003* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2004), chapter 2.

58 Data taken from Wrong, *Government of the West Indies*, pp.80-81.

good government but even of stable and orderly government."[59] Nevertheless, one cannot underestimate the role questions of race played in the installation of Crown rule. As Morley Ayearst notes in his discussion of the British West Indies, the Old Representative System "was based upon the assumption that the colonies were and would remain areas of European settlement... [with] a fairly homogeneous society. [However] this had long ceased to be the case in the West Indies."[60] Many questioned, therefore, the extent to which this system could remain a good form of government in a region populated by a black majority region, especially one in which much of that majority was recently removed from slavery and living alongside the former "masters" of the plantation system.

The idea of black majority rule had long worried not only local whites, but the metropolitan government as well. Such fears had circulated during the slavery period as well as in the immediate post-emancipation era, and there was a striking continuity between the old fears of slave rebellions and the often fanciful images of what would happen if free black populations gained "control" of the region. The fear of black majority rule was not simply imaginary, however, for the successful Haitian Revolution of the late eighteenth century transformed white fears into a reality. More than just a confirmation of the ability of enslaved peoples to throw off the chains of slavery permanently, the transformation of the Saint-Domingue slave society into the independent Haitian republic in 1804 created a genuine example of black self-rule that

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59 Ayearst, *The British West Indies*, p.30.

60 Ayearst, *The British West Indies*, p.26.

reverberated throughout the hemisphere.[61] Unfortunately, racist and stereotypical accounts of both the revolution and the Haitian state become the basis of many European stands against black self-rule.

Notions of African inferiority and European superiority seemingly gained new credibility and legitimacy with the development of assorted scientific racisms in the mid-nineteenth century. Various scientific studies spouted new biological understandings of race, and created racial hierarchies of so-called "superior" and "inferior" peoples with Europeans at the top and peoples of African-descent invariably located at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder. Racial determinism became popular amongst intellectual and governmental circles, consistently influencing and justifying policies of European imperialism.[62] What became known as the "White Man's Burden", the duty to lead, nurture, and civilize supposedly inferior races, while withholding self-determination until such peoples were "fit to rule", became a cornerstone of British imperialism with its imperial trusteeships, guardianships, and patronizing notions of tutelage.[63]

There is little doubt that these ideas influenced the decision to institute Crown Colony rule in the British West Indies. As Neil MacMaster argues in his study of racism

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61 For discussions of the Haitian Revolution and its reverberations, see: James, *The Black Jacobins*; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*; Julius Scott, "The common wind : currents of Afro-American communication in the era of the Haitian Revolution" (PhD Diss., Duke University, 1986); Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1989); Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, eds., *A Turbulent Time: the French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*. As will be shown in later sections of this chapter, as well as subsequent chapters, the "specter of Haiti" loomed large in most discussions of Black self-rule, be that bad or good, well into the twentieth century.

62 For a discussion of the rise of such scientific racism in the British Empire, see Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982).

63 Such notions of "fit to rule" were by no means confined to the British Empire. For a similar debate within the Caribbean, see Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*.

in Europe, "By the late 1860s the predominant thinking among colonial officials and policy-makers in London was that black populations in the Caribbean, Africa and elsewhere – unlike the colonies of white settlement like Canada and Australia, which could be prepared for self-government – would have to remain under the 'benevolent guardianship' of their white masters."[64] Crown Colony government provided the means through which these ideas were institutionalized in the British West Indies. As James Patterson Smith notes, "Racial thinking dictated this authoritarian solution to West Indian problems. Broadening the franchise would have required considerably more thought, energy, attention, and willingness to [take] risks. The racial reasoning that supported authoritarianism provided an escape from this burden."[65]

The Colonial Office presented Crown Colony rule as an "efficient and impartial" system of "benevolent paternalism".[66] On one hand, they claimed, it would serve to check local oligarchies' abuses and misuses of power. "The Crown was the guardian and representative of the masses, the protector of popular interests against the oppression of the landowners".[67] Given this role, not all local whites in the British West Indies welcomed Crown intervention into local affairs. Some saw this as a challenge to their rights of representation as Englishman, and to their economic well-being. Nevertheless, many within the planter and merchant oligarchy welcomed the introduction of Crown Colony government as the best means to block what some believed was an inevitable

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64 Neil MacMaster, *Racism in Europe 1870-2000* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p.65.

65 Smith, "Liberals, Race, and Political Reform", 135.

66 Patrick Bryan, *The Jamaican People 1880-1902: Race, Class, and Social Control* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2000), p.11.

67 Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad, 1870-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.25.

black majority rule in the British West Indies.[68] As Thomas Holt notes in the case of Jamaica, Crown Colony government was "justified as saving Jamaica from the perils of a black-dominated democracy."[69] Moreover, the idea that the Crown system would defend the masses at the cost of alienating or dominating the white elite proved a fallacy. In fact, despite the continued objections of some local whites, planters and merchants wielded great influence within the new colonial systems. Bridget Brereton says this quite well in her study of colonial Trinidad:

> It was the great myth of Crown Colony government that Governors and officials were impartial administrators and, at the same time, the special protectors of the poor. The Crown was the representative of the unrepresented masses; hence the need to keep power and responsibility in the hands of the Governor. But the written constitution of a Crown Colony was one thing, reality another... It was too much to expect that British officials would have operated as truly impartial arbiters between the contending socio-economic groups. For these English gentlemen by and large shared the planters' general political and social views.[70]

Therefore, well into the twentieth century, Crown Colony government proved to be more of a check to black, and to a lesser extent coloured, participation in West Indian politics than an impartial arbitrator of good government.

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68 CLR James, "The West Indian Intellectual" in J.J. Thomas, *Froudacity: West Indian Fables* (London: New Beacon Books Ltd., 1969), p.24.

69 Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, p.316.

70 Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad*, p.25.

Debating the Future of the British West Indies

The racialized justifications of the Crown Colony system were part of a broader ideological debate over the future of the British West Indies. The uncertainty of the post-emancipation era, the continued resistance of the working class, economic insecurity, the rise of new scientific racisms, and a general decrease in the importance of the Caribbean colonies within the British Empire combined to paint a dim future for the British Caribbean. Though a range of reasons existed for the depressed state of the British West Indies, not least of which was the removal of sugar preferences for West Indian sugar and the subsequent overall negative impact of free trade upon the region, numerous British intellectuals and government officials bound the fate of the region to questions about the intellectual and cultural "fitness" and ability of the black and coloured majority. [71]

Thomas Carlyle, the famous Victorian intellectual, penned one of the most famous condemnations of the British West Indies in his polemical 1849 essay "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question", which was expanded and reprinted in 1853 as the "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question".[72] In this text, Carlyle presents a caricatured image of black West Indians as "Quashee". A happy disposition, funny speech, rhythm, an ability to dance and sing, and an appetite for pumpkins (i.e., various tropical fruits) marked this figure. Most importantly, Quashee was a consumer,

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71 It is important to note that significant numbers of Indian and Chinese indentured servants arrived in the British Caribbean in the late nineteenth century. While several colonies received such peoples, they were overwhelmingly concentrated in Trinidad and British Guiana. For a discussion of this process and the extent of these migrations, see Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar; Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies 1838-1918*(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993). The addition of these peoples did not alter the racialized views of the region, since they too were considered "inferior peoples" by many Europeans. Nevertheless, the West Indies *as a whole* remained overwhelmingly composed of African-descended peoples, and ideological debates over the future of the region also remained primarily focused on these populations.

72 Thomas Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question" in *The Nigger Question, The Negro Question*, ed. Eugene R. August (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971), p.1.

rather than producer.[73] Carlyle repeatedly criticizes the supposed laziness of the black population, and declares emancipation was a mistake because slavery created order and extracted labor from a population who would otherwise not work.[74] In the words of Catherine Hall, "Carlyle argued that white people were born to be lords and black people to be mastered."[75] Throughout the essay, Carlyle claims the region will fall into decay and ruin without the leadership of the white population, who he maintains developed and, therefore, rightfully owned the region. "But under the soil of Jamaica, before it could even produce spices or any pumpkin, the bones of many thousand British men had to be laid."[76] Additionally, Carlyle presents a false image of Haiti as a warning on the future of the British West Indies without white presence and guidance. "Look across to Haiti, and trace a far sterner prophecy! Let him, by his ugliness, idleness, rebellion, banish all White men from the West Indies, and make it all one Haiti, - with little or no sugar growing, black Peter exterminating black Paul, and where a garden of the Hesperides might be, nothing but a tropical dog-kennel and pestiferous jungle."[77] Such claims supported and justified continued British control of the British West Indies.

In response to Carlyle's essay, John Stuart Mill penned his own essay on the British West Indies and its black majority, "The Negro Question" (1850). While Mill

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73 These images are summarized fairly well in August's "Introduction" to *The Nigger Question, The Negro Question*, pp.xviii-xix. Such stereotypes are similar to the happy "Sambo" image in the United States.

74 Here, Carlyle no doubt refers to the various post-emancipation work slowdowns, strikes, and demands for higher wages from the formerly enslaved population.

75 Catherine Hall, "What is a West Indian" in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. Bill Schwartz (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.43.

76 Carlyle, "The Nigger Question", p.30.

77 Carlyle, "The Nigger Question", p.29.

does not take an anti-imperialist stand, he defends emancipation, and the ability of the black population to be equals, noting how slavery, not nature, hindered the development of the enslaved. In response to Carlyle's contention that the West Indian colonies owed their development to the British, Mill responds,

> According to [Carlyle], the whole West Indies belong to the whites: the negroes have no claim there, to either land or food, but by their sufferance. 'It was not Black Quashee, or those he represents, that made those West India islands what they are.' [But] I submit, that those who furnished the thews and sinews really had something to do with the matter. 'Under the soil of Jamaica the bones of many thousand British men' ... How many hundred thousand African men laid their bones there, after having had their lives pressed out by slow or fierce torture. They could have better done without Colonel Fortescue, than Colonel Fortescue could have done without them.[78]

As for Carlyle's use of Haiti as a warning to the British West Indies, Mill responds, "We are told to look at Haiti: what does your contributor [Carlyle] know of Haiti ... Are we to listen to arguments grounded on hearsays like these? In what is black Haiti worse than white Mexico? If the truth were known, how much worse is it than white Spain?"[79] With such challenges, Mill eloquently dismisses many of Carlyle's blatantly racist assumptions. Nevertheless, Carlyle's assumptions of the inferiority of black peoples and the bleak future of the British West Indies remained popular within the British Empire.

Various other authors and intellectuals weighed in on the future of the British West Indies in the mid-nineteenth century.[80] The Morant Bay Rebellion and its aftermath

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78 John Stuart Mill, "The Negro Question" in August, *The Nigger Question, The Negro Question*, p.45. Colonel Fortescue was one of the commander-in-chiefs of Cromwell's army in Jamaica, and Governor of Jamaica for a short time. See August's footnote in Carlyle, "The Nigger Question", p.30.

79 Mill, "The Negro Question", p.45.

provided one of the most famous opportunities for metropolitan debate over the West Indies. In response to Governor Eyre's repressive tactics, the Crown recalled him to England in 1866. The "Jamaica Committee", which included John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, and Herbert Spencer, pushed for the prosecution of Eyre on murder charges, while the "Eyre Defence Committee", which included Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Charles Kingsley, defended Eyre "as a savior of besieged Anglo-Saxons in Jamaica."[81] The Eyre case continued until the end of 1860s, with the former Governor never prosecuted and remembered fondly by many whites.

Although the Carlyle and Mill debates and the Eyre controversy proved to be a major source of debate in the metropole, in the British West Indies themselves, James A. Froude's *The English in the West Indies: or, the Bow of Ulysses* (1888) was equally, if not more, provocative. Froude, the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford University, and a close friend and protégé of Thomas Carlyle, briefly traveled to the British Caribbean in 1887. Upon his return, he wrote this inflammatory volume. Froude claims that the West Indian colonies, once the pride of the British Empire, were slipping out of English hands and becoming a ruined society. He argues that the prospects of any country relied on the "character" of its population. In the case of the British West Indies, he insists that the vast majority of the population were of an inferior race that could not rise to the level of the white race without the guidance of white men.[82]

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80 For a discussion of such titles as Anthony Trollope's *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (1859) and Charles Kingsley's *At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies* (1872), see: Hall, "What is a West Indian", pp.44-46; Faith Smith, *Creole Recitations: John Jacob Thomas and Colonial Formation in the Late Nineteenth-Century Caribbean* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002), chapter 4.

81 Quote from Smith, *Creole Recitations*, p.70. See also, Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, pp.303-307. For a discussion of the Carlyle and Mill debates in the Eyre controversy, see Catherine Hall, *White, Male, and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), chapter 10.

Froude supported the extension of self-government in the British Empire; however, he believed this should be done cautiously. "The danger now is that it will be tried in haste in countries either as yet unripe for it or from the nature of things unfit for it."[83] Echoing the sentiments of Carlyle and others, he claimed that turning the West Indian colonies over to the black majorities would create another Haiti, which he portrayed as a barbarous land.[84] He claimed that despite the presence of British culture in the islands for many years, that the "old African superstitions lie undisturbed at the bottom of [the black populations'] souls. Give them independence, and in a few generations they will peel off such civilisation as they have learnt as easily and as willingly as their coats and trousers."[85] Therefore, Froude declared the British obligated to maintain their presence and control over the region.

Froude's volume is a prime example of the intellectual support that existed for British colonialism, and the role race played within such imperial justifications. Eric Williams, famed West Indian historian and politician, claimed, "No British writer, with the possible exception of Carlyle, has so savagely denigrated the West Indian Negro as Froude did in his analysis of Negro character."[86] However, unlike similar works, Froude's work solicited poignant replies from within the West Indies themselves.

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82 James A. Froude, *The English in the West Indies: or, the Bow of Ulysses* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), pp.278-286. In this case, Froude is obviously denying the inequality of black peoples; however, he appears to believe they can be "civilized" with proper white, in this case, British guidance. Thus, his ideas fall in line with the emerging notions of British imperialism in the late nineteenth century.

83 Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, p.4.

84 Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, p.333.

85 Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, p.287.

86 Williams, *British Historians*, p.176. In this work, first published in 1966, Williams provided a thorough critique of Froude; the work as a whole provides an insightful examination of the role of

The first such reply came in C.S. Salmon's *Caribbean Confederation* (1888).[87] In this volume, Salmon calls for the immediate introduction of local self-government in the British West Indies, with equal participation of the black citizens of the region, whom he refers to a "Black British Men". He presents the black population as one of the most loyal populations of the Empire, both capable and ready for a say in their own government. To deny this, Salmon argues, is to risk alienating the region's loyalty.[88] With this argument, Salmon directly confronts Froude's racialized call for Crown control over the region. In the words of James W. Green, Salmon "challenged what he saw as the unholy alliance of Colonial Office bureaucracy and West Indian planter-merchant interests."[89]

Salmon adroitly challenges many of Froude's major arguments against the region. Salmon notes that Froude's visit to the West Indies included stops at only four of fifteen colonies, and a few hours at two others. During that time, he primarily associated with government officials. Given such a short visit, as well as the lack of contact with the population he so thoroughly condemns, Salmon declares that Froude's assumptions of the black population and West Indian conditions are not only false, but the "result of prejudices formed in England long ago."[90] Similarly, Salmon dismisses Froude's use of

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historians in justifying and popularizing British colonial expansion – a process "profoundly tainted with racialism" (Williams, *British Historians*, p.168).

87 As noted in the beginning of this chapter, Salmon was a long-time colonial official with experience as the President of Nevis (British West Indies), Colonial Secretary and Administrator of the Gold Coast, and Chief Commissioner of the Seychelles Islands.

88 Salmon, *Caribbean Confederation*, pp.53, 134.

89 James W. Green, "Culture and Colonialism in the West Indies", *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 14, no.4 (Nov. 1972): 490.

90 Salmon, *Caribbean Confederation*, pp.5, 44.

Haiti as a "warning" to the British West Indies as more racist stereotypes.[91] Overall, he says that Froude's book was a warning of "how ready some are to re-forge [the black populations'] chains".[92]

Salmon's defense of the black majority's ability and readiness, as well as the call for an inclusive and expanded local self-government in the British West Indies, by a former colonial official no less, proved a powerful reply to Froude's portrait of the region. He was not a mere British liberal intellectual in the metropole, but a government official with "on the ground" experience in the Caribbean. While Salmon's reply is indeed noteworthy, another publication of the year proved even more significant.

In 1888, J.J. Thomas published *Froudacity: West Indian Fables Explained*, a book considered by many to be one of the earliest West Indian nationalist texts. In this work, the black Trinidadian schoolteacher (Thomas) confronts the great white Oxford professor (Froude), in a sort of "David versus Goliath" showdown.[93] Although Thomas was no British professor, he received some acclaim within the West Indies and England in the late 1860s and early 1870s for his book *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar* (1869). Nevertheless, it was his reply to Froude that sealed his fame within West Indian circles.

Thomas's book challenged both the paternalism and racialism of Froude's account. Upon receiving a copy of *The English in the West Indies* in February 1888 while on vacation in Grenada, Thomas wrote a series of articles in *The St. George's*

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91 Salmon, *Caribbean Confederation*, pp.90-91.

92 Salmon, *Caribbean Confederation*, p.54.

93 Though CLR James does not use the term "David vs. Goliath", his description of Thomas's challenge to Froude lends itself to such an allusion. See: CLR James, "The West Indian Intellectual" in Thomas, *Froudacity*, pp.26-27

Chronicle and Grenada Gazette. These articles became a draft of *Froudacity.*[94] Thomas begins his reply with a reference to Froude's book as "the dark outlines of a scheme to thwart political aspiration in the Antilles".[95] He, like Salmon, who he thanks for his reply to Froude, points out various mistakes in Froude's account, and argues that the residents of the British West Indies are capable of managing their own affairs.[96] In numerous sections, he rejects Froude's claims of black inability, as well as the idea that if all citizens were allowed to participate that this would inevitable lead to a vengeful, black rule of the region.[97] Moreover, like Salmon, he presents a transracial vision of the British West Indies. "No one can deserve to govern simply because he is white, and no one is bound to be subject because he is black."[98]

There is little doubt that one of the most significant aspects of Thomas's reply to Froude was that it came from the very population the latter criticized. Thomas was not only a defender of the region, but also of his race. However, rather than seeing these as two separate interests, it is important to note that Thomas, like many black and coloured West Indians, viewed their race and region as connected issues. As Faith Smith notes, Thomas challenged Froude's and other metropolitan assumptions by "offering the accomplishments of black people throughout the African diaspora as proof of the imagination and creativity that would rehabilitate African people, and stressing the ability

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94 Donald Wood, "Biographical Note" in Thomas, *Froudacity*, p.20.

95 Thomas, *Froudacity*, p.51.

96 Thomas, *Froudacity*, p.57.

97 Thomas, *Froudacity*, pp.52-54, 146-149. Ironically, Thomas does not give as spirited of a defense of Haiti as Salmon does, instead saying that the British West Indies should be compared to Liberia. For a discussion of this point, see: Faith Smith, "A Man Who Knows His Roots: J.J. Thomas and Current Discourses of Black Nationalism", *Small Axe* 5 (March 1999): 4.

98 Thomas, *Froudacity*, p.154.

of British Caribbean residents generally to chart their own destinies."[99] In such a perspective, the West Indies, and West Indians, were not simply a region of the British Empire, but a part of the broader black diaspora as well. While his claim to be a British citizen of the West Indies and his views of the abilities of the West Indian majorities were in-step with Salmon's conceptualizations of the British Caribbean, Thomas's "race work" added an additional, racialized dimension to his political actions (in this case, his reply to Froude) which would become a familiar characteristic of many West Indian nationalists in the twentieth century.

Faye Smith argues that to "know" Thomas, one must consider the multiple contexts in which he lived: "black nationalist, Caribbean resident, defender of francophone Creole traditions in a British-ruled territory, British subject proud of his mastery of British canonical texts, middle-class elite with working-class roots".[100] Likewise, it is just as important to note the multiple reasons Thomas took the stand he did. Because of his joint regional and pan-African interests and activities, his defense of the British West Indies was not solely a stand for democracy and equality within the British Empire, but also connected to a broader notion of racial self-determination and racial uplift. Thomas's West Indian nationalism and British cultural attributes coexisted (and included) a prominent racial consciousness. As such, he, like many West Indian and

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99 Smith, "A Man Who Knows His Roots", p.2. For further discussion of J.J. Thomas as a Pan-African figure, see: Smith, "A Man Who Knows His Roots"; Smith, *Creole Recitations*, especially chapter 2; Rupert Lewis, "J.J. Thomas and Political Thought in the Caribbean", *Caribbean Quarterly* 36, no.1-2 (June 1990): 46-58.

100 Smith, "A Man Who Knows His Roots", p.6.

black diaspora intellectuals after him, "challenged some of the racial and cultural assumptions...even as he shared some of these assumptions."[101]

These nineteenth century ideological debates offer a sampling of the major questions and conceptualizations of the British Caribbean in this era. Was the region a ruined, lost land? Was it simply in decline, or doomed? Did it require white guidance? Could it be developed as a site of transracial unity within the bounds of the British Empire? Could it become an example of the power and abilities of people of African descent? What role did the broader black diaspora play in the British West Indies, and the British West Indies in the black diaspora? These were some of the major questions for the region heading into the twentieth century. As in the previous century, of course, the perspectives on this question would be diverse and hotly debated in the coming years. They would, however, continue to revolve around inextricably linked questions of race and region. It was in this context that the idea of "Federation" would take on varied new and potent political meanings in the twentieth century.

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101 Smith, "A Man Who Knows His Roots", p.6. A similar case can be found within the work of the "Jubilee Five" in Jamaica. In 1888, this group of black (not coloured) men published *Jamaica's Jubilee; or, What We Are and What We Hope to Be.* This text was designed to show how far the formerly enslaved populations had progressed since final emancipation. In arguing their case, the group presents themselves as loyal to both their island of Jamaica and the larger British Empire, as well as a crucial racial consciousness and diasporic interests. See: Deborah Thomas, "Modern Blackness: 'What We Are and What We Hope to Be'", *Small Axe* 12 (September 2002): 25-48; Deborah Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), chapter 1.

Chapter 2

The Colonial Power Brokers and a 'United West Indies' (Late 19th, Early 20th Century)

> When one contemplates the wide circle of British possessions around the Caribbean Sea... one is left with the impression that here is to be found a waste of effort, an untidiness that calls for rearrangement, diffusion and variety where concentration and symmetry should prevail. In other parts of the British Commonwealth the tendency has been for distinct units which are geographically related gradually to coalesce for some or for all political purposes. Why should the West Indies remain almost as scattered and distinct politically as they were a hundred years ago?[1]

At the dawn of the twentieth century, much of the British West Indies had become a "synonym of ruin".[2] In the words of Joseph Chamberlain, the area was the "Empire's darkest slum".[3] Economically, many of the colonies remained mired in depression, several because of the continuous "boom and bust" cycle of the still-dominant sugar industry. Politically, the installation of the Crown Colony system in almost all of the colonies, a move that was supposed to bring good government, social order, and prosperity, more often only added another layer of bureaucracy and economic inefficiency. Socially, the region remained deeply divided along racial and class lines, with the bulk of the population suffering at the bottom of the economic ladder with little say in the functioning of the colonial governments.

Within the "official" circles of power in and over the West Indies – the Colonial Office, the various local colonial governments, the planter-merchant oligarchies and their

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[1] Wrong, *Government of the West Indies*, p.162.

[2] H.G. de Lisser, "The Negro as a Factor in the Future of the West Indies," *The New Century Review* 37 (January 1900): 1.

[3] S.R. Ashton and David Killingray, eds., *The West Indies* (London: The Stationery Office, 1999), p.xl.

representatives in the metropole colonial and imperial governments – one of the primary reasons given for the "problems" of the region was governmental and economic inefficiency. Metropolitan and colonial government officials worried about the cost and administrative efficiency of the multiple colonial governments of the British West Indies, while planters, merchants, and other commercially-minded groups appeared most troubled by the economic state of the region. One of the most common solutions to such problems was the amalgamation of some, or all, of the British West Indian colonies into a closer union, confederation, or federation.[4] The idea of federation was certainly not new. Throughout much of the pre-twentieth century history of British colonialism in the Caribbean, various groups had proposed schemes for Federation, often generating a great deal of controversy and contestation in response. Despite the divisive nature of these debates, ideas for varying degrees of federation remained a popular "solution" throughout much of the early twentieth century.

This chapter investigates the diverse projects put forth by the colonial power brokers to create a "united West Indies" in the early twentieth century. To better situate these projects, the chapter begins with an overview of some of the major pre-twentieth century plans that sought to unite the various British Caribbean colonies. It then discusses the resurrection of such ideas within the dominant political and business circles of the Colonial Office and British West Indies in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Taken as a whole, these debates and proposals for federation represent an array of ideas designed to maximize the government efficiency and economic prowess of the

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[4] As noted in the Introduction, this study uses many of these terms interchangeably, most often employing the terminology used within the specific proposals. In most cases, I consider all of these terms reflections of broader efforts to create some form of a "United West Indies".

West Indies as a means to support and bolster the status quo of the colonial regimes in the British Caribbean.

Federation in the Pre-Twentieth Century British Caribbean

Twentieth century visions of a united British Caribbean were rooted in a long series of proposals, investigations, and experiments for regional cooperation that had circulated between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. These efforts most often emanated from the metropole and represented imperial designs to institute more "efficient" government via the streamlining of colonial administration in the region. Such proposals often irritated the local planter-merchant oligarchies, who wished to maintain control of their respective colonies and economic interests through their powerful representative assemblies, which were colony-specific.[5] Many of the West Indian colonies competed against each other economically, which created island-based rivalries that tended to undermine reform projects that claimed they would lead to the greater good of region as a whole. For many whites in more prosperous colonies, the prospect of being tied economically to poorer colonies was unappealing. Nevertheless, in rare cases, the local oligarchies did accept projects for regional cooperation that they deemed it to be in their best interest.

Projects for Federation represented a kind of a return to the mechanisms of governance that previously prevailed in the region. The original "Caribbee" colonies were governed together under a proprietorship granted to the Earl of Carlisle between the

[5] As previously described in Chapter 1, there was often a contentious relationship between the local oligarchies and colonial officials representing the Crown – particularly if the former believed their powerful positions threatened.

1620s and 1670s.[6] In the following decades, however, governance was repeatedly disaggregated and re-aggregated as the colonies became more prosperous and demanded more control over their own affairs. Perhaps the earliest attempt at uniting disparate colonies took place in the late seventeenth century, when the Leeward Island Association, which included a common legislature and single governor for Antigua, Montserrat, St. Kitts, and Nevis, was created. Although this Association was never officially dissolved, it "simply ceased to function" as insular interests developed between the islands.[7] Various other Leeward and Windward Island groupings were attempted on and off in the eighteenth century; however, rivalries between the colonies and the desire for local representation within the Old Representative Systems generally limited or prevented the successful establishment of long-term and stable inter-colonial associations.[8]

There were, however, new attempts to unite the British Caribbean colonies in the nineteenth century. West Indian planters did often think of themselves as sharing a common identity and interests, especially as associations designed to protect and promote West Indian interests in the metropole multiplied during the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, this tendency did not make them more welcoming to ideas of regional unity in the Caribbean itself.[9] Other than the reorganization of Berbice, Demerara, and

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[6] Algernon E. Aspinall, "West Indian Federation: Its Historical Aspect," *United Empire* 10, no.2 (February 1919): 58-59; Jesse H. Proctor, Jr., "The Development of the Idea of Federation of the British Caribbean Territories," *Caribbean Quarterly* 5, no.1 (1957): 6.

[7] F.R. Augier, "Federations: Then and Now," *Caribbean Quarterly* 35, no.3 (1989): 18-19.

[8] The best overviews of these events are S.S. Ramphal, "Federalism in the West Indies," *Caribbean Quarterly* 6, nos. 2-3 (May 1960): 210-229; Aspinall, "West Indian Federation"; Proctor, "Development of the Idea"; Augier, "Federations".

[9] Prior to the twentieth century, visions of "West Indian" identity were primarily focused on a "white" identity, composed of planters and merchants within the Caribbean and the metropole. See Hall, "What is a West Indian", pp.31-50. Associations representing such West Indian interest included the Society of West

Essequibo into the single colony of British Guiana in 1831, and the so-called Colonial Congress of 1831, a short-lived organization of planters and merchants within the islands incorporated to protest tariffs, free trade, and most importantly, the abolition of slavery, the local oligarchy generally remained opposed to political unions of the West Indian colonies.[10]

During the reorganization of colonial rule in the post-emancipation era British Caribbean, however, various new colonial unions were proposed and instituted by the Colonial Office. The success of the Canadian confederation of 1867, according to one scholar, rejuvenated the Colonial Office's hopes of successful amalgamations in the West Indies, which they increasingly proposed in the 1870s and beyond.[11] In addition, there was some debate during this era about whether there should be a much broader, imperial federation of the British Empire.[12] With such ideas gaining popularity in circles of colonial governance, an 1871 parliamentary act created the Leeward Islands Colony. This federation brought together the individual presidencies of Antigua, Montserrat, the Virgin Islands, and Dominica, with an additional presidency over St. Kitts and Nevis. There was a single governor for the federal colony and a general legislative council

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India Planters and Merchants, and the West India Committee, both founded in the eighteenth century. The West India Committee remained an important group well into the twentieth century. For a history of the West India Committee, see Douglas Hall, *A Brief History of the West India Committee* (Barbados: Caribbean University Press, 1971).

[10] For further information on the creation of British Guiana, see F.R. Augier and Shirley C. Gordon, eds., *Sources of West Indian History* (London: Longmans, 1962), pp.269-270. For a brief history of the Colonial Congress of 1831, see B.W. Higman, "The Colonial Congress of 1831," in *Before and After 1865: Education, Politics and Regionalism in the Caribbean*, eds. Brian L. Moore and Swithin R. Wilmot (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998), pp.239-248.

[11] Ramphal, "Federalism in the West Indies", pp.212 & 216.

[12] H. Mortimer-Franklin, *The Unit of Imperial Federation: a Solution of the Problem* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey, & Co., 1887). The title reflects a broader idea that Federation could be the "solution" to local problems.

composed of members from the island legislatures. This federation, however, remained rather weak with most legislative and financial power reserved for the individual island legislatures.[13]

In the mid-1870s, the Colonial Office proposed a merger between Barbados and the Windward Islands of Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and Tobago. Though there was some support among the working classes of these colonies for such a grouping, the middle and upper classes of Barbados strongly resisted the suggestion, which they saw as a threat to their economic well-being and a potential hindrance to the continued development of the colony. An island-wide riot occurred in 1876, driven in part by resistance to the planned merger. The reigning governor of Barbados was transferred to Hong Kong and the federal initiative dropped.[14]

Despite these events, Barbados and the respective Windward Islands retained a joint-governorship until 1885, when Barbados was disassociated completely with all other colonies. As a result, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Tobago were grouped into a Windward Island association in 1885 with a common governor, though they maintained their individual legislatures. Tobago was removed from this association in 1889 and joined with Trinidad to form a single colony.[15]

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[13] Proctor, "Development of the Idea", p.7.

[14] Proctor, "Development of the Idea", p.8. For further discussion of this failed proposal, as well as the vehement reactions of some in Barbados, see Augier and Gordon, *Sources of West Indian History*, pp.273-278; Claude Levy, *Emancipation, Sugar, and Federalism: Barbados and the West Indies* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1980), chapters 6-7; Eric Williams, "The Historical Background of British West Indian Federation: Select Documents," *Caribbean Historical Review* nos. III-IV (December 1954): 21-32. Eric Williams' article is an especially useful primary source collection of excerpts from numerous official Colonial Office and West Indian colonial government reports.

[15] Proctor, "Development of the Idea", pp.8-9.

In 1893-1894, the Royal Commission, organized to investigate conditions in Dominica, issued a report that argued that there would be important benefits gained from a Federation of the entire British West Indies under the administration of one Governor-General; however, the report also noted that the time for such a move was not yet ripe. As a result, no formal plans were initiated.[16] A few years later, an 1897 Royal Commission rejected suggestions for a Federation under a single Governor-General and a combined West Indies Civil Service.[17] Another call for a "single government for all the islands" was issued in the British House of Commons in 1898, but that too proved unsuccessful.[18] And so, as the century closed, what remained of projects for Federation was only a series of loose associations between some, but not all, of the British Caribbean colonies.

The overwhelming majority of such proposals for varying levels of cooperation and association between the colonies were presented as attempts to resolve administrative and economic problems. They primarily originated in the metropole, which sought, generally unsuccessfully, to impose them on the colonies. Some within the planter-merchant oligarchies had, at times, relaxed their opposition to such schemes when they believed regional cooperation, in one form or another, could aid them financially during times of economic depression. Generally, then, debates about closer union, confederation, or federation were almost exclusively about how these plans would affect the colonial administration or the local planter elites. They were rarely conceived as a

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[16] Williams, "British West Indian Federation Documents," pp.38-39; Proctor, "Development of the Idea", p.9.

[17] Williams, "British West Indian Federation Documents", pp.39-41; Proctor, "Development of the Idea," pp.9-10.

[18] Proctor, "Development of the Idea", p.10.

way of bringing expanded political opportunities to the black and coloured majorities in the colonies, who largely remained largely subjects, rather than citizens, and had little ability to impact the form of colonial administration.

One of the only exceptions to this was a confederation plan put forth by C.S. Salmon's, one of the few colonial officials calling for full and equal integration of the black and coloured populations in the West Indies. In a detailed plan presented in 1888, Salmon called for a federation of *all* British West Indian colonies.[19] He ridiculed the superfluous and inefficient nature of the current individual colonial governments:

> For the fifteen colonies there are now eight governors, all receiving their orders from Downing Street direct, each with his staff, and nine lieutenant-governors, administrators, or presidents, four of whom receive orders from the Governor of the Windward Islands, and five from the Governor of the Leeward Islands. This makes seventeen governors and administrators for the fifteen colonies, because the Windward and Leeward Islands have every one not only their separate administrators, but a governor for each of the two groups.[20]

Salmon lambasted such colonial bureaucracy for needlessly wasting resources, "as if each of these colonies were large, distant, rich, and powerful communities, that had nothing in common, and that could never be amalgamated."[21] Such complaints were common in plans for confederation. However, since Salmon also demanded racial equality within the British Caribbean during the same period, as discussed in the previous chapter, the

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[19] Salmon's plan was to include: Antigua (with Barbuda), the Bahamas, Barbados Dominica, Grenada (with part of the Grenadines), Jamaica (with the Turks & Caicos Islands), St. Kitts & Nevis (with Anguilla), St. Lucia, Montserrat, Tobago, Trinidad, St. Vincent (with the remainder of the Grenadines), the Virgin Islands, British Guiana, and British Honduras. Salmon offers one of the most useful summaries of these colonies' various governments and economy as they stood at the time of his proposal. See Salmon, *Caribbean Confederation*, pp.131-132, 146-175.

[20] Salmon, *Caribbean Confederation*, pp.137-138.

[21] Salmon, *Caribbean Confederation*, p.138.

implications of his plan for a broader social and political transformation of the West Indies were quite different from other plans by colonial officials and the planter-merchant oligarchies.[22]

Although nothing came of Salmon's ideas for confederation, it was important as a precursor to the alternative visions of a united West Indies that would gain importance in the twentieth century. It also shows that while many ideas for regional unity appeared similar on the surface, the content and possible implications of these proposals could differ significantly in terms of what they sought to achieve, and more importantly who they hoped to aid. This became increasingly evident in the twentieth century when new bases of support co-opted and transformed the idea of West Indian unifications alongside familiar goals of federation.

Regional Unity & the Colonial Power Brokers (Early 20th Century)

The repeated failures of plans for federation in the late nineteenth century did not stop the continuing circulation of similar plans in the early twentieth century. Indeed, proposals for uniting the West Indies emanated from *both* the metropole and the colonies during this period. Within the realm of the colonial power brokers, support for and justification of federation remained tied to ideas of administrative efficiency and economic opportunity. The idea of federation, however, became increasingly connected with notions of progress, order, and modernity that came to dominate much of the

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[22] Interestingly, James Froude who bemoaned any notion of black equality within the West Indies, believed that the creation of a federation of the West Indies would require the inclusion of the black population as full participating citizens. Because of this, he noted that a federation would become a black-dominated venture. Moreover, if this occurred, he thought the inhabitants of white colonies like New Zealand and Australia would pan the loss of the region for their white brothers. See Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, pp.7-8; Salmon, *Caribbean Confederation*, pp.127-128.

discourse of colonial administration. During this period, some calls for federation included visions of a future marked by the widespread return of representative government, and eventually, responsible, self-government, possibly with dominion status in the British Empire. Like the nineteenth-century proposals, however, few (if any) plans emanating from the colonial power brokers of the region directly sought to increase the political participation or the economic status of the region's black and coloured majority.

Interest in regional cooperation reappeared early in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1902, Norman Lamont, a Member of Parliament (MP) who also owned a large estate in Trinidad, issued a call for the British West Indies to "be united into one great Colony with a Cromer or a Curzon at the head of it, advised by a council of the best men we can send out." Such a measure, he believed, would allow for greater trade through reciprocity treaties with Canada or the United States.[23] In a 1905 House of Commons debate, Lamont again called for steps to be taken towards federation in the West Indies, emphasizing particularly the need for a "strong central administration, under a benevolent despot".[24] He elaborated on this idea in a November 1907 article in the *Contemporary Review*. Dismissing a suggestion that the Empire should trade the West Indies to the United States for the Philippines, a move he assumed neither the United Kingdom nor the United States would welcome, Lamont called for colonial unity in the

[23] Norman Lamont, *Problems of the Antilles: a Collection of Speeches and Writings on West Indian Questions* (Glasgow: John Smith & Son, Ltd., 1912), pp.42-43. The "Cromer" he refers to is likely the colonial official Lord Cromer who held posts in Malta, India, and most famously as Consul-General of Egypt at this time. "Curzon" is likely Lord Curzon, another famous colonial official who was Viceroy of India at this time. Lamont also called for "the best men we can send out". In doing so, he obviously was asserting the need for a continuing presence of colonial officials from outside the West Indies, rather than drawing them from the local West Indian populations.

[24] Lamont, *Problems of the Antilles*, p.104.

