

EDITED BY

MICHAEL O. WEST,
WILLIAM G. MARTIN, &
FANON CHE WILKINS

FROM

TOUSSAINT
TO TUPAC



The Black International since the Age of Revolution

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FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF STUDENTS OF GLOBAL AFRICA

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CONTENTS

Preface xi

Acknowledgments xv

INTRODUCTION

Contours of the Black International

From Toussaint to Tupac 1

MICHAEL O. WEST & WILLIAM G. MARTIN

PART 1

The American Revolution and the Creation of a Global
African World 47

SYLVIA FREY

Haiti, I'm Sorry

The Haitian Revolution and the Forging of the Black International 72

MICHAEL O. WEST & WILLIAM G. MARTIN

PART 2

Nothing Matters but Color

*Transnational Circuits, the Interwar Caribbean, and the
Black International* 107

LARA PUTNAM

Providential Design

American Negroes and Garveyism in South Africa 130

ROBERT VINSON

The Negro Question

*The Communist International and Black Liberation in the
Interwar Years* 155

HAKIM ADI

PART 3

Waiting for the Black Gandhi

Satyagraha and Black Internationalism 179

VIJAY PRASHAD

The Rise and Fall of Caribbean Black Power 197

BRIAN MEEKS

Merely One Link in the Worldwide Revolution

*Internationalism, State Repression, and the Black Panther Party,
1966–1972* 215

ROBYN SPENCER

Hip Hop's Diasporic Landscapes of Blackness 232

MARC D. PERRY

Bibliography 259

About the Authors 299

Index 303

ILLUSTRATIONS

Queen Mother Moore xviii

General Toussaint Louverture 45

Isaac Theophilus Akunna Wallace-Johnson 105

Tupac Shakur 177

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PREFACE

This project has its origins in a search for something we could not find: a single volume that offers a broad overview of the black international in time and space—from the late 1700s, the Age of Revolution, to the present, and on both banks of the Atlantic, west and east, from the Americas to Africa and points in between. The envisaged text would be grounded in the most recent and relevant sources, secondary and primary, and would at once attract the attention of scholars, teachers, students, and engaged intellectuals. Furthermore, the text would cohere around the central theme of black internationalism from the outset, that is, struggle. To qualify as black internationalist, those struggles, although situated mainly in specific localities, would have to be connected in some conscious way to an overarching notion of black liberation beyond any individual nation-state or colonial territory. That is to say, at the core of black internationalism is the ideal of universal emancipation, unbounded by national, imperial, continental, or oceanic boundaries—or even by racial ones. Such are the aims of this volume. They make for an ambitious goal. Our readers will have to determine how much, or little, success we have had.

Epistemically, the volume makes no claim to novelty. Its subject, the story of the black international, is as old as the black international itself. This narrative, as told by scholars, became more intellectually sophisticated and ideologically diverse in the early decades of the twentieth century. Black internationalism fared less well in the Western (or, for that matter, the African, Caribbean, or Latin American) academy in the post–World War II era, when regional area studies emerged as an intellectual handmaiden to the Cold War. Still, a hardy band of scholars, some within the academy (often in black studies and related ethnic studies programs) and others outside, continued to produce scholarship on black internationalism during this period. The end of the Cold War, and with it a loosening of the hegemony of area studies, along with concomitant efforts to demarginalize ethnic studies, opened new prospects for scholarship on black internationalism. The resulting output, often presented under the label of African Diaspora or Black Atlantic studies, attests to the renaissance in the black international narrative. This is not the place to offer an accounting of

this fine body of work. Perusal of the volume's endnotes will, however, reveal our debt to the previous literature, the old as well as the new.

What, then, is the rationale for this book? To begin, and as already noted, it tells, in a single volume, major aspects of the story of the black international, from the beginning to the present, that is, over a period spanning four different centuries (the eighteenth to the twenty-first). But that is just a beginning, albeit an important one.

The volume is organized into three parts, plus an expansive introduction that ranges far beyond a summary of the individual chapters and offers an interpretive overview of black internationalism as a whole. The first part breaks new ground, recentering the U.S. and Haitian revolutions as epochal and foundational events in the making of the black international. Especially curious here is the Haitian case. Strange as it may seem, the black internationalist dimensions of the Haitian Revolution, so self-evident to contemporaries, has been woefully neglected by scholars (with a few notable exceptions), particularly in works produced since the end of World War II, including the most recent output.

