RICHARD HILTON TOBITT'S DIASPORA: RELIGION, MIGRATION, AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING, 1865 – 1945

By

Christopher Michael Shell

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

History – Doctor of Philosophy

2022

ABSTRACT

RICHARD HILTON TOBITT'S DIASPORA: RELIGION, MIGRATION, AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING, 1865 – 1945

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My doctoral dissertation project, titled, *Richard Hilton Tobitt's Diaspora: Religion, Migration, and Grassroots Organizing, 1865-1945,* is an early twentieth century political narrative of Black activism in the eastern Caribbean and New York City. The main argument of my dissertation is that through the lens of Antiguan-born Reverend Richard Hilton Tobitt (1873-1961), we learn about the monumental impact of Leeward Islander migration on Black political organizing in the understudied areas of Bermuda and Staten Island, New York. Using the early twentieth-century experiences of Tobitt as a window into much larger phenomenon, my project brings attention to Black political organizing in Bermuda, the roots of Caribbean nationalism, and highlights the understudied Black community in Staten Island.

To my village – Pamella Terry, Christal Terry, Barbara Terry, and Robert Terry

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Conducting archival research, reading, writing, and thinking through this project has truly been a labor of love. Additionally, constructing a narrative about an individual that has been eclipsed by larger historical figures is a tall order. The completion of my dissertation was made possible by numerous individuals that played critical roles in my life from childhood through the completion of my doctoral studies. I give thanks to the Creator and my ancestors, without whom, this dissertation would not have been possible.

I thank my family for their unconditional love and belief in my abilities. Many thanks to my Mom, Aunt and Grandparents – Pamella Terry, Christal Terry, Barbara Terry and Robert Terry. Mom – thank you for being my biggest supporter since birth and having an unwavering belief in my capabilities. Your advice to always follow my passion have served as the driving force in completing this project. Poppop – thank you for unearthing my penchant for history as a young boy. Sitting on your lap and watching Civil War Documentaries on the History channel allowed me to find my life's purpose at an early age.

It was at Howard University where I first gained formal training as a Historian. I entered Howard with the intention of majoring in Political Science and become a lawyer. It was through speaking with Dr. Edna Greene-Medford that she informed me of the wonderful opportunities a degree in History would afford me. Members of the History department - Drs. Quito Swan, Sewlyn Carrington and Jeanne Toungara - all played critical roles in radically expanding my knowledge of the African Diaspora and setting me on the path to earning a PhD.

My time at Michigan State has been otherworldly. While I at first was apprehensive about moving to the Midwest, the relationships I made both academically and personally, have

played a critical role in my development as a scholar and a young man. My dissertation committee, Drs. Glenn Chambers, LaShawn Harris, Pero Dagbovie and Nwando Achebe, thank you for your advice and counsel along my graduate journey. I would like to acknowledge Michigan State's History Department, Graduate school, and award committees for providing me with research funds. The Ruth Simms Hamilton Research Fellowship, Walker Hill International Award, Madison Kuhn Award, Edward Bouchet Graduate Honor Society Research

Award, Summer Research Funds, and the Dissertation Completion Fellowship allowed me to conduct archival research that was essential to the completion of this project

This project required that I visit archives across the United States and the Caribbean. I would like to acknowledge the staff of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Bermuda National Archives, Antigua National Archives, Moravian Church Archives, and the Staten Island Museum and Archives. I would like to acknowledge Mr. Prosper from the Antigua archives. Thank you for giving me a personal tour of the entire island of Antigua and taking me to the locations Tobitt traversed. I would like to extend thanks to those individuals that digitized tens of thousands of pages of historical Black newspapers. Digital collections of historic newspapers proved invaluable where the archive went silent.

I would also like to thank the many people at Michigan State University that served as friends and confidants while I finished course work, conducted research, and thought through my project. James Blackwell, Eddie Bonilla, Ramon Miranda-Beltran, Ajamu Dillahunt, Jasmin Howard, Moses Massenburg, Jaleah Rutledge, and Juan Maefield - I am thankful for your friendship and assistance along my graduate journey. I would like to thank my fraternity brothers, specifically Jahmaal, Bryandt, Rj, and Marsail for keeping me grounded and providing a space for me to unwind, vent, and take a break from dissertation writing. Lastly, thank you to

Tobitt's descendants – Greer Hansen Velazquez and Dionne Hansen-Sexton – for providing me with insight into who Tobitt was beyond his political activism.

Thank you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

African Methodist Episcopal	AME
Antigua Teachers Association	ATA
African Orthodox Church	AOC
American-West Indian Association for Caribbean Affairs	AWIACA
Bermuda Union of Teachers	BUT
Bermuda Amateur Cricket League	BACL
Black Star Line	BSL
British Guiana Labor Party	BGLP
Universal Negro Improvement Association	UNIA
Pioneer Negroes of the World	PNW
Mico Teachers Training College	MTTC
Trinidadian Workingmen's Association	TWA

INTRODUCTION

On November 2, 1920, the Governor of Bermuda, James Willcocks, sent a dispatch to Britain's Colonial Office asserting that due to Richard Hilton Tobitt's involvement with Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) he was unfit to teach children, and asked that the St. George's High School, where Tobitt was principal and manager, be defunded. This dispatch came immediately after the Bermuda African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Council urged Tobitt to step down from his pastorship of the St. David's AME Church in St. David's Island, Bermuda. These attacks were a result of Tobitt's presence at the UNIA's first International Convention in New York City during the month of August. At the convention, Tobitt was more than a spectator, he was elected "Leader of the Eastern Caribbean/West Indies Negroes" and signed the *Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World*, which decried the abuses African descended people suffered at the hands of Western governments.[1]

Born in the British West Indian colony of Antigua in 1873, Tobitt lived a life rooted in Black Internationalist activity. Historians Michael O. West and William G. Martin define Black Internationalism as collective Black struggle and resistance to oppression that transcends man-made and natural boundaries.[2] Tobitt's political activism transcended nations, islands, religious denominations, oceans, and ethnic groups. He migrated from Antigua, with his wife Caroline and two Children, to Bermuda in 1910 and joined a community of activists that fought for

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[1] *The Negro World,* October 20, 1923; Tony Martin, *Race First the Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1986.); Quito J. Swan. "Bermuda Looks to the East: Marcus Garvey, the UNIA, and Bermuda., 1920-1931." *Wadabagei: A Journal of the Caribbean and Its Diasporas* 13, no. 1 (20): 29-61.

[2] William G. Martin, Fanon Che Wilkins, Michael O. West eds. *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International Since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1

educational equality in an underfunded and segregated school system. Tobitt is perhaps best known for his role in establishing the first UNIA branch in Bermuda in 1920, and his tenure as a high-ranking UNIA official between 1920-1924. However, these episodes were not the end of Tobitt's journey as an advent fighter for black liberation, it was in fact a defining moment in a life dedicated to the Black Freedom Struggle. In 1925 he founded a cricket league to develop the skills of Bermuda's young working-class cricketers. Between 1930 and 1936 he assisted community leaders in Staten Island, New York's Black community in the fight against economic inequality, racial violence, and housing discrimination. Between 1936 to 1945 he joined lesser-known Garvey inspired organizations in Harlem, New York such as the Pioneer Negroes of the World, and West Indian interest groups, such as the American West-Indian Association for Caribbean Affairs, that agitated for anti-lynching legislation, fair employment practices, and decolonization in the Caribbean. This study moves beyond an analysis of Tobitt's tenure as a UNIA member and unpacks the numerous underexplored men and women, communities, and nations that he traversed in his commitment to the Black Freedom Struggle in the early twentieth century.

Interventions

To be clear, this dissertation is not a biography. Rather, this study is a political narrative of twentieth century black internationalism rooted in Tobitt's activism that spanned the Black Atlantic world. Tobitt's socio-political journey has been heretofore underappreciated by historians. A few notable works engage Tobitt's activism, including Tony Martin's *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (1976), Randall K. Burkett's *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (1978), and Quito Swan's article, "Bermuda Looks

to the East: Marcus Garvey, the UNIA, and Bermuda, 1920-1931" (2010). While invaluable, these works focus solely on Tobitt's tenure as a member of the UNIA. My dissertation is the first project to look at Tobitt's socio-political career in its entirety. Through meticulous archival research, I piece together Tobitt's life from his formative years in St. Paul's, Antigua to his final years in Harlem, New York. In doing so, my dissertation makes four critical interventions to the disciplines of Caribbean, African American, United States, and African Diaspora History.

First, in following Tobitt's migration from Antigua to Bermuda in 1910, it expands the scholarly conversation on West Indian immigration away from the popular destinations of Central America and the United States. Caribbean scholars have written extensively about the movement of West Indians throughout the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean. The scholarship of Velma Newton, Michael Conniff, and Bonham Richardson focuses on the wave of West Indian migrants to the Panamanian isthmus to help the United States construct the Panama Canal between 1904 and 1914.[3] Recent scholarship has since moved past West Indian migration to Panama. The scholarship of Aviva Chomsky, Winston James, Lara Putnam, Glenn Chambers, and Phillip Howard has broadened our understanding of West Indian migration throughout Central America, the Spanish Caribbean, and the United States.[4] This body of scholarship has

[3] Velma Newton, *The Silver Men: West Indian Labour Migration to Panama, 1850-1914* (Kingston, Jamaica: I. Randle, 1984.); Michael L. Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal: Panama, 1904-1981* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1985.); Bonham C. Richardson *Panama Money in Barbados, 1900-1920* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986.); Elizabeth McLean Petras, *Labor Migration in Jamaica: White Capital and Black Labor, 1850-1930* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988.)

[4]Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870–* 1940 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.); Winston James, Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in the Early Twentieth Century (Verso Books, 1998); Glenn Chambers, *Race, Nation and West Indian Immigration to Honduras 1890-1940* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2010); Lara Putnam. *Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of Race in the Jazz Age* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2013); Phillip A. Howard *Black Labor, White*

done an excellent job of highlighting the challenges West Indians faced in their new destinations and the ways in which they combatted the hostile environments they found themselves in. Unfortunately, the small but critical migration of West Indians to Bermuda has been sorely left out of the conversation. Only two scholars, Bonham Richardson and Frank Moya Pons have made passing mention of West Indian immigration to Bermuda.[5]

Between 1899 and 1920, roughly 3,000 Leeward Islanders set sail for the island of Bermuda.[6] In following the journey of the Antiguan-born Tobitt to Bermuda and his subsequent political activism, my dissertation highlights the seldom talked about migration of Leeward Islander migration to Bermuda, while Simultaneously highlighting the critical role West Indians played in organizing against the island's deeply entrenched racist social order. For example, when Tobitt arrived to Bermuda, he joined a network of AME preachers and Black men and women community organizers that were committed to fighting for a government funded free public school system. Additionally, when the first world war placed financial strains on the Bermudian economy, Tobitt and the Black Bermudian community found ways to supplement their income through personal agricultural endeavors. In 1919, Tobitt and several Black women founded Bermuda's first trade union, the Bermuda Union of Teachers (BUT). Moreover, in

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Sugar: Caribbean Braceros and Their Struggle for Power in the Cuban Sugar Industry (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2015).

[5]Richardson, Bonham C. *Caribbean Migrants: Environment and Human Survival on St. Kitts and Nevis*. (Univ. of Tennessee Pr., 1983); Frank Moya Pons. *History of the Caribbean: Plantations, Commerce and War, 1492-1930*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Markus Wiener, 2007).

[6] Historian Frank Moya Pons in *History of the Caribbean: Plantations, Commerce and War, 1941-1930* made note that by 1901 there were already 1,600 Leeward Islanders residing in Bermuda assisting in the construction of the Royal Navy Dockyard. By 1921, an additional 1,000 Leeward Islanders made the move to Bermuda. (300).

1920, Tobitt with the help of fellow West Indians Rev. E. B. Grant and Col. George A. Morris founded Bermuda's first UNIA Branch.

This intervention pushes back against the meta-narrative of "good" race relations in Bermuda espoused by various scholars. Historians Walter Hayward, Virginia Bernhard, and Michael Jarvis have argued that due to Bermuda's lack of a plantation economy, slavery in Bermuda was "benign" and that masters treated enslaved persons like family members.[7] Historian Quito Swan argues that such myths about Bermuda's relationship to slavery has led to the long lasting notion that Bermudian history was devoid of racism and Black Radical activity in the twentieth century.[8] Studying the critical mass of Black Bermudians that joined socio-political organizations such as the AME Church and UNIA, beckons us to reexamine the socio-political climate in Bermuda in the early twentieth century, and asks why was it that the UNIA was able to gain such a large following in an island that supposedly benefitted from pleasant race relations?

Second, in studying Tobitt's role as a high-ranking UNIA official, my project argues that the UNIA in the Caribbean did more than provide an avenue for labor union organizing. In fact, the UNIA in the Caribbean represented the first articulation of a Pan-West Indian identity and Caribbean nationalism. Between 1920 and 1924, Tobitt held positions as Leader of the Eastern Caribbean (1920-1921), High Commissioner to British Guiana (1922-23), and Ambassador to

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[7] Michael Jarvis's *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* and Virginia Bernhard's *Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda, 1616-1782* have put forth the argument that due to the lack of a robust sugar plantation economy, that slavery of Blacks in Bermuda was "benign" and not as bad slavery in the West Indian islands of Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad.

[8] Quito Swan argues that such erroneous claims perpetuate the myth that post emancipation Bermudian society was devoid of racial conflict and racial oppression that you see in the United States and the Caribbean proper. See: Ana Lucia Araujo ed. Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space (New York: Routledge, 2012), 71.

Great Britain (1924). In this capacity, Tobitt was tasked with traveling through the eastern Caribbean selling shares of the Black Star Line (BSL), the UNIA's economic venture, and ensuring the successful growth of UNIA branches. In following Tobitt's travels through the Caribbean, and in carefully reading his reports and those of other Caribbean Garveyites at the UNIA's yearly international conventions, we learn that there was a region wide discontent with British colonial rule and a clamor for the end of British colonial rule.

Scholars of Caribbean Garveyism such as Tony Martin, Rhoda Reddock, Rupert Lewis and Robert Hill, have written extensively about the UNIA's integral role in 1920s Caribbean politics.[9] Moreover, scholars have argued that Garvey himself did not become concerned with local Caribbean politics until the late 1920s.[10] I argue that during the movement's apotheosis (i.e. 1919-1921), Caribbean Garveyites were deeply concerned with regional politics and the state of the West Indies in the British Empire.

Scholars such as O. Nigel Bolland, Colin Palmer, and Eric Duke have written extensively about how labor rebellions of the 1930s and 1940s in the British Caribbean served as the cornerstone for independence and federation that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s.[11] However, my work pushes for a reconceptualization of West Indian Federation and argues that

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[9] Tony Martin, *Marcus Garvey: Hero* (Majority Press, 1983); Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan (ed.), *Garvey: His Work and Impact* (Africa World Press, 1991); Rhoda Reddock, *Women, Labour and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago: A History* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1994); Robert A. Hill, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, and Emory J. Tolbert. *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association papers*. Vols. XI-XIII. Berkeley, California.: University of California Press, 2011-2013

[10] Rupert Lewis, Marcus Garvey (Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2018), 76

[11] O. Nigel Bolland. *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001); Colin A. Palmer *Freedoms Children: the 1938 Labor Rebellion and the Birth of Modern Jamaica*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Eric D. Duke *Building a Nation: Caribbean Federation in the Black Diaspora*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016).

the inception of West Indies Federation came during the UNIA's apotheosis. [12] Tony Martin first made scholarly mention of Tobitt's travels throughout the Caribbean as "Leader of the Eastern Caribbean" and his role as "Ambassador to Great Britain." Quito Swan also made mention of his duties as a UNIA official; however, no scholarly work has seriously delved into the implications of Tobitt's position on the development of West Indian identity formation. Eric Duke made mention of how the early rumblings of West Indian independence and federation can be linked to Garvey's UNIA. However, his analysis stops there and can go much deeper. Building on Duke's sentiment, through looking at Tobitt's travels as a UNIA high official, my dissertation argues that in addition to African independence, West Indian independence and unification was a major part of Garvey and the UNIA's vision.

Third, my dissertation follows Tobitt's second and permanent move to New York City in 1930. In following Tobitt's travels to New York, my project highlights two phenomenon. First, it sheds light on Staten Island's understudied Black community in the Northeastern shore of the island. In studying Tobitt's role as pastor of Staten Island's Bethel AME church we learn about numerous community organizers such as Druscilla Poole, Dora Cole Norman, and William Morris, that helped to fight housing discrimination, racial violence, and economic inequality in the borough. Additionally, my project brings into focus understudied Garveyite inspired organizations such as the Pioneer Negroes of the World, which was founded by fellow Antiguan and Garveyite George Ausby Weston. Founded in 1927 and headquartered in Harlem, the Pioneer Negroes of the World bought property in Harlem, provided loans to members facing

[12] Robert A. Hill makes the case that the UNIA was the genesis of West Indian national identity and Caribbean Nationalism in the eleventh volume of the Marcus Garvey Papers. See Marcus Mosiah Garvey, and Emory J. Tolbert. *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association papers*. Vols. XI. Berkeley, California.: University of California Press, 2011.

financial hardship, offered legal advice and sought to raise the overall conscious of black Harlem residents.[13] Tobitt also served on the board of directors for the American West-Indian Association for Caribbean Affairs, an understudied organization that fought for decolonization.

It can be said without hesitation that there is an abundance of work on the socio-political life of African Americans in New York City in the first half of the twentieth century. The work of Clare Corbould, LaShawn Harris, Kevin McGruder, Shannon King are just a few of the many scholars that have expanded our understanding of Black New York in the first half of the twentieth century.[14] Unfortunately, at the moment of writing this, there are no scholarly works

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[13] Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, George and Maudell Weston Papers, Box 1, Folder 2.

[14] The literature on Black New York in the twentieth century is exstensive. As such, is a list of publications on Black New York socio-political life. However, all of these works are either centered on African Americans in Harlem or Bedford Stuyvesant, leaving out the vibrant communities of African Americans in other Black New York Communities. Brown, Tammy L. *City of Islands: Caribbean Intellectuals in New York*. University Press of Mississippi, 2015; Corbould, Clare. *Becoming African Americans Black Public Life in Harlem, 1919-1939*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009; Fearnley, Andrew M., and Daniel Matlin. *Race Capital?: Harlem as Setting and Symbol*. Columbia University Press, 2019; Gallagher, Julie A. *Black Women and Politics in New York City*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2012; Greenberg, Cheryl Lynn. *"Or Does It Explode?": Black Harlem in the Great Depression*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991; Harris, LaShawn, *Sex Workers, Psychics, and Numbers Runners: Black Women in New York City's Underground Economy*. University of Illinois Press, 2016; Jacob S. Dorman, "Back to Harlem" in Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, The Harlem Renaissance Revisited: Politics, Arts, and Letters, 2010; James, Winston. *Holding aloft the banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean radicalism in early twentieth-century America*. London; Verso, 1999. King, Shannon. *Whose Harlem Is This, Anyway?: Community Politics and Grassroots Activism during the New Negro Era*. New York: New York University Press, 2015; Makalani, Minkah. *In the Cause of Freedom Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011; McGruder, Kevin. *Race and Real Estate: Conflict and Cooperation in Harlem, 1890-1920*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017; Osofsky, Gilbert. *Harlem, the Making of a Ghetto: A History of Negro New York, 1890-1920*. Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 1963; Sacks, Marcy S. *Before Harlem The Black Experience in New York City Before World War I*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013; Vogel, Shane, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Watkins-Owens, Irma. *Blood Relations Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930*. Bloomington: Jamaica University Press, 1996; Weisenfeld, Judith. *African American Women and Christian Activism:*

that make mention of Staten Island's African American community during the interwar years. My dissertation will be the first to do so. When Tobitt immigrated to NYC in 1930, and assumed pastorship of the Bethel A.M.E. church, he opened a community center, put on local plays, and organized cricket matches in Staten Island. While the majority of literature focuses on Harlem with brief mentions of Brooklyn and the Bronx, none of the works in the historiography on Black New York offer adequate attention to the African American presence in twentieth century Staten Island.

Tobitt arrived at Staten Island four years after white mobs threatened Samuel Brown and his family for buying a home in the predominantly white neighborhood of Castleton Hills. The Staten Island NAACP Branch was founded by William Morris and Druscilla Poole. The work of Brian Purnell, Komozi Woodward, Jeanne Theoharris, and Thomas Surgue have broadened our understanding of the Jim Crow North.[15] My work is not only a welcome addition to studies on Black New York but also the nature of the Jim Crow North in the interwar years.

Lastly, in looking at Tobitt's career as a cricket player, I argue that spaces where Black cricket was played and watched were, in fact, sites of radical cultural politics. In Bermuda, Tobitt founded the Bermuda Amateur Cricket League and, in New York, Tobitt organized several games between New York based West Indian cricket clubs and the multi-national West Indies cricket team. It was in these spaces that the racial social order of white domination was

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New York's Black YMCA, 1905-1945. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997; White, Shane, Stephen Garton, Graham White. "Disorderly House: Residences, Privacy, and the Surveillance of Sexuality in 1920s Harlem." *Journal of history of Sexuality* 21, no. 3(2012): 443-466. University of Chicago Press, 2009.

[15] Thomas J. Sugrue, Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North (New York: Random House, 2008); Brian Purnell, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard eds. *The Strange Careers of the Jim Crow North: Segregation and Struggle outside of the South* (New York: NYU Press, 2019)

disrupted, and Caribbean nationalism continued to be fostered. Of the works currently present on Tobitt, my project is the first to provide a detailed account of Tobitt's cricket career. Robin D. G. Kelley, Hilary Beckles, Richard Iton, Sarah L. Trembanis, and Daniel Anderson are a few scholars that have produced groundbreaking work on popular culture and political activism.[16] This work adds to a growing body of scholarship on the intersection of popular culture, sports, and leisure in African American and Caribbean history.

Sources and Chapter Outline

Drawing on an extensive evidentiary base of primary sources – including underutilized archival material, census records, historical newspapers, and government records – this study sheds new light on the socio-political exploits of Tobitt. In doing so my project centers the social, political, and cultural networks that he developed in Bermuda, throughout the Caribbean, and in New York City. Although Tobitt did not leave behind papers, his activities can be recovered in other individuals' personal papers, newspapers, and government records. This study made use of underutilized collections in Antigua, Bermuda, New York, and Pennsylvania. This study was also made stronger though oral interviews with Tobitt's granddaughter-in-law and his great grandchildren. Collections such as the Moravian Papers at the Bethlehem Archives, the Black Man in Staten Island Papers at the Staten Island Museum and Archives, George Weston and J. R. Casimir Papers at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the

[16] Robin D. G. Kelly, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class (* New York: The Free Press, 1994); Hillary Beckles and Briand Stoddart eds., Liberation Cricket: West Indies Cricket Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Sarah L. Trembanis, *The Set-Up men: Race Culture and Resistance in Baseball* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company Publishers, 2014); Daniel Anderson, *The Culture of Sports in the Harlem Renaissance* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company Publishers, 2017)

Bermuda AME Conference Papers at the Bermuda National Archives, proved to be invaluable to this study.

Religious collections such as the Moravian Mission in Antigua Papers and the Bermuda AME Conference Papers helped me to understand the spiritual dimension to Tobitt and in part explains his philosophical and organizing approach that was rooted in Pan-Africanism but grounded in the Black Protestant religious tradition that centered liberation. Robert Hill's "Caribbean Series," the three-part addition to the *Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* along with the UNIA's political organ, the *Negro World,* proved invaluable in understanding the Caribbean nationalism that its West Indian constituency articulated.

Archival collections such as the Black Man in Staten Island Papers, the NAACP Legal Cases Papers, and newspapers such as the *Amsterdam News* and *New York Age,* served as an invaluable resource in writing about the understudied Black community in Staten Island. Sources on cricket in the Bermudian National Archives are scare. However, the *Royal Gazette*, *New York Age* and *Amsterdam News* served as valuable tools in recovering and reconstructing the world of Black Cricket. My oral history interview with Tobitt's granddaughter-in-law and his great granddaughters helped me to better understand Tobitt as a family man. Through interviewing Tobitt's descendants, I was able to better understand Tobitt's responsibilities to his wife and five children, in addition to better learning about the psycho-emotional tole that a life of migration and activism took on he and his family. Such interviews humanized Tobitt more than any collection in the archives could have.

I am using the political narrative approach to write a history about much larger historical phenomenon using an individual's life story. Political narrative is the theory that individual or

groups stories can be used to describe much larger social phenomenon. Recent scholars such as Keisha Blain, Tammy L. Brown, Dayo Gore, and Quito Swan have successfully used individual experiences to provide a window into the micro and macro aspects of specific moments in the past.[17] Through using the political narrative approach I am able to look beyond Tobitt and bring lesser known historical actors such as Caroline and Carmina Tobitt, George A. McGuire, Adele Tucker, George A. Weston, J. R. Casimir, Druscilla Poole, Dora Cole Norman, and E. B. Grant, into the dominant historical conversation. Additionally, the political narrative approach allows me to bring understudied phenomenon such as West Indian migration to Bermuda, Garvey's role in fostering Caribbean Nationalism, and Staten Island's black community to the forefront.

This project utilizes several conceptual frameworks such as the *Black Radical Tradition*, *Radical Diaspora*, and *Radical Cultural Politics*. The *Black Radical Tradition*, as political scientist Cedric Robinson defines it: "is an accretion, over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle…these experiences lent themselves to a means of preparation for more epic resistance movements."[18] Tobitt was an extension of generations of African descended people that fought against systems of slavery and white colonial domination. I situate Tobitt in the *Black Radical Tradition* and use this tradition to explain his involvement in the AME church, the UNIA, and Black Cricket. Quito Swan conceptualizes *Radical Diaspora* as being "particularly focused on black movements that have been marginalized by scholarship." He goes

[17] Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War*. (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Tammy L. Brown, *City of Islands: Caribbean Intellectuals in New York* (University Press of Mississippi, 2015); Keisha N. Blain *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom,* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018)

[18] Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), XXX.

on to state that it "looks for black Diaspora linkages in unexpected crossroads, including spaces of supposed disconnect between black communities."[19] *Richard Hilton Tobitt's Diaspora* highlights how the small islands of the eastern Caribbean, and the borough of Staten Island were in constant dialogue with each other and the Africana world. As such, this region and its people played a critical, yet understudied, role in twentieth century Black Internationalism. Lastly, *Radical Cultural Politics* stems from the work of scholars of cultural politics like Robin D. G. Kelly and Richard Iton. Iton has put forth that popular culture provides "a location for the discussion of issues of concern and the making of black politics."[20] The *Radical Cultural Politics* framework allowed me to listen to the silences when analyzing the cricket sources.

Richard Hilton Tobitt's Diaspora: Religion, Migration, and Grassroots Organizing, 1865– 1945 is divided into five chapters. Tobitt stated in a 1923 interview with the *Negro World* that "he gained race consciousness from his parents." To understand the race consciousness that he gained in his formative years, chapter 1, analyzes the institutions that Tobitt matriculated through that would have molded his world view. The archives do not contain much information on Tobitt's formative years; however, information is present on the institutions (i.e. the Moravian Church, Mico Teachers Training College, and the Buxton Grove Seminary) that Tobitt participated in before his departure from the island in 1910. Chapter one covers the socio-economic situation in the island, such as the failing sugar cane industry, that would have led Tobitt and several hundred other Antiguans on the move to Bermuda in search of a better life.

[19] Quito Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora: Black Internationalism and Environmental Justice* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida), 7.
[20] Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19.

Following Tobitt's path, chapter two explores the racist treatment that Black West Indians and Black Bermudians faced such as labor abuse during the construction of the Royal Naval Dockyard, voting and economic disenfranchisement, and educational and social segregation. This highlights the understudied yet important experience of West Indian and Black Bermudian experience in early twentieth century Bermuda. I then explore the critical role a handful of AME preachers played in creating self-help organizations, in particular the Bermuda Union of Teachers (BUT), and Bermuda's first UNIA branch, to combat a hostile racial climate.

Building upon Tobitt's founding of the Bermuda UNIA branch, chapter three analyses the Bermudan governments assault on Tobitt for his involvement with Marcus Garvey's UNIA. In addition, I detail how the AME church removed Tobitt from his pastorship of the St. David's AME Church. This highlights not only the colonial governments anti- Garvey sentiment but asks critical questions about the AME church and their relationship to the colonial administration. Lastly, I explore the travels of Tobitt through the Caribbean and to England as "Leader of the Eastern Caribbean", "High Commissioner to British Guiana, and "Ambassador to Great Britain." In doing so, I highlight the UNIA's goal of nationhood and sovereignty and ultimately argue that Tobitt's three high ranking positions in the UNIA were an early iteration of West Indian plans for an independent and autonomous British West Indies.

Chapter four follows Tobitt's migration to New York City in 1930 and highlights the role of grassroots Black New York activism during the depression era. This chapter analyses Tobitt's activities as a pastor, and community leader in the understudied borough of Staten Island. Moreover, through analyzing Tobitt, this chapter sheds light on less studied Garvey inspired black self-help organizations such as the Pioneer Negroes of the World and the American West-Indian Association for Caribbean Affairs. Through analyzing the Pioneer Negroes of the World,

it brings into view another Antiguan Garveyite, George A. Weston, the founder of the Pioneer Negroes of the World Inc. As such, this chapter highlights black activism in understudied areas of the city and it highlights "inspirational Garveyism" – a discourse that black men and women began to invoke in the absence of Garvey's direct leadership and influence.

Chapter five highlights Tobitt's love for the game of cricket. In doing so, this chapter explores the understudied Bermuda Amateur Cricket League (BACL), which he founded in 1926. In analyzing Tobitt's creation of the BACL it shows that during the 1920s and 1930s there was a movement to foster Black cricket skills in Bermuda. Following Tobitt's travels to New York this chapter also explores Tobitt's involvement in the New York cricket scene. I draw upon CLR James theorization of cricket and contemporary theories of leisure to demonstrate the political nature and identity formation tools of cricket for West Indians in Bermuda and New York City. The goal of this chapter is to not only humanize advent political activists by showing their leisurely side, but it sheds light on the socio-political power of cricket for Blacks in the diaspora.

In concert, the five chapters of this study shed new light and alternative ways of viewing and understanding twentieth century interwar era Black Internationalism.

CHAPTER 1: The Antiguan Foundation: Moravian Church, Mico College, and the Buxton Grove Seminary, 1865-1910

Introduction

There is limited information available about the experiences and intricacies of Tobitt's childhood and formative years. Not surprisingly, Tobitt becomes more visible in the archive as he grew older and became more involved in religious, teaching, agricultural and political affairs. However, thanks to several brief biographies written on Tobitt, we know that in his later years he received "race consciousness" from his parents William and Phoebe Ann Tobitt.[1] Surely, Tobitt's parents' experience as being the first or second generation removed from slavery and living through the complexities of post emancipation Antiguan society, would assist in developing a socio-politically conscious world view.

In the absence of extensive archival material detailing Tobitt's adolescence, it is therefore necessary to focus on the institutions and communities that Tobitt either joined or created that would have shaped his world view and growing political consciousness before his departure from the island in 1910. In focusing on the society that Tobitt came of age in, this chapter simultaneously provides context for the reasons leading to the sizable early twentieth century migration of Antiguans from the island to other parts of the Americas. This chapter focuses on the three major institutions that would have deeply impacted Tobitt, and many other Black Antiguans, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the Moravian Church, the Antigua branch of the Mico Teachers Training College, and the Buxton Grove Theological Seminary.

[1] *Negro World*, October 20, 1923.

By Tobitt's birth in 1873, Antigua and the wider British Caribbean was embroiled in unrest. Exactly two decades after British Caribbean emancipation, in March 1858, a five-day massive uprising broke out in the island of Antigua where working class Black Antiguans, deeply frustrated at the bleak economic situation of the island, attacked Barbudan dockworkers, Portuguese retailers, white planters, Black and mix raced police officers.[2] As Historian Natasha Lightfoot points out, following emancipation in 1834, the Antiguan economy remained firmly rooted in the sugar industry with little promise for the possible diversification of the economy. The majority of land on the countryside remained hoarded by White plantation owners resulting in the majority of Black Antiguans remaining beholden to the very plantations that their ancestors toiled during slavery. The decline of the sugar industry in the 1840s spelled disaster for the wider British Caribbean as many people, whether directly involved in sugar production or not, relied on the success of the sugar industry.[3] As such, the uprising of the islands Black working class occurred against the backdrop of a failing sugar industry and the steadily increasing cost of living.

The 1858 Antiguan uprising did not occur in a vacuum. Less than a decade later, in the neighboring island of Jamaica, in what would be etched in stone as the Morant Bay Rebellion, on October 11, 1865, Jamaican-born Baptist preacher Paul Bogle led an island wide rebellion where several Whites and hundreds of Black Jamaicans were killed along with thousands of homes being destroyed. Much like events in 1858, the Jamaican rebellion of 1865 was fueled by conditions in Jamaica remaining largely unchanged since emancipation. The anemic sugar industry meant that in Jamaica wages also stagnated as cost of living increased. Additionally,

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[2] Natasha Lightfoot. *Troubling Freedom: Antigua and the Aftermath of British Emancipation*. (Duke University Press, 2015), 19.
[3] Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom*, 10.

while Jamaicans were promised the ability to vote, high poll taxes meant that working class Black Jamaicans were disenfranchised while elite White planters were able to exercise their ability to vote.[4] The uprising in Antigua and Jamaica, just a decade apart, were symptomatic of the social, political, and economic failures of post emancipation British Caribbean society.

After the monumental Morant Bay rebellion (which scholars have deemed the zenith of post British West Indian emancipation unrest) the British government set out on a "civilizing mission" to mold Black West Indians into loyal British subjects. This civilizing mission was a multi headed beast that included independent churches and government education officials working in tandem to create a new generation of West Indians that were "proper" and "docile" subjects to the crown.[5] Richard Hilton Tobitt would be born fifteen years after both of these seismic events and in the midst of Britain's civilizing mission to William and Phoebe Ann Tobitt on June 8, 1873, in the rural parish of St. Paul's, Antigua.[6]

The Moravian Church in Antigua

Tobitt's formative years, roughly around the late 1870s and early 1880s, were spent in the Moravian Church at Grace Hill, Libertas. He was confirmed in the church at an early age. [7] In line with Moravian tradition, Tobitt more than likely attended the day school attached to the church. Tobitt's early involvement in the Moravian church during the late nineteenth century

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[4] Gad J. Heuman. *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica*. (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 39-41.
[5] Brian L Moore., and Michele A. Johnson. *Neither Led nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865-1920*. (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), XIV. The author's provide a detailed account of Britain's Civilizing Mission.
[6] Official documentation says that Tobitt was born in St. Johns. However, time spent in the island of Antigua revealed that historically the Tobitt family lived in St. Paul's parish. Also, archival research also reveals that Tobitt lived in Liberta, which is a town in St. Parish.
[7] *Bermuda Recorder*, August 26, 1961. Every church in the Moravian church system had a day school attached to it as education of the enslaved and formerly enslaved was a major part of the Moravian mission in Antigua and the wider Caribbean.

comes as no surprise since the Moravians in Antigua, especially its Grace Hill branch, had a uniquely strong relationship with the island's Black community. Liberta, located in St. Paul's Parish roughly 10 miles south of the capital of St. Johns, became the first "free village" in Antigua when, in 1836, hundreds of formerly enslaved Antiguans with the help of Moravian missionaries moved away from the plantation estates and created new homes on plots of land leased from the Moravian Church at Grace Hill.[8] The Moravians strong relationship with the island's African descended population is rooted in events that occurred roughly two centuries before the first Moravian missionaries arrived in the Caribbean in 1732.

From the onset of English colonization of the Caribbean in the 1620s, the Anglican Church (the Church of England) reigned supreme in the English-speaking Caribbean until the appearance of evangelical Protestant denominations in the eighteenth century.[9] The Anglican church was founded in 1534 when the King of England, Henry VIII, separated the Church of England from the Roman Catholic church. King Henry wished to annul his marriage and the Pope of Rome would not allow it. As such, Henry VIII separated from Rome and had his marriage annulled. To be clear, King Henry's break from the papacy did not mean a complete break from Catholic tradition. In fact, Henry maintained a strong preference for traditional Catholic practices, and during his reign, persecuted evangelical Protestant reformers. [10] While the Church of England may have been somewhat ideologically similar to the Catholic church, as the numbers of enslaved Africans swelled in the Caribbean, during the seventeenth and

[8] Brian Dyde. *A History of Antigua: The Unsuspected Isle*, (Northampton, MA: Interlink Publishing Group, 200), 155.
[9] Kevin Ward. *A History of Global Anglicanism*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 84.
[10] Ward. *A History of Global Anglicanism*, 20.

eighteenth centuries, the question of slave conversion would prove to be a point of contention for the Church of England.

England's mercantile rival, Spain, who was still loyal to the papacy, was lenient on the policy of Christianizing (i.e. baptizing) enslaved Africans. However, the Church of England and its constituents - the English plantation class - were anxious about Christianizing enslaved Africans, as this would cause moral complications for the continued enslavement and exploitation of the class of people driving the engine of the sugar industry.[11] It was thus a defining belief of the Anglican church that if enslaved Africans and their descendants attained equal privileges associated with church membership then the demarcation and justification for the colonial social order would be challenged.[12] This phenomenon is what Historian Katherine Gerbner termed "Protestant Supremacy" in which she argues was the forerunner to White Supremacy. Protestant Supremacy in the English and Dutch Caribbean was the belief that enslavement of African people was justified since enslaved Africans were not Protestant and therefore, "heathen" and not human. Therefore, the enslavement of African people was morally justified. Allowing Africans and their descendants membership in the Anglican church would muddy the differentiation between "master" and "slave." Put another way, "Protestant" meant free and "non-Protestant" meant enslaved. [13]

However, the appearance of evangelical Protestant denominations in the Caribbean such as the Quakers, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), Moravians, and Methodists would challenge "Protestant Supremacy" when they began to proselytize to the

[11] Ibid.
[12] Katherine Gerbner. *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 45.
[13] Gerbner, *Christian Slavery*, 48.

enslaved population. The Quakers were in Antigua since the late seventeenth century and SPG missionaries were in Antigua since the early eighteenth century. However, historian Brian Dyde argues that the first "wholehearted desire to bring Christianity to the slaves" did not occur "until the first Moravian missionaries arrived" in Antigua in 1756.[14] Moravian interest in Christianizing enslaved Africans explains, in part, why Tobitt, born a little over a century after the arrival of the first Moravian missionaries, would have been born and raised in the Moravian church. What follows is a brief understanding of the history of the Moravians and an explanation as to why enslaved Africans, who still practiced to varying degrees their indigenous African spiritual systems, saw benefits in converting to the Moravian belief system.

The Moravians are rooted in a history of protest and subsequent persecution. A sect of the protestant denomination, Moravians trace their roots back to the Czech reformer Jan Huss (1369 – 1415). Huss believed that salvation belonged to all those that believed in Jesus Christ and it was not necessary to partake in the Catholic practice of purchasing "indulgences" (i.e. pieces of paper) that would absolve one of their sins. Thus, Huss and his followers who soon became known as "Hussites" and later "Unity of the Brethren" began to be persecuted by the Catholic Church.[15] Colloquially the term Moravian became affixed to the church due to its roots in Moravia, located in modern day Czech Republic. Over the next several centuries Moravians fled all over Europe seeking refuge from the Catholic Church's scorn.

In 1722, a German nobleman, Count Nicholaus von Zizendorf provided the Moravians safe refuge from persecution in Saxony, modern day Germany. In 1731, while Zizendorf attended the coronation of his cousin Christian VI as king of Denmark, he met an enslaved

[14] Dyde, *A History of Antigua*, 35
[15] Patrick Taylor et al. "The Moravian Church." In *The Encyclopedia of Caribbean Religions*, (University of Illinois Press, 2013), 592.

African named Anthony Ulrich, from St. Thomas, Danish West Indies (DWI), who informed him of the ill treatment the enslaved Africans received. Zizendorf informed the Moravians upon his return to Saxony of the conditions of the slaves in the DWI. This peaked Moravian interest in the West Indies.[16] Moravian missionaries arrived in St. Thomas in 1732 and by 1756 the first Moravian mission was started in the island of Antigua, at Spring Gardens, located in the island's capital of St. Johns. The newly arrived Moravian missionaries focused solely on converting the enslaved population to Christianity, which was in direct opposition to the policies of the Anglican church.[17] The Moravians not only baptized the enslaved, they also taught their new converts how to read and write, officiated marriages for the enslaved, and even offered enslaved male members leadership positions in the church (e.g. leading prayer and sermon.)[18] Moravian practices such as teaching literacy to the enslaved garnered severe pushback from White planters, the colonial officials, and the Anglican church. Colonial leadership feared that literacy would lead the enslaved to rebellion. While the Moravians reversed their practice of literacy in the early nineteenth century, literate Black leaders continued to teach other enslaved Blacks how to read and write creating "an alternate hierarchy within the Moravian church" in which literate Black Moravians held more sway than the white Moravian missionaries.[19] While Moravian missionaries stressed to the plantation elite that conversion helped to make the enslaved more docile, Black Moravians used their ability to read the bible as a tool to point out the hypocrisy in the institution of chattel slavery. Historian Katherine Gerbner argues that Moravian missionary activity helped to furnish black Christians with "a theology based on liberation."[20]

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Dyde, *A History of Antigua*, 92.
[18] Gerbner, *Christian Slavery*, 186.
[19] Gerbner, *Christian Slavery*, 187.
[20] Gerbner, *Christian Slavery,* 188.

The receptiveness of the enslaved population to Moravian missionaries is evident in the growth of Moravian missions and conversion statistics. By 1822, less than 75 years after the first Moravian missionaries arrived in the island of Antigua, five missions were fully functioning at Spring Gardens, Gracehill, Grace Bay, Enon (Newfield), and Cedar Hall. By 1832, there were fifteen thousand Antiguan converts. [21] Black membership in the Moravian church outnumbered that of other churches for much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[22] While the Moravian church was not vehemently opposed to slavery like the Quakers were, for many enslaved Black Antiguans, the privileges found in the Moravian church such as literacy, marriage, and baptism was a form of liberation in the deprived world of Caribbean slavery.

In 1833 the Parliament of the United Kingdom signed the Slavery Abolition Act bringing to conclusion the centuries long institution of chattel slavery in the British Caribbean. On August 1, 1834, slavery in the British Caribbean was officially abolished. While the institution of slavery ended with the stroke of the pen, the church institution remained. The Moravians, like other religious denominations were now able to proselytize to the formerly enslaved populations without the threat of persecution from the plantation elite. The question of what to do about the education of the millions of formerly enslaved throughout the British Caribbean became a pressing matter. The solution was that education would be managed by religious bodies and the bulk of the funding would come from the government.[23] During slavery, the Moravians attached a Sunday school to every church that was tasked with Christian elementary education. At emancipation, many the Moravians and Methodists developed day schools on the grounds of

[21] Winelle J. Kirton-Roberts, *Created in Their Image: Evangelical Protestantism in Antigua and Barbados, 1834-1914* (AuthorHouse, Bloomington, IN) 11, 13.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Kirton Roberts, *Created in Their Image*, 98.

their church missions to assist in the education of the formerly enslaved.[24] The mission of the churches changed from ensuring that Blacks did not rebel against the plantation elite to ensuring that the formerly enslaved were educated to the point of not being a threat to the colonial order.

The strong relationship cultivated by Moravian missionaries before emancipation helped to instill a strong foothold in Black communities. More than likely Tobitt's ancestors, before emancipation, were drawn to the appeal of the Moravian church due to its numerous advantages such as marriage, literacy, and the ability to hold positions above rank-and-file membership. It is also likely that after emancipation, Tobitt's ancestors and members of the Black community were attracted to the Moravians due to its commitment to educating the formerly enslaved.[25] Tobitt's parents, William and Phoebe, like many formerly enslaved Blacks in the Americas strongly desired to give their children a proper formal education, and if that meant enrollment in a particular church denomination then so be it.[26]

The appeal of the Moravian church to the formerly enslaved after emancipation was even noted in the *Antigua Times* on April 24th, 1879, in which it reported that the Moravian church "has peculiar claims on the negro population of this island" and that the church was a leader in "evangelizing and educating the common people, its institutions did more than any other towards fitting the generation which came after slavery for proper use and enjoyment of civil liberty."[27] Surely, membership in the Moravian church was a generational phenomenon. Historian Winelle J. Kirton-Roberts argues that formerly enslaved Africans were "cognizant of their freedom to

[24] Kirton-Roberts, *Created in Their Image*, 83.
[25] Kirton-Roberts, *Created in Their Image,* 107.
[26] Kirton-Roberts, *Created in Their Image*, 105,
[27] *Antigua Times*, April 24th, 1879.

choose" and understood the benefits that could be derived from developing a relationship with Moravian missionaries.[28]

To be clear, while the Moravian church offered tangible benefits to the Black population, scholars have made note of the anti-African and pro-British imperial elements of the Moravian church. Historian Natasha Lightfoot had this to say about the Moravian church post emancipation:

> "Missionaries advocated for and facilitated the socioeconomic advancement of freed communities within the structural limits inherent in the colonial racial hierarchy, which distinguished their agenda from that of planters. But they harbored no belief that education, mutual- benefit societies, or any other church- based organizations should undermine the social system that rested on the exploitation of black labor and was legitimated by the dominant class's notions of orderly behavior."[29]

Thus, Tobitt came of age in the Moravian church where two competing agendas took place. The goal of the Moravian church was to increase the size of its congregations by offering tangible benefits to the Black community, all the while, currying favor with the colonial administration by ensuring that the Black community did not upset the racial hierarchy of White economic and political hegemony. On the other hand, there existed amongst the formerly enslaved an agenda in which the Moravian church would be used to attain a formal education that was denied to them over the past several centuries.