West Indies.[25] Lamont suggested the installation of "a governor-general and federal executive officers [to] be appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and [a] central legislative council...composed of nominated members representing the various colonies."[26] Such proposals recommended a strong federal center, with little concern on the effect this would have on the jealously guarded local institutions and interests. However, by 1912, his idea for federation – probably influenced by other proposals from the period, which asserted the need for more local autonomy – included safeguards for local institutions and "the greatest possible autonomy retained by the constituent units."[27]

G.B. Mason, a founding member of the West Indian Club, a social organization connected with the West India Committee, also supported some form of regional cooperation in the British Caribbean. In a July 1903 article in the *Empire Review*, Mason proposed a "common West Indian legal, medical, and civil service". In another article in the April 1908 edition of the *Colonial Office Journal*, he expanded on his proposal for regional cooperation. Mason called for the Windward Islands, Leeward Islands, and Barbados to be placed under a single governor (in a region that would be referred to as the "Antilles"), above which would be a Confederate Council consisting of four governors from the Antilles, Trinidad, British Guiana, and Jamaica.[28]

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[25] Lamont, *Problems of the Antilles*, pp.127-131. Lamont notes that one of the main reasons the US would not welcome this proposal is because the islands, which he assumes would become states at some point, had such a large and unwelcome black population.

[26] Proctor, "Development of the Idea," p.11.

[27] Proctor, "Development of the Idea," p.11.

[28] Dr. G. B. Mason, "The Future of the West Indies", *Colonial Office Journal*, April 1908, quoted in Joseph Rippon, *Unification: United West Indies* (London: Waterlow & Sons Limited, 1912), pp.21-25.

Another proposal for colonial consolidation came from Joseph Rippon of the Direct West India Cable Company, a man noted by one of his contemporaries as "a gentlemen most zealous in the cause of West Indian federation and of the advancement of the West Indies."[29] In 1907, Rippon appealed for the inclusion of regional representation for the West Indian colonies at colonial conferences like one that had been recently held in London. He felt that the area, population, trade value, and strategic position of the region dictated their inclusion at such conferences. The presence of the West Indies, he no doubt assumed, would provide the colonies with a stronger voice in the wider Empire.[30] A year later, Rippon proclaimed his "sincere desire to make those valuable [West Indian] Colonies more effective to their common good in the great world-wide competition now in progress" through some sort of "effective union" which would "give greater effect to representations coming from the West Indies." He believed that the "value of the [West Indies] united trade...would command permanent attention from other parts of the Empire, like Canada, as well as from foreign countries."[31] In conjunction with such ideas, Rippon devised a draft "United West Indies Consolidation Act" in which he suggested the formation of a general council composed of representatives of the various executive and legislative bodies of the British West Indies. Such a body was to deal primarily with issues of common interest in the colonies,

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[29] C. Gideon Murray, *A Scheme for the Federation of Certain of the West Indian Colonies* (London: West India Committee, 1911), p.30. Despite Murray's description of Rippon, the latter generally avoided the terms "confederation" and "federation" because he, like many others in the era, believed that such terms were reserved for a union of sovereign states, which the West Indian colonies were not. He preferred "unification" or "consolidation". For Rippon's discussion of his terminology, see, *Unification*, p.8.

[30] Despite the lagging economy of the West Indies in the early twentieth century, Rippon argued that the West Indian colonies still held significant value for the Empire. Rippon, *Unification*, pp.8-13.

[31] Rippon, *Unification*, p.13.

including trade, commerce, and communication matters amongst themselves and other countries.[32]

Another proponent of such plans, R.H. McCarthy presented his project for a regional confederation of Barbados, the Windward, and Leeward Islands in a July 1908 article in the *Colonial Office Journal*.[33] In his proposal, he made a point-by-point dismissal of the common objections to such a regional body in the British West Indies. Many critics of projects of federation cited the remoteness of the islands and their lack of communication, as a major obstacle. McCarthy noted, however, that both Australia and Canada, two existing federation models within the Empire, were extremely large landmasses with numerous remote areas; nonetheless, they were able to unite successfully. In fact, McCarthy argued, the Caribbean Sea was in some ways easier to cross than extensive, unsettled lands. "Were the Atlantic land instead of water," he wrote, "probably the West Indies would still await their discoverer."[34] To claims that there was little advantage in confederation, McCarthy responded that there was power in numbers, and that strength through unity had helped push the success of confederation in Canada and Australia, and would lead to the success of such projects in South Africa, which had not consolidated at the time of McCarthy's proposal. McCarthy believed that the power of a United West Indies would raise the international status of the region.

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[32] Rippon included all of the British West Indian Islands, and Bahamas, British Honduras, and British Guiana. For a more detailed listing of the "common interest" which Rippon believed the general council should oversee, see Rippon, *Unification*, pp.13-14.

[33] Unlike Rippon, McCarthy did not include Trinidad & Tobago, British Guiana, Jamaica, or British Honduras. R.H. McCarthy, "Notes on West Indian Federation", *Colonial Office Journal*, July 1908, quoted in Rippon, *Unification*, pp.26-33.

[34] Rippon, *Unification*, p.27.

In a series of articles published between 1908 and 1911, the West India Committee responded to these and similar calls for unity within the British West Indies.[35] The Committee generally supported Mason's idea of uniting the medical, postal, and civil services of the West Indies. McCarthy's broader proposals, however, were dismissed because the Committee believed that it would be too difficult to merge the colonies that he suggested, since they did not all share the same constitutional structure.[36] Rippon's plan proved more favorable to the West India Committee because it coincided with their desire for a "federated commercial and industrial West Indian Parliament" which would look after the economic interest of the region. Though the Committee rejected the idea of political federation at this time, they did see the creation of a commercial federation would be a positive first step towards a political federation of the West Indies.[37]

In 1910, D.S. DeFreitas, a representative of the Agricultural and Commercial Society of Grenada, presented his ideas for regional unity to the Royal Commission on Trade Relations between Canada and the West Indies. DeFreitas proposed the creation of a "central authority", with representatives from the British West Indian islands and British Guiana, which would deal with a series of "common subjects and questions". Like many other proposals of this era, his idea of what constituted "common interests" were largely economic: commerce, trade, and communications. He also echoed others

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[35] These articles, originally published in the *West India Committee Circular*, are found in Rippon, *Unification*, pp.33-42.

[36] One of the major differences in the colonial constitutions of the West Indian colonies dated back to the 19th century, when several colonies, including Jamaica, were made Crown Colonies, while Barbados maintained its locally elected assembly. In the case of a federation, therefore, either Barbados would have to surrender its assembly, or the others would have to be given local representation, neither of which was an appealing option for the Committee.

[37] Rippon, *Unification*, p.34-36.

who argued that such an institution would increase the region's power to influence imperial polices, claiming that "any policy or decision stamped with the concurrence of Demerara and of the British West Indies will carry weight and call for clear recognition."[38] The initial step he proposed would, he hoped, in time lead to the "formation of a real union".[39]

The most significant proposal for federation in the pre-war era, however, came from C. Gideon Murray, the Administrator of St. Vincent (and later of St. Lucia). In 1911 and 1912, Murray designed two of the most detailed schemes for closer association between the West Indies colonies. Murray presented his *Scheme for the Federation of Certain of the West Indian Colonies* to the West India Committee in London on 22 November 1911. Sir Owen Philipps, the presiding chair of the meeting, attempted to set a positive tone for Murray's discussion of the controversial topic by noting: "These are days of great federations, not only of labour and capital, but also of states." In response to those who opposed federations of labour and capital because of possible abuses, Philipps declared his support for such endeavors, and declared that he saw "the federation of small states into dominions, [as] perfectly natural development[s] in the progress of the nation, where it is practicable. It is, in my opinion, perfectly futile and worse than useless to fight against what is one of the laws of the development of our civilisation."[40] Noting the success of the United States (1776), Canada (1867), Australia (1901), and the Union

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[38] Rippon, *Unification*, pp.43-45.

[39] Williams, "British West Indian Federation Documents", p.44. In the late 1910s, DeFreitas would become a proponent of very limited constitutional reform through his work in the Representative Government Association in Grenada. However, at this point such ideas are not obvious. See, Patrick Emmanuel, *Crown Colony Politics in Grenada, 1917-1951* (Barbados: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1978), pp.48-54.

[40] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, pp.4-5.

of South Africa (1909), Philipps said that the West Indies must now decide if they would "sink local differences and combine together to form a West Indian Dominion, and thus fall into line with the other British Dominions beyond the seas." To do so would allow them to take their proper place within the Empire.[41] This introduction mirrored some recent calls for some form of regional unity, but also more explicitly connected federation with ideas of national progress and modernity, presaging the future development of proposals for federation.

Murray noted at the beginning of his talk that he understood discussions of federation "tread upon very delicate and debatable ground"; nevertheless, he declared the issue to be of "vital importance".[42] Despite the vast seascape of the West Indies, which separated some colonies of the British West Indian colonies by approximately one thousand miles of ocean, and the distinctive, local histories of many islands, which included guarded local interests and different levels of development, Murray believed that federation was both workable and needed because "the various colonies [were] waking up to the fact that unity means strength, progress and prosperity, while disunion spell[ed] weakness and even poverty."[43] Thus, Murray believed the time was right for a conference to discuss the feasibility of federation as a way of ushering in progress and modernity.

Dismissing the idea of immediately uniting all the colonies into a single federation as impractical, Murray suggested a federation of the southeastern portion of

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[41] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, p.5.

[42] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, p.7.

[43] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, p.42.

the West Indian colonies.[44] He claimed, however, that the door should be left open for the other colonies to join at a later date if such a desire arose.[45] Murray justified the need for a federation of the southeastern West Indies by arguing that there were "weighty subjects of common interest calling for solution".[46] These common subjects were largely the same as those emphasized by Rippon and DeFreitas, with a few other additions. Overall, issues of commerce, trade, and communication remained the most prominent concerns.[47] Murray's "Federated Colonies" were to include a Federal Council primarily elected by and from the members of the various colonial legislatures under a High Commissioner for the West Indies. The Council would have legislative powers over agreed upon "common interests."[48] While the proposal called for some rearranging of governorships and political associations between the islands, particularly within the Windward and Leeward Islands, Murray did not wish to significantly alter the local constitutions and colonial governments of the individual colonies, believing that "purely local affairs and taxation" remain controlled by local governments, with "the delegation to a central body [his Federal Council] of all affairs of common interest." Likewise, the

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[44] Murray divided the region into 2 zones: North-Western West Indies (Jamaica, Bahamas, Turks & Caicos) and South-Eastern West Indies (Windwards, Leewards, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, and British Guiana). He left out British Honduras on the Central American coast. Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, pp.8-23.

[45] Murray compared Jamaica to New Zealand, which chose not to join the Australian federation of the early twentieth century. He believed it was best to move on with a more "practical" federation than to wait for all colonies to want to join, much like Australia had done despite New Zealand's refusal. Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, pp.24-25.

[46] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, p.28.

[47] A full list of Murray's "common interests" is found in Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, p.31.

[48] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, pp.32-38. Rippon actually provides a useful summary of Murray's scheme in his own collection of the various plans for federation in the pre-war era. See Rippon, *Unification*, pp.49-50.

High Commissioner, like the Federal Council, would not have a say in local affairs or taxation.[49]

Murray likely emphasized the limited power of the federal council in order to reassure the powerful interests of the West Indies that he did not wish to threaten their economic dominance of the region. He did risk, however, some immediate opposition by noting that, unlike some previous schemes that claimed there would be savings in the cost of administration, he did not think federation would necessarily lessen administrative costs. "The benefits gained by confederation should," he nevertheless argued, "as history teaches, out-balance any extra expenditure that may be incurred."[50]

At the conclusion of Murray's talk, he took questions and comments from the audience. Joseph Rippon welcomed the lengthy discussion on the subject, though he had minor qualms with Murray's terminology, and made sure to reiterate his own contributions on the subject.[51] Some significant opposition, however, came from a "Mr. Rutherford". Rutherford said he was glad to hear that Murray's plan included no call for constitutional alterations. He questioned, however, the advantage of a High Commissioner, and wondered if there was a large enough leisure class to fill the positions on a Federal Council. Moreover, in regard to the broader idea of federation in general, he said, "When things are well, leave well alone."[52] In response, Murray responded that

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[49] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, p.30 & 37. For a specific discussion of the necessary rearrangements of the Windwards and Leewards, see pp.35-38.

[50] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, pp.38-39.

[51] As previously noted, Rippon considered proper terminology a major issue, preferring "unification" over "federation". Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, pp.47-49.

[52] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, pp.45-47. Rutherford's comment on the need for a "large enough leisure class" was also loaded with notions of race and class.

there was actually some debate on whether things were "well" in the West Indies. As for the issue of the leisure class, he claimed that the "planters and others" had the time to participate in a Federal Council. In doing so, Murray clarified that he was not calling for wider political participation in the government.[53]

Murray's detailed presentation helped stimulate further discussion on the topic of West Indian unity. C. Sandbach Parker, for instance, wrote a letter to the West India Committee shortly after Murray's presentation supporting the idea of closer unity between the colonies. He noted, however, that he believed all of the West Indian colonies, including Jamaica and British Honduras, should be included.[54] Murray himself did much to keep the discussion alive. In 1912, Murray republished his ideas in a new book, *A United West Indies*. This text showed few significant changes to Murray's proposal, though he added additional information to bolster his plans along with a draft constitution for a "United West Indies".[55] Murray reaffirmed his idea that the future of the West Indies rested upon the decision to create some form of regional unity in the region, an idea he once again clearly connected to notions of progress and modernity:

> For what is to be the destiny of our British West Indian Colonies? Are they to remain single, isolated, disintegrated units, each striving to work out its own salvation in the haphazard way that has hitherto been the case; coming together through delegates when some cause demands concerted action and then only at the last moment and in a spirit of reluctance and hesitation, like so many strangers entering into negotiations, suspicious of each other's business intention and motives? Or are they to face modern conditions in a modern way and to form such a combination amongst themselves for political and

[53] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, pp.53-54.

[54] Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, pp.54-55.

[55] C. Gideon Murray, *A United West Indies* (London: West Strand Publishing Co., Ltd., 1912).

> commercial purposes as will give them that status in the Empire and the world that their growing importance warrants.[56]

The following year, a lengthy article in the *Times* expressed mixed feelings on federation. It said that a union of only a portion of the colonies would make matters even worse for those who were left out because they would face an additional powerful competitor, one from within the same Empire. The anonymous author dismissed any sort of federation that would require a joint assembly with powers to make joint laws or control the finances of all members, but did support some level of cooperation in such matters as agriculture, education, and the civil service, as well as some sort of arrangement which would allow the West Indian colonies to speak with a single voice in the international arena.[57] This plan was consistent with many of the previous federation proposals that spoke in terms of regional "common interests" but demanded "local autonomy". Significantly, the author also included a direct comment on the need to avoid alteration of the constitutional structures of the islands, less the region become dominated by the black majority.

> Few persons acquainted with the West Indies would contemplate with equanimity any concession which would have the effect of giving to the coloured voter, who would, unless the franchise were very strictly limited, be in an enormous majority, a position of predominance. It is unnecessary to enlarge on this aspect of the case for federation. The experience of Haiti and San Domingo is too recent and too adjacent to escape attention.[58]

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[56] Murray, *United West Indies*, p.8

[57] "The West Indies and Federation: Obstacles to Union," *The Times*, 8 October 1913, p.5. In this portion of the article, the author refers to the recent troubled negotiations between Canada and the West Indies. Murray also cites this example, in which Canada refused to negotiate trade relations with individual colonies and expressed the need to be able to deal with the West Indian colonies as a whole. See Murray, *Scheme for Federation*, p.26.

Although they had rarely articulated such concerns so openly, previous proposals had also avoided calling for greater participation, arguing that any new organizations or government bodies would draw from the current legislative councils that were overwhelmingly white.

Discussions of federation subsided temporarily during World War One. There were, obviously, more pressing concerns in London and the West Indies during these years. However, the idea reappeared rather quickly in the postwar era with renewed proposals from the local oligarchies and West Indian interests, as well as some official investigation of the subject from the Colonial Office.

In the postwar years, some of the most prominent support for regional cooperation came from the Associated Chambers of Commerce in the West Indies, an inter-regional group established in 1917. Edward R. Davson, the President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, actually began to organize this association before the war, with support from the West India Committee and all of the West Indian colonies, except Jamaica.[59] The Associated Chambers of Commerce proposed periodic meetings where "the commercial men of the different Colonies will take counsel together over such questions as tariffs, customs, trade statistics, and the many other subjects which chambers of commerce discuss." It also hoped to represent the region as a whole at the triennial

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[58] "The West Indies and Federation: Obstacles to Union," *The Times*, 8 October 1913, p.5. In this case, the author's use of coloured obviously was not confined to the mixed population of the region, but included all peoples of African-descent (black and coloured). His use of Haiti as a warning against black majority rule speaks to the continued stereotypical image of that black republic in the early twentieth century.

[59] Davson was English, and "the son of a businessman with interests in British Guiana". Lloyd Braithwaite, "'Federal' Associations and Institutions in the West Indies," in *Federation of the West Indies*, ed. Huggins, p.286.

Congress of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire.[60] In the early 1920s, Davson and the Associated Chambers of Commerce formally approached the Colonial Office with projects to create a more permanent conference system under a joint central committee or council that would meet periodically to address issues of common interests, but little came of their proposals in these years.[61]

Until this period, the vast majority of such early twentieth century proposals for some form of regional unity emanated from individuals or commercial organizations, rather than government agencies. Though several of the individuals proposing regional cooperation actually held government positions, their proposals were not "official" inquires or proposals from the Colonial Office, but rather their own presentations on the subject. However, in the early 1920s, the Colonial Office formally reexamined the issue of federation and other constitutional matters of the West Indies. At the behest of MPs Gideon Murray and Samuel Hoare, and with the approval of Winston Churchill, then serving as the Secretary of State for the Colonies, a formal visit to the British West Indies was organized.[62]

In December 1921, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies E.F.L. Wood began a three-month tour of the British West Indies.[63] In each colony visited, Wood, along with

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[60] Edward R. Davson, "The West Indies and Federation," *The Times*, 16 December 1913, p.7.

[61] Edward Davson, "The West Indies: Scheme of Modified Federation – Gradual Development," *The Times*, 31 January 1921, p.6. Such inter-colonial conferences were held sporadically in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on such matters as quarantine, customs, communications, education, agriculture, and medicine. See Wood, *Government of the West Indies*, pp.167-169.

[62] Proctor, "Development of the Idea," pp.13-14.

[63] Wood's contingent visited Jamaica, St, Kitts, Nevis, Antigua, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Barbados, Grenada, Trinidad, and British Guiana. The planned visit to British Honduras was cancelled due to a yellow fever scare, while trips to the Bahamas, Montserrat, Tobago, and the Virgin Islands could not be arranged in the limited time. Colonial Office, *West Indies Report by the Honourable E.F.L. Wood on*

W. Ormsby-Gore (MP) and R.A. Wiseman (of the Colonial Office), investigated a range of constitutional questions, as well as economic, health, and medical issues. In conjunction with his report of the committee's finding, Wood offered his opinion on the matter of possible federation. Wood largely agreed with the some of the previous schemes for federation, which emphasized the need for some form of unity to provide a more powerful voice within the Empire.[64] However, in line with the official Colonial Office guidelines, he believed that there needed to be support for such an initiative from the colonies themselves. Based upon his brief stay in the West Indies, Wood reported, "It [was] both inopportune and impracticable to attempt amalgamation of existing units of government into anything approaching a general federal system."[65] He cited familiar reasons of geography, constitutional differences between the colonies, and fierce local sentiments as the primary to any such unity.[66] In addition, Wood dismissed suggestions for the wide introduction of representative government in the region as unwarranted given the sharp social divisions, and considerable numbers of "backward and politically

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His Visit to the West Indies and British Guiana, December 1921 – February 1922, Cmd. 1679 (London: HMSO, 1922), p.1.

[64] *Wood Report*, pp.28-29.

[65] *Wood Report*, p.32. Wood noted that he did hear some talk of a possible association between the Windward Islands and Trinidad, which some assumed would lead to financial savings and aid in the distribution of essential services. He believed, however, that would require both a demand and approval of all colonies involved. As a result of Wood's comments, the Governor of the Windward Islands visited several of the colonies under his charge to gauge the interest of such a proposal, but nothing came of the idea. For details of the Governor's address, see: Windward Islands Governor, *Governor's Address to the Legislative Councils Relative to the Association of those Islands with Trinidad* (n.p.: n.pub., 1922).

[66] *Wood Report*, pp.29-31.

undeveloped" people.[67] Wood declared, therefore, that "West Indian political unity [was] likely to be a plant of slow and tender growth."[68]

In the wake of the *Wood Report*, the constitutional structures of the various West Indian colonies remained largely unchanged.[69] Despite the introduction of some political reforms, such as the addition of small numbers of elected "unofficial members" to Legislative Councils in Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and Dominica, Crown Colony rule remained intact as the dominant system of the British West Indies.[70] Peripheral proposals of loose regional cooperation continued, however, along the lines of the early 1920s.

In 1926, a West Indian conference was organized in London to "consider and report upon the desirability of setting up a Standing Conference to deal in a consultative and an advisory capacity with matters of concern to all of the colonies."[71] At this conference, the delegates drafted a constitution for such a Standing Conference as a "purely advisory board, with no executive powers, meeting at regular intervals and performing for its constituents functions analogous to those which the Imperial

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[67] Howard Johnson, "The British Caribbean from Demobilization to Constitutional Decolonization," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume IV: The Twentieth Century*, eds. Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.602.

[68] *Wood Report*, p.32.

[69] At the time of Wood's visit, the majority of the West Indian colonies remained "pure Crown Colonies" with no elected members in their legislatures. Jamaica was a "semi-representative Crown Colony" with limited elected members. Barbados and the Bahamas were the only West Indian colonies with representative assemblies, while British Guiana was soon to lose its semi-representative government and become a Crown Colony in 1928.

[70] Johnson, "The British Caribbean from Demobilization," pp.602-603.

[71] "West Indian Conference in London," *The Times*, 28 April 1926, p.15.

Conference performs for the Empire as a whole."[72] For the most part, this plan emulated the previous plans of Edward Davson and the Associated Chambers of Commerce to hold periodic meetings to discuss matters of common interest in the West Indies. Its successful creation led to the first West Indies Conference in Barbados in 1929, with Davson as chair. As expected, economic issues predominated, with political reform not part of the agenda.[73]

In thirty years of debate, then, the official "power brokers" of the West Indies and London (local and metropolitan government officials, the Colonial Office, the planter-merchant oligarchies and their interests in the metropole) essentially limited their proposals for a united West Indies to visions of administrative efficiency and increased commercial prowess. Though there may have been some belief that such "advances" would trickle down to positively affect the majority of the West Indian population, the overwhelmingly lack of interest in, and in some cases outright opposition to, political reform or significant alteration of the West Indies economic system did little to directly impact or empower the vast majority of the West Indian population.

Plans for various forms of closer association among the British Caribbean colonies proposed by colonial administrators and members of the local elite were crafted to sustain and protect their own status and larger interests within the West Indies. For instance, British colonial policy in this era was characterized by policies of trusteeship and tutelage for the non-white colonies. These principles were obviously based on white supremacy, even if such notions purported to have the best interest of "uncivilized races"

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[72] *Report of the West Indian Conference*, Cmd. 2672 (London: HMSO, 1926), pp.4-5.

[73] For the full record of this 1929 conference, see *Report of the First West Indies Conference held in Barbados, January-February, 1929* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1929).

at heart. Wood, as the "official" representative of the Colonial Office during his investigation of the British West Indies, supported rather than opposed this position.[74] Furthermore, since the commercial interests of the West Indies relied on the maintenance of a subjugated labor force, there was little interest in empowering the West Indian masses economically or politically. Plans for federation had mostly come from members of the commercial class: Norman Lamont (MP and owner of a large estate in Trinidad), G.B. Mason (a member of the West Indian Club), Joseph Rippon (of the Direct West India Cable Company), the West India Committee (guardian of West Indian economic interests), D.S. DeFreitas (of the Agriculture & Commercial Society of Grenada), Gideon Murray (colonial official in the West Indies), Samuel Hoare (MP with business interests in British Honduras), and Edward Davson (President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce). Their motivations for and conceptualizations of a united West Indies were largely dictated by their wider interests. Therefore, within the larger contexts of imperialism and oligarchical rule in the British West Indies, calls for a united region from the ruling class and government officials primarily sought to create a "United Status Quo" which would bolster those already in power, and, even if minor reforms to the constitutional structure of the colonies were attempted, to preserve the overall trustee system of British tutelage. Still, such appeals for federation nevertheless created a foundation for other calls, which proposed the same political form – that of a united West Indies – for radically different ends.

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[74] Given the fact that Wood goes on to have a lengthy and successful career within the ranks of British colonialism, it is reasonable to assume that he served the Colonial Office loyally, rather than challenging dominant policies. Moreover, it has been noted that Wood's investigation of the Caribbean was largely limited to evaluating public opinions among the merchant and planter class. Sir John Mordecai, *Federation of the West Indies* (Evanston:: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p.20.

Chapter 3

The West Indian Majorities and a 'United West Indies' (Early 20th Century)

> He, who is 'too wise to err and too good to be unkind' did not send the Negro in His world to be sport and toy of nations. As Negroes, and in the highest spiritual instinct, we look up to the day – smile of the long-expected dawning of a truer world.[1]

During much of the twentieth century, the Colonial Office repeatedly claimed that it would not force federation upon the region, and that they would not intervene to create a united West Indian state without local demand. As E.F.L. Wood noted in his report of the early 1920s, if any advance was to be made on the question of federation, "it can only be as the result of a deliberate demand of local opinion, springing from the realisation of the advantages of co-operation under modern world conditions" – something that he claimed was not present during his visit.[2] In 1927, W. Ormsby-Gore, Undersecretary for the Colonies, wrote that he "hoped that no West Indians would think that because the Colonial Office [was] anxious to help and encourage them in economic cooperation... [that] they had a deep, dark plot at the back of their minds in favour of political federation. That was not so. Political federation was a very long way off, if it ever came at all."[3]

With such statements and policy, the question must be asked, whose support did the Colonial Office seek in this era? Who composed the West Indian opinion that the Colonial Office sought? More precisely, from what class and race did the Colonial

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[1] T. Albert Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation* (Grenada: Office of "The West Indian", 1917), p.48.

[2] *Wood Report*, p.32.

[3] "Trade of the West Indies: Mr. Ormsby-Gore on the Future," *The Times*, 8 November 1927, p.11

Office believe the demand for federation must originate? As Ann Spackman notes in her study of constitutional development of the West Indies,

> There was a certain ambiguity...as to the identity of the public which was to express this opinion. Although it is not clearly stated one can nevertheless assume that it did not involve any attempt to ascertain the views of the mass of the population since they were expressly denied any access to government by way of genuinely popular representation.[4]

Given the racial ideologies of British colonialism, it is obvious that many colonial officials, including Wood, believed that the oligarchy and other white elites were the responsible portion of the West Indian population from which regional opinions must be drawn.[5] Federation as a solution to the problems of the West Indies was not, however, confined to debate among such closed circles.

This chapter examines the place of federation within the political activity of the black and coloured majorities of the British Caribbean of the early twentieth century, particularly within the emerging West Indian nationalist movement. Despite the lack of official interest in the opinions of the black and coloured majorities, these populations were politically active in the early twentieth century fighting conjoined colonial and racist ideologies. In time, many would come to see the idea of federation as a tool they could use in their struggle for greater participation and self-determination in their homelands, as well as the connected fight for racial uplift and empowerment.

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[4] Ann Spackman, *Constitutional Development of the West Indies, 1922-1968: a Selection From the Major Documents* (Barbados: Caribbean Universities Press, 1975): xxxiv-xxxv.

[5] For further discussion of Wood's opinion on this matter, see Mordecai, *Federation of the West Indies*, p.20; Elisabeth Wallace, *The British Caribbean: From the Decline of Colonialism to the end of Federation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), pp.25-26.

Table 3.1 – British Caribbean Population by Race (early 20th Century)[1]

Colony	Year	White	Mixed	Black	East Indians	Chinese	Caribs	Abori-gines	Others & Unknown
Bahamas	1943	7,923	3,214	57,346	-	178	-	-	185
Barbados	1921	10,429	34,216	111,667	-	-	-	-	-
	1946	9,839	33,828	148,923	136		-	-	74
British Guiana	1921	3,291	39,762	117,169	124,938	2,722	-	18,850	659
	1946	2,480	46,228	143,385	163,434	3,567	-	16,322	285
British Honduras	1946	2,329	18,360	22,693	1,366	50	4,112	10,030	280
Jamaica	1921	14,476	157,223	660,420	18,610	3,696	-	-	3,693
	1943	13,809	216,348	965,960	26,507	12,394	-	-	2,045
Turks & Caicos	1921	210	1,503	3,900	-	-	-	-	-
	1943	115	1,935	4,081	-	-	-	-	7
Cayman Islands	1921	1,994	2,431	828	-	-	-	-	-
	1943	2,086	3,518	1,051	-	-	-	-	15
Leeward Islands	1921	2,281	13,864	69,038	-	-	-	-	-
	1946	1,726	12,156	94,388	99	4	-	-	464
Grenada	1921	905	11,673	51,032	2,692		-	-	-
	1946	635	14,769	53,265	3,478	16	113	-	111
St. Lucia	1921	49,316			2,189	-	-	-	-
	1946	343	26,326	40,616	2,635	-	13	-	180
St. Vincent	1931	2,173	11,292	33,257	653	-	-	-	586
	1946	1,906	12,631	45,042	1,817	-	242	-	9
Dominica	1921	556	11,563	24,940	-	-	141	-	-
	1946	142	35,524	11,862	4	1	40	-	51
Trinidad & Tobago	1931	268,584			138,960	5,239	-	-	-
	1946	15,283	78,775	261,485	195,747	5,641	26	-	1,013

[1] Data taken from R.R. Kuczynski, ed, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire: Volume III – West Indian and American Territories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp.28-29. The figures for the Leeward Islands include Antigua, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis. Dominica is listed separately as they are transferred from the Leeward to the Windward Islands in 1940.

Table 3.2 – British Caribbean Population: Percentage by Race (early 20th Century)[7]

Colony	Year	White %	Mixed %	Black %	Asiatic %	Aborigines %
Bahamas	1943	11.5	4.7	83.0	0.3	-
Barbados	1921	6.7	21.9	71.4	-	-
	1946	5.1	17.6	77.2	0.1	-
British Guiana	1921	1.1	13.0	38.2	41.6	6.1
	1946	0.7	12.3	38.1	43.5	4.4
British Honduras	1946	3.9	31.1	38.4	2.6	17.0
Jamaica	1921	1.7	18.4	77.3	2.6	-
	1943	1.1	17.5	78.1	3.1	-
Turks & Caicos	1921	3.7	26.8	69.5	-	-
	1943	1.9	31.4	66.5	-	-
Cayman Islands	1921	37.9	46.3	15.8	-	-
	1943	31.3	52.7	15.7	-	-
Leeward Islands	1921	2.7	16.3	81.0	-	-
	1946	1.6	11.2	86.7	0.2	-
Grenada	1921	1.4	17.6	76.9	4.1	-
	1946	0.9	20.4	73.7	4.9	0.2
St. Lucia	1921	95.7			4.3	-
	1946	0.5	37.6	58.1	3.8	-
St. Vincent	1931	4.6	23.8	70.2	1.4	-
	1946	3.1	20.5	73.1	3.0	0.4
Dominica	1921	1.5	30.9	67.3	-	0.4
	1946	0.3	74.6	24.9	-	0.1
Trinidad & Tobago	1931	65.1			34.9	-
	1946	2.7	14.1	46.9	36.1	-

The embedded racism of British colonialism was quite obvious to many within the black and coloured communities of the early twentieth century West Indies. The stark contrasts of Crown Colony rule in the West Indies and the accompanying ambiguous path towards West Indian self-government, compared to the representative systems and clearer path towards self-government for the so-called white dominions of the Empire provided some of the clearest examples. While white colonies such as

[7] Data taken from Kuczynski, ed, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire*, pp.28-29. The figures for the Leeward Islands include Antigua, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis. Dominica is listed separately as they are transferred from the Leeward to the Windward Islands in 1940.

Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, and South Africa sped to dominion status with internal self-government, the West Indian colonies remained stifled under an imperialist doctrine that promised "self-government when fit for it" to these territories. West Indian majorities, of course, were given few opportunities to prove themselves "fit," however.[8] Despite the large number of black and coloured peoples occupying civil service positions in the various colonies, and the lack of formal segregationist policies of the kind found in the U.S. South in this same era, there was an obvious racial caste system, which tended to ignore the capacity of the black and coloured West Indians and justified white colonial rule based upon racist assumptions of the "ability of the Anglo -Saxon to govern" the region under trusteeship until the colonies could "stand by themselves".[9] The importation of British whites from England and other colonial settings to rule over the local black and coloured West Indian populations was especially frustrating to the aspiring middle classes.[10] In such a setting, the colonial legislative councils remained overwhelmingly white, with only minuscule representation from the coloured and black middle classes.[11]

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[8] CLR James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani: an Account of British Government in the West Indies* (Nelson, Lancs: Coulton & Co., Ltd., 1932), pp.1-2; CLR James, "The Case for West Indian Self-Government," in *The CLR James Reader*, eds. CLR James and Anna Grimshaw (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p.53 and 63. These works remain two of the most poignant critiques of the Crown Colony system of rule in the British Caribbean. The latter, the better known and more available work, draws heavily, and in some case verbatim, from the former.

[9] James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, p.6; James, "The Case for West Indian Self-Government", p.52-53. CLR James was especially critical of such policies given the fact the West Indians were, in his estimate, Western (or British) in every sense. He drew a distinction between the colonial setting of the West Indies and Africa, the latter which was, in his estimation, more obviously tied to non-European culture. Nevertheless, this did not mean that James supported white colonial rule in Africa in any way, or that he separated the anticolonial struggles of the West Indies and Africa. See for example, James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, p.52.

[10] James, "The Case for West Indian Self-Government," pp.52-53.

[11] Black and coloured communities did not operate as a united group consisting of peoples of African-descent. In fact, in many cases, the coloured classes attempted to tie themselves to the white power

During the early decades of the twentieth century, in response to such conditions, the black and coloured majorities of the region, particularly the middle classes, became increasingly politicized and demanded a greater say in their homelands. They formed numerous reform and protest organizations in the colonies, some of which became part of the emerging West Indian nationalist movement. Given the centrality of racial justifications of British colonialism, the programs of many such groups incorporated notions of racial equality and racial uplift, not only in the West Indies but worldwide, into their demands.

In many ways, the development of West Indian nationalism in the early 20th century grew out of older traditions of black and coloured activism.[12] One of the most significant precedents was the work of Dr. J. Robert Love in Jamaica. Love, a Bahamian immigrant, came to Jamaica in the 1890s after living in the US South and Haiti.[13] Until his death in 1914, Love worked both for better economic conditions and greater political participation in Jamaica's government for the black and coloured populations. He gave public lectures on Toussaint L'Ouverture and Haiti, among other topics, and also established the *Jamaican Advocate*. This newspaper became a significant forum for the black middle class of Jamaica. In its pages, Love and his constituents pushed for

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structure as a means to further their hopes of attaining better positions within the colonial setting. Moreover, some within the black middle class also tried to separate themselves from the black working class for similar reasons. For a brief discussion of these issues, see James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*; James, "The Case for West Indian Self-Government".

[12] Though some scholars have argued that such activism preceded J. J. Thomas's eloquent rebuttal of Froude's polemical text, Thomas's *Froudacity*, as previously noted, is recognized by many as a key moment in the development of West Indian nationalism. For a brief discussion of such earlier activism, see Joy Lumsden, "A Forgotten Generation: Black Politicians in Jamaica, 1884-1914," in *Before and After 1865*, pp.112-122.

[13] Bryan, *The Jamaican People*, p.242

economic, social, and political equality and reform in the island.[14] In 1898, Love established the People's Convention as an organization to address a range of issues, especially the plight of black people in Jamaica.[15] Such efforts actually led to the election of a few black men to Jamaica's Legislative Council; however, their numbers remained very small.[16]

Like other black and coloured activist of this era, Love was not solely concerned with local conditions. No doubt influenced by his own migration experiences, Love connected the Jamaican struggle with the global struggle of black peoples in Africa and the Black Diaspora. One reflection of this internationalism was his involvement in the establishment of a Jamaican branch of Sylvester Williams' Pan-African Association.[17] Efforts to raise the economic, social, and political status of Jamaicans were connected to broader regional and global issues of racial uplift and racial unity.

Another important example of activism is the work of the National Club and S.A.G. (Sandy) Cox in Jamaica. Cox, a very fair-skinned coloured or "brown" man in

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[14] Lumsden, "A Forgotten Generation," p.118. Lumsden's dissertation unfortunately remains one of the few monographs on Dr. Love. See Joy Lumsden, "Robert Love and Jamaican Politics" (PhD Diss., University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, 1988).

[15] Bryan, *The Jamaican People*, p.261; Lumsden, "A Forgotten Generation," p.120.

[16] Lumsden, "A Forgotten Generation," p.119. It is important to remember that Jamaica was a semi-representative Crown Colony at this time. While the work of Love and The People's Convention allowed the election of a few members to the Legislative Council, their power was of course severely limited by the structure of Crown Colony rule which insured Crown control. Nevertheless, the symbolic importance of such elected officials cannot be underestimated as a challenge to ideas about black inferiority.

[17] Bryan, *The Jamaican People*, p.262; Anthony Bogues, "Nationalism and Jamaican Political Thought," in *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom: History, Heritage and Culture*, eds. Kathleen E.A. Monteith and Glen Richards (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), p.379. Love was "particularly disturbed at efforts by Jamaican blacks to draw distinctions between of superiority and inferiority between themselves and Africans". Quoted in Bryan, *The Jamaican People*, p.52.