In the second part of the volume, we move forward in time more than a century, to the years following the end of World War I. By this point, the black international had expanded in space to include the African continent, an unintended consequence of the European conquests of the late nineteenth century. (Previously, only relatively small coastal areas of Africa, some of them populated by scions of returnees from the diaspora in the Americas and Europe, partook of black internationalism.) Among other things, the chapters in Part 2 highlight two well-known groups, the Garvey movement and the Communist International (the Comintern), which competed furiously to articulate and channel black grievances and aspirations on both banks of the Atlantic. Some of the material here presented is new, from both the geographical (world areas covered) and documentary (archival sources) standpoints. Additionally the two movements, Garveyism and the Comintern, are seen to interface in unusual ways, and thus new interpretive vistas are opened.

The main subject of Part 3 is Black Power, which is to say the rebirth of black internationalism in the 1960s, following the post-World War II struggles against colonialism and legalized racism on both banks of the Atlantic, the battle for decolonization and desegregation. As with many other black internationalist struggles, so also with Black Power: too often it is presented, whether implicitly or explicitly, as a singular movement, specific to this or that nation-state. The chapters in Part 3, on the contrary, show not just the wide

spatial range of Black Power but also the global interlocation it set in train. This section includes, too, discussions of Black Power's transnational and transracial antecedents, and of hip hop, a movement that, at least in its origins, claims ideological descent from Black Power.

Such, we contend, are the claims and achievements of this volume. It is offered as an installment in the ongoing narrative of the black international, in the hope that it will stimulate further discussion, research, and production.

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As editors, our greatest debt is to our contributing authors, who have waited entirely too long for this project to come to fruition. In some small way, we hope, their patience and forbearance have been rewarded. As editors and authors, we could not have asked for more diligent and searching manuscript reviewers than those chosen by the press. Their thorough and thought-provoking reports pinpointed omissions, uncovered errors of both fact and interpretation, and forced us to rethink many of our assumptions. The reviewers, later revealed to be Lisa Brock and Komozi Woodard, helped to make this a better volume. We remain in their debt. Indeed, Professor Woodard went so far as to convene a workshop, "The Black International: The Haitian Revolution to the Black Consciousness Movement." Held at his institution, Sarah Lawrence College, the workshop was inspired by this volume. Greater solidarity hath few in the academy. We are grateful, too, to our editor, David Perry. From our first substantive encounter, at a meeting of the Southern Historical Association in Birmingham, Alabama, David posed a series of critical questions that helped to frame the volume. David's assistant, Zachary Read, has proven to be a wonderful conduit and invaluable resource in his own right. We also give thanks to Stephanie Wenzel for splendid work as project editor, to Margie Towery for indexing, to Mary Caviness for proofreading, and to Ravi Palat for moral and material support.

For their many and random acts of kindness, friendship, and solidarity, intellectual and personal, we wish to thank Ibrahim Abdullah, Mark Beittel, Merle Bowen, Joye Bowman, Horace Campbell, Jacques Depelchin, John Higginson, Savi Horne, Lashanda Ingram, David Johnson, Robin D. G. Kelley, Ricardo Laremont, Marcus Rediker, Marjorie Thomas, Nigel Westmaas, and Coltrane and Irie Zerai-Che, along with Harpur College, Binghamton University; the Graduate School of American Studies at Doshisha University; the Department of African-American Studies and the Research Program and Department of History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and the Black Atlantic/African Diaspora Seminar at the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis.

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FROM TOUSSAINT TO TUPAC



Queen Mother Moore (1898–1997) in an undated photograph. Queen Mother Moore was a legendary freedom fighter throughout the twentieth century, across Garveyite, communist, black nationalist, and pan-Africanist organizations. (“Queen Mother Moore” from Brian Lanker, *I Dream a World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America* [1989]; courtesy of Brian Lanker Photography)

INTRODUCTION

Contours of the Black International

From Toussaint to Tupac

MICHAEL O. WEST & WILLIAM G. MARTIN

This volume is an act of recuperation. It seeks to reclaim and advance an old, but largely unheralded, story of black struggles worldwide. The subject, in brief, is black internationalism. The black international, we argue, has a single defining characteristic: struggle. Yet struggle, resistance to oppression by black folk, did not mechanically produce black internationalism. Rather, black internationalism is a product of consciousness, that is, the conscious interconnection and interlocution of black struggles across man-made and natural boundaries—including the boundaries of nations, empires, continents, oceans, and seas. From the outset, black internationalism envisioned a circle of universal emancipation, unbroken in space and time.¹ It is a vision personified, respectively, by the Haitian revolutionary Toussaint Louverture and the U.S. rap impresario Tupac Shakur, the one illustrating the struggles against slavery and the other signifying contemporary cultural insurgencies.