In line with Natasha Lightfoot's argument about the Moravian church's work within the limits of British Imperialism, the church functioned as a handmaiden of Britain's civilizing mission. To meet Britain's goal of properly educating and reeducating the formerly enslaved,

[28] Kirton-Roberts, *Created in Their Image*, 83.
[29] Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom*, 153.

teachers hailing from the Black community were sought after.[30] However, in the decades following emancipation there was a shortage of young men and women that "possessed the basic knowledge needed for admission" into the Mico Teachers Training College, the premier teacher training institution on the island. As such, the Moravians and even the Methodists established preparatory schools such as the Moravian owned Cedar Hall Training Institution, in May 1846, to prepare Black Antiguan men and women for admission in Mico College.[31] While the historical record does not say whether or not Tobitt attended the Cedar Hall Training Institution, knowing that he was educated in the Moravian School system does tell us that he excelled academically, as such, he more than likely was selected among other high performing Black men around the age of 18 to attend the Mico Teachers Training College. The mission behind young Black male education at Mico College would be that those trained returned to their communities and instilled "class deference." This would in turn ensure that no more rebellions like the Antigua Rebellion of 1858 and the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 occurred again.[32]

The Mico Teachers Training College, Antigua Branch

The Mico Teachers Training College (MTTC) was founded in 1837 out of the dismal need for teachers, specifically Black West Indians, to meet the overwhelming demand to educate formerly enslaved children and adults after emancipation. In Antigua, the Moravian, Methodist, and Anglican Missionary Societies attempted to create normal schools to meet the ever-growing demand for teachers. Unfortunately, missionary societies worked on shoestring budgets and lacked the resources both financial and material to meet the overwhelming demand. This demand swelled as missionary societies had to meet quotas at domestic day schools and schools around

[30] Moore and Johnson. *Neither Led nor Driven*, 200.
[31] Kirton-Roberts, *Created in Their Image*, 105 - 106.
[32] Moore and Johnson. *Neither Led nor Driven,* XIV.

the eastern Caribbean. While missionary societies desired to educate the formerly enslaved to make them "civilized" Christian freed people, for the formerly enslaved, schools offered a clear pathway to an education that had been denied during slavery.[33] Seeing the educational conundrum faced by missionary societies, the colonial government sought to offer a level of succor by creating teachers' colleges such as the MTTC.

The MTTC was founded with the help from a generous grant named the *Lady Mico's Charity*. Oddly enough, the Mico fund was not initially created to educate formerly enslaved Blacks. In 1670, a "Lady Mico" donated 1,000 pounds to rehabilitate English slaves taken from the Barbary states – a collection of polities on the North African coast that engaged in piracy. The Court of Chancery (i.e. a court in England over all matters related to trusts, land law), declared that the money be used to purchase English slaves from the Barbary coast. However, as the need to purchase English slaves waned, the funds were more or less forgotten until the 1820s when the question about West Indian education arose due to the increased agitation for emancipation.[34] The Lady Mico Charity grant went into effect simultaneously with the British "Negro Education Grant" of 1834 in a combined effort by churches and the British government to tackle the task of preparing several million bondspeople for freedom in 1834.[35] The British government bore the brunt of the financial responsibility of the Mico Institutions and paid half the cost required to pay teachers and two-thirds the cost of building new schools throughout the Caribbean.[36]

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[33] Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom,* 149.
[34] Carl Campbell. *Denominationalism and the Mico Charity Schools in Jamaica, 1835-1842* (*Caribbean Studies* 10, no. 4 (1971)): 153.
[35] Carl Campbell. *Denominationalism and the Mico Charity Schools in Jamaica,* 152.
[36] Ibid.

As post emancipation revolts arose throughout the region, it became clear, in the eyes of colonial officials, that not enough funding was allocated to the education system. Historians Moore and Johnson argue that specifically after the 1865 revolt in Morant Bay, Jamaica, colonial officials decided that the solution - to what seemed like-never-ending restlessness throughout the region - was not to extend full socio-political and economic equality to the formerly enslaved but rather the implementation of a proper "cultural education" that would "maintain class deference, prepare the unwashed rabble for their inclusion in the political process," and "would bring to the working class a 'culture' which would in turn remove the temptations of trade-unionism, political agitation, and working-class culture."[37] The sentiment in the British metropole was that Caribbean restlessness was a result of improper culture, one that was rooted in the remnants of African culture, resistance, spiritual beliefs, and ways of comportment.

As a result, a little over a decade after the Morant Bay rebellion, the Mico Act of 1878 was passed. The Mico Act provided the MTTC with a bevy of much needed financial funding. The act allocated $2.10 paid to the Mico trustees for each student admitted from the Colonies. Additionally, the government agreed to provide said payment for a maximum of twenty students per year. The grant allowed for the college to have larger graduating classes, which in turn would meet the growing demand for teachers.[38] Thus, when Tobitt entered the Mico College in the late 1880s he entered an institution that saw larger classes than previous years, thanks to the increased funding from the Mico Act.

What set the Mico Charity apart from the work of missionary societies was that it was non-denominational and functioned on the premise that all Black children should receive an

[37] Moore and Johnson. *Neither Led nor Driven,* XIV.
[38] EDU/834/00412, pg. 4/EDU P Reports Box 12 – 00361-00424 Loc. No.p 2240, National Archives of Antigua.

education regardless of the child's parental religious affiliation. The MTTC administrator's policy of non-denominational education was twofold. Trustees believed that if they practiced a policy of non-denominational affiliation then they could provide religious education to a larger population that would lead to a wider reach of moral reformation. Secondly, Mico Trustees felt that they would not be in competition with missionary societies and could work alongside the churches without engaging in religious rivalry.[39] While this was the case, an interesting connection existed between the Moravian Church and the MTTC. For example, the 1871 periodical of the Moravian church stated that the Antiguan congregation sustained a great loss when the superintendent of the Mico Institution, B. Oughton, Esq and his wife left the institution. The periodical stated that while Oughton and his wife were not members of the congregation, they "regularly worshipped with us, and took a lively interest in the welfare of the Church, promoting it in every way open to them."[40] Additionally, financial hardship on the Moravians led church leadership to divert many of its teachers-in-training to the Mico College. The 1881 Moravian Periodicals stated that the Moravians attempt at creating a normal school at Cedar Hall failed in the 1840s due to financial hardship. However, the founding of the Mico Institution "greatly aided…educational work."[41] The existing records of the MTTC students rolls further explicates the Moravian church's reliance on the institution. For example, the Mico Examination

[39] Campbell. *Denominationalism and the Mico Charity Schools in Jamaica* 153.
[40] 1871-1873, vol. 28: Periodical accounts relating to the missions of the Church of the United Brethren established among the heathen, 79; https://collections.mun.ca/digital/collection/cns_permorv/id/14138/rec/3
[41] 1881, vol. 32: Periodical accounts relating to the missions of the Church of the United Brethren established among the heathen, 166; https://collections.mun.ca/digital/collection/cns_permorv/id/5752/rec/4

Results of November 1880 showed that of the 19 students enrolled in the college that year, 10 students hailed from the Moravian church, all Antiguans.[42]

The explanation for this trend can be explained primarily to the fact that having large numbers of Antiguan students at the college afforded the Moravian Church the ability to save funds that would have otherwise been used on teacher training and could now be spent elsewhere. Secondly, the Moravian Church's goal of Christian religious instruction was still met. For example, knowledge of the scriptures was woven throughout the curriculum along with history, vocal music, and the art of teaching/pedagogy.[43] While teachers were furnished with the skills to teach the formerly enslaved basic math, reading and writing they were also, if not most importantly, taught to uphold the colonial order. Moor and Johnson argue that teachers at Mico were required to instill "high culture" and Victorian ideals in their students, but they were required to be walking examples as well. These teachers were tasked to go back into their communities and function as "second-tier missionaries" and "leaders of community organizations." In other words, they were to function as white missionaries in black-face, inspiring not only the youth in their classrooms but the larger black populace through their embodiment of nineteenth century Victorian ideals.[44]

The curriculum that Tobitt and his peers were exposed to was one built around the liberal arts, while still being deeply wedded to religious instruction. Beyond basic instruction, the Mico offered its students other interesting courses. For example, in 1899 a "Dr. Pierez" visited Mico and provided the students with a lecture on "the Blood of Vertebrates" which the principal,

[42] EDU/834/00412, pg. 3, Nation Archives of Antigua.
[43] Howard A. Fergus. *A History of Education in the British Leeward Islands, 1838-1945.* (University of West Indies Press, 2004), 89.
[44] Moore and Johnson. *Neither Led nor Driven*, 228.

Thomas Nowell, thanked him for as it would assist the students in their knowledge of Physiology, which was also a part of the curriculum.[45] Mico's Liberal Arts intensive curriculum was also coupled with agricultural science. In 1883, F. H. Watkins took over as inspector of schools in the Leeward Islands. At the 1900 Agricultural conference he commented that upon his arrival, in 1883, he noticed that the belief of the teaching was that "books were knowledge and words were ideas." He then went on to comment that "the whole system of elementary education in that colony was equally vicious in plan and if not actually disastrous, at least almost profitless in effect."[46] Watkins went on to state:

> "The highest ambitions of the boys, in the majority of the upper standards on leaving school, was to find employment as junior clerks in stores or to be appointed to some minor place in the Government Service. Agricultural work was considered suitable only for children in the lower standards or for those who had never attended school at all, and it was flouted almost as a degradation. The natural consequence of such a system was the gradual production of a "collars and cuffs" generation and the almost total alienation of the more intelligent portion of the population from agricultural pursuits."[47]

Watkins argued that agricultural science ought to be taught in the schools as many students were not furnished with tangible skills upon graduation. It was understood that the teachers controlled the dissemination of knowledge in the colonies. As such, Watkin's solution was implementing a system where in the "final examination of adult teachers, an attempt" was "made to frame a continuous chain of instruction aimed at the gradual development of an elementary school code which would engraft practical work in agriculture."[48] Similar debates

[45] *Antigua Standard*, June 10, 1899.
[46] West Indian Bulletin: The Journal of the Imperial Department of Agriculture for the West Indies, Volumes 1-2 (1900), 241.
[47] Ibid.
[48] West Indian Bulletin, 243.

about the purpose of education of the formerly enslaved took place in the United States.[49] Likewise, government and educational officials in the British Caribbean battled over the purpose of education. It was commonly understood that teachers and the curriculum they carried out was the critical lynchpin in carrying out the agenda of administrators in the metropole. As such, students at the MTTC received an education in which they went out and also instilled agricultural knowledge in the hearts and minds of black Antiguan children. However, the objective remained the same, this teaching was to only occur to the extent to keep the social order of British Imperialism intact and benefit the finances of the colony. Students and teachers alike were not to use their agricultural knowledge or their liberal arts education to question British Imperial rule. Tobitt's time at MTTC was characterized by theological, liberal arts, and agricultural instruction. He and his cohort were socialized to take their education and serve as "model" citizens to the Antiguan working-class community from which they came.

In addition to academics, athletics were also a part of MTTC educational ecosystem. Track and field and the exclusive British imperial game of cricket were present at the institution. While there is not much evidence that details the extensiveness of sports in the curriculum, we do know from a brief biography written by Tobitt some decades later that he, in fact, excelled at several track and field events during his tenure. He won several races including the hundred yard and quarter mile dash races. In cricket, he was an advent player, captained teams on numerous occasions and often led them to victory.[50] The presence of sports at Mico served several purposes. First, for more quotidian reasons, schooling roughly 20 virile males without any form of athletic relief would make two years' worth of religious and social indoctrination mind

[49] James D. Anderson. The Education of Blacks in the South: 1860-1935. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
[50] *Negro World*, October 20, 1923.

numbing. Second, and more importantly, as Historian Aviston D. Downes argues, sports were present in British colonial schooling to further instill social control amongst these young men. Cricket especially, was a colonial sport for the British elites. Allowing these men to play cricket was with the intent to make sure that these men were performing a very particular "reformed" and "civilized" Victorian masculinity. This masculinity meant that not only were they ideologically subjects of the British crown, but they were physically fit models for the empire. Downes points out that cricket was believed to instill "discipline, unity, and responsibility."[51] All in all, the sports and recreational activities that Tobitt and other young West Indian men participated in at Mico was meant to instill a "spartan-schoolboy-sportman-soldier construct of masculinity" that assisted in the goal of education as a tool of social stability and not social change.[52]

While the MTTC was an extension of British Imperial goals and aims, there is evidence to speculate that a subaltern space in opposition to colonial agendas existed at the institution. Employing Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's theorization of *The Undercommons* can help to better understand the environment of Mico beyond the agenda of British imperial officers and superintendents of education. Moten and Stefano argue that *The Undercommons* is a "fugitive community" that exists beyond the realm of hegemonic power.[53] They argue that while the university, may be an extension of systems of power and oppression, there exists a "downlow

[51] Aviston D. Downes, 'Boys of the Empire: Elite Education and the Socio-cultural construction of the Hegemonic Masculinity in Barbados., 1875-1920',113. In Rhoda Reddock (ed*.) Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. (Kingston: UWI Press, 2004).
[52] Downes, 'Boys of the Empire', 116.
[53] Fred Moten and Stefano Harley, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 40.

low-down maroon community…where the work gets done."[54] At the University - and in this case on Mico's campus - there was a radical space were "subversive intellectuals" formed a "refugee colony" and a "gypsy encampment."[55]

There are several factors and reasons that explain the presence of a subversive intellectual community at Mico. As a result of the British Guiana and Trinidad Branches closing in the 1830s, Antigua became a regional educational training center for Black West Indians in the Leeward islands, by proxy turning Mico into a diasporic space.[56] While extensive documentation on Mico enrollment is no longer extant, the remaining student enrollment documents paint a picture that helps to understand the nature of the Mico student community. Documents of the Mico College show that students from Montserrat, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Croix, Anguilla, Trinidad and Tobago, and British Guiana, all were trained at the Antigua branch spending up to two years in residence at the island. Due to geographical location and efforts of the Moravians, Antiguan students predominated in enrollment.[57] Results of the government examination of students at Mico College in 1880 shows that nineteen students were in enrollment, all men. Additionally, of the 19 students enrolled, 11 were Antiguan with one student hailing from Nevis, Tobago, St. Kitts, and Barbados, respectively. Interestingly, of the 11 Antiguan students, 10 were Moravian with the eleventh Antiguan student hailing from the Anglican church. The youngest student was 17 and the oldest was 25.[58]

The 1888 Mico examination results yielded rather similar results. Of the 19 students listed, 11 were Antiguan with the remaining students hailing from Montserrat, Dominica,

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[54] Moten and Harley, The Undercommons, 26.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Fergus. *A History of Education in the British Leeward Islands*, 87.
[57] Fergus. *A History of Education in the British Leeward Islands*, 88.
[58] EDU/834/00412 – Pg. 3, National Archives of Antigua.

Anguilla, and St. Croix.[59] In comparison to the 1880 report, a Moravian presence was still at the Mico, primarily coming from the Antiguan students. However, the number of students from the Anglican church increased from 4 to 10, while the number of Moravian students dropped from 10 to 5.[60] Although documentation of the exams for each year the Mico College existed from 1837 are no longer extant, it can be surmised that from roughly 1880 to the universities closing in 1899, that the Mico college housed primarily Antiguan students along with a wide array of students from the eastern Caribbean. Additionally, in conjunction with the reports from Moravian periodicals, it is apparent that the Moravians consistently sent their pupils to the Mico. As time progressed other denominations used the Mico to train teachers to lessen the costs on their own church coffers. To this end, the Mico schools' grounds was a community of black West Indian men that came from varying islands, differing religious backgrounds, and were in their late adolescence. Mico was a diasporic space.

As stated earlier in the chapter, in the years before and after emancipation (1838) there was a Black radical tradition in Antigua and the larger British Caribbean. Historian and Political Scientist Cedric Robinson argues that the Black Radical Tradition was "an accretion, over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle. In the daily encounters and petty resistances to domination." He goes on to add that Blacks "acquired a sense of the calculus of oppression as well as its overt organization and instrumentation."[61] Antigua and Jamaica were not the only Caribbean islands that witnessed several iterations of rebellion by enslaved and formerly enslaved Blacks. The Black Radical Tradition, or a culture of resistance, put another

[59] Fergus. *A History of Education in the British Leeward Islands*, 88.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Cedric Robinson. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), XXX.

way, was present throughout the Caribbean and in the islands that Mico College students hailed from. For example, Barbados saw rebellion in 1816, British Guiana saw mass uprisings in 1823, Jamaica experienced mass rebellion in 1831 and 1865 (Morant Bay), and St. Kitts and Trinidad saw mass rebellions in 1834 because of the implementation of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship in the Caribbean is a term applied to the four-year interim period (1834-1838) where the formerly enslaved were "learning to be free." The formerly enslaved still toiled on the lands of their former masters, however, they received a small, in many ways unlivable, wage.[62] Historian Richard Frucht argued that the litany of pre and post emancipation rebellions signaled the "developing consciousness of the plantation workers."[63]

MTTC opened in 1837 and closed its doors in 1899. Most students at the institution would have been, at most, only two generations removed from the protests that sprang up in their home islands. Tobitt attended Mico in the late 1880s and early 1890s and would have lived in residence halls, took classes, and engaged in recreational activities with fellow Antiguans, students from across the eastern Caribbean, and individuals from varying religious denominations. As mentioned earlier, Tobitt declared that he gained racial consciousness from his parents. It is highly plausible that many of the other Mico students would have arrived on the campus with some semblance of racial consciousness. One can only wonder the effect that this had on Tobitt's world view. In a time when many people did not leave their home island, and lived in an insular environment, Tobitt was already learning and growing in a diasporic space only ten miles away from his childhood home.

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[62] Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom*, 16; Dyde, *A History of Antigua*, 152.
[63] Richard Frucht. "Emancipation and Revolt in the West Indies: St. Kitts, 1834." Science & Society 39, no. 2 (1975), 202.

In regard to faculty, not much documentation exists in Mico about the specifics of the teachers that worked at the normal school. We do know that the pay for teachers was meagre, as was the case for teachers across the diaspora. While many former students graduated and went on to teach at missionary schools throughout the Caribbean many were asked to stay and teach at Mico and groom the next generation of teachers. Thus, a deeper strain was placed on the educational system as Mico was pressured to produce teachers for the greater Leeward and Windward islands in addition to meeting its own growing demand for educators at Mico and in Antigua at large.[64] The historical record does lend evidence to the fact that there were socially conscious Black educators at Mico. Antiguan born Rev. Henry Mason Joseph taught at the Mico College from 1881-1886. Fourteen years later, while living in London, he served as the chairman to Pan-Africanist Henry Sylvester Williams' African Association (AA) headquartered in London.[65] While there was a fourteen-year difference between Rev. Joseph's departure from Mico and his involvement with an early iteration of Pan-African organizing it can be speculated that the early rumblings of his political activism were present in his years at Mico and Antigua.

To borrow Historian Winston James' term, the MTTC was a "black contact zone." James argues that "black contact zones" were sites "where peoples of African descent from different geographic spaces meet, interact, and commingle with one another, often for the first time." James goes on to argue that these contact zones were sites of "shared suffering, of sorrow as well as joy, and generally are sites of black solidarity." Most importantly, Black contact zones are

[64] Fergus. *A History of Education in the British Leeward Islands*, 87; Taylor et al. "The Moravian Church," 595.
[65] Marika Sherwood. *Origins of Pan-Africanism: Henry Sylvester Williams, Africa, and the African Diaspora* (Routledge, 2012), 250.

"congenial spaces for the development of black internationalism and Pan-Africanism."[66] To this end, Mico College was a Black contact zone. Students from across the eastern Caribbean lived, studied, and engaged in recreational activities with each other. While their education was with the intent of indoctrinating them to be agents of British Imperialism, they came as extensions of the nineteenth century Black Radical Tradition in the Caribbean.

By the early 1890s Tobitt had graduated from this "black contact zone" with academic honors. The principle, Thomas Nowell, even stated that Tobitt possessed "much grit and influence as a leader among young men" during his time at Mico. [67] During this same period, Tobitt gained employment as a teacher at the Moravian day school at Cedar Hall.[68] Tobitt did not immediately follow the footsteps of other Mico alum and leave the island to teach at schools throughout the Caribbean. Rather, he became a teacher in the religious school system of the Moravians. This makes sense as schools in the island of Antigua were in short demand of competent teachers as well. As stated earlier, Cedar Hall played a critical role in the Moravian teachers' pipeline in preparing young boys to enter Mico College. In essence, for much of the 1890s he played a role in preparing Black Moravian boys for entrance into the Mico teachers training college. Aside from professional aspirations, on December 29, 1897, Tobitt married Caroline Augusta Black of St. John's, Antigua.[69] The two would go on to make preparations to

[66] Winston James, *Harlem's Difference*, 112-113. In Andrew N. Fearnley and Daniel Matlin (eds.) Race Capital? Harlem as Setting and Symbol (New York, Columbia University Press, 2019).
[67] *Negro World*, October 20, 1923.
[68] Moravian Cedar Hall Register of Baptism 1980-1958 Loc. No. B00385/ Cedar Hall Church Book. National Archives of Antigua.
[69] Original Register of Marriage (December 29, 1897). Acquired on October 15, 2020. Registrar General Office, Antigua and Barbuda.

start a family when news circulated that would rock the entire Mico Alum and Black Antiguan community to its core.

In 1899, the Mico Board of Trustees announced that they would be shuttering the doors to the Antigua branch of the Mico teachers training college. The plan devised by the Trustees was that the current students would be sent to the Jamaica Mico branch and would have their travel, both to and from Jamaica, subsidized by the Board. A bevy of responses were sent into the *Antigua Standard* newspaper by Mico alum and concerned Antiguans expressing their discontent with the educational institution closing down. We can only begin to imagine Tobitt's frustration at the closing of his alma mater. A Mico alum, currently living in St. Kitts, wrote to the *Antigua Standard* suggesting that since the Principal, Thomas Nowell, was retiring, the assistant, Mr. Buckley, could be raised to Principal and that a new assistant "be sought among us ex Miconians." Lastly, he suggested that the new principal's salary be lowered from $400 to $200 and the Assistant pay be fixed at $100 and the funds used to pay for student's travel to Jamaica be diverted to the College's upkeep.[70] Another suggestion to fix this vexed problem was avoiding the "costly transfer to Jamaica" and instead reducing the number of students to 12 at the Antigua branch and a "proportionate number in Jamaica." Additionally, it was recommended that Mr. Nowell go home with his pension and replace him with "a man of great experience."[71]

All those writing in regard to the future of the Mico were not so optimistic. One person wrote "I fear all chances, of striving to do well, have like the sunbeam of yesterday, passed by and the well has already run dry." His reason for such a gloomy outlook was couched in the fact that the Bishop of Antigua pleaded for the continuation of the Charity, the Board of Visitors did

[70] *Antigua Standard*, August 5, 1899.
[71] *Antigua Standard*, September 16, 1899.

the same, and the male teachers of the island assembled in the Mico schoolroom on Saturday, June 3rd, all to the result of the decision of discontinuing the funding to remain the same. Surely, Tobitt attended the June 3rd meeting. The gentlemen ended his letter with this final solution: "At this juncture we can but hope that those premises may be owned by some religious body, who will continue the good work which for 62 years has characterized its existence."[72] In the 1898-1899 inspector of school report lamented the closing of the Mico College, stating that Antigua would soon be losing a school that has "always been top of the list by undisputed merit." While official statistics vary on the number of students passing through the Mico it was reported that under Mr. Thomas Nowell's tenure, which began in 1872, 223 students passed through the school with roughly 181 receiving "certificates of competency." In 1899, it was reported that 11 were religious ministers, 7 were in secondary education, 1 became a lawyer, 19 went on to professions besides teaching, and 142 were working throughout the West Indies and British Guiana as teachers in primary schools.[73]

A reading of the responses to the closing of the Mico College reveal several key important factors. First, it shows that while the Mico was an instrument of British imperial initiatives, Black West Indians saw their own personal use for the university. It was an avenue in which they could capitalize on a proper education and achieve a level of social mobility in an environment where many were relegated to a life of. sugar cane planting. Secondly, there was a latent push for black leadership at the Mico college. The comment of the Mico alum suggesting that a former Mico student should be placed as assistant principal should be read as an act in which black teachers were not complacent with being rank and file elementary teachers, rather

[72] *Antigua Standard*, September 23, 1899.
[73] *Antigua Standard*, September 30, 1899.

they sought to move to headmaster and administrators of these institutions. As will be demonstrated later, this desire by black Mico alum assuming administrative positions would not end. Lastly, the call for a religious institution to take over the Mico premises did not fall on death ears.

A year later, the Moravian Church bought the grounds of the MTTC and constructed the Buxton Grove Seminary. What a coincidence that the church that first undertook teaching the enslaved reading and writing in Antigua would take over an institution that served as a critical cornerstone in the education of Black Antiguans. The exact causes for the closing of the Mico Antigua branch are not entirely clear. Historian Howard A. Fergus argues that the branch closed presumably due to financial pressures.[74] This makes sense, as the solutions presented at the June 3rd, 1899, meeting were mostly, if not entirely, financial in nature. The closing of the Antigua branch could not have been due to colonial officials believing that the British civilizing mission had concluded. This is because the Jamaica branch remained open, and as pointed out previously, it was decided that Antiguan students would be diverted to the Jamaican branch. In fact, the Mico branch in Antigua remains open to this day. However, the closing of the Antiguan Mico Branch speaks to the larger fiscally strained situation of the island that would lead to the exodus of thousands of Antiguans from the island.

[74] Fergus, *A History of Education in the British Leeward Islands*, 89.

Buxton Grove Seminary

At the closing of the Mico Institution in 1899, Moravian interest in the vacant property was swift. After a series of correspondence between Moravian Bishop A.B. Romig, and the Attorney General of the Leeward Islands clerk, W.H. Semper, on December 12, 1900, Semper alerted Romig that he was in in receipt of his check for fees associated with "the application for a Certificate of Title to "The Mico."'[75] On February 29, 1900, Mico College officially reopened as the Moravian College and Theological Seminary at Buxton Grove or colloquially known as the Buxton Grove Seminary. The entire staff of the school remained the same except for the headmaster, Thomas Nowell, who was replaced by a Mr. Joseph E. James.[76] Thus, ushered in a new era of normal school training, in many ways that was not much dissimilar to the Mico. Moravian interest in Mico provided a beacon of hope for teacher training on the island. However, Antigua experienced a confluence of factors that led thousands of Antiguan men and women to look beyond the island for economic succor.

Historian Brian Dyde argues that the Antiguan economy in the late nineteenth century was "on the verge of collapse."[77] This was in part because he Antiguan economy, like many of its neighboring islands, relied heavily on the export of sugar cane. The lack of agricultural diversification deeply hurt the economy when the sugar cane market took a downturn in the 1840s. By the 1880s, the USA – who was an importer of up to three quarters of the islands sugar output in previous decades, began importing sugar cane from competing sugar markets in Brazil, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. In Britain, beet sugar, an early nineteenth century European development

[75] West Indian Spring Gardens Antigua School. EWI, W.I. 101+102, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.
[76] *Antigua Standard*, January 27, 1900.
[77] Dyde*, A History of Antigua, 203.*

began to wrestle away sugar cane's dominance in the European market. To make matters worse sugar estate owners used antiquated methods and obsolete machinery (i.e. windmills instead of steam engines). Dyde states that in "1895 sugar production in Antigua was only 60 percent of what it had been ten years earlier."[78] Additionally, in 1838 cane sugar coming from the Caribbean accounted for 95 percent of the world sugar market. By 1900, cane sugar accounted for 46.7 percent of the world sugar market and beet sugar held the majority with 53.3 percent of the market. [79] To make matters worse, two hurricanes devastated the island of Antigua, one in 1898 and another in 1899. Both hurricanes made an already precarious sugar industry in the island even worse.[80]

As such, Antiguans who could, and those throughout the British Caribbean, did as any people do when conditions in their home worsen, they migrate. Migration for Black West Indians was not a foreign concept. As early as the 1850s up to the 1870s, Black West Indians, primarily Jamaicans and Barbadians, migrated to Central America to help build railroads in Panama and Costa Rica.[81] With the almost utter collapse of the British Caribbean sugar industry, by the turn of the century, a strong interest in migration was renewed. As early as 1899, articles providing reasons for why West Indians should immigrate to the U.S appeared regularly in the *Antigua Standard* newspaper. In 1900, news of the expansion of the British Royal Streamline appeared in the *Antigua Standard*.[82] This expansion provided a direct connection for steam ships from the

[78] Dyde, *A History of Antigua*, 203.
[79] Gordon K. Lewis. *The Growth of the Modern West Indies*. (Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1968), XVII.
[80] Frank Moya Pons. *History of the Caribbean: Plantations, Trade, and War in the Atlantic World*. (Markus Weiner Publishers, 2013), 100
[81] Velma Newton. *The Silver Men: West Indian Labour Migration to Panama, 1850-1914* (Institute of Social and Economic Research: University of the West Indies), 20.
[82] *Antigua Standard,* May 13, 1899; *Antigua Standard*, January 27th, 1900.

Leeward Islands to Bermuda - where there was a project to further develop the Royal Naval Dockyard - and to Halifax, Canada, offering another pathway for immigration beyond the Panamanian isthmus. In 1900, while many Antiguans left for work on the Royal Navy Dockyard in Bermuda, New York City, and the Panamanian Isthmus, Tobitt and his wife remained in Antigua. While many Mico graduates left the island to teach in other Caribbean islands, it makes sense why Tobitt would have stayed on the island while so many around him departed. Tobitt was a native Antiguan. Schools in the island were in dire need of competent teachers as well. Inspector of schools, Mr. F. H. Watkins reported in his 1898-99 report that the Moravian school at Gracehill under the principalship of Tobitt stood "head of the list in order of Merit" in all of Antigua.[83] Tobitt was a competent teacher, and it is a strong possibility that Tobitt felt compelled to give back to the young Black youth being educated in his home denomination and church.

The anemic sugar industry posed real issues to the islands welfare. Especially after General Sir Henry Norman stated in his 1896 royal commission that the sugar industry was "in danger of extinction," the resuscitation of the agricultural industry became an all-hands-on deck venture.[84] The same way agricultural instruction was implemented to Mico students during the mid to late nineteenth century, it was of concern of the Buxton Grove director, A. B. Romig, at the turn of the century. On December 21, 1900, in Buxton Grove's first year of operation the Agricultural Society of Antigua held its annual show on Buxton Grove's premises. The show began at 12 o'clock and ended at 6pm. The show was open to those of all ages.[85] Tobitt, the Mico trained agriculturalist he was, was in attendance and performed exceptionally well. Surely,

[78] *The Antigua Standard*, September 30, 1899.
[84] Dyde, *A History of Antigua*, 204.
[85] Antigua Standard, December 15th, 1900.

as a teacher in the Moravian school system, his attendance was more than likely required as he would impart any new agricultural knowledge to his students at Gracehill.

A year later, on April 20th, in an attempt "to develop the scheme for regenerating the Agricultural condition of the West Indies" the Imperial Department held an agricultural show geared specifically to Sugar cane cultivation. At the beginning of the show, in the absence of the Governor, Sir George Melville KCMG addressed the crowd and expressed that he hoped these shows would "bring people together who are not Planters, stimulate an interest in local affairs, encourage self-help and otherwise prevent us in these depressing times from lapsing into a sleepy apathetic condition."[86] For this show we have primary evidence that confirms Tobitt's attendance and highlights his performance. Tobitt participated in several exhibitions. Eight exhibitors presented "Tamarinds in Syrup" and Tobitt came in first place with "Mrs Walter" winning second place. Of the two people that presented "Pawpaws" Tobitt came in first place as well. Five individuals participated in the "Sweet Potato Meal" exhibit and Tobitt won first place as well.[87] Tobitt's agricultural skills were made known at this conference.

Tobitt's presence and participation at Agricultural shows was a yearly occurrence. On February 14, 1902, another Agricultural Show was held at Buxton Grove.[88] Again, Tobitt won first place presenting Tapioca, and on this rare occasion he came in second place presenting "Preserved Tamarinds." Unfortunately, Tobitt's repeat success at agricultural shows garnered much jealously among individuals both in and outside of the Agricultural community. After the show on February 14, a series of rumors began to circulate as to how Tobitt was so successful at numerous agricultural competitions. Less than a month after the show, Tobitt wrote into the

[86] *Antigua Standard*, April 20, 1901.
[87] Ibid.
[88] *Antigua Standard*, March 1st, 1902.

Antigua Standard to clear the air of all false rumors and to protect his integrity. In a letter with several bullet points he addressed each rumor, stemming as far back as the Agricultural show that took place in April of 1901.[89]

First, Tobitt refuted claims that he presented Pumpkin meal that was mixed with cornmeal. He made it abundantly clear that the fake Pumpkin meal was the product of someone else. The second rumor pertained to the recent show on February 14 when individuals accused Tobitt of not having orange trees and that they would tell the judges that he could not participate since he did not own any. Tobitt's response was "I proffer a cordial invitation to come to Liberta, where the orange crop is o'er in order to have a good feed from *my* orange trees." The last rumor also pertained to the February show where an individual, who did not know Tobitt, claimed that they did not know anyone that had the ability to grow Tapioca trees in Antigua. Tobitt's response was "To this individual I also extend an invitation to come to Liberta, as I would not mind devoting my time, after school, in practically convincing him that Tapioca is not "picked" from Tapioca trees (as the researches of his meagre calibre inform him), but is the result of manufacture." Tobitt closed his manifesto with a quote from Shakespeare stating "Who steals my purse, steals trash;'tis something, nothing, 'Twas mine, 'tis his; and has been slave thousands; But he that filches from me my good mane, Robs me of that which not enriches him, And makes me poor indeed."[90] Tobitt's statement was in reference to his reputation, surely, he probably sold his agricultural products at markets for supplement income as many did at the time, and false rumors would definitely impact his sales. Also, Tobitt was a premier teacher in

[89] *Antigua Standard,* March 8th, 1902.
[90] *Antigua Standard,* March 8th, 1902.

the entire island of Antigua and such rumors would not benefit his reputation as an educator either.

Not only were working class Black Antiguans impacted by the steep downturn in the agricultural industry of the island. But for professional Black Antiguans, such as teachers, the financial situation was bleak as well. On March 1st, 1902, at the All-Saints Schoolroom located in St. Paul's Parish, the first meeting of the Antigua Teachers Association (ATA) was held. The school room was filled with schoolteachers, Reverends, and parents from across the island. The Rev. McConney addressed the meeting and stated (1) "That the Antigua Teachers Association could be a strong Educational Power in the Leeward Islands Colony, if conducted on proper lines and duly supported by School Managers and Teachers." (2) That the teachers of Antigua notably have to experience much marked apathy on the part of the parents of their scholars and (3) The desirability of an improved Pupil Teachers System and of better salaries for Elementary School Teachers.[91] After Rev. McConney's address Mr. Zephaniah Joseph read a paper on Education in Jamaica. After several "hearty toasts" to the founding of the ATA the meeting concluded with arrangements made for the next meeting on May 3rd.[92]

It makes sense that Tobitt, who had spent the entirety of his adult life as a schoolteacher, was especially drawn to the mission of the ATA. At the next meeting he was elected Vice President of the association.[93] At the August 2nd meeting of the ATA held at the Buxton Grove Seminary, Tobitt read a paper titled "The Training of the Young." Things had now come full

[91] *Antigua Standard*, March 22nd, 1902. The presence of the Antigua Teachers Association shifts our understanding on teacher organizing in Antigua. The official record states that the Antigua Teachers Union was not founded until 1926. See link for more information about the Antigua and Barbuda Teachers Union https://abteachers.org/index.php/history/
[92] Ibid.
[93] *Negro World*, October 20, 1923.

circle, Tobitt was standing in the halls of his old alma matter partaking in groundbreaking union organizing work. After a series of papers were read, the Inspector of Schools addressed the meeting and "spoke in high terms of the possibilities of a Teachers Association." He stated that he "would like to see a Colonial Teachers Association established, with branches in the various islands and "would be pleased… to give it his support."[94] The presence of the inspector of schools was momentous. Teachers, who served as the backbone of Black West Indian advancement, were finally able to air their grievances to an extension of British Colonial rule. The ATA in many regards was more than just a coming together of teachers seeking equitable pay. It was a benevolent organization in which teachers, who did not receive proper respect from colonial officials came together in their plight for the betterment of colonial education.

In 1906, the leadership of Buxton Grove Day school would go through a minor reshaping. In a letter from Bishop Romig to Rev. Greider, Romig expressed to Greider that "the present headmaster at Buxton Grove School," Joseph E. James, "has practically decided to leave us soon for Panama." Romig was not surprised by his sudden departure as he had a hunch that his departure was imminent "at least since his leave of absence a year ago." Romig stated that during his leave of absence in 1905 an application was received from a teacher at Greenbay. Romig stated that "there has come an application" from Tobitt who was a teacher at the Gracehill Day school. Romig decided to speak with Bro. Tisdale before making a sudden decision.[95] Mr. James was slow to fully depart for Panama as he was waiting on a final word from the inspector of schools. On June 6, 1906, Romig alerted Greider that James left for Panama on May 18, and he appointed a "Miss Pigott" to oversee the school. However, he stated that "realizing the

[94] *Antigua Standard*, August 23rd, 1902.
[95] Theol. Sem. Buxton Grove, Ant. 1900-1906, Buxton Grove Seminary, April 18, 1906. Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.

necessity of having a male teacher, and not being ready to appoint one permanently" he "placed Charles Schouten in charge, for the month of June." Romig was pleased with Schouten's work and planned after "a trial" for him to assume duties as headmaster indefinitely.[96]

It is not entirely clear why Romig decided on Charles Shouten to assume duties of Buxton Grove over Tobitt. It is, however, rather strange that Tobitt would be overlooked as he was listed in 1899 by the inspector as the best teacher in the island of Antigua, and arguably all of the Leeward islands. The Moravian clergy in Antigua would have been rather familiar with Tobitt and his work. First, Tobitt would have been well acquainted with Director, A. B. Romig as he served as the marriage officer for his marriage with Carmina Tobitt in 1897.[97] Secondly, Tobitt was well acquainted with Rev. Tisdale as he and Tobitt had participated in several celebrations at Moravian churches.[98] Lastly, Tobitt's stellar performance at agricultural competitions would have surely put him on the radar of the Buxton Grove school administration. Perhaps, the agricultural rumors did "make him poor indeed" as he lamented several years earlier. Even after extensive archival research it remains unclear the race of Shouten. What is clear is that Tobitt's application for headmaster is an extension of the concerns of many of the Black and Mico Alum community. As was mentioned earlier, when the Mico closed there was a push for a Mico Alum, who more than likely would have been a Black man, to attain a position in the administration of the institution. Tobitt was a premier Mico student and alum. His passing over by Romig says a great deal about the administrative decisions of the white Moravian church leadership, and the British colonial system at large.

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[96] Theol. Sem. Buxton Grove, Ant. 1900-1906, Buxton Grove Seminary June 6 , 1906, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.
[97] Original Register of Marriage, December 29, 1897. Acquired on October 15, 2020. Registrar General Office, Antigua and Barbuda.
[98] *Antigua Standard*, December 1, 1900.

Exodus from Antigua

As the first decade of the twentieth century progressed, the capricious economic situation of Antigua did not improve, even in the slightest. In fact, recent developments such as the US endeavor to complete the Panama Canal in 1904, provided more incentive for working class West Indians to leave their home islands.[99] In 1907, Governor of Leeward Islands, Sir Bickham Sweet Escott, stated in his 1907 report to the Colonial Office that the laborers that left for the Panamanian Isthmus have "sent generous support to their dependents."[100] It became abundantly apparent that a plethora of financial opportunities lied beyond the islands, even if it meant dealing with the racism of White American Canal Agents.

For Tobitt and his wife, migration was surely an option that he may have contemplated from early on. It is likely that Tobitt and his wife, Carmina, saw the numerous articles about the financial opportunities that laid ahead in other countries. Additionally, Moravian Periodical accounts reveal that Moravian congregations in Antigua experienced a significant loss of members due to immigration.[101] One can only imagine conversations that were had as members revealed their plans to leave for Panama or the United States. Although Tobitt was not a laborer by trade, there was not much incentive for he and his family to stay in Antigua. As an educator, he was recognized by the Leeward Island inspector of Schools as an exceptional teacher and yet, pay was meagre, and he was denied the opportunity to move into an administrative role.

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[99] Velma, *The Silver Men*, 22.
[100] Dyde, *A History of Antigua*, 208.

[101] 1910, vol. 07, no. 83: Periodical accounts relating to the foreign missions of the Church of the United Brethren; https://collections.mun.ca/digital/collection/cns_permorv/id/27046/rec/19

As a Mico alum, a culture of educators leaving Antigua to teach abroad was already present. It is likely that some of the Mico Alum that left Antigua to obtain work abroad may have been Tobitt's peers. In 1910, Tobitt and his family followed the path of the several thousand West Indians that chose to go on the move since the 1850s. However, Panama would not be Tobitt and his family's next destination. Nor would the United States, at least not immediately. Rather, Tobitt joined a small but significant group of Leeward Islands that migrated to a different location in need of laborers and educators. That island was Bermuda.

CHAPTER 2: The Isle of Devils: Black Bermuda's Fight for Socio-Political Equality, 1910-1919

Figure 1: Picture: Bermuda Union of Teachers, circa 1919

Introduction

After an approximate 928 nautical mile voyage aboard the S.S. Sobo, on November 22, 1910, Tobitt, his wife Caroline and their two children, arrived in the British colony of Bermuda.[122] This chapter details, through Tobitt's experiences, how the Black Bermudian community fought for educational, economic, and political equality during the second decade of the twentieth century. Moreover, this chapter paints a portrait of the critical role members of the

[122] *Royal Gazette*, November 24, 1910.

African Methodist Episcopal church played in advancing the causes and concerns of the Black Bermudian community during the hardships brought on by the first World War.

Educational, Religious, and Agricultural Activism

The island of Bermuda was similar and, in some respects, different to Tobitt's home island of Antigua. Demographically, Bermuda, had a larger white settler population than Antigua. While Antigua was ruled by absentee plantation owners, the resident white population of Bermuda set in place a system that ensured the complete economic, social, and political subordination of the majority Black Bermudian population. In 1911, a year after Tobitt's arrival, the total population of the island sat at 18,994 people. 12,203 people or 65 percent of the population were of African descent.[123] Moreover, due to the growing demand for laborers on the island, West Indians from other British Caribbean colonies numbered 3,000 of Bermuda's population – close to 20 percent.[124] Due to cultural affinities and segregation, West Indian immigrants became integrated into the resident Black Bermudian community and joined protest against the white ruling class.[125] The number of White Bermudians in 1911 numbered 6,691- 35 percent of the population.[126]

Bermudian politics and economic power was vested in the hands of a small white elite that came to power in the seventeenth century through piracy, racketeering, and the slave trade.[127] As was the case throughout the Black Atlantic, the abolition of slavery did not erase

[123] Quito J. Swan. The truth is an Offense: The Struggle for Decolonization and the Rise of Black Power in Bermuda, 1967-1977 (Dissertation, Howard University, 2005), 45.
[124] "West Indies Exhibit", Bermuda National Museum, Somerset, Bermuda.
[125] Theodore Stanhope Francis. Fantasy Island: Race, Colonial Politics, and the desegregation of tourism in the British Colony of Bermuda, 1880-1961 (Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2015), 4
[126] Swan. The truth is an Offense, 45.
[127] Swan, The truth is an Offense, 40.

racist oppression. In the decades following British Caribbean emancipation, Bermuda's white elite played a critical role in limiting Black Bermudian social mobility and fostering island wide segregation. Bermudian Historian Francis Theodore Francis makes note that segregation in Bermuda evolved out of colonial law and "time-honored practices of white Bermudian racial separatism."[128]

For example, on February 10, 1834, a law was passed that required specific property qualifications in order to participate in the political system. Bermudian Historian Cyril Packwood stated that such rigid property qualifications made it "virtually impossible for any Black to qualify for office or to be able to vote."[129] Thus, such medieval property ownership laws rendered a vast majority of Black Bermudians politically impotent. Laws that restricted Blacks political freedom were coupled with economically restraining ones as well. On June 28,1834, "vagrancy" laws were passed that allowed for unemployed persons to be arrested and imprisoned. This in essence forced Blacks to accept employment from employers that did not pay a fair wage and abused their labor.[130] Quito Swan argues that such vagrancy laws were the "building block for racial segregation and restricted the physical areas in which Black could congregate."[131] As was the case in the United States, segregation impacted one of the most crucial sites of Black social mobility and empowerment – education. While there was no specific law that forbade integrated schools, several attempts by Black and white educators to create integrated schools in the 1850s were met with contempt by white Bermudians and colonial officials.[132] This socio-political landscape was Tobitt's new home. However, Tobitt and the

[128] Francis, Fantasy Island, 30.
[129] Cyril O. Packwood. *Chained on the Rock* (Hamilton: Island Press Limited, 1993), 185, 197
[130] Swan, The truth is an Offense, 42.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Francis, Fantasy Island, 31

Black Bermudian community did not sit idly in the face of such injustices. This chapter details their fight.