Jamaica, and H.A.L. Simpson, a "Jamaican white", founded the National Club in 1909.[18] The National Club was one of the early organizations in which Marcus Garvey participated, and it focused primarily on constitutional reform, including the extension of representative government in Jamaica (i.e., self-government within the empire). Despite the middle class orientation of most of its members, the group also instituted some of the earliest calls for labour organization and improved working conditions.[19] Cox also published a biweekly newspaper, *Our Own*. Through its publication, Cox echoed much of the National Club's platform. Cox, like Love, connected the plight of Jamaica's black and coloured populations to the broader struggle of peoples of African-descent in the Black Diaspora. Writing in 1911, Cox declared, "The coloured and black people in Jamaica can only hope to better their condition by uniting with the coloured and black people of the United States of America and with those of other West Indian islands, and indeed with all Negroes in all parts of the world".[20]

Such organizations, then, connected their local activism to the larger realm of the Black Diaspora. As they saw it, the broader context of racism (expressed most powerfully in European colonialism and imperialism) affected the local and national lives of African-descended peoples everywhere; thus, local and national movements by such

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[18] Glen Richards, "Race, Labour, and Politics in Jamaica and St. Kitts, 1909-1940: a Comparative Survey of the Roles of the National Club of Jamaica and the Workers League of St. Kitts," in *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Verene A. Shepherd (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p.508. Such phrases as "Jamaican white", often within quotations, were often used in various British sources of the early twentieth century. While the phrase could simply be a way of noting that the "white" in question was born in Jamaica, it could also imply that a person was considered white in the islands, but not necessarily white by British or US standards. The term "brown" was generally synonymous with coloured, i.e., mixed ancestry, in Jamaica.

[19] Richards, "Race, Labour, and Politics in Jamaica and St. Kitts," pp.508-511; Glen Richards, "Race, Class, and Labour in Colonial Jamaica, 1900-1934," in *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom*, pp.346-350.

[20] *Our Own*, 1 July 1911, quoted in Rupert Lewis, *Marcus Garvey, Anti-Colonial Champion* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1988), p.44

groups were, both purposely and incidentally, connected to international struggles. Many black and coloured West Indian activists, therefore, viewed their local struggles as "but a local phase of a world problem."[21]

What then, were the motivations, justifications, and goals of those among the black and coloured majorities of the British West Indies of the early twentieth century, particularly in the West Indian nationalist movements, who advocated for federation? Given the multiple contexts in which many of these proponents operated – island activism, regional activism, and in many cases, diaspora activism – there were many, often overlapping visions and meanings attached to the idea of a federation in the West Indies. The specific content of demands for federation varied depending on the time and place in which they were formulated, as well as on the particular individuals involved.

From the turn of the twentieth century, support for a West Indian federation became part of many black and coloured West Indian demands for increased economic and political opportunities through the introduction of representative, and eventually responsible, self-government with dominion status. Some, however, connected such ideas of local and regional liberation and empowerment to a broader racial consciousness and visions of self-determination and racial uplift for peoples of African-descent. Therefore, federation came to exist as both a regional and diaspora project. The hope of federation became infused simultaneously with hopes for increased political rights within empire, regional and global visions of racial uplift, and a means to challenge white supremacist ideologies.

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[21] This phrase is taken from W.E.B. Dubois, "The Color Line Belts the World", *Collier's Weekly*, 20 October 1906, quoted in *W.E.B DuBois: a Reader*, ed. David Levering Lewis (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 42. It is also the title of a recent article by Robin D. G. Kelley, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem': Black History's Global Vision, 1833-1950," *Journal of American History* 86, no.3 (December 1999): 1045-1077.

In her study of the British Caribbean, Elizabeth Wallace notes that by the late 1930s and early 1940s, "pressures for federation were no longer based mainly on the white planters' interest in economy or on Britain's administrative convenience, but on black and brown West Indians' desire for more control over their own affairs."[22] In fact, though, Wallace's assertion could have been applied to previous decades as well. In the early decades of the twentieth century, support for federation seems to have been as widespread among the black and coloured population as it was the white oligarchy. The difference between the two periods was that the Colonial Office chose generally to ignore the former's demands more in the earlier period.

One of the earliest examples of support for federation from the coloured and black communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is the work of William Galwey Donovan in Grenada. Donovan was the "brown", or "coloured", editor of the *Federalist and Grenada People* newspaper from the 1880s through the pre-World War I era. In a recent study of Donovan, Edward Cox describes him as a "race man" and "champion of the black man" who "clearly linked his demand for local empowerment to black racial solidarity."[23] As early as the 1880s, Donovan began his campaign for the empowerment of Afro-Grenadians. In line with contemporaries such as Robert Love and S.A.G. Cox, both of whom were also newspaper editors, Donovan connected the struggle

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[22] Elisabeth Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, p.96.

[23] Edward L. Cox, "'Race Men': the Pan-African Struggles of William Galwey Donovan and Theophilus Albert Marryshow for Political Change in Grenada, 1884-1925," *Journal of Caribbean History* 36, no. 1 (2002), pp.75-76.

for political power in Grenada and other areas of the West Indies with the broader struggles of black peoples across the globe.[24]

Described by some as the "First of the Federalist", Donovan proved a staunch supporter of local, regional, and racial empowerment – ideas that he combined and pursued through his early and consistent advocacy of federation. Donovan believed that uniting the West Indies would also unite his race in the West Indies. "For Donovan, political advancement and federation were useful vehicles through which blacks could truly become masters of their home."[25] While Donovan did not go so far as to suggest a break from the British Empire, he did envision a West Indian nation with local self-government where the majority population of African-descent would have equal opportunity and full political participation. Given his involvement and avid support for pan-African activities in the early twentieth century, including his coverage of and support for the 1900 Pan-African Conference and subsequent efforts to establish Pan-African Association branches in the Caribbean, it seems clear that he connected his idea of a federated West Indies to the broader struggle of racial uplift.[26] In such circumstances, federation was both a regional movement within the British Empire, and part of an international project of racial uplift and self-determination.

Another example of support for federation as both a regional and racially conscious project is found in *Confederation of the British West Indies versus Annexation to the United States of America: a Political Discourse on the West Indies*, published by

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[24] In fact, the original serial publication of JJ Thomas' argument against Froude, later published as *Froudacity*, appeared in Donovan's newspaper. Cox, "Race Men," p.76.

[25] Cox, "Race Men," p.75

[26] For a discussion of Donovan's specific pan-African activities, see Cox, "Race Men," pp.75-80.

Jamaican doctor and dentist Louis S. Meikle in 1912.[27] Meikle denounced the idea of the possible annexation of the British West Indies by the United States or Canada, which had been periodically debated since the late nineteenth century.[28] Despite the fact that the British Empire placed the West Indies on a different path than the white dominions, he, like many of his contemporaries, believed it to be better than the other imperial powers of the era. Nonetheless, Meikle opposed Crown Colony rule in the West Indies as "autocratic in principle, and a gigantic farce", a "government of subjugation, under which the people are semi-slaves."[29] Instead, Meikle called for a West Indian confederation with self-government within the British Empire (i.e., dominion status).[30]

Meikle sought such a confederation as a means to "preserve the West Indies for the West Indians".[31] On the surface, such an idea was seemingly not racially motivated. His stand against United States annexation of the West Indies and his justifications for federation, however, portrayed a striking racial consciousness. He rejected any association with the United States due to the overt racism of that country towards people of African-descent, an issue he warned, very likely from his own experiences in the U.S.,

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[27] Louis S. Meikle, *Confederation of the British West Indies versus Annexation to the United States of America: a Political Discourse on the West Indies* (NY: Negro Universities Press, 1969). Meikle was educated at Howard University in Washington, DC, and actually spent some time teaching at the dental school there, before going on to study medicine. Meikle briefly worked for the US Public Health Service in Panama during the building of the Panama Canal, before returning to Jamaica. Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers: Volume I, 1826 – August 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 22 fn 7.

[28] For a discussion of the possible annexation of the British West Indies by the US or Canada in these years, see H.G. DeLisser, *Twentieth Century Jamaica* (Jamaica: Times, 1913).

[29] Meikle, *Confederation*, pp.38-39, 200.

[30] Meikle used both confederation and federation interchangeably.

[31] Meikle, *Confederation*, p.6

went far beyond the racism embedded in British colonialism. "With the Americans you must be White! White!! White!!! You must be white to be truthful and honest. You must be white to hold any position of trust outside of the political realm...and so it is wherever the Stars and Stripes float as the controlling power."[32] He advocated, instead, a West Indian confederation with colonial self-government as a means to empower and develop the region for the good of the West Indians – a people he defined as "negro".[33]

Meikle's appeal for a "federation, with responsible government," was "made with the negro in the foreground."[34] Such a confederation, he believed, would create a homeland and a land of opportunity for peoples of African-descent, from which the "white population could migrate, if conditions did not suit them in the change of authority."[35] This "change of authority" would no doubt involve the empowerment of the black and coloured population in place of white oligarchical rule.

Meikle's visions of a united West Indies went well beyond any "official" or oligarchy proposals of federation made during that era. While agreeing that regional

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[32] Meikle, *Confederation*, p.43.

[33] Ironically, despite Meikle's description of "West Indians" as "Negro", the publishers of the 1969 edition of his text included an editor's footnote that explained that the "term 'West Indians' is intended to mean the children of immigrants, both white and black, and their offspring born in the West Indies." This seems to contradict Meikle's own definition in the text. However, this could be because later in the book, Meikle expands his conception of "West Indians" to include "white, black, or coloured." Meikle, *Confederation*, pp.6-7, 255. Nevertheless, given the bulk of his argument for federation, it seems that Meikle believed peoples of African-descent to be the "real West Indians" because of their numerical superiority, as well as their historical contributions to the region's development.

[34] Meikle goes on to note that such a position is not a selfish act or done with malice towards the white population, but because the black and coloured populations form the vast majority of the West Indian population and, therefore, deserved first consideration in the discussion of a possible federation. Meikle, *Confederation*, p.254. Meikle repeatedly states, however, that there is no reason for whites to fear black majority rule. For example, see Meikle, *Confederation*, chapter XXIII.

[35] Meikle, *Confederation*, p.89. Interestingly, he claims, "The British West Indies have no race issue of any moment to solve... chiefly due to the fact that these islands are not the home of the white man." Meikle, *Confederation*, p.89. For other examples of Meikle's discussion of the region as "the assets of the coloured man", and the West Indies as a sort of black homeland, see Meikle, *Confederation*, 85-89, 254-255.

unity would create greater economic opportunities in the region, his staunch demand for federation with self-government, "a government by the people for the people", illustrated his desire to move beyond simple commercial ties under the current colonial regimes. A federation without self-government, Meikle believed, would only keep power in the hands of the "*Official Masters*, namely 'The West Indian Committee,' who, acting in conjunction with the 'Colonial Office' dominate the West Indies."[36] Like those of Donovan, therefore, Meikle's vision of a united West Indies promulgated ideas of racial uplift via regional empowerment and unity.

Calls for some form of regional unity also emerged from the activities of the British West Indian Regiments (BWIR) of World War One.[37] These regiments became one of the most prominent groups associated with the creation and affirmation of a regional West Indian identity in the early twentieth century.[38] Created in response to demands on the part of local West Indians seeking an opportunity to show their loyalty to the Crown, the Regiments offered an opportunity for West Indians to prove themselves as equals within the British Empire.[39]

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[36] Meikle, *Confederation*, p.183. Also, see pp. 18-21, 38-39.

[37] These "British West Indian Regiments" should not be confused with previous black regiments from the British West Indies, the "West India Regiment". Those regiments served against France in the 1790s in Martinique and Guadeloupe, the suppression of the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865 Jamaica, and in West Africa during the Ashanti wars in the 1870s. See C. L. Joseph, "The British West Indies Regiment 1914-1918," *Journal of Caribbean History* 2 (May 1971): 94.

[38] Catherine Hall claims, "The naming of black regiments as West Indian fractured the prevailing image of West Indian as an exclusively white identity." Hall, "What is a West Indian," p.41. While I agree with this statement, I think that it would be more appropriate to say such action *further* fractured whiteness from a West Indian identity, which as previously noted, had been ongoing since the late nineteenth century.

[39] Military service has long served as a means through which peoples of African-descent have fought for and earned inclusion within the "nation" or "empire". Examples can be found throughout the Caribbean, Latin America, and the US. For examples within the Caribbean and Latin America, see: Glenford D. Howe, *Race, War and Nationalism: a Social History of West Indians in the First World War* (Kingston: Ian

After much debate within the empire over the recruitment and participation of the black men in the war effort, their participation was agreed upon.[40] Many took pride in the formation of the BWIR, arguing they demonstrated the loyalty and capabilities of the black population. A 1915 article in the *Dominica Guardian* claimed that, "It is the proud boast of all coloured West Indians that they have now been called upon to fight alongside Englishmen, Canadians, Australians, South Africans, New Zealanders, East Indians and others of the British Empire."[41] Some also saw the Regiments as proof of cross-racial unity within the British Empire. The following year, another article in the *Dominica Guardian* claimed the BWIR were a "concrete symbol of inter-racial unity... a splendid brotherhood in the service of the Empire of men who have overcome the slavery of racial distinctions." It went on to claim that their actions would help "pave the way for that inevitable Federation...The Dominion of the West Indies."[42] Referring to one military rally, a British newspaper noted, "A sturdy party of the British West Indian Contingent was there to remind us once again that loyalty under the English flag is no matter of race."[43] Indeed, the BWIR's experience abroad, away from their individual islands and beyond the insularity that often prevented regional cooperation, encouraged those who served to think in terms of a regional, West Indian identity. However, despite such

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Randle Press, 2002); Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*; Peter Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race, and Nation in Brazil, 1864-1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

[40] For details of the push for the right to fight, and subsequent reactions to these demands within the Colonial Office and local West Indian governments, see Howe, *Race, War, and Nationalism*, chapters 2-3.

[41] "The Kaiser's Protests Against Coloured Troops", *Dominica Guardian*, 28 October 1915, p.2

[42] *Dominica Guardian*, 1916 March 2, p.3.

[43] *Daily Telegraph*, 8 Nov 1915. This clipping is found within the "Album of Press Cuttings relating to the Regiment taken from British and Commonwealth Newspapers between 9th September 1915 and 12th February 1919", ICS 96/2/3, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London (hereafter cited as ICS).

positive portrayals of the BWIR, their actual wartime experiences did little to prove the irrelevance of race within the Empire. Instead, their experiences with racial exclusion helped to entrench a racial consciousness into their emerging regional identity.

The BWIR, like many other nonwhite colonial regiments of World War One, faced widespread discrimination during the war. These soldiers often operated under trying, unequal conditions, were restricted from commissions, used primarily as laborers instead of "fighting men", subjected to racist slurs and hostility from white soldiers, received unequal pay, and led a generally segregated life.[44] On numerous occasions, the BWIR witnessed the racism of their supposed imperial brothers. Once, as the BWIR marched into a camp in Italy singing "Rule Britannia" they were confronted by white British troops who asked them, "Who gave you niggers authority to sing that."[45] On another occasion when a protest of their ill-treatment reached Brigadier-General Carey Bernard, a South African camp commandant, Bernard replied, "the men were only niggers... [and] they were better fed and treated than any nigger had a right to expect."[46] Overall, one West Indian soldier remembered, "The men were treated 'neither as Christians nor British Citizens, but as West Indian Niggers'."[47]

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[44] For examples of such conditions, see: Howe, *Race, War and Nationalism*; Joseph, "The British West Indies Regiment," pp.94-124; Richard Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: Race, Masculinity and the Development of National Consciousness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), chapter 5-6; W.F. Elkins, "A Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean: the Revolt of the British West Indies Regiment at Taranto, Italy," *Science & Society* XXXIV, no. 1 (Spring 1970): 99-103; James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, chapter 3.

[45] Peter Ashdown, "The Growth of Black Consciousness in Belize 1914-1919: the Background to the Ex-Servicemen's Riot of 1919," *Belcast Journal of Belizean Affairs* 2, no.2 (December 1985): 2.

[46] James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, p.34.

[47] Elkins, "Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean," p.100.

Tensions finally exploded into rebellion at Taranto, Italy in December 1918. Though the rebellion itself was important, the aftermath proved equally significant.[48] Shortly after the Taranto rebellion, 50-60 sergeants of the BWIR organized an intra-regional group called the "Caribbean League". At the initial meeting of this organization, the topics discussed included "black rights, self-determination, and closer union in the West Indies".[49] At a later meeting, the correlation between these issues was stated more bluntly when one sergeant said that the "black man should have freedom to govern himself," and take it by force if necessary. In reporting these activities, one British official noted that the League's discussion "drifted from the West Indies and became one of grievances of the black man against the white."[50] Rather than seeing these topics as separate, as this official obviously did, in the minds of many members of this Caribbean League discussions of the West Indies and the problems of the Black man were not separate subjects. They were, instead, intimately related, if not melded, via a racialized regional consciousness. Their desire for "closer union" in the West Indies, therefore, combined racial and national ideas of unity and power in numbers.

In the immediate post-war era, there was much concern within the Colonial Office and colonial West Indian governments about the demobilization of black troops and the effect these returnees would have in an already tense situation in the colonies. The war had led to food and supply shortages in the Caribbean, along with inflation but no corresponding increase in wages. Upset by poor wages and working conditions, workers

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[48] For details of the rebellion, see Howe, *Race, War, and Nationalism*, chapter 10; Elkins, "Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean".

[49] Howe, *Race, War and Nationalism*, p.165.

[50] Major Maxwell Smith to G.O.C. Troops Taranto, 27 December 1918, CO 318/350, National Archives of the United Kingdom: Public Records Office (hereafter cited as PRO).

held strikes in several colonies between 1916 and 1919.[51] In addition, Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, which some colonial officials saw as inciting "racial hatred" in the region, had become an increasingly prominent group. Under a controversial Seditious Publications Ordinance, there were calls by the colonial administration for bans on the circulation of the *Negro World* in the immediate post-war years.[52] Officials worried about the demobilized soldiers, fresh from their mistreatment abroad, would add force to such resistance movements.

Though the governments' fears proved exaggerated, there were some significant strikes and riots in 1919, with often overlapping and interconnected racial and class components. In July there was a riot involving ex-servicemen in Belize, British Honduras. During the riot, one police officer reported hearing people say that "'the white man had no right' in Belize as this is 'our country' and 'we want to get the white man

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[51] Strikes occurred in St. Lucia, Grenada, Barbados, Antigua, St. Kitts, Trinidad, Jamaica, and British Guiana. See Johnson, "The British Caribbean from Demobilization," p.600; Howe, *Race, War, and Nationalism*, p.178.

[52] Sylvester Williams' Pan-African Association had several branches in the British Caribbean in earlier years of the twentieth century, but by the time of the war had largely given way to the rise of the UNIA. For a discussion of the growth of Garveyism in Trinidad in this era, see Tony Martin, *The Pan-African Connection: From Slavery to Garvey and Beyond* (Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 1983), chapter 5. For an example of the UNIA in British Honduras, see Peter Ashdown; "Marcus Garvey, the UNIA and the Black Cause in British Honduras, 1914-1949," *Journal of Caribbean History* 15 (1981), pp.41-55; Peter Ashdown, "The Growth of Black Consciousness in Belize 1914-1919, pp.1-5. For a discussion of the debates over the possible ban of the *Negro World* in the British Caribbean, which actually occurred in a few colonies, see W.F. Elkins, "Marcus Garvey, The *Negro World*, and the British West Indies: 1919-1920," *Science & Society*, Vol. XXXVI, No.1 (Spring 1972): 63-77; Ashdown, "The Growth of Black Consciousness in Belize 1914-1919, pp.3-4. A most interesting example of an article in the *Negro World* that some colonial officials in the West Indies considered particularly dangerous was a February 1919 article that not only attacked colonialism, but also claimed that the colonies were "the property of the Blacks" who should gain control of them "even if all the world is to waste itself in blood." Quoted in Ashdown, "The Growth of Black Consciousness in Belize 1914-1919, p.4.

out'".[53] In Trinidad, ex-soldiers participated in a longshoremen's strike, which spread throughout the island, causing chaos over several weeks.[54]

Such actions were important signs of the growing racial and class consciousness in the British West Indies in this era; however, they were not the only forms of protest in the post-war era. There were also numerous "peaceful" protests against Crown Colony rule in the post-WWI West Indies. A petition from some residents of St. Kitts and Nevis in 1919, for instance, attacked the Crown Colony system. The petition, written from St. Kitts and Nevis but regional in scope, noted that local West Indians, were "quite fit and capable to have a voice in the management of their own public affairs", and that they deserved the "full citizenship" enjoyed by other colonists who were no more loyal than West Indians.[55] Such demands drove the creation of a series of political reform organizations founded in the late 1910s and 1920s. These included the Representative Government Association (Grenada), the Trinidad Workingmen's Association, the Jamaica Reform Club, the Democratic League (Barbados), and numerous others.[56] Many of the leaders and members of these organizations incorporated the race and class consciousness of the era into their respective reform efforts. And, while most of the organizations focused on constitutional reform, particularly representative government, many also added a demand for federation into their general programs. As Allister Hinds

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[53] Peter Ashdown, "Race Riot, Class Warfare and 'Coup d'etat: The Ex-Servicemen's Riot of July 1919," *Belcast Journal of Belizean Affairs* 3, nos. 1&2 (July 1986): 11. Ashdown discusses the background of this riot, including the influence of the local UNIA in two other articles. See Ashdown, "Marcus Garvey, the UNIA and the Black Cause in British Honduras, 1914-1949"; Ashdown, "The Growth of Black Consciousness in Belize 1914-1919, pp.1-5.

[54] W.F. Elkins, "Black Power in the British West Indies: The Trinidad Longshoremen's Strike of 1919," *Science and Society* XXXIII, no.1 (Winter 1969): 71-75; Martin, *The Pan-African Connection*, chapter 3.

[55] "For Representative Government," *Dominica Guardian*, 6 February 1919, p.2

[56] Johnson, "The British Caribbean from Demobilization," pp.603-604.

has argued, such support for federation marked the conjunction of political aspirations, and a heightened racial consciousness among the "black and colored intelligentsia" within these island societies.[57]

Out of these reform movements emerged two of the most famous West Indian nationalists, who were also leading supporters of federation in the 1920s: A.A. Cipriani of Trinidad and T.A. Marryshow in Grenada. These figures are renowned for their lengthy support of, and leadership within, the push for federation. As friends and allies, Cipriani and Marryshow worked in their own islands for better social, economic, and political conditions, and traveled widely among the West Indian colonies advocating the establishment of a federation as an essential step in the overall advancement of the region as a whole. As a result, both men were at times given the title of "Father of Federation", though that title is most often associated with Marryshow.

Despite their parallel action, the careers of the two men also symbolize different aspects of West Indian nationalism and the accompanying federation movement. Marryshow was black, and Cipriani white. Their frequent cooperation therefore, suggested the possibility of a transracial vision of West Indian nationalism and unity. Both, at times, together and individually, represented what Deborah Thomas has referred to as "creole multiracial nationalism."[58] Such nationalism focused on, among other

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[57] Alister Hinds, "Federation and Political Representation in the Eastern Caribbean 1920-1934", Paper presented at the conference on "Henry Sylvester Williams and Pan-Africanism: A Retrospection and Projection", University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Trinidad, 8-12 January 2001. Hinds' argues that that federation was not the primary goal for these activists, but rather the best means through which they could attain increased representation and self-government.

[58] Thomas, *Modern Blackness*, chapter 1. In this text, Thomas discusses the co-existence of creole multiracial nationalism alongside black nationalism in Jamaica. Anthony Bogues makes similar distinctions in his study of Jamaican nationalism, which he says includes "brown creole nationalism" and "black nationalism". Bogues argues that brown creole nationalism claimed to "subordinated race and

things, island or regional development, with little overt attention to matters of race. In fact, this strand of nationalism implicitly sought to portray either specific islands or the entire region through a transracial image that suggested they were "beyond" conventional racial ideologies and politics. At the same time, however, many black and coloured West Indian nationalists added a racially conscious component to their activism – a racialized nationalism that often included a diasporic element. West Indian nation-building, including federation, therefore, could (and did) exist as both a transracial and racial venture. This feature of the federation movement of the 1910s-1920s is represented best in the careers of Cipriani and Marryshow.

Arthur Andrew Cipriani, a white Trinidadian of Corsican descent, rose to fame in Trinidad and the West Indies as a military officer, labour leader, local politician, and staunch supporter of West Indian federation. Cipriani, born in 1875, spent much of his early life divided between his cocoa estates and horse racing interests.[59] This changed, however, with the outbreak of World War One. Cipriani first came to prominence with his support for the creation of the British West Indies Regiments, and his service as an officer with one of those regiments during the war.[60] It was at this time that Cipriani earned his reputation as a friend and defender of West Indians through his representation of several BWIR soldiers facing unjust court martial during their tour of duty. His experiences with the regiments, which included his frustration at the lack of fighting opportunities for West Indians until late in the war, furthered his conclusion that West

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colour issues" but "under the cloak of multiracialism was profoundly antiblack." See Bogues, "Nationalism and Jamaican Political Thought," pp.373-374. As noted in the introduction, this study employs the term transracial rather than multiracial.

[59] James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, pp.20-22.

[60] Details of Cipriani's role in the recruitment of the BWIR in Trinidad are recounted in James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, pp.22-26.

Indian peoples were more than ready to have political representation. The only thing that was lacking, he came to believe, was an opportunity offered by the Crown.[61]

Upon his return to Trinidad, Cipriani continued his advocacy of West Indian advancement and became more actively involved in colonial reform. One of his most prominent positions was the presidency of a resurgent Trinidad Workingmen's Association (TWA) in the post-war era. With Cipriani at the helm, the TWA experienced an unprecedented expansion in the colony, adding thousands of members and numerous branches throughout the colony. As CLR James notes of Cipriani, the Captain had "faith in the local black men" and in return, they shared "an unshakeable affection for and confidence in the man who stood by them so firmly."[62]

In spite of contemporary claims that "if he raise[d] his finger he [could] cause a riot", Cipriani, who was a socialist, was much more a reformer than a radical or revolutionary leader.[63] In the 1920s, Cipriani formally expanded into politics, serving as both an elected member to Trinidad's legislative council (after the limited constitutional reforms put in place by the Wood Commission), and Mayor of Port-of-Spain. Beyond Trinidad, Cipriani was also involved in the regional West Indian nationalist movement of

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[61] James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, pp.30 & 35. Cipriani actually wrote his own account of the BWIR, *Twenty-Five Years After: the British West Indies Regiment in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Port-of-Spain, Trinidad: Trinidad Pub. Co., 1940). Unfortunately, this volume has long been out of print, and the only known library copy is apparently lost.

[62] James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, p.37.

[63] James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, p.103. Nigel Bolland, among others, argues that despite the expansion of TWA, the organization's "activities as a trade union declined under Cipriani's leadership" because of the Captain's focus on reform politics. In fact, in the 1930s when trade unions were legalized, the TWA changed its name to the Trinidad Labour Party, with obvious connections to the British Labour Party with which Cipriani and numerous other Caribbean socialists were allied. O. Nigel Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: the Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2001), pp.203-204.

the 1920s, particularly through the prominent role he played within the intra-regional British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress. In these roles, he advocated numerous reform measures: poor-relief, worker safety, health, housing, education, a minimum wage, eight-hour workday, old-age pensions, and competitive exams for entry into the civil service. In addition, Cipriani became one of the most vocal supporters of expanded franchise, the return of representative government, and especially, federation with self-government and dominion status within the British Empire.[64] The West Indian population, he believed, were ready for such reforms:

> It is all very well and good to talk of us as 'subject races'. I laugh that to scorn. We are free people of the British Empire. We are entitled to the same privileges and the same form of Government and administration as our bigger sisters, the Dominions, and we have got to use everything in our power, strain every nerve, make every effort – I go further and say to make every sacrifice to bring self-government and Dominion status to these beautiful colonies.[65]

In many ways the career of Captain Cipriani characterized, and seemingly verified, the vision of West Indian nationalism as a transracial project. His rejection of the moneyed white classes in favor of the TWA's primarily black, and to a much lesser extent Indian, laborers, endeared him to many as a great West Indian patriot and a friend of the "barefooted masses". On numerous occasions Cipriani downplayed the significance of race and claimed his program and that of the wider regional movement

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[64] James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, pp.66-68. For further discussion of Cipriani in Trinidad during this era, see Selwyn D. Ryan, *Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago: a Study of Decolonization in a Multiracial Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), chapter 2.

[65] James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, p.103.

was not one based colour or class.[66] To this day, his name is often evoked as "proof" of West Indian transracialism. However, while it is true that Cipriani's strand of West Indian nationalism was transracial to a large degree, his leadership and ideals did not eliminate the prominent role of racial identification as a basis of support for organizations like the TWA, or within the larger push for representative government and federation among many of his supporters and contemporaries.[67] Instead, West Indian nationalism was simultaneously a racial and transracial endeavor, often with proponents emphasizing and deemphasizing race dependent on the time and place in which they operated.

Theophilus Albert Marryshow provides one of the best examples of how West Indian nationalists ably juggled racial and transracial visions of federation. Given his lengthy and consistent support for federation, he was recognized eventually as the "greatest and most accomplished protagonist of Federation", and the "first citizen of the united West Indies".[68] Marryshow, a black Grenadian, was born Theophilos Maricheau

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[66] See for example Cipriani, "Speech Delivered at the British Guiana and West Indian Labour Conference," 12-14 January 1926, quoted in *His Best Orations*, ed. Randolph Mitchell (Port of Spain, Trinidad: Surprise Print Shop, 1950s), pp.91-95; Cipriani, "Speech Delivered at the Labour Commonwealth Conference, July 1928, quoted in Mitchell, *His Best Orations*, pp.67-72.

[67] Throughout much of its early existence, the TWA was associated overwhelmingly with black laborers. In fact, much of the leadership below Cipriani was made up of Garveyites, or at least advocates of racial unity and Pan-African policies. For example, William Howard-Bishop Jr., the TWA's general secretary was known to have clearly linked industrial unity to issues of racial unity and consciousness. For a discussion of this, see Kelvin Singh, *Race and Class Struggles in a Colonial State, Trinidad 1917-1945* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1994), pp.131-133. Moreover, Cipriani's place at the helm of such an organization cannot be assumed to indicate a diminished sense of racial worth or lack of racial consciousness by black members of the TWA. While that may have been true for some, the decision to appoint a white man as leader of their organization was also a political decision by many of the TWA's membership, who knew that the colonial governments and planter-merchant oligarchy that they were dealing with were more comfortable and more likely to listen to a white man, rather than a black leader. For a discussion of such issues, see Richards, "Race, Labour, and Politics in Jamaica and St. Kitts, 1909-1940".

[68] Minutes of the Proceedings of a Special Meeting of the Legislative Council held at the Council Chamber York House, 30 March 1955, Item D.6, CLR James Papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies (hereafter cited as CLR James Papers, ICS).

in 1887 to a small black planter, but raised by his housekeeper godmother after his mother's death.[69] From these humble origins, Marryshow rose to prominence in the early twentieth century as a renowned journalist, political activist, local colonial politician, and labor leader.

Like Cipriani, Marryshow held several positions throughout the early twentieth century. These included positions as co-owner (with lawyer C.F.P. Renwick) and editor of the Grenada-based *West Indian* newspaper, a leading member of the Representative Government Association (RGA) in Grenada, president of the Grenada Workingman's Association, an elected member of Grenada's legislative council (after the Wood reforms), and an important figure, along with Cipriani, in the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress. Through such activities, Marryshow and Cipriani shared many causes, and worked together on such issues as the fight for racial and class equality, labour, an expanded franchise, the return of representative government to the West Indies, and a regional federation with self-government. While the cooperative work of Cipriani and Marryshow represented the transracial nature of West Indian nationalism, Marryshow's role as a journalist and his associated race consciousness and involvement in black diaspora politics added a familiar racialism to his West Indian agenda. These also shaped his ideas of a federation within the British Caribbean.

The *West Indian* became an important outlet for Marryshow and many other West Indian nationalists in the early twentieth century. No doubt influenced by his time as a delivery boy and protégé of William Galwey Donovan, Marryshow created a newspaper

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[69] Marryshow would later anglicize his name to Theophilus Albert Marryshow. Jill Sheppard, *Marryshow of Grenada: an Introduction* (Barbados: Letchworth Press Limited, 1987), pp.1-7. This title, though brief, remains the only biography of Marryshow. See Emmanuel, *Crown Colony Politics in Grenada*, which Sheppard's work utilizes, for further information on Marryshow's career, particularly in Grenada.

whose title asserted a regional identity and agenda, and which provided a space for the coverage of and commentary on local, regional, and black diaspora events.[70] Though Marryshow was by no means the sole contributor to the *West Indian*, he did contribute a great many writings and, as editor, was largely in charge of selecting the articles and editorials that appeared in the newspaper. Therefore, even those articles not penned by Marryshow in many ways represented his ideals.

A particularly common topic of discussion in the *West Indian* was the idea of a West Indian federation. From the first issue on 1 January 1915, Marryshow noted the newspaper's support for an "administrative and fiscal union" between the West Indian colonies.[71] A few days later, the *West Indian* advertised an essay competition on West Indian Federation: first prize two guineas, second prize ten shillings. In February, another editorial called for the subordination of the various insular island identities in favor of a regional West Indian identity that would seemingly pave the way for the creation of a federation.

> There should be neither Grenadians, nor Barbadians, nor Trinidadians, nor any such 'ians' among us, but West Indians and, fundamentally, none other... only in this way can a West Indian Dominion come into being which will cause us to be a respectable force in the affairs of the world. We should all leave the 'outgrown shell' of insular limitations and aspire to the more 'stately mansions' - the mansions of nationality.[72]

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[70] In this manner, Marryshow carried on Donovan's legacy in Grenada, the West Indies, and the boarder black diaspora (and in many ways the legacies of Love and Cox). For a comparative study of these men's careers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Cox, "Race Men," pp.69-99. Marryshow later became the godfather of Eric Williams. Colin A. Palmer, *Eric Williams and the Making of the Modern Caribbean* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p.7. These relationships show an important connection between some of the most prominent West Indian nationalists, diaspora activists, and federation supporters.

[71] *West Indian*, 1 January 1915, quoted in Sheppard, *Marryshow of Grenada*, p.10.

Articles and editorials related to federation appeared with some regularity in the *West Indies* over the next several years. In the midst of World War I, calls appeared for "a nearer West Indies, a united West Indies", and for federation as a means to give the region a greater voice in the Empire.[73] Discussions of the possible annexation of the West Indies by Canada or the United States, primarily in the immediate postwar years, were dismissed on multiple occasions, in many cases in favor of a West Indian union of their own.[74] Upon hearing rumors that the Empire was considering creating a new Pacific dominion of British islands and recently captured German islands after WWI, one editorial asked why a new dominion among the British Caribbean islands was not being considered.[75]

As discussions of federation increased in the postwar era, Marryshow welcomed discussion of a possible federation amongst the colonial power brokers; however, he, like

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[72] *West Indian*, 10 January 1915, p.1; "West Indians and the West Indies," *West Indian*, 20 February 1915, p.2.

[73] "A Nearer West Indian," *West Indian*, 23 November 1916, p.2; "The West Indies and the Empire Parliament," *West Indian*, 31 August 1917, pp.2-3.

[74] "News and Topics," *West Indian*, 18 March 1917, p.2; JA Martineau, "Annexation of the West Indies to the USA a Danger," *West Indian*, 26 September 1919, p.1; CH Lucas, "No Yankee Rule for Us Negro British West Indians," *West Indian*, 7 November 1919, p.1; Ernest Bentham, "A New West Indian Consciousness: the Call of 1920," *West Indian*, 19 January 1920, p.1. Such rejections of the extension of the US into the Caribbean were not confined to the British West Indies. In August 1917, the *West Indian* reprinted an editorial that appeared in the *New York News* on the transfer of the Dutch Virgin Islands to the United States. In this editorial, a CH Emanuel noted that "We, as natives of this land [Dutch Virgin Islands], want it to be distinctly understood by those already here, as well as by every other Caucasian newcomer who may have occasion to pitch his tent among us, that this island is ours by divine right... the purchase of our liberties was not included in the [purchase of the islands]." "Prejudice Follows the American Flag in the West Indies," *West Indian*, 3 August 1917, p.3. Such ideas highlight the heightened racial consciousness in many parts of the Caribbean and black diaspora in the era. Moreover, its publication within the pages of the *West Indian* shows the diasporic coverage of the newspaper, and suggests the broader context for such feelings among many peoples of the British West Indies in this era.

[75] "The Future of the West Indies," *West Indian*, 2 August 1918, p.1.

many other West Indians, demanded federation with self-government within the British Empire.

> We are ardent Federalists but primarily we are staunch believers in the rights of the intelligent and law-abiding governed to have a voice in their government. We desire to see a West Indian Commonwealth, but not a huge West Indian Crown Colony, which will the more easily be boxed at the whim of each successive Governor-General! We want the Ship of Federation, but the people should have the power and right of anchorage, the power to set sail, no matter who the pilot may be... We tell our people that a Foul Federation is gaining attraction in these days, and ask them not to touch it. It is dead and rotten. It has no life of Representation; no soul of Liberty. There is a true Federation which will be presented if we are wise to reject this dead one. When that time comes, West Indians will have something worthy of attention.[76]

These demands echo the earlier sentiments of such West Indian nationalists as Donovan and Meikle, as well as contemporaries like Cipriani, for whom federation was viewed as an avenue for change rather than a structure to bolster the status quo. This sentiment can also be seen in a February 1920 editorial by Marryshow in which he reminds the Associated Chambers of Commerce to "discuss men and not only material materials", and demands the implementation of representative government – a call he believes is "a reasonable demand ... a British demand."[77] Such editorials, a great many by Marryshow himself, presented federation as a key step in the development of the region, a "summit", which could only be attained through representative government.[78] Ostensibly, few overt

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[76] "Foul Federation," *West Indian*, 17 January 1919, p.1.

[77] TA Marryshow, "The New West Indies," *West Indian*, 27 February 1920, p.2.

[78] In a February 1920 editorial from Marryshow to the editor of a Barbadian newspaper, Marryshow claimed, "There is a flight of stairs, a ladder, or a steep road leading to this Federation. Federation is a summit... The flight of stairs, the ladder, the steep road, or whatever condition we are likely to find in getting to the summit, is Representation ... Without Representation, the Federation of the West Indies will never be reached in virtue and in fact." This statement challenges the argument put forth by Allister Hinds

mentions of race are found within these calls for federation. Within the broader context of the *West Indian*, however, such discussions were connected to a larger program of racial unity, racial consciousness, and self-determination embodied in the work of Marryshow.