Our collection examines a variety of events and movements that manifest the multilayered and interconnected character of black internationalism. First, the essays show the emergence of black traditions of struggle and resistance in particular localities. Second, the contributions demonstrate how local struggles intersected with one another across diverse boundaries to form, loosely and informally, a black international that was greater than the sum total of its constituent parts. Third, the black international, in its turn, variously quickened, inspired, and stimulated local struggles. These essays chart aspects of that black internationalist resistance, from the onset of modern capitalism to the current postmodern era, in sum, since the Age of Revolution.²

Historical scholarship, including most of the writings on black experiences, has not been kind to black internationalism. Two dominant scholarly tradi-

tions, the metanarrative and the national narrative, have intellectually marginalized the black international. The metanarrative, despite its vaunted claim to universality, pays scant attention to most of humanity outside the white Atlantic, while the national narrative, with its singular focus on the nation-state, is largely oblivious to transnational concerns.³ Caught between these two hegemons—the Eurocentric metanarrative and the exclusivist national narrative—the discourse of black internationalism, although never fully silenced, has been much muted.

The recuperation we attempt in this volume necessarily runs counter to the dominant master narrative, whether in the form of the metanarrative or of the national narrative. Contrary to the existing literature on social movements and revolutions,⁴ we argue that black movements have been a leading force in the search for emancipation since at least the second half of the eighteenth century. In contrast to those who celebrate globalization as a new phenomenon,⁵ we maintain that black movements have long imagined and operated on a world scale. Against the master narrative, we posit that successive waves of black international struggles have countered, shaped, and at times destroyed central pillars of capital and empire, racial as well as political. In short, the story of the black international requires nothing less than a rethinking of received wisdom about life under capitalism over the long *durée*—and the possibility of alternative social worlds in the past and the future.

Our project, as noted, is more reclamation than innovation. Black activists, scholars, and movements have long made many of the claims we sketch here, in broad outline if not in specific detail.⁶ But the master narrative, as produced especially in the historically white academy, has steadily and effectively effaced the black internationalist counternarrative. Thus we have been told of an “Age of Revolution” with little, if any, mention of the Haitian Revolution. Repeatedly, we hear stories of twentieth-century revolutions that conveniently elide black internationalism. Incessantly, we are regaled with praise poems about the good, nonviolent 1960s and the new social movements it spawned, with scant reference to their black internationalist antecedents.

In our own time, the erasure of global black histories, which is to say the story of the black international, may be attributed primarily to the remaking of the Western academy, and especially the U.S. academy, after World War II. The demands of the Cold War, as determined by the national security state, gave rise to a new Orientalist-style branch of knowledge, area studies, of which African studies was a component part. African studies, as we have argued else-

where,⁷ separated and isolated continental Africa from black North America, and both from the Caribbean and Latin America. Thus did an iron curtain, to appropriate a formulation made famous elsewhere, descend over the study of African peoples. With the possible exception of Atlantic slavery, the resulting intellectual segregation generally precluded investigation of shared black or African experiences, much less shared black struggles for emancipation across nations and empires, continents and oceans. Accordingly, black studies in North America, which emerged out of later struggles in the 1960s and 1970s,⁸ were increasingly confined to a narrower, national locale. Likewise, black British studies remained separate from African studies in the British academy, just as African American studies and African studies were distinct areas of inquiry in the leading U.S. universities.⁹ Taking the nation-state as the unit of analysis, and utilizing a comparative method that required isolated cases, the Cold War academy effectively ruled out the notion of a black international that cohered the freedom struggles of African peoples globally.