Not only were working class laborers needed in Bermuda to assist in ventures such as the Royal Naval Dockyard extension, but educators were needed to fill the overcrowded and underfunded segregated Black schools. Instances of West Indians migrating to Bermuda to assist in the teacher shortage can be traced back as early as 1901, when John Alexander Braithwaithe opened the first secondary education school in Sandy's Parish for Black children.[133] Afterall, going throughout the West Indies and teaching where needed was one of the purposes of Tobitt's Training at the Mico Institution. As someone who's teaching was closely tied to religious instruction as well, it is more than likely that Tobitt simultaneously looked for a new religious home. Evidence shows that Tobitt developed a relationship with the African Methodist Episcopal church as early as 1912.

Several reasons explain why Tobitt would have gravitated to the AME church in his first few years in the island. Bermuda was primarily dominated by five major religious dominations: the Church of England, Presbyterian, Wesleyan Methodist, Roman Catholic, and African Methodist Episcopal.[134] While each denomination had Black membership, only one denomination was founded by African descended people and had a history of standing up for the Black Bermudian community and wider African Diaspora – The African Methodist Episcopal Church. The AME church was founded by Richard Allen in 1816 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

[133] Nellie Musson. *Mind the Onion Seed: Black Roots, Bermuda*. (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1979), 98.
[134] Bermuda National Archives, Government Reports Statistical Census 1851-1950 L. 4005, 1921 No.4

Richard Allen was born on February 14, 1760, in Deleware and into slavery.[135] Allen and his family were owned by Stockley Sturgis who separated the Allen family from each other. In 1777, Allen converted to Christianity and in 1783, manumitted himself and bought his freedom.[136] Upon buying his freedom, Allen spent a significant amount of time in both white and Black Methodist communities. Unfortunately, the Methodist community was rife with anti-Black racism. Seeking a church in which Black Methodists could escape the racism of the white Methodist community and a church that was committed to the ending of slavery, Allen founded the African Methodist Episcopal church.[137] With black Methodists present throughout the United States and the Caribbean, the church quickly spread throughout the Black Atlantic. Historian Dennis Dickerson argues that the AME church in the Black Atlantic "embodied" a "freedom rhetoric and praxis."[138] The AME's initial goal was the advancement of emancipation in the Americas. With much of chattel slavery abolished in the Americas by the late nineteenth century, the church shifted its attention to fighting against racist economic, social, and political institutions in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa.[139]

African Methodism came to Bermuda in 1870. AME services were at first small, taking place in homes of Black Bermudians. Over the next decade AME membership grew substantially with the first AME church built in October 1879 in Bailey's Bay. The largest AME church, St Paul's AME located in the capital of Hamilton, was built in December 1881.[140] From the earliest

[135] Dennis Dickerson. *The African Methodist Episcopal Church: A History*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 25
[136] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 28
[137] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 31, 33
[138] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 14
[139] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 16
[140] William S. Zuille, *The Story of Bermuda and her People* (London: MacMillan Education Ltd, 1999), 141-142

arrival of AME members in Bermuda they lived up to the church's mission. For example, Canadian born Rev. J. Albert Johnson, who arrived in Hamilton, Bermuda in 1886, helped to create with the help of fellow AME clergy the Bermuda Collegiate Institute. Johnson stated in an interview some years later the impetus for founding the Bermuda Collegiate Institute lay in "the unrighteous caste of the white population of the little island."[141] Racism permeated Bermuda's religious community as well. Johnson also stated that members of a white church he interacted with "treated me shabby because I am black."[142] Additionally, a decade before Tobitt's arrival, in 1901, the American born AME preacher, Rev. Henry Monk, organized Jamaican and other West Indian workers against the labor abuses taking place on the construction site of the Royal Navy Dockyard, located on the far Western end of the island.[143] The case gained much notoriety when Rev. Monk was jailed for libel after publishing the labor abuses occurring on the construction site in his newspaper, *The New Era*.[144] It is likely that upon Tobitt's first years on the island, through interactions with other Black Bermudians, that he learned about the racism in Bermudian society, its religious community, and the premier role the AME church played in fighting against Bermuda's racist social order.

Historian Dennis C. Dickerson argues that the AME church at the dawn of the twentieth century proved "to doubtful whites" that African descended people were "fully capable of effective self-governance."[145] Tobitt's childhood denomination in Antigua, the Moravians, maintained an organizational hierarchy of white rule, and were not remotely interested in upsetting the colonial order. The all-Black leadership of the AME church in Bermuda would

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[141] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 199.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ira Philip. *Freedom Fighters: From Monk to Mazumbo*. (London: Akira Press, 1987), 10
[144] Philip. *Freedom Fighters*, 12
[145] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church,* 1

have been attractive to Tobitt. Additionally, the stories of Rev. Johnson and Monk would have signaled to Tobitt that AME church ministers were actively organizing against the racial hierarchy of the island. Evidence of Tobitt's decision to ally himself with the AME came on March 3, 1912, when the island's premier newspaper, the *Royal Gazette,* announced that the "energetic" AME Pastor Rev. C. A. Stewart founded the St. George's High School, located on Water Street in St. George's Parish, and recently installed Tobitt as the headmaster.[146]

Rev. C. A. Stewart had just arrived from Nova Scotia, Canada, earlier that year, and more than likely, after assessing the dismal situation for education on the island set out to create the school. It is not entirely clear how Tobitt befriended Stewart. However, the opportunity for Tobitt to headmaster a school probably appeared as an answer to his prayers. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Tobitt applied to headmaster the Moravian Buxton Grove Seminary in 1906 in Antigua and was denied the opportunity. In Bermuda, through the commitment of the AME church, Tobitt had the ideal opportunity to take charge of his own school. Tobitt's relationship with Rev. Stewart did not stop at the halls of education. A few months later, on July 29th, Tobitt accompanied Rev. Stewart to the Bermuda AME's Twenty-Ninth Annual Conference held in Hamilton.[147]

At this conference, if he wasn't aware already, Tobitt received a first-hand introduction into the AME churches commitment to the Black freedom struggle. In the opening minutes of the conference he heard fellow Antigua native, William B. Derrick, the island's presiding Bishop, say that "His majesty has no more loyal subjects than the ministers and members of the AME

[146] *Royal Gazette*, March 3, 1912.
[147] *Minutes of the Twenty Ninth Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church held at Hamilton, Bermuda, from July 29th to August 5th, 1912*. Bermuda National Archives. 2-3.

church." Derrick also stated that the Majesties government in England was "the best and greatest in the world."[148] Such rhetoric that embellished the British government on the part of West Indians was common occurrence in the colonies. While Tobitt and his colleagues may have felt some sense of loyalty to the crown, they surely understood, at least to a degree, that Black West Indians were not experiencing the "greatest" aspects of the colonial order. Perhaps the hypocrisy in Derrick's statement became even more apparent when the Committee on Education presented their findings.

The 1912 committee of education was staffed by Revs. A. Richard Tulsie, J. W. Cann, and J.W. Edgehill. These men provided Tobitt with the first glimpse of the destitute teaching situation present on the island, and AME churches role in the struggle for equality. In their report they stated that "Bermuda as a British colony is the only one which undertakes compulsory education, without a school building owned by the colony for the training of her young." As a result, the committee declared that the education system of Bermuda was "meagre" and that "the teachers who are the direct sufferers close their mouths when they ought to promulgate such a cause; the parents who are the next sufferers sit by the grumble." The committee members challenged the ministers and individual churches to "double their efforts and support" the schools that functioned on shoestring budgets. They offered that the most pertinent solution would be the establishment of a Public-School System for Bermuda's youths.

The committee on education requested that teachers go on strike until a public school system was founded and to no longer tolerate funding that simply provided enough funds to "build one or two [schools] for the whites and one for the blacks."[149] Tobitt, who was not a

[148] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 287.
[149] *Minutes of the Twenty Ninth Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference*, 15.

member of the committee or the AME conference yet, chimed in and stated that he hoped in an event that a strike happened that "African Methodism would be clearly seen playing its potent part in bringing about a public school system."[150] Two important takeaways should be drawn from the 1912 conference. First, the opening statements by Bishop Derrick speaks to the outwardly appeal of the AME to assuage the sensitivities of onlooking colonial officials. Second, the report on education speaks to the fact that there was a radical insurgency amongst the ranks of the AME clergy that sought to push back against British colonial neglect of education of the Black population. In 1912, while Tobitt and other AME clergy left the convention invigorated and ready to lead the push for educational equality, statistics from the Inspector of Schools official report paint a much broader picture as to the hurdles that Black educators had to overcome. The 1912 Report of the Inspector of Schools revealed that St. George's parish, where Tobitt's High School was located, had the third largest population of school age children in 1911. To make matters worse, it was the parish with the second largest number of youths that were not enrolled in school - 98 children.[151] In fact, there were only two schools present in a parish that had roughly 300 children in need of instruction.[152]

After agreeing to headmaster Rev. Stewart's St. George's High School, a year later in 1913, Tobitt was listed on the Inspector of Schools official records as one of 30 officially recognized schools. Tobitt oversaw the education of a total of 60 students.[153] In the 1913 annual report by the inspector of schools, the inspector concluded that at Tobitt's St. George's school "the work of the Junior Standards is satisfactory. All the pupils write neatly, though the spelling

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[150] *Minutes of the Twenty Ninth Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference*, 11.
[151] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 7. 1912, Bermuda National Archives.
[152] Ibid, 3.
[153] *Minutes of the Twenty Ninth Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference*, 11.

is extremely bad in the Upper Standards and calls for the immediate care of the Teacher."[154] Tobitt had a tall order ahead of him as he had to work against decades of educational neglect by the Bermudian government. However, it is not apparent if the Inspector of Schools understood the impact of systemic inequality on the performance of students.

Although Tobitt came to Bermuda for pedagogical reasons, he availed himself further to the cause of the AME church. Before the 1913 Bermuda Annual Conference convened, Tobitt took charge of the AME's St. David's Mission. The St. David's Mission was in a precarious position. Formerly pastored by Rev. R. J. Stovell, membership in the church had struggled significantly due to the "inconvenience of travel."[155] The St. David's Mission was located on the far eastern side of the island and was in a rural agricultural community that required transport by boat to reach. In the face of transportation issues the members were deemed "faithful and loyal." It was ultimately decided by Presiding Elder Walker that the mission be attached to the St. George's church and placed under the care of Rev. C.A. Stewart. [156] Stewart, who had a strong relationship with Tobitt by this time, placed him in charge of the mission. At the 1913 Bermuda AME conference, in presiding Elder Walker's annual report, he stated that in the conclusion of his first year as pastor Tobitt "had a degree of success along all lines" and Walker believed Tobitt was "an excellent scholar and a diplomat" and that "success awaits him in the Church, if he will join the Conference and put himself in position where God and the Church could use him."[157] In short order, Tobitt asked Haitian-born Bishop John Hurst and other delegates if he

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[154] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 3. 1913, Bermuda National Archives
[155] Ibid, 11.
[156] Ibid, 11.
[157] *Minutes of the Thirtieth Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church held at Richard Allen AME Church, St George, July 24rd to 28th*, 1913, 10.

could be admitted as a ministerial candidate.[158] Admission into the conference would have to wait, as Tobitt still needed to prove his commitment to the churches mission.

Increased involvement with the AME church was not a challenge for Tobitt. He attended the 1914 Bermuda Annual Conference, and this time served on the committee of education chaired by Rev. Stewart. On the conference's second day, the Committee on Admission, in reviewing Tobitt's request to be admitted into the conference found him "proficient" and recommended that he be considered for admission into the conference. Immediately following that report, Tobitt's close colleague, Rev. C.A. Stewart presented a resolution stating, "Resolved that this Conference endorses a free Public-School system for the colony with equal advantages for both races, white, as well as coloured." The resolution was "signed by almost every member of the Conference," and was adopted.[159] After the resolution was signed and adopted another minister moved that the resolution should "be given publicity through the press."[160] Stewart concluded his report by arguing that the Board of Education needed to pay a living monthly wage to the teachers that sometimes-taught classes of up to 100 students. Additionally, he believed that it "is only when the AME church reaches that place where her views are adopted by the majority as being worthy of support" will the Bermudian government concede and listen to the measures put forth by the AME church.[161] For the AME clergy, the bulwark to progress in education was the lack of a free public school system provided by the Bermudian government. This made sense, when taking into consideration the fact that teaching would be hampered if teachers did not have the proper resources to teach overcrowded schools and if parents did not

[158] *Minutes of the Thirtieth Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference*, 15, 18
[159] *Minutes of the Thirty-first Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church held at Somerset in Allen Temple, July 23rd to 27th*, 1914, 10.
[160] *Minutes of the Thirty-first Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference*, 10-11
[161] *Minutes of the Thirty-first Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference*, 30.

have the funds to afford sending their kids to said schools. Under such conditions proper education would undoubtedly be affected. However, the report by the Inspector of Schools shows that there was a complete disconnect between that of the working-class Black population and colonial officials.

In the 1914 Inspector of Schools report, George S. Patton, stated, "The Teacher is no doubt in part responsible for the attitude of his pupils with regard to regularity of attendance." The board seemed, to a degree, understand that there were other factors saying, "But the distance which children have to go in order to get to school also makes a difference in the attendance, especially in wet weather." Patton then added that "Poverty also, and the real need of sometimes keeping children at home in order to perform various household duties, have their effect. But the most decided influence upon the regularity with respect or irregularity of attendance is no doubt the attitude of parents with respect to the value of education."[162] While the Board of Education seemed to understand that school attendance was impacted by numerous factors, the final takeaway that they seemed to have drawn from the low attendance numbers were that parents lack of zeal for education influenced the need for parents to send their children to school. Ultimately the onus fell on teachers to ensure their students came to school and the "culture" of the parents regarding education. In a final jab at the intelligence of the parents the report stated "the very people who are most in need of education are also the ones who can least readily distinguish between a command and a reasonable expectation"[163]All in all, rather than addressing the poor economic situation that deeply plagued Black Bermudians, the blame was placed on teachers and Black parents lack of respect for education.

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[162] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 3. 1914, Bermuda National Archives.
[163] Ibid, 3.

If the political situation in Bermuda was not already dire, the outbreak of the first World War would make matters worse. Although a conflict between European powers (France, Britain and Russia vs. Germany, Austria Hungary and the Ottoman Empire), the effects of the war reverberated through the British Caribbean. Bermuda was not immune. Mixed feelings about involvement in the World War existed amongst Blacks in the British Caribbean. Some felt that the war in Europe was a White man's conflict and did not warrant Black participation. On the other hand, some West Indians, wished to maintain a healthy relationship with England and preferred to support the war effort. Interestingly, some West Indians, who were interested in representative government were in favor of supporting Britain in hopes that the colonies support would result in national autonomy.[164] In the end, many of the colonies, which were under the rulership of white governors, supported the war effort, including Bermuda. Support for the war came in two ways: physical and material.

In terms of physical contribution to the war effort, several hundred Black Bermudians volunteered for the all-Black Bermuda Militia Artillery (BMA) regiment. As was the case throughout much of the colonies, the BMA was called upon to serve in the front lines of the bloody and muddy battlefields in northern France. The Bermudians in the BMA were accompanied by roughly 15,600 Black West Indians that enlisted in the British West Indies Regiment (BWIR).[165] As Historian Carrie Gibson argues, at the outbreak of World War I, many Black West Indians enthusiastically joined the BMA or British West Indian Regiment in hopes that their service to the mother country would lead to political reforms in the colony.[166]

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[164] Glenford D. Howe. *Race, War and Nationalism: A Social History of West Indians in the First World War* (Kingston: Ian Rand Publishers, 2002) 2-3.
[165] Zuille, *The Story of Bermuda and her People*, 152.
[166] Carrie Gibson, *Empire's Crossroads: A History of the Caribbean from Columbus to the Present Day* (New York: Grove Atlantic, 2014), 240

While civilians in the British Caribbean colonies did not feel the physical trauma enacted on the battlefields of northern France, they did feel the economic effects of the war. Island administrators, who were painfully out of touch with the economic situation of working class Black West Indians, gave extremely generous "gifts" to England in support of the war effort. Such gifts included sugar, rum, oil, lime, cotton, arrowroot, rice, clothing, and logwood. Additionally, financial contributions amounted to "approximately two million pounds of sterling" from the colonies.[167] These donations were given to England as cost of living in the Caribbean collectively rose, and as wages stagnated.[168] To make matters worse, remittances from the United States and Canada decreased as West Indians laboring in those countries were also negatively affected by the war effort as well.[169] Since the 1860s, Bermuda relied on shipping its staple agriculture produce of onions and potatoes - primarily grown by Black Bermudians - to markets in New York City. The need for steamers for the war effort along with increased German U-boat patrolling of the Atlantic Ocean, lead to catastrophic shipping problems between Bermuda and its economic lifeline, New York City.[170]

Blacks in Bermuda, and throughout the larger Caribbean, were not passive agents to the socio-economic issues brought on by the War. In an effort to lighten the load economically, in 1915, the teachers of Bermuda asked that the Board of Education support "hands on learning" and furnish the schools with gardens.[171] The director of education responded to their demand by stating that "it is quite possible to teach the elements of Agriculture without a garden, though the

[167] Howe. *Race, War and Nationalism*, 4
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Zuille, *The Story of Bermuda and her People*, 152.
[171] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 7. 1915.

addition of a garden is an obvious advantage."[172] While the Board did give in to some demands they stated that they "did not contemplate the establishment of a garden in connection with every school."[173] The verdict by the board was that "not more than eight gardens in connection with selected schools, to be chosen with reference to the more particular needs of different localities, the interest and capacity of the several teachers, and the availability of a suitable piece of ground."[174]

In addition to the board's expressed concern about teachers specialized interests and availability of grounds, there was also a gendered element to the Board's decision as to who would receive such increased funding for school gardens. The board stated, "it did not contemplate turning all the female teachers loose to teach boys how to farm." They then went on to state "For the benefit of any female teachers who may be disturbed in mind at the thought of having to turn unwilling gardeners I desire to say that nothing is farther from the mind of the Board. The Board regard the supervised cultivation of a small plot of ground as a privilege to be extended to certain teachers not as a task to be imposed upon all."[175] For the Board, the urgency of school gardens for the youth meant several things. It was not deemed essential to all youth. Second, the board assumed that only boys needed of learning how to farm. How about the girls? Lastly, it was assumed that agriculture and gardening would be a task that women would be inherently appalled at the idea of doing. This was surely an oversight by the board, as Historian

[172] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 6. 1915.
[173] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 7. 1915.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.

Nellie Munson argues that Black women were always at the forefront of education in Bermuda since emancipation.[176]

A year later, in 1916, the director of education reported that six school gardens had been established across Bermuda. All of the teachers were male, one of them being at Tobitt's school in St. George's. It was stated by the director that "These schools were selected because of their location and for other reasons."[177] Tobitt's school in the rural and more spacious St. George's parish made it ideal to have a school garden. It is quite possible that Tobitt was vocal about his agricultural successes in Antigua and expressed that to fellow teachers, AME clergy, or the Board of Education. The board was aware of the grassroots desire to increase agricultural production amongst working class Blacks. The director, George S. Patton, stated:

> "a large proportion of the people of Bermuda are now turning their attention to the land in an endeavor to reduce their cost of living, and the instruction given to the school-children and their success in growing vegetables will furnish both stimulus and assistance to parents who are now planting gardens and door-yards which have never before produced any part of the family's food. Further, the instruction in the school gardens will prompt some children to plant vegetables for sale or home use…their small efforts will help to reduce the colony's dependence on imported foods."[178]

The director of education concluded his report by stating that "it forms a useful and healthy outdoor occupation, and is an excellent manual training, for it teaches one of the highest moral and economic lessons – 'the dignity of labor".[179] The directors' reports should be read two ways. At first glance, the directors funding of school gardens was an attempt to implement a

[176] Musson. *Mind the Onion Seed,* 97
[177] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 5. 1916.
[178] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 6. 1916.
[179] Ibid.

hierarchy of Blacks producing agriculture that would maintain the economic status quo. Blacks produce agriculture in order to ease the financial burden on the colonial administration while simultaneously keeping the racial hierarchy in order. A deeper analysis shows that the push for school gardens by the teachers speaks to a much larger tradition stemming back to slavery of autonomous food production and agriculture. The ability for teachers to teach black youth the knowledge of agricultural science was undoubtedly a revolutionary act. One in which, the youth gained both academic and hands on learning and the ability to lessen their reliance on shrinking imports and an increasing cost of living.

Undoubtedly, Tobitt understood that the work being done was invaluable. Although Tobitt's close colleague, Rev. C.A. Stewart, left Bermuda for Ontario at the end of the 1914 conference[180], Tobitt continued to increase his involvement with the AME community. In fact, Tobitt's zeal to "become a better instrument in His hands" was finally being noticed. In the 1916 conference Tobitt was listed as an "elder" and he was appointed to several committees including "Children's Day money" and "Education."[181] His involvement in the conference did not end there. On the Second day, Tobitt read "a practical paper on Education."[182] While the papers content is not present in the 1916 AME conference minutes, we can rightly assume that agitation for a free public school system was a part of Tobitt's list of demands. Rev. Joseph Gomez in his report on the state of the AME church in Bermuda stated that "it has received the stamp of approval of the Colonial Government and was subsidized years ago when other denominations

[180] *Minutes of the Thirty-first Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1914*, 11.
[181] *Minutes of the Thirty-third Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church held at St. Paul's AME Church, Hamilton, July 20th to 24th, 1916*, 4.
[182] Ibid, 10.

were so helped."[183] He then went on to state that "It has given to a large portion of the population a new angle of vision of the social problems of the colony."[184] More than likely, the "new angle of vision" referred to by Gomez was related to the fight for an education system that was fully funded by the Bermudian government. Rev. Gomez's statements serve as further evidence that while the AME church sought to improve the livelihood of black Bermudians, it would be done so without upsetting the Bermudian colonial government. The prevailing culture within the conference was that the AME would agitate for social change, but only within the parameters of colonial administration. This would be a reality that Tobitt would have to soon grapple with.

In Rev. Cann and Stovell's "Report on State of the Country" they commented on Bermuda's deep loyalty and support of Britain's war effort stating that it was "unparalleled in such a small country." They reported that the BMA regiment which left for Europe in 1915 "remained in England only a few days before proceeding to France to take their place in the battle line and fight for their King and Country."[185] Such praise by Black West Indian ministers – de facto leaders of the community - was not uncommon. Throughout the British and French empire, along with the United States, Black leaders hoped that participation in such a dire struggle would yield some sort of socio-political and economic results for their valor on the battlefield. Historian Dennis Dickerson points out that the AME church throughout the Atlantic was slow to action in its denunciation of the Great War. AME religious bodies in the United States and the British Caribbean saw the involvement of African descended people in the great war as an avenue to political and economic opportunities. In other words, AME leadership believed that service in British and American militaries offered Blacks social mobility and

[183] ibid, 18.
[184] Ibid.
[185] ibid, 21.

showed Anglo-American governments that they were worthy of treatment as first-class citizens.[186] Tobitt's early thoughts on Black Bermuda's role in the war are not entirely clear. Surely, as someone raised and schooled in the British Empire, he saw the benefits and drawbacks of participation in the conflict. Moreover, Tobitt witnessed the economic tole that the war effort placed on the Black Bermudian community. Nevertheless, Tobitt remained committed to the battle on the home front: a government funded free public school system.

As such, beyond the annual AME church conference meetings, Tobitt used his St. George's schoolroom as a venue to advance the fight for education equality. In early January 1917, an "Educational Mass Meeting" was held at the St. George's High School with the Mayor, Director of Education, Director of Agriculture, and AME pastors Rev. Joseph Gomez, and Rev. C. McLaren Morgan present. The educational mass meeting consisted of a long line of events with several speeches, a welcome address by Miss Edith Corbin, songs, and recitations. Tobitt read a title "The Condition of the Public Schools in Bermuda with regard to the Training or Education of the Young."[187] In Tobitt's paper he stressed the need for a free public school system and the necessity of teaching agricultural knowledge to the youth. The first speaker to offer remarks was the Director of Education, Mr. George Patton. Patton reported that "Mr. Tobitt" covered "a wide area, thus affording much food for thought." Patton was disappointed in the fact that more parents were not present at "such an important meeting as his [Tobitt's] remarks were intended chiefly for them." He was also in favor of Tobitt's demand for a Free Public-School system, however, he declared, "until we can have such a system in Bermuda, we ought to do all we can to improve the present one."

[186] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church,* 239
[187] *Royal Gazette*, January 9, 1917.

The Director of Agriculture followed Mr. Patton and stated the benefits he believed were gained from teaching agricultural science to the youth. He stated "the children's power of observation is cultivated and their minds quickened: the individual child is benefitted not only the school, but the home as well especially from a civic standpoint. No one should be ashamed to soil his hands or even his clothes in gardening." The *Royal Gazette* even referenced Booker T. Washington by stating that he "became the great man he was because he was not ashamed of his first job of cleaning the windows at school, nor did he think it menial but went at it with a will." It is interesting that the *Royal Gazette*, an institution ran by the island's white elite, would reference Booker T. Washington. Perhaps, they referenced Washington, with his speech at the Atlanta Compromise in mind.[188] The question remains, did Black Bermudians go about teaching agriculture to the youth to instill civic responsibility or economic self-sufficiency? The author submits the latter.

Fellow AME colleague to Tobitt, Rev. Gomez, spoke next and stated that he visited Tobitt's school on several occasions and noticed that "there is no cramming such as he observed in some other schools; the cramming system must surely have an injurious effect on those who indulge in it." He also noticed and was pleased at the frequent use of "exercise books" and a focus on neatness. In a final remark by Tobitt he stated how he was deeply indebted to the Mayor of the Town, Director of Education, Agriculture and numerous Reverends for their time and willingness to "Assist such a noble cause as the educational advancement of the masses." Tobitt stated:

> "It is high time however, for the people of our community, and especially indifferent parents, to wake up to their educational advantages and seize time by the forelock; but how can we expect a better condition of things when those in our midst who undertake to

[188] *Royal Gazette*, January 9, 1917.

> teach the young cannot spare time, or do not consider it necessary to attend an educational meeting." Tobitt concluded the meeting by stating that "the teachers calling, is high and holy; it is second to none, since the teacher holds in his hand the destiny of generation yet unborn. How careful he or she ought to be therefore, to measure up to the standard of the true teacher."[189]

The educational meeting at Tobitt's high school and the presence of several AME preachers along with Bermudian colonial officials speaks to the praxis of the AME church. This was a direct call to action by AME clergy, one that would signal directly to colonial officials, a radical insurgency that existed amongst the Black Bermudian community. Unfortunately, The Director of Educations comments show that Bermuda's colonial elite were not interested in providing immediate change to the island's situation. Tobitt did not rely solely on the Board of Education to increase funding to Bermuda's schools. Seeing the necessity of teaching student's agricultural science so as to instill economic self-sufficiency, on March 29, 1917, the *Royal Gazette* reported that Tobitt "hired a piece of land" at Turkey Hill, a neighborhood in St. George's Island and intended to use it to teach "practical lessons in agriculture" to his students. The land was "rich red Bermuda soil" which made it ideal for growing healthy bountiful produce.[190] Such "practical lessons" would aid in helping school children to assist their parents in growing their own produce to offset the increased cost of living brought on by the war in Europe.

On April 13, 1917, Tobitt and his wife Caroline held an Easter celebration at the St. George's High School which drew a crowd of roughly 50 people. The event included "the singing of Patriotic songs" and a keynote address by Tobitt. The key theme of Tobitt's address was giving honor and praise to the past scholars of the school that now were serving "their King

[189] *Royal Gazette*, January 9, 1917.
[190] *Royal Gazette*, March 29, 1917.

and Country" in the trenches of the Western front. Harold Paynter, Esrom Phipps, Whitford Richardson, who now served in the Bermuda Militia Unit, were given special mention. Tobitt stated that these young men set an excellent example of "patriotism, loyalty, responsibility and self-sacrifice" traits that served as an admirable example for the current male students to "go and do likewise."[191] For Tobitt, while he might or might not have had strong opinions about the justification of the War in Europe, one thing is for certain, that the war in Europe touched his life on multiple levels. In addition to experiencing the increased cost of living, his former students who me probably developed close relationships with, were sent overseas to fight in a conflict that had no bearing on Black Bermudian life.

Between July 19 and 23, 1917, while thousands of Black Caribbean soldiers fought alongside British and French troops in the battle of Passchendaele, the Bermuda AME Annual Conference convened for its thirty fourth session at St. John's AME Church. Tobitt was again present representing the St. David's church and this time donning the title of "elder." Quite a bit of reorganizing took place at this conference, in which Tobitt would lose some close colleagues. First, Rev. Joseph Gomez and his wife were transferred to the Ontario Conference and were due to report to Chatham, Canada on August 16th, 1917.[192] Additionally, presiding elder W. E. Walker, who served in that capacity for six years, was also set to leave the Bermuda conference. Tobitt "referred feelingly" to the news of Walker's imminent departure.[193] Replacing Walker would be Rev. E. D. Robinson. The further reorganization of the Bermuda AME leadership allowed Tobitt to take an even more vocal role in the conference. Tobitt reported in his "State of

[191] Royal Gazette, April 24, 1917.
[192] *Minutes of the Thirty-fourth Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1917*, 5.
[193] ibid, 8.

the Church" address that despite the bloodiest war mankind has ever seen in recent history due to "Prussian Militarism" the AME church continued its mission of uplift.[194] Tobitt stressed that the AME church possessed "an enviable position in the pages of Bermuda's history."[195] From issues ranging from Temperance, educational reform, and the fight to "reclaim the vagrant youths" of Bermuda and "to provide for the public welfare" the AME church stood at the vanguard of all those problems for the islands black population.[196] It was a general consensus amongst the conference attendees that it was the AME church's rightful duty to be at the helm of all issues pertaining to the betterment of black life in Bermuda.

Rev. Stovall followed up Tobitt with his "State of the Country" address. Stovall reported that the agricultural situation on the island "has taken on new life" thanks to the "frequent agricultural meetings" held in the different sections of the islands. Stovall stressed that at these meetings provided invaluable information about seed selection, plant diseases, insect pests, and methods of treating the soil were disseminated to the Black community. These meetings came in timely fashion due to the food restrictions placed upon Bermudian people because of the World effort. In the wake of these recent developments, Bermudians turned to the use of agriculture to supplement the decreased food imports.[197] Surely, Stovall was the right person to speak on the agricultural state of the country as he had been present at numerous agricultural meetings, including the St. George's Agricultural Committee meeting in which Tobitt was a regular contributor. All in all, there was a deep relationship between the AME church and the issues

[194] Ibid, 17.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid, 19.
[197] Ibid, 25.

facing the black Bermudian community. As such, AME preachers were on the front lines of organizing and it reflected in their reports.

The conclusion of 1917, and the dawning of 1918, meant several things for the Africana world. First, The United States of America had been dragged into the Great War due to Germany's indiscriminate submarine warfare campaign in the Atlantic. The entrance of the United States into the war caught the attention of African American leaders and saw roughly 380,000 African Americans join the battle fields of northern France.[198] After the bloody and futile campaigns of the Somme and Passchendaele, thousands of Black soldiers from Africa and the Caribbean lay dead. As the War in Europe dragged on, in what appeared to be no end in sight, conditions in the British Caribbean did not improve either. On the grassroots level, Black Bermudians continued to do what they could to lessen the burden of the times. As the community pushed to increase food production and lessen their reliability on foreign food imports, the St. George's Food Development Committee continued to meet weekly to share field notes as to the best ways to grow food. In early March, Inspectors from the St. George's Food Development Committee visited Tobitt's school garden and reported that they were "pleased with the results of their visit." Tobitt had been training his students for several years in the science of horticulture since he took principalship of the St. George's high School. Teachers Barnes and Outerbridge stated, "We have never seen the equal, either at home or abroad, of the chards grown some few seasons ago by the St. George's High School scholars."[199]

At another monthly meeting in late March, various committee members commented on their techniques in growing vegetables. Mr. Barnes, who had visited Tobitt's school a month

[198] Chad Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African Americans in the World War I Era* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2013)
[199] *Royal Gazette*, March 14, 1918.

earlier and was greatly impressed by the garden's advancements, spoke on using paw-paw as a "pseudo custard." He recommended that adding a little vanilla or lemon and a decent amount of sugar would make a delicious dessert dish. Tobitt, stated that from experience, cream could be added to the mixture as well. Tobitt spoke on the science of corn and sweet potato planting. He stated that from his experience "coal dust, especially charcoal dust" should be used in the soil due to the carbon it contained for the growth of potatoes. Using the charcoal dust, Tobitt successfully grew 6 Irish potatoes and sold "six shillings worth of the production."[200] Tobitt concluded his presentation by stating that the sweet potatoes he planted using his developed ridge formation saw more success than the "usual Bermuda methods."[201] Tobitt was a visionary in food cultivation practices. Tobitt's methods at agriculture were lauded by other members of the committee and even proved that traditional methods of farming in Bermuda were outdated in comparison to more recent forms of agricultural science.

On Saturday May 4, 1918, members of the St. George's Branch of the Food Production Committee made their way, in extremely rainy weather and poor road conditions, to the scheduled meeting to discuss matters related to the agricultural situation of the island. Dr. W.P. Graham Shelley, the Secretary of the Exposition Committee read a letter from the Acting Director of Agriculture informing those present of the upcoming exhibition on the 23rd and 24th of May. He even stated that there were monetary prizes to be distributed by the Board of Agriculture. Many in the crowd responded enthusiastically stating that they already had several food items in store to be presented. The highlight of the meeting came when Tobitt took the stage and "read a most illuminating article on casava which opened the eyes of many to the general

[200] *Royal Gazette*, April 2, 1918.
[201] Ibid.

usefulness of the tuber."[202] A week later, *The Royal Gazette* published an extract from Tobitt's lecture titled "Cassava A Food Plant" in the May 11th issue. Tobitt stated that beyond the traditional use of cassava in a "pie" or a few other dishes he believed that "the intrinsic value of cassava as a food plant is either not fully realized, or hitherto has been sadly neglected in this colony."[203] Tobitt admonished to all those present that with the current agricultural situation of the island and "the present demand for increased food production" he hoped that by sharing his findings in regard to cassava that the fruit will "soon play a prominent part in the dietary table of the people of 'Beautiful Bermuda'".[204]

Cassava had numerous benefits in the realm of climate necessity, cultivation, and preparation. Tobitt stated that from his analyses there seems to be grown a hybrid version of cassava on the island, a mix between the bitter and the sweet version. However, by growing both distinct versions of cassava - the bitter cassava (Manihot utilissima) and sweet cassava (Manihot Aipi) there is much benefit to be gained than having a singular hybrid plant. For starters, cassava grows well in "sub-tropical places, but the best climate is a hot and dry one" and it also grows well in lowland neighborhoods near the sea. Moreover, the plant does not need extensive shade and high winds do very little damage to the plant and its roots, proving to be an excellent crop to defend against hurricanes. [205] Tobitt stated that "the cultivation is simple and inexpensive." In bringing agricultural knowledge from the West Indies, Tobitt stated that from his experience in the Caribbean, the best time to plant cassava is between September and May. Even after the tuber is harvested the "fibrous roots" can be used to make "commercial products."

[202] *Royal Gazette*, May 4, 1918.
[203] *Royal Gazette*, May 11, 1918.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.

Tobitt even offered much advice in the way of preparing cassava meals outside of the few traditional Bermudian meals that were made with cassava. Tobitt stated that the indigenous people of Dominica, St. Vincent, and South America get rid of the poisonous pulp in the bitter cassava by squeezing the pulp in baskets called "matapies." After a process of drying out the pulp otherwise known as "meal" Tobitt stated that "the cured meal is known in the market as farina, and may be used in combination with wheat flour to make bread, dumplings, etc. or mixed with other meals such as tania, potato, etc." He also stated that in the Francophone Caribbean farina is served with milk and can be served "as a porridge also, and in a number of other ways as taste or knowledge may dictate." Additionally, cassava bread could be made as well by simply taking the wet meal and forming it into round cakes and baking it on a hot plate. Every aspect of the plant was to be used. Tobitt informed the crowd that even the poisonous juice from the bitter cassava should not be thrown away. The juice could be transformed into "a valuable product known in the commercial world as cassareep." Cassareep forms the cornerstone of many famous West Indian sauces and dishes such as Worchester Sauce, and pepper-pot. To make the fruit readily available on the international market Tobitt stated that "tourists from all parts of the globe highly relish it" and that "it finds sale in England, America and elsewhere."[206]

Seeing Bermudian's limited use of cassava in comparison to his extensive knowledge about the many uses and capabilities of the plant would have frustrated Tobitt. Cassava was a plant whose cultivation was simple for the average Bermudian that possessed an elementary agricultural skillset. In addition, every aspect of the plant, both the sweet and bitter version, could be used for self-edification or manufactured to be sold on both local and international markets. The economic situation for Black Bermudians was put under enormous stress by the

[206] Ibid.

war effort. Tobitt's paper should be read as a micro attempt at assisting Black Bermudians in developing a semblance of economic self-sufficiency through agricultural science. Moreover, Tobitt's speech on Casava speaks to the long tradition of Black people turning to agricultural subsistence as a form of resistance.[207]

During the minor, yet substantial, advancements that black educators made regarding agricultural methods, life for Black Bermudas teachers remained rife with setbacks. Black teachers in Bermuda faced a whirlwind of issues that included: poor travel conditions for themselves and their students, meager pay, and a battle to teach students that had been previously neglected by the colonial administration for the previous two decades. In the 1918 report of the inspector of schools, the director of the board of education stated "the year 1918 was a hard one for the aided schools. The death of three of the teachers rendered necessary a considerable amount of reorganization." The report then stated that after some moving around of several teachers the "reorganization" was "satisfactorily accomplished."[208] But, what was accomplished and for whom?[209]The same report stated that Mr. A. C. Hodgson of the Sandys Grammar School died suddenly on February 28th after only serving as teacher of the school for a month. Assistant teacher Miss Lola Tucker was put in place to teach classes. This was the second time Miss Tucker was called in to take over for a deceased colleague. She previously took over "Miss Matthews" class when she passed away in March 1917. Lola Tucker was severely underpaid.

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[207] Judith Carney*, In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (LA: University of California Press, 2011), 127.
[208] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 2. 1918.
[209] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 2. 1918.; *Royal Gazette*, September 23, 1918.

The 1918 report on educated stated that she made 13 pounds on the year compared to other teachers that had a similar workload making between 20 to 30 pounds a year.[210]

To make matters worse, Mr. Alex S. Swan, teacher of the St. James School, Somerset, since October 1911, died suddenly in March 20th and Miss Catherine Astwood teacher of the "school for coloured children in Warwick, East, was taken ill in the year and died in the Autumn."[211] The boards "reorganization" plan included moving teachers "back to their own Parishes and in order that they might give better service in teaching near to their respective places of residence."[212] Such a plan was simply patchwork and did not address the root of the problem. To make matters worse, the 1918 Influenza pandemic or "Spanish flu" ravaged an already war weary world. The influenza quickly reached the shores of Bermuda which resulted in the schools closing from September 23rd to November 11th. Surely, the closing of schools for more than a month, for a school system that was not publicly funded spelled both a financial and health disaster for the teachers.[213][214]

What was missed by the Board of Directors in their reports was the emotional labor that was placed on these teachers. A hyper focus by the board on school attendance and an increase in the students writing, arithmetic, and diction left no room for an analysis of the well-being and teaching conditions that the teachers faced. A disconnect was present between the lived reality in the classrooms and the board when the Director stated "The changes that have taken place have not invariably, but they have as a rule, tended to strengthen the teaching staff"[215] Reminiscing

[210] Board/Ministry Education Annual Reports, 1886 -1940 Report of the Board of Education for the year, page 9. 1918.
[211] Ibid, page 3.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Royal Gazette, September 23, 1918
[215] Ibid.

some years later in 1959, Adele Tucker, a teacher at one of the colored schools, stated that some of the "reorganization" undertaken by the board resulted in the "demotions for teachers in general" especially those for the aided schools for Black children. Additionally, Teachers in the aided white schools taught smaller classes but received a higher pay than their black colleagues who taught much larger classes.[216]

For the AME church, their march to uplift downtrodden humanity continued. From August 8-11, 1918 the AME church convened for its annual thirty fifth session. The AME conference was a shell of its former self. Stalwarts of Black racial uplift in the Bermuda conference, including Rev. C. A. Stewart, Rev. Joseph Gomez, and Presiding Elder W. E. Walker, were no longer members of the conference. With the deaths of several Black teachers and the major reorganization undertaken by the Board of Education, it was fitting that Tobitt provided the 1918 report on education.[217] Tobitt stated in his report that education in the island "leaves much to be desired."[218] More than likely he was referring not only to the lack of funding for teachers and schools but the lack of support for the health and well-being of teachers themselves. Tobitt was staunch in his belief that only a Free Public School could serve to fix all of the ills that plagued the education system in the island. Tobitt concluded his report by saying that the Free public school could only be achieved "by the people themselves, by proper agitation, legislation and sacrifice."[219] Tobitt's request for a free public school system from the Bermudian government fell on deaf ears. This was especially evident when, a year earlier at the

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[216] Nellie E. Musson "Founders of the Bermuda Union of Teachers." In *Bermuda Educational Journal*, 85-87. Vol. 1-2. Bermuda, 1986, 85
[217] *Minutes of the Thirty-fifth Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church held at Allen Temple, Somerset August 8th to 11th, 1918*, 23.
[218] Ibid, 24.
[219] Ibid, 24.

Mass Education Meeting held at St. George's High School, the Governor told teachers that they had to make do with the current system. As such, Tobitt saw pulling the coat tail of colonial administrators was not working. Change had to be brought through other avenues.

Soon after, Tobitt presented the "Report on the State of the Church." Tobitt stated that even with the bloody war in Europe still raging on, the AME church stood tall and proud. He stated that from the bloody battlefields of the French countryside "men of our race have nobly bled and died … forged on the anvil of African Methodism" against the foe of "Prussian Militarism."[220] Tobitt, knew first-hand the effects of "Prussian Militarism," or rather "British Militarism." For example, on November 25th, 1917, a memorial service was held at his St. David's Church for the passing of Col. Saltren-Willett, and gunner Charles Place. Both men died on the Western front as members of the all Black BMA. The service was described by the Gazette as a "solemn and imposing order" as members of the St. George's community gathered *en masse* to pay their deepest respects.[221] By 1918, a war that appeared to be a path to Black West Indians equality in the British empire, was quickly turning into a conflict that was putting a severe strain on every aspect of West Indian quality of life.