Alongside the calls for federation, Marryshow's *West Indian* included numerous anti-racist editorials, coverage of black diaspora groups and activities, and demands for representative government. For instance, Marryshow covered the struggle to organize the BWIR (including his outrage at the organization of private white contingents in some colonies), and their wartime experiences. Extending beyond the West Indies, the newspaper carried articles on the activities and treatment of African American soldiers.[79] It also included, for example, coverage and editorials on the post-war activism in the black diaspora, including defenses of Garvey's *Negro World* in the face of post-war sedition charges, reports on the UNIA's activities, and the program of the African Progress Union in London.[80] In 1920, Marryshow published an original poem in praise

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that federation was a means to gain representative government, rather than the ultimate goal of the black and coloured intelligentsia of the Easter Caribbean in the 1920s-1930s. Here, representative government is a key step in attaining the ultimate goal of a federation. Such a debate speaks to multiple, simultaneous visions of a possible Caribbean federation. TA Marryshow, "Steps to Federation," *West Indian*, 27 February 1920, p.2.

[79] "Trinidad's 'White' Private Contingent," *West Indian*, 23 November 1915, p.2; "The Black Soldier in the United States," *West Indian*, 22 June 1917, p.2; "Execution of Negro Soldiers in America," *West Indian*, 4 March 1918, p.7. Various letters and editorials on and from the BWIR can be found in the *West Indian* throughout the WWI years.

[80] "Shall It Be," *West Indian*, 24 October 1919, p.1; CH Lucas, "Coloured Subjects – Not Citizens of Empire," West Indian, 24 October 1919, p.3; "Shutting Out the Dawn with a Scrap of Paper," *West Indian*, 24 October 1919, p.2; "St. Vincent Prohibits the 'Negro World'," *West Indian*, p.3; "The Negro and the Peace Conference," *West Indian*, 3 January 1919, p.1; "The A.P.U. Telegram," *West Indian*, 3 January 1919, p.1. The exact relationship between Marryshow and Garvey remain unknown. In Surjit Mansingh's study of the failure of the West Indies Federation, she claims that Marryshow was at one time the president of Grenada's UNIA branch. Surjit Mansingh, "Background to Failure of the West Indies Federation: an Inquiry into British Rule in the Caribbean, 1920-1947" (PhD diss, American University, 1972), pp.173-174. Marryshow's biographer Jill Sheppard noted that Garvey was "a man after Marryshow's own heart," and said that Marryshow had a photograph of Garvey in his home in Grenada. Sheppard, *Marryshow of*

of the famous African American leader Frederick Douglass.[81] Taken as a whole, such writings speak to the race-consciousness and racial activism of Marryshow and other West Indians in this era. If such issues appear disconnected from Marryshow's support for federation, one of his most famous writings draws his views on race and nation-building together more obviously.

In 1917, Marryshow penned a series of editorials in the *West Indian* titled "Cycles of Civilisation" in reply to a May 1917 speech by General Jan Christian Smuts of South Africa in which the Boer general lamented the problem of creating a "White South Africa" and "outlined a programme for the suppression of Africans in the interest of white members of the Empire."[82] Though Marryshow claimed that "[i]n the West Indies, when public men speak on race questions they are condemned by some who think they have no right to discuss such questions," *Cycles of Civilisation* spoke directly to the issue of race.[83]

One of the major components of *Cycles* was Marryshow's staunch defense of a glorious African past. In his speech, Smuts noted that despite the "foothold" that civilization once held in some regions of ancient Africa, the continent was marked at that time by widespread barbarism and the need for European colonization. Marryshow replied that Africa was not a "foothold" but a "stronghold" of civilization. "[Africa] held

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Grenada, p.12. Thus, it is likely that Marryshow may not have agreed wholeheartedly with Garvey, he and many other West Indians respected his work and agreed with many aspects such as race pride and unity, as well as the demand for self-determination for the region. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of Garvey's views on federation in the British Caribbean.

[81] "To Frederick Douglass," *West Indian*, 9 April 1920, p.3.

[82] These articles were shortly thereafter republished in a brief book by the same name. Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, pp.1-2, 19-20.

[83] Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, p.1.

sovereign sway when the inhabitants of England were in the sheerest infancy of human development - when they were unmitigated savages, who fed on the barks and roots of trees, and were scantily clothed with the skins of animals."[84] Marryshow also spent a number of pages detailing the place of Africa and black peoples in the Bible, including a discussion of Egypt as a former black nation, and Jesus as looking quite different from contemporary European notions of him as a white man.[85] In response to praise of Cecil Rhodes for building a "civilised Rhodesia out of a mere forest which was inhabited by black men," Marryshow noted that the ruins of that region, which included "wonderful fragments of art and glimpses of the high standard of scientific thought to which Africans attained when white men were savages", showed a past perhaps much greater than anything the present Rhodesian colony could hope to be.[86] With such rebuttals, Marryshow directly challenged white supremacist notions that claimed Europe as the cradle of civilization, and provided inspiration to black peoples throughout the globe, especially those suffering under European colonialism.

Marryshow's key argument was that history evolved in a cyclical pattern in which nations (and races) rose and fell. The recent and current era of European dominance was simply "their time" and but a small fraction of world history. Marryshow believed that this was temporary, and forecasted that this era's demise was near. He challenged the idea that European civilization was some sort of zenith in human development, or in any

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[84] Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, pp.2-3.

[85] In a particularly telling passage, Marryshow wrote, "The Virgin Mary, should she come back to earth, would never be able to recognise the son born of her womb in the current paintings and pictures." Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, pp.7, 12-18. This, along with his parallel discussion of the accomplishments and great history of Africa when Europe was in a primitive state echoes sentiments found in many black nationalist ideologies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

[86] Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, p.3.

way a permanent fixture. In Marryshow's estimations, nations such as France, Italy, and Portugal were already in decline, and modern Europe as a whole was "not in a very hopeful position."[87] "Who knows whether London will not become the capital of a decayed Libya, and Paris of Persia, and Berlin of a Babylon." In the future, he noted, a "superior Chilian [sic], Brazilian, Negro, or aboriginal Indian" may gather "fungi in the damp devastation of the Reichstag, or beetles where once stood the lofty Campanile of some famous Italian Cathedral."[88] In regards to the British Empire, Marryshow believed that the recent patriotism for the Crown during the war years would likely subside, and the Empire might crash on the "Rocks of Race."

> United in spirit in war and disunited in peace, may be the verdict of tomorrow... There are strong indications that certain parts of the Empire will not be able to endure, for long, certain monstrous inequalities of the British order, and on racial grounds is this wonderful Empire of ours likely to break up.[89]

In conjunction with the eventual demise of European nations, Marryshow predicted the rise of new nonwhite nations, particularly within Asia and the Americas. Africa, he said, would have its time again soon too.[90] However, while in many ways

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[87] Marryshow believed that not only were many European nations were in decline, but that many were never powerful or influential countries. He included Austria, the Balkan States, and Scandinavian countries in the category. Russia, he believed, was the only European nation with a bright future. Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, pp.9-10.

[88] Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, pp.3-4.

[89] Marryshow said this should not "be regarded as Cassandric prophesy ... but a considered view of the revolution of the cycles of civilisation, and the rise and fall of nations and peoples." Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, pp.11-12.

[90] Marryshow was especially impressed with the rise of Japan because in fifty years, Japan rose "from a nation of half-blind, insular and self-centered hermits, with no voice in the world, to a great enterprising and vigorous power – a force in international affairs." Japan was likely of particular interest to Marryshow given the fact that it was a nation of multiple islands, much like a united West Indies would be. As for the Americas, he argued that the opening of the Panama Canal would be a great boost to nations of the Americas and the Caribbean (not just North America). Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, pp.4-6.

Cycles was an anticolonial treatise that appealed to various nonwhite peoples and not solely to Africans and West Indians, Marryshow focused primarily on the past, present, and future of people of African-descent, especially those of the English-speaking world (British-controlled Africa, West Indies, and North America). Within *Cycles*, Marryshow asked rhetorically, "Is there to be no place under the sun... where Negroes are to experience free human development?"[91] To this question, Marryshow answered no.

> He, who is 'too wise to err and too good to be unkind' did not send the Negro in His world to be sport and toy of nations. As Negroes, and in the highest spiritual instinct, we look up to the day – smile of the long-expected dawning of a truer world.[92]

Marryshow declared, "The great Negro Race has had its turn, and its turn is coming again."[93]

More than just a reference to a possible African redemption, this "turn" also alluded to the rise of a West Indian nation, a region he described, "in all departments of thought and activity, [as] a coloured man's West Indies." Marryshow asserted, "The indication of the times point to a great prosperity that shall dawn for the West Indies and a high type of civilisation that shall come a-wooing in these parts."[94] The next great rise of people of African-descent, therefore, might not occur in Africa, but possibly in the diaspora, specifically in the West Indies. The only obstacle to such a nation was "that so

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[91] Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, p.23.

[92] Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, p.48.

[93] Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, p.7.

[94] Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, pp.1-2. In this instance, it appears obvious that Marryshow's use of "coloured" applied to peoples of African-descent, both coloured and black. This also ostensibly connected with Meikle's call for a confederation earlier in the decade.

many [West Indians] are blind to the value of unity of purpose and direction, and prefer loose and easy compromises which do not make for race identity and dignity."[95] A new West Indian nation, he believed, would require regional and racial unity. Marryshow's strong support for the development of a united West Indies via federation in these passages show that it was not simply Caribbean nation-building, but a black diaspora nation-building project as well – a step in the broader appeal for racial uplift, unity, and self-determination.

The publication of *Cycles* provided Marryshow much political currency within the broader black diaspora. While in Barbados in 1919, Marryshow met with a "Mr. Anthony Crawford" who brought "the best wishes of a large majority of coloured people in New York to the Editor of the West Indian whoever he may be." Crawford noted that both the *West Indian* and *Cycles of Civilisation*, which sold thousands of copies in the US, circulated from hand to hand among many people in New York, securing Marryshow a presence on a wider international stage. Apparently, an offer was made for Marryshow to move to New York and join the burgeoning black diaspora movements in that area, but Marryshow declined to make such a permanent move, preferring instead to stay and fight in the West Indies despite efforts by colonial officials to curtail black periodicals and pamphlets in the postwar era.[96] He did, however, visit the US briefly, became a

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[95] Marryshow, *Cycles of Civilisation*, pp.1-2.

[96] "A Call to Larger Fields," *West Indian*, 20 June 1919, p.1. This decision should not be read as a rejection, or downplaying of diaspora politics; instead, it speaks to his belief that his work in the West Indies was important and also part of the broader struggle for peoples of African-descent. In many ways, this parallels to a similar decision made by Eric Williams in the 1950s.

"corresponding member of the Negro Society for Historical Research," and spoke at the Second Pan-African Congress in London in 1921.[97]

Throughout the 1920s, Marryshow continued to be an active force in both West Indian and diaspora politics via his role as editor, politician, labour leader, and West Indian nationalist leader. His role within black diaspora politics in no way diminished his ability to work for local or regional causes via the Representative Government Association, the Grenada Workingman's Association, as a local elected member of the Grenada legislative council, or as a major figure within the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress. Instead, it added an extra dimension to his various activities within the West Indian nationalist movement.

Cipriani and Marryshow worked together throughout the 1920s, and into the 1930s, for the cause of West Indian federation. Both men decried the colonial policies of the British Empire that choked the aspirations of the West Indian majorities, and sought significant reforms of the existing economic, social, and political systems for the benefit of those majorities.[98] Their similar roles in West Indian politics and labour movement, including their roles within the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress, which called for a federated West Indies with self-government and dominion status at its 1926 inception, suggest that some transracial cooperation was present within West Indian nationalism and the federation movement.[99] However, Marryshow's nationalism was

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[97] *West Indian*, 12 March 1920, as cited in Cox, "Race Men," p.98; Sheppard, *Marryshow of Grenada*, p.13. Sheppard claims in her brief biography that the attention Marryshow received from *Cycles* was the basis for his invitation to the Second Pan-African Congress.

[98] While both men were socialists who called for extensive reform of the colonial system, neither man could be broadly labeled as "anti-British" as their activism, in this era, did not call for a break from the empire or British political models.

[99] O. Nigel Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean*, p.366.

also crucially shaped by ideas about racial unity and racial uplift.[100] The West Indian nationalist movement, including the accompanying support for federation, cannot easily be characterized, or pigeonholed, as *either* transracial *or* racial.[101] Instead, the movement simultaneously espoused racial and transracial characteristics, with race emphasized and deemphasized as a basis of support according to the particular context.

As the West Indian nationalist movement grew in the early twentieth century, the idea of federation became one of its pillars.[102] West Indian nationalists' support for federation, like many proposals from colonial officials and the local oligarchies, sought to

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[100] Though many of these early West Indian nationalists moved beyond the historical class and colour distinctions between "black" and "coloured" peoples, the unity between these populations into a broader frame of "peoples of African descent" often created a stronger racial consciousness, rather than a transracial outlook.

[101] Unfortunately, this characteristic has seemingly remained overlooked in many studies of Marryshow. For instance, in Emmanuel's study of Grenada, the author claims that a 1931 editorial by Marryshow contrasted with his "previous emphasis on the notion of racial harmony". In this editorial, Marryshow asserted West Indians "must be prepared to see 'black' in season and out of season...we must see the good in our own people and worship race as a religion... We should no more desire to be black Englishmen than Englishmen desire to be...white negroes." TA Marryshow, "Along Life's Way," *West Indian*, 31 March 1931 as cited in Emmanuel, *Crown Colony Politics in Grenada*, p.91. However, as previously noted, Marryshow's racial consciousness was present in the 1910s-1920s too in his work for the *West Indian* and in *Cycles of Civilisation*.

In a similar tone as Emmanuel, Surjit Mansingh's study of the failure of federation notes that such a quote by Marryshow was limited as he "did not dwell on matters of race, but took up the cause of West Indian labor's forming trade unions and demanding less unfavorable legislation." Mansingh, "Background to Failure of the West Indies Federation," pp.173-174. This depiction of Marryshow, however, also tries to find a "neat break" between Marryshow's racial and transracial views, when in fact that seemingly coexisted for the bulk of his life. Particularly distressing is the notion that somehow his role in the labour movements precluded a racial consciousness or commitment to racial uplift, especially since the vast majority of the West Indian working class was black, and many of them and their leaders held a stout racial consciousness throughout much of the first half of the twentieth century. This issue will be explored briefly in chapter five's discussion of labour in the 1930s.

[102] Plans for the installation of federation itself, though repeatedly called for by numerous leaders and organizations, particularly Cipriani, Marryshow, and the budding labour movement, remained vague. While the official colonial brokers worried themselves with the practicality of federation, the West Indian nationalists did not put forth many, if any, concrete plans on how to move federation from an idea into reality, other than their staunch demand for an end to Crown Colony rule and the establishment of representative, self-government within the Empire (i.e., dominion status). Of course, the lack of specific plans could be attributed to the fact that the bulk of the West Indians remained locked out of the decision making process within their native lands, thus the need for representative government in the face of the stalwart opposition to such reforms among the colonial power brokers.

increase the economic power of the region and give the West Indies a greater standing among the free nations of the world. However, the common "power in numbers" and "unity as strength" justifications of federation served different ends for colonial power brokers and West Indian nationalists. The nationalists' often-associated insistence of wider franchise, representative government, self-government, and dominion status in conjunction with the demand for federation made their calls for a united West Indies an idea designed to challenge, rather than uphold, the status-quo. Federation was a step for the advancement of the region for the good of the West Indian majorities – an idea with both transracial and racial conceptualizations. This was a significant departure from the discussion of federation within the ruling oligarchies and still severely restricted colonial governments that sought to use federation largely as a means to create a united status quo. This difference would continue to animate debates over federation as both sides developed more substantial and concrete proposals for such a venture.

Federation, however, was not only discussed in the regional context of the West Indies or within the imperial governance. As noted throughout the chapter, many West Indians also viewed their regional struggles as intimately connected with broader global struggles of people of African-descent. Such visions were not confined to the Caribbean. Federation also emerged as a subject of debate and concern among black diaspora activists and groups outside the Caribbean. These contributions added still further visions of a united West Indies.

Chapter 4

The West Indies & Black Diaspora Politics (Early 20th Century)

> Let us unite from the ends of the earth on the common purpose of liberation and redemption of our motherhood and the rejuvenation of the great states that in ages past held Africa securely for her children... Let us even include in our aims the lands of the New World for which our blood was shed and where still we are numerically predominant. Let us aim for a greater rule that will include Haiti and the rest of the West Indies and the vast republic of Brazil in South America with the ancient homeland...[1]

The British Caribbean has long been connected to multiple worlds. As one of the earliest centers of European imperialism, with direct connections to Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Asia, the region's historical importance on the international stage far outweighs its small landmass and population. Beyond its place within the history of the British Empire, the region and its people have also played a disproportionate role in history of the black diaspora. Winston James asserts that the Caribbean "produced the most peripatetic of all African peoples" – especially the British West Indies.[2]

> No other national grouping of Africans in the Americas - not that in the USA, not that in the Spanish Caribbean, not that in Brazil, and not even that in the French territories - has produced such a large and widely scattered diaspora as the British Caribbean, especially over so many centuries.[3]

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[1] "A Race of Cry Babies", *The Crusader*, December 1920, p.9 in *The Crusader: Volume 3*, ed. Robert A. Hill (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), p.939.

[2] Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Verso Press, 1998), p.71. James use of "Caribbean" here is not confined to the British Caribbean. To clarify, in this chapter, "Caribbean" will be taken to include all of the nations and colonies of the region, not just the British colonies. The English-speaking portions of the region are referred to as the "British Caribbean" or the "West Indies".

[3] Winston James, "The Wings of Ethiopia: The Caribbean Diaspora and Pan-African Projects from John Brown Russwurm to George Padmore," in *African Diasporas in the New and Old Worlds: Consciousness and Imagination*, eds. Genevieve Fabre and Klaus Benesch (New York: Rodopi, 2004), p.123.

From the era of slavery, through the post-emancipation era, and into the anticolonial struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the British Caribbean, and West Indians themselves, were crucial components of black diaspora activism.

This chapter explores how the myriad black diaspora movements of the early twentieth century, based in the diaspora itself, incorporated the Caribbean and its inhabitants, especially the British West Indies, into their disparate programs for racial uplift through which black peoples would achieve freedom, equality, and self-determination throughout the globe. Calls for federation in the West Indies played an important role within this field of diaspora activism. While Africa held center stage in most of the diaspora initiatives of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the West Indies themselves were not merely an afterthought in black diaspora politics, but rather melded into the global struggle of black peoples.

There is a long history of connections between struggles for freedom and equality in the Caribbean and the black diaspora, notably the United States. Many noteworthy figures within the struggle against slavery in North America, such as Prince Hall, Denmark Vesey, and John Brown Russwurm, had Caribbean roots. The numerous slave rebellions of the Caribbean, particularly the successful Haitian Revolution, also proved influential and inspiring to the African American abolitionist movements. In Robert Alexander Young's *Ethiopian Manifesto* (1829), the black messiah for enslaved peoples in the United States was prophesized to come from the British West Indian island of Grenada. Moreover, the emancipation and post-emancipation activism of such individuals as Martin Delany, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Henry Highland Garnet, James T. Holly, and Alexander Crummel also connected the plight of African Americans,

Caribbeans, and Africans in the nineteenth century.[4] In some cases, such as Holly and Delany, the Caribbean was seen as a possible place to emigrate to and to create new black nations or, in the case of Haiti, contribute to an existing one.[5] Building upon these historical connections, new associations between the Caribbean and United States were established via the immigration of thousands of new Caribbean immigrants, especially from the British West Indies, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The story of British Caribbean migration in this era was not simply a direct move from the West Indies to the US. In the post-emancipation era, many people moved first within the British West Indies, to escape the overcrowded conditions of some islands (especially Barbados), and in search of better economic opportunities. From these intra-island movements, British Caribbean migratory patterns expanded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to the sugar plantations of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Cuba, the banana plantations of Central America, and the canal zone of Panama. West Indian migration continued to increase in these times with many of these migrants, as well as new direct migrants, venturing to the United States, and to a lesser extent England, Africa, and other parts of the British Empire.[6] Such migrations patterns not

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[4] For a discussion of these numerous connections, see for instance, Richard Blackett, "The Hamitic Connection: African-Americans and the Caribbean, 1820-1865," in *Before and After 1865*, pp.317-329; James, "Wings of Ethiopia," pp.121-157. For a useful collection of some of these figures' key writings, see Wilson Jeremiah Moses, ed., *Classical Black Nationalism from the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

[5] The possibility of the Caribbean as a basis for new black nations was not restricted to black activists. In the early nineteenth century, Alexander von Humboldt believed the region could become an "African Confederation of the free states of the West Indies." Similarly, Thomas Jefferson noted the West Indies could be an "ideal place for a black kingdom" for repatriated slaves. See, Thomas Mathews, "The Project for a Confederation of the Greater Antilles," *Caribbean Historical Review* nos. III-IV (December 1954): 71.

[6] For an excellent overview of Caribbean migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, pp.9-49, 353-371; Louis J. Parascandola, ed., *"Look for Me All Around You": Anglophone Caribbean Immigrants in the Harlem Renaissance* (Detroit: Wayne State

only created a vast "Caribbean diaspora", but also significantly expanded the ties of the larger "black diaspora".[7]

The migration experiences of these various British Caribbean peoples, who most often identified themselves by their insular identities in this era, proved one of the most important means through which a "West Indian" people were constructed. Similar to the British West Indies Regiments of World War One, this development began once the migrants left the bounds of the British Caribbean. In areas like the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, Costa Rica, Panama, and the United States, people from different West Indian colonies met, commingled, and constructed a regional identity that was often elusive within the British West Indies, though the burgeoning West Indian nationalist movement pushed for a similar consciousness within the colonies themselves. In addition to this regionalization, many West Indians found themselves, and their insular and regional identities, racialized into an international black identity, particularly in the United States. Thus, through migration, two additional identities were constructed, adopted, or imposed upon the migrants.

University Press, 2005), pp.1-47; Bonham C. Richardson, "Caribbean Migrations, 1838-1985," in *The Modern Caribbean*, eds. Franklin W. Knight and Colin Palmer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp.203-228. Winston James has noted that United States' corporate interests in the Americas in this era preferred English-speaking laborers, and that the British Caribbean population filled a large portion of these demands. James also notes that these West Indians were also able to migrate to regions of Africa and Europe via their status as "subjects" of the British Empire (see James, "Wings of Ethiopia," pp.124-125). Migration from the West Indies to England in the early twentieth century was, however, relatively small in comparison to the US. These migrants were primarily smaller numbers of students, professionals, and seamen. Though the numbers were small, they too proved an active force in early black diaspora politics. See Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: Black People in Britain since 1504* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1984), chapters 9-10; Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain 1901-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

[7] Winston James has argued the need for scholars to recognize plural diasporas, rather than a singular diaspora. James, "Wings of Ethiopia," p.121. Similar calls for the need to acknowledge "overlapping diasporas" can be found in Earl Lewis, "To Turn as on a Pivot: Writing African Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas," *American Historical Review* 100, no.3 (June 1995): 765-787.

Table 4.1 – Black Immigrants to the US from the Caribbean & Central America (1900-1925) [8]

	Caribbean		Central America	
Year	Numbers	% of all Black Immigration to US	Numbers	% of all Black Immigration to US
1900	703	98.5	n/a	n/a
1901	520	87.5	n/a	n/a
1902	805	96.8	n/a	n/a
1903	1,134	52.2	1	-
1904	1,762	73.8	3	-
1905	3,034	84.3	37	1.0
1906	3,018	79.7	91	2.4
1907	4,561	87.2	99	1.9
1908	3,563	77.0	116	2.5
1909	3,340	77.5	107	2.5
1910	3,769	75.9	120	2.4
1911	4,973	74.0	154	2.3
1912	4,885	72.3	245	3.6
1913	4,891	73.7	277	4.2
1914	5,724	67.8	348	4.1
1915	4,104	72.5	252	4.5
1916	3,257	70.6	160	3.5
1917	5,769	72.0	662	8.3
1918	3,993	70.0	906	15.9
1919	4,027	69.2	799	13.7
1920	6,059	74.1	417	5.1
1921	7,046	71.4	543	5.5
1922	4,424	84.3	188	3.6
1923	6,580	86.6	254	3.3
1924	10,630	86.8	511	4.2
1925	308	38.9	174	22.0

[8] Statistics from James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, pp.356-357. The "Caribbean" in this data is not confined to the British Caribbean, but includes the entire region. Nevertheless, the majority of these numbers were from the British Caribbean. Likewise, a great many of the Central American numbers included British West Indians moving from stays in Central American nations like Panama and Costa Rica. Destinations in the US included New York, New England, and Florida; however, between 1900-1930, approximately half of these numbers migrated to New York. See James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, pp.9-49; Calvin B. Holder, "The Causes and Composition of West Indian Immigration to New York City, 1900-1953," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 11, no.1 (1987): 7-27. The massive drop-off in Caribbean migration in 1925 represents the fallout of new US immigration restrictions.

Pushed from the British Caribbean and pulled to the US for various reasons, both working class and middle class immigrants arrived in the United States.[9] New York, Florida, and New England were the primary destinations, with the former drawing the majority of these immigrants from 1900-1930. "Coming at midnight," as Winston James noted, during the nadir of US race relations marked by staunch segregation in the South, de-facto segregation in the North, and racial violence throughout the country, the Caribbean travelers encountered an overt US racism different from the prejudices of their homelands. While migrants arrived as Jamaicans, Barbadians, Guyanese, or members of other island communities, often viewing themselves through the lens of common West Indian class and colour distinctions between "coloured" and "black", the confronted an American-style racism that largely collapsed such divisions into a damning blackness. The "majority consciousness" with which many of them arrived was displaced as they were transformed into members of a "minority." These conditions no doubt proved a major factor in the radicalization of many West Indians who held prominent positions within the black diaspora politics of the twentieth century.[10]

Such transformations of insular identities into a regional identity, and that identity into a subsection of an international racial identity, however, were not solely the work of white racism, but also the result of conscious efforts by black peoples themselves. They did not necessarily equate to the affirmation of one single identity at the loss of other

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[9] Some of the major factors in this migration were an escape from poverty for workers and limited economic opportunities due to a proverbial "glass-ceiling" for the black and coloured middle class within the West Indian colonies. For a discussion of such "push and pull factors" of migration, see James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, chapter 1; Holder, "Causes and Composition," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 11, no.1 (1987): 7-27.

[10] Such recollections are abundant in the memoirs of many West Indian immigrants of this era. For especially good overviews of these events, see James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, chapters 3-4.

identities. Instead, many British Caribbeans, as well as some migrants from other regions of the Caribbean, willingly adopted multiple, situational identities.[11] As Louis J. Parascandola argues, "They exhibited a fluidity of identity, describing themselves as Black, as West Indian or Caribbean, as British, as Jamaican (or whatever their homeland was), and, when it suited their purpose, American, feeling no need to choose between multiple identities."[12]

Writing in 1925, W.A. Domingo, a popular and influential activist of the era, noted of Harlem,

> Here [various "colored people"] have their first contact with each other, with large numbers of American Negroes, and with the American brand of race prejudice. Divided by tradition, culture, historical background and group perspective, these diverse peoples are gradually hammered into a loose unit by the impersonal force of congested residential segregation. Unlike others of the foreign-born, black immigrants find it impossible to segregate themselves into colonies ... Their situation requires an adjustment unlike that of any other class of the immigrant population.[13]

Domingo's characterization of the ways in which black immigrants found themselves pushed together was undoubtedly true on many levels; however, his identification of the

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[11] The regionalization and racialization of Caribbean immigrants was not confined to the British Caribbean migrant experience. Such events can also be seen within Spanish, French, and Danish islanders. However, scholars such as Winston James have noted some key distinctions between Hispanic and non-Hispanic Caribbeans, arguing the latter were much more likely to embrace and be involved in black diaspora politics, noting the lack of cross-racial nationalism in the British, French, Dutch, and Danish Caribbean in comparison with the Hispanic Caribbean. James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, p.108. For useful discussions of these matters, see Winston James' comparison of these Caribbean areas, as well as his comparison of Arturo Schomburg and Jesus Colon in *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, chapters 4 and 7.

[12] Parascandola, *Look for Me All Around You*, p.4

[13] W.A. Domingo, "The Tropics in New York," *The Survey: Social, Charitable, Civic: a Journal of Constructive Philanthropy* 53 (1925): 648. Domingo was a Jamaican immigrant who, throughout his career, participated in various Jamaican, West Indian, and black organizations.

creation of a "loose unit" is most telling. Despite the "impersonal force" of US racism, a homogeneous Harlem was not created.

Within the seventy to eighty blocks of an increasingly black Harlem, the men and women of the British West Indies established themselves in a myriad of ways that encompassed all of their identities rather than one in particular. They established themselves as members and leaders in the economic, social, and political life of their new communities. During the early decades of the twentieth century, like many southern African Americans who also migrated to Harlem in this era, numerous West Indians established and participated in various insular community organizations and societies, based upon their land of origin, including the Jamaican Benevolent Association, Montserrat Progressive Society, St. Lucia United Association, St. Vincent Benevolent Association, and Trinidad Benevolent Association among many others. Additionally, numerous regional organizations appeared that connected different groups of British Caribbean migrants, such as the American West Indian Ladies Aid Society, American West Indian Association, Caribbean Union, West Indian Protective Society, and the West Indian Committee. At still another level, West Indian men and women often associated with African Americans and other "black peoples" in churches, local politics, race-based fraternal and social organizations, as well as more internationally focused groups (including the Universal Negro Improvement Association and the African Blood Brotherhood, among several others).[14]

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[14] Such associations included churches (though some remained in predominantly Caribbean denominations), local Democratic and Republican politics, race-based fraternal and social organizations such as the Elks, Prince Hall Freemasons, Order of the Easter Star, the Odd Fellows, as well as more internationally focused groups including the Universal Negro Improvement Association and the African Blood Brotherhood, among several others. For one of the most beneficial and thorough studies of these various activities, see Irma Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), chapters 4-5.

Despite the participation of many West Indians and African Americans in the same organizations, an all-encompassing racial unity beyond all ethnic tensions was not easily or always produced. As Irma Watkins-Owens notes in her study of Caribbean immigrants in Harlem during this era, "Churches and fraternal lodges, through their leaders especially, bonded the newer Caribbean community to larger African American Harlem, although this connection was not always smooth."[15] There was much cooperation between the groups, but also a great deal of contestation. Stereotypes, condescending attitudes, jealousies, were all too common within both communities. The "national" differences between the two groups often became inflated as both sides jockeyed for economic, social, and political power within Harlem. Simple disagreements between individuals could take on more meaningful significance should the opponents be from different communities *within* Harlem's international black communities.[16] Such divisions became a key target within the growing black diaspora political movements of the early twentieth century.

One of the key goals inherent in many of the various race-conscious, black diaspora political movements in the early twentieth century, whether "New Negro" or

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[15] Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations*, pp.73-74.

[16] Difficulties between these groups often centered on economic competition, as well as different political strategies and philosophies. While Winston James convincingly details the disproportionate, over-representation of West Indians within black radical politics of this era, he dismisses simplistic and stereotypical divisions which seemingly portray one group completely conservative and the other always radical. This theme can be found throughout his study, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*. For a contemporary account of these divisions, see Domingo, "The Tropics in New York," pp.648-650. While this article does note many issues or misunderstandings between African Americans and West Indians, Domingo notes that such divisions can also be found within the respective subsections of Harlem's black community. He mentions that some African Americans, in this era, claimed Garvey represented all West Indian opinions on how to solve race problems. He rebuts, however, that Garvey no more represented all West Indians, than the NAACP did all African Americans. His point was especially poignant given the internal divisions between African Americans over groups such as the NAACP in this era, as well as the fact that many of Garvey's most critical opponents were themselves West Indians, including many Jamaicans.

"Pan-African", was intraracial cooperation and unity via a "Race First" philosophy. If white peoples could meet at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to divide Africa amongst themselves, and, while seemingly continuously warring with each other over larger shares of the so-called colonial world, still maintain the belief that they as a supposedly "superior race" had a right to dominate the globe, then peoples of African-descent had both a right and duty to organize themselves on such a "Race First" ideology for their own liberation, despite some intraracial differences.

The carnage of World War One and the post-war racial violence which occurred in the United States, Caribbean, and England, provided an opportune time for the advancement of the "Race First" ideology that had been stirring for some time. Such demands for racial unity between black peoples, wherever they might reside, was the first step required in many of the programs and goals of black diaspora politics in the early twentieth century. While such calls were intended for black peoples throughout the world, it especially resonated in regards to intraracial divisions within Harlem. Given the fact that Harlem was one of the, if not *the* center of black diaspora activism at this time, it was natural that calls for race unity not only come from this area, but also focus on Harlem too.

Numerous calls for a "Race First" philosophy appeared in the various writings, speeches, and programs of black diaspora activists in the latter years of World War One and the postwar era. Writing in 1917, Hubert Harrison, a Danish Caribbean immigrant noted by some of his contemporaries as "the foremost Afro-American intellect of his time", boldly stated,

> Any man today who aspires to lead the Negro race must set squarely before his face the idea of 'Race First'. Just as the

> white men of these and other lands are white before they are Christians, Anglo-Saxons or Republicans; so the Negroes of this and other lands are intent upon being Negroes before they are Christians, Englishmen, or Republicans.[17]

A year later, Cyril V. Briggs, the "angry blonde Negro" from Nevis, who became one of the founders of the diaspora-focused African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) and one of the leading black Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century, published his famous "Race Catechism" in *The Crusader*.[18] Personifying the "Race Patriotism" of this era, the article asked, among various "questions and answers",

> Question: What are one's duties to the Race?
> Answer: To love one's Race above one's self and to further the common interests of all above the private interests of one.[19]

While the catechism did not specifically name African Americans and West Indians, there is little doubt that they were two of its main targets as the most powerful groups in Harlem. Within the same issue of *The Crusader*, Briggs reprinted an article from the *New York Amsterdam News* entitled "Sowing Dissension". The article noted, "There

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[17] Harrison, *When Africa Awakes*, p.40. Similar calls are found throughout his numerous other articles. For the most current and extensive studies of Harrison, see Jeffrey B. Perry, ed., *A Hubert Harrison Reader* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Universities Press, 2001); Jeffrey B. Perry, "An Introduction to Hubert Harrison: 'The Father of Harlem Radicalism'," *Souls* 2, no.1 (Winter 2000): 38-54; James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, chapter 5. Perry's volume is the most extensive collection of Harrison's writing, but other useful collections can also be found in Hubert Harrison, *When Africa Awakes: The "Inside Story" of the Stirrings and Strivings of the New Negro in the Western World* (Chesapeake, NY: ECA Associates Press, 1991); Parascandola, *Look for Me All Around You*, pp.131-162.

[18] Briggs, who had been a reporter for the *New York Amsterdam News*, founded *The Crusader* in September 1918. This became the mouthpiece for the African Blood Brotherhood shortly thereafter. For helpful overviews of Briggs, *The Crusader*, and the African Blood Brotherhood, see, Robert A. Hill, "Introduction," in *The Crusader: Volume 1 (September 1918 - August 1919)*, ed. Robert A. Hill (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), pp.v-lxxiii; James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, chapter 5; Parascandola, ed., *Look for Me All Around You*, pp.199-226; Minkah Makalani, "For the Liberation of Black People Everywhere: The African Blood Brotherhood, Black Radicalism, and Pan-African Liberation in the New Negro Movement, 1917-1936" (PhD Diss, University of Illinois, 2004).

[19] Cyril V. Briggs, "Race Catechism," *The Crusader*, September 1918, in Parascandola, *Look for Me All Around You*, p.202.

have been several attempts made of late to sow the seeds of dissension between the American Negro and his West Indian brother." Clearly defining West Indians as black people, the writer argued, "The American Negro and the West Indian Negro are one in blood, one in achievement, and one in the aspiration for equal rights and opportunities. They are both the seed of Africa." In conclusion, the article asked readers to follow the example of Jewish people who have refused to weaken or divide their widely scattered race.

> Let us, recognizing that in unity there is strength, focus our eyes upon, and move forward the consummation of a united Race that shall recognize neither geographical lines nor European superimposed governments; smoking out in the process all the conscious or unconscious traitors to the Race who would create a rift between any of its members.[20]

In October 1918, a *Crusader* article on "The Black Man's Burden" called out West Indians in the West Indies for maintaining insular identities given their common oppression, and addressed the various differences between African Americans and West Indians. The following year, a brief but powerful article summarized such ideas. "The white man can afford divisions and diversions. The Negro cannot. It's Negro first, last and all the time or perish for us." Similarly, a 1920 editorial from Trinidad to the editor of the *Crusader* derided West Indians for their allegiance to the Great Britain and their claim of a British identity at the expense of race patriotism, believing that white Britons viewed West Indians by their race and not as fellow Britons."[21]

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[20] "Sowing Dissension," *The Crusader*, September 1918, pp.30-31, in *The Crusader: Volume 1*, pp.32-33.

[21] Anselmo R. Jackson, "The Black Man's Burden," *The Crusader*, October 1918, pp.9-10, in *The Crusader: Volume 1*, pp.47-48; "The African Knows," *The Crusader*, October 1919, p.23, in *The Crusader: Volume 2 (September 1919 - August 1920)*, ed. Robert A. Hill (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), p.491; VPM Langston, editorial, *The Crusader*, July 1920, p.30, in *The Crusader: Volume 2*, pp.785-786.

Calls for racial unity, particularly between African Americans and West Indians, continued throughout the 1920s. Speaking at a forum on "The Problem of the Relationship between the American and West Indian Negroes", Chandler Owen, a black socialist leader and co-editor of *The Messenger* called for "[Black] Americans and West Indians to unite and fight for the betterment of conditions affecting them as a race."[22] As late as 1927, the *West Indian American* continued the call for racial unity. "The colored man, wherever he may be found, cannot afford to draw fine distinctions...or indulge in inter-racial strife. 'One for all and all for one,' must be the motto if he hopes to come out from under."[23]

Within such perspectives, peoples of African-descent were not only racialized into what Frank Guridy has recently described as a "racial citizenship", the conditions and respective struggles within the various lands where people of African-descent resided were similarly racialized into part of the global struggle.[24] Alongside the calls for black peoples to adopt a "Race First" ideology, many periodicals in Harlem also carried news and informational pieces on the British West Indies. These served not only to keep West Indians in Harlem aware of their homelands and to educate African Americans on their "brothers abroad", but also to help forge an international consciousness which many diaspora movements believed was necessary given the current global oppression of black

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[22] "West Indian and American Negroes," *New York Amsterdam News*, 28 February 1923, p.2. The title of this forum is particularly telling of the ongoing rivalry between African Americans and West Indians, as well as the efforts by many activists to move beyond such issues via intraracial unity. Ironically, despite this call from Owens, he was involved in his own intraracial debates with West Indian activist WA Domingo, who wrote for *The Messenger* before quitting over a supposed anti-West Indian bias by the paper's editors. See *The Messenger*, March 1923.