But no condition, it has been noted, is permanent. More recent scholarship, driven by forces as diverse as the Afrocentric protests of the 1980s and the end of the Cold War, has challenged the master narrative, including the African studies one.¹⁰ By the beginning of the new millennium, more and more scholars and activists were being drawn to the connections, old and new, between peoples and movements across the globe. As area studies and African studies receded, along with the Cold War, insurgent forces within and without the academy forged new ties between the previously discrete fields of African, African American, Caribbean, Latin American, and Black European studies. These trends resulted in the appearance of new journals (e.g., *Contours*, *Diaspora*, and *Black Renaissance*), new Ph.D. programs in diaspora and Africana studies, and new conferences and associations dedicated to the black world (e.g., the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora). The resulting synergy has, among other things, sparked renewed interest in the forces—ideological, cultural, and organizational—that have long linked black life and activity in various parts of the globe.¹¹

The studies brought together in this volume represent some of the first fruit of the most recent labor. Collectively, they demonstrate the multiple and complex ways in which local black struggles and revolts have been conjoined to larger processes and movements among black folk here and there,¹² such that one can credibly speak of globally connected waves of struggles by African peoples over the past two and half centuries. These struggles, and their

cumulative effect, are fundamental to a full accounting of the early formation and transformation of capitalism in the Atlantic world, specifically, and more generally to the story of humankind in the modern world.

Such a project, furthermore, recovers a past within the world of activist scholarship. Already at the turn of the twentieth century, circles of movements and bodies of scholarship had emerged with a common mission: to challenge scientific racism worldwide, to contest colonialism and its reputed civilizing mission in Africa and the Caribbean, and to confront new forms of racial oppression in postemancipation societies such as the United States, Brazil, and Cuba.¹³ These antinomian expressions, in turn, were built on still older traditions of common resistance, traditions that date back to the second half of the eighteenth century. In that era of ferment throughout the Atlantic world, local struggles for emancipation, although expressing a wide range of lived experiences in specific societies, began to link together in a broad insurgency against imperial and racial orders.¹⁴ The linkages were forged amid the iconic movements of the modern North Atlantic, notably the Enlightenment, the Evangelical Revival, and the U.S., French, and Haitian revolutions. These were not just European and European-settler phenomena but, rather, world-historical events that were fundamentally shaped by the African agency and the African presence, literal and figurative. Such lines of inquiry, however, were largely foreclosed by the post–World War II rise of U.S. hegemony and, more specifically, by what it wrought: area and African studies. Exiled from the mainstream academy, black counternarratives were literally driven underground.

Reclaiming and advancing that intellectual tradition is a huge task, one that will have to be collaborative and can only be achieved over the long haul. We certainly make no pretense here of offering anything approximating a comprehensive accounting of the emergence and evolution of black internationalism. What we attempt, rather, is a rough outline of such a project and its promise. Our volume unearths moments when struggles against a racially ordered world system coalesced, creating black international moments of considerable—and often violent—force. In so doing, we claim uniformity of neither conditions, identities, nor movements; just the contrary, racial identities and forms of protest varied over space and time. The notion of black or African remained in constant flux, changing over time. At certain moments, however, racial struggles and identities cohered across vast masses of land and bodies of water, challenging and changing dominant modes of white supremacy. The volume focuses on three such moments of black internationalism—and their legacy.

Part 1: Foundations of the Black International

The foundational moment of black internationalism occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century. In that Age of Revolution, the black international began to coalesce around opposition to the central fact of black life on the west bank of the Atlantic: racial slavery. This is not, most assuredly, to argue that resistance to slavery began in the Age of Revolution. Clearly that was not so. From the very beginning of their involuntary sojourn in the Americas, enslaved Africans resisted racial bondage in multiple ways, overt and covert, violent and nonviolent.¹⁵ It is to say, however, that black antislavery increasingly became more interconnected, ideologically and organizationally, in the Age of Revolution.

A key event in this evolution of black struggles was the rise of a significant and articulate free black community on the North American mainland, consequent on the U.S. Revolution.¹⁶ No less significant, from the black internationalist standpoint, were the newly freed black people who escaped the United States in the wake of the patriot victory, “fleeing the founding fathers,” as one writer has termed it.¹⁷ The free North American black community, along with its diaspora, whose members settled on both banks of the Atlantic, east and west, powerfully shaped an emerging discourse about the possibilities of universal emancipation.¹⁸ The idea of universal emancipation, in turn, would become the foundational core of black internationalism.