Several months after the Bermuda AME conference convened, on November 18, 1918, Germany signed an armistice with the Allies, officially bringing an end to the Great War. The conclusion of four years of combat yielded 37 million casualties, including 10 million military fatalities and 7 million civilian deaths.[222] Thousands of African descended men would be included in the 10 million military death count. Such senseless carnage evoked serious critique about the necessity and virtue of war by various religious bodies. However, at the conclusion of

[220] Ibid, 27.
[221] *Royal Gazette*, December 1, 1917.
[222] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church,* 239

the war the AME church remained slow to action in its denunciation of the Great War. [223] Religious and political leaders in the Americas, like their colleagues in the Caribbean, believed that Black service to the Allies would enact some sort of socio-political change. Unfortunately, they were wrong, and the experience of Black service men speaks to this. For example, Black combat trained troops stationed in Europe, faced unmitigated racism from white officers, received lesser pay, and were relegated to dangerous tasks that should have been assigned to labor units.[224] All of this came to a head when in December 1918, a month after the wars conclusion, Black Soldiers of the British West Indies Regiment, while stationed in Taranto, Italy, revolted in protest. When men of the BWIR enlisted they were promised, equal pay, promotion, and equal equipment as white regiments. As the war progressed, Black soldiers received inadequate equipment, denied the ability to promote to officer, and unequal pay. Soldiers of the BWIR felt betrayed, and rightfully so. Amongst the chaos and commotion of the Taranto Revolt, men of the BWIR founded the "Caribbean League," an association that demanded black self-determination. At the second meeting of the Caribbean League, a Black Sargent expressed to members that the Black man "should have freedom and govern himself in the West Indies."[225] Soldiers of the BWIR saw first-hand that their self-sacrifice to the British government was ignored. And that, in fact, little would change if they did not agitate for change. In the months following the revolt at Taranto, soldiers returned to the British Caribbean and brought a renewed call for Black nationalism with them. The increased political consciousness of returning soldiers coupled with the depressed economic situation of the islands lead to a wave of unrest throughout

[223] ibid
[224]W. F. Elkins, "A Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean: The Revolt of British West Indies Regiment in Taranto, Italy" (Vol. 34, No. 1 (Spring, 1970), 100
[225] Elkins, "A Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean", 102

the Caribbean. In the early months of 1919, Laborers in British Guiana coalesced to found the British Guiana Labour Union and in Trinidad they founded the Trinidad Workingmen's Association. These newly founded associations had a common goal" increased pay. Although situated roughly 1,000 miles north of the Caribbean archipelago, Black Bermudians were connected to the wave of political unrest that shot through the region.

The Black teachers of Bermuda, fueled by post World War I unrest and the numerous deaths of Black teachers, decided that it was only if they formed an association could they protect themselves from the abuse placed upon them by the Board of Education.[226] In January 1919, a month after the revolt in Taranto, four teachers came together to found the Bermuda Union of Teachers, Bermuda's first trade union – the founders included Tobitt, Miss Matilda Crawford, Miss Edith Crawford, Miss Adele Tucker, and fellow AME pastor Rev. Rufus J. Stovall. The meeting was held in the backyard of a church and the unions first officers were elected. Tobitt was elected president, Rev. Stovell Vice President, Miss Edith Crawford the Secretary, and Miss Adele Tucker the Treasurer. [227] The founders drafted a constitution that read as such

> The objects of the Union shall be (a) to associate and unite teachers of Bermuda, (b) to provide means for co-operation of teachers and the expression of their collective opinion upon matters affecting the interest of education and the teaching profession. (c) to aid and/or join with other societies and bodies having objects altogether, or in part, similar to the objects, or one or some of the objects of the Union, and to contribute or subsidize or otherwise assist or take part in the working, management or control thereof. To negotiate and enter into arrangement for amalgamation or federation in such manner as may be prescribed bv law and upon such terms as may be agreed with societies or bodies of teachers[228]

[226] Musson, "Founders of the Bermuda Union of Teachers.", 85.
[227] Ibid, 11.
[228] *Bermuda Recorder*, November 9, 1963

Although the president and vice president were both black men and AME preachers, black women formed a substantial part of the organization's membership. The role of Black women in the BUT's founding was not an isolated incident. In fact, 1919 was a critical year for Black self-help organizing that were led by Black women. Around the same time of the founding of the BUT, Miss Agnes May Robinson founded the Sunshine League that served as a children's home to youth that were in need.[229] While the AME church played a critical role agitating for educational equality, Black women and their social organizations agitated for social uplift as well. To be clear, the conclusion of World War I was not the inception of Black women's involvement in grassroots organizing.

Historian Nellie Musson argues that as early as emancipation (1838) the women's division of Black Masonic lodges played a critical role in everyday Black Bermudian life. Some women's divisions were named Ladies of Samaria, Women of Independent Order of Oddfellows, The Star of the East, etc. Munson goes on to state that these women's organizations concerned themselves with all things, political, social, and economic relating to Black Bermuda. Most importantly, was the concern with educating the children of lodge members and the wider Black community.[230] Scholars agree, that traditionally, the Black Church, across denominations, has been a space where Black women have held leadership roles – both administrative and spiritual. At the same time, the AME church in the first 52 years of its founding (1816-1868) exercised gender exclusivity in which men held all offices ranging from ministry, laity, and conferences. Religious scholar Jualynne E. Dodson argues that Black women, regardless of denomination, have fought just as hard as their male counterparts to establish the Black church as a premier

[229] Swan. The truth is an Offense, 50; *Royal Gazette*, April 20, 2017,
[230] Musson, *Mind the Onion Seed*, 97-100.

social institution that was committed to improving the condition of Blacks in the United States. The same can be said in the case for Bermuda. In the AME church, women fought a two-front battle in which they established space for female leadership (i.e. female evangelist, deaconess, and two women's missionary societies) while also making their presence known in the fight against white supremacy.[231]

Moreover, religious historians E. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya argue that the struggle for Black women to become fully ordained ministers in Baptists and Methodists churches was a protracted battle in the twentieth century. For example, Black women in the AME church were not allowed to be fully ordained until the 1948[232] Lincoln and Mamiya posit that "religiously motivated" Black women turned their attention to teaching and organizing in other avenues.[233] This in part explains the visibility of Black women as teachers in Bermuda's school system and the substantial number of women involved in founding the Bermuda Union of Teachers. What this also tells us is that while AME meeting minutes may have painted a picture that Black men were carrying the torch of educational reform, Black women were just as active, however unfortunately not given proper acknowledgment in the minutes due to the religion's patriarchal nature. To this end, Rev. Tobitt and Stovall were able to create the BUT with the help of Black Bermudian women who came from a tradition of social advocacy, especially one that was rooted in educating the children of the formerly enslaved.

While education administers commented on the travel difficulties faced by the students, it was not until several teachers died that travel difficulties faced by the teachers were taken into

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[231] Jualynne E. Dodson. *Engendering Church: Women, Power, and the AME Church* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.), 3-4.
[232] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 286
[233] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church,* 283.

consideration. Additionally, the psycho-emotional stress teachers faced dealing with students in overcrowded classrooms and on shoes string budgets completed missed the radar of the board of education. The death of three black teachers raised an alarm to the Board of Directors that something was gravely wrong with the present system. However, by then it was to late. The founding of the Bermuda Union of Teachers showed that Bermuda's colonial administration was morally bankrupt. Additionally, Tobitt's participation and position as president also showed his dissatisfaction with the present educational system. As mentioned earlier Tobitt had aired his grievances with Bermuda's educational system to the Board director, George Patton, but his remarks fell on death ears. Tobitt's actions marked the first of many instances of his dissatisfaction of "working from within" the system and working extralegally with other blacks to unravel a deeply racist system.

In regular form, the Bermuda conference convened for its annual conference on July 17th, 1919. Unfortunately, not much changed for Black Bermudians in the year following the close of the war. In fact, racist prejudice attitudes remained pervasive in Bermuda. For example, in Presiding Elder E. D. Robinson's report he stated that in St. Philips, Church located in Tucker's Town that the church did not experience a substantial increase in members due to "the prejudice of many of those who are there, toward coloured preachers." Racism in the island still persisted regardless of black participation in the war struggle. Regarding Tobitt's position at St. David's, Robinson reported that Tobitt "has done remarkably well at the mission, and especially when you consider the length of time he has been pastoring at that point, nearly seven years."[234]

[234] *Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1919*, 16.

R. J. Stovall's report on State of the Country paints a gloomy but insightful picture on the state of Bermudians, specifically Black Bermudians. Stovall stated, "No recent effort has been made to add any more patches to our already over-patched educational system." Stovall then went on to say "If we must give our assent to Jim-crow legislation and the placing of segregation laws on our statute book in order to get "Free Schools," then my advice is – 'leave bad alone.'[235] Additionally, the island had no juvenile court, no reformatory or industrial institution. Only "the lash and the jail."[236] In regard to the return of the BMA Stovall stated that they "have done their bit" and return home "freighted with experiences pleasant and unpleasant" in the name of the "fight for world democracy."[237] The democracy fought for in the battlefields of northern France did not translate to the home islands.

Tobitt followed Stovall's presentation with his annual report on the educational situation of the island. Tobitt, in usual form, was deeply critical of the education system of Bermuda stating that "no real educational facilities for the betterment of the people" existed on the island. To make matters worse, in addition to no Free Public Schools, there were no colleges or universities on the island. Tobitt stated that as a result a "brain drain" in a since had developed on the island. He stated that Bermudians go abroad and "drink deep at the fountain of knowledge" in American institutions and "prefer to solace in the country of their adoption, and thus become alienated or weaned from their native land to the detriment of "Beautiful Bermuda."[238] Interestingly enough, Tobitt posited that the solutions to the complex educational problem facing Bermuda was for the island to become a "Crown Colony." Tobitt put forth that in

[235] Ibid, 19.
[236] Ibid.
[237] ibid, 20.
[238] ibid, 21.

Barbados, the Free Public-School System is in place. However, Tobitt was aware that the situation in Barbados was not the same as in Bermuda. For example, most of the members of the parliament are black and racial discrimination is not so rampant in the colony. Tobitt understood that Bermuda sat in a precarious position, the white oligarchy and racial discrimination stood as a major roadblock to the fight for educational advancements.[239] These two critical factors played a role in retarding black progress in the island compared to other British Caribbean islands.

Tobitt's hopes of proper agitation by the teachers of Bermuda was answered when he informed the conference that "a stirring of the waters and a rift in the dark clouds" occurred when in January the Bermuda Union of Teachers was founded. [240] Tobitt's announcement of the Bermuda Union of Teachers to the conference was a subtle but important move for Tobitt's political career. There is a strong possibility that Tobitt saw the necessity for political agitation from outside of the church as well. While much of the consensus amongst pastors was that the AME church was the sole conduit for socio-political change for black Bermudians, perhaps the colonial government's "stamp of approval" slowed down the radical activity of the church. It is no coincidence that the BUT was founded by fellow AME pastor, R. J. Stovall. Teachers were dying, underpaid, and facing rampant discrimination and racism. To solely rely on the work of the AME church was not feasible. Perhaps, safe to say, Tobitt did not fully subscribe to the AME church's rhetoric.

[239] ibid, 23
[240] Ibid.

Conclusion

Black Bermudians clamored for socio-political reform at the conclusion of the first world war. Their political organizing did not occur in a vacuum. In fact, such agitation was a worldwide phenomenon. The founding of the Sunshine League and the Bermuda Union of Teachers was a signal that black Bermudians were ready to take their destinies in their own hands. Black Bermudians understood that it was futile to expect the government to fix the social, political, and economic ills of the island with any real urgency. The cost of living continued to rise substantially, soldiers returned maimed (mentally and physically), an unprecedented pandemic swept the world, all the while white supremacy reigned supreme throughout the island. At this critical moment, in which the Black world seemed to be dealing with the economic hangover from the Great War, political consciousness swept through the Black Atlantic.

In 1914, a Jamaican born printing press worker by the name of Marcus Garvey, founded an organization that sought to address the political, economic, and social exploitation of African descended people throughout the world. Garvey's organization promised to tackle issues at the forefront of the Africana worlds list of demands: black economic self-sufficiency and political independence. Such concerns were at the forefront of the minds of Bermuda's AME clergy, working class Black men and women, and Tobitt himself. In 1920, word of Garvey's brainchild would reach the shores of Bermuda. That organization would be the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). It no doubt caught the attention of Tobitt.

CHAPTER 3: Leaving “The Court of Pharoah”: Garveyism Sweeps the British Caribbean, 1920-1929

Figure 2: Picture: R. H. Tobitt with Bermuda UNIA banner, date unknown. Photo Courtesy of Diane Hansen-Velazquez

Introduction

In 1914 Marcus Garvey with the assistance of his first wife, Amy Ashwood Garvey, founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey's travels as a young man throughout Central America, the Caribbean, and to Europe lead him to the conclusion that Black racial oppression was a global phenomenon. The solution to this vexed problem, for Garvey, lay in the establishment of an organization that fought for economic self-sufficiency, racial pride, and most importantly, African redemption from European colonization. Garvey concluded "The future of the Negro… outside of Africa, spells ruin and disaster."[1] Garvey's call for black self-determination reverberated throughout the Africana world attracting continental Africans, African Americans, West Indians, and even Aboriginal Australians. The Caribbean, which had been suffering terribly due to severe British colonial exploitation, saw Garvey's UNIA as a ready solution to its problems. By the time word of the UNIA reached the shores of Bermuda in 1920, the social, political, and economic landscape was ripe for the movement to take root.

This chapter, using Tobitt's tenure as a high-ranking official in the UNIA, argues that the organization, at least for British Caribbean people, was an early articulation of West Indian nationhood and a Pan-Caribbean identity. Scholars have acknowledged how Caribbean migrants from disparate islands developed a broader "West Indian" identity when they found themselves in Central America, the United States and London.[2] However, this chapter argues that for those

[1] Keisha Blain. *Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 11; Eric Duke. *Building a Nation: Caribbean Federation in the Black Diaspora* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2015), 71.

[2] Some works that highlight the formation of a West Indian identity abroad include Irma Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930* (Bloomington: Jamaica University Press, 1996), Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in the Early Twentieth Century* (Verso Books, 1998), Glenn

who did not leave the Caribbean islands, the UNIA was a vehicle that offered a Pan West Indian identity that served as the precursor to West Indian federation of the 1950s.

The UNIA in Bermuda

In early 1920, after giving a fiery lecture at the St. Paul's AME church on the subject "Is Education Necessary to the Negro," Tobitt was approached by a transient merchant seaman from Barbados. The Barbadian Sea merchant handed Tobitt a copy of the UNIA's political organ, the *Negro World* newspaper. At the end of the sermon, Tobitt took time to read the contents of the paper. This paper was unlike the *Royal Gazette*, which was operated by Bermuda's white elite. Through reading this paper, Tobitt would have quickly learned about Marcus Garvey's UNIA and its goals of establishing a black owned shipping line, economic independence, and the end of European colonization the world over.[3] Much like the rest of the Africana world, Black Bermudians were frustrated by the inequalities of colonialism and racism and were made even more upset by the lack of social change at the end of the great war.

Around the same time Tobitt learned of Garvey's organization, Bermudian Governor, James Willcocks, was also made aware of the UNIA and the *Negro World*, in a "secret dispatch" he received from Britain's Colonial office on February 5th, 1920. Two months later, on April 5th, Governor, James Willcocks sent a dispatch to Viscount Milner, Secretary of State of the Colonial Office, declaring that the Negro World was widely circulated in Bermuda and that its content was "violent and inflammatory." Willcocks decided not to ban the *Negro World*. Rather, he reasoned that it would be "impossible" to attempt to suppress the circulation of the newspaper

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Chambers, *Race, Nation and West Indian Immigration to Honduras 1890-1940* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2010), and Minkah Makalani. *In the Cause of Freedom Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011)

[3] *Negro World*, October 20, 1923.

since copies would continually be brought into the island as a result of "the coloured hands" that worked the steamships that frequented between Bermuda and the UNIA's headquarters in New York City. Willcocks, decided for a more cunning scheme to root out the "violent and inflammatory" organization. He declared that rather than outright suppression, a tab should be kept on "the agents through whom it is distributed and their associates." In addition to his belief that it would be easier to suppress the UNIA if it functioned without harassment, Willcocks believed the UNIA to be an organization that only posed a threat to the United States, and that the contents of the *Negro World* were "inapplicable" to Bermuda because conditions for Black Bermudans were in "obvious contrast" to those of Black Americans. Willcocks concluded his dispatch, in an even more paternalistic tone by applauding his track record with "coloured British subjects" and declared that if "less notice" is made "of their vapouring on paper" then Blacks would be less inclined to oppose the present political order.[4]. Willcock's stance on banning the *Negro World* allowed the movement to grow in the island, however, it would bring Tobitt and his associates in the direct crosshairs of British colonial officials.

A month after Gov. Wilcock's verdict on the UNIA, the May 8, 1920, issue of the *Negro World* announced that Tobitt, after making "a canvass of the island" found that Black Bermudians were "anxious to form a branch." [5] Historian Quito Swan has noted that the conditions in Bermuda were more than ripe for the appearance of the UNIA. As elaborated in the previous chapter, Bermuda was a deeply segregated island where wealth and political power rested in the hands of the minority white elite. In addition to issues of racial prejudice, the Trade Development Board which was founded in 1913 to procure white American tourists, began, in

[4] Robert Hill, ed. *Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers Vol. 11* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 598.
[5] *Negro World*, May 8, 1920; MGP, Vol. 11, 659.

1920, to buy land in the historically black neighborhood of Tucker's Town with the intent of creating an enclave for wealthy white American tourists. Additionally, the cost of living in Bermuda had risen by 100 percent while living wages stagnated.[6] As such, the UNIA's mission of ending colonialism, combatting white supremacy, and economic self-sufficiency had much appeal to Black Bermudians.

As it were, on Friday evening, April 16, just a week after Willcocks' dispatch to the Colonial Secretary, a large gathering was held at Tobitt's St. George's High School in which Black Bermudians from across the island gathered to hear about the aims and mission of the UNIA. After Tobitt made clear the goals and mission of the UNIA, those in attendance "banded themselves into a branch" and compiled an application that was sent to the New York headquarters to request an official charter. Tobitt did not handle affairs at the April 16th meeting by himself, he was accompanied by fellow native Antiguan and Mico College alum, Rev. Edward Byam Grant, and visitor from the Montreal UNIA Division, Mr. James Gibson.[7] Both men gave "stirring addresses" received "thunderous applause" and later assisted Tobitt in crafting a resolution to create the UNIA and ACL Branch, which was unanimously adopted. At the conclusion of the meeting a number of individuals enrolled their names and paid entrance fees to become members of the Bermuda UNIA Branch.[8] As such, Willcocks assessment of Black Bermudans interest in Garvey's message could not have been more incorrect.

Tobitt's relationship with Rev. Grant was not random circumstance. Rev. Grant was born on April 2, 1878, in St. John's Antigua and also attended the prestigious Mico Teachers Training

[6] Quito Swan. "Bermuda Looks to the East: Marcus Garvey, the UNIA, and Bermuda., 1920-1931." *Wadabagei: A Journal of the Caribbean and Its Diasporas* 13, no. 1 (20): 33.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

College. Grant and his wife Jestina Williams came to Bermuda in 1900. In 1905, he founded the Church of God, headquartered in Anderson, Indiana.[9] Quito Swan argues that Grant was the "quintessential black nationalist" and sought to address the needs and concerns of working- and lower-class blacks through his church activities. For example, in 1910, he bought a lot of land on Angle Street, Hamilton where he constructed a church and mission home. This mission site served as not only a home to he and his family, but several other working-class black families in the Hamilton area.[10] Grant's deep commitment to the wellbeing of lower-class blacks of the Hamilton area did not curry him any support from Bermuda's elite clergy and white oligarchy. For example, the *Royal Gazette* did not list his church services in their religious section.[11][12]

Tobitt was also joined by Barbadian born Colonel George Morris. Morris' story is just as interesting as Tobitt and Grants. Born in Barbados in 1877, at the age of 18 he enlisted in the West Indian Regiment. In 1902, when he was discharged from the BWIR he went to Jamaica and later moved to Bermuda with his wife Annetta Masters. These crucial experiences in Africa and as a BWI regiment soldier in Africa and Bermuda furnished him with his "race consciousness"

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[9] Reginald A. Leevy, Echoes from the Edifice: Being the Sermons, Lectures and Writings of The Rev. Edward Byam Grant Vol. 1, 1905-1934, 2-3.;
[10] Swan. "Bermuda Looks to the East", 47.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Grant came from a family of distinguished schoolteachers. His father Edward Byam Grant, Sr. was trained at the Mico College, Antigua Branch and served as a teacher for over 40 years. Grant's mother, Mrs. Rachael Grant, was a schoolteacher before her marriage to Edward Grant. Grant was one of eleven children and at the age of 17 decided that he would a pursue a career in theology. Thus, he enrolled in the Mico Teachers College in preparation for a career in ministry. In 1899, at the fresh young age of 21, he married Miss Jestina Williams in the island of Dominica. Out of this union produced a daughter Mizpah. The following year, in 1900, he and his wife departed for Bermuda. In 1905, he founded the Church of God, headquartered in Anderson, Indiana.[12] Quito Swan argues that Grant was the "quintessential black nationalist" and sought to address the needs and concerns of working- and lower-class blacks through his church activities. For example, in 1910, he bought a lot of land on Angle Street, Hamilton where he constructed a church and mission home.

that he would bring with him when he moved to Bermuda officially in 1907.[13] Thus, these three men with their socio-political acuity held the UNIA's first official meeting on Tuesday, June 22, 1920 at the Colonial Opera House.[14] Tobitt, and E. B. Grant, vice president, both gave speeches at the first meeting. [15] The UNIA in Bermuda was completely visible to Bermudan news outlets and colonial authorities. *The Royal Gazette* attempted to downplay the event stating that "despite urgent appeals" to "come early and avoid the crush" attendance "was not very large."[16] Regardless of whether attendance was large or not, the establishment of the UNIA reverberated through Bermuda's socio-political spine.

A key aspect of Garvey's grand mission of black empowerment was to erase the cloak of invisibility that existed amongst African descended people. To solve this issue, Garvey organized a mass convention titled, the UNIA's First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World, to be attended by delegates from every country where a branch was present. Delegates would then share the conditions in which African descended people lived under and draft a master plan for black liberation. The location for this momentous event was to be held in New

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[13] *Fame: A Bermuda Monthly Publication, April 1963* - Morris was enamored with the uniform that other young black men were wearing and upon learning more about the BWI enlisted in the regiment as an opportunity to "get out of the island and seeing the world."[13] In 1897, after two years of infantry training in Jamaica, Morris and his unit were shipped to Sierra Leone and stationed there for two years. While in Sierra Leone he was deployed on what Morris recalls as a "memorable trip" to Ethiopia. The British has used the BWI as a way to deter the Italians from encroaching on Britain's territory in the Ethiopian peninsula.[13] Morris's tenure in Africa had been a paradigm shift for him. Similar to many blacks in the diaspora, the agenda to socialize blacks against unity was in full effect. Morris recalled that his commanding officers informed he and his unit that "there would be savages in Africa" and "not to trust anything in Africa." Upon Morris's departure from the African continent, he learned that while Africans lived different from those in the Caribbean, they were in fact far from savages.

[14] *The Royal Gazette*, June 24, 1920.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

York City in the month of August.[17] As it were, the Bermuda Branch made plans to attend the conference and selected Tobitt and Benjamin Dyett to attend as delegates on behalf of the island.

While Tobitt and Dyett prepared for their August trip to New York, a racial disturbance occurred in Bermuda, highlighting even more how conditions in Bermuda were not in "complete contrast" to the US, as Willcocks had purported a few months earlier. Two days before Tobitt's departure from the island, on July 24th and 25th at the St. George's Barrack's, roughly 20 to 30 members of the all-Black Bermuda Militia Artillery, armed with guns and bayonets, tried to free fellow BMA members held prisoner in the barracks guardroom. The "riot", as the *Royal Gazette* dubbed it, was quelled when a white Guard opened fire and killed Hilton Simmons, a member of the BMA. *The Royal Gazette* was quick to pathologize the unrest by stating that a "spirit of unrest" had taken over the men.[18] Willcocks, in his dispatch to the colonial secretary stated that the event was a "somewhat serious fracas" and that the "ringleaders" were to be "severely punished."[19] The exact reasons behind why BMA soldiers were being held prisoner, and why their BMA colleagues took to arms is not clear. However, we do know, as Historian Adam Ewing points out, that Black WWI veterans were "deeply illusioned about their place in the Empire, and receptive to the doctrines of racial consciousness and solidarity that had begun to circulate around the greater Caribbean."[20] The spread of Garveyism, the spirit of labor organizing, and dissatisfaction with the treatment of WWI by the British Crown explains why the soldiers took to arms against the British guard.

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[17] MGP, Vol. 2, XXXI.
[18] *The Royal Gazette*, August 7, 1920.
[19] Governor's Despatches: 1920-1922, August 6, 1920, CS 6/1/32, Bermuda National Archives
[20] Adam Ewing. "Caribbean Labour politics in the age of Garvey, 1918-1938." *Institute of Race Relations Vol.* 55, no. 1 (July 2, 2013): 28

Tobitt would have surely heard about this event right before his departure. As pointed out in chapter two, Tobitt was well acquainted with members of the BMA as several of them were his former students. Nonetheless, with all the chaos occurring right in Tobitt's backyard, this served as fuel to ensure that all delegates were aware of the inadequate socio-political landscape of Bermuda. Two days after the BMA riot was quelled, on July 27, 1920, Tobitt and Dyett left Bermuda for the First International Convention which was set to begin on August 1st. Surely, Tobitt who had been a regular attendee at AME annual conferences understood the transformative power of convening to discuss pressing issues of the day. When Tobitt and Dyett arrived at Madison Square Garden, the site of the convention, on August 1st, they were in the company of twenty-five thousand delegates hailing from 22 countries.[21]

The grievances that Tobitt had taken up with the AME conference and Bermuda's government officials, years prior, he now told to Marcus Garvey, fellow delegates, and the 22,000 in attendance at Liberty Hall. Entering the 1920 Convention there was much energy around Garvey and his message. Not only did Garvey articulate a powerful message of black self-determination, but he managed to provide tangible reasons for why his UNIA should be followed. By the start of the convention, the UNIA's business venture, Black Star Line, was in control of three vessels – a cargo ship, an excursion boat, and a converted yacht. The number of shares purchased in the BSL totaled 96,285.[22] An impressive feat given that the Black world was suffering from the post-world war economic slump. Garvey's Black Star Line was the economic backbone to bring about "the founding of a great independent African Republic."[23]

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[21] Rupert Lewis, *Marcus Garvey* (Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press), 22
[22] MGP, Vol. 2, XXXI, XXXIII.
[23] MGP, Vol. 2, 30.

For many African Americans, who had been subjected to extensive racial violence and discrimination, the founding of an independent African state free of white supremacy was a major calling card. Garvey himself was pessimistic about the future of African Americans in the United States and was keen on selling his vision of an African Republic under the banner of the UNIA to African Americans. Garvey himself declared at the convention that "The objective of the UNIA is the founding of a great independent African Republic."[24] Alongside the thousands of delegates that hailed from the rural American South and the urban centers of the North, there were hundreds of West Indian delegates that lived in the United States and those that came directly from the region.

While American delegates complained of racial violence and discrimination across the country, delegates from the West Indies did not hesitate to inform the crowd of the struggles they faced at the hands of British Imperialism. In addition to Bermuda, delegates from Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, St. Lucia, Antigua, the Bahamas, and St. Kitts were in attendance. On August 3rd, Tobitt was among one of the first delegates to inform the convention of the precarious situation in the Caribbean. He stated that Bermuda was 75 percent Black "yet for all that, in the House of Parliament there are at present only two-colored representatives; and one is dubbed by the natives as "the white man's tool." Tobitt stated in regard to Bermuda's disenfranchisement of Black voters that "The powers that be have put up the franchise at such a rate that only men who own property of great value can be set up to be members of the House of Parliament."[25] Regarding the agricultural situation, which was the economic lifeline for many Black Bermudians, he stated:

[24] Lewis, *Marcus Garvey*, 37
[25] MGP, Vol. 2, 519.

> "I have told you before that 75 per cent of the inhabitants are Negroes and the majority of these are farmers; and many a time during the crop season on account of the fact that all the shipping is in the hands of the white men, he is also engaged in farming on a large scale, when the market prices are high in New York City, the white man with his own ships sends his produce to New York City and other parts and catches the high prices, but the colored farmer's produce remains in the Customs House or on the wharf, and then when shipping is available, his produce is hardly of any value. The colored man owns but very little land and he has got to pay high rent for his land; then he has to bide time for his crop to be sent abroad." [26]

Tobitt declared that the solution to this vexed problem was coming into ownership of ships exclusively for the black community. He stated that the Bermuda division "was but a three-months-old daughter" and totaled "600 members."[27] He added that "we [Bermudians] look forward hopefully and we feel the day is not far distant through the instrumentality of the Black Star Line Steamship Company that Bermuda may be the means of helping to build up this association."[28] He declared that black Bermudians were not only willing to purchase shares of the BSL but that Bermuda had engineers, fitters, plumbers, and pilots that were well trained that willing to work for the BSL.[29]

Fellow Antigua native and Mico Institute Alum, George Alexander McGuire, painted a picture of the situation in Antigua. McGuire stated, "The crown colony system of government keeps Antigua, as well as most islands of the British West Indies, under the thralldom of crown officialdom." McGuire went on to state "The taxpayers and people have absolutely no say in their choice for representatives in the Legislative Council, but the Governor is "graciously pleased," to use the bombastic phraseology of the petty government, to appoint one "colored"

[26] MGP, Vol 2, 520.
[27] Swan. "Bermuda Looks to the East", 34.
[28] MGP, Vol. 2, 521.
[29] Ibid.

man – [not] Negro, not black, but "colored"…he is merely a cipher, to fill out space."[30] McGuire concluded his report by stating that Antigua is ran by absentee land ownership. He declared "the owners of most of the estates live in England. Their money is invested in sugar cultivation and production, and they do nothing for the economic betterment of the laboring people, whose sweat and whose brawn till the soil and reap the harvests. They stay in England and suck the island dry, while the islanders get the husk."[31] The situation in Antigua was similar in many British Caribbean islands that held a relatively small white population. The delegate for St. Lucia, Randolph Felix, spoke on the situation in the island. He spoke on low wages, which was a universal issue in the British Caribbean, while also declaring that there was "No Steamship Accommodations."[32] Felix declared that St. Lucians sometimes wait two to three years just to catch a steamship to other parts of the world. He himself stated that "I was booked three months in anticipation of getting passage to come to this country to attend this convention, but I could not get it, and I was three months coming from St. Lucia to New York. So you see that we are surely in need of a boat in that part of the world."[33]

While every delegate from the Caribbean did not have a moment to speak, many Caribbean delegates shared similar concerns: the lack of Black representation in crown colony rule, economic disenfranchisement, and the clamor for the ability to bring Caribbean shipping lines into the control of Blacks. If Tobitt, and other West Indian delegates were not already aware, it became abundantly clear that the issues facing individual Caribbean islands were a region wide phenomenon. What the reports to the convention on August 3rd show is that West

[30] MGP, Vol. 2, 529.
[31] MGP, Vol. 2, 530-531.
[32] MGP, Vol. 2, 536.
[33] Ibid.

Indians in attendance saw a need for Garveyism to fix the ills plaguing their own home islands. Surely, they saw a need and agreed with Garvey in his advance for an independent and powerful African continent, however, Garveyism offered a solution to British Colonialism in the Caribbean.

On August 13, 1920, the delegates convened to draft and sign the *Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World*. *The Declaration of Rights* protested the injustices suffered by the global diaspora at the hands of Anglo-American world powers. More importantly, the Declaration put forth a list of demands that it required the United States and European governments adhere to at once. For example, it called for an end to lynching in the United States and condemned European nations for seizing the land and natural wealth of Africa. Although "Africa for the Africans at home and abroad" reigned supreme throughout the document, there were still hints of self-government that people like Tobitt and other West Indians interested in black nationhood would have noticed. For example, bullet point number nine stated "In the British and other West Indian Islands and colonies Negroes are secretly and cunningly discriminated against and denied those fuller rights of government to which white citizens are appointed, nominated and elected."[34] Additionally, bullet 37 states "We hereby demand that the governments of the world recognize our leader and his representatives chosen by the race to look after the welfare of our people under such governments".[35] As such, Tobitt and several hundred delegates signed the declaration.

Carrying out the promise of bullet 37, at the conclusion of the convention on August 31, the delegates selected representatives chosen to oversee various regions of what was to be

[34] MGP, Vol. 2, 572.
[35] MGP, Vol. 2, 575.

Garvey's global Black Empire, with Africa as the throne. In an address to a crowd of convention attendees at the Star Casino, Garvey introduced himself as the President-General of the UNIA and Provisional President of Africa. John Debourg, who served as the delegate for Trinidad, was elected "Leader of the West Indies of the Western Section." Tobitt was subsequently introduced by Garvey as "Leader of the Eastern Division of the West Indian Negroes."[36] In this capacity, Tobitt and Debourg were tasked with traveling throughout the Caribbean and ensuring the proper growth and maintenance of UNIA chapters while simultaneously, and most importantly, selling shares of the Black Star Line Shipping Company. Historian Michelle Ann Stephens argues that the Black Star Line was more than a business enterprise. In fact, the BSL helped Garvey to "realize, imaginatively, his vision of a politically united black diaspora, one in which free movement was also the imagined racial community's central political goal."[37] This is true. I argue that the BSL and the UNIA's message, for Caribbean people, articulated a sense of imagined pan Caribbean identity for those that remained in the Caribbean. Historian Eric Duke put forth that West Indian immigrants in New York, Toronto, and London began to view themselves through a common West Indian lens when living in large metropoles and their identities were juxtaposed against those of others.[38] What I argue is that Tobitt's election as Leader of the Eastern Caribbean and Debourg's role as leader of the Western Caribbean is an articulation of a common Caribbean and West Indian identity by those that remained in the region. For Garvey, during this period the Caribbean was central to the selling of BSL shares so as to fund the purchasing and maintenance of ships. However, I argue that there was another

[36] MGP, Vol. 2, 652-653.
[37] Michell Ann Stephens, *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press), 109.
[38] Duke, *Building a Nation*, 66.

agenda for West Indian delegates at the convention. The UNIA was a venue in which Black West Indians would bring about self-government in their home islands. West Indians viewed the BSL as the conduit that would bring about economic and political independence. It is through Tobitt's position as Leader of the Eastern Caribbean that we best understand this.

Leader of the Eastern Caribbean

In chess like fashion, as Tobitt and UNIA officials positioned themselves to break free from the jaws of British colonialism, Gov. Willcocks made a move of his own. On August 14, a day after UNIA officials signed the monumental *Declaration of Rights of Negro People of the World,* Gov. Willcocks sent a dispatch alerting the British colonial secretary to the creation of the Immigration Act of 1920. The new immigration Act allowed the Governor to override immigration officials and furnished him with the direct ability to "exclude any alien or any person whom" he deemed "undesirable."[39] While the dispatch did not explicitly state anything in regard to UNIA members or Marcus Garvey, it is clear from previous colonial correspondence that the UNIA were deemed a threat to Bermudian colonial rule and that its members were to immediately be put under close surveillance. Such a nebulous definition of "undesirable" gave the Governor unmitigated power to remove anyone he pleased.

Tobitt and Dyett returned to Bermuda in September fresh and reinvigorated to continue the work of the UNIA. As was the case with many Garveyites, Tobitt's presence at the convention put him and other Bermuda UNIA members in the crosshairs of colonial officials. Since Tobitt had been a resident of Bermuda for more than five years, he did not fall within the parameters of the new immigration act that sought to deport undesirable West Indians. In return, colonial officials devised another method to quell Tobitt's activism: cutting off his economic

[39] Governor's Despatches: 1920-1922, August 14, 1920, CS 6/1/32, Bermuda National Archives.

livelihood. The first blow to Tobitt would not come from the colonial apparatus, rather, it came from Tobitt's religious home, the AME Church. At the AME Church's annual conference, held at the Richard Allen Church, St. George's from October 7th to the 9th, AME leadership made their first assault. On Friday, October 8, during the convention's afternoon session, Rev. E. D. Robinson spearheaded charges against Tobitt. Rev. Robinson charged Tobitt with leaving for the US to attend an event for a "secular organization" without asking for permission from the Bishop of the District or from the Presiding Elder. The minutes of the annual conference reported that Tobitt attempted to defend himself with allegations against Robinson which were deemed "irrelevant." The minutes stated that Tobitt pled guilty to the charges levied against him and "begged to be forgiven." The minutes also reported that the Bishop informed Tobitt that his pushback against Rev. Robinson's charges were in regard to a "passing of characters" that had transpired previously and that those were not permissible in this case and he should know the laws of the church better in order not to commit such a "serious breach."[40] Although it is not abundantly clear, the minutes hint towards the fact that there was in fact some sort of prior tension between Tobitt and Robinson. Indeed, knowing that the UNIA was quintessentially public enemy number one to British Colonial rule, Tobitt's presence at the UNIA convention served as a perfect opportunity for Rev. Robinson to single out Tobitt, if that in fact was his goal.

That night Tobitt had much to contemplate. His religious home, which he had been involved with for close to a decade, was now reeling against him. Individuals whom he had previous squabbles with were using his involvement with the UNIA to humiliate him. If it was not clear before, it now became abundantly apparent to Tobitt that the Bermuda AME church

[40] Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1920, 7-8, Bermuda National Archives.

leadership was committed to black progression but only within the parameters of white Bermudan oligarchical rule. In a biographical sketch written a few years later, Tobitt stated that he "counted the cost" and signed the *Declaration of Rights of Negroes of the World* and "left the court of Pharoah, choosing rather to suffer affliction with my people than to dwell in the land of Goshen."[41] Tobitt understood that his position as an AME preacher and schoolmaster offered him a level of affluence and privilege compared to the vast majority of working-class Black Bermudans. However, he reasoned that it was worth following Garvey and his masterplan than following the accommodationist political agenda of the Bermuda AME.

As it were, on the morning of Saturday, October 9th, the final day of the conference, Tobitt rose and told the Bishop that he would leave the AME church since the UNIA brought "reflection and criticism" on the church. He stated that the UNIA was a "worthy" organization and would "afford him a larger scope for the usefulness among his people."[42] Tobitt was resolute in his belief in the UNIA and placed his trust in Garveyism rather in the AME church. Surely, if left to his own choice Tobitt did not view the UNIA and the AME church as being mutually exclusive. However, the AME Bermuda conference left him no choice to pick a side. After the conference, Rev. Robinson did not delay in alerting Gov. Willcocks to what he surely deemed pleasant news. On October 27, Gov. Willcocks stated that he was in receipt of Rev. E. D. Robinson's letter stating that Tobitt has been withdrawn "from the Ministry of the AME church."[43] Rev. Robinson's correspondence with Gov. Willcocks speaks to the fact that the AME church wished to maintain positive relations with the colonial government and that rooting out

[41] *Negro World*, October 20, 1923.
[42] Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1920, 9, Bermuda National Archives.
[43] ExCo Minutes, 1915-21, October 27, 1920, Bermuda National Archives.

Tobitt and his activities would keep the church in the government's good graces. Additionally, it also speaks to how the church was about alleviating the ills of the black community, but ultimately, they were not about ending colonialism, one of the main calling cards of the UNIA.

Now that the AME church made their move, Gov. Willcocks made his next move which he hoped to be a knockout blow for Tobitt. A week later, on November 2, 1920, Gov. Willcocks sent a dispatch to the British Colonial secretary, Viscount Milner. He was gleeful in alerting the colonial secretary that "action taken by the local government" in regard to Tobitt resulted in the end of Tobitt's relationship to the AME church. Willcocks stated that he recommended that all funding for Tobitt's St. George's High School be discontinued because he was "no longer a fit person to be entrusted with the education of children." What was Tobitt's crime? In the eyes of Gov. Willcocks, it was not only Tobitt's presence at the UNIA convention, but it was the fact that Tobitt signed a document that he deemed to be "antagonistic to the existing order."[44] Tobitt's signature on a document that decried injustices in the British Caribbean and Africa alarmed authorities. In a matter of a couple of months, Tobitt went from a well-liked and active member of the AME clergy and in conversation with colonial administrators to becoming "public enemy number one" in Bermuda.

Amid Tobitt's troubles, by 1921, the UNIA reached what is considered by numerous scholars as the organization's zenith. On March 25, 1921, the UNIA's third boat the Kanawha was finally seaworthy and set sail from New York for the West Indies.[45] For UNIA members across the world, and especially in the Caribbean, the sailing of the Kanawha showed that their investment in the BSL was coming to fruition. What's more, it also signaled that an independent

[44] Governor's Despatches: 1920-1922, November 2, 1920, CS 6/1/32, Bermuda National Archives
[45] Lewis, *Marcus Garvey*, 48.

Caribbean anchored on the Black owned and manned shipping company was not far away. Before Tobitt could leave on his journey through the Caribbean, he tended to local Bermuda UNIA business.

With Tobitt's school now defunct from the lack of financial resources, the Bermuda UNIA chose Rev. E. B. Grant's Church of God as the Bermuda UNIA branches new home and headquarters of the UNIA's Eastern province of the West Indies. On Easter Sunday, March 27, Tobitt gave a sermon to a church hall that was described by the *Negro World* as being "overflowed" with people from "various denominations." Later that evening, the Hamilton Chapter Ladies Division hosted a reception for Tobitt and pastor of the St. George's A.M.E. Church, Rev. J. P. Stephens, delivered the welcome address. Rev. J.P. Stephens address at a UNIA sponsored speaks to the fact that the anti-Garvey sentiment espoused by the Bermuda Conference leadership was held by all members. Although Bishop E. D. Robinson had a personal vendetta out for Tobitt and the UNIA, many Bermuda UNIA preachers still aligned themselves with the movement.[46]

As it were, on April 2nd the Bermuda Division held the branches first anniversary celebration at the Church of God. Much was instore on this monumental day. First, Rev. E. B. Grant, who now served as president and chaplain, gave the keynote address and Tobitt spoke on the subject "The Dawn of a New Day for Ethiopia." While the Bermuda UNIA branch may have had two men serving as their leadership, Black Bermudan women played a critical role the branches affairs. Lady president of the St. George's Chapter, Miss A. L. Burgess and lady president of the Hamilton Chapter, Mrs. Tucker gave speeches as well. After the speeches, the celebration continued with "a grand procession" in which a massive Red, Black, and Green flag

[46] *Negro World*, April 23, 1921.

was carried by Col. George A. Morris, followed by the choir, officers from each local branch and Rev. Tobitt who brought up the rear donning his episcopal robes. Secretary of the Division, Mr. R. Burrows descried the entire event as an "inspiring picture" that was "a miniature Liberty Hall." On April 12th, the UNIA convened again at the Colonial Opera House, the setting of the first official UNIA meeting. Tobitt spoke on the subject "The Negro Problem and its Correct Solution." Surely spirits were high amongst the Bermuda UNIA branch members. A year after the Bermudan government sought to go after Tobitt whom they considered the head of the movement on the island, branches continued to appear throughout the island.[47] Surely, parades such as the one on April 2nd gave Black Bermudians much to be proud of and demonstrated to Governor Willcocks that the movement was alive and well.

On April 20, 1921, Tobitt set sail for the West Indies aboard the R.M.S. P. "Chigneto."[48] Aboard the steamer Tobitt probably had many mixed emotions. His entire world had come crashing down upon him; however, he was now fully committed to assisting Garvey in his ultimate mission of black self-determination. Moreover, one of the major reasons for his travels away from his wife and four children was to develop a black economic empire of top-of-the-line steamships that would replace the need for travel and commerce on British ships. Tobitt's first stop would be the island of Dominica.

The UNIA presence in Dominica was as strong as it was in Bermuda. The branch was founded on January 11, 1920, with about twelve members. By May of the same year, the main branch in Roseau (the island's capital) had more than six hundred members. Additionally, subbranches were established throughout the island in Pointe Michel, Soufriere, Grand Bay, and

[47] Ibid.
[48] *The Royal Gazette*, April 21, 1920.

Marigot.[49] Dominicans, like the rest of the Africana world, strongly desired to assist the cause for the BSL. In early 1920, British authorities passed a law that forbad the issuance of more than one money order to an individual in a two-week period. This was done to limit the financial support Dominicans could lend to the BSL enterprise in New York. As a result, in February 1920, preeminent Dominican activist J. R. Casimir wrote to Garvey in a letter declaring that "We have received no authority from your Company to collect shares."[50] The arrival of a UNIA representative was the solution Casimir arrived at in order to circumvent around colonial duplicity. Casimir's submission to the April 26, 1920, issue of the *Negro World* further illustrates Dominican's attraction to the UNIA and the necessity of Tobitt's visit. Casimir stated that the cause of unrest in the island "are due to Crown colony rule (one man rule) which keep the people in ignorance in regard to matters of government in the island otherwise; high costs of living, low wages" and "lack of steamship communication"[51] He stated, "The cry everywhere now is, "Away with Crown colony rule!" The best thing is to let the Negro rule himself. We want a government of the people (Negro) by the people and for the people. The Negro is tired of being ruled by the pale-faced oppressors."[52]Casimir concluded by stating, "Negroes when traveling… are not well treated. Sometimes they are refused as first-class passengers… Generally speaking, the treatment of Negro passengers is unsatisfactory."[53] A little less than a year after Casimir asked to be visited by a UNIA representative, Tobitt landed in Dominica in late April 1921. Tobitt gave a speech to UNIA members, presumably about the progress of the BSL and the

[49] Martin, "A Pan-Africanist in Dominica,", 121 - 122.
[50] Ibid.
[51] MGP, Vol. 11, 621.
[52] *Negro World*, April 26, 1920.
[53] MGP, Vol. 11, 624

organization's mission and contacted Dominican J. R. Casimir.[54] Tobitt's arrival to the island was the answer to Casimir and local UNIA members call to be a part of Garvey's grand mission. Tobitt and Casimir would develop a strong relationship.