[23] "All for One-One for All," *The West Indian American*, 15 October 1927, p.6.

[24] Guridy uses this term in his discussion of Afro-Cuban and African American encounters in the early twentieth century. Frank Guridy, "From Solidarity to Cross-Fertilization: Afro-Cuba/African American Interaction in the 1930s and 1940s," *Radical History Review* 87 (Fall 2003): 21.

peoples. Mainstream African American newspapers like the *New York Amsterdam News*, organizational periodicals such as the UNIA's *Negro World* and the ABB's *Crusader*, and socialist newspapers like *The Messenger* contributed news and notes on the British West Indies, as well as other key sites of struggle for peoples of African-descent.[25]

Despite the obvious inclusion of the British Caribbean and other areas outside of Africa into the black diaspora politics of the early twentieth century, there remains a popular tendency to view the nation-building efforts of such activists and organizations as focused solely on the African continent. Africa would be the site of black nations, while black populations in the diaspora sought equality in the land in which they resided. However, while it is true that the continent received the bulk of diaspora nation-building initiatives, black nation-building initiatives in the West (beyond Haiti) also existed. Throughout the early twentieth century, there were numerous calls from black diaspora organizations for an end to Crown Colony system in the British Caribbean and the installation of majority rule in those colonies. Given the underlying notion of "strength in unity" among most of these movements, many activists did not wish to see the creation of small, struggling self-governing nations in the region. Instead, parallel with projects for uniting portions or all of Africa under majority rule, there was a call for the British West Indies to unite in order to form a stronger black nation that would bring both respect and power to peoples of African-descent throughout the world. With such a goal, a

[25] For example, in the *Negro World*, Hubert Harrison penned a column called "West Indian News Notes" from 1920-1922. Perry, *Hubert Harrison Reader*, p.234. In *The Messenger*, popular historian J.A. Rogers, a Jamaican immigrant in Harlem, penned a series of articles on the political, social and economic conditions of the West Indies. J.A. Rogers, "The West Indies," *The Messenger*, September 1922, pp.483-485; J.A. Rogers, "The West Indies," *The Messenger*, October 1922, pp.506-508; J.A. Rogers, "The West Indies," *The Messenger*, November 1922, pp.526-528; J.A. Rogers, "The Future of West Indians," December 1922, pp.543-545.

united, federated West Indies was often seen as one of the most logical and powerful embodiments of black nation-building in the West.

Marcus Garvey, one of the most well-known diaspora activists of the early 20th century, provides some of the earliest examples of such conceptualizations of federation. Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) galvanized millions of black peoples throughout the black diaspora in the late 1910s and 1920s. His experiences as a young man in Jamaica, followed by international travel to England, Central and South America, and eventually the United States merged to create the passionate "Race First" philosophy, race pride, and demands for self-determination for black peoples which came to mark the UNIA for decades. Though the UNIA was founded in Jamaica in 1914, its dynamic expansion began when it was re-inaugurated in Harlem a few years later. From that basis, the UNIA grew to become the largest black diaspora movement in the early twentieth century with hundreds of branches spread throughout the United States, Caribbean, Central and South America, and even Africa. As a result, Garvey's power equaled any other, and surpassed most, contemporary black diaspora movements, drawing both intraracial support and competition.[26]

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[26] Marcus Garvey and the UNIA have spawned numerous studies over the years. See for example, Tony Martin, *Race First: the Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1976); Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, 10 Volumes (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1983-2006); Marcus Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey or Africa for the Africans*, volumes I & II, Amy Jacques Garvey, ed. (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1986); Rupert Lewis, *Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1988); Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1986). See also recent works that look at the role of the UNIA beyond Harlem, including more regional and local studies, as well as studies of other leaders within the UNIA. See for example, Martin, *Pan-African Connection*; Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan, eds., *Garvey: His Work and Impact* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1991); Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Claudrena N. Harold, "The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942" (PhD Diss, University of Notre Dame, 2004).

While Garvey, like many Black Diaspora activists of the era, focused primarily on the African continent (in his case, the desire for a united Africa and the "Back to Africa" movement for which he is likely most remembered), ideas of racial unity and self-determination among black peoples in the West were also very important in his movement. Most scholars of Caribbean federation have overlooked (if not outright dismissed) any interest by Garvey in Caribbean federation.[27] If one focuses on Garvey's work only during his Harlem heydays, this appears to be the case. In the early 1920, Garvey himself stated, "The future of the Negro...outside of Africa, spells ruin and disaster."[28] However, Garvey's work before and after Harlem show that he did not ignore Caribbean federation, and in fact saw it as an important black nation-building project with far-reaching ramifications. In fact, as Richard A. Hill has noted, before Garvey's vision of an "African Empire", he imagined a federated West Indies as the basis of a "Black West Indian Empire".[29]

Various examples of Garvey's interest in Caribbean federation exist. One of the earliest illustrations is found in a 1913 article in the *African Times and Orient Review.*

> There have been several movements to federate the British West Indian Islands, but owing to parochial feelings nothing definite has been achieved. Ere long this change is sure to come about because the people of these islands are all one. They live under the same conditions, are of the

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[27] For an example of Garvey's supposed disinterest in Caribbean federation, see Mansingh, "Background to Failure of the West Indies Federation," p.218. Here, Mansingh claims that Garvey "was more concerned with the fate of the entire Negro race and its connection with Africa than he was with the West Indies. The idea of federating the British Caribbean as a possible solution to some of the problems of the Negro in the Western Hemisphere did not seem to have occurred to him."

[28] Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions*, p.53

[29] Robert A. Hill, "The First England Years and After, 1912-1916," in *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, John Henrik Clarke, ed. (New York: Random House, 1974), p.47.

> same race and mind, and have the same feelings and sentiments regarding the things of the world.
>
> As one who knows the people well, I make no apology for prophesying that there will soon be a turning point in the history of the West Indies; and that the people who inhabit that portion of the Western Hemisphere will be the instruments of uniting a scattered race who, before the close of many centuries, will found an Empire on which the sun shall shine as ceaselessly as it shines on the Empire of the North today. This may be regarded as a dream, but I would point my critical friends to history and its lessons. Would Caesar have believed that the country he was invading in 55 B.C. would be the seat of the greatest Empire in the World? [30]

In Jamaica in 1914, Garvey also penned an editorial to the *Gleaner* in which he called for a West Indian federation. Despite the fact that African became the primary focus of Garvey during the glory years of the UNIA in Harlem, with only a brief mention of the West Indies in the UNIA's "Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World", it is unlikely that he simply dismissed the idea of federation in the West Indies. Rather, he seems to have seen Caribbean federation as a step in the broader unification and empowerment of black peoples throughout the world.

Support for a West Indian federation also became a cornerstone of Garvey's political career upon his return to Jamaica in the late 1920s. As Tony Martin has noted in his study of Garvey's activities in this era, particularly through his People's Political Party in Jamaica, Garvey demanded majority rule for the Caribbean, dominion status (i.e., self-government) for Jamaica, and the establishment of a Caribbean federation

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[30] Marcus Garvey, "The British West Indies in the Mirror of Civilization," *African Times and Orient Review*, October 1913, in *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, p.82. Such an idea predates, but is seemingly connected to TA Marryshow's view of federation and rise and fall of nations throughout history. See chapter 3 for that discussion.

which he hoped would come to include even non-English speaking islands.[31] Writing in the *Blackman* in May 1929, Garvey said, "Federation of the West Indies with Dominion Status is the consummation of Negro aspiration in this Archipelago."[32] Without a doubt, Garvey's support for federation represented a black nation-building project in the Western Hemisphere.

Another prominent example of a Black Diaspora group with Caribbean ties was the African Blood Brotherhood founded in Harlem in the postwar era by Cyril Briggs, Richard Moore, and W.A. Domingo, and Grace Campbell. During its brief existence from 1919-1924, the ABB shuffled between black nationalism and revolutionary socialism, addressing both race and class issues.[33] In spite of some key ideological differences and serious disagreements with other black diaspora movements during these years, particularly Garvey, the ABB did share a fundamental belief in the need for racial unity and uplift for black people throughout the diaspora and on the continent. Alongside goals of racial equality, race pride and harmony, and political and economic liberation for black peoples, the ABB sought

> to organize the national strength of the entire Negro group in America for the purpose of extending moral and financial aid and, where necessary, leadership to our blood-brothers on the continent of

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[31] Martin, *Pan-African Connection*, pp.61, 115-116.

[32] Quoted in Martin, *Pan-African Connection*, p.116

[33] All of these figures, with the exception of Campbell, were West Indians migrants who had been radicalized in regards to both race and class issues through the diasporic experiences. Campbell was the daughter of a West Indian immigrant and African American, so she too had some Caribbean connections. Unfortunately, there is still no monograph on the ABB at this time. For helpful overviews, see Hill, "Introduction," in *The Crusader: Volume 1*, pp.v-lxxiii; James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, chapter 5; Makalani, "For the Liberation of Black People Everywhere"; Wilfred D. Samuels, *Five Afro-Caribbean Voices in American Culture, 1917-1929* (Boulder, CO: Belmont Books, 1977), chapter IV.

> Africa and in Haiti and the West Indies in their struggle against white capitalist exploitation.[34]

Like Garvey and other movements of this era, the ABB supported self-determination and nation-building efforts in Africa as well as the diaspora. In fact, their *Crusader* publication sought to "awaken the American Negro to the splendid strategic position of the Race in the South American and the West Indian Republics."[35] Through various editorials and articles in the *Crusader*, the ABB pushed this goal. In conjunction with the "rising tide of colour" against the "alien overlords" across the globe, the ABB and its supporters called for the development of the West Indies for West Indians, and black nation-building initiatives in the West.[36] This would seemingly include the idea of a West Indian federation.

> Let us unite from the ends of the earth on the common purpose of liberation and redemption of our motherhood and the rejuvenation of the great states that in ages past held Africa securely for her children... Let us even include in our aims the lands of the New World for which our blood was shed and where still we are numerically predominant. Let us aim for a greater rule that will include Haiti and the rest of the West Indies and the vast republic of Brazil in South America with the ancient homeland...[37]

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[34] "Summary of the Program and Aims of the African Blood Brotherhood, Formulated by 1920 Convention," in *The Crusader, Volume 1*, p.lxvii. Such a goal led the ABB to attempt to create a federation of all black diaspora organizations in the early 1920s, but this effort failed to materialize. The ABB were particularly interested in joining with the UNIA to create such a federation, but Garvey rejected their efforts. For a discussion of this failed proposal see, Michelle Ann Stephens, *Black Empire: the Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp.116-125.

[35] "Aims of the Crusader," *The Crusader*, September 1918, p.4, in *The Crusade: Volume 1*, p.6.

[36] Edwin Williams, "Crown Colony Government in the West Indies," *The Crusader*, October 1919, p.19, in *The Crusader: Volume 2*, pp. 486-487; "British Seditious Laws," *The Crusader*, July 1920, p.22, in *The Crusader: Volume II*, p.778.

[37] "A Race of Cry Babies", *The Crusader*, December 1920, p.9 in *The Crusader: Volume 3*, p.939.

While actual discussions of federation appear to be rare in the ABB program, one news note in the October 1919 edition of the *Crusader* noted that,

> Falling in line with the world-wide sweep of the Negro movement for national existence and freedom from the white heel, residents of Dominica, B.W.I., have started a movement for an independent federation of the West Indies on the principle of national freedom.[38]

Though it is debatable whether the actual residents of Dominica considered their actions to be part of Black Diasporic politics, it did not matter to the ABB. They, like most involved in black diaspora politics saw such an effort as part of the struggle for racial uplift and self-determination. Caribbean federation was once again racialized within the diaspora as a linking of regional and racial concerns, whether internal Caribbean views saw it as such or not.

The West Indies and West Indians also constituted an important aspect of the formal Pan-African conferences and congresses convened in the early twentieth century. Beginning with the Pan-African Conference in London (1900), organized by Trinidadian barrister Sylvester Williams, through the Fourth Pan-African Congress in New York (1927), numerous West Indian delegates joined with African American activists and smaller numbers of Africans to discuss the problem of race.[39] Within most of these meetings, the future of the British West Indies was conjoined with African, African American, and other Caribbean areas as sites of struggle for peoples of African-descent,

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[38] "The Fight for Freedom," *The Crusader Magazine*, October 1919, p. 16, in *The Crusader: Volume 2*, p.484.

[39] It is not the intent of this study to provide overviews for each of these historical meetings. For some of the best summaries of these meetings, see Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, trans. Ann Keep (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1974), chapters 11 & 13; P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement 1776-1991* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1994), chapter 2.

Table 4.2 – Pan-African Meetings (early 20th century)

Pan-African Meetings	Year	Location
Pan-African Conference	1900	London
First Pan-African Congress	1919	Paris
Second Pan-African Congress	1921	London, Brussels, Paris
Third Pan-African Congress	1923	London, Lisbon
Fourth Pan-African Congress	1927	New York

with the continent taking precedence. The bulk of the declarations that came from these meetings sought a broad array of reforms connected to self-determination for black peoples in these areas. For instance, the 1900 Pan-African Conference called for the British Empire to provide "responsible government to the black colonies of Africa and the West Indies" which would ostensibly create majority-rule in these areas.[40] Similar calls were made about the West Indies in the first three Pan-African Congresses in 1919, 1921, and 1923. After failed attempts to organize the Fourth Pan-African Congress in the West Indies in 1925, the meeting took place in New York in 1927. At this meeting, the usual calls were made for "self-government" for the colonies (but not necessarily independence). In addition, the constituents "urge[d] the peoples of the West Indies to begin an earnest movement for the federation of these islands."[41] No explanation is given for why federation was needed in the Caribbean, but once again, given the context in which the statement is made, it is reasonable to assume these delegates viewed federation as the best means to empower and unite the West Indies, which they viewed as a black region.

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[40] "To The Nations of the World" in *W.E.B. DuBois: a Reader*, p.640.

[41] WEB DuBois, "The Pan-African Congresses: the Story of a Growing Movement," *The Crisis*, October 1927, in Lewis, *DuBois: a Reader*, p.674. This statement's request to "begin" a movement for federation seemingly ignored the ongoing movements for federation that had been ongoing for some time within the West Indies.

Aside from the formal programs of black diaspora organizations such as the UNIA, ABB, and Pan-African conferences and congresses, calls for federation litter the writings of various black activists in this area. For instance, Hubert Harrison included a discussion of a West Indian federation alongside discussion of the broader Caribbean in one of his "West Indian New Notes" columns in the *Negro World* in March 1922.[42] W.E.B. DuBois, who had previously referred to the West Indies as a "new Ethiopia of the Isles", seemingly supported the cause of West Indian federation in his 1925 article "The Negro Mind Reaches Out" in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* compilation. Noting the fear of black self-rule among Europeans, DuBois asked, "Why is there not a great British West Indian Federation, stretching from Bermuda to Honduras and Guiana, and ranking with the free dominions? The answer was clear and concise – Color."[43] Once again, federation was viewed as a program through which black peoples in the West Indies could achieve self-determination; however, at this time, in DuBois' opinion, the British Empire prevented this.

Caribbean federation also became a goal among many black communists in the late 1920s. Richard B. Moore, former member of the ABB, represented the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC) at the International Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism and for National Independence held in Brussels in 1927. The various resolutions "for the benefit of the oppressed Negro peoples in the world" included a demand for an end to imperialist occupation and independence for nations such as Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic, and self-government for Caribbean

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[42] Perry, *Hubert Harrison Reader*, p.234

[43] W.E.B. DuBois, "The Rise of the West Indian," *The Crisis*, September 1920, pp.214-215, in *The Crisis: a Record of the Darker Races*, Volume 19-20 (New York: Arno Press, 1969); W.E.B. DuBois, "The Negro Mind Reaches Out," in *The New Negro*, Alain Locke, ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1992), p.401.

colonies, including a "Confederation of the British West Indies."[44] In 1928, the black communist leader George Padmore penned a lengthy article for the ANLC's *Negro Champion* newspaper. This article noted the growing movement for federation in the West Indies, and called for the colonial masses of the region to support such an initiative "in their own interest" and not just for the reasons that the colonial governments and middle class pushed it. He also called for West Indians in the US to support the cause of federation, closed by stating that the "The Negro Champion... [stood] ready to give its full support to a militant movement among the islanders for the federation and the freedom of the West Indies."[45] Similarly, a 1929 editorial in the *Liberator* (formerly the *Negro Champion*) presented Caribbean federation as a means to fight British colonialism and end the Crown Colony system in the West Indies. Once more, there was a call for workers to resist colonial and middle class ideas of federation, and instead, "seize the movement and turn it to their own advantage in a relentless struggle against both native and foreign exploiters...for a Free independent West Indies!"[46] Taken as a whole, these black communist editorials represented the joint race and class struggles that characterized the views of many black Marxists who refused to set aside race and focus solely on class as orthodox Marxism prescribed.[47] Caribbean federation was yet again

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[44] "Statement at the Congress of the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence, Brussels, February 1927," *The Crisis*, July 1927, pp.126-130 in W. Burghardt Turner and Joyce Moore Turner, eds., *Richard B. Moore: Caribbean Militant in Harlem, Collected Writings 1920-1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp.143-146.

[45] George Padmore, "A Federated West Indies," *Negro Champion*, 8 August 1928, p.12.

[46] "Demand Federated West Indies," *Liberator*, 7 December 1929, p.4.

[47] For examples of such attitudes among Black Marxists, see, Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: the Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Great Depression* (Urbana:

interpreted as a means through which black peoples could achieve self-determination in the West Indies.

In the late 1920s, A.M. Wendell Malliet, a Jamaican immigrant who worked as a journalist for the *New York Amsterdam News* and Secretary of the West India Committee of America, published a brief book titled *The Destiny of the West Indies*.[48] In this text, Malliet claimed that the British Caribbean offered the most opportunities for people of African-decent in the New World, as "there [was] room in those colonies for the coloured man to grow to full stature."[49] However, for the region to reach its full potential, he believed the Crown Colony system must be abolished and replaced with a West Indian federation.[50] Knowing that such a demand required the colonial governments to abandon their belief that the black and coloured populations of the West Indies were not yet "fit" for self-government, Malliet spent the bulk of his booklet dismissing such notions and arguing that the West Indians were more than ready for such a responsibility. He pointed to the numerous positions already capably held by peoples of African-descent in the West Indies, and claimed that those who ignored such examples and held-fast to the idea that the region required a trusteeship were held back by the "pernicious influence of the Anglo-Saxon race philosophy."[51] Like many other West Indians, he noted the advancement of the white dominions of the empire and called for the same opportunities

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University of Illinois Press, 1983); Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-36* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1998).

[48] A.M. Wendell Malliet, *The Destiny of the West Indies* (New York: Russwurm Press, 1928).

[49] Malliet, *Destiny of the West Indies*, p.2.

[50] Malliet, *Destiny of the West Indies*, pp.4, 15.

[51] Malliet, *Destiny of the West Indies*, pp.8-15.

for the British Caribbean so that they could take their place as a united, "self-governing nation within the British Commonwealth of Nations."[52]

Though not as involved in the more radical black diaspora organizations, Malliet was a diasporic activist nonetheless through his involvement in West Indian, African American, and intraracial ventures in Harlem in this era. Despite Malliet's desire to assure his readers that a united West Indies would not be "governed on the principle of race", his appeal undoubtedly portrayed a prominent racial consciousness like many of his contemporaries.[53] He envisioned a federated British Caribbean as a key step in the transformation of white-ruled colonies into a strong black homeland in the West where peoples of African-descent could reach their fullest potential. In this, his ideas aligned closely with the various other diaspora conceptualizations of the West Indies and federation popular in the early twentieth century.

In comparing diaspora visions of Caribbean federation to those of the colonial power brokers and West Indian majorities, one finds both similarities and differences. Whereas the vast majority, if not all, of the government officials' and oligarchies' ideas of a united West Indies sought to maintain and bolster the status quo of the British West Indies, diaspora notions of federation, like most West Indian conceptualizations from within the Caribbean, directly challenged the status quo and viewed federation as an means to develop the region for the good of the local populations. Nevertheless, there were also important distinctions between West Indian and diaspora views. Within the black and coloured majorities of the Caribbean and the West Indian nationalist movement, there was more diversity among people and groups about the extent to which

[52] Malliet, *Destiny of the West Indies*, p.20.

[53] Malliet, *Destiny of the West Indies*, pp.14-15.

race should be a basis for support of federation. While activists like Donovan, Meikle, and Marryshow offered racialized visions of federation that connected with the wider black diaspora, others like Cipriani (and Marryshow) also held more transracial views and saw federation primarily as a regional project. The bulk of diaspora calls for a united British Caribbean, meanwhile, were quite direct in emphasizing the place of race in their visions of federation. Most of these viewed federation as a black nation-building project, and did so without the ambivalence common in many regional calls. At the same time, however, the diaspora offered much less concrete plans for the actual installation of such a federal scheme. If the black and coloured majorities of the Caribbean held little say in the politics of the West Indians, black diaspora movements were even further removed from the decision making process. Nevertheless, all of these perspectives are important within the history of Caribbean federation. The connections, overlaps, and divergences between these multiple conceptualizations of federation speak to the complicated history of efforts to build a united West Indies, which continued and expanded during the 1930s and 1940s.

Chapter 5

Disparate Interpretations of British Caribbean Federation (1930-1945)

The 1930s and early 1940s proved to be an era of much chaos and significant change throughout the globe. Worldwide economic depression, invasions, rebellions, war, and increasingly powerful anticolonial movements substantially challenged and altered the imperialist stranglehold over many regions during these times. By the time World War II ended in 1945, much of the globe seemingly stood on the verge of a new era as old empires were weakened, and new nations appeared poised to emerge. If the World War I and post-war era inspired significant ideological attacks on European colonialism, the turmoil of the 1930s-1940s brought many of those challenges into reality as the post-WWII years represented the "beginning of the end" for many empires via a lengthy decolonization process which was to take shape over the next several decades.

The British Empire faced significant challenges in the 1930s and early 1940s. In the early 1930s, the empire was divided between the emerging Commonwealth members (at this time reserved for the so-called white dominions such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Irish Free State), and the non-white colonial areas of Africa, Asia, and the West Indies. The 1926 Balfour Act and the 1931 Statute of Westminster solidified a different status for the self-governing white dominions who, while still technically in the Empire, became equal and voluntary members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.[1] These occurrences further distanced the disparate parts of the British Empire and seriously undermined any notions of an imperial family. While

[1] For a brief discussion of these acts and the growth of the British Commonwealth, see, W. David McIntyre, *British Decolonization 1946-1997* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), chapter 1; Martin Kitchen, *Empire and Commonwealth: A Short History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).

white dominions were now officially recognized as equals, the nonwhite colonies of the empire remained exploited and unequal under familiar forms of trusteeship and tutelage. Though the British were technically able to maintain their infamous claim that the "sun never set on the British Empire" into the post-WWII era, in many parts of the empire, ominous storm clouds increasingly gathered in the 1930s-1940s and forewarned of the "setting sun" in many parts of the British colonial world. This was especially true for the British Caribbean whose claims of being one of the oldest parts of the empire increasingly became more of a "scarlet letter" than a "badge of honor".

In the early 1930s, the West Indies, with the exception of Barbados and the Bahamas, remained locked under the antiquated Crown Colony systems with severely restricted economic, social, and political opportunities. Even in the two colonies where Crown Colony government was not formally established, the dominance of the commercial oligarchies remained the norm with obvious race and class discriminations over the bulk of the population. Though the reforms of the 1920s added miniscule representation in many colonies, the black and coloured majorities remained largely disfranchised and outside of the decision-making processes of the West Indies. Economically, the region continued to flounder too. The depression that gripped much of the globe in the 1930s was especially hard in these colonies. The struggling export economies of the region grew worse as the foreign markets that usual purchased West Indian goods suffered through their own economic woes. Moreover, many in the middle class and working class found their traditional migration outlets closed, leaving them increasingly stuck in their respective colonial homelands. Adding to such dire conditions were thousands of West Indian migrants returned from abroad. Socially, despite a lack of

formal Jim Crow policies found in the US, the British Caribbean remained staunchly divided along seemingly congruent race and class lines. Despite the continued ambivalence and cautious nature of the colonial power brokers to initiate reforms which could threaten the economic, social, and political status quo, the economic stagnation of the colonies, lacking and lost job opportunities, poor wages, shameful working and living conditions, poverty, and general dissatisfaction with the constrained economic, social, and political systems produced a volatile situation in which labor unrest and activism, heightened racial consciousness, and continued demands for significant political reform, from within the West Indies and the broader black diaspora., combined to seriously challenge the status quo of the British Caribbean in the 1930s and early 1940s.

This chapter investigates the evolution of the British West Indies from 1930-1945, with a particular focus on the ongoing debates over federation and its place within the multiple conceptualizations of the future of the West Indies. Throughout these tumultuous years, federation remained a popular "solution" to a range of problems envisioned by colonial powers, regional nationalists, and diaspora activists. Within official circles, the idea of federation continued to be viewed as the means through which to institute better colonial government, administrative efficiency, and greater economic strength. However, like in previous decades, such measures were not designed to challenge their own authority and status in the colonies. To West Indians in the colonies, particularly the growing nationalists forces and budding labor movements, federation remained viewed as the vehicle through which to gain a range of political, economic, and social reforms for the good of the West Indian population themselves. Outside of the West Indies, black diaspora activists and transnational West Indian groups continued to

trumpet federation as a key step in the liberation of the colonies from white colonial rule. The future of the West Indies, therefore, remained tied to multiple worlds and seemingly up for grabs as the various interested groups put forth their own ideas for federation, which existed simultaneously as a means to control, improve, and in some cases liberate (to varying degrees) the region from its current quandary.

Early 1930s

Building upon the support for federation in 1920s, the new decade opened with continued inquiries and support for the idea among a range of groups associated with the British West Indies. The West Indian Sugar Commission of 1929-1930, organized to investigate the dire economic situation of the region, made the familiar recommendation of unifying some colonial governments as a means to reduce costs and achieve better efficiency. In 1930, some members of the legislative council in Antigua petitioned for federation of the Leewards, Windwards, and Trinidad, while officials in Dominica requested a federation of the Windwards and Leewards as a step towards a union of all British Caribbean colonies.[2] In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Cipriani and Marryshow continued to campaign in the colonies for federation with self-government, as the West Indian nationalists directed the local population to "agitate, educate, and confederate."[3] Similar West Indian calls for federation can also be found in the program of the St. Kitts Worker's League, founded in 1932.[4] Outside of the West Indies, Otto Huiswoud, a black

[2] Wallace, *British Caribbean*, p.93.

[3] Mordecai, *Federation of the West Indies*, p.22; Mansingh, "Background to Failure of the West Indies Federation," p.189.

[4] Richards, "Race, Labour, and Politics in Jamaica and St. Kitts," p.512.

communist leader, noted the growing nationalist calls in the Caribbean for a "Federated West Indies" with dominion status as a campaign for "native rule".[5] Support for self-determination in the West Indies, and calls for a "Free Federated West Indies" as a means to empower the workers of the region and combat the exploitation of British imperialism also appeared in the columns of the *Negro Worker*.[6] However, it would be another British commission and a West Indian conference that elicited the most discussion of federation in the early 1930s.

In 1931, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Passfield, issued a dispatch to the governments of the Windward Islands, Leeward Islands, and Trinidad calling for a "comprehensive enquiry" into the possibilities of closer union and cooperation between all or some of these Eastern Caribbean islands. This request led to the launching of a Closer Union Commission in November 1932.[7] Before that commission officially launched, however, local West Indians organized their own conference in late October 1932 known as the West Indian Conference in Roseau, Dominica.[8]

The Roseau Conference brought together a number of interested parties from many eastern Caribbean colonies, including some elected (and formerly elected) members of the various legislative councils, newspaper editors, and West Indian

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[5] Huiwoud, "World Aspects of the Negro Question," *Communist*, February 1930, in Parascandola, *Look for Me All Around You*, pp.249-250.

[6] "Self-Determination for the West Indies", *Negro Worker*, April 1932, p.19; "'Negro Worker' Banned by Imperialists," *Negro Worker*, 15 June 1932, pp.14-15.

[7] *Report of the Closer Union Commission (Leeward Islands, Windward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago), April 1933*, Cmd.4383 (London: HMSO, 1933), p.iv-v, 35-36.

[8] This conference is also referred to as the Unofficial West Indian Conference, or simply as the Roseau Conference. It met from 28 October – 2 November 1932, and was hosted by the Dominica Taxpayers' Reform Association. For an excellent, lengthy discussion of the Roseau Conference, see Mansingh, "Background to Failure of the West Indies Federation," chapter 4.

nationalists. A large number of the attendees were also coloured or black, though a few white representatives from the planter and merchant class were present. Such a configuration made this conference unique in comparisons with the official conferences held in previous decades at which the local West Indian representation was minute.

The primary task of this meeting was to discuss a series of common problems facing the West Indian colonies, particularly the need for significant political reform. Among the topics discussed, the most pressing were the need for an end to anachronistic Crown Colony Rule, and the installation of a federation of the eastern Caribbean islands with self-government and dominion status (with a possibility of additional members at a later date). Such topics obviously coincided with most of the West Indian nationalists goals in this era, many of whom attended.[9] The conference also represented one of the most significant regional discussions of these issues. In the words of Cecil E.A.Rawle, Chairman of the Conference, the conference marked,

> the end of a Chapter in West Indian history, and the beginning of a new era, for in taking the initiative and sustaining to a successful end the effort necessary to devise a programme of political reform and the outline of a democratic constitution for a United West Indies, the people of these islands proclaim that they have definitely freed themselves from the Crown Colony mentality, and from the prejudice of insular myths.[10]

The idea of federation was discussed at length as the means through which the West Indies could improve the current inefficient government, and increase the economic

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[9] Cipriani proved to be one of the major figures of the conference, and despite being a "white man", he had already well-established himself as a leader who had "given his life to the cause of West Indian Nationalism and to the work of uplifting the lower classes of the West Indies." *Proceedings of the West Indian Conference held at Roseau, Dominica, B.W.I., October-November, 1932* (Port Castries, St. Lucia: n.p., 1932), p.20 (Hereafter referred to as *Roseau Proceedings*). Marryshow was unable to attend as he was in London with a delegation making similar pleas directly to the metropole. Nevertheless, he was in full support of the Roseau Conference, and in communication with those constituents.

[10] *Roseau Proceedings*, p.2.

prowess of the area – for the good of all West Indians and not just the ruling oligarchies. Any ideas of federation under the current Crown Colony regimes was rejected as the vast majority of the participants sought greater participation by West Indians themselves via a much wider franchise than currently in place. The proceedings of the conference offered an extensive blueprint of their plans for federation in the eastern Caribbean, including the numbers, procedures, and powers of the federal government. In lieu of the Closer Union Commission, which was to arrive in the West Indies shortly, a resolution was also passed requesting that their "terms of reference" be expanded to include the investigation of self-government.[11]

Given the hopes that the conference would lay the "foundation stones of West Indian Nationality", represent "West Indian Solidarity", and provide a base for a new "West Indian Nationhood", it became necessary to offer a definition of who was a West Indian. The place of race proved one of the most interesting aspects of that question.[12] Captain Ashpitel, a Dominican planter, helped initiate this discussion when he asked, as a member of the English community with interests in the West Indies, what would be that community's status under the proposed federation. Obviously, Asphitel was alluding to the common notion that people of African-decent, who were the vast majority of the West Indian population, would likely dominate a self-governing federation. Asphitel, in fact, even suggested that there should be some safeguards installed into the structure of the proposed federation for "the section of the community which entertained doubts as to the aims of the movement for federation." A Mr. Elder from Barbados responded that

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[11] *Roseau Proceedings*, pp.9-17.

[12] *Roseau Proceedings*, p.19;

"Federation was for all classes of the West Indies," and Cipriani replied, "Confederation had nothing to do with class, colour, or creed." With such ideas in mind, the "term West Indian was defined... as including all persons born, domiciled, or having a permanent stake in the West Indies.[13] Therefore, both federation and West Indianness emerged from the Roseau Conference as largely a transracial regional project within the British Empire.

Despite the claims of the Roseau delegates that federation was to be a regional project, and not one of for any particular race or class, some within the Colonial Office still viewed such calls for federation as a racial movement that directly challenged British trusteeship policies. A few months after the Roseau Conference, a Colonial Office memo by S.E.V. Luke, described the conference delegates as representing a "negro separatist movement strongly tinged with a political socialism." Their desire for dominion status, Luke believed, would place the West Indies into the hands of a "negro population" who viewed Crown Colony government as not only "irresponsible" and "unrepresentative" but also white supremacist.[14] Though it is true that many West Indians did wish to have self-determination, and overturn the obvious racism of the colonial systems, the notion of a "separatist movement" was simply paranoid folly as the Roseau Conference's request for federation with dominion status clearly showed a desire to maintain ties with the Commonwealth.

While the Roseau Conference seemingly avoided any direct talk of black self-determination by arguing for self-government with a wider franchise, many delegates were no doubt conscious of the fact that the federation proposed would indelibly bring

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[13] "Minutes of Proceedings of the West Indian Conference held at Roseau, Dominica, 28th October to 4th November 1932," CO 318/411/6, PRO.

[14] Luke Memo, 31 January 1933, CO 318/411/6, PRO.

power to the black and coloured majorities in ways that official calls for federation avoided. One such example is found in a memorandum from Randall H. Lockhart submitted to the Closer Union Commission, which arrived in the British West Indies in November 1932 to begin their investigation.[15] Within the lengthy memo, Lockhart addressed, among other things, the race and class structures of the West Indies. Some of his most eloquent rebuttals referred to the flawed notion of the trusteeship, which he believed could not accomplish its goals of making the local populations fit for government because many in the white population would not wish to threaten their place atop West Indian society.

> A class of officials anxious to uphold the prestige of their race and to continue its privileged position as a ruling people are not likely to be over-anxious to train a subject people to oust them from that position, nor will they readily acknowledge that the time has come for their own gradual eviction.[16]

Lockhart claimed that much of the political activity that West Indians undertook, which would seemingly show them as desiring change and ready for self-government, was dismissed by those who did not believe "in the complete educability of the Negro," viewed such activism as Communist plots, or dismissed them for their supposed lack of character.[17] He argued if the West Indies were populated by only white people that they would have free democratic institutions, and that the question should not be whether

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[15] Lockhart was a Roseau Conference delegate, former elected member to Dominica's Legislative Council, and a member of the Dominica Taxpayers' Reform Association. The Closer Union Commission arrived in the British West Indies in November and in the course of approximately three months visited Antigua, St. Kitts & Nevis, Montserrat, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada, and Trinidad & Tobago. *Report of the Closer Union Commission*, pp.iv-vi.

[16] Randall H. Lockhart to Closer Union Commission, 22 December 1932, p.8, CO 318/411/6, PRO.

[17] Randall H. Lockhart to Closer Union Commission, 22 December 1932, p.9, CO 318/411/6, PRO.

West Indians were fit for self-government, but if they had the right to it.[18] Lockhart believed they did and noted the great strides West Indians had made in such a short time since the horrors of slavery. To refuse their demands for self-determination, he argued, was not only detrimental to black people, but also an indictment of English notions of liberty which they held so dear.[19]

Lockhart's memo impressed some colonial officials, but it did little to sway the focus or function of the Closer Union Commission. Though the CUC did allow some testimony for self-government as the Roseau Conference requested, the bulk of their focus remained the investigation of the viability of a federation in the Eastern Caribbean as a means to achieve economic and administrative efficiency. This mission was similar to many of the previous ones, in which federation was not seen as a means to empower or improve the West Indians for West Indians, but rather a system for better colonial control. The Commission reported that they heard much "lip-service" for federation, but that the deep-seated insularity of most of the islands and their reluctance to agree to any unions that they deemed might restrict their local autonomy, prevented the institution of an Eastern Caribbean federation. The Commission did propose, however, uniting the Windwards and Leewards into one colony with one governor over the separate colonial administrations. Several colonies rejected this limited proposal too, and the divided opinions in other colonies, rendered this suggestion null as well.[20]

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[18] Randall H. Lockhart to Closer Union Commission, 22 December 1932, pp.11-12, CO 318/411/6, PRO.

[19] Randall H. Lockhart to Closer Union Commission, 22 December 1932, pp.12-13 and 19, CO 318/411/6, PRO.

[20] *Report of the Closer Union Commission*; "West Indies: Closer Union Proposals," *The Times*, 19 August 1933, p.7; Wallace, *British Caribbean*, pp.94-95.

In spite of the lengthy discussions of federation in the early 1930s, no formal plans were launched. Federation, therefore, remained on the shelf as a possible solution to the woes of the West Indies, but one that was not ready to be formal attempted. It would reappear soon enough however.

Mid-Late 1930s

If the early 1930s proved to be trying times for many in the British West Indies, then the mid-late 1930s appeared tumultuous. During these years, two key events garnered the attention of the West Indian populations, and illustrated the dual regional and diasporic concerns of many in the region. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the various labor rebellions within the British Caribbean combined to increase both racial and regional activism in the West Indies which spawned a wave of activism that challenged the status quo in ways unseen since the turmoil of the emancipation era.

Ethiopia has long existed as a symbol of pride, a glorious past, and one of the few symbols of "black" independence during the height of European colonialism for peoples of African-descent.[21] The Italian invasion of this sovereign nation, therefore, sent shockwaves throughout the black diaspora and stimulated both increased race-consciousness and anticolonial activities among people of African-descent. More than simply an imperialist invasion of one of only three "black nations" at this time, or a threat to one of the most important symbols of "black history", many black peoples viewed this "as a setback to their own struggle for self-determination" – particularly in the British

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[21] For one of the best studies of the lengthy history of Ethiopia as a site of major importance among black peoples in the diaspora, see Fikru Negash Gebrekidan, *Bond Without Blood: a History of Ethiopian and New World Black Relations, 1896-1991* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2005).

West Indies.[22] As a result, the Ethiopian invasion awakened and stimulated a range of black diaspora political activity unseen since the heydays of the post-WWI era.

Across the globe, peoples of African-decent organized various support committees, wrote letters and sent petitions to European and American governments, requested the opportunity to enlist in the fight for Ethiopia, and took up funds for the Ethiopian cause. In the United States, black newspapers offered news and opinions on the war, as African Americans and West Indians created numerous organizations to protest the invasion of Ethiopia, such as the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia, The Friends of Ethiopia, and United Aid for Ethiopia.[23] Given the international black community in Harlem, many of these organizations included African Americans and West Indians and symbolized an important source of diasporic cooperation which would continue into the 1940s.