If the first principle of black internationalism was universal emancipation, then its foundational language often had a biblical accent.¹⁹ That particular inflection derived from the Evangelical Revival, better known in the United States as the Great Awakening, an important episode in the making of the black international. A major reformation within Protestant Christianity, the Evangelical Revival was a transatlantic phenomenon, spreading from England to its American colonies in the second half of the eighteenth century.²⁰ Although it did not target them exclusively, the Evangelical Revival succeeded in converting large numbers of enslaved Africans, one of its main achievements. The ensuing Afro-Christianity was the first of its kind in the Anglo-American world.²¹ This was quite unlike the situation in the Catholic-dominated areas of the Americas, where church, state, and masters collectively had long embraced mass conversion, or at least mass baptism, for the enslaved Africans.²² British Protestant slaveholders, by contrast, initially equated Christianity with freedom, assuming manumission would necessarily follow conversion. Even after laws were passed explicitly rejecting any such connection, most Anglo-

American slaveholders remained averse to the conversion of their human chattel. Then came the Evangelical Revival, which began the mass Christianization of slaves in British lands, a task that would be completed by black preachers and evangelists, slave and free. In time the Evangelical Revival, originally no friend of slavery, morphed into the institutional church of the slaveholders, notably in the United States. On the North American mainland, at least, white evangelicalism had parted company with black liberation. The blacks, on the contrary, kept faith with the nascent liberationist theology of their conversion, encapsulated in the notion that God is no respecter of races or nationalities, having “made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth.”²³ This biblical passage appeared repeatedly in the earliest black internationalist narratives and had special resonance for slaves.²⁴ Thus the Evangelical Revival helped to create an intellectual scaffolding for the black international, or at least a particular expression of black internationalism.

The U.S. Revolution, coming hard on the heels of the Evangelical Revival, opened up new possibilities for black liberation. Seizing the moment, a small but important minority of the enslaved people in British North America defiantly claimed freedom. It was the first such assertion of the black agency in the Age of Revolution, but it would not be the last, or even the most significant. Notably, the rise of a free African American community was not part of the blueprint of the U.S. Revolutionary leadership, in which the slaveholders were well represented, if not hegemonic. Of the three institutions—colonialism, slavery, and white supremacy—on which European rule in the Americas had been constructed since the advent of the Columbian era, the U.S. Revolution challenged just one, colonialism. The other two institutions, slavery and white supremacy, most of the leading U.S. patriots were content, if not eager, to keep.

As Sylvia Frey’s chapter demonstrates, the enslaved people upset such plans. Striking a blow against slavery and white supremacy amid the chaos of war, they ran away, enlisted for military service in return for freedom (especially but not exclusively on the loyalist or British side), waged guerrilla warfare, and petitioned for manumission, among other acts of self-emancipation.²⁵ Enslaved Africans, too, would claim the rights and freedoms enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, despite its attack on them and on the Native Americans.²⁶ This was not, however, solely an American story. As Frey narrates, African Americans, drawing upon both evangelical and Revolutionary traditions, played a foundational role in the development and transnational dispersion of a diasporic consciousness and of pan-Africanism.

The consequences of these developments emerged as the U.S. Revolution approached its denouement and cataclysm struck the French colony of Saint Domingue, announcing the advent of that canon-busting event of that era, the Haitian Revolution. For the second time in less than a generation, political upheaval among the oppressors, this time the revolution in France, opened up self-emancipatory possibilities for enslaved Africans, this time on Saint Domingue. Originating in the most magisterial of slave revolts, the Haitian Revolution would decisively determine the contours of the emerging black international.

Our chapter on the Haitian Revolution charts how Haitian revolutionaries—in sharp contrast to the dithering of those who led the U.S. and French revolutions—demolished the unholy trinity of slavery, white supremacy, and colonialism.²⁷ Curiously, however, the centrality of the Haitian Revolution in the rise of black internationalism is largely unacknowledged in the literature on black revolts. That literature, which even in its more recent diasporic and Black Atlantic variations displays a consistent Afro-Saxon bias,²⁸ relegates the Haitian Revolution to the status of a nonevent, to use Michel-Rolph Trouillot's felicitous phrasing.²⁹ Contemporaries of the Haitian Revolution knew better. In turning the world that was Saint Domingue upside down, the Haitian Revolution electrified the enslaved and oppressed far and wide, firing their enthusiasm and broadening their horizons. A common wind, as one historian has acclaimed it,³⁰ appropriating the words of the poet William Wordsworth in his sonnet to Toussaint Louverture,³¹ swept through the greater Caribbean and the Atlantic world more generally. The ideological current consisted of underground networks of sailors and other maritime workers, runaways, and itinerant traders, individuals who collectively linked the city and the sea, the port and the plantation.