After collecting payment for Black Star Line Shares, Tobitt continued his West Indies tour by heading to British Guiana. Sailing on the Canadian Steamer, S. S. Caraquet, Tobitt arrived at the nation's capital of Georgetown on Sunday evening, May 15, 1921. Tobitt's arrival was strongly anticipated. In 1919 working class Blacks in Guiana formed the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU). While the BGLU was comprised of an array of workers, the most militant and largest constituency were dockworkers in the nation's capital of Georgetown.[55] While the BGLU's main contention was low wages, it was in fact the presence of the *Negro World* and Garvey's ideology that helped to channel the growing racial and class consciousness in the country into organized social action.[56] There were a total of seven UNIA Branches in British Guiana, with two located in Georgetown. Additionally, the trade movement was deeply interconnected with the Garvey movement in the island.[57] Surely, dockworkers that were frustrated about low pay and racism were drawn to Garvey's promise of a black owned and manned shipping line. The same can be said for Tobitt's next stop, Trinidad.

As it were, when Tobitt landed, he was met by the president of the Georgetown Branch, Mr. George Sertima Primo; Secretary Mr. Ernest Montague Seaton, and numerous rank-and-file members of the Branch. On Thursday evening, May 15th, Tobitt prepared to address the British Guiana UNIA at the Dyer's Hall. The *Negro World* reported that his speech was so anticipated

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[54] Martin, "A Pan-Africanist in Dominica," 132.
[55] O. Nigel Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean* (London: Ian Randle Publishers, 37.
[56] Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean*, 35.
[57] Martin, *Marcus Garvey, Hero*, 74.

that “crowds packed the hall to its utmost, scarcely leaving room for passage.” Eager Garveyites were not the only ones in attendance, local police were also at the meeting hall, as every British Colonial governor had been alerted to UNIA activity. At this event the Lady President Miss Louisa Scott attended along with the Black Cross Nurses who were in uniform.[58] Tobitt gave a “forceful” speech and alerted the crowd to the stunning growth of the UNIA over the past couple of years. Tobitt told the crowd that many people have called Garvey a “madman,” in response Tobitt assured the crowd that “If a madman could in the space of three years put four ships on the sea” then “he was quite satisfied to follow that madman.”[59] The crowd erupted in loud applause. At the conclusion of Tobitt’s speech, Mr. Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow, Secretary-Treasurer of the BGLU took the stage and spoke on “Unity” and expressed his agreement with the mission and aims of the UNIA. He told the crowd that “their destiny was in their own hands, and it was by hard work and development and not by railing that they were going to achieve racial salvation.”[60]

After the mass meeting, Tobitt spent the remainder of his time in the country taking conscriptions for the Black Star Line and attending meetings for both the UNIA and the BGLU. British Colonial surveillance did not stop once Tobitt left the shores of Bermuda. The Governor of British Guiana, Wilfred Collet, was aware of Tobitt and UNIA presence in the island. In a dispatch to Secretary of State, Colonial Office, Winston S. Churchill, Collet stated that Tobitt’s activities in the country were being closely watched by local police. Moreover, the Governor concluded by stating that he wished to send Tobitt to his home island of Antigua however, “at

[58] *Negro World*, July 9, 1921
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

the present there" was "no good reason why he should be deported."[61] Like Garvey, colonial surveillance of UNIA members was protracted. After completing his duties in British Guiana, and barely escaping the gaze of colonial authorities, Tobitt traveled to Trinidad, where UNIA activity was functioning on all cylinders.

Trinidad was in a similar socio-political situation to British Guiana. In 1919, Trinidadian dockworkers went on strike in the capital, Port of Spain, protesting low wages. They were organized by the Trinidadian Workingmen's Association (TWA), a labor union whose leaders were sympathetic, if not, card carrying Garveyites. Leaders of the TWA distributed copies of the Negro World to its members, and in fact, TWA meetings were described as de facto Garveyite meetings.[62] Between 1919 and 1921 the ranks of the TWA mushroomed to over 6,000 members. Nigel Bolland argues that the TWA, much like the BGLU, during 1921 turned into a reformist political party that looked beyond labor issues and pushed for larger political reforms. [63] Additionally, Trinidad and Tobago was reported to have had at least 30 UNIA branches, making it the country with the second highest number in the West Indies and the fourth highest in the world.[64]

Trinidad was a site of almost uncontrollable Garveyite energy. Tobitt's entry into Trinidad would not be as easy as it was for him to enter Dominica and British Guiana. On June 4, 1921, Trinidad's governor prevented him from landing in the country. From the governor's perspective – who was a British official - this is an understandable political move and for several reasons. Trinidad was still recovering from the 1919 riots in which workers went on strike for

[61] MGP, Vol. 12, 295
[62] Ewing. "Caribbean Labour politics in the age of Garvey, 30.
[63] Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean*, 35
[64] Tony Martin, *Marcus Garvey, Hero: A First Biography*. (Dover, MA: Majority Press 1983.), 71 ; Ewing "Caribbean labour politics, 33

higher wages. The Workingmen's Association (TWA) played a major role in organizing the disgruntled workers throughout the island.[65] One could only imagine the radical charge Tobitt's visit would have given the TWA and UNIA movement. Additionally, with 30 branches present in the island, thousands of BSL would have been purchased if Tobitt successfully set foot on the island.

Although banned from entry into Trinidad, Tobitt looped back towards Bermuda and made a stop at St. Lucia on June 9, 1921. The situation in St. Lucia would be a preview of what awaited many UNIA branches in the coming years. The St. Lucia branch faced an internal feud that had been raging for months. The branch was officially launched in November 1920, however, a split in the chapter occurred when the president at the time, Mr. Wilberforce Norville, purchased property using UNIA funds in his name and began to lead the branch in a direction that was not fully in line with the aims and missions of the UNIA.[66] As such, Tobitt's arrival in the island was not simply to collect black star line shares but to restore order and to keep a splinter group from gaining much traction. On May 15, 1921, a new charter for the UNIA was unveiled and the branch was headed by President Job E. James. When Tobitt landed on June 9 he was met by Mr. James and his executive council. Later that evening, at 2pm, Tobitt addressed a crowd of UNIA members and associates at the Good Shepherds Society's Hall. Tobitt made clear the "aims and principles" of the UNIA movement and "removed the wrong impression" of the movement and Marcus Garvey that had been circulating by members that "did not quite comprehend the real purport of those aims and principles."[67] At the conclusion of Tobitt's address he "made it perfectly clear that the recognized members of the UNIA in St. Lucia are

[65] Tony Martin, *Marcus Garvey, Hero,* 30.
[66] *Voice of Saint Lucia*, July 6, 1921
[67] *Voice of Saint Lucia*, June 15, 1921

those who are under the leadership of Mr. Job E. James as President."[68] For Tobitt, his job as Leader of the Eastern Caribbean was not simply mired in trying to navigate the suffocating grasp of British Colonialism. Additionally, some people used the UNIA movement to galvanize a following and funds of their own. What Tobitt faced on the ground would be the same forces that would take down the UNIA from its headquarters in New York City.

By July Tobitt was back in Bermuda. More than likely, he assisted Grant and Morris with the Bermuda branches affairs, tending to his wife and four children whom he spent several months away from, and preparing for the second UNIA conference that was set to take place in August. Furthermore, Tobitt did not let his being banned from Trinidad go to rest. Surely, Tobitt was well aware of the Garvey zeitgeist in the island and knew that a visit had to happen in order for him to fulfill his organizational duties. On July 25th, 1921, Tobitt wrote to Winston S. Churchill, Secretary of State, Colonial Office pleading with him that he rectifies the prior incident with Trinidad. Tobitt made it clear in his letter that he received an official passport from Sir James Willcocks, legally purchased a round-trip ticket from the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company and visited numerous islands of the British Caribbean and "enjoyed in each of these the full rights of British Citizenship." Tobitt was not sure as to why in the island of Trinidad he was banned from disembarking the R.M.S.P. "Chaudiere." Tobitt asked that in the future he "a loyal, law-abiding British subject" be able to freely visit Trinidad or any other British West Indian territory without harassment.[69]

Tobitt was right, nothing he had done qualified him to be a criminal. However, in the eyes of British administrators, Tobitt's work on behalf of an organization that sought black

[68] Ibid.
[69] MGP, Vol. 13, 98.

empowerment and decolonization, by proxy made him "criminal." One would think that the approval of his passport by Gov. Willcocks and his free mobility in other British Caribbean islands would point out the hypocrisy in the Governor of Trinidad, Sir. John R. Chancellor's, decision. However, that was not the case. The preservation of the colonial order meant trespassing on the rights of British subjects. Unfortunately, Tobitt's pleads would fall on death ears. However, this would not be the last time Churchill would hear from Tobitt. Amid British administrators soft-shoeing, Tobitt still had his commitments to the UNIA.

A few weeks later, on August 2nd, Tobitt was back in New York in attendance at the UNIA's second convention.[70].[71]. While the second convention witnessed much of the same splendor and grand processions that characterized UNIA events, a reading of the convention's minutes show that beneath the pageantry, the weight of Anglo-American surveillance and financial responsibilities began to take a toll on the organization. Objectively speaking, given the postwar economic slump, the UNIA managed to do relatively well. By July 1921, it is estimated that the UNIA employed roughly 200 persons in New York and nearly an additional 200 in various parts of the globe. This amounted to roughly $70,000 in annual salaries that Garvey had to keep up with - $875,000 dollars in today's money. By August 1921, BSL stock sales totaled $55,147, an impressive feat given the economic situation of the Africana world. Additionally, the Liberian Construction Loan, whose initial plan was to raise $2 million was nowhere close to that mark, bringing plans for recolonization to a screeching halt. What's more, Garvey struggled to pay the $70,000 in salaries that he had promised his employees. The three ships Garvey purchased: Yarmouth, Kanawha, and Shadyside required extensive repairs and were

[70] MGP, Vol. 3, 703
[71] Ibid.

hemorrhaging money for the UNIA. Additionally, the fourth ship that Garvey had promised, the S.S. Phyllis Wheatley, was not in the UNIA's ownership by the time the second convention began, surely dampening moral.[72] Nevertheless, business for the redemption of Africa and Africans had to be conducted.

On August 8, 1921, Tobitt gave his report after spending several months traveling the Eastern Caribbean. He informed the crowd that he had traveled through the Eastern Caribbean (i.e. Bermuda, Dominica, Trinidad, British Guiana, and St. Lucia) and "encountered considerable opposition from the government as well as from individuals."[73] On Friday morning, August 12, 1921, probably to Tobitt's surprise, Marcus Garvey levied charges against Tobitt in regard to his progress as Leader of the Eastern Caribbean. Garvey believed that his past years work was "poor" and he now served "in a position of a liability rather than an asset to the organization."[74] Surely, Garvey would have wanted things to progress much faster, as he was under immense pressure to deliver on his promise of a fleet of top-of-the-line ships. Moreover, the West Indies was vital to Garvey's grand vision of African Redemption as there was a potential for tens of thousands of dollars to be made from selling Black Star Line Shares. In Tobitt's defense, his "poor" progress was impacted by many obstacles in the region, both internal and external.

This was not the end of Tobitt being under Garvey's scrutiny. Garvey and his executive council turned their attention to Tobitt and his religious partner George A. McGuire. While Garvey was keen on pairing religious imagery with calls for black nationalism, he did not want the UNIA to have an official religion. This is especially evident when on August 23, 1921, fellow Antiguan born AME minister George A. Weston put forward a resolution for "the

[72] MGP, Vol 3. XXXIV.
[73] MGP, Vol. 3, 646.
[74] MGP, Vol. 3, 652.

unification of the race under one great faith." The resolution under "unanimous opinion" was rejected. The next day Dr. McGuire was brought under charges for duality of service due to his connection with the Independent Episcopal Church. Although Hon. E. V. Morales stated that he saw no conflict between the IEC and the UNIA, Garvey was adamant in bringing charges against him. McGuire put in his resignation. The next day, Tobitt was also brought up on charges of "duality of service", found guilty, and removed from his position as "Leader of the Eastern Caribbean".[75]

The removal of Tobitt from his executive position and the charges of duality of service say much. First, going by *Negro World* reports it appeared that Tobitt made his way around the Caribbean collecting BSL shares as required. More than likely, the immense stress Garvey was receiving from the US government, his own personal family dealings, and the pressure to meet the promises he made at the 1920 convention led him to have to blame someone, and Tobitt was the scapegoat. Additionally, the duality of service claim is eerily like the issues Tobitt faced with the Bermuda AME church. This speaks to the fact that Garvey, in many ways similar to the Bermuda AME church, was very particular about the allegiances UNIA members. Nonetheless, these events would not break Tobitt's spirit in the UNIA movement. Rather, Garvey would continue his relationship with Tobitt and use him in many more UNIA expeditions.

[75] MGP, Vol. 3, 689.

Figure 3: Picture: R. H. Tobitt as High Commissioner to British Guiana, circa 1923. Photo Courtesy of Diane Hansen-Velazquez

High Commissioner to British Guiana and UNIA Ambassador to Britain

At the end of the second International Conference, Tobitt found himself without a position in the UNIA. However, he remained loyal to Garvey and the organization. Tobitt's religious colleague, McGuire went on to organize the African Orthodox Church (AOC) on September 2 and around November 17 he joined Cyril Briggs' African Blood Brotherhood

(ABB).[76] It is not entirely clear if Tobitt and McGuire's relationship soured after the dissolution of the IEC. However, it is clear that Tobitt did not follow McGuire into the ranks of the AOC or the ABB. Garvey and Cyril Briggs had fallen out at the Second International convention. The ABB had an affinity to socialist organizing and caught the attention of the fledging American communist movement. Perhaps, McGuire was sympathetic to the communist ethos and chose to leave Garvey's vision of racial capitalism for a movement that was closely tied to communism. This makes sense, as the ABB garnered the support of many newly arrived Black West Indians.[77]

Tobitt, even in the face of the increased bickering and looming issues facing the UNIA, remained loyal to Garvey and the UNIA. Tobitt's relationship with Casimir would prove to be influential in keeping Tobitt's spirits high even in the face of UNIA bickering and British Colonial harassment. On November 15, 1921, writing from Court Street, Hamilton, Bermuda, Tobitt's letter to J. R. Casimir provides critical insight into Tobitt's thoughts after the second convention. Tobitt informed Casimir that he was recently appointed High Commissioner to British Guiana and he planned on visiting Dominica on November 29th. He informed Casimir that the work of UNIA officials in the Caribbean had been divided between Commissioners, High Commissioners, and a newly elected Leader of the Eastern Caribbean which he referred to as "a blunder on the part of Delegates at the last Convention who attended some merely seeking a job, and with the determination to vote worthy and honest men out of positions." With limited space to detail the conference proceedings, he told Casimir that when he arrived in late November he would elaborate.

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[76] MGP, Vol. 4, LI, LII.
[77] Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1936* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 36

Tobitt also informed Casimir that in regard to his situation with Trinidad, he had reached out to Secretary of State, Winston Churchill, and Governor of Bermuda, James Willcocks and was "waiting for results." Tobitt later wrote that "it is time this 'fast and loose playing' in Trinidad with honorable citizens of the British Empire be stopped." He concluded his letter by informing Casimir that members should make preparations for a "triumphant meeting" and he would have BSL certificates for members to purchase. [78] Tobitt's letter to Casimir is illuminating, and for several reasons. First, it shows that Tobitt felt that politics and personal agendas got in the way of organizational progress. Tobitt's feelings were well grounded as many individuals sought to use the UNIA as a way to excel their own personal agenda for financial gain. Additionally, as Commissioner of British Guiana, Tobitt did not have to stop at Dominica. Perhaps amid all the bickering Casimir was one of the few UNIA members that Tobitt could truly confide in. Lastly, Tobitt's acceptance of the role as Commissioner of British Guiana highlights Tobitt's commitment to Garveyism in the circum-Caribbean.

Nevertheless, Tobitt visited Dominica briefly and on January 3,1922, made an appearance in Barbados. A spirit of labor union organizing - that was deeply wedded to Garveyite activity – more than likely explains Tobitt's stop at the island. Clennell W. Wickham and Dr. Charles Duncan O'Neale founded the Barbados Labour Union in 1919 and in 1920 founded a UNIA branch.[79] The island had a total of four active branches with two of them being in the capital of Bridgetown. The UNIA movement was thriving in Barbados particularly due to the numerous transient workers that subscribed to Garveyism while working on Banana plantations and Panama Canal construction in Central America. Upon Tobitt's arrival he met

[78] J. R. Casimir Papers (box 1, folder 10), Sc MG 110, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library
[79] Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean*, 36.

with one of the founders of the Barbados UNIA and future activist John Beckles. Beckles was a highly respected community member and social worker on the island. In Tobitt's honor, as former Leader of the Eastern Caribbean and now High Commissioner to British Guiana, Mr. Beckles held an extravagant dinner at St. Lawrence, Christ Church. Local Garveyites described the dinner as being like "a palace" with all main courses named after great figures in African history. After mingling with members of the local UNIA branches, Tobitt made his way for British Guiana.[80]

On February 15, 1922, Tobitt arrived in Georgetown, British Guiana. An article published in the *Negro World* titled "UNIA and ACL Movement Flourishing in Demerara" reported that the local UNIA meeting was made public after increased interest due to the announcement that Tobitt would be a guest speaker. A mass meeting was held at Frolic Hall in which the venue was "taxed to its utmost." A preliminary address was given by Mrs. Sophia Benjamin, lady president of the Georgetown Division. Tobitt then took the stage and spoke extensively on the matter of the many enemies and forces that had attempted to tear down Garvey and his movement. Tobitt reassured the crowd that "enemies may destroy the physical body of Marcus Garvey, but his spirit will live on in 400,000,000 Negroes of the world who have arisen from their Rip Van Winkle slumber of over 300 years."[81] More than likely Tobitt was speaking in reference to Garvey's arrest in New York a month earlier in addition to the numerous people ganging up on Garvey such as Cyril Briggs, W.E.B. Du Bois and Edgar J. Hoover.

After his speech at Frolic Hall, Tobitt made an appearance at the BGLU's third anniversary. Tobitt's appearance confirmed the strong connection that existed between

[80] Martin, *Marcus Garvey, Hero*, 75.
[81] *Negro World*, March 11, 1922.

Garveyism and the nation's nascent labor movement. Tobitt arrived to the anniversary dinner in "a dignified manner" wearing his UNIA military dress, followed by local division officers carrying the UNIA flag, and the Black Cross Nurses bringing up the rear. In addition to BGLU and UNIA members, numerous notable officials of British Guiana were in attendance. Such notable officials included the lawyer P.N. Browne, author and statesman A.R.F. Webber. Invites were even given out to notable people such as Hector A. Joseph, the first black barrister in Jamaica. It is evident that the event while grassroots in its formation, was committed to garnering the attentions of notable government officials.

Tobitt took the stage as the guest speaker and congratulated Mr. Critchlow on the monumental feat of his organization reaching three years of activity. Tobitt reassured the crowd that the UNIA was present to support the BGLU's cause. In Tobitt's speech he made sure to clear up any misunderstanding that may have been present in regard to Garveyism and the aims of the UNIA. Tobitt stated that while some may have heard that Garveyism was a "Back to Africa Movement," in fact, only "Negroes with intelligence and backbone" were being courted to return to Africa. Perhaps this was a slight against those that did not wish to repatriate, or Tobitt could have very well understood that the BGLU showed nationalist elements and wished to quell any concerns that membership in the UNIA dogmatically required repatriation. Tobitt concluded his speech by declaring that that "Garveyism has no taint of Bolshevism in intent or act. It is a builder and supporter of good government and not a destroyer of such."[82]

Several months later in August 1922, Tobitt appeared at the UNIA's third annual convention. Historian Robert Hill argues that the period between the second and third conventions was the UNIA's "political decline" the "erosion of its economic base." For example,

[82] *Negro World*, March 11, 1922.

the at the beginning of the 1921 convention 480 divisions were chartered, whereas at the beginning of the 1922 convention only 230 divisions were added. The drop off in newly charted divisions was coupled with the lessening of the *Negro World's* circulation. This can partially be explained by the harsh bans placed on the Negro World and harassment of UNIA members by Western governments. To make matters worse, the UNIA was in a precarious situation financially. Garvey's ships were not producing a profit as he had expected. As a result, Garvey was not able to hold to his word and pay the close to $70,000 in salaries to his officers.[83] As a result dissent began to grow within the UNIA's ranks and divisions began to fester.

Nonetheless, amidst the looming issues facing the UNIA, Tobitt reported to the delegates of the conditions in British Guiana, Bermuda, and Barbados. He stated that there was an "absence of the manhood suffrage" and that the Black West Indian tends to be "a bit selfish when in a high position." On a positive note, he reported that "through the work of the U.N.I.A. they were getting several prominent men of the race to take interest in the affairs of the different islands and some of them have been elected to the different legislatures." He concluded by stating that these "prominent men" invested their hope in the U.N.I.A. to bring about the "unification of the Negro peoples."[84]

Tobitt's colleague, John Debourg, who served as the Leader of the Western Caribbean quit his post at the second convention. Irritated at the lack of pay for almost two years, he left his position and joined the ranks of Garvey's enemies. A year later he would join the federal prosecution against Garvey in the mail fraud case. The third annual convention was not completely mired in negativity. In fact, women of the UNIA raised valid critiques of the male

[83] MGP, Vol. 4, XXXI.
[84] MGP, Vol. 4, 893.

dominated leadership of the movement. Reforms were made that added a women's section in the organization's political organ. Additionally, sections in Spanish and French were added to the Negro World, signaling the growth of the UNIA beyond the Anglophone world and an encompassing of non-English speakers in Garvey's "Black Empire."

After Tobitt left the third annual convention, he continued his duties as high commissioner to British Guiana. However, this time he turned his attention to British Guiana's next-door neighbor, Dutch Guiana (Suriname). A UNIA chapter was established in Suriname sometime in the middle of 1922, yet, the official chapter charter had to be delivered by Tobitt from UNIA headquarters. On January 9, 1923, Tobitt arrived at Suriname's capital, Paramaribo, for a two-month tour bolstering the recently established chapter. Members of the local UNIA division were enthused to have a UNIA high official visit their country. Later that day Tobitt visited the local meeting hall to unveil the official charter and provide an invigorating speech to local members. The meeting was so highly anticipated that the hall could only fit a fourth of all those in attendance. Acting in the manner of a true ambassador, Tobitt made sure to make contact with colonial officials. Tobitt's experience dealing with Dutch colonial officials was in complete contrast to those of Bermuda, Trinidad, and British Guiana. A few days into his stay Tobitt met with Governor-General, Aarnoud van Heemstra and was accorded "freedom of the colony" by the Governor. During his meeting with the Governor, Tobitt spoke about the conditions of Black people in the colony, avenues to advance their progress, and declared that the Governor received his thoughts "with good results."[85] In March, as Tobitt boarded his steamer to depart the colony he received a warm and joyous send off from the local divisions officers and rank and file members, along with local citizens. The crowd stayed in port for

[85] *Negro World*, May 19, 1923.

nearly three hours and sang UNIA patriotic songs such as the Ethiopian National Anthem and the Dutch National Anthem.[86]

While Tobitt reveled in the fact that Garveyism was expanding in the Caribbean beyond Anglophone countries, the United States struck the UNIA in the heart. On June 21,1923, Garvey was sentenced for using the mail to defraud and was held in jail in the Tombs prison in New York for three months until he was released on bail on September 10.[87] Even in the midst of Tobitt's work bolstering UNIA branches in the circum-Caribbean, Tobitt was sure to remain deeply involved in his home islands activities. Even in the midst of Bermuda's intense anti-Garvey/UNIA campaign, local branches continued to make headway. On August 1, 1923, the Bermuda UNIA held a "local convention" at Rev. E. B. Grant's Church of God. Delegates from every local branch arrived and listened to speeches from Rev. E. B. Grant, Tobitt, Edward Burgess, president of the St. George's Brach, Mrs. W. Paynter, lady president of the same branch, Seward Smith, president of the Crawl Hill Branch, Miss A. L. Burgess, former lady president of the St. George's Branch, and lady president of the Brooklyn Division, amongst others. The next day, the UNIA sought to recreate the pageantry of Liberty Hall and threw the islands first UNIA parade. At 1:30pm on August 2nd the parade began on Court St and made its way down Front Street. Rev. E. B. Grant led the procession in uniform carrying an "artistic large green silk banner" with the UNIA colors, and in gold letters the organization's motto and underneath reading "UNIA and ACL Bermuda Division No. 64. 1920-1923." The main banner, along with the smaller ones were put together with the hard work of Tobitt's wife, Caroline, Mrs. Hammond Tucker, and the many women of the chapter including Tobitt's daughter May Tobitt,

[86] *Negro World*, May 19, 1923.
[87] Lewis, *Marcus Garvey*, 54.

who was the secretary of the Black Cross Nurses. Col. Morris, who led the African Legions was mounted on a horse followed by the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides of Hamilton and Warwick. Lieut. Gordon of the London, England Division also marched with the African Legions. The grand procession ended interestingly with a speech by American Consul, William P. Kent, Esq and a speech by Tobitt in which he declared that "the UNIA was determined to go on, because the race was now fully awakened to their potentialities and realized that they were endowed with certain inalienable rights."[88] This parade was a show of force that the Bermuda UNIA was alive and well even in the midst of the colonial assault on the local branches. Moreover, the parade shows that women played an integral part to the branch's local operations. While Tobitt may have been an ambassador ensuring the organizations growth women were critical to the sustainment to the internal affairs of the branch. Additionally, the Bermuda branch also served as a site of diaspora, with individuals arriving from Montreal, Brooklyn, and the UK. It is important that we view Bermuda as also a crucial site where blacks converged and received crucial diasporic thought. This was made especially popular by Bermuda's central location along the lines of major shipping routes.

A year later, as Garvey wrestled with his legal troubles, he had another diplomatic duty for Tobitt. This position required him to travel once more, rather this time to the British metropole, London. Garvey had a deep understanding of the role that diplomacy played in the nation building project. Garvey was keenly aware of the necessity of diplomats to represent the UNIA if it were to function as "Black Empire" or African nation in exile. By 1922, he sent a delegation of UNIA members to Geneva to meet with the League of Nations at the third annual

[88] *Negro World*, August 18, 1923.

summit in 1922, and sent a delegation to meet with the president of Liberia in 1924.[89] Garvey understood that not only did he need to develop an intricate relationship with the masses of African descended people the world over, but a relationship needed to be established with the rulers of the very people and nations he was seeking economic and political independence from.

` As such, Garvey a British subject and traveler to England in his younger years, paid particular attention to the politics of the UK. In early January 1924 the Labour Party, under the leadership of Ramsay McDonald, took control of British Parliament from Stanley Baldwin's Conservative Party. This was an event that Garvey sought to use to his advantage. On Sunday, January 20, 1924, at Liberty Hall Garvey announced that Tobitt a "tried and trusted officer of the Association" would serve as Ambassador to Great Britain and would set sail on January 26th. Tobitt received the title "Sir" and was "admitted into the exclusive order of Knight-Commander of the Sublime Order of the Nile." Garvey told the crowd that he selected Tobitt for this position because of his "loyalty and devotion" to the movement in the face of many obstacles. Moreover, Garvey stated that Tobitt's "educational ability" and knowledge of "things within the British Empire" influenced his decision. Garvey then declared to the crowd that since the Labor party was in control of parliament then "the working man of Britain would, of necessity, lend a sympathetic ear to the Negro's ambition to occupy his rightful place… alongside of other races and peoples."[90] Upon being knighted, Tobitt took the stage of Liberty Hall and thanked Garvey for such a noteworthy position. Tobitt told the crowd that he "would be faithful unto death" and the deep faith from the people of the UNIA would push him to do an utmost job. Two days before Tobitt's departure Garvey sent a dispatch on January 24 to Premier MacDonald stating

[89] Martin, *Race First*, 45.
[90] *Negro World*, January 26, 1924.

"As Negroes fighting for our independence and a nation of our own in our motherland Africa, we shall look to your meritorious party for help and consideration."[91]

The next day Garvey sent another dispatch to the new British Colonial Secretary J. H. Thomas. Garvey in his letter introduced Tobitt, along with his credentials, and informed Sir Thomas that Tobitt would be arriving to Britain soon and would "interest himself in all matters affecting the interest of the Negro race" in the country. Garvey also informed the colonial secretary that the prime minister and foreign secretary have also received his credentials and that he hoped that Tobitt would receive the same treatment as "other representatives of independent races and sovereign peoples."[92] On February 1, Tobitt arrived to Southampton, England aboard the S. S. Aquitania. Tobitt informed immigration officials that he was a "Minister of Religion." While this was not a falsehood, Tobitt's real reasons for being in the country, to secure Caribbean and African sovereignty, would have surely alarmed immigration officials.
As Tobitt made his way from Southampton northward to London, the February 2nd publication of the Negro World reported in an article titled "The Labor Party Controls England" that Ramsay Macdonald and his new cabinet members were "some of the most liberal minds of the Labor and Socialists parties of England, and it is hoped that they will pilot the ship of state to success."[93] Unfortunately, Garvey and Tobitt quickly learned that these men were not so "liberal" minded.

As Tobitt made his way for London from Southampton to meet with the Foreign officer and Prime Minister, the British Colonial Office compiled an official report on the UNIA and Tobitt. The official report referred to Garvey and the UNIA as a "fraud." Additionally, the report gave a full run down on Tobitt's activities as a UNIA officer ranging from his disavowal by the

[91] Ibid.
[92] MGP, Vol. 5, 549.
[93] *Negro World*, Feb 2, 1924.

AME Church to his being banned from entry into Trinidad. For a movement that colonial officials saw as a "fraud" the activities of its members and activities remained on the front of Britain's radar.[94] As it were, Tobitt met with the local UNIA branch in London at the Canning Town hall. The meeting was referred to in the Negro World as "a new epoch in progress."[95] Three days later on February 20th Tobitt wrote to the colonial secretary asking for a meeting to discuss "the welfare of loyal Negro subjects in various colonies of the British Empire." After some delay, the colonial office replied to Tobitt on March 8 stating that it could not meet with him for an interview.[96] Tobitt and Garvey attempted to strike right in the heart of the British Empire. Perhaps, it was a level of naivety that they thought the Labor party would be more receptive to calls for sovereignty than the previous conservative party. Nevertheless, it was worth the try. What these sequences of events show us is that, in fact, the Labor party, much like the conservative party remained committed to exerting control over populations in the global south. The socialist rhetoric of the Labor party did not extend entirely to African and African descended peoples.

Tobitt remained in Britain through the month of April. He boarded the S.S. Berengaria and returned to Bermuda on April 24th.[97] This was the last major political position Tobitt held with the UNIA. Not only was Tobitt's expedition futile, but so was Garvey's dream of securing land in Africa for his recolonization project. In February 1924, around the same time of Tobitt's arrival in England, the UNIA was assured by Liberia's President, Charles D. B. King, that 3,000 African American migrants would be allotted land for recolonization. Liberia, a mere pawn of

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[94] MGP, Vol. 5, 561.
[95] *Negro World*, April 5, 1924.
[96] MGP, Vol. 5, 561.
[97] Year: *1924*; Arrival: *New York, New York, USA*; Microfilm Serial: *T715, 1897-1957*; Line: *10*; Page Number: *159,* Ancestry.com

the United States and other Western colonial powers, strong armed President King into denying the UNIA a foothold in the country. In June, when a delegation from the UNIA arrived, President King reneged on his agreement with Garvey and did not allow the UNIA to land.[98] Although the UNIA continued to thrive in parts of Africa, Garvey's dream of sovereign land under the flag of the UNIA was snuffed out. To complicate matters, a year later in February 1925, Garvey's appeals for his mail fraud conviction failed. He was arrested and transported to the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary to serve out his five-year sentence.[99] With Garvey imprisoned, a power vacuum ensued. In 1926, the unthinkable happened, the UNIA headquarters split. William Sherrill assumed leadership of the Midwestern branch and George Weston assumed control of the New York branch. Rupert Lewis points out that during this time, Garvey's instructions were being ignored by his high-ranking officers and that "the only person in the leadership he could rely on was his wife, Amy Jacques Garvey."[100] The UNIA of the mid 1920s was a shell of its former self. With Garvey imprisoned and the remainder of the UNIA being carved up by Garvey's enemies, there was no longer funds and a direct need for statesman like Tobitt. As such, Tobitt returned home to Bermuda.

Tobitt's reentry to Bermudian Society

As Tobitt reacclimated to Bermudian society full time, he was greeted by a UNIA movement that was as strong as it was in 1920. The local UNIA branches were doing fairly well for themselves. UNIA members established a local bank operating out of Rev. E. B. Grants Church of God. Additionally, the UNIA embarked on a mission to establish another primary school in Warwick Parish. On September 13, 1926, the Director reported that the Board of

[98] Lewis, *Marcus Garvey*, 40.
[99] Lewis, *Marcus Garvey*, 54.
[100] Lewis, *Marcus Garvey*, 57.

Education, following the Police departments reports, denied Rev. E. B. Grants request to open a school. The boards reasons were that the school was "closely connected with the UNIA," that Grant was "not a competent teacher" and that "there is no need for another school in the locality."[101] Six years after the UNIA caught the radar of Bermuda government officials, every branch of the colonial administration remained staunch in its animosity towards the UNIA movement.

While the impediment of the UNIA school stopped Tobitt from teaching again, he did, however return to the AME church in 1926. Tobitt was readmitted to the Bermuda Annual Conference and by 1927 Tobitt was assigned to the Vernon Temple at Southampton East.[102] While it is not clear whether Tobitt's readmission was based on financial necessity or his nostalgia for the pulpit, Tobitt was warmly welcomed, and the events of 1920 were to be passed bygones. While Tobitt worked on reacclimating himself to the AME Church, Rev. E. B. Grant was committed to bringing Marcus Garvey back to the island of Bermuda. By 1928, Garvey had served two years and nine months of his five-year sentence when President Calvin Coolidge commuted his sentence, on the grounds that "the ends of justice have been sufficiently met."[103]

During the same year, Garvey and Amy made plans to visit several Caribbean nations, the location of some of the UNIA's most diehard members. Garvey and his wife were denied visa entries for British Guiana, Trinidad, and several other British West Indian islands.[104] Grant attempted to procure Garvey's visit to the island. Grant, knowing that Bermuda was against Garvey and his movement sent a letter to Governor Asser on November 5th, 1928 requesting that

[101] EXCO Minutes, 1924 – 1927, September 15, 1926, Bermuda National Archives
[102] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 297.
[103] Lewis, *Marcus Garvey*, 58.
[104] Lewis, *Marcus Garvey*, 61.

Garvey and Amy Jacques be able to set foot on the island and stay with him while their ship, the S. S. Canadian Forester, was in port. The colonial secretary responded to Grant informing him that Garvey could set foot on the island, however, he could dock in port and in the name of preventing any "disturbances" Grant was to see to it that Garvey did not hold any public meeting, speeches, or parades.[105]

However, the Governor Asser did allow Amy Jacques Garvey to set foot in Bermuda. It is not clear exactly why he banned Garvey from the island but allowed Amy Garvey to disembark. Perhaps, rooted in sexist patriarchal thinking he believed that she was simply Garvey's "help mate" and would not serve as a serious impetus to UNIA organizing. In fact, Amy Jacques Garvey was not simply a "fill in" for Garvey, as the Governor may have assumed. Amy Jacques served as the *Negro World* editor, publisher of two volumes of *Marcus Garvey and his Opinions,* and an intellectual and organizational partner to Garvey. On a rainy thundery evening, Amy Jacques gave a stirring address to a sizable crowd composed of UNIA members and community members interested in the message. In true form, the Governor sent in a dispatch to the secretary of state that Mrs. Garvey did speak to a crowd on the island, however, that it was "small" and comprised of mainly "West Indians." The governor also reported that there were "no demonstrations" and that he believed the movement would die out in Bermuda.[106] Little did colonial officials realize that the arrival of Amy Jacques Garvey provided a much-needed boost for local UNIA members to remain committed to the cause. After Marcus and Amy Jacques departed for Jamaica, Tobitt wrote a letter to the *Royal Gazette* protesting Garvey's ban from coming ashore and stressed that the principles of Marcus Garvey were far from inciteful and

[105] EXCO Minutes 1927-1930 1/1/30, November 21st, 1928, Bermuda National Archives
[106] Governor's Dispatches, 1928-1929 – CS 6/1/35 – November 20th, 1928, Bermuda National Archives

would "teach the coloured people how to be independent and work to improve themselves."[107] The *Royal Gazette* refused to publish the letter. As a result, fueled by the anger of the *Royal Gazette*'s actions and the moral boost from Amy Jacques visit, UNIA members Alfred Brownlow Place, Henry Hughes, David Augustus, James Rubain, and Joquin Martin founded the *Bermuda Recorder,* Bermuda's first Black owned newspaper.[108] As Bermuda Historian Ira Phillip put forth, the Garvey movement sparked a Black Renaissance in Bermuda that would serve as the foundation for Bermuda's Black power movement and struggle for decolonization in the 1970s.

Conclusion

By the late 1920s, Garvey's brainchild, the UNIA, was a shell of its former self. Correlated attacks from the United States, Great Britain, and their negro minions thwarted his vision of a free African continent under the UNIA's banner. Historian Eric Duke makes note that in the late 1920s, when Garvey returned to Jamaica his politics took on a more nationalistic and regional tone. West Indian federation, Duke argues, "reappeared as a more explicit goal within" Garvey's political agenda. For example, Garvey demanded majority rule for the Caribbean, dominion status (self-government) for Jamaica, and the establishment of a Caribbean federation that would even include non-English speaking islands.[109] Much of this was articulated and disseminated through his new newspaper venture *The Blackman.* While Garvey's politics in the latter part of the decade show a shifting in priorities, for the rank-and-file membership during the UNIA's ebb (1919-1923), regional politics, specifically West Indian nationhood was always at the forefront. This is not to say that West Indians were unconcerned with Africa. Rather, West

[107] *The Workers Voice*, April 22, 1977.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Duke, *Building a Nation*, 72

Indians in their concern for a free and powerful Africa, were just as concerned about an independent Caribbean in which they were the majority population.

As Historian Tony Martin argued "at a time when most Black people in the area were denied the right to vote, and in an age mostly predating mass political parties, the UNIA often performed the function of quasi-political parties"[110] This is best understood through Tobitt's role as Leader of the Eastern Caribbean and High Commissioner of British Guiana. Through Tobitt's experience, and a careful reading of the archive it becomes apparent that anger with Crown Colony rule and a desire for better representation across the West Indies was a mainstay for Caribbean UNIA members. What's more is that the Garvey influenced labor unions in British Guiana, Trinidad, and Barbados ended up serving as the backbone in the fight for independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Although Bermuda, to this day, remains an overseas territory, the UNIA laid the groundwork for Bermuda's struggle for decolonization in the 1970s.

[110] Tony Martin, *Pan African Connection* (New York: The Majority Press), 61-62.

CHAPTER 4: Exiled from Bermuda: Staten Island Activism and Inspirational Garveyism in Harlem, 1930-1945

Introduction

On Thursday, May 8th, 1930, Tobitt, his wife Caroline and five children, arrived in the New York harbor on a chilly spring day.

[1]In this chapter, by following Tobitt's political activities in New York City, through the 1930s and first half of the 1940s, I highlight the political worlds he entered and the networks that he developed throughout the city. Tobitt joined an apparatus of black political organizers that fought against racial discrimination in the understudied borough of Staten Island. Furthermore, upon his move from Staten Island to Harlem in 1936, Tobitt coalesced with former Garveyites who were committed to addressing both local and international issues. Specifically issues of employment, lynching, and decolonization in the Caribbean. As such, this chapter brings attention to political activity that occurred in understudied spaces in inter-war era Black New York.

The archive does not yield exact answers as to the reason for Tobitt's transfer to New York City. However, there exist two plausible reasons for such a move. First, interview's with Tobitt's descendants revealed that Tobitt remained involved in local UNIA politics in Bermuda through the later part of the 1920s. In fact, in the spring of 1930, Tobitt organized a grand procession, marked with UNIA regalia down Hamilton's main throughway, Front Street. As a result, Tobitt was ordered by the Governor to vacate the country.[2] We do know that the Bermuda AME church facilitated his transfer to the Bethel AME church in West Brighton, Staten Island. Unfortunately, the story of Tobitt's exile from Bermuda at the hands of colonial officials in 1930

[1] *New York Age*, May 10, 1930.
[2] Hansen-Vazquez, Greer and Hansen-Sexton, Dionne. Interview with Christopher Shell. Personal Interview. Zoom, March 18, 2021.

has not been corroborated in the archives. Another possible reason for Tobitt's move to New York can be explained by the AME churches transnational nature. It was commonplace for AME ministers to be reassigned to new posts. As such, it makes sense that Tobitt would be transferred to New York City, especially since the AME presence in New York was so pronounced and New York and Bermuda were members of the same AME district.

Black Staten Island

When Tobitt and his family arrived in New York City, they came through Ellis Island, the immigration processing center that would administer the arrival of millions of White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian immigrants entering the city in the first half of the twentieth century. It is probable that an additional move for Tobitt elicited mixed feelings for he and his family. Tobitt and Caroline spent a total of 18 years in Bermuda which yielded two more children and a strong relationship with multiple communities in black Bermuda. On the contrary, Tobitt's commitment to black empowerment brought him in the direct crosshairs of Bermuda's colonial government and Bermuda AME leadership. Whatever the sentiment, this was in essence, a new beginning for Tobitt. Although Tobitt had visited New York several times as a high-ranking official in the Garvey movement in the 1920s, all his trips were temporary, lasting no more than a month. Additionally, most of his time was spent in Harlem, tending to UNIA official business. This time around, he would dig his heels into New York's black community as a permanent resident. However, Tobitt would not immediately settle in Harlem, the popular destination for Black Southern migrants and Black Caribbean immigrants. His transfer to the New York AME network

required him to assume pastorship of the Bethel AME Church in Staten Island.[3] Life for Black New Yorkers at the dawn of the 1930s was filled with its fair share of socio-political problems. The nation was gripped in the great depression after the stock market crash of 1929, and as such, Blacks felt the brunt of the financial decline. Additionally, like life in the American South, racism and discrimination was prevalent in parts of the city. Staten Island was not bereft of such racial tension.

Staten Island is one of five boroughs that comprise New York City. Staten Island, today and both historically, has been the least populated borough while being the third largest borough per square mile. This is partially the case for several reasons. Probably most impactful to the island's sparse population is due to its relative geographic isolation away from the other four boroughs. A direct land route connecting Staten Island to the rest of New York City was not created until 1961, with the creation of the Verazzano-Narrows bridge. Before then, the only connection Staten Island enjoyed to the city was a ferry that linked Staten Island to lower Manhattan and two bridges that connected Staten Island to New Jersey, built in the 1920s.

In 1930, the total population of New York City was 6,930,446 million people, and New Yorkers, both black and white fled Manhattan for more living space in Brooklyn and the Bronx. The population of Staten Island totaled a mere 158,346 with roughly a population of 3,000 blacks.[4] In comparison, during the same year, the upper Manhattan neighborhood of Harlem

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[3] Minutes of the One Hundred and Eighth Session of the New York Annual Conference, AME Church Held at St. John's AME Church, NYC, May 28 to June 1, 1930, 12. in Dennis Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 297.

[4] *New York Times*, Dec. 18, 1978; Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. "Negroes in Staten Island"" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed May 19, 2020.

boasted a population of 580,277 with 197,294 of those residents being Black.[5] As one can see form the above statistics, Staten Island was a borough that was sparsely populated and contained a marginal percentage of the city's black population. The Black presence on Staten Island can be traced as far back as the eighteenth century, when Blacks were brought to the island as enslaved persons. When full emancipation came to Staten Island in 1825 it was reported that there were 698 enslaved persons in addition to hundreds of Blacks that had been manumitted.[6] At the moment of emancipation, many freed blacks developed a community at Sandy Ground (Roseville) on the northwestern side of the island. The population of freed blacks in Sandy Ground grew in the nineteenth century as Blacks fled to the north fleeing Southern slavery.[7] The Black community in the northeastern shore of the island, that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, had rather different demographics from that of the northwestern shore. While exact data does not exist that disaggregates the ethnic origins of Staten Island's Northeastern community (Tompkinsville, New Brighton, and Port Richmond), the archive reveals that the community was a hodgepodge of people that descended from freed families that resided on the island since emancipation, Black Southern migrants and Black Caribbean immigrants that arrived during the interwar era.