British Caribbean newspapers and West Indian organizations in the Caribbean covered the conflict and organized along similar lines to groups in the United States. Robert Weisbord, in fact, has referred to their reactions to the war as "an episode of Pan-Africanism" in the West Indies.[24] A resolution of the Ethiopian Alliance of the World in Jamaica felt it was "part of [their] racial duty to express unanimous resentment against

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[22] Gebrekidan, *Bond Without Blood*, p.51.

[23] William R. Scott, *The Sons of Sheba's Race: African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), chapters 5 & 9. For further coverage of the reactions of black communities in the US, see: Joseph E. Harris, *African-American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1994); Baiyina W. Muhammad, "'What Africa is to Us?' The Baltimore *Afro-American*'s Coverage of the African Diaspora, 1915-1941 (PhD Diss, Morgan State University, 2005), chapter 5.

[24] Robert G. Weisbord, "British West Indian Reaction to the Italian-Ethiopian War: an Episode in Pan-Africanism," *Caribbean Studies* 10, no.1 (1970): 34-41.

any effort to infringe upon the sovereignty of Ethiopia."[25] Various UNIA branches and other organizations offered themselves as soldiers to the Ethiopian cause, and requested the right to fight on behalf of the Ethiopians.[26] Given the fact that the United Kingdom was a leading member of the League of Nations, and host to an exiled Haile Selassie, many West Indian supporters of Ethiopia also expected the British Empire to come to Ethiopia's aid against Italy. For instance, at a meeting of the Afro-West Indian League in Trinidad, the members asked "His Majesty's Government to do all in its power in order to ensure that the independence and sovereignty of the ancient Empire remain inviolate and respected."[27] In addition to the defense of Ethiopia, many British West Indians also drew inspiration from the war for their own struggles in the West Indies.

At a Friends of Ethiopia meeting in St. Lucia in 1935, a resolution claimed that if Italy was allowed to conquer Ethiopia, it would, among other things, "shatter the hopes of His Britannic Majesty's coloured subjects for the future peaceful and harmonious intercourse between the various Races of Mankind."[28] Obviously, such a reaction spoke to issues beyond the actual Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Numerous colonial officials noted this during this era. In a letter to the Colonial Office, the Jamaican governor noted, "There is undoubtedly strong feeling in this Colony in support of the Abyssinians against Italy. There is also a risk of this feeling being inflamed on racial grounds and being used

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[25] Resolution of the Ethiopian Alliance of the World to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 October 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO.

[26] See for instance: Resolution of the Spanish Town Branch of the UNIA, 9 October 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO; Governor (British Guiana) to Malcolm MacDonald, 12 September 1935, CO 318/418/4. PRO; Resolution of Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, 31 July 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO; Petition of the Kingston Division of the UNIA to King George V, 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO; Resolution of The Empire Defence League of the Bahamas, 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO.

[27] A.E. James to the Colonial Secretary, 9 August 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO.

[28] Resolutions Passed by the Friends of Ethiopia [St. Lucia], 31 July 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO.

as a pretext for demonstrations which have nothing to do with the War."[29] Two telegrams from the governor of British Guiana noted that the "African community is powerfully affected by Italian Abyssinian conflict which presents itself to them as [a] colour question." He even suggested that a warship be kept in the area in case more widespread trouble ensued.[30] The governor of the Windward Islands, who believed that the Italian-Ethiopian conflict "intensified" racial feelings in those islands, echoed a similar suggestion.[31] As J.L. Maffey summarized in his letter to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty,

> the Italo-Abyssinian conflict has aroused feelings of indignation amongst the negro population of those dependencies, which, it seems certain, have already been exploited in certain colonies in such a way as to provoke active disorder and to stimulate anti-white feeling.[32]

Officials' fears of disorder in the West Indies came to fruition in the mid-late 1930s. Though there appears to be few riots directly related to the Ethiopian invasion, the emotions and tensions emanating from that struggle combined with ongoing local race and class issues to produce a wave of labor rebellions that brought the predicted chaos to the region. As a result, the West Indies remerged as an increasingly important site of anticolonial and diasporic struggle.

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[29] Governor (Jamaica) to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 November 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO.

[30] Telegram from the Governor of British Guiana to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 October 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO; Telegram from the Governor of British Guiana to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 October 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO.

[31] Telegram from the Governor of Windward Islands to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 October 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO.

[32] J.L. Maffey to Secretary (Admiralty), 29 October 1935, CO 318/418/4, PRO.

The West Indian labour uprisings of the mid-late 1930s have long been remembered as the genesis of the various nationalist movements that appeared across the region in this era. Though there was much local and regional activism by West Indians prior to these events, these uprisings spawned many of the labor unions and political parties that came to dominate the British Caribbean through the 1940s and 1950s. Likewise, they shook the empire's general disregard for these colonies and refocused much diasporic interest in the area, bringing about what one historian has noted as "the twilight of colonial rule" in the West Indies.[33]

Table 5.1 – Labor Rebellions in the British Caribbean (1934-1939) [34]

Year	Colonies
1934	British Honduras
1935	British Guiana, Jamaica, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad
1937	Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad
1938	British Guiana, Jamaica
1939	British Guiana

Beginning in British Honduras in 1934 and continuing almost annually through 1939, the British Caribbean was rocked by a series of uprisings and strikes that represented the frustrations of the West Indian workers. These events marked the full-scale entry of West Indian workers into the regions reform efforts that had largely been the domain of the black and middle class in the previous decades. The resultant labor unions and political parties organized during this era also marked new levels of

[33] Cary Fraser, "The Twilight of Colonial Rule in the British West Indies: Nationalist Assertion vs. Imperial Hubris in the 1930s," *Journal of Caribbean History* 30, nos.1-2 (1996): 1-27.

[34] Data taken from O. Nigel Bolland, *On the March: Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean, 1934-1939* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1995).

cooperation between the British Caribbean middle and working classes, which became the cornerstone of West Indian politics, both local and regional, for the rest of the twentieth century.

The causes of these rebellions included a range of frustrations aimed at the existing economic, social, and political conditions of the region. The poor economic conditions of the colonies, including limited job opportunities, dismal wages, and cost of living, combined with poor housing, education, and health services added to the misery many of the working class had existed under since emancipation. In addition, the continued exclusion of most West Indians from the contemporary political systems of the region, and the obvious racial and class discriminations embodied in these institutions created an explosive situation.[35]

The revolt of West Indian workers brought a wide range of coverage and inquiry into the British Caribbean. Within the empire, these events demanded the attention that many in the metropole had seemingly ignored in previous investigations of the region, which were more focused on improving the status quo than in altering the very conditions that many West Indians had complained about for years. Though Fabian socialists had limited contact with the West Indies previously via the Labour Party's support of some of the reform efforts of Cipriani, Marryshow, and the growing West Indian nationalist and labor movements of the 1920s, the development of a more extensive and lasting labor

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[35] Numerous studies of the labor rebellions and their causes exist. Among the best are the works of O. Nigel Bolland. See, for instance, Bolland, *On the March*; Bolland, *Politics of Labour*. W. Arthur Lewis produced one of the most substantial contemporary studies of these events in *Labour in the West Indies: the Birth of a Worker's Movement* (London: Fabian Society, 1938). Official inquiries into these events include Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, *Labour Conditions in the West Indies*, Cmd. 6070 (London: HMSO, 1939), and the *West India Royal Commission Report*, Cmd. 6607 (London: HMSO, 1945). The *West India Royal Commission* was better known as the Moyne Commission, and hereafter its report is referred to as the *Moyne Report*.

movement, including formal local political parties, increased their interest in the West Indies for many decades to come. In addition, many of the race-based diasporic movements of the era also commented on the strikes and lent their support to the largely black workers of the region. The anticolonial rhetoric emanating from these rebellions, therefore, included both transracial and racial portraits of the West Indies situation.[36]

One of the most active black diaspora organizations interested in the West Indies at this time was the International African Service Bureau (IASB) based in London. While London had long been the home of black diaspora political movements, including Sylvester Williams African Association (later renamed the Pan-African Association) at the turn of the century, and F.E.M. Hercules' Society of Peoples of African Origin in the post-WWI era, the IASB were among the most well-known and active diaspora-focused organization in London at this time.[37] The IASB grew out of the International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA), an organization created in 1935 and led by numerous West Indians, including CLR James (Trinidad), George Padmore (Trinidad), Peter Milliard (British Guiana), TA Marryshow (Grenada), and Amy Ashwood Garvey (Jamaica).[38] The IASB was formally organized in 1937, with many of the same leaders, as "an organisation representing the progressive and enlightened public opinion among Peoples of African descent" which supported "the demands of Africans and other colonial peoples

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[36] Bolland, *On the March*, p.191.

[37] Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*, pp.176-198; James R. Hooker, *Henry Sylvester Williams: Imperial Pan-Africanist* (London: Collings, 1975); W.F. Elkins, "Hercules and the Society of Peoples of African Origin," *Caribbean Studies* 11, no.4 (1971): 47-59. The SPAO actually included a federation in the British West Indies among its aims. At this time, the black population of London was still small and primarily professionals, intellectuals, and students from the various colonies of the British Empire. See Fryer, *Staying Power*, and Green, *Black Edwardians*.

[38] Jomo Kenyatta was also a member and honorary secretary of the IAFA. Otherwise, it was a good example of the continued vanguard role that West Indians played in black diaspora movements in this era. Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*, pp.354-355.

for democratic rights, civil liberties, and self-determination." One of its primary aims was to "help and enlighten public opinion in Great Britain... to the true conditions in the various colonies, protectorates and mandated territories in Africa, the West Indies and other colonial areas." While the organization welcomed other colonial peoples and sympathetic whites to hold "associate memberships" in the IASB, "active membership" was reserved for Africans and peoples of African-descent.[39] Given the fact that many of its leaders, especially Padmore and James, were previously extensively involved in Marxist politics before rejecting communism in favor of Pan-Africanism, the IASB focused on race and class issues, both of which they believed dogged black peoples – "the victims of the most ruthless forms of oppression and exploitation."[40]

Given such goals, the IASB was particularly interested in the West Indies.[41] Among the earliest activities of the IASB was their coverage of, and support for the West Indian labour rebellions, which they defined as an awakening of the West Indian workers and a struggle for self-determination. The IASB covered the strikes in numerous periodicals and at various public meetings in London during the late 1930s.[42] In 1938,

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[39] "The International African Service Bureau - for the Defence of Africans and Peoples of African Descent," undated, MEPO 38/91, PRO. The breakdown of membership categories is especially interesting because while the IASB was representative of a broad anti-colonial movement that embraced all of the colonial struggles of the era, the reservation of "active membership" for "black peoples" speaks to the particular race-conscious focus of the IASB. As will be shown in later pages, the anticolonial struggle often consisted of transracial cooperation, but one cannot dismiss the racial focus of these organizations either.

[40] "The International African Service Bureau - for the Defence of Africans and Peoples of African Descent," undated, MEPO 38/91.

[41] One of the earliest publications of the IASB was *The West Indies To-day* that provided a historical overview of the region, as well as a discussion of the contemporary social, economic, and political conditions. International African Service Bureau, *The West Indies To-day* (London: IASB, 1936).

[42] See for instance: "Labour Unrest in the West Indies," *Africa and the World*, 27 July 1937, MEPO 38/91, PRO; "Strikes in West Indies," *Africa and the World*, 14 August 1937, MEPO 38/91, PRO; "Stemming the Tide - a Brief Summary of the First Terminal Report of the International African Service Bureau," *African Sentinel*, October-November 1937, MEPO 38/91, PRO; "Metropolitan Police Report," 26 June 1938,

the IASB published "An Open Letter to the Workers of the West Indies and British Guiana". This letter thanked the West Indian workers for their actions which "served to dramatise before the world and to bring home to the British people the fact that all is not well in [their] island homes" and forced the empire to note publicly the dreadful social and economic conditions of the West Indies. It pledged support for all the workers in the West Indies, irrespective of race, as part of their push for working class solidarity. The IASB demanded the workers maintain their struggles for justice and equality via trade unionism and continued political action, less the British Government forget them. Such actions, they believed, would form "a solid and firm basis for the building of a West Indian Liberation Movement striving for self-determination and political federation."[43] Though the IASB often spoke in transracial terms of class solidarity, one cannot easily collapse their "race work" into simply a class struggle. Like many Black radicals, the IASB viewed race and class as doubly plaguing black workers across the globe. Thus, the creation of a federation in the Caribbean was seen as an important movement for black self-determination in the West Indies where peoples of African-descent, particular workers, formed the overwhelmingly majority.[44]

The League of Coloured Peoples (LCP) was another important black diaspora organization located in London in this era. Founded in 1931 by Jamaican immigrant Harold Moody, a physician in London, the LCP was a Christian-oriented, interracial

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MEPO 38/91, PRO; Special West Indian edition of the *African and the World*, 1 September 1937, MEPO 38/91, PRO; "Facing the New Year - The West Indies," *International African Opinion*, February-March 1939, MEPO 38/91, PRO. All of these periodicals were associated with the IASB.

[43] IASB, "An Open Letter to the Workers of the West Indies and British Guiana," 1938, MEPO 38/91, PRO.

[44] Again, the call for transracial cooperation against imperialism, cannot be assumed to translate into the lack of racial motivations in the call for self-determination. In many cases, it appears that the old adage of "the enemy of my enemy is a friend" range true in many anticolonial activities in the 1930s and 1940s.

group that worked for interracial cooperation and the welfare of coloured peoples. While some members of the LCP included all non-whites as "coloured peoples," Moody restricted his definition to peoples of African-descent, particularly those in Africa and the West Indies.[45] Many of the early activities of the LCP were rather conservative, and focused primarily on struggles against the "colour bar" in England which many black immigrants encountered in that country. During these years, Moody and the LCP were often chastised by more radical black activists such as George Padmore and CLR James who were involved in Marxist organizations and focused on more revolutionary change.[46]

Like many black organizations, however, Moody and the LCP became increasingly active on the international scene with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the West Indian labour rebellions in the late 1930s. For instance, in 1937-1938, the LCP raised funds for the Ethiopian struggle and sent a resolution to the Colonial Office in support of Jamaican workers involved in the strikes of the island.[47] These activities marked the LCP's entrance into more "radical" protests, and aligned them with other black activists and organizations that had once condemned the League.

While the coverage of the West Indian labor rebellions by black diaspora organizations did much to highlight the plight of the West Indian workers and the conditions of the British Caribbean in the late 1930s, the most substantial investigations

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[45] David A. Vaughan, *Negro Victory: the Life Story of Dr. Harold Moody* (London: Independent Press Limited, 1950), p.65.

[46] Moody was even labeled an "Uncle Tom" in 1933 in the pages of the *Negro Worker*. David Killingray, "'To Do Something for the Race': Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples," in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, p.51. Killingray's study is one of the best new studies of Moody and the LCP. Also see Anne Spry Rush, "Imperial Identity in Colonial Mind: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-1950," *Twentieth Century British History* 13, no.4 (2002): 356-383.

[47] Seventh Annual Report as presented to the Seventh Annual General Meeting, 11 March 1938, CO 318/435/2, PRO; Resolution of the LCP on Jamaican Disturbances, 17 June 1938, CO 318/435/2, PRO.

of the West Indies were undertaken by the West India Royal Commission, better known as the Moyne Commission, of 1938-1939. This commission aimed

> To investigate the social and economic conditions in Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Windward Islands, and matters connected therewith, and to make recommendations.[48]

Many doubted the effectiveness of another British commission in addressing the woes of the West Indians.[49] This commission, however, differed from previous commissions for its mandate to take a broad survey of "West Indian opinion" on the conditions of the region, beyond the limited opinions gathered by previous commissions such as the Wood commission of the 1920s which generally only sought the opinions of the white oligarchy. The Moyne Commission would, in fact, become a venue for both regional and diaspora testimony.

During its investigations, the Moyne Commission received approximately 789 memoranda from a wide range of interested parties in the West Indies and London.[50] Testimony came from elected members of colonial legislative councils calling for an

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[48] *Moyne Report*, p.xiii.

[49] The IASB was initially particularly critical of the appointment of another commission as well as the fact that it was composed of only white British colonial officials. For example, an article in August 1938 claimed "The Royal Commission is a bluff. The Government knows the condition of the people. Commissions, Royal or otherwise, have reported it over and over again." It went on to say that the white officials of the commission will do nothing to improve the conditions of the West Indies because they were friends of the white capitalists and shared in the "white man's burden." See, "The West Indian Royal Commission," *International African Opinion*, August 1938, MEPO 38/91, PRO. Similar comments were also made the following year when the IASB warned the workers to "not be misled by belief in the efficacy of the Royal Commission. There have been many Commissions and too little action. This is just a method of killing time, in the hope that the temper of the masses may die down and the long-awaited reforms be stayed off." See, "Appeal to Our Readers, *International African Opinion*, February-March 1939, MEPO 38/91, PRO.

[50] John La Guerre, "The Moyne Commission and the West Indian Intelligentsia, 1938-1939," *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* 9, no.2 (July 1971), pp.134-135.

increase in their numbers, demands for civil liberties from trade unions, commercial organizations, ethnic organizations in the West Indies, and even black diaspora organizations in London – all of whom noted their views on the problems of the West Indies and oftentimes possibly solutions.[51] Some of these included federation among their calls as a possible solution to the problems of the West Indies, and the best government for the West Indies. For instance, the Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress called for a federal constitution for the region "if they are to have efficient and progressive Government."[52] The Committee for Industrial Organisation called for Parliament, "which ha[d] neglected these outposts of the British Empire," to "take early and active steps to grant to British Guiana and the West Indies SELF-GOVERNMENT and FEDERATION without which it would be difficult to improve and social conditions." This, they believed, was the view of the vast majority of the West Indian population.[53]

Calls for a West Indian federation can also be found in a lengthy joint proposal by the International African Service Bureau (IASB), League of Coloured Peoples (LCP), and the Negro Welfare Association (NWA), who described themselves in the memo as

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[51] See for example: No. 906 Memo by elected members of the [Trinidad] legislative council on constitutional reform, 20 January 1939, Moyne Papers on West India Royal Commission (hereafter noted as "Moyne Papers"), ICS 56/43, ICS; No. 902 Memo by "The West Indian pilot" official organ of the Trade Union Movement in Trinidad & Tobago on social, economic, and political conditions in the colony, n.d., Moyne Papers, ICS 56/39, ICS; No. 907 Memo by the Indian Evidence Committee on matters pertaining to the welfare of East Indians, n.d., Moyne Papers, ICS 56/44, ICS. One of the best overviews of the Moyne Commission can be found in La Guerre, "The Moyne Commission," pp.134-157.

[52] No. 892 Memo by [British] Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress on the Social, Political, and Economic Welfare of the British West Indies and Guiana, 17 January 1939, Moyne Papers, ICS 56/34, ICS. As noted in chapter 3, the BGWILC previously issued a call for federation in 1926, and continued to support this goal in the 1930s.

[53] No. 914 Memo by Committee for Industrial Organisation on Political, Social, and Economic Conditions, 24 January 1939, Moyne Papers, ICS 56/51, ICS.

West Indian organizations in London. Their memorandum combined both racial and class analyses of the West Indian situation. These groups noted the continued domination of the West Indies by the small white population, which they estimated as 3.5% of the West Indies population, despite the numerous examples of the abilities of peoples of African-descent. They also addressed the poverty, poor housing, health, education, illiteracy, and overcrowded conditions of the West Indian colonies as a whole, as well as called for the extension of civil liberties and democratic government. Noting the need for political power as "the first requisite for the improvement on the condition of the masses," the memorandum called for representative government, universal adult suffrage, the removal of property qualifications for legislators, and the abolition of the Crown Colony system. In closing, they noted,

> the establishment of democratic government fully representative of the people of these territories, is an essential prerequisite to the abolition of the inhumane conditions now prevailing, and a first step on the road towards that goal, which is Federation and Dominion status [their emphasis].[54]

Harold Moody, president of the LCP, and Peter Blackman, president of the NWA, presented further oral testimony before the Moyne Commission on 29 September 1939. Their presentation continued their general critique of the Crown Colony system and the need to build a stronger "West Indianness" in the region. Blackman believed that a federation would go far in building such a regional consciousness within the region,

[54] Memorandum on the Economic, Political and Social Conditions in the West Indies and British Guiana Presented by the International African Service Bureau, the League of Coloured Peoples and the Negro Welfare Association, 9 September 1938, CO 950/30, PRO. For further discussion of this memo, see La Guerre, "The Moyne Commission," pp.136-137.

though in this presentation, his call for federation appeared more gradual than an immediate demand.[55]

It is interesting to note that much of the support for federation in the late 1930s continued to come from labour organizations, which sought to unify the working class population on a regional scale, beyond insular divisions (though local unions continued to proliferate in this era), and black diasporic organizations whose existence outside of the region had helped to create a regional outlook beyond their individual colonial identities with a more overt connection to a international racial identity. There was no doubt much cooperation between the two groups, West Indian workers and diaspora organizations, via the work of organizations such as the IASB. Federation, therefore, seemingly continued to exist as both a regionally focused movement and a more international movement, with West Indians defined as both a regional identity, as well as part of a larger international racial identity.

At the close of the 1930s, the West Indies stood on the verge of much change. The labour rebellions prompted the empire to take more notice of the long neglected colonies. The lengthy investigations of the Moyne Commission confirmed the terrible conditions of the region, and they recommended a series of reforms which they believed would improve and stabilize the region. Though the official report of the Moyne Commission and the "statement of actions" were not published until 1945, a brief report on the "recommendations" was published in 1940.[56] On the issue of constitutional

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[55] Oral Evidence Transcript of Moody (LCP) and Mr. Blackman (NWA) before the West India Royal Commission - Ninth Session, 29 September 1938, CO 950/30, PRO.

[56] The Moyne Report was actually withheld because the empire feared it would serve as negative propaganda against the empire during World War II.

reform and closer union, the commission took a middle ground between the demands of "immediate and complete self-government" and calls for an extension of autocratic rule favored by some officials. In the matter of federation, the commission found that the institution of such a structure would not solely solve the "pressing needs of the West Indies," it was "the end to which policy should be directed."[57] New policy, however, was delayed for several years as the outbreak of World War II presented more immediate problems for the empire, including the West Indies.

Early 1940s

While World War II delayed reform efforts in the West Indies, it opened up new opportunities for the discussion of the future of the West Indies, including federation, as the empire struggled for its very existence. The British Empire faced not only the military threat of Nazism and its Axis allies, but also the encroachment of the United States into the British West Indies, and vigorous anticolonial movements from within its own ranks.

The defeat of France by the Germans in the summer of 1940 prompted many people to question the survival of England in the face of the Nazi forces. Considering the fact that the installation of the Vichy government in France had essentially put the colonies of the French Caribbean under Axis control, many in the Americas sought a plan to deal with the British territories of the Caribbean in case of England's defeat. In July 1940, a Pan American Conference was held in Havana, Cuba, to discuss the fate of European territories in Western Hemisphere. This venue provided one of the most

[57] *West India Royal Commission 1938-1939, Recommendations*, Cmd. 6174 (London: HMSO, 1940), p.25.

important moments of diasporic activism on behalf of the West Indies, and a crucial example of debates over self-determination in the British Caribbean during this era.

As the various delegates from across the Americas prepared to discuss plans for the British and other European Caribbean colonies at the "Havana Conference", without any direct representation of those islands, West Indians in the United States scrambled to insure the islands would not be voiceless at this meeting. In June 1940, several West Indians in Harlem, including many longtime black "radical" figures organized the West Indies National Emergency Committee (WINEC). This group included WA Domingo (Jamaican) as president, Richard B. Moore (Barbadian), CA Petioni (Trinidad), and Ivy Bailey-Essien as vice presidents, Herman P. Osborne (Trinidad) as secretary, and Arthur E. King (British Guiana) as treasurer.[58] The primary goal of this organization was to "lobby for self-determination and self-government of the Caribbean people" at the Havana Conference.

Though the WINEC was not officially invited to attend, they sent a delegation to the conference in hopes of stirring pan-American sentiment in favor of Caribbean self-determination. The WINEC's "Declaration of Rights of the Caribbean Peoples to Self-Determination and Self-Government", which was translated into Spanish and Portuguese for the broadest circulation at the conference, demanded the right for Caribbean peoples to "untrammeled self-determination" and included an appendix containing "Evidence of the Widespread and Urgent Character of the Demands of the Caribbean Peoples for Self-Government and Self-Determination". The declaration specifically protested any actions by European powers or the United States to sale or transfer Caribbean colonies, or place

[58] West Indies National Council – Subversive Activities in the West Indies (FBI Report), 22 September 1941, Box 1 – Folder 5 (WINC), West Indies National Council Papers (hereafter cited as WINC Papers), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (hereafter cited as Schomburg Center).

them under any sort of mandate or trusteeship without the consent of Caribbean peoples.[59]

The WINEC delegation hoped to receive the support of Latin American delegates who did not want to see an extension of the United States power in the Caribbean. They received such support from the Argentina delegate Leopoldo Melo who "championed the rights of the Caribbean peoples to self-government", as well as Cuban leader Fulgencio Batista who supported Caribbean independence over a mandate or trusteeship in the case of a British defeat in World War II. Though the final act of the Havana Conference did not guarantee Caribbean independence, it did recognize that any new administrations over the Caribbean would be temporary.[60]

The WINEC considered this decision to be a major victory and trumpeted it over the next several years. Despite the fact that the WINEC presented the West Indian struggle for self-determination in broad pan-American terms with no overt mention of race, both the United States and the United Kingdom seemingly deemed their efforts as a racial program given the surveillance record of both countries on the organization. This was very likely because many of the leaders of the WINEC, which was renamed the West Indies National Council (WINC) shortly after the Havana Conference, were in fact well-known black radicals.

Such a conclusion is not completely illogical. In a November 1940 letter to the NAACP, W.A. Domingo declared the actions of the WINEC/WINC and the ensuing

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[59] WINEC, Declaration of Rights of the Caribbean Peoples to Self-Determination and Self-Government, July 1940, CO 137/846/10, PRO. A more accessible copy of this can be found in Turner and Turner, *Richard B. Moore*, pp.262-266.

[60] W.D. to Padmore, 2 August 1940, CO 137/846/10, PRO.

Havana Act represented "a substantial political gain for the colored race in the Western World." Domingo continued,

> I think it is safe to say that this is the first time in the history of the Western World, since the Haitian Revolution, that a group of Negroes, without the backing of a State, succeeded in influencing an international gathering among along the lines they desired. This fact and its logical consequence, the possibility of creating new black nations in the Caribbean, should be of the highest significance to American Negroes.[61]

If the Germans should win, Domingo argued, there is a good chance that the US itself would become fascist. If that was the case, "American Negroes will be grateful for the existence of Haiti and perhaps an autonomous West Indies and British Guiana capable of offering them asylum."[62] Such a contention obviously played to notions of diasporic connections and self-determination for black peoples. Interestingly, a few months later, a WINC letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies describing the WINC's actions in Havana and their ongoing demands for Caribbean self-government made no mention of their efforts as a racial endeavor.[63]

These exchanges speak to the ways in which Caribbean nation-building continued to be viewed in both regional and international, transracial and racial terms. It appears that the WINC "played diaspora politics" when it suited their cause and garnered them support, and at other times, deemphasized racial motivations for their actions – with neither conceptualization able to be defined as the true image of Caribbean self-

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[61] WA Domingo to Walter White, 6 November 1940, Box A332, Folder "Labor – British West Indies, 1940-1947", NAACP Papers, US Library of Congress (hereafter LOC).

[62] WA Domingo to Walter White, 6 November 1940, Box A332, Folder "Labor – British West Indies, 1940-1947", NAACP Papers, LOC.

[63] Herman P. Osborne to Hon. Lord Lloyd (Secretary of State for the Colonies), 25 January 1941, Box A332, Folder "Labor – British West Indies, 1940-1947", NAACP Papers, LOC.

determination. In any case, the early actions of the WINC marked one of the first of many discussions of the West Indies in black diaspora politics during the 1940s.

African American organizations such as the NAACP also showed an increased interest in the British West Indies in the 1940s. The already growing international component to the NAACP's program expanded as US influence in the Caribbean increased via lend-lease deal with the British in March 1941, which established a US military presence in the British Caribbean.[64] Regarding the installation of US military bases in the Caribbean, the NAACP worked with the WINC and various US federal government agencies to investigate rumors that the British had requested that the Americans not allow African Americans to work on the new bases. This rumor proved to be false, though there were some who still believed this was unofficial policy at least.[65] After the arrest and detention of Domingo in Jamaica in June 1941 as a "threat to public safety" and order in the colony, the NAACP became one of the key advocates of his release, and his later efforts to be allowed to return to the US upon his release some twenty months later.[66] The NAACP also corresponded with various West Indian leaders, particularly Norman Manley of Jamaica, acting as both host and fundraiser when he and

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[64] For some of the best works on the role of African Americans and predominantly African American organizations in the international arena in the 1930s-1940s, see: Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and US Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1996); Penny M. VonEschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2002).

[65] WA Domingo to Walter White, 20 March 1941; Walter White to Cordell Hull, 25 April 1941; John Hickerson to Walter White, 1 May 1941; Walter White to President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, 29 August 1941; Lawrence Cramer to Walter White, 15 September 1941, Box A332, Folder "Labor – British West Indies, 1940-1947", NAACP Papers, LOC.

[66] Domingo had actually returned to Jamaica to help Norman Manley and the People's National Party, with whom he had been in contact with for some time via the WINC and Jamaica Progressive League. Domingo's detention, protests of these detentions, and efforts to be readmitted are found in numerous exchanges between Domingo, the WINC, and the NAACP between 1941 and 1945. See Box A332, Folder "Labor – British West Indies, 1940-1947", NAACP Papers, LOC.

other West Indian delegates visited Harlem to promote the West Indian cause – a cause that was presented as part of the black diaspora struggle in New York, but not always as overtly as such within the West Indies.[67]

Much of the support for the British West Indies among black organizations in the US, including the NAACP, WINC, and a more conservative West Indian organization known as the American West Indian Association on Caribbean Affairs (AWIACA), covered a broad spectrum of ideas for self-determination in the region. This included the cause of federation which all believed would create a more powerful nation than a series of small West Indian nations. Discussion and support for federation can also be found outside of formal organizations. Howard University hosted two conferences in the early 1940s that addressed the "Negro and in the Americas" (1940), and the "The Economic Future of the Caribbean" (1943). The former discussed more hemispheric issues, but included a presentation on the British West Indies by Eric Williams. The latter addressed the various international sections of the Caribbean with several papers on the British West Indies, including discussions of federation by W. Adolphe Roberts of the Jamaican Progressive League and African American historian Rayford W. Logan.[68] The columns of A.M. Wendell Malliet in the *New York Amsterdam News* from 1942-1944 presented steady coverage of the West Indies, black diaspora, and broader colonial struggles of the

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[67] See for instance: Remarks of Mr. Norman Manley of Jamaica, British West Indies Before the Board of Directors of the NAACP, 8 October 1945; N.W. Manley to Walter White 6 November 1945; Walter White to Norman Manley, 15 November 1945, Box A336, Folder "American Committee for West Indian Federation, 1945-1948", NAACP Paper, LOC. In a 1945 *New York Times* article, it was also reported that Manley claimed a West Indies federation would have a "salutary effect on the status of the Negro the world over," and that "this experiment is of interest to the Negroes of the United States." "Federation Urged for West Indies," *New York Times*, 11 October 1945, p.10.

[68] Charles H Wesley, ed., *The Negro in the Americas* (Washington, DC: Howard University Graduate School, 1940); E. Franklin Frazier and Eric Williams, eds., *The Economic Future of the Caribbean* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1944).

era. Malliet, longtime West Indian resident and activist in New York, had supported the call for federation since the 1920s, and continued to support the cause in the 1940s. He believed that nation-building was one of the key challenges facing black peoples in the twentieth century, and claimed that the destiny of the West Indies was federation with self-government. In conjunction with this goal, he called for West Indians to develop a strong nationalism in this cause, and for African Americans to help their "West Indian cousins" to create such a nation – a nation that he believed embodied both regional and racial destinies.[69]

When World War II ended in 1945, the reality of a post-war world was finally at hand. Much like the post-WWI era, various meetings and conferences were held to discuss "the future". One of the most significant events of that year was the founding conference of the United Nations held in San Francisco in May. More than simply the formal organizing of this international organization, the United Nations Conference was an opportunity for nations and various interest groups to put their respective platforms in front of an international audience. Numerous organizations concerned with the peoples of African-descent attended as formal delegates, observers, and uninvited guests.[70] The West Indies National Council and the Jamaica Progressive League, both based in Harlem, represented West Indian interests at the conference. The former would make a broad call for West Indian self-determination, including federation.

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[69] "World Fronts," *New York Amsterdam News*, 3 October 1942, p.7; "World Fronts," *New York Amsterdam News*, 23 January 1943, p.9; "World Front," *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 February 1943, p.7.

[70] For further insight into the UN founding conference, see Carol Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Plummer, *Rising Wind*, chapter 4; Marika Sherwood, "The United Nations: Caribbean and African-American Attempts to Influence the Founding Conference in San Francisco in 1945," *Journal of Caribbean History* 29, no.1 (1995): 25-58.

Approximately a month before the UN conference was to be held, the West Indies National Council held a meeting to discuss the stance the group would take at the UN Conference. Three leading members of the WINC gave speeches on this matter. Leonard Lowe, noted by British surveillance as a "newcomer to the scene" said that, "We are not asking anybody to benevolently share anything with us. We are seeking the right of self-government and allowing the West Indian people to decide for themselves the form of government they want." Reginald Pierrepointe, a West Indian reporter in Harlem, called for the extension of representative government. Though Lowe was bolder in his call for self-government than Pierrepointe, neither of them would match the rhetoric of H.P. Osborne, Secretary of the West Indian National Council.[71]

Osborne began his speech by noting that the single aim of the WINC was "to liquidate the scourge of imperialism." In discussing the future of the West Indies, Osborne claimed, "The colonial peoples hate the very sound of the word 'trusteeship'. We reason to no less than the way all men of African descent resent and hate the word 'nigger'." He also dismissed the goal of "dominion status" within the British Commonwealth. Instead, he called for federation as "essential to the economic development and cultural growth of the West Indian people" who sought nationhood. Unlike the other two speakers, there was an overt racialism in the speech of Osborne. This was most notable in his statement on the dawning of a new attitude among black peoples.

> Men of African descent are no longer to be assailed in their racial integrity with impunity. Yesterday, we were considered patient 'jackasses'. Do you remember? Today, we might be considered as jackasses alright but with the

[71] Gilbert Holliday (British Consulate General, NY) to George Middleton (British Embassy, DC), 9 May 1945, CO 968/121/4, PRO.

> power to kick out all the front teeth of these dingoes... we fight together side by side with them in this fight today, tomorrow, one minute after the Victory our paths can quickly diverge. This much is clear. We say categorically: We are not interested either in the continuity or in the salvation of Empire...[72]

Such a statement, combined with his demands for federation, portray the latter as a project seeking racial self-determination and racial uplift.

At the UN conference, the WINC put forth their "Appeal to the United Nations Conference on International Organization on Behalf of the Caribbean Peoples". Steering clear of the tone of Osborne's previous speech, the appeal recapped the vital support Caribbean peoples played in the war, claimed that the abolition of imperialism was essential to world peace, called for economic rehabilitation, demanded self-determination, and said that the trusteeship idea was discredited. They put forth a seven-point program that included "recognition of the inalienable right of the Caribbean peoples to self-government and self-determination" and the "practical recognition of the age-long objective of the West Indian peoples for voluntary federation."[73] Although the appeal claimed to represent the British, French, and Dutch Caribbean colonies, the call for federation was obviously more specifically tied to the British West Indies.

The WINC's demands portray a presumably transracial and regional appeal. However, given the overt racial consciousness of many members of the WINC, it is hard to dismiss their calls for self-determination and federation as not embodying ideas of racial uplift for black peoples. Moreover, as an organization deeply involved in the black

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[72] Gilbert Holliday (British Consulate General, NY) to George Middleton (British Embassy, DC), 9 May 1945, CO 968/121/4, PRO.

[73] Appeal to the United Nations Conference on International Organization on Behalf of the Caribbean Peoples, 25 May 1945, in Turner and Turner, eds., *Richard B. Moore*, pp.270-276.

diaspora politics of Harlem, and viewed by both the US and UK as a "subversive Negro group" – they and their agendas were often racialized whether they always intended them to be or not.[74]

A similar context can be found in the black diaspora politics of London in the 1940s. Building upon the foundation laid in the 1930s, various black diaspora organizations continued to lobby on behalf of the West Indies within their broader support for peoples of African-descent across the globe. The LCP, for instance, claimed on numerous occasions to have a mandate to represent the West Indies (not just West Indians in London).[75] In that capacity, Moody and the LCP proved to be one of the continuous supporters of federation.[76] Given the wider activities of the LCP, federation was no doubt seen as a form of racial empowerment and uplift for peoples of African-descent in the British Caribbean.

Another key example of support for federation within such a racialized context can be found in the proceedings of the Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in October 1945. The Manchester conference proved to be one of the most important Pan-African meetings for its numbers and the increased participation of Africans, rather than primarily African Americans and West Indians as had been the case in the previous meetings. Nevertheless, the West Indies were still represented by various West Indian

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[74] Here I am referring to the emphasizing and deemphasizing race as a motivation for supporting federation. Also, the label of "subversive negro organization" is found on numerous US and UK surveillance of the WINC in the 1940s.

[75] Internal CO memo to Secretary of State, 10 June 1940, CO 318/445/47, PRO. Some colonial officials doubted this claim and noted some resentment towards Moody in the West Indies. However, many other colonial officials treated Moody as one of the key representatives of the West Indies.