Thus were hopes of liberation fueled well beyond the shores of Saint Domingue. Indeed, as our chapter recounts, summarizing the work of others, the Haitian Revolution marked the apex in a long series of revolts across the Atlantic that both preceded and followed it. Among other things, the Haitian Revolution drew on the legacy of the evangelical revivalist tradition that so forcefully propelled the black internationalism that emanated from the U.S. Revolution. At the same time, the Haitian Revolution lent a powerful impetus to a second tradition in black internationalism, namely, the revolutionary tradition, as discussed in both Frey's chapter and ours. It was heady stuff, this wind of change, and the Haitian Revolution stood as the powerful exemplar of its potential. Nor did it matter that, for the most part, the leaders of indepen-

dent Haiti made little attempt to export revolution and, fearful of retaliation by neighboring powers, even disavowed the idea. The Haitian example was enough of an incitement: it provided the spark that fired a new and revolutionary black internationalism.

Part 2: The Great War and the Black Internationalist Revival

The second moment of black internationalism that the volume takes up coincided with World War I, known to contemporaries as the Great War, and its aftermath. Here, the chapters examine the elaboration and refinement of the black international in response to the transformation wrought by the war. In this second moment, the black international moved from the realm of ideological coherence to actual political organization. Not only was this latest wave of resistance and revolts better coordinated than ever, but it also encompassed a much wider geographical area. By the era of the Great War, the African continent, now under the colonial yoke, had become a full and integral part of the black international, which previously had been confined to the west bank of the Atlantic and a few outposts along the Atlantic coast of Africa, areas settled disproportionately by freed people from the west bank and their descendants.³² The widening circle of the black international revealed, once again, how particular struggles in different locales came to a common appreciation of the global nature of the racialized systems of oppression that everywhere diminished the lives of black folk, making a mockery of their aspirations for full emancipation.

African peoples were centrally involved in the Great War. More than 2 million continental Africans served in the war, many of them forcibly recruited. Organized mainly in labor brigades, they worked under horrific conditions and had a higher mortality rate than non-Africans. Even more Africans than went to the military theater were mobilized for the war on the home front, in many cases also involuntarily. The result was a massive increase in mining, agricultural, forestry, and industrial production, along with an expanded infrastructure (roads, railroads, and harbors) to move the increased production to Europe.³³ Africans of the diaspora, too, played their part in the war. The British and French recruited tens of thousands of soldiers from their Caribbean possessions, while the United States, which finally joined the fray in 1917, some three years after hostilities began, conscripted African Americans in disproportionate numbers, around 400,000.³⁴

On both banks of the Atlantic, the wartime demand for industrial and

related labor on the home front led to a vast upsurge in black urbanization. Although global in scope, the migration of black folk to the city was most conspicuous in the United States, which witnessed a “Great Migration” (so called after the Great War) of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North.³⁵ Actually, the Great Migration occurred in two waves: a bigger one from the U.S. South and a smaller one from the Caribbean and Central America, which also sent tens of thousands of African-descended people to the United States, mainly to the northern cities, New York above all.³⁶ All told, the Great War set in motion a massive movement of black folk (and many others, too). Everywhere, African peoples were crossing boundaries—regional and provincial, national and imperial, continental and oceanic—on a scale unseen since the end of the Atlantic slave trade.

The upsurge in migration and urbanization was matched by an upsurge in consciousness. There was a rise in expectations among peoples of African descent everywhere. Pronouncements by the leaders of the Allied powers, most notably U.S. president Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points—a document that seemed to advocate global peace, democracy, and self-determination—encouraged hopes for a better postwar deal.³⁷

In fact, African peoples were not repaid for their contributions to the Great War, and the global black revolution in expectations would be frustrated. Instead of getting better, in many respects black life became worse after the war. The formal postwar settlement, contained in the Treaty of Versailles, offered black folk nothing. In Africa, state repression of waged workers, the proletariat, which had grown in both numbers and consciousness, intensified after the war. Repression also increased in the diaspora, most notably in the United States, where the government set out to crush radicalism, including black radicalism, while the mob unleashed its fury on entire black communities, most deadly in the “Red Summer” of 1919.³⁸ Nor were violent attacks on the physical presence and political assertiveness of African peoples limited to the United States: there were similar manifestations against black folk and other colonial subjects in Britain and France.³⁹

As Lara Putnam demonstrates so vividly in her chapter, virulent white supremacy in the Central American states in the 1920s and 1930s led to increased oppression of black folk, many of whom were from the British Caribbean.⁴⁰ Indeed, and as Putnam further charts, a British Caribbean-centered, black transnational network had already emerged in the opening decades of the twentieth century, a migratory community that stretched from northern Venezuela to southern Harlem. Bound together by church and culture, voluntary and formal

organizations, this world developed a “race consciousness” as it came under increasing attacks. The results included explicit black internationalist critiques of imperial and colonial orders.