Similar to the tensions that arose in Manhattan, as Black Southern and Black Caribbean migrants moved into predominantly White neighborhoods, Staten Island was not remiss of such

[5] Cheryl Lynn Greenburg, Or Does it Explode? Black Harlem in the Great Depression (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 232.
[6] Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis. *Staten Island and Its People: A History, 1609 -1929* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc, 1930), 212.
[7] Leng and Davis. *Staten Island and Its People*, 478; Mapping the African American Past: Sandy Ground, Columbia University, https://maap.columbia.edu/place/42.html

racial tension.[8] Six years before Tobitt's arrival, in 1924, a black resident faced Jim Crow style discrimination that would set the tone for Black political organizing of the 1930s. On September 6, 1924, the Black owned and operated *New York Age* reported that an African American mail carrier, Samuel Browne, and his wife, Catherine, a school teacher, who had four children bought a house in the Castleton Hill section of Staten Island. The majority of African Americans in Staten Island lived in the Northeastern coast of the borough. Their venture slightly west into the landlocked neighborhood of Castleton was met with vitriol from white residents. Browne and his wife bought the house for $8,500 from the former white owner in February. Right before moving in, Browne received a letter signed by the Klu Klux Klan stating:

> "If you move into that house on Fairview Avenue, Castleton Hill, it will be the worse day's work you ever did. You may treat this lightly, but after you move in it will be too late. You should know better than to move where you are not wanted."[9]

Ignoring the threatening and obtuse letter, Mr. Browne and his family moved in on Thursday, July 4. In less than a couple of weeks, on Thursday July 17, a crowd of roughly 40 individuals marched around the house protesting the black family's arrival. The small showing of force was not the end of the harassment. On September 1st at 3am "a mob stoned the house, breaking two windows, and the plate glass in the front door."[10] As a result, the Browne family stated that they were resolute in not leaving the neighborhood and received police protection while the bomb squad investigated the letter from the KKK. Peace for the Brown family would

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[8] Marcy S. Sacks. *Before Harlem: The Black Experience in New York City Before World War I* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Kevin McGruder. Philip Payton: The Father of Black Harlem (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021). Both works make mention of the racial backlash that African Americans received as they moved into the predominantly white neighborhoods of Hell's Kitchen and Harlem.
[9] *New York Age*, September 6, 1924.
[10] Ibid.

not last long, a year later, on August 8, after the first attack, another mob attacked Browne's house smashing windows, doors, flowerpots, and tearing trees and shrubbery from the roots.[11]

Overt violence was not the only way Browne was threatened. More subversive attempts were made to remove the Browne family. For example, Browne reported to the Grand Jury of Richmond County (Staten Island) that the fire insurance he had on his house had been cancelled upwards of five times. Additionally, the holder of the mortgage threatened Browne with withdrawing the mortgage unless the fire insurance was properly paid for. The fire insurance was taken care of in short order. However, the crafty idea of cancelling the fire insurance and the mortgage holders plan to renege on the contract speaks to the cunning and manipulative tactics taken by white Staten Islanders to have an African American family removed from the neighborhood.[12]

Police protection for the Browne family was not enough as evidenced by the second attack on the Browne family's house. As was the case throughout New York, many police officers, who were primarily white, were not keen on properly policing of African Americans, let alone protecting the property of an African American family in a white neighborhood. The white anger against the Browne family was not going to dissipate anytime soon, and all the signs pointed to increased violence soon. Thus, the local African American community, many of whom resided in West Brighton and Port Richmond, adjacent to Castleton's corner, stepped in to aid the Browne families cause. One individual was community leader and successful entrepreneur William Morris, Sr. Morris was born in Elizabeth City, NC in 1877 and moved to Staten Island in his early twenties. After marrying Susie Estelle Dehart, Morris entered the

[11] *Kansas City Advocate*, July 31, 1925.
[12] *New York Age*, August 8, 1925.

moving business and purchased a former police station in which he converted into a warehouse and another house on Barker Street that he converted into a modern garage. By the 1920s his business had grown to the extent to where he owned nine tractor trailers.[13] Morris, who himself faced his own share racism and discrimination on the island, galvanized the Black Staten Island community to lend succor to the Browne family. Thus, a month after the second attack, in September, Morris reached out to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and informed them of his interest in creating a branch on Staten Island. Founded in 1909 by W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B Wells, Mary White Ovington, and Moorfield Story, the NAACP was committed to reversing the disenfranchisement of Blacks. Additionally, the NAACP was especially keen on addressing issues of racial violence (i.e. lynching) that was particularly widespread through the American South. Against this backdrop, the Director of Branches, Robert W. Bagnall, promptly responded on September 21, 1925, stating that he would be in attendance at the meeting taking place next Sunday on Sept. 27 at Morris' business headquarters.[14]

On September 27, Robert Bagnall arrived at 88 Barker Street and was met by "a substantial sum" of Staten Islanders ready to support Samuel Browne. As a result of rumors circulating around the area about the meeting being of "an incendiary nature" police were stationed outside the meeting place and two officers were inside. In direct contrast to the rumors that had been swirling around the island, the meeting was extremely orderly, and the police left soon after hearing about the mission and objectives of the NAACP. As the meeting got under

[13] Jim Harkens and Cecilia N. Brunner. *Images of West Brighton* (Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 95.
[14]NAACP Legal File, Samuel A Browne – 1925-1926, September 21, 1925. NAACP Papers Collection

way Mr. William Morris was elected President of the Branch. James Henry, a schoolteacher on the island, was elected Vice President, Mrs. Druscilla Poole, member of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), was elected secretary, and Mr. William Dunn, was elected treasurer.[15] After officers were elected a resolution was swiftly passed stating that the new branch would "stand solidly behind Mr. Samuel A. Browne." Mr. Bagnall closed the meeting with a stirring address telling all those in attendance that while the NAACP stood for "law and order" if necessary "every Negro" should "stand for his full rights" and "defend himself and his home against mobs." Bagnall concluded his address by imploring that all those in attendance "Stand behind the fight which Mr. Browne is making, for he is fighting for you all. When discrimination against one Negro is frustrated, it discourages similar attempts against others."[16] In 1926 Samuel Brown brought to the Richmond County supreme court a lawsuit of $100,000 as compensation for damages incurred by his white neighbors. In November of 1927, the supreme court dropped the case due to "insufficient evidence." Browne said that the Supreme Court's verdict did not mean "surrender" and he and his family would remain in the home.[17]

Racial discrimination in the island also permeated the halls of education as well. A year after the NAACP Staten Island branch was founded, the March 17, 1926, edition of the *Amsterdam News* reported on a case in which white parents protested the appointment of a black women a schoolteacher. An African American women named Mrs. Marie Mickens, who was a resident of Harlem, was made teacher over an all-white class at Public School No. 6 in Roseville, Staten Island. *The Amsterdam News* stated that parents and "civic bodies" protested to Commissioner Joseph V. McKee. The *Amsterdam News* reported that the Commissioner told the

[15] NAACP Legal File, Samuel A Browne – 1925-1926, Oct. 2. 1925. NAACP Papers Collection
[16] Ibid.
[17] *Negro World*, November 19, 1927.

protesters that "the law recognized no racial lines and that the Negro teachers in the public schools of New York City have met all the requirements with reference to teaching."[18] As was the case throughout the country, discrimination in Staten Island extended beyond housing and effected almost all aspects of Black life. This was the political environment that Tobitt was thrusted into upon his transfer to the Bethel AME church only four years later. This setting was nothing new to Tobitt, as he was a veteran in the Black Freedom Struggle. True to his black internationalist politics, Tobitt did not hesitate in joining Black New Yorkers in their freedom struggle.

When Tobitt arrived at Staten Island he assumed pastorship of the Bethel AME Church located at 51-53 Van Duzer Street in the Tompkinsville neighborhood. As was the case for much of Black America and the West Indies, the Black church was a critical cornerstone for Black community organizing and a mechanism of survival. The AME church in Staten Island, was deeply rooted in the Black Freedom Struggle, as was the case throughout the Black Atlantic. For example, the Zion AME Zion church, located in the Sandy Ground Village and founded in 1850, served as a stop on the underground railroad and a central pillar in the Sandy Ground neighborhood.[19] Miles away from the majority black neighborhoods of Harlem and Bedford Stuyvesant, churches in Staten Island served as a cornerstone of Black life in an island that faced severe racial hostility. The Black church also played a critical role for the community in Staten Island's growing Northeastern community. St. Phillip's Baptist Church was one of the earliest

[18] *Amsterdam News*, March 17, 1926.
[19] Leng and Davis. *Staten Island and Its People*, 478; Mapping the African American Past: Sandy Ground, Columbia University, https://maap.columbia.edu/place/42.html

Black Churches founded in Port Richmond in 1876. Additionally in 1884, the First Baptist Church of New Brighton was organized.[20]

What's more is that Black women were just as central to Staten Island's social and political activist network. Historian Julie A. Gallagher makes note that during the interwar year's Black women "developed a broad vision of politics that included a strategic engagement with various forms of state." Moreover, she argues that Black women were deeply involved in grassroots struggles in various avenues than what Historians have previously realized.[21] This remains true for Staten Island. For example, on March 24, 1928, the *New York Age* reported that the Women's Political Union, Staten Island branch held a "Big Card Party" residence of Mrs. Sarah Stuart at 112 Roe Street, West Brighton. The officers of the Branch were Druscilla Poole, President and who had assisted in organizing the Staten Island NAACP a few years earlier, Mrs. Augusta Jones and Mrs Mollie Savage, Vice President, Mrs Anita Henry, Secretary, Mrs Grace Forting, Treasurer, and Mrs Mary Riddick, Chaplain.[22] People from Brooklyn and New Jersey gathered to play Whist and Five Hundred. Prizes were awarded to the winners of both games. Surely, the card game was a site of leisure and relationship building for these women. Additionally, this meeting also signifies the formal and informal networks developed by Black women in Staten Island. As Gallagher argues, women in Harlem and Brooklyn were developing political networks since the 1910s.

As stated previously in Chapter 3, the Black Church historically, across denominations, has been a space where Black women have held leadership roles – both administrative and

[20] Black Man on Staten Island, Box 1, Folder 9, Staten Island Museum History Archives and Library
[21] Julie A. Gallagher. *Black Women and Politics in New York City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 4.
[22] *New York Age*, March 24, 1928

spiritual. Religious scholar Jualynne E. Dodson argues that Black women, regardless of denomination, have fought just as hard as their male counterparts to establish the Black church as a premier social institution that was committed to improving the condition of Blacks in the United States. In the case of the AME church, women fought a two-front battle in which they established space for female leadership (i.e. female evangelist, deaconess, and two women's missionary societies) while also making their presence known in the fight against white supremacy.[23] Such was the case in Staten Island. Beyond the veil of Black male ministers, Black women in the community played critical roles in grassroots organizing. For example, on February 7th, 1930, two months before Tobitt and his family arrived in the borough, a member of the Calvary Presbyterian Church, Mary C. Barnes, procured the visit of W.E.B. Du Bois. Perhaps Du Bois was brought to the island because of the recent formation of the NAACP and the looming racial tensions on the borough. After Du Bois' lecture, Mrs. Barnes wrote to Du Bois on February 8, 1930, thanking him for speaking with members of the Church. In her letter to Du Bois she stated, "expressions of praise are coming in over my telephone in such numbers that it is my hope that you will catch the spirit of them in some word that I set down here."[24] Mrs. Barnes added a quote from a "distinguished listener" stating that Du Bois' speech was "the most profitable hour, intellectually" that they "spent in a quarter of a century."[25] The exact contents of Du Bois' lecture is not clear as a transcript of his February 7th speech could not be found in the archive. It can logically be assumed that he spoke on race relations issues more

[23] Jualynne E. Dodson. *Engendering Church: Women, Power, and the AME Church* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.), 3-4.
[24] Calvary Presbyterian Church. Missionary Society. Letter from Calvary Presbyterian Church Presbyterian Society to W.E. B. Du Bois, February 8, 1930. W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.
[25] Ibid.

broadly, and probably spoke on the litany of race related issues occurring in the borough. Whatever the case, his speech is important for two distinct reasons. Mrs. Barnes correspondence with Du Bois highlights the critical role Black Staten Island women played in organizing the community and the role they played in the church's activism. The central role Black women played in Staten Island activism would become even more pronounced as the community continued to organize well into the decade. Moreover, Du Bois' visit to the island highlights how Staten Island was not marooned from the larger Black Freedom Struggle.

As Historian Quito Swan argues, "small places" are in fact connected to and add to much larger trends in the Black Radical Tradition in addition to larger sites of diaspora like Harlem and London. Fortunately, in Staten Island, as was the case in Bermuda, Tobitt was entering a "small place" that was still rooted in the tradition of organizing against unequal racial treatment. Tobitt himself left a small island that sat 1,000 miles away from the Caribbean and roughly 800 miles away from New York City. Yet, in such a place, radical activity was ever present. Two months later, Tobitt arrived in the island further cementing Staten Island's relationship to Black Radical activity that swept the Black Diaspora during the interwar era.

The first documentation of Tobitt's ministerial work came when the *New York Age* reported that "after undergoing extensive repairs, renovations and improvements," members of the Bethel AME church set apart Sunday, March 22, as a day of "thanksgiving" in which pastor Rev. R.H. Tobitt, and members of the congregation would express thanks and celebrate the church's renovations.[26] A year after Tobitt's arrival in New York City, in 1931, a section titled "35th Anniversary of Bethel, Staten Island" was dedicated to covering the celebration processions of the church's founding in 1896. The celebration began on Sunday, November 1st and on the

[26] *New York Age*, March 21, 1931.

first day at "an address of welcome and history of the church by Mrs. Lucilla Braxton, historian was given." The article further states that "The anniversary address was by the Rev. E.E. Tyler, pastor of Bridge street A.M.E. Church, Brooklyn." The celebration continued Monday night when a "Grand Fellowship Night" was held with individuals coming to speak from Manhattan, Long Island and other parts of Staten Island. Wednesday was musical and educational night with Richard Hilton Tobitt reading a paper on "The Contribution of the A.M.E. Church to the Educational Advancement of the Negro." The article then stated, "All the speakers paid high tribute to the ability of Rev. Tobitt as a chairman and leader." The article concluded by adding that on Sunday "Among the visitors during the Young People's and Women's Hour was Mrs. Amy Dill from St. Paul A.M.E. Church, Bermuda."[27] The Bethel AME church 35th Anniversary celebration further highlights how the Black community in Staten Island was not marooned from New York and the wider Black Diaspora. The appearance of individuals from Harlem, Brooklyn and even Bermuda shows that the Black community was in constant conversation with the larger Black world. Tobitt was a family man, and as such his family was involved in his ministerial service. Tobitt's daughter, Carmena, was involved in the religious activities of her father's church. The *NYA* reported an update on the church's services in 1932 and stated that in addition to two large services held Sunday that "Miss Lois Jones conducted the song services for the Allen C.E. League". The topic "How Far Do the Teachings of Jesus Affect Our Conduct?" was led by Miss Carmena Tobitt."[28] As stated earlier, women in the AME church found ways add to the overall church environment, even in the face of an all-male hierarchy.

[27] *New York Age*, Nov. 14, 1931.
[28] *New York Age*, July 23, 1932.

Tobitt's first two years in Staten Island were rather routine. Surely, he made connections with community organizers and leaders, however, his baptism into the world of Staten Island activism would not come until 1933. Political and economic affairs were not the only pressing issues for Black Staten Islanders. They saw that there was a severe deficit in the way of community activities for the youth. The *NYA* reported that on Sunday, March 5, Mrs. Dora Cole Norman led a group of African American residents as they "worked out plans for a community council with centers for young people in various parts of the borough" for black youth to have adequate recreation and proper supervision. The meeting was held at the Shiloh A. M. E. Zion Church and hosted people from across the island. Mrs. Norman presented a program to all those in attendance.[29]. An address was presented by Dr. Peton F. Anderson, chairman of the Board of Management of the 135th Street Branch YMCA and a member of the staff of Seaview hospital of Staten Island; Mrs. Ernest R. Alexander, chairman of the Board of Management of the West 137th Street Branch YWCA; Mrs William G Wilcox, a trustee of Tuskegee Institute and native of Staten Island, Editor Fred R. Moore of the *NYAN*.

At the meeting it was stressed that there were "more than 10,000 Negroes living in Staten Island" and that there were "no recreational facilities for colored children of the various communities." The 10,000 number may have been an exaggeration as census reports from that time period show that the population sat at roughly 4,000 by mid-decade. However, the population was swelling as Blacks looked to leave overcrowded Harlem and as new Migrants to the city overlooked the historic neighborhoods of arrival. All in attendance agreed that the situation for the youth was dismal and in fact, recommended that the various churches open their lecture rooms and basements for recreational use to the youth. The meeting with those in

[29] *New York Age*, Saturday, March 11, 1933.

attendance providing donations so that a building could be secured for recreation. Lastly, ministers of the Staten Island churches pledged to give their support to the movement.[30] The work of Mrs. Norman by bringing individuals in from the Harlem YMCA and YWCA further speaks to the work of the black Staten Island community to be connected to larger black NY communities. Additionally, it speaks to the central role Black women played in galvanizing the resources that the Black churches had to offer.

Tobitt, who more than likely was present at the March 5th meeting, answered the charge given to him by Mrs. Norman. On March 25, 1933, in a section entitled "Rev. R.H. Tobitt Tells of Community Work on Staten Island" it was reported that a meeting was called at the Shiloh A.M.E. Zion Church of West New Brighton, S.I. by a Mrs. Dora Cole Norman. The meeting was called "for the purpose of inaugurating a program of community work and recreational activities among the colored boys and girls of Staten Island… this was the first undertaking of its kind on the island." The article states that Tobitt, who was an executive board member of the Greater New York Federation of Churches, organized community work in his Bethel AME church three months ago. In his report to the Federation, he stated:

> Community Center No.1, organized three months ago as the first of its kind on Staten Island for the colored population, is proving a boon to the young men and women of the vicinity, which includes West Brighton, Tompkinsville, Stapleton, Clifton, etc. It is being operated on the A.M.E. Church premises until a more suitable place is obtained, and that we hope to have soon.

In the same report he stated:

> As I pointed out in a previous report, it is necessary to have at least three community centers of the kind on Staten Island if the aims and objects of a community center are to be realized… Our aim in establishing community centers and recreational grounds in

[30] *New York Age*, March 11, 1933.

> different sections of the Borough of Richmond is to create counter attractions from the harmful places of vice for our young men and women under such training and guidance as well as prepare them to become better citizens and a credit to the community in which they dwell.[31]

Tobitt had a vision for how to use the church as a conduit to impact the youth across Staten Island. His influence by the UNIA can be seen as he saw that one community center was not enough but like the UNIA with its numerous chapters, saw the necessity of numerous community centers to have a larger reach and impact.

Black churches did not bear the brunt of organizing recreational activities for the youth by themselves. Not long after Tobitt announced the creation of the Premier Community League, the *NYA* reported that on Friday evening, March 31 the NAACP Staten Island Branch hosted an Oratorical Contest for the Black youth of the island. The event was held at the St. Phillip's Church located in Port Richmond. The contest was organized by a committee of Black women Staten Island Branch members: Druscilla W. Poole, Ethel Fowler, Mollie Savage, Mildred Griffin, Sadie Bomar and Maude DeHart. The committee solicited the help of James H. Hubert of the New York Urban League, Dr. Deckle McLain, president of the Jersey City Branch NAACP and Attorney John Alvin Ross of New Rochelle to serve as judges. The contest consisted of a total of eleven high school students: 3 boys and 8 girls. The girls performed exceptionally well winning the first five places. The first-place winner was 15-year-old Helen Butts who spoke on "The Patriotism of the American Negro," and for her excellent presentation she was awarded a 5-dollar bill. Tobitt's son, Richard D. Tobitt, was also a contestant and ranked high enough in the competition to earn honorable mention.[32] The oratorical contest speaks to

[31] *New York Age,* March 25, 1933.
[32] *New York Age*, April 8, 1933.

several phenomenon. First, it highlights grassroots activities organized for the development of Black youth. Secondly, it speaks to the critical role Black women played in the education of Black Staten Island youth.

It was a black woman, Mrs. Norman, that called for the organizing of a meeting to create recreational activities for the youth and it was a committee composed entirely of Black women that created an event for the local youth to exercise their public speaking skills. The fact that the contest was held in the St. Phillip's church also speaks to the importance of Black churches to the small yet active Black community in Staten Island. Moreover, religious historians E. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya argue that the struggle for Black women to become fully ordained ministers in Baptists and Methodists churches was a protracted battle in the twentieth century. For example, Black women in the AME church were not allowed to be fully ordained until the 1948[33] Lincoln and Mamiya posit that "religiously motivated" Black women turned their attention to teaching and organizing in other avenues.[34] Such is the case here. While Black women were not allowed to serve as ministers, they were the backbone of educational and social organizing, in very much the same ways as pastors were.

Although Tobitt was deeply invested in the political organizing in Staten Island, he made sure to maintain connections with family and friends back in Bermuda. In a letter written to the Bermuda Annual Conference on April 17, 1933, he reassured the Bermuda conference that "you are not forgotten." Tobitt also made sure to address the recent development of the appointment of the Georgia-born Rev. William H. Heard as Episcopal Chieftain over the First Episcopal District which included New York and Bermuda. He stated that in the New York Conference they were

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[33] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 286
[34] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church,* 283.

"delighted to have so distinguished, broadminded and fatherly Bishop as the Rt. Rev. William Heard" to serve as the Episcopal chieftan. Tobitt went on to add that from his experience he was "certain that you who have always stood by right leadership will give him your maximum support in a general way." He concluded by stating that he hoped this conference would "be the best in history."[35]

Throughout the late nineteenth century Rev. Heard made a career of fighting racial injustice in the US through the auspices of the AME church. In 1895 Rev. Heard was appointed as the United States Minister in Liberia, helping to found the first AME church in Monrovia. At the end of his episcopal duties on his way back to the US, Rev. Heard noted in his Autobiography that upon visiting the British Museum that the mummies were of an African race, and not Caucasian.[36] In 1922, the UNIA awarded him for his "great work done by him in Africa among the native people there." It is more than likely that Tobitt was aware of Rev. Heard's UNIA connection and wanted to reassure those in Bermuda that they support a UNIA sympathetic AME leader. Afterall, there were members in the Bermuda AME that were also sympathetic to the UNIA movement. This was an opportune moment to boost the strength and influence of UNIA sympathizers in AME leadership, especially since Bermuda had a track record of AME leadership being loyal to the colonial administration.

As it were, back in Staten Island, in the midst of the push to organize youth activities, it did not take long for the community to honor Tobitt's work on the multiple community centers. On August 26, 1933, the New York Age reported in a section entitled "Citizens of Staten Island honor Dr. R Hilton Tobitt" about the festivities taking place around the celebration of Tobitt's

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[35] Minutes of the Fiftieth Annual Session of the Bermuda Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1933, 13 Bermuda National Archives.
[36] Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church: A History,* 297.

commitment to the borough's black community. The article states "The Rev. Dr. R. Hilton Tobitt, pastor of Bethel A.M.E. Church of this town with his family, were accorded a testimonial reception by members of his church and friends last week." The program included a musical program which consisted of a piano duet by Tobitt's daughter, Mrs. Mae Tobitt-Hansen and her protégé, testimonial addresses by the trustees on behalf of the community, and on behalf of sister churches. Mrs. Ida Natiel, also presented Dr. Tobitt with a purse as a "tangible expression of their high esteem." Additionally, Mrs. L. Braxton, chairman of the committee, read a letter from Presiding Elder S.H.V. Gumbs. Dr. Gumbs told of the excellent qualities of Dr. Tobitt, who he said was "second to none in respect and esteem of members of the New York Conference."[37]

In addition to developing recreational outlets for the youth, Tobitt hosted plays that brought white and black Staten Islanders together. A year later the *NYA* published a section titled "Echoes From Staten Island's 'Pocahontas'" that highlighted the performance of a play entitled "Pocahontas." The play was originally written by Tobitt in 1917 and "first played by the pupils of St. George High School at the Colonial Opera House, Bermuda" when he was headmaster. The play was presented at the First Presbyterian Chapel, Stapleton, Staten Island. The drama featured Blacks as main characters. Additionally, it was reported that "half of those present" in the audience were white. There was such a strong request for the play to be shown again that Tobitt agreed to present the play again on June 21, of the same year. The proceeds went to aid Tobitt's Premier Community Center. Special mention was made to numerous people that participated in the play including Tobitt's son, R.D. Tobitt, who played "Lieut. Rolfe," who became the husband of Pocahontas.[38] This play demonstrates Tobitt's versatility in developing

[37] *New York Age*, August 26, 1933.
[38] *New York Age*, June 9, 1934.

venues for youth engagement, his role as an active and engaged parent, and his attempt to bridge the divide between Staten Island's white and black communities.

A month later a surprise birthday celebration was thrown in honor of Tobitt due to his "reappointment for the fifth year by the recent annual conference of his church." The members of his congregation made it a double celebration to both celebrate his birthday and religious appointment. At the end of the celebration "friends gathered around" Tobitt and congratulated him for "his splendid service to the community." The article reported that Tobitt was involved in much more than being a pastor for the Staten Island A.M.E. Bethel Church. It stated that he was also a member of the Staten Island Ministerial League and an executive member of the Staten Island Branch of the Greater New York Federation of Churches. The article also stated that Tobitt recently acquired "a recreation ground… for the colored people of that vicinity" to be attached to his Premier Community Center. In addition to his numerous friends and congregation members were Tobitt's family, including Carolina Tobitt who was the president of the Mite Missionary Society, and his son, Richard D. Tobitt, who recently graduated from the Port Richmond Continuation High School, his daughters, Miss Carrie Tobitt of the Curtis High School. Tobitt's family had additional members as his daughter, Mrs. Mae Tobitt-Hansen, was present with her two sons. Mrs. Hansen served as the organist of the church, highlighting even more so how Tobitt's family was deeply involved in the church's affairs.[39]

While Black Staten Islanders faced their own local issues of racial discrimination, community members remained connected to issues facing African Americans nationally. In 1933, trial for nine African American young men accused of raping two white women in 1931 began. The young men, aged 13 to 20, infamously became known as the Scottsboro 9. In a

[39] *New York Age,* July 7, 1934.

moment in which the African American Press consistently reported on lynching and racial violence throughout the nation, the trial of the Scottsboro 9 garnered both national and international attention.[40] Communist Party organizers in the South along with the NAACP closely monitored the case. The American Communist Party courted numerous black intellectuals and looked to garner the support of the wider African American population. As such, the Communist Party saw providing legal advocacy for the Scottsboro 9 to appeal to marginalized groups, especially African Americans.[41] On the other hand, the NAACP which deemed itself the vanguard of African American rights, proceeded rather cautiously to defend the boys.[42] As such, the Scottsboro 9 case was relevant to Staten Island residents, who just dealt with their own case of racial violence a decade earlier. An example of the Staten Island community's commitment to larger issues of racial justice came when the "Workers Ex-Servicemen's League, Staten Island Post No. 174," a branch of an international veterans' organization with ties to the Communist Party, reacted to the verdict of Haywood Patterson, one of the Scottsboro 9, at the March 1933 trial in Decatur. The Workers Ex-Servicemen's League, Staten Island Post, sent a letter to Alabama Governor, Benjamin Miller, immediately release the boys, enforce the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments of the U.S. Constitution, protect the boys and their attorneys from "Klu Klux Klan lynch mobs," and change the venue for remaining trials to Mobile, Alabama.[43]

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[40] Miller, James A., Susan D. Pennybacker, and Eve Rosenhaft. "Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys, 1931-1934." *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 2 (2001): 391.
[41] Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2007)
[42] Miller, Pennybacker, Rosenhaft, "Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys, 1931-1934," 391
[43] Workers Ex-servicemen's League, Staten Island Post No. 174 (Staten Island, N.Y.), "Resolution from Workers Ex-servicemen's League, Staten Island Post No. 174 in Staten Island, New York, to Governor Miller in Montgomery, Alabama. The University of Alabama: University Libraries.

While NAACP leaders may have had an anemic response in defending the Scottsboro 9, members of the Staten Island community, including Tobitt and the Staten Island NAACP, were eager to play their vital role in the fight against lynching. For Tobitt, his activism was a family affair. In November, 1933, Tobitt and his daughter Carmina, attended a rally against lynching at the Bethel AME Church in Harlem. Carmina gave a "dramatic reading" of a paper on the issue of lynching in America to an audience of 600 African Americans.

The crowd was assembled by Rev. Thomas S. Harton, in which he urged that the crowd "do something" and "wake up" to the perils of lynching facing African Americans around the country. Rev. Harten told the crowd that he had been William Monroe Trotter's "right hand man" in his anti-lynching movement and was willing to join it again. He stressed to the crowd that "in order to cure lynching we must get rid of some of this disorganization which the white man uses to keep us apart."[44] Surely, Tobitt and Carmina were inspired to bring the anti-lynching energy with them to Staten Island. Carmena the daughter of Tobitt, a former UNIA high official, was not foreign to the idea of unity as a critical tool in the battle against white supremacy. Unfortunately, the Scottsboro 9 trial ended with all but one of the boys receiving the death penalty. The miscarriage of justice for the Scottsboro 9 was a sad addition to a long history of unmitigated racial violence enacted on African Americans. Two years later, senators, Robert F. Wagner and Edward Costigan, drafted the Costigan-Wagner Bill. The bill was a federal anti-lynching law that proposed federal trials for any law enforcement officers who failed to exercise their responsibilities during a lynching incident.[45]

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[44] Journal and Guide, Saturday, December 9, 1933, found in Papers of the NAACP, Part 07: The Anti-Lynching Campaign, 1912-1955, Series A: Anti-Lynching Investigative Files, 1912-1953
[45] Olson, Walter. "2019 Mencken Society Lecture: Mencken, the NAACP, and the Anti-Lynching Campaign." *Menckeniana*, no. 224 (2019): 8–15.

In 1935, the Costigan-Wagner Bill began to gain traction as the NAACP and other organizations pushed for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to sign the Bill. Tobitt attempted to do his part and on April 24, 1935, sent a letter to NAACP activist Walter White containing two pages of signatures in support of the bill. Tobitt stated that "it may be interesting to know that all who have signed sheet no. 2 are white people." Tobitt stated that one individual was apprehensive to signing the form because "he thinks lynching is necessary for some people." Tobitt did not stand for such draconian beliefs and concluded the letter by saying that "by the time" he "was through with him he relented and signed."[46] Tobitt's letter to Mr. White is important, and for numerous reasons. First, it shows that Jim Crow-esque thinking in Staten Island remained. The anti-black racism in Staten Island did not dissipate after the Samuel Browne case. In fact, it was alive and well and members of the white community saw lynching perfectly fine in the "progressive" North. Second, the fact that the first page was contained signatures from black residents and the second contained signatures from white residents reinforces the fact that Tobitt functioned as an interracial mediator on Staten Island. Although the island was deeply segregated Tobitt was able to infiltrate both circles and garner signatures from a diverse group of people. Lastly, while Harlem pastors galvanized the masses around the anti-lynching movement, Tobitt's work shows how Black Staten Islanders in New York's "outpost" contributed to the war effort against anti-black racism.

Unfortunately, Tobitt's time in Staten Island, while vital, would be short lived. In 1936 after serving as the pastor of the Staten Island Bethel A.M.E. church for a little more than half a

[46] Tobitt letter to Mr. Walter White, April 24, 1935, found in NAACP Papers: The NAACP's Major Campaigns-Scottsboro, Anti-Lynching, Criminal Justice, Peonage, Labor, and Segregation and Discrimination Complaints and Responses

decade, Tobitt's duties were transferred to the Warwich AME Church in Warwich, New York.[47] Although Tobitt left the vibrant activist community of Staten Island, the work against lynching that he had participated in would not be done in vain. A year later, on February 12, 1937, the Staten Island NAACP branch, donning black armbands, along with branches from Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Virginia, participated in a "No more lynching parade" and mass meeting at the Mother AME Zion Church in Harlem. Speakers in attendance were Angelo Herndon, a symbol of legal lynching, Dr. Allan Knight Chalmers, chairman of the United Scottsboro Defense Committee, Rev. A. Clayton Powell, Jr, pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, and Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, along with several youth pastors.[48] Tobitt's move to Harlem would not divorce him from the Black Radical Tradition. Rather, it would put him in the heart of New York's Black activist community.

Black Harlem

Tobitt's ministerial move brought him to a town on the outskirts of New York City, roughly an hour and half drive from where he and his family made their home at 225 West 146th Street, in central Harlem.[49] This new move for Tobitt and his family, while still within the confines of the five boroughs, brought him to a different world. Staten Island was less densely populated with higher prospects for private home ownership. The Harlem that Tobitt arrived to was filled with tenement houses stacked on top of each other. Not a single lot was left without a building in it. Unfortunately, the Harlem that Tobitt settled in, in 1937, would be a tad bit different than his original visit in 1920 for Garvey's UNIA convention. While the neighborhood

[47] *New York Age*, July 4, 1936.
[48] Papers of the NAACP, Part 19: Youth File, Series A: 1919-1939, Group I, Series E, Youth File, Antilynching Demonstrations, February 1937
[49] *New York Age*, January 30, 1937.

was still teeming with black southern and West Indian migrants, Harlem by the mid 1930s was in the grips of the great depression. Unemployment skyrocketed and the once vibrant UNIA, whom Tobitt was a dedicated member of, was a husk of its former self. The New York UNIA division was mired in internal disputes and was fractured. Additionally, the organizations mastermind, Garvey, had been deported and was living in Jamaica, to never return back to the United States.

As Historian Cheryl Greenburg has demonstrated in her seminal work on depression era Harlem, trade unionism, discrimination, and educational racism, of the 1920s relegated the majority of black Harlemites to unskilled jobs with little protections, which meant they were the first to be fired when the stock market crashed in 1929.[50] Stats from the census show that in 1931 black unemployment sat at 25.4 percent for blacks and 19.4 percent for white men. For women, the stats were even more stark with black female unemployment sitting at 28.5 percent for black women and 11.2 percent for white women.[51] Tensions really came to a head with the 1935 Harlem race riot, that Rev. A. Clayton Powell argued was the boiling over of the frustrations experienced by all classes of Black Harlemites.[52] However, all this is not to say that the Harlem Tobitt moved to was bereft of political organizing. Mutual aid societies, churches, fraternal organizations mobilized against the issues plaguing Black Harlemites, most importantly the issue of adequate employment that plagued black men and women. In true form, Tobitt immersed himself in the socio-political world of Harlem that organized against the ills of the depression.

Italy, under the fascist rule of Benito Mussolini, invaded Ethiopia in 1936. For many African Americans, especially Garveyites who dreamed of an independent Africa, this act of war

[50] Cheryl Lynn Greenburg, Or Does it Explode?, 43
[51] Greenburg, Or Does it Explode?, 44
[52] Greenburg, Or Does it Explode?, 211,

elicited strong emotions for African Americans. Historian Joseph Harris makes note that the invasion of Ethiopia sparked a resurgence in Black Nationalist and Pan-Africanist sentiments. [53] While pro Ethiopia support groups sprang around the country, Harlem served as Ethiopia's most vocal allies. For example, in early March 1935, after a border incident in Ethiopia between Italian and Ethiopian soldiers, Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. called a massive meeting at the Abyssinian Baptist Church. The crowd heard speeches from a lineup of both present and former Garveyites including, Joel A. Rodgers, historian and journalist, Dr. Willis N. Huggins, Garveyite and scholar, James W. Ford, head of the Communist Party's Harlem Branch, Arthur Reid, leader of the Patriotic League, and Captain A. L. King, President of the UNIA New York Branch. [54]

In the wake of the 1935 riot, Mayor Fiorella La Guardia, set up a Commission to survey the socio-economic/political atmosphere of the neighborhood. Additionally, the Federal Writers' Project set up a "Negroes in New York" study in 1936 in which it became abundantly clear that over two thousand social, political, and mutual aid societies were present in Harlem providing economic support to those in need.[55] These mutual aid societies ranged from HBCU alumni groups (i.e. Hampton Alumni club, Tuskegee Alumni Association), fraternal societies, and benevolent mutual aid societies (i.e. Bermuda Benevolent Association, Trinidad Benevolent Association, Anguilla Benevolent Association, and St. Lucia United Association).[56] Tobitt did not hesitate to join the organization of the nation that he had spent close to two decades in, the Bermuda Benevolent Association (BBA). The BBA was founded in 1898 and incorporated in

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[53] Joseph Harris, *African American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1994)
[54] William R. Scott, "Black Nationalism and the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict 1934-1936." *The Journal of Negro History* 63, no. 2 (1978): 124.
[55] Scott, "Black Nationalism and the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict 1934-1936," 195.
[56] Ibid.

1920. The organization functioned much like many other progressive organizations, providing financial support and community for Bermudians living in New York. Additionally, the organization kept strong connections with Bermuda receiving visitors from Bermuda on a regular basis and providing updates to the Black owned *Bermuda Recorder Newspaper.* The organization's headquarters were located at 402 W 146th Street.

On October 7th the BBA, met and held a special meeting for its members to meet and mingle with distinguished visitors from Bermuda. Prominent members included Rev. B.A. Galloway D.D., Presiding Elder of the A.M.E. Church in Bermuda; Rev. Eugene Stowe, Pastor of Allen Temple AME Church, Somerset (whom Tobitt had mentored), and Tobitt himself. When addressing the crowd Tobitt stressed his "great interest and love for Bermuda and Bermudans." He stated that some of his best years as a teacher were spent there. He added that although born in Antigua, due to his children being born in Bermuda it "entitled him to call himself a Bermudian." He was excited to hear of the achievements of Reginald Raynor (who opened a gas station during segregation in Bermuda), Raynor was one of his former pupils in the Sunday school. Tobitt expressed that he hoped a day would come where "the powers that be in Bermuda will provide the colleges and institutions that will preclude the necessity of students going abroad to finish their education."[57]

Tobitt not only formed partnerships with fellow Bermudians - as many West Indians that found themselves in New York did - but he developed relationships with several former Garveyites. As stated earlier, one of the defining fights in depression era Harlem was the fight for equal employment opportunities. It is no surprise that many of the individuals in the fight for equal employment were former members of the UNIA. As historian Keisha Blain has argued,

[57] *Bermuda Recorder*, October 22, 1938.

"inspirational Garveyism" which was the long lasting influence that the Garvey movement had on its followers played a role in later iterations of political organizing. As such, much of the political organizing in Harlem was spearheaded by former Garveyites. As stated earlier, political halls were not the only place that political connections and community leaders encountered one another. The NYA reported on April 23, 1938, that Mrs. C. I. Nesbitt put on a fashion show at the Harlem Y.W.C.A. auditorium in which numerous black women modeled Nesbitt's various gowns and dresses that she designed. Along with the modeling, vocal, and instrumental solos, dramatic readings and interpretive dance was featured as well. Amongst the packed auditorium were honored guest's editor of the *NYA* Fred R. Moore, Rev. R. H. Tobitt, and Author Reid of the Harlem Labor Union, Inc.[58]

The Harlem Labor Union was founded by Ira Kemp and Author Reid. Ira Kemp passed away from a heart attack in 1937.[59] However, both men shared similar politics to Tobitt. Both Ira Kemp and Arthur Reed were former members of the UNIA and still subscribed to much of Garvey's principles. Reed was a West Indian immigrant and Kemp was a Black Southern migrant from Georgia.[60] One of the main objectives of the H. L. U was creating a sustained black economy and combatting the rampant employment practices throughout Harlem. The H. L. U was officially incorporated in 1936, and was rather small, but made up for its lack of size with radiant energy coming from its youth, who were primarily West Indian.[61] Members of the H.L.U. had participated in the 1934 Harlem Boycott, which was a mass movement that stopped

[58] New York Age, April 23, 1938.
[59] New York Age, December 11, 1937.
[60] William Muraskin, "The Harlem boycott of 1934: Black Nationalism and the rise of labor-union consciousness", Labor History, 13:3 (1972), 367.
[61] Muraskin, "The Harlem boycott of 1934," 370-371.

supporting white owned businesses in Harlem that did not hire darker skinned black salesgirls along Harlem's financial district, 125th Street.[62]

The activities of the H.L.U. carried on even after the co-founder, Ira Kemp, died in 1937. In fact, employment discrimination continued well through the 1930s and Arthur Reid, who now assumed dual positions as president of the African Patriotic League announced in 1938 that there would be another round of boycotts on stores that do not hire Blacks in Harlem. Reed declared to a crowd of members of the HUL that "The fight is on! Starting now we will demand that every store in Harlem give Negroes their share of jobs or suffer the consequences of our picket campaign" which took place in mid-April of 1938.[63] Surely, Tobitt who had been at the event and rubbed shoulders with Reed was aware of the ongoing fight for proper job equality. Moreover, Tobitt organized his own community center for Staten Island youth and understood the revolutionary protentional the youth had if properly organized. Tobitt's next relationship with Antiguan-born George A. Weston, would provide him the opportunity to continue to work with Harlem youth and to engage with grassroots politics.

Weston was born September 23, 1885, in the Village of Green Bay, Antigua. At a young age Weston turned to the seas and worked as a seaman, on a boat owned by his cousin, Captain Samuel Gumbs. While aboard Weston traveled between islands engaging in trade and even sailed to Europe, the United States, and Canada. It was during these years that he "looked with amazement at the ruthless economic exploitation of the black masses."[64] Also, through his travels at sea he came to "appreciate the significance of international commerce as an important

[62] Muraskin, "The Harlem boycott of 1934," 362.
[63] *New York Age*, April 9, 1938.
[64] George and Maudell Weston Papers, Box 1, Folder 2: George Weston Interview, 7.

agent in the distribution of material and the creation of wealth." This realization was critical to his agreeing with Marcus Garvey's intent for establishing the Black Star Line.[65]

Weston settled in Boston, Massachusetts in 1917 he would marry fellow Antiguan Francis Rosina Amos.[66] Weston rose through the ranks of the UNIA, becoming president of the New York branch in 1925. In that same year, during Garvey's imprisonment, he led a revolt against Garvey insisting on the right of the New York branch to full legal ownership of the impressive Liberty Hall property. Ula Taylor points out that George Weston also took issue with Amy J. Garvey, who assumed leadership during her husband's imprisonment. He accused her of inciting agitation between American and West Indian members of the UNIA. He claimed that she intentionally pitted him against William Sherrill, an African American man who was the leader of the New York UNIA Division.[67]

Subsequently, Weston founded the Pioneer Negroes of the World in 1926. The organization would have a short period of success in the late 1920s before succumbing to the stressors of the great depression. On February 7, 1927, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported that the Pioneer Negroes of the World was launched by 200 men and women at Mother Zion Church located at 153 W. 136th St in Harlem. The goal of the organization was to improve the "social and political status" of Blacks in America. The former deputy mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone, Frederick W. Dove unveiled the charter of the organization. [68]. Weston in an interview recorded some years later stated, "We organized the Pioneer Negroes of the World to carry out the same

[65] George and Maudell Weston Papers, Box 1, Folder 2: George Weston Interview, 8.
[66] George and Maudell Weston Papers, Box 1, Folder 2: George Weston Interview, 9.
[67] Ula Y. Taylor. *The veiled Garvey: the life and times of Amy Jacques Garvey*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002): 67.
[68] *Brooklyn Daily Eagle,* Feb 7, 1927.

objectives as the New York Branch because we did not wish to perpetuate a confrontation with …Jacques.".[69]

A few weeks later February 26 the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported that the expressed aims of the organization were to "If we can organize the Negroes of the United States or any one state of the United States, we shall be doing a great job. To organize the Negroes of the world is a task as hopeless as trying to ball out the Atlantic Ocean with a teaspoon. The best way and the only way to improve the status of the Negroes of the world is for each group of Negroes to improve its status right where it is. Improvement, like charity, should begin at home."[70] The Pioneer's took a tad bit more nationalist approach than their predecessor organization, UNIA. Garvey believed in a global African family and dissuaded his members to privilege national and ethnic identities over a global African one.

A year later, on January 7, the *Pittsburg Courier*, in a section titled "Thrifty New Yorkers Buy Apartment" reported that the President, William L. Sherill reported that a week earlier the Pioneer Negroes of the world bought a large apartment house at 223 West 142nd street. The article concluded by saying that "Officials of the organization say that the acquisition of the property in Harlem is the beginning of the business program which the association has worked out. Branches in other cities will invest in property."[71] The business program of the Pioneers was to "establish a business involving the shipment of products from Negro farms in the South to Negro grocery stores in the North."[72] The Pioneer Negroes of the World would not make it past the hardships of the great depression.[73]

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[69] George and Maudell Weston Papers, Box 1, Folder 2: George Weston Interview, 29.
[70] *Pittsburgh Courier*, Feb 26, 1927.
[71] *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 7, 1928.
[72] *New York Age,* August 23*, 1958.*
[73] George and Maudell Weston Papers, Box 1, Folder 2: George Weston Interview, 30.