[76] See for example, Memorandum on the Recommendations of the West India Royal Commission prepared for H.M. Secretary of State for the Colonies by the League of Coloured Peoples, May 1939, CO 318/445/47, PRO.

delegations from the colonies, many of whom included federation in their resolutions before the congress. EDL Yearwood of the Barbados Progressive League and Workers' Union noted the League was a "keen supporter of the federation of the West Indies" as the only means to solve the economic and social problems of the region.[77] D. M. Harper of the British Guiana Trades Union Council demanded self-government and a West Indies Federation.[78] Representatives of the St. Kitts Workers' League and the Executive Committee of the St. Kitts-Nevis Trades and Labour Union called for a greater unity that would only be achieved through federation, noting, "The time for West Indian Federation [was] overripe."[79] A supplementary resolution was submitted by the UNIA of Jamaica supporting federation as a desire of both the Colonial Office and West Indians.[80] As a group, the "accredited and recognised representatives of the people of the British West Indies and British Guiana in attendance at this Fifth Paul-African Congress" demanded federation "on a voluntary and equal basis founded upon complete Self-Government."[81]

Within this setting, it is difficult to ignore the place of race within the support for federation. While the Pan-African Federation which organized the Manchester Congress supported and extended well-wished to colonial peoples who were not of African-descent, given the history of the West Indies within the politics of the black diaspora, in which the region was repeatedly connected to Africa in ways that "other" colonial sites

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[77] Yearwood also interestingly noted that 180,000 of the 200,000 people in Barbados were of African-descent. George Padmore, ed., *Colonial and Coloured Unity, a Program of Action: History of the Pan-African Congress* (London: Hammersmith Bookshop Ltd, 1963), p.47. This title contains the minutes of the Manchester Conference.

[78] Padmore, *Colonial and Coloured Unity*, p.49.

[79] Padmore, *Colonial and Coloured Unity*, p.53.

[80] Padmore, *Colonial and Coloured Unity*, p.62.

[81] Padmore, *Colonial and Coloured Unity*, p.60.

and struggles were not, support for a West Indies federation within the larger "pan-African movement" was part of a global program to uplift and empower black peoples.

Up to the end of World War II in 1945, the empire had essentially offered only limited official support for a British Caribbean federation. However, with the end of World War II, there was a significant shift in Crown policy towards the idea of a West Indian federation. On 14 March 1945, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Stanley, issued the "Stanley Dispatch" which directed the legislatures of the West Indian colonies to officially debate the issue of political federation as a goal which he believed would "quicken the progress" towards self-government within the British Commonwealth of Nations. Though Stanley said that no colony would be forced to participate in such a scheme, the Crown had made a significant step to suggest and support federation.[82] The long imagined goal of federation now appeared poised to become a reality.

[82] "Despatch Dated 14th March 1945 From the Secretary of State for the Colonies," in *Closer Association of the British West Indian Colonies*, Cmd.7120 (London: HMSO, 1947), appendix 1

Chapter 6

From Idea to Reality: Defining a West Indian Nation (1945-1958)

> The flash of pens across paper...does not really create a new nation. Tangibly, of course, it does not and cannot create anything... For them to become a new nation-for them to become one nation at all-the West Indian people have got to learn to live and act like one nation.[1]

The Stanley Dispatch of 1945 launched a new wave of official and unofficial discussions and meetings which culminated in the 1958 inauguration of the West Indies Federation. After nearly a century of discussion among government officials, commercial interest groups, West Indians (in and out of the Caribbean), as well as various black diaspora peoples and organizations, the creation of the long-debated "West Indian nation" appeared destined to finally take shape. John Mordecai has claimed that "the idea that federation was desirable only as a means of reducing the cost of government disappeared altogether after the war. [The] new leaders wanted federation in order to realize their nationalist aspirations."[2] Assuming Mordecai's contention is correct, he still presents federation monolithically – as if everyone now had the same idea, plans, and desires in federation. The question remained, however, what conceptualization of federation was to be instituted and how was a federation to be characterized? Was it going to be a means to extend the influence and control of the British Empire in the midst of widespread decolonization debates across the empire in the post-WWII era? Would it empower the local West Indian populations at the expense of the long-standing colonial oligarchies? What about the question of race? Was this new

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[1] "No Birth Yet," *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, 25 February 1956, p.4

[2] Mordecai, *Federation of the West Indies*, p.33. Mordecai's study remains one of the most detailed studies of the final planning of the West Indies Federation from an internal, regional perspective.

nation going to be an expression of transracial cooperation, or the symbolic independent black nation long-sought by some? All of these issues lingered, both consciously and unconsciously, as the formal state structures of federation were debated and implemented.

This chapter explores the multiple conceptualizations of the West Indian nation, and accompanying notions of West Indianness, during the final steps of creating the formal West Indian Federation in 1958. Given the fact that this era has received the overwhelmingly attention of the limited historiography on federation in the Caribbean, the formal details of the creation and well-remembered failure of the West Indian state are not the primary focus of this chapter. Instead, the chapter focuses on the ways in which the pending West Indian nation and West Indianness were imagined in this era – especially in regard to the place of race.

Planning the Federation

The decision to ask the various colonial legislatures to formally consider federation coincided with a general liberalization of the British colonial policies in the West Indies. In 1944, Jamaica was granted a new constitution that created a two-chamber parliament based on universal adult suffrage. Around the same time, the income qualification was lowered in Barbados which allowed more of the working class to vote. These colonies lead the way for similar gradual political reforms in the other West Indian colonies over the course of the next decade.[3]

[3] George Padmore covers some of these reforms in *The White Man's Duty*, but Gordon K. Lewis offers one of the best overviews of these events. Nancy Cunard and George Padmore, eds., *The White Man's Duty*, enlarged edition (Manchester: PanAf Service Ltd., 1945), pp.36-41; Gordon K. Lewis, *The Growth of the Modern West Indies* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1968).

The idea of federation also became an increasingly popular idea in the British Empire in this era. Federations were debated, attempted, and in some cases, implemented (with varying success) in East Africa, Central Africa, Nigeria, Malaysia, and the West Indies from the end of WWII through the 1960s. Many officials viewed it as the best means to prepare or strengthen colonies for self-government and dominion status, while others viewed it as a means to control decolonization.[4] The Crown's support for a federation in the West Indies, therefore, was not unique.

Many studies of Caribbean federation note the Caribbean Labour Congress conference, a "new organization" formerly built on the former British Guiana and West Indies Labour Conference, in September 1945 as the *first* major conference to discuss federation after the Stanley Dispatch. In some ways, this shows the limited scope of many federation studies which view the Caribbean federation as a regional project only. The United Nations Conference (May 1945) was held just a few months after the Stanley Dispatch (March 1945), and included discussions of Caribbean federation. However, it could be that discussions of federation at the UN were not "officially" connected with internal discussions of federation between the metropole and colonies.

The Caribbean Labour Congress conference was held in Barbados in September 1945. This organization sought a "Unified West Indies based upon the desire of the people of the various units for Closer Union". Federation, they claimed, was a key to region's political development. As to the key question of self-government, the delegates

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[4] For a discussion of the idea of federation among British colonies, see: RL Watts, *New Federations: Experiments in the Commonwealth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966); Ursula K. Hicks, *Federalism: Failure and Success: a Comparative Study* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1978). For analysis of the general idea of federation, see: Thomas M. Franck, ed., *Why Federations Fail: an Inquiry into the Requisites for Successful Federalism* (NY: NYU Press, 1968).

compromised on that immediate demand in favor of federation on any terms for the moment.[5]

In 1947, two regional conferences were held in Jamaica to discuss the issue of federation. In September 1947, the CLC held another conference in Kingston a few days before the official Montego Bay Conference was to take place in that city. In Kingston, the CLC reversed its previous compromise and demanded full dominion status upon the creation of federation. "Each of the territories of the federation must, simultaneous with creation of a federal structure, be granted constitutions substantially similar and providing for internal self-government."[6] These demands would not be met though at the Montego Bay Conference.

Delegates from almost all of the British Caribbean discussed the matter of a loose federation at the Montego Bay Conference. All of the delegates except the representatives of British Guiana accepted "the principle of a federation in which each constituent unit retains complete control over all matters except those specifically assigned to the federal government." They also recommended the establishment of a Standing Closer Association Committee (SCAC) which would investigate further the possibility of a federation, and create a draft federal constitution based upon the Australian federal constitution, which favored "state's rights". The SCAC, which

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[5] Antigua Delegates, Caribbean Labour Congress, *Report of Conference held at Barbados from 17th to 27th September 1945*, pp.1 & 28, Barbados - Political Parties, Trades Unions and Pressure Groups Material (hereafter cited as PPTUPG), ICS; Mordecai, *Federation of the West Indies*, p.35.

[6] Resolution, Statement and Draft Bill by the Caribbean Labour Congress in *Conference on the Closer Association of the British West Indian Colonies – Montego Bay, Jamaica, 11th-19th September 1947*, Part 2: Proceedings (London: HMSO, 1948), p.121. These ideas are also embodied in the title of a pamphlet published by the CLC around this time: *Federation and Self Government Now or Colonialism and Slavery Forever*. See, Caribbean Labour Congress, *Federation and Self Government Now or Colonialism and Slavery Forever* (London: CLC, 1948).

included delegates from all of the colonies at the Montego Bay Conference, including British Guiana, held a series of meetings over the next three years investigating the topic of federation.[7]

The SCAC published its report in 1950, also known as the Rance Report. It recommended federation as the quickest path to self-government (not *with* self-government). It suggested a federal government with a Governor-General, a bi-cameral legislature with a wholly elected House (by universal suffrage) and fully nominated senate, and a federal executive consisting of the Governor-General, a council of state, and Prime Minster elected by the House of Assembly. While this was hardly the self-governing federation that many West Indian nationalist had envisioned, the report was accepted by Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad, Windward Islands, and Leeward Islands. British Guiana, British Honduras and the Virgin Islands rejected it.[8]

Delegates from all of the colonies who agreed to the Rance report, as well as observers from British Guiana and British Honduras, met in 1953 in London to discuss the matter further. There, the legislative representatives, who for the first time were all now elected by universal suffrage rather than by colonial appointment, agreed upon the tentative constitutional principles and to enter into the contract of federation.[9] While most of the islands agreed on the broad principal of federation, additional meetings were

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[7] Central Office of Information, "West Indian Federation: a Background Note", 7 January 1953, pp.3-4, Box 133/3, 1-8, Fabian Colonial Office Bureau Papers, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House (hereafter cited as Rhodes House), Oxford University.

[8] Central Office of Information, "West Indian Federation," 7 January 1953, pp.4-5, Box 133/3, 1-8, Fabian Colonial Office Bureau Papers, Rhodes House; *Report of the British Caribbean Standing Closer Association Committee, 1948 – 1949*, Col. No.255 (London: HMSO, 1950).

[9] *Report by the Conference on West Indian Federation held in London in April, 1953*, Cmd. 8837 (London: HMSO, 1953); *The Plan for a British Caribbean Federation agreed by the Conference on West Indian Federation held in London in April 1953*, Cmd. 8895 (London: HMSO, 1953).

still necessary to try to iron out remaining obstacles to federation. One of these was the question over "freedom of movement" between islands. This was a matter of great importance for overcrowded islands, as well as those less populated areas that feared being overrun with migration. In 1955, a conference on inter-territorial migration was held in Trinidad. From this meeting, a rather ambiguous agreement was made which preserved "the principle of freedom of movement while reassuring the fears of any territory concerning the effects of its immediate application."[10] Though some details remained to be decided, many saw this as the last obstacle to federation.

In February 1956, another London Conference was held to finalize the plans for the West Indies Federation based upon the 1953 plans. At numerous times during these meetings, it appeared a final agreement on federation would be prevented by some of the attendees who wanted the resolution of issues ranging from the debate over the establishment of a customs union to other financial and constitutional contentions. While some deemed it necessary to have all the intricacies solved, others believed that the fine points could be formalized later. T. A. Marryshow, the well-known "Father of Federation" from Grenada proclaimed that the federation was for future generations. Therefore, it was more important to launch it and let it evolve rather than creating a rigidly fixed plan.[11] Eventually, the representatives fell into line with Marryshow's plea, and after nearly eleven years of continuous debate, the federation was formalized. On 23

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[10] *Report of the Conference on Movement of Persons Within a British Caribbean Federation: held in Port of Spain, Trinidad from Monday 14th March to Thursday 17th March, 1955*, Col. No.315 (London: HMSO, 1955); "Full Agreement on Migration: Conference Report to be Signed Today," *Trinidad Guardian*, 17 March 1955, p.1.

[11] "Words of Wisdom," *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, 4 February 1956, p. 4.

February 1956, "leaders of the British West Indian colonies signed an agreement... merging the 1000-mile chain of islands in to a new nation."[12]

With meetings and debates completed, the matter was returned to the British Parliament which had the final say on federation. On 2 August 1956, the British Parliament issued the British Caribbean Act, which established a federation incorporating ten colonies (containing thirteen islands) in the British Caribbean: Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Trinidad & Tobago.[13] Thereafter, in August 1957, the Parliament approved an Order-in-Council establishing the West Indies Federation, which would be formally inaugurated in the beginning of 1958.[14]

The governmental structures blended democratic institutions with some lingering aspects of colonialism. The head of the federal government was the Governor General who represented the Crown. This position would be held by Lord Patrick Hailes, "a relatively minor Conservative politician". The federal legislature was bicameral, divided between an appointed Senate and an elected House of Representatives. The Senate consisted of two members from each federal unit, except Montserrat who received one. Senators were appointed by the Governor General after consultation with the various unit governors, who were supposed to listen to the advice of their local governments. The House of Representatives was based upon population; however, the specific number of

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[12] "Report Rushed to WI Governors: Result of 11 Years' Planning," *Trinidad Guardian*, 24 February 1956, p.6; "Federal Report Signed: Delegates Agree to Create a New Nation," *Trinidad Guardian*, 24 February 1956, p. 1.

[13] Conference on British Caribbean Federation, *Report by the Conference on British Conference on British Caribbean Federation held in London in February, 1956* (London: HMSO, 1956), 3; Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 119.

[14] Central Office of Information, "The West Indies – Towards Federation," July 1957, pp.1-4, Box 133/6, 60-63, Fabian Colonial Office Bureau Papers, Rhodes House.

seats was a controversial subject throughout the existence of the federal government.[15] While the particular structure of this new federal government was set, many constitutional and financial questions remained; however, it was decided that these could be worked out during the early years of the federation, rather than indefinitely delaying federation until all of the individual unit concerns were addressed.

Table 6.1 – Population and Federal Government Representation[16]

Colony	1960 Population	House of Representatives	Senate
Antigua	54,354	2	2
Barbados	232,085	5	2
Dominica	59,479	2	2
Grenada	88,617	2	2
Jamaica	1,606,546	17	2
Montserrat	12,157	1	1
St. Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla	56,644	2	2
St. Lucia	86,194	2	2
St. Vincent	80,005	2	2
Trinidad & Tobago	825,700	10	2

Stepping back from the series of official meetings, it is important to note that during the 1940s and 1950s, most of the prominent political parties and West Indian leaders adopted federation as part of their political platforms. This included, among others, the Barbados Progressive League (the predecessor to the Barbados Labour Party) which claimed that they supported federation "because the future of Barbados is inseparably bound up with that of the whole Caribbean area, and the major economic and social problems of the countries in the region can be solved only by co-operative

[15] For useful summaries of these federal structures see: Ayearst, *The British West Indies*, chapter 10; Jamaica Public Relations Office, *Jamaica and Federation* (Kingston: Government Printer, 1961); West Indies Federation, *The Federal Principle* (Port of Spain, Trinidad: Federal Information Service, 1956).

[16] Government Public Relations Office, *Jamaica and Federation*, pp.9 and 20.

action."[17] Likewise, Jamaica's People's National Party claimed to "always have and always will be foremost in advocating federation for the British Caribbean area with Dominion Status."[18] Eric Williams, who would eventually organize the People's National Movement and lead Trinidad in the 1950s, was also a major advocate of federation during these times, as he had been in previous years.[19]

While such official meetings, West Indian political parties and leaders have overwhelmingly been the focus of most studies of federation, the idea of federation also remained popular in the black diaspora in this era. The League of Coloured Peoples in London continued to support the cause of federation as an "immediate necessity" in the post-war era.[20] Before the CLC conference in 1947, the WINC and NAACP hosted a "Conference on West Indian Federation" at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Here, Norman Manley and Grantley Adams, two key figures in the West Indian nationalist movement and the CLC, spoke on federation. The conference proposed a nationwide organization composed of West Indians and African Americans which could bolster the cause of West Indian federation both politically and financially.[21] Shortly thereafter, Richard B. Moore and the American Committee for West Indian Federation

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[17] Barbados Progressive League, *The Barbados Progressive League: Policy and Programme*, November 1944, Barbados - PPTUPG, ICS.

[18] People's National Party, *PNP Plan for Progress*, 1954, Jamaica - PPTUPG, ICS.

[19] Eric Williams, *Federation: Two Public Lectures* (Port of Spain, Trinidad: PNM Publishing Company, 1956). For a brief example of Eric Williams' earlier stand on federation, see Eric Williams, *The Negro in the Caribbean* published in the 1940s. In this text, Williams calls for both a political and economic federation of the British Caribbean as a key step in the future of the region.

[20] For instance, see: Harold Moody to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 May 1940, CO 318/445/47, PRO; League of Coloured Peoples, "Fifteenth Annual Report (Year 1945-1946) as presented to the Fifteenth Annual General Meeting", *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, no.79 (April 1946): 15.

[21] Director, FBI to Assistant Attorney General Caudle, 10 June 1947, Box 1 – Folder 4: Norman W. Manley, WINC Papers, Schomburg.

(ACWIF) submitted a "Memorandum on Federation and Self-Government" to the 1947 CLC Conference in Kingston in support of the conference's demand for federation with self-government. Interestingly, the ACWIF described their own memo as expression of solidarity and support between West Indians in the Caribbean and the US, as well as an expression of "the growing interest and solidarity of persons of African descent born in this Republic, who are increasingly conscious of the ties of common interest which link their destiny with that of their brothers in the Caribbean."[22] All of these examples clearly show federation being viewed as part of a broader racial struggle by black peoples – an idea noted by various West Indian politicians who continued to visit Harlem in the 1950s to garner support for the West Indian cause among African Americans and West Indians in the US.

The idea of federation continued to exist simultaneously as both a transracial and racialized throughout the post-war era and into the actual federation in the late 1950s. As such, it is important to briefly address the ongoing debates over the place of race within conceptualizations of West Indianness and the West Indian nation within the Caribbean and diaspora in this era.

Defining a Nation and a People

> We are still unsure of ourselves, still feeling our way to Nationhood -still trying to discover what we are like –what makes us characteristically West Indian...what is the essence of our West Indianness.[23]

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[22] American Committee for West Indian Federation, "Memorandum on Federation and Self-Government of the West Indies," in Turner and Turner, *Richard B. Moore*, pp.279-283.

[23] H.W. Springer, "On Being a West Indian," *Caribbean Quarterly* III (1953), p.181.

Writing in 1953, H. W. Springer, a leading figure in the West Indies during these times, poignantly noted the ongoing debates over, and construction of "West Indianness" – something many people believed to be a requisite for a successful federation. One such vision of this "West Indianness" was a transracial, and in some cases multiracial, view of the people, region, and nation to be.[24] Imagined in this manner, the new West Indies Federation would showcase the region as an area to be emulated the world over. It would be a symbol of hope for the world to move beyond racial and ethnic divisions, and a source of pride that the West Indies had shown the world how this was possible. As such, it would also provide a striking challenge to white supremacist notions of "inferior peoples." A 1955 *Daily Gleaner* editorial proclaimed the federation was "going to be the only full-fledged, multi-racial, self-governing country in the world" where "no one is even conscious of such a thing as a colour bar."[25] T.A. Marryshow believed, "It [was] a fascinating prospect, the new Caribbean nation, with its melting pot of races and creeds, producing a common British Caribbean spirit and devoted to the dreams of democratic freedom and christian peace."[26] A 1957 editorial claimed, "the vagaries of history have caused to flow through our veins the blood & cultural heritage of every subdivision of the human race. From this extraordinary amalgam we have been forging a new nation of men that will be proud to call themselves West Indians."[27] Gordon Lewis's 1957 article on the background to the federation closed by noting that the federation had "the

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[24] Again, this study does not use transracial and multiracial as synonymous. The former implies a moving "beyond race", with the latter implying more of a mixing of races or interracial cooperation (i.e., still "recognizing race").

[25] "Birth of a Nation," *Daily Gleaner*, 23 August 1955, p.8.

[26] "Marryshow's triumph," Port-of-Spain Gazette, 24 February 1956, p.2.

[27] "Federation: a spur to national solidarity," *Daily Gleaner*, 27 May 1957, p.8

opportunity to terminate the long and evil history of colour warfare, both in the Caribbean and, through Caribbean example, in the world outside".[28] The PNP in Jamaica referred to the federation as a "powerful example to the rest of the world of racial harmony in practice."[29] A 1957 special edition of the *Canada-West Indies Magazine*, "Saluting the West Indies Federation" also contained an article on race relations in the West Indies, in which the author quoted a former governor of Jamaica as noting, "The West Indies have the best race relations in the world."[30]

While such views of the region were popular, they were not the only conceptualizations of the new West Indian nation. Co-existing alongside the trumpeting of transracial and multiracial images of the region, as had been the case for decades, there were also familiar notions of the new federation as a "black nation" – a symbol of racial unity and power. One of the best examples of this can be found in a 1958 NAACP resolution congratulating the West Indies on its founding. Among other things, it said, "May you demonstrate for all the world to behold, the capacity of the Negro for self-rule."[31] An expose in the May 1958 edition of *Ebony* noted, "Down in the sugar-coated islands of the Caribbean a colored nation has been born." While the article noted that this would include some East Indians in areas like Trinidad, it presented the federation as a

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[28] Gordon Lewis, "The British Caribbean Federation: the West Indian Background," *The Political Quarterly* 28, no.1 (January-March 1957): 65.

[29] Government Public Relations Office, *Jamaica and Federation*, p.8.

[30] "Race Relations Seen Best in West Indies," *Canada-West Indies Magazine* XLVII, no.11 (November 1957): 41.

[31] Roy Wilkins, "Long Live the West Indies," Box 1 - Folder 12: West Indian Federation, Richard B. Moore Papers, 22 April 1958.

nation to be led by people of African-descent primarily.[32] A 1958 *New York Times* article also noted that in the federation, "the black man rules."[33] Despite his opposition to regional federations in Africa, Kwame Nkrumah once claimed that his "ultimate interest in the establishment of a united West Indies stems also from the fact that a strong and powerful nation of peoples of African descent in the West Indies would... give a strong fillip to the efforts we in Africa have been making towards the creation of a united Africa."[34] These conceptualizations of the West Indies Federation also presented the region as a powerful symbol for the world, and a direct challenge to white supremacist ideologies.

Such racialized views of the federation were more prominently expressed outside of the Caribbean itself; however, it would be a mistake to simply pass such visions of the region as foreign, misguided views by "outsiders", especially given the lengthy connections between the diaspora and Caribbean. While one should not take such support for federation as a call for "black racial supremacy", as most would agree was not the case, it would be equally wrong to simply collapse obvious racialized support for federation into a transracial image of the region since the West Indies Federation coexisted as both a transracial and racial symbol of hope and pride. Though some West Indians were likely unconformable with such a racialization of their new nation, others were obviously not.

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[32] Clotye Murdock, "West Indies Federation," *Ebony* XIII, no.7 (May 1958): 146-148.

[33] "James Morris, "New Federation in the Sun," *New York Times*, 10 August 1958.

[34] CLR James, *Kwame Nkrumah and the West Indies* (San Juan, Trinidad: Printed for CLR Jones by Vedic Enterprises, 1962), 3.

Whether the region was to be a transracial or racial symbol, the unity of the region as one nation was required. For some supporters and opponents of the federation, this unity was not yet a reality. As one Jamaican preacher noted,

> Today we rejoice not so much for what has been achieved, but rather for the opportunity for what can be achieved in the future. For surely, it would be idle to pretend that a West Indian nation already exists - that, West Indians already think as West Indians, and not as Jamaicans, or Barbadians, or Trinidadians.

If federation was to work, "men of different blood, different race and different colour" had to be transformed "into one family."[35]

Some opponents of federation recognized the historical differences between the various island populations, and believed it was preposterous to simply expect them to federate on supposed commonalties such as race, religion, region, language, history, and culture. One Jamaican columnist said the idea of uniting a vast geographical region based on a common language, colonial history, culture, or race was ridiculous. In a sarcastic response to supporters of federation, Thomas Wright, a columnist for the *Daily Gleaner*, suggested,

> To the champions of Federation that they endeavor to include Hong Kong and the Falkland Islands into the scheme. After all, they are only a few thousand miles further away than Trinidad, and communications by sea and air are excellent. Having done that...we incorporate the whole lot into the City of Birmingham (thus gaining industrial potential) and then apply to become the 49th state of America, along with Great Britain. We could then call the whole thing the Federation of English-speaking peoples and live in peace and happiness for ever after.[36]

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[35] "Federation - Day of Opportunity," *Daily Gleaner*, 13 August 1956, p.8.

[36] "Get it Straight," *Daily Gleaner*, 17 August 1955, p. 8.

Equally critical of the 1950s plan for federation was W. A. Domingo. Domingo, who had long been a black diaspora activist himself, and formerly an avid supporter of the idea of federation (at times even describing West nation-building as black nation-building) now seemingly took a contrary stance.[37] Obviously influenced by his desire to see Jamaica become independent alone, and possibly displeased with the way that this particular federation would operate, he criticized the planned federation for its flawed planning. Despite previously emphasizing race as a motivating factor for a Caribbean federation, Domingo now believed such a notion absurd. Domingo said, "If being of Negro descent in the Caribbean is justification for federation, Haiti and the French West Indies with their heavy Negro population, eminently qualify for inclusion in such a union." Even a shared territorial region did not necessarily denote similarities, he argued. "The French, Germans, Italians, Poles, and Spaniards occupy the same European land mass and are of the same race...but this 'oneness' is not regarded by Europeans as a compelling reason for federating their nations."[38] Ultimately, he believed that no matter how homogeneous proponents made the peoples of the English-speaking Caribbean, it was a "superficial unity – an artificial oneness."[39]

During the era of federation, one of the most important issues confronting an inclusive West Indianness was the question of Indian (i.e., Indo-Caribbean) participation within the federation. This group was especially important in Trinidad and Guyana, which had received hundreds of thousands of Indian indentured servants from the post-

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[37] See chapter five for Domingo's characterization of a Caribbean federation in this manner.

[38] WA Domingo, *British West Indian Federation: a Critique* (Kingston: The Gleaner Co., Ltd., 1956), pp.4-5.

[39] Domingo, *British West Indian Federation*, pp. 4 and 9.

emancipation era through the early twentieth century.[40] Though there was cooperation at times in the twentieth century, in many ways the black and Indian communities remained largely separated in these colonies in the mid-twentieth century. Racial tensions between people of African-descent and Indians appeared to rise again after India's independence in 1947 when many Indians reasserted their "Indianness" at the same time that many in the Caribbean were pushing a regional West Indianness. In Trinidad, for example, by the 1950s, there was open competition and disdain between an established black middle class and an emerging Indian middle class – both of whom sought to claim their "piece of the pie" once colonization ended.[41]

In regards to federation, there was a widespread perception of Indians as anti-federation (which in some cases was true). Despite support for federation among some Indo-Caribbeans in the region, these perceptions made them a target for both justified and unjustified criticism from supporters of federation. Given the fact that peoples of African-descent made up the vast majority of the British Caribbean as a whole, many people no doubt believed that the federation was to be "a Negro republic to a

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[40] For a discussion of this process and the extent of these migrations, see for instance Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar*. Interestingly, in a March 2001 speech at Wayne State University on "Fighting for the West Indian Federation" – Selma James, the widow of CLR James spoke of her and CLR's involvement with Federation, and the popularity she believed the Federation had among the masses who she believed considered themselves to be "West Indians." The latter idea alone is debatable, but it became even more problematic when James admitted that they had never gone to the rural, Indian areas of Trinidad to discuss Federation. Thus, it seemed as if the Indian population was almost completely ignored, or at least an "other" – different from "real" West Indians.

[41] See for example: Selwyn D. Ryan, *Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago: a Study of Decolonization in a Multiracial Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972); Brinsley Samaroo, "Politics and Afro-Indian Relations in Trinidad," in *Calcutta to Caroni: The East Indians of Trinidad*, ed. John LaGuerre (Trinidad: Longman Caribbean Limited, 1974), 97; Malcolm Cross, *The East Indians of Guyana and Trinidad* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1980), preface.

predominant degree."[42] Despite all of the talk of a transracial West Indian region, this no doubt worried some Indians – especially those who stood ready to stake a greater claim with the end of colonialism. In his 1961 study of "East Indians and the Federation of the British West Indies", Jesse Harris Proctor, Jr., noted that the Indian population in Trinidad and Tobago alone was "greater than the total population of any of the other British Caribbean islands except Jamaica." However, if they joined the federation they would be "only about one-tenth of the population of the entire area to be federated."[43] Some believed that one of the reasons that British Guiana refused to join the federation was because the Indian majority in that colony refused to have their power curtailed under a black majority federation.[44] Such notions, which may have been true for some but not *all* Indians, provided fire for separatist or racialist charges against the Indian population, including the rather preposterous notion by some that Indians were trying to takeover those colonies and make them part of a "Greater India." As David Lowenthal argues, "East Indian hesitations about federation tend[ed] to be construed by Creoles as a lack of loyalty, if not a positive disloyalty, both to The West Indies and to Great Britain."[45]

Indian efforts to maintain their cultural distinctiveness provided another opportunity to question Indian loyalty and their place within the emerging West

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[42] "Fantastic Political Adventure," *Daily Gleaner*, 18 December 1956, p. 10; "Unity Develops in Caribbean," *Daily Gleaner*, 9 January 1957, p.8.

[43] Jesse Harris Proctor, Jr., "East Indians and the Federation of the British West Indies," *India Quarterly* XVII (1961): 370-371. A 1956 article in the *Trinidad Guardian* recorded that the East Indian population in Trinidad (which was 37% of the population) and British Guiana (which was 43%) would be only 12% of the federal population. "The Preference," *Trinidad Guardian*, 1 September 1956, p.6.

[44] For example, see: CLR James, *Lecture on Federation: West Indies and British Guiana* (Georgetown, British Guiana: "Argosy" Co., 1959).

[45] David Lowenthal, "The Social Background of West Indian Federation," in *The West Indies Federation: Perspectives on a New Nation*, ed. David Lowenthal (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p.83.

Indianness. Some people felt Indians failed to embrace and contribute to the "West Indian culture" that formed the basis of federation, while others questioned Indian cultural separation and called for their assimilation. For instance, in a 1955 editorial, Harold Julien (a common contributor of numerous editorials) said that the reason the Indians had remained unassimilated was because of improper British colonial polices which "provided and permitted for them special and exclusive institutions and privileges," such as "a special Indian commissioner in the colony." These policies had hindered the absorption of the Indian population, which he appears to have believed was necessary.[46] Some Indians apparently read this (and rightfully so) as a call for the assimilation of Indians. One respondent believed that Julien's plan for the absorption of Indians was essentially advocating the obliteration of the group.[47]

In another case, a series of editorial debates ensued over the teaching and use of Hindi in Trinidad. One of the central issues in the debates over assimilation was the fight to not only maintain Hindi among Indian homes, but to teach it in their schools as well. In an editorial that set off a string of angry responses, "Scarlet Ibis" cheered the return of an Indian commissioner to India from Trinidad because he believed the commissioner had encouraged the use of Hindi among Indians, which was "the best medium of spreading racial issues for political propaganda."[48] In response, Indians said "that if speaking different languages in one's own home was somehow subversive then Trinidad would have long been in a chaotic situation because of its multiple languages and

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[46] "People Not Consulted on Federation Issue," *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, 18 March 1955, p.4.

[47] "Indians' Attitude to Problems," *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, 30 March 1955, p.4.

[48] "Language Query," *Trinidad Guardian*, 13 October 1955, p.6.

people." In another words, why was the Indian population and Hindi only considered subversive?[49] Indraprakash Bann was not so calm in his rebuttal. He asked, "Now what would the 'Ibis' type of people want Indians to do? First, they must destroy the Hindi language; then they must cut off all cultural and religious relationship with India. After that, if they still persist, they must be wiped off." He went on to say that "there is so much hatred in the minds of this type of people against things Indian that they put fear into our minds, forcing us to hate a Federation of the West Indies where Indians will be in a minority."[50] Therefore, perceptions of the West Indies as a region "beyond race" proved folly in many areas.

The place of race within West Indian identity and support for (or opposition to) a West Indian federation was also debated in the diaspora. In the 1940s and 1950s, one of the most prominent groups associated with the rise of West Indian nationalism and support for federation were the West Indian students attending universities in Great Britain, the US, and Canada. Much like the West Indies Regiments who spent time overseas, their experiences abroad helped forge a sense of regional unity among many of the students beyond their island identities. Even some of the coloured students who may have held themselves separate from their darker-skinned peers in the Caribbean realized that in these foreign lands, they were also usually classified as "black". In these strange lands, West Indian students (who were primarily of African decent) lived and faced discrimination as both colonial subjects, as well as racial minorities. In London, for example, these racial issues were likely further ingrained by the fact that before the

[49] "No Political Issues," *Trinidad Guardian*, 28 October 1955, p.8.

[50] "Future of the Indians 'Tied Up in the West Indies," *Trinidad Guardian*, 18 October 1955, p. 8.

creation of their own student organizations, many West Indian students chose (or were forced) to associate with West African student groups. In addition to formal student organizations, West Indian students were actively involved in anticolonial politics such as the various Pan-African movements of the era, or with other racially conscious organizations such as the League of Coloured Peoples.[51] Therefore, race initially proved to be a prominent issue in the daily life of the majority of these students, both as a crux of their discrimination and as a basis of their support for, and association with, various organizations.

With the advent of various West Indian student organizations in the 1940s, there was a marked increase in the rise of Caribbean nationalism. These included such groups as the West Indian Students' Union (in the UK), the Oxford University West Indian Society, West Indian Students' Association (in the US), the Caribbean Association of Howard University, the British West Indian Society (at McGill University in Montreal), and the West Indian Student Society (at the University of Toronto). While these organizations may have had subtle differences between them, they shared many characteristics including the promotion of a supposed inclusive regional West Indian identity, as well as a spirit of Caribbean nationalism.

In many of these student organizations, it appears that one of the strongest manifestations of Caribbean nationalism was the support for federation. To many, this program offered the best route to pursue their desires of creating a Caribbean nation – a homeland which would confer upon them recognition as a national, independent people rather than colonial subjects. One of the most prominent groups in the UK was the West

[51] See, for example Paul Rich, "The Black Diaspora in Britain: Afro-Caribbean Students and the Struggle for Political Identity, *Immigrants and Minorities* 6, no.2 (1987): 151-173.

Indian Students' Union (WISU) who was recognized by one colonial official as "keenly interested in Federation" and praised for their "good work in bringing West Indians over here together and in break down parochialism among them."[52] In fact, in some groups, support for federation went hand in hand with assertion of a West Indian identity. For instance, one WISU report stated that they (the students) could not properly call themselves West Indians if they did not support federation – a familiar claim by many West Indian nationalists in this era.[53] Another WISU circular bragged that their dances created the "the atmosphere that makes the idea of federation a real and reasonable prospect instead of a remote and abstract topic for conversation".[54] This type of support for federation could also be seen in the West Indian student groups in the US and Canada. The Caribbean Association of Howard University sought "to foster and promote cooperation among students from the Caribbean area, irrespective of nationality, in view of the current official policies of federation and regionalism," while McGill University's British West Indian Society wanted to "foster a spirit of co-operation and understanding, between the representatives of the various islands, and between representatives of the various persuasions."[55]

Judging from such proclamations, West Indian students appear as one of the best symbols of a regional identity, and their support for federation appears as national

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[52] Colonial Office Memo by J.L. Keith, 2 November 1952, CO 876/155, PRO.

[53] Lloyd Braithwaite, *Colonial West Indian Students in Britain* (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2001), p.155.

[54] West Indian Students' Union circular, n.d., Box 133/1/3, Fabian Colonial Office Bureau Papers, Oxford University.

[55] Caribbean Association of Howard University pamphlet, 1945, Folder 13, Eric Williams Memorial Collection (hereafter cited as EWMC), University of the West Indies-St. Augustine ; Ralph Hoyte to Eric Williams, 6 March 1943, Folder 11, EWMC.

project, with little to do with race. However, if we look closer at this West Indian identity, the place of race appears more prominent, which would bring their support of federation into question as well. While a few Indian and white students were members in these organizations, questions remained. Were they considered *as* West Indian *as* their black and coloured counterparts? How well integrated were these non-black students? Did the presence of a few white or Indian students make these groups multiracial or raceless? That is, did they irrevocably dismiss race from conceptualizations of federation and West Indianness? One student likely described the reality for many West Indians when he said:

> I found that I sometimes presented two separate pictures of the West Indian in my conversations with friends: when we talked about the racial situation in the world the West Indies was an area of hope; when we talked about the West Indies in isolation it was a hot-bed of racial neuroses.[56]

In several instances, it appears that some of the Black and Coloured students considered themselves to be more legitimate or the "real West Indians", which, I argue, coincides with a sustained racial consciousness and recognition (by many) of themselves as the vast majority of the Caribbean. For instance, as Lloyd Braithwaite recounts in his study of colonial West Indian Students, during the first elections of the West Indian Students' Union, a Trinidadian was elected as the first president of the Union, despite the proportional dominance of the Jamaican students. However, he also contends that the reason for this was the reluctance of many Jamaicans to vote for a white Jamaican student who was considered the strongest Jamaican candidate. As Braithwaite described it, some members of the Union "were opposed to the idea that a white person, who lorded it over

[56] Mervyn Morris, "Feeling, Affection, Respect," in *Disappointed Guests: Essays by African, Asian, and West Indian Students*, eds. Henri Tajfel and John L. Dawson (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 8.

them in their homeland should now, through the assertion of West Indian nationality in London, continue to lord it over them."[57] Seemingly ignoring his own perceptive point, Braithwaite summarizes this election as embodying the assertion of a West Indian consciousness beyond insular island loyalties. While this is true, it *also* clearly shows the assertion of a racial consciousness – not necessarily beyond this West Indian identity but rather in conjunction with it.

In another case, despite McGill's British West Indian Society (BWIS) objective to promote cooperation between West Indians, there was apparently some racial strife amongst the Caribbean students of "various persuasions." Judging from a series of letters between the BWIS and Eric Williams in 1945, there was some strife between the Black leadership of the organization and some of the Indo-Caribbean students. Without assigning blame, it appears the Indians were either not as welcome by some of the black students, or that they had chosen not to be part of a group dominated by black students.[58] In hindsight, it was likely a little of both.