As Black Nationalism resurged in Harlem in the wake of Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, the Pioneer Negroes were recharted in 1939 with new officers and directors. Officers were as follows: George A. Weston, President, Jacob H. Murray, Vice President, Joseph A. Moore, Financial Secretary, Pearl V. Morton, Corresponding Secretary, P.A. Moore, Treasurer, J.A. Rodgers, Director of Education and Publicity, and Rev. R. H. Tobitt, Associate Director.[74] Its headquarters were in Harlem at 100 St. Nicholas Avenue, the home of George Weston. The rechartered Pioneer Negroes of the World maintained many of the same goals as it did in the late 1920s, however, as conditions in Harlem worsened it expanded the scope of its mission as well.

The new Platform was:
1) To disseminate Negro History
2) To advance Negro Culture and Higher Education
3) To work for economic Independence for the Negro Race
4) Unification and Organization for the Negroes of the World
5) Full Political Rights and Privileges of every Community and Nation wherever Negroes choose to reside
6) Establishment and development of all Negro Nations and Communities
7) Religious Tolerance within the Negro Race, and Between the Black Christians and Mohammedans in Africa and the World
8) Recognition of the One God, who is the Loving Father of all men, which makes all mankind brothers of one another.

The new iteration of the PNOW of the world also acted as a benevolent association by offering certain advantages to its members. These included:
1) Social and Educational Activities
2) Labor Bureau to secure lucrative employment for members
3) Loan Fund for members in financial difficulties
4) Support and cooperation for members of the race in business
5) Legal advice and protection
6) Participation in profits derived from subsidiary business
7) Accurate and detailed information about local and international conditions effecting the Negro race throughout the world.
8) Courageous Political Leadership that views all thing from the standpoint of immediate benefit to the negro group as against the individual.
9) Fearless and outspoken exposition of Negro grievances throughout the world.[75]

[74] George and Maudell Weston Papers, Box 1, Folder 2.
[75] George and Maudell Weston Papers, Box 1, Folder 2.

The Pioneer Negroes of the World maintained a mission that sought to benefit local Harlemites and Blacks across the country. The rechartering of the Pioneer Negroes of the World came at an interesting time.

The rechartering of the PNOW came when the world was thrusted into the second world war. Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland, in 1939, plunged Europe into another bloody and protracted conflict. While the United States sat on the sidelines for the first two years of the war, the US soon joined the conflict when Imperial Japan bombed the US Navy base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941. As was the case during the first world war, African Americans were uneasy with the idea of fighting and dying to ensure global democracy while democracy was denied to them at home. As such the campaign for "Double Victory" took hold amongst African Americans across the country. The Double V campaign was an ideology championed by Blacks that called for not only a victory against fascism in Europe but a victory against racism in the United States. Black soldiers and nurses faced racism within the US military as they did during World War I. What's more, is on the Homefront, as the US war industry required more labor to meet wartime demands, defense industry contractors enacted racial discrimination against Blacks. [76] Prominent civil rights activist, A. Philip Randolph threatened to lead a March on Washington demanding an end to discrimination in defense industries and government agencies, and segregation in the armed forces.[77]

The fight for an anti-lynching bill that was spearheaded by the NAACP in the 1930s did not ease up in the 1940s. In fact, On March 5, 1941, the Journal of the Senate reported that the Committee on the Judiciary received a resolution from the Pioneer Negroes of the World

[76] Cornelius L. Bynum, *A Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 162
[77] Bynum, *A Philip Randolph*, 157

"favoring the enactment of an appropriate antilynching bill to end lynching in the United States."[78] It is not surprising that the Pioneer Negroes of the World were vocal about the enactment of antilynching legislation. Perhaps, Tobitt's presence in the organization and his prior antilynching work with the Staten Island NAACP spurred the organization to carry the baton on the issue. This speaks to the fact that even grassroots organizations balanced the duty of helping everyday Harlemites overcome the struggle of the great depression in addition to agitating on the national level for equality.

By 1941, the executive board of the Pioneer Negroes were seasoned veterans of the Garvey movement. Additionally, all the members of the organizations rechartering in 1939 by now were in their late 50s and early 60s. The same energy that Weston, Tobitt, and Rodgers gave to the Garvey movement to facilitate its growth would be hard to give to the Pioneers now that they were up in age. Fortunately, a young Harlemite named Harry Fredericks and his wife joined the Pioneer Negroes in 1940. Harry met George Weston at a rally on 116th and 8th avenue in August 1940, and being "impressed with his eloquence and common-sense views" Harry quickly signed up. Seeing that the Pioneer Negroes needed a place to hold meetings Harry wrote a song entitled "In Swamplands" in which he recorded and used the royalties to purchase a meeting hall at 650 Lenox Avenue to host meetings and member registration.[79] Harry Frederick reported that registration of new members was the most important phase of the organization. He stated, "I have interviews hundreds of Negroes now working as menials and there's a tremendous amount of skill going to waste there because there isn't one Negro organization that can really represent

[78] Journal of the Senate of the United States of America: First Session of the Seventy-Seventh Congress (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1941) pg. 91, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015087709161&view=1up&seq=95&q1=Pioneer%20Negroes%20of%20the%20World.
[79] *New York Amsterdam Star-News,* Sept 6, 1941.

them." Harry went on to state "New York seems to be a regular burial ground for skilled Negro workers and yet I see plenty of white artisans working in Harlem." Harry was also keenly aware that while the increased military production for World War 2 should offer blacks employment opportunities it in fact did the opposite. He stated that "every fresh report proves that the Jim Crow philosophy is being strengthened rather than eradicated."[80] Harry's concern about black labor directly tied into the second benefit to members being the "labor bureau to secure lucrative employment for members."

Depression era Harlem saw dismal numbers for employment for male and female black Harlemites. The Pioneer Negroes took several steps, beyond street corner rallies, to alleviate problems for not only their members but the black Harlem community. When World War 2 broke out in 1939, and the U.S. expanded its factory production output, unfortunately many firms that had defense contracts with the U.S. government did not higher certain racial groups in including African-Americans, Jewish, Italian, and German Americans. As a result, on June 25, 1941, President Franklin Delanore Roosevelt issued Executive Order, Number 8802: "Reaffirming the government's policy of full participation in the defense program by all persons regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin." He then established within the Office of Production Management a Committee on Fair Employment Practice to ensure that fair employment was being exercised by contractors with defense contracts with the government. As such, in NYC there was established the Metropolitan Council on Fair Employment Practice. In the summer of 1941, the Committee of Fair Employment sent out a questionnaire that any community organization should fill out in order for the Committee to decide which organizations could gain priority to negro defense job placements. The questionnaire wanted to know the

[80] Ibid.

function of the interested organization, how the organization seeks to further the Presidents Executive Order, and how many individuals would be able to assist in the work of the coordinating committee. The minutes of the December 22, 1941, Committee meeting show that 26 organizations were accepted and seven organizations, including the Pioneer Negroes of the World, were not eligible for membership "on the basis of answers to questionnaire."[81]

Executive Secretary, Howard A. Van Dine, concluded his report by stating that "the membership committee presents this report of its meeting and action with the feeling that it has been reasonably lenient and broad-minded in its decisions and recommends its acceptance." The rejection of the Pioneer Negroes of the World from the committee is not surprising. Afterall, the Pioneer Negroes of the World was an organization comprised primarily of former Garveyites, a movement that only 20 years earlier received unprecedented government surveillance and resources to facilitate its takedown. Referring back to the organization's platform, its proponent of black self-determination more than likely sparked an alarm for the committee. The Pioneers were not the only "militant" organization banned from acceptance in the committee. The Negro March on Washington Committee, headed by A. Phillip Randolph, was also rejected for admittance on the grounds of their questionnaire responses.[82] Most on the same grounds that the Pioneers were denied admission. The Pioneers would continue their advocacy of black economic autonomy in Harlem until its ultimate collapse in the mid 1940s. The Pioneers even served as a form of economic aid to Garvey's first wife, Amy Ashwood Garvey. In October 1944, Amy Ashwood had desires to become a Liberian citizen and even contacted Liberian President

[81] Papers of the NAACP, Part 13: NAACP and Labor, Series B: Cooperation and Organized Labor, 1940-1955, New York City, Metropolitan Council on Fair Employment, 1941-1942. Pp. 166. Library of Congress.
[82] Ibid.

William V.S. Tubman to help expedite her entry into the country. Amy contacted the Pioneer Negroes of the World and received substantial funding for her Liberian venture.[83]

At any rate, while the Pioneers political activity peaked in 1941, at a rate not seen since the late 1920s, Tobitt's activism was not simply limited to former Garveyite circles. As a native Antiguan, and a longtime resident of Bermuda, Tobitt was sure to be a part of several Caribbean benevolent associations in Harlem that agitated for change for the betterment of West Indians in the U.S. and the Caribbean. Tobitt was a man whose political whereabouts brought him in contact with many individuals. As the War in Europe escalated and the United States ramped up its efforts to support the marooned nation of Britain, the Caribbean's strategic place in the war was once again centralized.[84] The same way in which the Caribbean found itself in the middle of European warmongering during WW1, the region found itself in the situation again. On March 9, the U.S. and Great Britain announced the creation of the "Anglo American Commission" designed to "strengthen economic and social co-operation in the vital Caribbean area." As such, the U.S. undertook the creation and expansion of naval bases in Bermuda, Trinidad and Tobago, British Guiana, the Leeward Islands, Barbados, and the Windward Islands. In a effort of so-called benevolence, the Anglo-American commission promised to conduct research on health, labor, agriculture, and housing conditions, however, only in the areas where naval bases were being built.[85] As several historians have pointed out, much of the interest in the socio-economic welfare of West Indian nations by Britain and the US during WW2 was concerned with assuring

[83] Tony Martin. *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan-Africanist, Feminist, and Wife No. 1* (New Marcus Garvey Library, 2007), 179.
[84] The Caribbean was important to WW2 for various reasons. One, Germany's U Boats harassed U.S. shipping. Securing naval bases in the Caribbean would give the Anglo-American alliance the ability to protect its shipping lines and a jumping off point to defend against German U-Boat attacks.
[85] *St. Petersburg Times*, March 9, 1942

their allegiance to the crown and quelling any dissent and not in any way of assuring sovereignty, which had been vocalized by West Indians since the end of the first world war. President Roosevelt establishing a Caribbean advisory committee, yet, it was not composed of a single Black West Indian. The closest person to being Caribbean, or of African descent, on the committee was white Puerto Rican supreme court justice Martin Travieso.[86] The same way that Both West Indians and African Americans in the US responded to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, they also acted accordingly to the U.S. imperialistic encroachment of the West Indies.

As such, Rev. A Clayton Powell Jrs newly started newspaper, *The People Voice* made mention of several important political happenings taking place in Harlem at the time. In an article titled "Caribbean Group Made Permanent" announced that at a mass meeting at Harlem's Renaissance Ballroom in late April, 1942, The American West-Indian Association for Caribbean Affairs was made into an official organization. At the meeting speeches were made by Rev. A. C. Powell, Jr., Assemblyman Hulan Jack, Attorney Joseph C. Morris, Atty, Lester Taylor and Hodge Kirnon. The stated goals of the Association were to work closely with President Roosevelt, the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission and its Advisory Committee in order to "demand" the "appointment of several US Negro citizens of West Indian birth or ancestry to the Commission and Advisory Committee."[87] At the Harlem YMCA on May 23, the AWIA for Caribbean Affairs met again, this time to declare its executive board and laid out a nine point program for the "social and economic improvement of conditions in the West Indies"[88]

[86] Ibid.
[87] *The Peoples Voice*, May 9, 1942.
[88] *The Peoples Voice*, June 6, 1942.

The elected officers were as such: President Joseph C. Morris, 1st Vice Pres. Augustine A Austin, 2nd VP Attorney Richard E Carey, 3rd VP, Dr. Lucien M. Brown, 4th VP, H.S. Boulin 5th VP Dr. Pearl Strachn, Secretary I. Newton Braithwaite, and Treasurer T. E. Hanon. The board of directors were comprised of a host of local Harlem attorneys, reverends, community activists, and former Garveyites. Tobitt served on the board of directors along with notable historian Dr. L. D. Reddick, former Garveyites such as Hodge Kirnon, and prominent Harlem clergymen like Rev. James Herman Robinson.[89] The seven-point program read as such:

> -Labor: the recognition of organized labor with the right to collective bargaining: the right to strike; the right to fair and equitable working conditions; maximum wages and minimum hours; Workmen's Compensation and Unemployment Insurance Laws.
> -Agriculture: Scientific training; variety and rotation of crops; breaking up the large estates held by absentee landlords.
> -Housing: eradication of slums through help of government and employers.
> -Health: enactment of modern public health laws; eradication of tropical diseases; assistance by US scientific medical foundations.
> -Education: free compulsory elementary and secondary education; a central university providing the most advanced methods suitable to the progress and advancement of the islands.
> -Economics: survey of natural and economic resources; inclusion of these islands among the most favored nations in the tariff policy of the US.
> -Government: civil rights and Four Freedoms; introduction of universal suffrage and representative democratic self-government.[90]

It would not take long before the AWIA had a chance to put their calls for self-government to use. *The Peoples Voice,* on June 13, reported that twelve days earlier in the Bahamas, a massive riot broke out by 15,000 black workers. The black Bahamian laborers, whom had been employed by U.S. contractors since early 1942, to build naval and army bases, protested intolerable living conditions and subpar wages. US contractors justified their lack of adequate pay to black workers by stating that they feared "that if the worker is adequately paid,

[89] *The Peoples Voice*, June 6, 1942.
[90] *The Peoples Voice*, May 23, 1942.

the economic equilibrium of the island will be upset." The "economic equilibrium" referred to was one of discrimination, racism, and the maintenance of white minority rule of the island. Author of the article, Ellis A. Williams declared that the Bahamas was "the playground of" America's "idle rich." To this end, improper treatment of black Bahamian laborers ensured that they would not gain tangible wealth from the expansion of military fortifications and the Bahamas could remain a white oligarchy, much like Bermuda.[91]

The plight of Bahamians laborers at the hands of US contractors did not go unnoticed by African Americans and West Indians in New York. Thanks especially, to newspapers like the People's Voice, Black New York activists were kept abreast to the Panama Canal-esque practices of US contractors. As such, community leaders in Harlem launched "a campaign for Liberation of the West Indian Islands." On June 14, a mass meeting was held at Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist church. The massive crowd garnered members from across the Harlem activists community. Members of the AWIA were present represented by Dr. Lucien Brown, members of the UNIA were present represented by Captain A. L. King,Felipe Sabater, pastor of the Bethel Christian Church, Puerto Rican activist Jose Cesteros, along with members of the National Negro Congress represented by Hope B. Stevens, and editor of the PV Adam C. Powell, Jr. The theme of the meeting was "A Free Caribbean." Members stressed that the establishment of American bases in the Caribbean was almost a transfer of power since America was "footing thre bill." Since, America, the harbinger of so-called "freedom" was present in the Caribbean made it almost impossible for "continued domination of the islands by the Vritish" since it would go against "ideas of freedom for all people."[92]

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[91] *The Peoples Voice*, June 13, 1942.
[92] Ibid.

The *zeitgeist* for the end of colonialism that swept through Harlem can largely be accredited to the massive growth of Garveyism that took place just 20 years prior. Garvey's call for a free and independent Africa, and by proxy Caribbean, was a message heard by grassroots organizers and Black Harlem politicians. In fact, at an annual memorial service held in Garvey's honor on June 28, 1942, at the St. James Presbyterian Church located at. 141st and St. Nicholas Avenue, members of the UNIA New York Branch gathered in addition to, numerous prominent clergy men were in attendance including clergyman and activist William Lloyd Imes, Tobitt, and Rev. A. Clayton Powell Jr.[93] It is not surprising that Tobitt was sat on the board of directors for the AWIA. It is not surprising either that Rev. Powell was present at almost nearly every AWIA mass meeting in addition to supporting a Garvey memorial. Powell was in close proximity to Tobitt, a man that led, from the ground, the UNIA's cause for West Indian autonomy just two decades prior.

A May 15, 1943, article published in the *PV* entitled "Sugar Planters Prefer Natives in Ignorance" denounced the dismal education situation of the West Indies stating that the current educational systems of the Caribbean "are an insult to the native intelligence and the great civilized traditions of black peoples." The article went on to highlight how in many Caribbean nations roughly half of the population was illiterate, and many youth dropped out of school around 13 or 14 to work the sugar cane fields. Additionally, many blacks went to public schools where pay was meager for teachers ($15-20 per week) while white students went to well-funded private schools. The AWIA published their "Caribbean Charter" in 1942 and proposed "free compulsory education up to a reasonable age" in all British Caribbean territories and an "extension of secondary education." Additionally, the AWIA urged that a central West Indian

[93] *New York Age*, June 27, 1942.

university was needed so that Black West Indians could be trained to be doctors, technicians, and statesman right in the Caribbean. These issues were what Tobitt argued about when he was in Bermuda in the 1910s. The fact that there was not substantial education apparatus in the Caribbean meant that the Caribbean's best and brightest minds had to leave for the US or Europe for their schooling.[94]

West Indians living in America were fully aware of the aggrandizement for self-governance coming from the West Indies. Jamaica's Peoples National Party, the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, the British Guiana Labor Congress, were only a few of the many labor parties coming out of the Caribbean that sought to show the hypocrisy of the Anglo-Americans fight against fascism but the continuation of fascism right in the British Empire. President of the AWIA, Joseph C. Morris stated that the AWIA "united immigrant West Indians from all of the islands, to work for a federation which will cooperate economically and politically with the free peoples of this country."[95] African Americans and West Indians did not always agree, even within their own respective groups. However, the same way the "Double V' campaign showed the hypocrisy in American democracy, WW2 showed the hypocrisy in British Imperialism. For Harlemites, many of whom were former Garveyites, organizations such as the AWIA allowed them another opportunity to push for Caribbean autonomy from the shores of the United States. The moment of the AWIA and members like Tobitt being a part of it speaks to the phenomenon of inspirational Garveyism and how Garveyites did not merely vanish into oblivion. As Historian Eric Duke points out, Caribbean Federation did arrive for the Caribbean, but it was short lived. Independence swept the Caribbean in the 1960s, as the Black Power movement gained steam

[94] *The People's Voice*, May 15, 1943.
[95] *The People's Voice*, May 22, 1943.

across the Africana world. The Bahamas would not receive independence until 1973, Tobitt's home country of Antigua, 1980, and his second home Bermuda is still a British colony to this day. Tobitt continued to be involved with Harlem community activates after WW2 until his death in 1961.

Conclusion

Tobitt's New York experience is important, but sadly under studied. The primary documents under review tell us that he did not slither into obscurity after his tenure as a high-ranking UNIA official in the 1920s. In fact, Tobitt added to his activist resume when he joined the freedom movements in Staten Island and in Harlem. Although Tobitt left Staten Island as its Black community developed a strong socio-political network, racial tension in the island would not subside. In 1945, a white women accused a Black GI of raping her, garnering the attention of the Mayor and numerous city councilman.[96] The accusation led to a litany of rumors accusing the roughly 4,000 GI's stationed in Stapleton of looting, rape, murder, and overall disturbance of peace.[97] Instances of racial tension, violence, and discrimination would be common place for Black Staten Islanders through the twentieth century. About 7 miles north, in Harlem, Black activists continued to fight for both local and international concerns. Although the Pioneer Negroes of the World had a short tenure, Garvey's ideology would permeate through the hearts of minds of Harlemites allowing for later movements such as the African Nationalists Pioneer Movement, Nation of Islam, Rastafarianism, Black Panther Party, and the Five Percent Nation to take root in the following decades.

[96] *Daily News*, March 15, 1945.
[97] *New York Age*, March 24, 1945.

Tobitt, like all human beings was a multidimensional person. As mentioned earlier, Black women activists in Staten Island organized card games for those to attend from the tri state area. Leisure and play in a world filled with stress and trauma was a radical act within itself. Moreover, Tobitt engaged regularly in his own form of leisure. In addition to the plays he wrote and put on for the Staten Island community, he enjoyed the British colonial game of cricket.

CHAPTER 5: West Indian Cricket and Radical Cultural Politics, 1925-1945

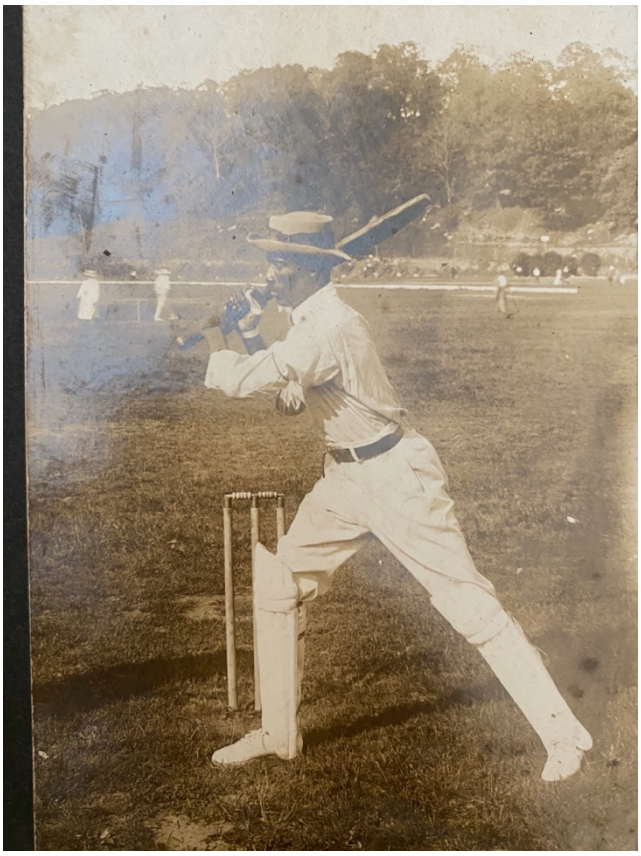

Figure 4: Picture: R. H. Tobitt Playing Cricket, date unknown. Photo Courtesy of Diane Hansen-Velazquez

Introduction

This chapter sheds light on the radical cultural politics in Bermuda and New York City during the inter-war years (1925-1945). I argue that using Tobitt's involvement in cricket culture, we gain a more nuanced understanding of cultural politics during the interwar years. Using conceptual methods in understanding "Black West Indian Cricket" I argue that cricket served as a subversive space away from the watchful eye of British colonial officials and promoted what Robert Hill call's "long-range Caribbean nationalism.

[1] Cricket in the British Caribbean and its diaspora cannot be divorced from the region's history of colonization and the racism that it bred. Moreover, it cannot be divorced from the growth of a West Indian identity and the struggle for national independence that grew out of it. Many cricketers, whether professional or amateur, were at the vanguard for West Indian liberation. So too was Tobitt.

In 1925, Tobitt, donning the UNIA title of Ambassador to Great Britain, returned to Bermuda after his failed attempt to meet with Britain's Foreign and Colonial Officers. This marked the end of his career as a UNIA high official. Tobitt reacclimated to life in Bermuda by seeking readmission to the AME Church Conference. The AME Church conference meeting minutes, from 1925-1930, show that while Tobitt was present in church affairs, he did not have as active of a voice on the major social issues as he did before 1920. If one were to judge Tobitt's commitment to the freedom struggle based on his involvement with the UNIA and AME, between 1925-1930, they would be remiss in understanding the complexities of grassroots political activism. In fact, in the immediate years following Tobitt's permanent return to Bermuda he created the Bermuda Amateur Cricket League. Moreover, upon his move to New York City in 1930, he captained cricket teams and organized numerous cricket matches in Staten Island and the Bronx, New York. These cricket spaces, while on the surface appeared as sites of leisure devoid of political activity, were in fact, spaces of radical diasporic political thought.

Cricket and the West Indies

The modern game of cricket evolved in seventeenth century English society out of the myriad of bat and ball games played by the English peasantry. During the eighteenth century the

[1] Robert Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers Vol. 11*, Lxvii.

game was restructured and propagated by the English elite. The English ruling class inserted their values and aspirations into the game, in essence making cricket an extension of the moral codes of the ruling class. [2] To play cricket properly, by elitist standards, meant to replicate a Christian (i.e. Anglican) heterosexual, hyper-masculine archetype that showed unwavering loyalty to the English crown. Although such ideas were disseminated throughout England's popular culture, the game was to be played solely by the elite, and visually consumed by the working and lower classes. Cricket Historian Alan Cobley argues that, for the English working class, cricket represented the values of the dominant class, and thus was worthy of imitation. He contends that while the elite attempted to keep the game exclusive it "has always been a common currency of pleasure."[3] Although cricket was enjoyed by all, only a few played. However, the lower classes clamored to partake in the "Kingly" game as well.[4]

In the age of conquest and colonization, Britain exported religion, guns, and men to its colonies, in service of mercantilism. As such, the game of cricket was exported to the British West Indies in the early nineteenth century, by British seafarers and soldiers.[5] While the game was a form of leisure for whites maintaining the West Indian colonies, cricket Historians C. L. R. James, Brian Stoddart and Keith Sandiford argue that cricket also carried the task of furthering empire building and the maintenance of the plantation society paradigm – master and slave.[6] As argued in chapter 1, the English exported their social institutions, most notably the church, to its colonies in order to maintain economic, political, and social hegemony. Such institutions were

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[2] Alan Cobley 'Cricket and the Black Struggle in South Africa.' In Hilary Beckles (ed.) in *A Spirit of Dominance: Cricket and Nationalism in the West Indies* (Canoe Press, 1998), 123.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Hillary Beckles and Briand Stoddart eds., Liberation Cricket: West Indies Cricket Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 34.
[6] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 34.

present in the British Caribbean to make clear the demarcation between the ruling and subservient classes.[7] Historian Hillary Beckles makes note that the game of cricket functioned in the same capacity in British colonial society as it did in the English homeland. Like the Anglican church, cricket was an institution solely reserved for membership of the English plantation and merchant classes. As such, throughout the British Caribbean, cricket was to be played by the plantation elite and watched by the majority black population. Beckles had this to say about the game in the West Indies:

> "Cricket… carrying the 'made in England' hallmark, was marked and consumed as a refined elite product in much the same way as was 'high Church' Anglicanism… Within the recipient plantation world, it reaffirmed the existing race/class division of labour while at the same time reassured supporters of empire that the central purpose of colonies… was to consume with satisfaction things made at the centre." [8]

In the same manner that the English working class desired to partake in the game, so too did Black West Indians. In the decades before and following emancipation, the majority Black populations of the British Caribbean engaged in a litany of uprisings and rebellions.[9] Britain scrambled for ways in which to quell the popular unrest in the region. As such social institutions such as the church, education, and the game of cricket were chosen as the pacifying elixir. Beckles states, "The downward social mobility of cricket into the villages of blacks was guaranteed so long as the elite ascribed to it the normative values of respectability and honour, since the frantic search for betterment by this 'semi-free' population involved the attainment of these social goals."[10] Most notably, after the Morant Bay rebellion, British colonial officials

[7] See Chapter 1
[8] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 34.
[9] See Chapter 1
[10] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 35.

sought to instill Victorian social mores into Black West Indians. This was not done to blur the racial dominance hierarchy, rather, to insure that Black West Indians were compliant with the unjust post emancipation social order.

In the years following emancipation, education was one of the means through which the English elite would instill Victorian culture in British West Indian society. Historian Aviston Downes argues that the mid nineteenth century ideology of 'muscular Christianity' was inculcated into Black male pupils of independent and denomination ran schools. Muscular Christianity arose during the Victorian age in which Christian ideals were paired with Victorian conventions of masculinity (i.e. patriotic duty, self-sacrifice, and athleticism). While colonial officials did not intend to elevate Black West Indian men to the same level as Anglo-Saxon men, 'muscular Christianity' served to instill respect for the Crown, and a rejection of the radical tradition of unrest and insurgency. Black West Indian manhood was molded into a refined masculinity in which Black men respected the crown and sacrificed himself to the greater good of the British Empire. With the increasing numbers of Black men entering teacher colleges and imperial schools, cricket was the vehicle used to instill proper civil responsibility into the Black working class.[11] Tobitt, the product of a Black working-class family steeped in the Black Radical Tradition was one of thousands of Black men that sat in the classrooms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century receiving an education in 'muscular Christianity' through the game of cricket.[12]

[11] Aviston Downes, 'Boys of the Empire: Elite Education and the Socio-cultural Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity in Barbados, 1875-1920. In Rhoda Reddock (ed.) *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses* . Kingston: UWI Press, 2004, 109.
[12] See Chapter 1

Although cricket may have reached working class Blacks toiling on sugar plantations and young black men being schooled in elite teacher training institutions, cricket on the highest level was relegated to the white elite. National cricket clubs came to prominence in the late nineteenth century and garnered the eye and awe of many. These clubs were dominated by the white elite, who primarily came from the top civil service echelons.[13] Membership in these clubs were based on a combination of race and class. For example, Beckles makes note that in 1900 the Georgetown Cricket Club was comprised of white elites that came from colonial administrative positions or had bourgeoise professions (i.e. lawyer or doctor). Moreover, the $10 entrance fee and $10 annual subscription helped to keep the heir of exclusivity. Additionally, CLR James, wrote in memoir *Beyond the Boundary*, that although educated, his dark skin and working-class background barred him from entrance in certain clubs in Trinidad. As a result, clubs functioned on the premise of race and class requirements.[14]

In the 1880s intra-island cricket play development into an inter-Caribbean cricket club touring network. Clubs from Antigua, Jamaica, Trinidad, and other islands traveled through the region playing for colonial Cups in which "white elite cricket flourished."[15] The inter Caribbean games evolved into the 1886 creation of a West Indian Cricket Team. The West Indian team was selected to play in an extra-territorial match against Canada, and as such the team was comprised of the white colonial elite selected from various islands. Beckles argues that "West Indies" for the white colonial population was rooted in imperial origins and territorial space. It did not have

[13] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 17.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 194.

the same signifier of "consciousness and identity" that Blacks would subscribe to in the early twentieth century.[16]

Beckles argues that when West Indies cricket reached the global scale, through the travels of the West Indies cricket team, it was seen as another game that represented the showy display of English gentlemanliness that was "devoid of overt political rancor." However, Beckles argues that "the political exclusion of nonwhites, and the reasons offered to rationalize the consequences, meant that blacks confronted cricket at the outset as an activity associated with racial elitism, respectability and ideological authority."[17] Cultural Theorist, Richard Iton, argues that popular culture is in fact political.[18] As such, for West Indians their relationship to the game, since its arrival to the region in the nineteenth century, has always been tied to the larger fight for Black self-determination. This cricket culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is the context in which Tobitt and millions of other West Indians came of age.

Cricket in Bermuda

Tobitt arrived in Bermuda with his family in 1910. Upon Tobitt's arrival he would have learned that cricket enjoyed a rich tradition in Bermuda, especially amongst the Black Bermudian community. This was the same case for his home island of Antigua. Cricket was introduced to Bermuda, like much of the wider Caribbean, in the late 1800s through British colonists. As was the case throughout the British Caribbean, the game was originally relegated to the white colonial class. However, it quickly became intertwined with Black working-class culture. By the 1880s Cricket became a common mainstay at the annual emancipation

[16] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 192.
[17] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 150.
[18] Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 4.

commemorations throughout Bermuda. By the late nineteenth century, in Black communities such as Tuckers Town, cricket pitches and matches became a central part to Black community formation.[19] In August 1902, friendly societies agreed that a formal cricket match would serve as the celebration of emancipation. The annual celebration became known as "Cup Match." Every year, on the first of August, the St George's Cricket Club would play the Somerset Cricket Club in commemoration of emancipation. The pairing of the celebration of Caribbean emancipation with cricket should not be read as random coincidence. The use of cricket, in celebration of a watershed moment in Black Caribbean history, speaks to the early linkages that the game had with black political popular culture.

Tobitt arrived to Bermuda exactly 10 years after the creation of cup match. As early as July 1913 he played in several matches with the St. George's cricket club.[20] Unfortunately, he never played in any cup match games. This could have been in part due to his age. As discussed in chapter 2, Tobitt became headmaster of the St. George's High School in 1912. Tobitt did not hesitate to immerse pupils in the game. As an educator, and product of "muscular learning," Tobitt's pupils at the St. George's High School engaged in a fair share of "muscular learning" as well. The St. George's High School played numerous games against other grammar schools in the St. George's region. For example, a spectator wrote into the Royal Gazette on September 10, 1913, in regard to a game played between the students of Tobitt's St. George's High School and the St. George's Primary School. One adult was allowed to play on each team, and the onlooker noted that Tobitt bowled the Primary schoolers "as he might in a Somerset-St. George's test

[19] Black History in Bermuda: Timeline Spanning 5 Centuries. Published by Citizens Uprooting Racism in Bermuda (CURB); https://www.humanrights.bm/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Black-History-Timeline-Bermuda-CURB-September-2020.pdf
[20] *Royal Gazette*, July 20, 1913.

match." The kids played Tobitt "to a finish." When it came time for St. George's High School to bat, Tobitt "interested the onlookers with some exhibition cricket hitting" by hitting "with all his might." The correspondent felt the game was unfair, with Tobitt playing the school children as if he were playing against grown men.[21]

Whether or not it was fair that Tobitt played "with all his might" is up for debate. However, what this shows is that as was the case in Tobitt's schooling, he also made sure to instill cricket in the curriculum of his students. Moreover, we know that Tobitt's pedagogical style was rooted in the Black Radical Tradition or what education historian Jarvis Givens has termed *Fugitive Pedagogy*. Jarvis Givns defined Fugitive pedagogy as the "subversive power of education." Tobitt stated to a crowd of UNIA members some years later that he was "free to teach what he liked" and taught about black leaders such as "Toussaint L'Ouverture, Frederick Douglass and Crispus Attucks."[22] The essence of leadership, self-sacrifice, teamwork, and an imperial masculinity would have been stressed to his students through this game. However, engaging in the game of cricket with his students would have also taught them that they held the power to disrupt the English Imperial social order. Thus, we know. That cricket was a pedagogical tool for him.

As discussed in chapter 2, when the First World War ended in 1918, Black Bermudian citizens and soldiers were bitterly disillusioned with the British Empire. Black Caribbean soldiers and citizens expected there to be massive socio-political change after contributing to the bloodiest human conflict in recorded history. However, the social order remained the same. Black soldiers experienced racism in the militaries ranks, and white colonial elites continued to

[21] *Royal Gazette*, September 13, 1913.
[22] Swan, "Bermuda Looks to the East," 41.

live lavishly while unemployment and cost of living increased for the majority of Black Caribbean folk. This was compounded with the Bermudian colonial governments anemic efforts to establish a free public school system.

A wave of radical unrest swept the Caribbean at the conclusion of the first world war. Political organizing agitated for an increase in wages, and perhaps, most important was the region wide call for West Indian nationhood. Marcus Garvey's UNIA swept the Black World at the opportune moment of post-World War I unrest. Garvey's UNIA called for the end of racial oppression, the establishment of black economic self-sufficiency, most importantly the end of British Imperial rule in the Caribbean and Africa. For the British Caribbean world, Garvey's UNIA offered the same goal as Black Cricket: upending white colonial rule. This is not to say that every Black Cricket player joined the UNIA. However, what I am saying is that Black Cricket culture as purported by Beckles, was rooted in playing the game of the colonial elite so at to upend the social order that it represented. Undoing the white supremacist social order was also at the heart of the UNIA. Thus, it makes since why Tobitt and tens of thousands of Black Caribbean people would have subscribed to the UNIA.

As discussed in chapter 2, Tobitt founded the Bermuda UNIA with the help of two other West Indians in 1920. The colonial administration was swift in its persecution of Tobitt. He lost government funding for his St. George's High School and was removed from his position as pastor of the St. David's AME mission. From 1920-1925, Tobitt was dogmatically loyal to Garvey and served in various high-ranking positions assisting in bolstering the UNIA's presence in the British Caribbean. After his last appointment, Tobitt fully returned to Bermuda in 1925. In the same year, Tobitt was readmitted to the Bermuda AME conference. The *Royal Gazette* and the Bermuda National Archives reveal that Tobitt's traditional political activity such as agitating

for a free public school system waned. Additionally, colonial authorities continued to surveil the Bermuda UNIA, however, Tobitt's colleague Rev. E. B. Grant was primarily under scrutiny as he served as the branch's president. While it may appear that Tobitt's political activity from 1925 onward waned, such was not the case. Applying the conceptual frameworks of Richard Iton and Hillary Beckles we see that Tobitt's political activism showed itself in the realm of popular culture. In this case cricket.

In the summer of 1925, Tobitt was the captain of the newly formed Caribbean Cricket Club.[23] Iton put forth that "one of the most important functions popular culture has played has involved providing a location for the discussion of issues of concern and the making of black politics."[24] I argue that it is not coincidence that Tobitt founded the BACL and captained the Caribbean Cricket Club, a year after he ceased being a UNIA high official helping the movements growth in the eastern Caribbean. For Tobitt, the AME church served as a traditional site in which he pressed for socio-political change. However, Tobitt learned in 1920 that the AME church leadership was not as radically committed to change as it purported to be.[25] Additionally, as historian Nellie Musson argues, throughout the 1920s and 1930s the UNIA continued to be harassed by the colonial officials and the local police.[26] As such, Tobitt, inspired by the UNIA's revolutionary praxis established his own cricket league in which Black men could hone their skills, captain teams, and in which the Black community could attend and watch games.

[23] *Royal Gazette*, July 7, 1925.
[24] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 19.
[25] See Chapter 3.
[26] Nellie Musson, *Mind the Onion Seed,* 80.

The UNIA and AME church were rooted in diasporic theory. Richard Iton argues that "diaspora" is more than a spatial category, rather, it is "insubordination." As demonstrated in chapters 2 and 3, the AME church and UNIA represented sites of radical political activity that sought to deconstruct white supremacist power structures. As I will demonstrate below, the cricket culture in Bermuda that emerged post 1925 was diasporic. Iton contends that black popular culture is also "autodiaspora." He defined autodiaspora as is a radical space that emerges when culture cannot be rigidly aligned to the borders of nation-states. In other words, popular culture allows for African descended communities to enjoy leisure, build community, and engage in radical politics that transcend the Euro-American nation state.[27] I contend that the Black cricket spaces in Bermuda in the latter half of the 1920s were autodiasporic spaces that were eerily similar to the diasporic space of the UNIA.

What follows, is an analysis of Tobitt's activity as captain of the Caribbean Cricket club and organizer of the Bermuda Amateur Cricket League. Analyses of these activities show that Tobitt's political activity diffused into the realm of popular culture, in this case cricket. On Wednesday, September 8, 1926, the Court Street Sports Club held a celebration for its first-year anniversary. The anniversary celebration consisted of a cricket match and concluded with an extravagant dinner held at Samaritans' Hall, Court Street with local guests and representatives from various cricket clubs. Mr. Clayton Richardson served as the clubs president, and chairman, Dr. Leon J. Williams spoke about how he hoped that the sports club would "continue to be more and more useful to the community."[28] Male and female representatives from the Young Men's Social Club, Young Men's Athletic Club, Warwick Cricket Club, Building Committee of the

[27] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 202.
[28] *Royal Gazette,* September 10, 1926.

Victoria Lodge were all present and expressed their gratitude for the work that Mr. Richardson, Dr. Williams, and the treasurer, Miss M. Jackson had done. Along with Tobitt, Mr. S. O. Johnson represented the Caribbean Cricket Club. Tobitt rose and made remarks on the effectiveness of the Court Street Sports Club. He expressed that the sports club had done much especially "from their literary side" and congratulated the club for how active and involved the female members were, and Tobitt was especially happy that "all their officers were young people of whom a great deal will be expected."[29]

Less than a year after the Court Street Sports Club meeting, Tobitt embarked on a mission of his own to create an avenue that fostered the skills of young black men. The June 18, 1927, edition of the *Royal Gazette* reported that Tobitt organized the Bermuda Amateur Cricket League (BACL) which consisted of six "bonafide" clubs. The League consisted of the Caribbean C. C. under the captaincy of Tobitt, Devonshire Marylebone C. C., the Smith's Hill C. C., the Middle Town Amateur C. C, the British West Indian C. C, and the Warwick Union C. C. The season set to begin at the end of the month.[30] The article reported that the goal of the League was to "promote consistent cricket and to help foster the ethical side of that "king of sports."" It was reported that the local cricket played in Bermuda ignored the "social graces, civic virtues and moral principles that are originally intended to govern the game." The BACL hoped to "do its bit" in "restoring the prestige" and values that have long been tied to the game. The season would end with two cups presented to the best clubs. The first season for the BACL began on June 30th and the final match was on September 22nd. The league was comprised of "an army of

[29] Ibid.
[30] *Royal Gazette*, June 18, 1927.

young cricketers", with many of the cricketers having played in other leagues and for previous clubs as well.[31]

One of the main highlights of the first season of the BACL came when Tobitt's Caribbean C. C. played against Smith's Hill C. C., during the beginning of August. The Royal Gazette noted that both teams were the strongest clubs in the BACL, in other words this was a rivalry game of sorts. The game was hard fought on both ends and the Caribbean's came out victorious at a score of 166:99. The Caribbean's did well, especially without some of their best players like C. Isaac Henry, who was principal of the West End Primary School. The Royal Gazette reported that the game was won by the expertise of several young cricketers. Eldon Gilbert, who served as a reservist for two consecutive years on the prestigious St. George's Cup Team, made several crucial plays in the field. Eldon Gilbert and S. Tucker both stated that it was their role on the Overseas Team that allowed them both to have consistent hitting during the game and throughout the season.[32] The BACL served as a critical space for Black Bermudians. Tobitt, a staunch Garveyite was able to gather Black school teachers and players on the Bermuda overseas team. The Bermuda overseas team, comprised primarily of Black cricketers, traveled frequently to New York playing teams throughout the city.

A week later, the Bermuda overseas team, comprised primarily of Black cricket players made their way to New York to represent the island in several cricket matches. The overseas team played New York based cricket clubs, the Jamaican and St Kitts cricket club, winning all of their matches. While black players represented the country well in New York, the BACL carried on its season. On August 25, 1927, the Caribbean's kept up their winning streak by defeating the

[31] *Royal Gazette*, June 24, 1927.
[32] *Royal Gazette*, August 16, 1927.

Middle Town Amateurs 173:104. The *Gazette* reported that the Middle Town Amateurs surprised themselves at the fight they put up since the Caribbean's had beat some very formidable cricket clubs both in and out of the BACL. Star players for the Caribbean's, S. Tucker and S. Taylor led the way with stellar batting and fielding. S. Ming, of the Amateurs, was referred to as the "Tucker" of his time for his spectacular play. The *Royal Gazette* concluded by saying that "We may mention in passing that the Bermuda Amateur Cricket League, which Rev. R. H. Tobitt, organized is bringing to light the best there is in our young coloured cricketers."[33] Already it can be seen that Tobitt's BACL served as a site of mentorship and education for Black youth. To onlooking colonial officials, the BACL served as a subversive site where, on the surface, Tobitt was instilling Victorian morals in these young men. Rather, it was a radical space where they were being trained and mentored by a veteran of the Black Freedom struggle. Moreover, in New York as the overseas team concluded their tour, the *New York Times* reported that the Bermuda cricketers played the UNIA's cricket team at the New York oval, located in the Bronx New York, on September 8. Star players for the St. George's Cricket Team, Alma Hunt and Eric Swainson helped the Bermudians to beat the UNIA by a score of 211:119.[34] 1920s Harlem was teeming with Black nationalist and Pan African activity. It can be surmised that aside from the game, some sort of black political conversation took place.

The BACL's first season ended mid-September, with the Caribbean C. C. serving as the reigning champions of the league. The Caribbean C. C. had five wins on the season, with Devonshire M. C. C. coming in at four wins, Middle-Town A. C. C. with one win, and Smith Hill C. C. having zero wins on the season, underperforming the expectations that were set out for

[33] *Royal Gazette*, August 27, 1927.
[34] *The New York Times*, September 8, 1927.

them.[35] On October 1, 1927, *The Royal Gazette* reported that having 17 points, the most in the league, the Caribbean's received the Championship Trophy, and the Devonshire Marylebone C. C., at 13 points, received the Runners-up cup. The Royal Gazette reported that the Caribbean C. C., being champions of the league, would play a game against the best players of each team from the rest of the league, at which the cups and minor prizes would be distributed.[36]On Thursday, October 27, 1927, an all-day cricket match took place between the Caribbean C. C., champions of the BACL, and the Western Stars C. C., champions of the Loyalty Cricketers League.[37] The *Royal Gazette* reported that "ideal cricket weather prevailed." During the lunch interval of the game between the Caribbean's and Western Stars, the BACL gathered, and the Caribbean CC and the Devonshire MCC posed with both trophies and were photographed. The game was exhilarating with both teams playing very hard, with the game ending in a draw.

After the game concluded, an extravagant event was held in honor of the main festivities. Tobitt, who captained the Caribbean CC, gave a speech to all those present about the newly founded BACL, its regulations, its accomplishments over the past year, and its future plans. Tobitt stated that although two clubs revoked their membership to the league, the BACL hoped to keep a "friendly and protective attitude" toward sister leagues. The Rev. Dr. Charles H. Bell, who was the AME presiding elder at the time, took the foreground and gave an address entitled "Playing the Game." Rev. Bell detailed all the excellent qualities and habits that are instilled in those that play the game, these included: leadership, discipline, obedience to authority, courtesy and endurance amongst others. The Rev. Bell, who was from the United States, was rather unfamiliar with the game and after watching the Annual Cup match between Somerset and St.

[35] *Royal Gazette*, September 19, 1927.
[36] *Royal Gazette*, October 1, 1927.
[37] *Royal Gazette*, October 22, 1927.

George's he developed his "Playing the Game" essay. The Royal Gazette even mentioned that "one could hardly conceive that he was listening to an American doing such justice to a British national game."[38]

After Rev. Tobitt and Rev. Bell's speeches, the championship cup and special prizes were presented. The championship trophy had the colors of Bermuda representing the Lily and the Rose on the handle, and the colors of the Caribbean CC on the other, which were blue, green, and yellow. Tobitt told the crowd that the significance of the colors were blue for the blue waters of the Caribbean Sea, the green symbolized "merald islands situated therein" and the Yellow represented "the radian sun that kissed with his golden rays these beautiful islands set in a Summer Sea, and of which all true West Indians were justly proud. The Runners-up Cup was placed on exhibition and would not be awarded that year. Tobitt made sure to recognize all the players and expressed their exemplary talent. S. Tucker of the C.C.C. won a bat donated by the Gosling Bros. for the highest individual score (113). S. Ming of M.A.C.C. received a bat donated by Bryan & Co for the second highest individual score (53). S. Tucker received a cup for the best batting average in the League. M. Masters of (D.M.C.C.) received a cup donated from Phoenix Drug Store for the second-best batting average. Sinclair Taylor of C.C.C. received a bat donated by Jas Richards, Esq., proprietor of the Canadian Hotel, for the best bowling average in the League. Sinclair Taylor also received another cup donated by Gibbons Co. for the best all around cricketer. R. Darrell of the CCC received a pair of cricket pads donated by H. A. & E. Smith Bros for best wicket keeper in the League. For the highest individual score in the game played today, Alfred Steede of the CCC received a cricket ball donated by George Williams Esq., Realtor and Agent in Hamilton. The last prize, a pair of cuff links, was awarded by Tobitt

[38] *Royal Gazette*, October 31, 1927.

himself to W. Dill for being a young and promising bowler "by way of encouragement." The prize was donated by T. T. United Co. The days of activities concluded with the presentation of "Special Prizes" for the Caribbean C.C. Champions for 1927. Frist, Tobitt donated a cup that he awarded to Sinclair Taylor for "faithful service to this club, generally" and assisting the club in its first win of the season when they were short three men. A pocketbook as awarded to S. Tucker for making the first century for the CCC in the BACL and for "proper deportment, generally." Next a fountain pen was awarded to Eldon Gilbert and W.M. Smith "Buller" for the "splendid stand" against the CCC. Lastly a walking Cane was given to W. H. Paynter for serving as co-captain of the CCC and a Silver Pencil Tower was awarded to Alfred Steede for highest individual score in the last match of the league.[39]

For Black Bermudians and Black West cricket enthusiast, they would have witnessed decades of white men playing each other and exchanging gifts after their battle on the pitch. Moreover, in Bermuda there would have been only one day in the year, Cup Match, in which such comradery took place. Tobitt's BACL subverted England's imperialist goals for the game of cricket. Young Black youth, who were more than likely from working class backgrounds, received championship trophies and had their skillset rewarded.

As the Bermuda cricket community prepared for another season of cricket, Tobitt and his club prepared in earnest as well. However, unfortunately, one of the Caribbean CC club's premier members set to depart the island of Bermuda right before the season was to start. The February 10, 1928, *Royal Gazette* reported that Mr. S. O. Johnson planned to leave for his native island of Nevis. Mr. Johnson was a merchant tailor that worked in the city of Hamilton, and also served as the Vice-Captain of the Caribbean Cricket club, and member of the Caribbean Literary

[39] Royal Gazette, October 31, 1927.

and Athletic Association, which Tobitt also organized. *The Royal Gazzette* described Mr. Johnson as a man of "sterling character, and fine educational ability." As Mr. Johnson prepared to board the steamer S.S. Pathfinder he was met on board by Tobitt and members of the Caribbean cricket club including William H. Paynter, Shirley Jackson, John B. Woodward, Samuel Tucker, Sinclair Taylor, Eldon Gilbery, Gilbert Crofton, Rupert Gibbons, William Lowe, Charles W. Anderson, Arthur Bryan, Lauriel Ryan, Louis Taylor, Louis Paterson, George Morris, Mansfield G. Brock, and John Taylor. Tobitt read an address to Johnson expressing his appreciation and stated that on the eve of his leaving Bermuda for Nevis:

> "the land of your birth – Nevis the historic island of the British West Indies that gave the great Sea Lord, Horatio Nelson, a wife; and to the USA, the "Land of opportunity," Alexander Hamilton, one of the most brilliant and distinguished men of mark in American History" the club presented to Johnson a "De Luxe" cricket bat as "a souvenir in token of our high esteem and appreciation for the efficient and loyal services which you rendered your Club during the years you have been associated with it."

The cricket bat contained the colors of the Caribbean Club - blue, green, and yellow. Tobitt declared that he hoped Johnson would forever bear in mind "the significance of the colours that adorn it." Tobitt reiterated that the Blue was for the Caribbean Sea, the Green for the "Brilliant" West Indian Islands, and the Yellow for the "Golden Sun that Kisses" the Caribbean Sea. Tobitt concluded the speech by reminding Johnson that if he ever sought to return to Bermuda that he would find "open hearts and friendly hands to receive" him.[40]

As it were cricket still needed to be played and on Easter Monday the Caribbean C.C. played an all-day Club match at the Antilles Field ("The Box"). The match garnered much attention with schoolchildren and adults coming out to see the much-touted team that won the

[40] *Royal Gazette*, February 10, 1928,

championship trophy for the 1927 season.[41] After much anticipation the BACL began its season on Thursday, July 14, 1928. The premier match came between the Caribbean Cricket Club, under the captaincy of Tobitt, and the British West Indian C. C., whom did not participate in the league last season. Although the BWI C.C. were defeated by 47 runs (103-56), the *Royal Gazette* reported that the teams "bowling and fielding" were "to the standard of the Annual Cup Match teams of Somerset and St. George's." The Caribbean C.C. score of 103 was the smallest score made by that club for the first time in all of league play. The Gazette reported that this "inspired confidence in their opponents and gave them hopes of an easy victory." However, the veteran captaincy and raw talent of the Caribbean C. C. led the championship winners to an ultimate victory. The Gazette reported that "the spirit of comradeship and sportsmanship was manifested throughout the match; the cool breezes from the sea fanned the faces of the fine gathering of spectators who thoroughly enjoyed the game – being free from the hooliganism that so often distinguished."[42] The Gazzette's comment on "hooliganism" of the crowd speaks the critical element the crowd played to the game of cricket.

The crowd was just as integral to the West Indian cricket ecosystem. Just as cricket was meant to be solely played by the English elite, so was the visual consumption of the game. Beckles argues that for onlooking crowds it was meant to be a visual display of "English cultural Imperialism," and not intended for "the social consumption of the politically disenfranchised and materially impoverished black communities."[43] Beckles goes on to state that in the West Indies while "Englishmen and their creole progeny sought to imitate and fossilize cricketing images and behavioral patterns that originated with the Victorian gentry, blacks surrounded and infused the

[41] *Royal Gazette*, March 23, 1928.
[42] *Royal Gazette*, July 20, 1928.
[43] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 370.

game with an aura and ethos derived from their popular struggles and residual African cultural norms."[44] For English cricket crowds a mode of comportment that was quiet and reserved was met with a West Indian crowd that yelled, sang tunes, played instruments and at times ran on the field. CLR James argues that this is due to spectators taking "with them through the gates the full weight of their history and visions of the future."[45]

For example, The New York Times reported that On Sunday, September 4, 1927, 3,000 men and women gathered at the New York Oval to see the highly touted West Indian Cricket team take on the visiting Bermudian cricket team. The Bermudians came out with fiery play and in only the first inning had scored 145 runs to the West Indians 97 runs. Alma Hunt, known as the "Babe Ruth of Bermuda," hit the ball over the fence three times resulting in six runs scored. After Hunt's third hit ball over the fence, the crowd serenaded the Bermudians and umpires with resounding boos. The game was not going as planned, the Bermudian cricket team was not supposed to be outperforming the critically acclaimed West Indian team. The deafening screech of boos were not enough, and in due time the crowd rushed the field chasing the two umpires away.[46]

Such behavior completely contradicts the modes of comportment that the colonial white community would have espoused. For the West Indian crowd, they were enmeshed in the game and their performances on the sideline signified it. Moreover, there was a self-esteem element that was deeply intrinsic in the Black communities that watched such games. Historian Colin Bobb makes note that there was a sense of pride instilled seeing fellow Black men on the field

[44] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 371.
[45] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 372.
[46] *New York Times*, September 6, 1927.

playing a game that for so long had been relegated to the colonial elite.[47] Moreover, what an analysis of Tobitt's cricket league and the overseas territory matches show is that Blacks were not merely players, but they also captained teams. Historian Aviston Downs points out that leading a cricket team was to embody the qualities of authority, stamina, courage and vigilance.[48] As pointed out earlier, even as the West Indies developed a national team in the late nineteenth century, and while blacks were allowed marginal membership on the teams, white men were kept in the role of captains. In Tobitt's cricket league its evident that Black men were captains. This would have instilled a great sense of pride in players and the onlookers.

The BACL second season was put on a brief pause when negotiations were met between New York Cricketers and Bermuda Cricketers that a contingent of Bermudian-American Cricketers would arrive to the island and play a series of games against Bermudian cricket teams. The touring team arrived in Bermuda on August 17th, were met with a reception and dance at the GUO of OF Hall in Somerset. The touring team included: Cecil Carter (Manager); R. Douglas (Asst. Manager); E. H. Margetson (Captain); K. Margetson, W. Springer, E. Holder, Kid Lewis, A. Gittens, V. Sween, C. P. Carter, V. Olivierre, A. Dash, R. Alder, A. Simpson, and N. Yearwood. The touring team is especially talented with many of the players having already participated in the 1926 tour, and several of the players coming from West Indian families that had members that played in the West Indies cricket team.

Immediately after the Touring team's warm reception, games began with little room for rest. For the rest of the month of August and the early part of September, the touring team played various Bermuda cricket clubs with only two days rest. In fact, the best players from the BACL

[47] Colin Babb, *They Gave the Crowd Plenty Fun: West Indian Cricket and Its Relationship with the British-Resident Caribbean Diaspora* (UK: Hansib Publishing, 2015), 20.
[48] Downes, Boys of the Empire, 114.

were scheduled to play the touring team on September 3rd at Warwick park. The Royal Gazette reported that "cricket in Bermuda has greatly improved" since the Touring teams last visited in 1926. The first match was scheduled to be played on August 18th between the overseas team and Captain Sarel's Services XI. Sarel's XI was comprised of players from Cavendish C. C., Sandys C, C, and St. George's and Somerset Cricket Clubs, as well as the Navy H. M. S. Malabar. Such notable players included Eric Swainson, who was a premier black cricketer and the first black officer to be promoted to rank of Inspector. Additionally, S. Tucker, who played on Tobitt's Cricket Club and made his first debut in the 1927 Cup Match was also selected for the game. The Royal Gazette had this to say about S. Tucker: "he shows great promise, and deserves his selection." The Gazette stated that the other players were "tried and true players" and had the capability of possibly beating the overseas team.[49]

In fact, Bermuda's cricket skill did greatly improve since the 1926 tour. The All Bermuda XI defeated the touring team in their first game to a score of 194 to 139. Eric Swainson was to be commended for his excellent play. The Bermuda team's victory provided a considerable amount of morale for the other Bermuda teams as Somerset C. C. and St. George's C.C. geared up to play the touring team. While the touring team garnered much attention, it did not take attention away from the local community building of Bermuda's local cricket games. Two days before the Somerset CC and New York cricket game, on Thursday, August 23rd, hundreds of individuals gathered on St. David's Island for a "Cup Match" like event on the island's east end. Black Bermudans from Somerset, Shelly Bay, Bailey's Bay, and about 250 students from the Bethel AME Sunday School arrived on the island's east end. The main match was to occur between St. David's Cricket Club and the Flatts County Cricket club. The game took place on the grounds of

[49] *Royal Gazette*, August 10, 1928.

the St. Davis' Social Club in which a bazaar was held in aid of the local St. David's AME church, and many "side shows" were presented for the children and adults in attendance. The game concluded with the St. David's Cricket Club winning 212 to 178, a game that lasted only a day, although time was allotted for two days.[50]

The overseas tour was not solely comprised of intense rivalry on the cricket field. After the game on Wednesday, August 28, between the Central Team and Overseas team, the Central Committee hosted a dinner in honor of the Overseas Team at the Canadian Hotel, Hamilton. Members of the Central Team, Overseas team, and numerous guests of Bermuda's cricketing community were present as well. Before the dinner, a toast and brief speech was given by Mr. C. Reynolds of the Layal's Cricketer Team. After the dinner was served under the personal supervision of the hotel's proprietor Mr. James Richardson, a toast was list was carried out by chairman Mr. W. F. Wilson. The toast list included, R. H. Tobitt representing the Bermuda Amateur Cricket League, Mr. C A. I. Henry, Mr. Reynolds, representing the Reynolds League, the Loyal Cricketers League, members of the Somerset C.C., Mr. C. P. Carter, Manager of the Overseas Team, Mr. E. H. Margetson, spoke briefly about the great advancements of Bermuda cricket since the team last visited in 1926. Discussion occurred about how ways in which cricket could be made stronger on the island.[51]

As it were, while Tobitt and the BACL waited for their chance to play the overseas team on September 5th, the other Bermuda teams showed a considerable improvement in overall talent. On Thursday, August 29, 1928, the New York team suffered their second drawn match. After suffering a defeat to the Bermuda XI on August 18, the overseas team drew against the cup

[50] *Royal Gazette*, August 25, 1928.
[51] *Royal Gazette*, September 1, 1928.

holders, Somerset CC, and then drew again to the St. George's CC. The Royal Gazette reported that that these draws showed "a considerable advance…in local cricket, for the visitors are quite as strong as on the last occasion that they came to Bermuda." Surely, the two draws served as a strong morale boost for Tobitt's eleven that prepared to play the overseas team on Monday, September 3rd. Tobitt's evelen consisted of Tobitt serving as captain, C. I. Henry (Vice Ccaptain), H. F. Wiklons, S. Taylor, E. Gilbert, S. Tucker, J. DeVent, S. Ming, R. Darrell, H. Lawrence, F. Johnson, and T. DeGrilla. Reserves would be C. Raynor and H. DePeezer. The *Royal Gazette* reported that roughly 1,200 people attended the previous games and it was expected that in the final games of the overseas tour the crowd would double in attendance.

On September 1st the Overseas team defeated Captain Gregg's XI to a score of 252 to 250. Greg's XI fought hard, in what the Royal Gazette called "a moral victory." Partly due to the fact that the game had a delayed start, taking away from crucial time needed for Greg's XI to mount a substantial comeback. Two days later, Tobitt's XI from the BACL took the field against the overseas team, in which the Gazette described as an "easy win for the overseas team." Usual BACL superstars such as S. Taylor and S. Tucker was thwarted with the Overseas team winning by a score of 205 to 119. [52] After the game, a huge presentation for the overseas cricket team was held at the Colonial Opera House. The Central Committee, consisting of Rev. R. H. Tobitt, Mr. Rupert Richardson, and Mr. A. Dillas, who "spared no pains to see to the comfort and enjoyment of the visitors" gave presentations and awards to the Overseas Team and local players that participated in the games between August 29th and September 3rd. Tobitt, on behalf of the Central Committee, introduced Mr. G. A. Williams M.C.P who presented the awards to the cricketers. Awards for the game between the Central Team and Overseas on August 29th went as such: The

[52] *Royal Gazette*, September 4, 1928.

Silver Souvenir Cricketer's Spoon for highest individual score went to Mr. K. Margetson; Cigarette Stand and Ash Tray for highest Individual score went to Mr. Eldon Gilbert; Souvenir Cup for best bowling average went to Mr Clayton Richardson; Leather Wallet for best all-around cricketer went to Mr. Edmund Holder; Fountain Pen for best all-around player went to Mr. Clayton Richardson.

The next set of awards were presented for the overseas game against the BACL on September 3rd. Souvenir Cup for highest individual score was awarded to Mr. Karl Margetson; Silver Match case for highest individual score went to Mr. Eldon Gilbert; Souveneir Cup for best bowling average went to Mr. A. Gittens; Silver Ash Tray for best bowling average went to Mr. C. Isaac-Henry, and another Silver Ash tray was awarded to MR. A. Gittens for best all-around play. Silver Cricketer's Medal (looped with colors of Bermuda) was awarded to Mr. E. H. Margetson for his "meritorious service" as skipper of the N.Y. Overseas Team in 1928. A Silver Pencil Case was awarded to Mr. Cecil Carter for his role as Manager of the NY Overseas Team. At the conclusion of the dissemination of awards the Central Committee took the time to thank the Military authorities of Prospect Garrison for letting them use their space for the game and the people of Central District and the overall public "for the part they played in contributing to the success which crowned their efforts on those occasions."[53]

After the overseas team left back for the United States, the BACL attempted to resume their season as much of it was suspended in honor of the overseas team tour. The seasoned resumed on October 10 and set to conclude on October 31st.[54] The BACL also functioned as a self-help organization with deep interest in the larger West Indies as well. In September 1928,

[53] *Royal Gazette*, September 24, 1928.
[54] *Royal Gazette*, October 6, 1928.

the Caribbean saw a succession of hurricanes that left many islands destroyed. As such, on October 8th, 1928, Tobitt wrote to the editor of the Royal Gazette that "At Prospect Garrison Field on Wednesday afternoon, October 10th, between the Caribbean CC and the BWICC of the Bermuda Amateur Cricket League, a collection will be taken upon the Grounds to augment the above-named fund. (West Indies Hurricane Relief Fund). I take this opportunity on behalf of the League, to extend a cordial invitation to the public in general to witness the game and to respectfully request that all come prepared to assist this urgent and worthy cause." [55]

Although colored cricket teams had a hard time finding places to play and practice, and in the face of an abridged season, the BACL began their third season on June 20th, 1929.[56] On November 28, 1929, in the presence of a large crowd a soccer match took place between the "Green" and "White" teams of Hamilton and Pembroke. After the match concluded the championship trophy was presented to the Caribbean C.C. of the BACL for their third consecutive year winning the league championship, 1927, 1928, and 1929. Rev. Charles H. Bell. Presented the Bradley Bryan Cup to the Caribbean CC and the runners-up cup was presented to the Dellwood CC. Additionally, prizes and individual prizes were handed out to members and players of the league.[57]

On April 19, 1930, the Royal Gazette reported under the section "Cricket Notes" that one of Bermuda's "premier clubs", the Caribbean Cricket club, met to discuss the future of the cricket club. Tobitt who served in dual capacity as president and captain of the club resigned due to his pastoral duties as an AME preacher being moved to New York City. Tobitt told club members that although was leaving "he saw no reason why the Caribbean's should not continue

[55] *Royal Gazette*, October 10, 1928.
[56] *Royal Gazette*, April 26, 1929; *Royal Gazette*, June 7, 1929.
[57] *Royal Gazette*, November 29, 1929.

their progressive march, and that it was up to them and the new officers to maintain the traditions of the pioneers of their club." It was also reported that The BACL would continue to function. The two clubs that have consistently stayed with the league, The Caribbean C.C. and the Dellwood C.C. "will continue to play an annual tournament of the best two out of three games for victory." Tobitt assured those in attendance that in his absence "he will still work in the interest of the League and Bermuda insofar as that which lies in his power."[58] Unfortunately, after Tobitt departed the island, news of the BACL ceased to appear in Bermuda's newspapers, probably signaling the end of the league's existence.

Although the BACL only existed for a total of four years, its existence was an act of radical cultural politics. Every aspect of the BACL was rooted in diasporic cultural politics. The names of BACL teams such as the Caribbean Cricket Club and British West Indian Cricket Club signal a regional, cultural, and historical identification. Additionally, there was a symbiotic relationship of cricket players traversing between New York and Bermuda. The cricket spaces in Bermuda were not insular. Moreover, the BACL and its activities represent the refusal to be bound by national identifications. UNIA historian Robert Hill argues that the UNIA signaled a form of "cultural and political ethnogenesis" for West Indian people.[59] It is not a coincidence that Tobitt, who was essential in helping the Garvey movement establish a broad West Indian identity, founded a league in Bermuda that continued to articulate Caribbean and West Indian group ethos.

[58] *Royal Gazette*, April 19, 1930.
[59] Hill, *MGP* Vol. 11, lxxxvi

Cricket in New York

On April 30, 1930, Tobitt and his family relocated to New York City. They were not in the capital of Black New York - Harlem. Rather, they were in New York's outpost – Staten Island. As discussed in chapter 4, Tobitt brought his spirit of political activism with him to New York. For example, Tobitt became involved in the Staten Island NAACP's fight for anti-lynching legislation, organized a community center for the youth, and joined West Indian interest groups in their fight for Caribbean decolonization. Likewise, he brought his radical cultural politics with him. After playing several matches against New York Cricket Teams in Bermuda, Tobitt would have been more than aware of New York's cricket culture. By 1930, roughly 30,000 Caribbean immigrants settled in New York City alongside roughly half a million Black Southern migrants.

A 1928 article titled "Negro Cricket Thrives Here" published in The *NYA* provides an excellent window into the New York Cricket culture that Tobitt would become a part of two years later. The article reported that due to many of the cities playing fields being repurposed for additional baseball diamonds, Van Cortland Park, located in Northeastern section of the Bronx, became the hub of all Black cricket play in New York City. On any given Saturday or Sunday thousands of West Indians, both players and spectators alike, journeyed from Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn to Van Cortland Park to watch roughly 12 teams of the Cosmopolitan (New York) Cricket League battle from mid-May to mid-September for the league championship trophy. The league was composed of teams named after and manned by players (roughly 30 to 40 players each) hailing from their West Indian nation of origin (e.g. St. Kitts, St. Vincent, Montserrat, Antigua, etc). The article stated that "the members of the city's-colored cricket clubs are willing and eager to teach the young how to bowl and bat." The article went on to state that due to the

Immigration Law of 1924, clubs were struggling to attract new talent and thus "the sons of some of the veteran players are being enrolled on the teams and several of these are distinguishing themselves by their technique and agility." What's more about the critical aspect of veteran players was that although youth had agility and vigor older players "were frequently responsible for runs that turned the tide of a close contest."[60] Cricket in New York had the same mentorship element that it had in Bermuda's cricket world

In regard to the social aspects of cricket, General Manager of the Virgin Islands Cricket Club, Morris E. Davis stated that "the elements of good fellowship and mutual aid are scarcely less important than the scoring of runs." Davis went on to report that his club met every Thursday evening at the American West Indian Benevolent Society on Lenox Avenue to discuss assisting Virgin Islanders in distress along with the next games lineup. Cricket culture at Van Cortland Park did not solely revolve around the masculine spectacle. The Virgin Islands Cricket Club, like many other clubs had a women auxiliary which helped to put on "strawberry festivals" fundraisers, gatherings and appeared to games in the hundreds in order to cheer on their team.[61]

While cricket at Van Cortlandt provided a safe space for West Indians to congregate, it was not without its problems. C. E. Donald commented on the undesirable field conditions teams were relegated to play on. Donald told the *New York Herald Tribune* that the cricket grounds at Van Cordlandt Park were not suitable for excellent play. The grass was too high which impacted how the ball rolled. Additionally, to play the game of cricket was an expensive venture in New York since all the materials, shoes, ball, and goal keepers' pads had to be imported and subjected to tariffs. For example, a baseball could be acquired for $1.50 compared to a cricket ball that was

[60] *New York Age*, July 11, 1928.
[61] Ibid.

$5.[62] Much of the reason for Van Cordlandt becoming the cricket hub of 1930s New York was not by pure choice by cricket teams. The NYA reported in a section titled "With the Cricketers" that local cricketers "have endured much that would move any other group of citizens to action." On numerous occasions cricketers were told they could not play in Manhattan's Central Park unless they showed a permit. However, when Cricket leagues applied for permits, they were told that no permits were being issued for cricket play. On the contrary, permits were issued for baseball to be played in Central Park. The article stated that cricketers were to "go to Van Cortlandt Park to be relegated to the dump-heap in a secluded and little used corner, to wither away in despair."[63] Even amid all these problems, West Indian cricketers still found a way to play their games, season after season.

For many West Indians joining a sporting team, most likely the team of their national origin, was the first step to building community in a foreign land. Tobitt followed the same path and joined the Antigua Cricket Club. The Antigua Cricket Club in New York in 1930 functioned much differently than the Antigua Cricket Club that Tobitt participated in back in Antigua during the early years of the twentieth century. The Antigua Cricket Club of Antigua functioned as an elite exclusive club meant for white affluent government officials, doctors, and lawyers, with the token acceptance of Black Antiguans. However, in the case of New York, the Antigua Cricket Club, like many other Cricket Clubs formed by West Indian migrants was a space in which Black Caribbean migrants could build social networks and rely on each other for mutual aid if necessary. As early as the summer of 1930 Tobitt played in games for the club. In an article published on July 20, 1930 by the New York Times entitled "West Indians Triumph," it was

[62] *New York Herald Tribune*, July 7, 1930.
[63] *New York Amsterdam News*, May 26, 1934.

reported that Tobitt and the Antigua Cricket Club took on the Overseas West Indian cricket team, at the Innisfail Park (located in modern day Van Cordlandt Park) on July 19.[64]

The Times described the game as being "low scoring" with the West Indian team outscoring the Antigua club by a score of 107 to 78. Tobitt, W. Burton, G. Mulvaney and A. Pell were the only players that reached the double figure coloumn. Stars from the West Indian team included Emmanuel Martindale, L. Jeffrey, Ellis Achong and V. Chabrol, all who reached double figures. This game is significant. Players such as Emmanuel Martindale, and Ellis Achong would go on to play in the 1933 West Indies tour of England, and subsequently play critical roles in improving West Indian cricket on the world stage. Although Tobitt and his team probably were not pleased by being considerably outscored. The impact of this game goes beyond the score. One must look further than the score to truly understand the impact of these connections on the cricket field. Hilary Beckles argues that in the 1930s while highly skilled Black West Indians made their presence known on the team, the team leadership remained in the hands of the white colonial elite.[65] As West Indies cricket reached the national scale through cup match, the presence of white sin administrative roles, and Blacks in subordinate roles proved problematic. Beckles points out that it became understood by Blacks, circket players and those not, that "black leadership of the West Indies team was necessary in order to infuse it with" the region wide call for Black self-determination and political independence.[66] Understanding Tobitt's radical politics and the wave of Black nationalist and leftist politics circulating in Harlem in the late 1920s and early 1930s, once can speculate the influence that the New York diasporic cricket space had on West Indian cricket greats such as Martindale. Tobitt being a front line worker for Garvey in

[64] *New York Times*, July 20, 1930.
[65] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 151.
[66] Beckles, Liberation Cricket, 152.

bringing about West Indian autonomy surely knew the societal impact of having a West Indian cricket, additionally, having a Black cricket player play on a team that historically did not have many black cricket players not black cricket captains.

In July, 1931, at the widely used Dyckman Oval, Bronx, NY, Tobitt participated in another game with the Antigua Cricket Club, in which they played against a team called "the Jamaicans." The *New York Times* declared that the Jamaicans beat the Antigua CC in "hollow fashion" winning by a score of 173 to 75.[67] Sites such as the Dyckman oval were critical to West Indian cricket in New York. For example both West Indian touring teams played numerous games at the Dyckman Oval.[68] The Antigua CC contained between 30 and 40 players and the goals of many managers was to ensure that everyone received ample playtime throughout the season. Surely, it would have been a serious scheduling commitment for Tobitt to travel from Staten Island to the Bronx for a cricket match. Tobitt lived in Staten Island from 1930-1936. Likewise, there was also a cricket culture in the island as well.

As such, on September, 1932, The New York Age, in its sports section under the subheading "Cricket on Staten Island" reported that at the Antilles Cricket Field, Tompkinsville, Staten Island, on Labor Day two twelve-man teams the Red Caps and the Green Caps met to play a game. It was reported that "this match was the result of the recent organization of the Antilles Cricket Club" of whom Tobitt served as the president. The cricket field which is situated behind two piers was obtained "through the courtesy of the officers in charge" and cricket gear was provided to them by "certain gentlemen cricketers of Staten Island, as an encouragement to the fostering of clean and manly sports." It was a fair and well played match with both teams playing

[67] *New York times*, July 19, 1931.
[68] *Amsterdam News* August 6, 1930.

exceptionally well, however, the Red Caps would seize the day with Tobitt proving himself to be the "best all-around cricketer of the day." The match garnered much attention with roughly between seven to eight hundred people, white and black coming to spectate the match. People came as far as Manhattan, Brooklyn, New Jersey, and from all parts of Staten Island to watch. The Antilles C.C. had several more matches to play and had one especially scheduled to play against a team from Harlem on Saturday, September 17 at 1PM in Tompkinsville.[69]

Cricket was also a family affair for the Tobitt family with his son R.D. Tobitt participating in the festivities as well. On September 23, 1933 the NYA reported that an "interesting game" was played on the Brier Cliff baseball grounds in Staten Island on a Saturday Afternoon between two teams. One Captained by A. Rannie and the other R. D. Tobitt. Tobitt's team turned out victorious winning the contested match by 16 runs. Rannie's team was composed of players of the Antilles Cricket Club and Tobitt's team was made up entirely from the Caribbean C.C. of Staten Island.[70]

On October 14, 1933 two cricket teams met up to play a match at Central Park West, located in the upper portion of Manhattan's famous Central Park. The Central Athletic Cricket Club of Manhattan, under the captaincy of Allan McFeekers hosted the Caribbean C.C. of Staten Island. The Caribbean C.C. was under the captaincy of Dr. R. Tobitt. The game was very much lopsided with two members of the C.C.C., H. Lewis and E. Livingston yielding 77 runs. Lewis concluded with 98 runs. The primary highlight from the Central Athletic Cricket Club was a player names Araque who made 44 runs. *The New York Age* reported "The splendid bowling of King, Mosley and Captain McFeeters of the home team which was successfully defied by H.

[69] *New York Age*, September 17, 1932.
[70] *New York Age*, September 23, 1933.

Lewis and last, but not least, the final over of the match when Dr. Tobitt took the ball and with two wickets more to fall captured both in 3 balls without the addition of a single run"[71] Tobitt's son R.D. Tobitt also participated in the team as well providing excellent bowling. This cricket game is important for several reasons. First, cricket is not traditionally an American game. The fact that this game is being played in New York City, upper Manhattan specifically, by a Caribbean cricket club, and not a group of loosely affiliated people, speaks to a larger network of leisure and community building amongst these West Indians in New York.

Understanding that West Indian cricket in its inception was an exclusionary game is important to understanding the critical impact of Tobitt's love for the game. Tobitt established an amateur cricket league in a time where blacks were excluded from the game and those who did play the game were to ideologically be in line with the British empire. Tobitt politically was anti-British imperialism as evidenced through his radical preaching activity and deep involvement with the UNIA. He broke two barriers, creating an avenue for working class blacks to play the game and for individuals that may have not been necessarily ideologically in bed with white elites. This came while you had a resurgence in labor agitation in the Caribbean. Labor parties were morphing into political parties that would sow the seeds for West Indian autonomy.

The historical record does not make much mention of Tobitt playing cricket going well into the later part of the 1930s. Several reasons could explain this. First, Tobitt moved to Harlem in 1936 and became involved in Garvey inspired organizations. Moreover, Tobitt joined West Indian interest groups such as the Bermuda Benevolent Association, Antigua and Barbuda Progressive Society, and the American West Indian Association. In these groups Tobitt networked with former Garveyites and West Indian activists that agitated for West Indian

[71] *New York Age*, October 21, 1933.

independence and reform in the Caribbean during the 1940s. It can be assumed that with Tobitt's involvement with West Indian interest groups this may have taken away from his time playing the sport. However, Jamaican political leader Michael Manley stated that the Caribbean labor rebellions of the 1930s was directly connected to the struggle within West Indies cricket. [72]

Conclusion

The last documented report of Tobitt partaking in cricket related activities came in Adam Clayton Powell's *The People's Voice Newspaper*. The *People's Voice* reported that on Sunday, May 25, 1947, at the age of 74, Tobitt was assisted by Harlem ministers Bishop W. R. Cruickshank and Rev. Clement Gordon in organizing an event at Harlem's Mt. Morris Presbyterian Church in honor of deceased members of the Interstate Joint Cricket League. Cricket League members, and families and friends of the deceased players attended the ceremony to pay respects to the men that had committed their life to the game. The event also procured the presence of numerous retired cricketers hailing from islands such as St. Vincent and Barbados. Tobitt provided remarks in which he spoke about the beauty of cricket due to the "Christian ethics involved."[73]

While Tobitt may have highlighted "Christian ethics" such as loyalty, humility, and self-sacrifice, what the People's Voice did not capture is the radical political nature of the game. In the two locations Tobitt played the game (Bermuda and New York), cricket served as a space in which West Indian collective identity was fostered, the upending of white supremacist rule was acted out, and room for the discussion of radical politics was made. To a lesser extent, Black

[72] Beckles, *Liberation Cricket*, 151.
[73] *The Peoples Voice*, May 31, 1947.

cricket spaces were a site of intergenerational exchange and mutual aid. What Tobitt's experience shows is that simultaneous to traditional sites of political organizing, radical political activity occurred under the guise of popular culture.

CONCLUSION

Tobitt's political activity began to wane in the years following the conclusion of World War II. Although Tobitt was deeply involved in New York's political ecosystem, he was still a family man and, as such, had personal obligations. His daughter, Mae Tobitt-Hansen, passed away sometime in the late 1930s, leaving behind her two sons, Richard and William Hansen. Tobitt and his wife Caroline, along with the help of his daughter Carmina, assisted in raising Mae's two sons. As Tobitt's grandchildren came of age in Harlem during the 1950s, his attention turned to ensuring that they did not become engulfed in the world of gangs and crime that lured so many Harlem youths.

[1] Tobitt's shift in priorities partially explains why his activities became less visible in the archive in later years. This also speaks to the public and inner lives that so many Black radical men and women dedicated to the freedom struggle had to reconcile.[2]

As Tobitt spent his final years in Harlem, he would have witnessed a changing socio-political landscape in the United States and the Caribbean. At the conclusion of World War II, a resurgence in decolonial struggle swept the Global South. Moreover, in the 1950s, especially after the murder of Emmitt Till in 1955, Civil Rights activists doubled down in their battle for the full extension of Civil Rights to African Americans. By the 1950s, many of the Garveyites that Tobitt networked with in the 1920s had either passed away or were well into their golden

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[1] Hansen-Vazquez, Greer and Hansen-Sexton, Dionne. Interview with Christopher Shell. Personal Interview. Zoom, March 18, 2021.

[2] Scholars have written extensively about the inner lives of Black activists. Foundational work on this topic includes E. Frances White, "Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counter Discourse and African-American Nationalism," *Journal of Women's History* 2 (1990) and Barbara Bair, "True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology, and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement," in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History*, ed. Dorothy O. Helly and Susan Reverby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992): 154-166.

years. For example, E. B. Grant passed away in 1938, Marcus Garvey passed away in 1940, Henrietta Vinton Davis passed in 1941, to name a few. While the old guard of Pan-Africanist warriors may have been making their return to the ancestors, Garvey's ideology of Black nationalist politics was deeply imbedded in the collective consciousness of the Black World. Historian Robin D. G. Kelley terms this "inspirational Garveyism." Kelly argues that the measure of the UNIA's success should not be how long the movement lasted. Rather, it should be measured by the deep impact that Garvey's ideas had on the Black Freedom Struggle. Such is the case in this narrative.

By the 1950s, Elijah Muhammed's, Nation of Islam, took root in Harlem. Historian Mary G. Rolinson points out that Elijah Muhammed's family, in rural Georgia, were deeply influenced by Garvey's Black nationalist ideology.[3] As such, Mohammed Mosque Number 7 located on 116th St and Lenox Avenue would serve as the central pulse for Black nationalist and Pan African activity in 1950s and 1960s Harlem. Moreover, the Garveyite inspired movement, Rastafarianism, founded by Jamaican born Leonard P. Howell, begin to gain mainstream attention during the 1950s as well. While the historical record shows that Tobitt remained faithful to the AME church through the rest of his life, he would have surely seen the impacts of "inspirational Garveyism" on emerging religious movements throughout the diaspora. On the political front, Tobitt probably read about the developments of West Indian Federation in 1959. As Historian Eric Duke argues, many of the proponents and leaders of West Indian Federation, most notably Trinidadian statesman Eric Williams, were admirers and well-read in Garvey's ideology.

[3] Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South. 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

There are two possible reactions Tobitt could have had to the news of the formation of the Federation. First, he could have been ecstatic to learn that the West Indies were finally forming a regional government. This would especially be the case since he spent close to five years away from friends and family wrestling with British Authorities to promote the UNIA as a regional government. Second, Tobitt could have been ambivalent to the news since West Indies Federation did not immediately grant nations independence. Tobitt's island of birth, Antigua, was included in federation, however his second home, Bermuda, was not. This is partially explained by Bermuda's white elite ruling class wishes to have nothing to do with the West Indies. Although Bermuda was not included in Federation talks, the Black Bermudian community continued their local battle against white supremacy. As Bermudian historians Ira Phillip, Nellie Munson, and Quito Swan argue, the Bermuda UNIA branch ushered in Bermuda's Black Renaissance. Moreover, in the same year West Indian Federation was formed, an anonymous group of Black youths, the "Progressive Group", organized an island wide boycott of movie theaters in protest against the islands segregationist policies.[4]

Two years after the formation of West Indies Federation and the theatre boycott, the Black owned newspaper *Bermuda Recorder* reported that Tobitt passed away on Saturday, July 22, 1961, after a short fight with an undisclosed illness.[5] He was 88 years old. In the years prior to his death, Tobitt and his wife, Caroline, returned to Bermuda to "tie up some loose ends." In the wake of Tobitt's death, he left behind his wife, whom he had been married to for 63 years. At the time of his death, two of his five children remained alive, along with two grandsons and one

[4] Quito Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda: The Struggle for Decolonization* (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2010), 14.
[5] *Royal Gazette*, August 26, 1961.

great-granddaughter.[6] Caroline remained active in the Bermuda Benevolent Association in Harlem, serving as the general secretary for the organization and on the board of directors.[7] Tobitt would not live long enough to see West Indian federation dissolve. One of the main reasons for the collapse of West Indian federation was the big vs. small island rivalry in the Caribbean that continues to mark conversations on the Caribbean to this day.

Tobitt's death came roughly six years before what historian Quito Swan terms as Bermuda's "Black Power Movement" which lasted roughly from 1967-1977. Swan has pointed out that Black Power advocates in Bermuda during the late 60s and early 70s were directly influenced by the ideological underpinnings of Marcus Garvey's UNIA. For example, Pauulu Kamarakafego, one of Bermuda's premier Black Power advocates was raised by parents that were devout attendees at UNIA meetings.[8] When the spirit of decolonization swept through the Caribbean in the 1960s and 1970s, the zeitgeist was slow to reach the islands Tobitt called home. Antigua did not receive independence until 1981 and to this day Bermuda remains a British oversees territory. In fact, several of the island's that Tobitt traveled to during his tenure as Leader of the Eastern Caribbean (i.e. Dominica and St. Lucia) would receive independence rather late in comparison to the earlier wave of independence that swept the Global South in the 1960s. This phenomenon is worthy of further inquiry.

In the spirit of *Radical Diaspora,* it was a main objective of this dissertation to demonstrate that "small" spaces have been just as influential to Black Internationalism as have

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[6] *Royal Gazette*, August 26, 1961.
[7] *Royal Gazette*, May 23, 1959.
[8] In Swan's first manuscript, *Black Power in Bermuda,* he argues that Bermuda's Black Power movement was influenced by the UNIA, Nation of Islam, and Rastafarianism; Quito Swan, *Pauulu's Diaspora: Black Internationalism and Environmental Justice* Tallahassee: University of Florida Press, 2020).

more popularly studies spaces. In analyzing Tobitt's adolescence in the Moravian church and the Mico Teachers college it brings institutions into conversation that were critical to molding racial consciousness. A deeper study of the Mico Teachers College and its impact on Caribbean radicalism is needed. Through Tobitt's life story we better understand how the understudied migration of West Indians from the small island of Antigua played a critical role in Black Internationalist politics.

This dissertation demonstrated that early twentieth century Bermuda was not devoid of radical Black protest. West Indian and Black Bermudian men and women used various avenues at their disposal to fight against the island's racist white elite power structure. While Bermuda is often divorced from the Caribbean in popular culture, in analyzing Bermuda through the lens of the UNIA it reinforces the fact that the tiny island of roughly 20,000 people in the 1920s was linked to larger currents of Black Radical activity.

This dissertation also demonstrates that the seeds for West Indian came a decade before West Indian labor rebellions of the 1920s. Additionally, it also shows that Black Caribbean people from smaller islands, in this case Antigua and Bermuda, played a critical role in helping to articulate a West Indian ethnogenesis. The conversation on West Indian federation of the 1950s was dominated by the geo-politically larger islands of Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad. In fact, it was West Indians from smaller islands such as Antigua, Bermuda, St. Lucia and Dominica that were just as vocal and prominent in the 1920s calls for West Indian nationhood and a pan-Caribbean identity.

Perhaps the most groundbreaking aspect of this study is the addition of Staten Island to the conversation on Black New York and the Jim Crow North. Tobitt's time in Staten Island from 1930-1936 opens the door to a whole world of Blacks in the borough that have been

severely understudied. In the years and decades following Tobitt and his family's departure from the borough, Staten Island remained mired in instances of racial discrimination. It would not be until recent years when the Hip Hop group Wu-Tang emerged on the scene in the early 1990s and the murder of Eric Garner in 2013 that the social ills plaguing New York's "outpost" resurfaced in mainstream media. A study on Black Staten Island in the twentieth century is sorely needed.

The question now arises, why is it that Tobitt has been seldom talked about? Especially, beyond his career as a Garveyite? The answer partially lies in the fact that Tobitt's entire life's story intersects with historiographies that have been understudied by historians. While he was a part of the UNIA, a movement that has enjoyed substantial visibility recently, Tobitt like many other UNIA men and women, have been eclipsed by the cult like personality of Marcus Garvey. Much attention is given to Garvey's travels throughout the Americas but this comes at a disadvantage of the rank-and-file members that kept the organization going.

Secondly, when Tobitt moved to New York he made his home in Staten Island's Tompkinsville neighborhood. Historically, and even to this day, in conversations on Black New York, black neighborhoods in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn receive an unprecedented amount of attention. Early 1990s Hip Hop group Wu-Tang Clan, and the murder of Eric Gardner in 2013 has brought much needed attention to the economic, political, and social inequality facing Staten Island's northern black neighborhoods. However, Tobitt's activism in the Bethel AME church shows us that the same socio-economic inequalities faced by Harlemites during the inter-war years were faced by Blacks living in Staten Island. Why hasn't Tobitt's story in Staten Island been talked about? I surmise that Staten Island is the "forgotten borough." Until the creation of the Verrazano bridge in the 1960s, many New Yorkers, especially African Americans

did not have quick and easy access to the island. It would be this metaphorical maroonage of Staten Island before 1960 that I argue marooned Staten Island even within the academy. There is much room to further explore the racial tensions in Staten Island of the mid to late twentieth centuries and how it builds upon Tobitt's time in Staten Island.

Surely, Tobitt's life work has earned him the position as a national hero in the island of Bermuda. The question then becomes why has he not been deemed as a national hero? Several factors explain why. First, Bermuda's contested legacy with white supremacy and its suppression of black liberation movements partially explain why Tobitt's story has been largely suppressed. Afterall, he was a part of an AME insurgency committed to educational equality, helped to create the islands first trade union, founded the islands first UNIA branch. All of these activities were deeply antagonistic to the colonial social order. It is the goal of this dissertation to do more than to simply retell Tobitt's narrative for a handful of academics and his descendants. In 2020 Citizens Uprooting Racism in Bermuda (CURB) compiled a historical timeline detailing Black Bermudian history over five centuries. CURB Stated that the timeline was created due to the "absence of substantive Black history in the vast majority of published literature, educational curricula and texts."[9] It is my goal that this study will be a welcome and transformative addition to the Black Bermudian communities fight to reclaim their history.

[9] Black History in Bermuda: Timeline Spanning 5 Centuries. Published by Citizens Uprooting Racism in Bermuda (CURB); https://www.humanrights.bm/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Black-History-Timeline-Bermuda-CURB-September-2020.pdf

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