West Indian students, like many West Indian migrants in previous decades, clearly showed the development of a regional and racial consciousness during their experiences abroad. Students from the West Indies often realized their regional identities while studying abroad; however, this did not always translate to an inclusive West Indianness beyond all racial and ethnic tensions. While recognizing that some notions of West Indianness were indeed transracial, many students, faced with overt racism abroad

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[57] Braithwaite, *Colonial West Indian Students*, p.133.

[58] Eric Williams to Winston [Mahabir], 16 April 1945 ; Eric Williams to Ralph & Milton, 16 April 1945 ; Winston [Mahabir] to Eric Williams, 28 April 1945 ; Wilma Cameron to Eric Williams, 18 April 1945, Folder 11, EWMC.

and often surrounded by anticolonial activities, also developed an increased racial awareness that was intertwined with their identity and activities as West Indians. West Indianness, therefore, cannot easily be described as *either* racial or transracial, but more appropriately as racial *and* transracial, dependent upon the particular context it was evoked.

Federal Capital Controversy

As 1956 ended and 1957 began, the territories which had voted to join the pending federation readied for the transition. One of the first concerns of the still-to-form federation was the selection of a site for the federal capital. Though still technically a pre-federation action, the battle over the placement of the federal capital was one of the first large-scale, region-wide tests of West Indianness. The conflict that ensued challenged the notion and reality of a prioritized West Indianness over the traditional island and racial loyalties, which had to be overcome for federation to be a success.[59]

The establishment of a federal capital had been discussed formally in the 1949 Standing Closer Association, 1953 London Conference, 1955 Trinidad Conference, and again in the 1956 London Conference. Numerous sites were discussed, and tentative decisions were made only to be overturned later. For example, Trinidad was named preliminary capital by the Standing Closer Association in October 1949, but then the 1953 London Conference decided in favor of Grenada before going back to Trinidad,

[59] One of the best overviews of the selection of a West Indies federal capital can be found in David Lowenthal, "The West Indies Chooses a Capital," *Geographical Review* 48, no.3 (July 1958): 336-364. This section of my study, however, uses various newspaper editorials from this era as the chief source of information.

which was dropped again later. By the 1955 Trinidad Conference, many representatives believed that Barbados was the leading candidate.[60]

Finally, at the 1956 London Conference, a Federal Capital Sites Fact-Finding Commission was created to finalize three recommendations, which would then be voted on by representatives in January 1957.[61] The Fact-Finding Commission consisted of three members: Sir Francis Mudie (former Governor of West Punjab), Professor H. Myles Wright (Lever Professor of Civic Design at Liverpool University), and Mr. A. E. Cook (retired Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, East Nigeria). After touring all 13 islands, and British Guiana from 25 June – 30 August 1956, they were expected to choose a site that was "as broadly representative as possible of the diverse elements in the Federation." Furthermore, the capital site "should be the place which will draw people from all the islands and foster the growth of that West Indian patriotism which is essential if the Federation is to be a success."[62] However, their investigation and report initiated a controversy threatening the already tenuous notion of West Indianness.

On 2 January 1957, the Fact-Finding Commission issued its top three choices for the capital site: (1) Barbados (2) Jamaica (3) Trinidad. As if prepared for the backlash from the islands that were not chosen, the commission cited several reasons for their rankings. Explanations for the placement of Trinidad, considered by many an early favorite, included the supposed instability of Trinidad's political scene, and a low

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[60] "Christmas and Federation," *Trinidad Guardian*, 25 December 1956, p.8; "Barbados May Get Capital," *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, 18 March 1955, p.1.

[61] The official report of this commission can be found in the Colonial Office's *Report of the British Caribbean Federal Capital Commission* (London: HMSO, 1956)

[62] "Jamaica, Trinidad Chosen Capital Prospects 2 and 3," *Trinidad Guardian*, 3 January 1957, p.1; "A Federal New Year," *Trinidad Guardian*, 1 January 1957, p.1; "Questions and Answers on the Capital," *Trinidad Guardian*, 13 January 1957, p.8.

standard in public life characterized by "widespread reports of corruption." The commission also noted "a disturbing element in the public life of Trinidad to which importance is attached in the other islands." In their investigation, the committee heard allegations that the large Indian population that comprised approximately one-third of Trinidad held "ideals and loyalties differing from those to be found elsewhere in the Federation and they exercise a disruptive influence on social and political life in Trinidad."[63] Though the Capital Sites Commission claimed "to pass no judgment on these allegations" (which were included in the formal findings), they did say that "the existence of such a large minority, differing in so many ways from the rest of the people of the island, is bound to introduce complications" which would make the "growth of healthy political traditions in Trinidad" even more difficult. These sentiments mirrored earlier editorials which described the fears of some in the region that if Indians were ever able to get political power in Trinidad, they could wreck or endanger the federal process by taking the country out of the federation.[64]

Reaction was swift as Trinidadians and other federal supporters joined to voice their disapproval on the way ethnic differences and racial hearsay were used to damn Trinidad as the federal capital. Mass meetings were held within the Indian communities, and leaders expressed their outrage at being used as scapegoats in the Fact-Finding Committee's decision to pass on Trinidad as the capital site. They demanded an apology for antagonizing the Indian community, which some Indians claimed "had taught the

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[63] "Jamaica, Trinidad Chosen Capital Prospects 2 and 3," *Trinidad Guardian*, 3 January 1957, p.1; "Battle for WI Capital Must Go On,", *Trinidad Guardian*, 4 January 1957,p.1; "Questions and Answers on the Capital," *Trinidad Guardian*, 13 January 1957, p.8.

[64] "Capital Sites Commission Findings," *Daily Gleaner*, 3 January 1957, p.13; "Distorting the Picture," *Trinidad Guardian*, 13 July 1956, p.8.

world that harmonious relationships could exist between different races."[65] Likewise, newspaper editorials poured in to defend the Indian population and Trinidadian society from these charges. Many of these re-iterated that Indians had been misconstrued as anti-federation, and even disloyal to Trinidad. One letter said that the Indian population was not anti-federation, and that they were "a very great nation in the West Indies." Another cited the Indian population as the "backbone of agriculture in Trinidad" and "loyal to Her Majesty's Government." Even the Chief Minister Eric Williams lectured that the Indian population were not an alien population, and were an integral part of West Indian society.[66] Thus, it appeared for a moment that Trinidadian society had rallied beyond their racialized local identities, and united for the regional good of the federation.

The claim of a "disruptive" Indian population was not the only controversy involving race that came from the Fact-Finding Commission's report. There was also a backlash against the choice of Barbados as the top nominee for the capital site. Reaction was swift as articles and editorials against the choice of Barbados appeared alongside the defenses of Indian loyalty. While the committee gave various reasons for choosing Barbados, many of those upset by its choice focused on the problems of race in Barbados. As early as 1956, some representatives noted the extent of racial discrimination in Barbados, and implied this could prevent Barbados from being the federal capital. Many contended that if the federation intended to portray an inclusive "West Indianness," and fuel West Indian patriotism, this was a horrible choice to place the capital. One editorial

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[65] "Indians to Protest," *Trinidad Guardian*, 6 January 1957, p.1; "Leaders Call for an Apology, Demand Capital for Trinidad," *Trinidad Guardian*, 8 January 1957, p.2.

[66] "East Indians are Not Opposed to Federation," *Trinidad Guardian*, 8 January 1957, p.6; "Attack on Indians Wrong and Unfair," *Trinidad Guardian*, 15 January 1957, p.8; "Dr. Williams Says 'Indians are Part of W.I. Society," *Trinidad Guardian*, 8 February 1957, p.10.

claimed that if the "national capital would be a showcase to the world in human relations... Barbados is certainly the least qualified spot to build such a showcase."[67] An editorial from Antigua claimed the Commission had "ignored the obnoxious colour and class question in Barbados." It went on to claim that the choice of Barbados "would be like moving the capital of the United States to Jim Crow Dixie land."[68] Gordon Lewis even noted that it was hard to stay in Barbados for an extended period without feeling the "prejudices of a golf club in Outer London."[69] Still, others wondered how the "very English" and "squirearchic Barbados with its social separation of races" would be an ideal site for a West Indian capital. In contrast, Trinidad "with its plurality of races" had "gone further than the others in evolving a cultural solidarity."[70] In addition to proclaiming the segregation of Barbados, it also appears that many sought to discredit Barbados as a way of showing that racial problems in Trinidad were not as bad as other islands.

In response, some Barbadians claimed the taint of segregation extended into almost all West Indian societies, and that it was no worse in Barbados.[71] Another article written by a Trinidadian Indian, who was not on speaking terms with his family since he married a Black woman, wondered "what was wrong with Commissioner's report?

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[67] "Race Bar 'May Rob Barbados of Federal Capital," *Trinidad Guardian*, 12 January 1956, p. 1; "Trinidad 'Obvious Choice'," *Trinidad Guardian*, 11 January 1957, p.3.

[68] "Antiguans Hurt - Choice of 'Dixie' Barbados Attacked," *Trinidad Guardian*, 5 January 1957, p.2.

[69] "BWI Must Look to the New World," *Daily Gleaner*, 7 January 1957, p.8.

[70] "Suitable Island Wanted," *Sunday Guardian*, 6 January 1957, p.8.

[71] "Barbados is Victim of Unfair Criticism," *Trinidad Guardian*, 5 February 1957, p.8; "Barbadians Never Stoop to Slander and Abuse," *Trinidad Guardian*, 13 February 1957, p. 8.

Nothing. It should teach us to behave differently."[72] Both of these editorials are representative of those who felt that West Indianness had failed to conquer lingering "problems" of race in the Caribbean.

The concept of West Indianness emerged from the capital controversy with mixed results. On one hand, the rallying in support of Trinidad produced an optimistic outlook of an inclusive regionalism, even if many of the defenses of Trinidad appeared more "islandist" than "regionalist".[73] However, the very fact that the report still noted allegations of a subversive Indian population showed that traditional island and racial identities were still the reality for many. Nonetheless, the brief efforts of West Indianness did sway enough representatives to secure the capital for Trinidad on 2 February 1957. However, larger tests of West Indianness were to come in the 1958 elections when "West Indians" were supposed to be elected into the federal government.

1958 Federal Elections

The year 1958 began with pomp and circumstance as the West Indies Federation was officially inaugurated under the auspices of Governor General Lord Hailes. In the Governor General's inaugural address, he noted, "I know that the far-flung West Indian territories have their own individualities: there are the rivalries, perhaps even jealousies...but surely the people are West Indians."[74] As the federation began, Lord

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[72] "We Must All Live Together," *Trinidad Guardian*, 16 January 1957, p.6.

[73] My use of "islandist" here refers to Earl Gooding's notion of "islandism" which denoted the idea of an insular nationalism that existed in many islands before they were independent nations, and which usually competed with a regional identity. See Earl Gooding, *The West Indies at the Crossroads* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company Inc., 1981).

[74] "Long Live the West Indies," *Daily Gleaner*, 4 January 1958, p.6.

Hailes warned that "the strong must be prepared to help the weak, and to make some sacrifices for the good of all. Jealousies and suspicions must disappear. Everyone must take the big and not the petty view."[75] Again, the hope of a regional West Indian identity was to be pursued against the traditional handicaps of insular and racial identities. However, the upcoming federal elections would prove that dream a difficult task.

For the 1958 federal elections, the key federal parties were the West Indies Federal Labour Party (WIFLP) and the Federal Democratic Labour Party (FDLP), both of which were loose federal parties based largely upon the existing party divisions of each island. The WIFLP incorporated the ruling parties in each territory except St. Vincent. Its most prominent members were Norman Manley and the People's National Party (PNP) in Jamaica, Eric Williams and the People's National Movement (PNM) in Trinidad, and Grantley Adams and the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) in Barbados. The FDLP was composed of many opposition parties including the JLP in Jamaica, and the newly formed Democratic Labour Party in Trinidad (DLP), which has been created as an anti-PNM party to try to end Williams' rule.[76]

The federal elections in Jamaica and Trinidad were especially important in 1958 since these islands held the most power in the federation.[77] As such they would have a significant say in the policies of the new federation. Policies aside, however, these 1958 elections also came to be characterized by a vicious exchange of charges of racialism that challenged notions of a transracial identity in the region.

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[75] "Stability, Prosperity Will Come to Area through Federation," *Trinidad Guardian*, 20 January 1958, p. 2.

[76] Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 140-141.

[77] This discussion focuses on Jamaica and Trinidad. These two islands contained 83% of the territory and 78% of the people in the West Indies Federation.

In the year before the 1958 election, many people in Jamaica promoted the idea of a colorless society where people had been amalgamated into a "Jamaican race." Bustamante claimed, for instance, claimed that "all races should think of each other as brothers...in Jamaica we don't know any difference of races. We all live as one people." Some others concurred as articles appeared in the *Daily Gleaner* stating that Jamaicans had put an end to racism, as well as racial terms and slurs – the people of Jamaica were "all Jamaicans." The Lord Bishop of Jamaica even noted the terms "colour bar" and "segregation" were "meaningless in Jamaica."[78] However, this was far from true. Indians in Trinidad protested (possibly in place of their Indian brethren who wielded far less power in Jamaica) against the "Anti-Indian Jamaican laws" such as discriminatory contract procedures, non-Christian Indian rights of marriage, and anti-cremation laws. As well, just two years prior, Norman Manley stated that the "opposition to the idea of a Caribbean Federation comes largely from British Guiana and Trinidad where the East Indian communities believe they are about to attain political dominance on a communal level."[79] Racial controversies, therefore, were not foreign to Jamaica at this time.

The competition in Jamaica between Bustamante's JLP and Manley's PNP, the chief parties of the island, brought the issue of race in the elections to the public's attention. While both parties were "multiracial," the JLP contained many of the former white Jamaican politicians. In this nationalist era of decolonization, white skin was, in

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[78] "I Am No Socialist – He Says," *Trinidad Guardian*, 18 May 1957, p.1; "Federation," *Daily Gleaner*, 22 July 1957, p. 8; "Bishop Gibson: 'Colour Bar' meaningless in Jamaica," *Daily Gleaner*, 15 May 1957, p.7.

[79] "Maraj Hits Anti-Indian Jamaican Laws," *Trinidad Guardian*, 5 February 1957, p.1; "Get it Right," *Daily Gleaner*, 4 January 1958, p.6; "Mitra Sinanan calls Manley statement 'irresponsible'," *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, 18 February 1956, p. 1.

some cases, a political liability of sorts, with white politicians an easy target for black politicians and candidates.

In the months leading up to the elections, charges of racialism from the JLP against the PNP began to appear.[80] Less than a month after the West Indies Federation had officially began, editorials appeared by outraged JLP supporters who claimed that the PNP had made the coming election a "Colour War" by advocating "colour for colour and skin for skin." Vivian Blake, a PNP candidate in one of the parishes was charged with referring to a JLP candidate's colour as a reason to reject him. In response, Blake claimed to have only noted Lionel Densham's, the JLP candidate, connections with "that group of employers and planters" who made a mockery of the concept of labour politics. He added, "If mischievous people choose to mis-represent this as an attack of race and colour: he was not to blame."[81] Other editorials contended that this exchange was nothing to caterwaul about as the idea of "colour for colour" had been used by the JLP in previous elections (and of course actually dates back to the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865).

A similar incident occurred with Morris Cargill, a white JLP candidate. Cargill claimed the PNP attacked him on the basis of his race. Anti-PNP editorials wondered why the PNP resorted to this strategy of making distinctions between people they refer to as "white and people of dark skin."[82] PNP supporters, however, were quick to note that the "PNP is, as it has always been, unalterably opposed to racial or class prejudice in

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[80] It is important to remember that the JLP was associated with the Federal Democratic Labour Party and the PNP with the West Indies Federal Labour Party.

[81] "Colour Question," *Daily Gleaner*, 28 January 1958, p.8; "Colour in Politics," *Daily Gleaner*, 30 January 1958; p.10.

[82] "I Can't Help the Colour of My Skin," *Daily Gleaner*, 18 March 1958, p. 8; "PNP Fighting Election on Class and Colour," *Daily Gleaner*, 24 March 1958, p. 11.

politics."[83] Another editorial claimed that this form of campaigning was the norm as politicians appealed to crowds by making "wise cracks at a candidate who comes from minority group." This editorial went on to argue that minorities should come out of their shells and assert that they were Jamaicans.[84]

In the end, the JLP stunned the PNP in winning the majority of Jamaica's seats in the new federal government. The defeat of the PNP obviously cannot be attributed to simple discussions of racial politics, as the JLP victory actually spoke more to many Jamaicans' uneasiness with Jamaica being in the federation. Some, however, believed this victory was more than a defeat of PNP policies – it was a defeat of racial divisions and the manipulation of them. One JLP supporter claimed the victories of Lionel Densham and Morris Cargill over the PNP's "open colour attacks" upon their race proved that white skin was not a political liability.[85] If this was true, the victory of the JLP was also in some ways a "moral victory" for West Indianness (or more appropriately in this case, Jamaican-ness) over the racial identities the PNP had purportedly stressed in some campaigns during the election. However, the Trinidadian election would provide no such illusions.

In Trinidad, the 1958 federal election followed closely on the heels of the 1956 national elections in which Eric Williams' PNM had swept to power over opposition from weaker political groups such as the Party of Political Progress and Trinidad Labour Party, and the People's Democratic Party who represented the expanding participation of

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[83] "Colour in Politics," *Daily Gleaner*, 1 February 1958, p.6; "Race Politics," *Daily Gleaner*, 4 February 1958, p.8.

[84] "So What?" *Daily Gleaner*, 16 March 1958, p.8.

[85] "Political Myths Go By the Board," *Daily Gleaner*, 29 March 1958, p. 8.

East Indians in politics.[86] The PNM was a rather new party itself, created largely upon Williams' calls for a truly national party that would "appeal to all classes, all colours, all races, all religions." Williams envisioned a party where members felt secure and pledged to "oppose racial discrimination in all shapes and forms."[87] Based on these concepts, and despite their political immaturity, the PNM won the 1956 election. Williams' idea of a multiracial party was realized to some extent as the party claimed representatives from all racial groups. However, it was still predominately black. For this reason, the PNM still confronted the historical animosities between the black and Indian populations.

Some Indians believed the PNM, popularly referred to by some of its opponents as the "Popular Negro Movement," was a "black nationalist and racist movement" that only used Indian and other minority members for "the necessary window-dressing to give the PNM a 'national' appearance." H. P. Singh, a leading Indo-Caribbean nationalist, claimed that Williams was "an Indian hater, [and] that he hates white people." Furthermore, Singh claimed that Williams' scholarship on the black experience in the Caribbean, as well as his various anti-colonial speeches (which Singh believed were essentially anti-white), were nothing more than appeals to raise racialism in Trinidad.[88] The PNM's multiracial platform, which at one time looked as if it would renew the flirtation with multiracialism seen from time to time in previous decades, failed as "the

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[86] "West Indies DLP," *Daily Gleaner*, 5 October 1957, p.8; Morley Ayearst, "A Note on Some Characteristics of West Indian Political Parties," in *The Aftermath of Sovereignty*, eds. David Lowenthal and Lambros Comitas (Garden City, N.Y., Anchor Books, 1973), 79.

[87] Williams, *Historical Background of Race Relations, 34; Eric Williams, The Case for Party Politics in Trinidad and Tobago* (Port of Spain, Trinidad: The College Press, 1955), 18-19.

[88] Indian Review Press, *H. P. Singh: The Indian Struggle for Justice and Equality Against Black Racism in Trinidad and Tobago, 1956-1962* (Couva, Trinidad: Indian University Press, 1993), XLVI-XLVII and XLIX.

prevalence of ethnic differences between the two groups and Williams' own inability to understand the East Indian culture alienated" much of the Indian populace.[89] This failure became evident in the 1958 federal election.

The campaign lines were drawn – it was Williams and the PNM versus an anti-PNM coalition in the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). The constituency of the DLP alliance included the parties the PNM defeated in 1956: Party of Political Progress and Trinidad Labour Party, and the People's Democratic Party. This party combined a large number of Indo-Caribbean nationalists and former colonial politicians based upon a common goal of defeating Williams and the PNM. Even Albert Gomes, a "white" politician who some Indians had described as anti-Indian in prior decades, was welcome to join alongside the Indian population against Williams and the threat of a "black neo-colonialism."[90] With these seeds of racial animosity sowed, the campaigns began.

As in Jamaica, an essential characteristic of Trinidad's federal election was the charges of racialism and the manipulation of multiracialism by both parties. Though less than in Jamaica, there were some claims of racialist campaigning before the election. In late March 1958, a "Democrat" wrote in to question why Dr. Winston Mahabir (an Indian supporter of the PNM) had attacked Albert Gomes and openly said that he should not be elected since he was not black or Indian. This writer claimed that Trinidadians "were dwelling together in unity until" Mahabir and the PNM entered the political scene.[91]

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[89] Mahin Gosine, *East Indians and Black Power in the Caribbean: the Case of Trinidad* (New York: Africana Research Publications, 1986), 19.

[90] Indian Review Press, *H. P. Singh*, XLVI-XLIX.

[91] "Hatred and Animosity Seen in Election Move," *Trinidad Guardian*, 22 March 1958, p.8.

While the campaigns had such minor squabbles, it was the aftermath of the election where the better-known controversy ensued.

When the results of the election were announced, the PNM had suffered a severe blow as the DLP won a majority of Trinidad's federal seats. Just as in Jamaica, the ruling party in the WIFLP camp suffered a major setback. However, the controversy was not over the results of the election as much as it was how those results came about. In the month following the election, the PNM and DLP exchanged accusations of racialism, while both purported to uphold the federation's multiracial motto of "dwelling together in unity."

The post-election disputes began with Eric Williams' accusations that the East Indians of the DLP used racial propaganda and appeals to racialism to win the election. He based this claim upon anti-PNM propaganda directed to "My Dear Indian Brothers" and signed "Yours Truly, Indian." Williams alleged this was not the action of the respectable "Indian nation," but one by a "recalcitrant and hostile minority" within it. Some believed it was used to scare the Indians, and it appeared to work as the PNM was beaten convincingly in the rural areas dominated by Indians. "It was a deliberate attempt of our opponents to exploit race as the basis of political power."[92]

DLP supporters quickly voiced their outrage. To some Indians, it was "plain as daylight that the advent of [the] PNM in this colony started this race feeling," and the Indians demanded an apology.[93] Editorials and articles carried various responses:

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[92] "CM Claims – Dems Used Race," *Trinidad Guardian*, 3 April 1958, pp. 1 and 13.

[93] "Trinidadians Should Not be Misled by Political Novices," *Trinidad Guardian*, 14 April 1958, p.6.

Williams was just making excuses, he was attacking Indians since he was scared of the white society, he was ruining the harmony and understanding of previous years. Furthermore, some claimed, it was Williams who brought up racial issues when they would have been better left alone – including the racialist history lessons he preached in many of his speeches. Gomes and others even likened Williams to Hitler. Was "the Doctor, like Hitler and the Jews, looking for a scapegoat and finding the Indians a good target?"[94] Other argues that Williams provided "a very rude shock" to the federation's motto. Even Bustamante voiced the opinion that Williams' allegations were "vulgar" coming from such an educated man, and that anyone "who attempted to set up race against race in any country should be thrown out of the country."[95]

Williams and the PNM fought back with their own editorials. The PNM resolved "that the multi-racial ship of the PNM" would not succumb to the "fascist flood of racial conflict." PNM supporters penned replies to clarify that Williams had not attacked all Indians, only those leaders who introduced race and misled the "illiterate Indians" of the rural areas.[96] Their case gained some validity as news of DLP political rallies where promises were made to largely Indian audiences that an Indian would be appointed Prime Minister if the DLP won, were confirmed. Further support for the PNM's accusations can be discerned from the letter of one disgruntled DLP supporter who complained about

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[94] "Racially Speaking," *Trinidad Guardian*, 3 April 1958, p.8; "Dems Deny Using 'Race' in Federal Election Fight," *Trinidad Guardian*, 8 April 1958, p.7; "Trinidad Was Famous for Racial Harmony," *Trinidad Guardian*, 13 April 1958, p.8; "CM Seeking a Scapegoat," *Trinidad Guardian*, 9 April 1958, p.6.

[95] "Williams Gives Rude Shock to 'Unity' Motto," *Trinidad Guardian*, 9 April 1958, p.6; "Busta Hits back at CM," *Trinidad Guardian*, 13 April 1958, p.2; "Busta Warns About Ghost of Manley," *Trinidad Guardian*, 21 April 1958, p.2.

[96] "Fight racialism With Multi-Racialism: PNM Victory in Defeat," *Trinidad Guardian*, 4 April 1958, p.9; "PNM Stands for Unity," *Trinidad Guardian*, 12 April 1958, p.6; "East Indians Were not Attacked by Williams," *Trinidad Guardian*, 16 April 1958, p.6.

rumors that the white Albert Gomes might be made the first Prime Minister of the West Indies Federation. This article asserted that this "would be a complete betrayal of the East Indian community as the elections in the rural area were fought to the bitter end on the ground that if the [DLP] won, the first Prime Minster would be an East Indian."[97] Therefore, it appeared that the DLP had used racialism and the fear of black domination over Indians in their campaigns.

These editorial debates continued for some time. Both sides continued to push their assumptions, and to deny their opponent's allegations. Yet, neither party could honestly claim that they had not simultaneously employed racialism. As one PNM Indian noted in defiance of his own party, "if the DLP is racial in that Indians voted for their candidate, then the PNM is equally racial in another direction."[98]

By May 1958, many of the daily editorials on the issue of race in the election calmed to a few weekly lingering complaints. Most were renewed cries for an end to these racial controversies. They wanted the "Government heads and political leaders to whatever party they may belong to teach and preach racial unity." Others insisted that race must cease to be an issue or it would ruin the West Indies. What was needed was the re-establishment of West Indian cooperation, as had been presented in the Capital Site struggle. Only then could federation be strong.[99]

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[97] "Trinidad DLP Stands Condemned," *Trinidad Guardian*, 15 April 1958, p.8; "False Impressions Given to Public About PNM," *Trinidad Guardian*, 21 April 1958, p.6; "East Indian Should be Prime Minister," *Trinidad Guardian*, 11 April 1958, p.8.

[98] "CM Seeking a Scapegoat," *Trinidad Guardian*, 9 April 1958, p.6.

[99] "Preach WI Unity," *Trinidad Guardian*, 25 April 1958, p.8; "Forget Race or Ruin WI - Hopkin Says," *Trinidad Guardian*, 8 May 1958, p.7; "Unity Alone Can Give Federation Strength," *Trinidad Guardian*, 9 May 1958, p.8.

In examining the post-WWII years of the federation movement, it was obvious that the underlying notion of West Indianness upon which the federation was to be based remained fluid, ambiguous, and in many cases, elusive. The decades of debates over federation had done little to confirm a particular vision of West Indianness. Therefore, if the federation was to be successful based upon a prioritized, regional sense of unity, then the federation was in dire straits.

Conclusion

> Changes in government will be meaningless until we have settled the fundamental question of our national identity. In the earlier struggle for our political rights, it was perhaps enough to be anti-British. Now that we face Independence, and the immense problems which it will bring, it has become absolutely essential that we should know whether we are West Indians.[1]

While the birth of the West Indies Federation in 1958 received much praise from within and outside of the Caribbean, there were also serious questions and concerns simmering just beneath the surface. There remained much to discuss in the new nation, including key constitutional and financial questions. Many of these issues had been set aside by West Indian politicians during the final planning stages of the 1950s, lest the project be indefinitely delayed until all involved were pleased. Though this was a reasonable temporary solution, with the new nation now secured, it was time to address these issues and cement the structure and scope of the federation. The problem was, however, that many of the pressing matters to be discussed involved diametrically opposed opinions, particularly between those favoring a strong or weak federal government. For these reasons, the West Indies Federation faced an ominous beginning, and unfortunately a surprisingly short existence.

If the federal capital controversy and federal elections challenged ideas of a prioritized West Indianness beyond insular concerns, the brief years of the federation confirmed the problem and primacy of insularity in the British Caribbean. While the failure of federation cannot simply be attributed to the lack of a West Indian identity –

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[1] Elsa Goveia, *An Introduction to the Federation Day Exhibition* (Jamaica: UCWI, 1959), p.40 quoted in Hugh W. Springer, *Reflections on the Failure of the First West Indian Federation* (New York: AMS Press, 1962), p.17-18.

since there were serious financial and political problems that beset the federation from the beginning – it would also be short-sighted to overlook the fact that the lack of regional cohesion exacerbated these problems.

The West Indies Federation faced many problems from the beginning. One was the lack of a firm commitment from the Crown on when the federation would obtain independence (i.e., dominion status). This was a particularly galling shortcoming to West Indian nationalists who had long envisioned an independent federation. The issue would become a matter of much discussion in the various intergovernmental constitutional conferences during the early years of federation as West Indians pushed for assurances and a firm date for when they would achieve formal independence.[2]

Numerous other financial and constitutional questions existed alongside the question of West Indian independence. Financially, some believed the financial relationship between the West Indies and United Kingdom was of primary concern, including the issue of how much the Empire "owed" the region. Others, however, believed internal financial relationships were more important.

Some of the key disagreements between the islands involved debates over federal taxation, a customs union, tariff rates, the movement of goods and people between the islands, and federal representation. While some supported a common tariff rate and a high degree of inter-island cooperation, others sought to "protect" their respective

[2] Some have suggested that one of the reasons dominion status was withheld from the federation was because the metropole wanted to judge the viability of such an arrangement in the region, especially in regards to the financial state of the British West Indies. For such discussions, see Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, chapter 6; Elisabeth Wallace, "The West Indies: Improbable Federation," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 27, no.4 (November 1961): 444-459; Elisabeth Wallace, "The West Indies Federation: Decline and Fall," *International Journal*, vol. 17, (October 1962): pp.269-288; David Killingray, "The West Indian Federation and Decolonization in the British Caribbean." *Journal of Caribbean History*, Vol. 34, Nos. 1-2 (2000): 71-88

island's economy. One of the most noted examples of such a premise involved Jamaican perceptions that they were paying too much into the federation (i.e., being forced to care for "small islanders" whose economies paled in comparison to Jamaica), and supposedly lacking an appropriate number of representatives given the numerical dominance over the region (see Table 6.1). Ironically, the richest colony, Trinidad and Tobago, with its oil and asphalt, was actually a supporter of greater financial cooperation between the colonies. It would be wrong, however, to assume Trinidad sacrificed all of their local concerns for the good of the region, as Trinidad's stand against the freedom of movement of federal citizens between colonies proved most insular and at odds with regional cooperation.[3]

There had been constant conflict in the West Indies between those who sought a strong federal government, and those who favored a weak federal government. During its brief existence, the West Indies Federation leaned towards the latter. Overall, attempts to expand and enforce federal initiatives over local units generally failed, leaving the federation invariably weaker than most of its components. To make matters worse, such strong federal supporters such as Norman Manley and Eric Williams chose to remain in their respective island's politics rather than "going federal." This did nothing to add to the reputation and prestige of the federation. Indeed, it was ironic that Grantley Adams, as Prime Minister of the West Indies Federation, was not even one of the two most

[3] F.A. Barrett, "The Rise and Demise of the Federation of the West Indies," *Canadian Review of Studies of Nationalism* 1, no.2 (Spring 1974); Wallace, "Improbable Federation," p.446-448; Killingray, "The West Indian Federation," pp.75-77.

powerful leaders of the West Indies Federal Labour Party (to which Manley and Williams also belonged).[4]

Despite some periodic glimmers of hope that the federation would become stronger, including efforts to satisfy critics (such as offering Jamaica more House seats in a new constitution), the federation could not assert itself as the major governmental force in the region. Things only got worse when Manley, who faced powerful anti-federation opposition in Jamaica, decided to hold a referendum on Jamaica's place in the federation in 1961. Despite a widespread campaign to explain the costs and benefits of federation for Jamaica, Manley and the cause of federation lost a close election (with a small turnout) to the anti-federation forces in Jamaica led by Bustamante and the JLP.[5] While there was some immediate speculation that the federation would move on without Jamaica, that was not the case. As Eric Williams quipped shortly after Jamaica's decision to leave the federation, "one from ten leaves naught". Shortly thereafter, Trinidad also left the federation believing that they too would be better off "going it alone."

In an ironic twist, the date recently set for the formal independence of the West Indies Federation, 31 May 1962, instead became the date for the formal dissolution of the

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[4] Wallace, "Improbable Federation," p.446-448; Killingray, "The West Indian Federation," pp.75-77.

[5] While Bustamante and the JLP had originally backed the federation, they increasingly became associated as the anti-federation party during the early years of the West Indies Federation. Bustamante went so far as to claim that any Jamaican supporter of federation was a traitor to their own "nation". For discussions of the referendum, see for example: Wallace, "Improbable Federation," pp.445-446; see Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, chapter 7; Mordeai, *Federation of the West Indies*, chapter XXIII; Michele A. Johnson, "To Dwell Together in Unity," in *Before and After 1865*, pp.261-271. For examples of PNP pro-federation propaganda in this era, see: People's National Party, *Federation facts. Unity! Freedom!! Progress!!! Independence Now* (Kingston: PNP, 1961); People's National Party, *Great Sayings on Federation: Quotations from Speeches Made at Federation Conferences, in House of Representatives' Debates and at Public Meetings* (Kingston: PNP, 1961); Jamaica Premier Office, *Federation: How Much Does it Really Cost? Which is Cheaper? To Go it Alone for Independence? Or to Share Everything in Federation* (Kingston: Govt. Printer, 1961).

federation.[6] In the aftermath of federation's collapse, both Jamaica and Trinidad gained their independence in August 1962. There was some debate of an Eastern Caribbean Federation with the other former members, but nothing came of that. Instead, British Caribbean independence would take place gradually over the next twenty years.

So why did federation fail? Most explanations center on the inability of the participants to agree on some of the key financial and constitutional issues noted above. Many of these were undeniably tied to the insularity of the federal and island politicians who in one way or the other (and obviously some more than others) failed to place "federation first".[7] In this sense, a lack of West Indianness (long considered to be stronger in the diaspora than in the Caribbean) likely did contribute to the fall of federation.

Reactions to the demise of the federation were mixed. Obviously there was much disappointment, but probably less surprise given its brief, shaky existence. Within colonial circles, there was no doubt some disappointment that federation failed, but this was not the first or last time a federation scheme would fail between colonies of the crumbling empire. Amongst West Indians themselves, there was also mixed reviews with some supporters upset, but others noting that many in the region had already shown themselves more concerned with their own islands than the region as a whole. Moreover, if the ultimate failure of federation was blamed on the faulty planning and structure

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[6] The West India Dissolution Bill, introduced on 1 March 1962, was formally passed by the House of Common on 2 April 1962. This was followed by the formal dissolution on 31 May 1962.

[7] The various reasons for the failure of the West Indies Federation are summarized in most studies of federation, especially those of appearing shortly after the demise of this experiment. For particularly good overviews of these failures see: Springer, *Failure of the First West Indian Federation*; Thomas M. Franck, ed., *Why Federations Fail: an Inquiry into the Requisites for Successful Federation* (New York: New York University Press, 1968); Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, chapter 8; Barrett, "The Rise and Demise of the Federation."

installed by the British, as some argued, then the local population was not to blame. Within the diaspora, there was surprisingly little outcry over the failure of federation which had long been described and supported as an anticolonial and black nation-building project. While diasporic supporters of Caribbean federation who believed federation embodied a symbol of "unity" were obviously disappointed, for others who were concerned only about the increasing number of symbols and victories, the almost immediate independence of Jamaica and Trinidad after the federation provided two symbols to fill the void of the one lost symbol, which was not even independent.

Perhaps if federation had been attempted and failed in preceding decades (such as the 1930s or 1940s), there would have been a greater outcry, particularly from West Indian nationalist and black diaspora groups. There is little doubt that such a failure at that juncture would have likely produced a more damning critique of the abilities of West Indians and/or black peoples to rule themselves. However, by the early 1960s, the dissolution of the British Empire was well underway, and numerous examples of former colonies becoming independent (including various "black nations") existed. Such realities lessened the blow of federation's failure.

While federation failed, the dream of West Indian unity did not disappear. In the following decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and beyond, periodic experiments at regional cooperation appeared as the region slowly and unevenly developed into numerous independent nations. Outside of the famous West Indies cricket team, long a symbol of regional identity, efforts at Caribbean unity focused on economic cooperation. The most prominent examples of these are the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA, 1965-1972) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM, 1973-present). While these

have proven to be important examples of Caribbean cooperation, they are not the only ones.

Despite the development of various independent Caribbean nations with their own respective national identities in the aftermath of federation, conceptualizations of a wider regional identity continued. As in prior decades, this included both transracial and racial conceptualizations of what it meant to be West Indian. Though some emphasized an inclusive regional identity beyond race, others made more obvious appeals to race (particularly blackness) and West Indianness. That is to say, to this very day, the British Caribbean and West Indians (or Caribbeans) continue to exist in and out of the region as transracial and racialized peoples, dependent, as always, on the particular time and space in which the identity is evoked.

So what can we learn from the history of Caribbean federation as presented in the previous pages? What can we learn from this perceived "failure"? First, one must concede that the history of Caribbean federation cannot simply be confined to the story of the 1958 incarnation of federation, nor can the wider history of federation be dismissed because of the ultimate failure of that particular experiment. Instead, we must look at the Caribbean federation movement as one of the most lengthy and dynamic nation-building projects of the twentieth century, and a crucial component of both regional and diasporic activism. In doing so, the history of federation proves to be more than a failure.

Once we move beyond federation as a failure, there are many lessons to learn. One of the most important lessons we can take from the history of federation is that we must appreciate the complex history of the multiple conceptualizations of the Anglophone Caribbean and its peoples in and out the region. While numerous scholars

note the international scope of Caribbean history, and its place as a historical crossroads of sorts, the history of Caribbean federation has remained largely confined to imperial and regional perceptions, rather than comparative and diasporic in scope. Next, by viewing federation in a truly comparative context, inclusive of black diaspora perspectives, we can recognize yet another example of Caribbean involvement in black diaspora politics. Within a diasporic perspective, the Caribbean federation movement embodied a black nation-building project in the West, outside of Africa. While the failure of the West Indies Federation does dim the eventual success of these efforts, showing the limitations of both geography and race as nation-building tools, the efforts themselves do represent important nation-building tools used in the British Caribbean. Finally, such a comparative history of federation provides a historical example of how the West Indies has long coexisted with itself as both a transracial and racial region: a key site and symbol of transracial and multiracial cooperation, alongside an equally important site and symbol of racialized activism and pride.

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