The phenomena Putnam describes were part of a larger renaissance across the black world, a reaction to the hopes and dreams so brutally repudiated by the reemergent global white Thermidor. At the core of the rebirth stood the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Officially, the UNIA was founded in 1914 in Jamaica under the leadership of Marcus Garvey, back on the island from an odyssey that included a stint among the Caribbean diaspora in Central America and an extended stay in England. In reality, the UNIA that meteorically rose to the forefront of black internationalism after the war had only a faint likeness to its original incarnation. Now headquartered in the United States, the reconstituted UNIA was a product of wartime developments far beyond Jamaica—namely, the Great Migration, both the southern U.S. and Caribbean waves, including Garvey himself, who arrived in New York in 1916; the broader global African urbanization; the growth of the urban and industrial black proletariat globally; and the violent repression, after the war, of the revolution in expectations on both banks of the Atlantic.⁴¹

Garveyism gave black internationalism, for the first time, a return address. From its headquarters in Harlem, New York, newly transformed into a pan-African metropolis, the UNIA, with its secretariat, entered into sustained communication with movements and individuals throughout global Africa. Most significantly, the message of Garveyism was carried far and wide by its official organ, the *Negro World*, published mainly in English but with Spanish and French supplements. Colonial and national powers waged war against the paper, banning and interdicting it, even imprisoning readers. An underground distribution network, at the center of which were black sailors, proved equal to the challenge, and despite the attempts to suppress it, the *Negro World* continued to circulate worldwide.

Garveyism, like the Haitian Revolution more than a century earlier, engendered fear and alarm among the guardians of empire, territorial and racial. The hostility of white imperial powers and white-dominated nation-states to the UNIA was even more widespread than in the case of the Haitian Revolution, although not as intense; the attacks on Garveyism extended from the west to the east bank of the Atlantic. What made Garveyism dangerous was not just its demand for a modern black nationality in Africa in the face of colonialism, but that it was making the demand in the changed circumstances of the postwar era and then mobilizing a mass constituency behind it. “Africa for the Africans, at

home and abroad,” Garvey cried out, reducing his program to a slogan. From the centers of power, the power of existing states and empires, came a uniform denunciation of the agitation and a determination to suppress it.

Suppression was no easy task because Garveyism, despite its formal structure and hierarchy, mirrored the historic informality and looseness of the black international. In its day, Garveyism was the pan-African potter’s clay: it could be molded any which way. Globally, Garveyism was more metaphor than movement—a rhetorical, stylistic, and organizational model easily replicated. Black folk everywhere with grievances against the system could find in Garveyism an archetype for seeking redress, as indeed many did, from dockworkers in South Africa to sharecroppers in the United States, from cocoa farmers in Ghana to intellectuals in Nigeria, from ethnic mobilizers in Zimbabwe to activists in Cuba, from the Anglophone to the Francophone black world.⁴² Outside the United States, perhaps even outside New York, Garveyism was a hydra with multiple heads,⁴³ more inspirer than executor. In global Africa as a whole, Garveyism, in the inspirational sense, remained independent of Garvey and the UNIA.

Garveyism, as both inspirer and executor, was on full display in South Africa, as Robert Vinson’s chapter recounts. South African Garveyism blended two strands of a long-standing interconnection between black South Africans and “American Negroes” (a category that included West Indians as well as African Americans). The first of these was the nineteenth-century notion of Providential Design, which was an outgrowth of the revivalist tradition in black internationalism and which promoted the “redemption” of Africa through Christianity and commerce, a project that would be spearheaded by Africans of the diaspora. This was the black version of the “civilizing mission,” and it was allied with emigration, or the “return” of diaspora blacks to the African continent.⁴⁴ The most noted exponents of Providential Design were the West Indian Edward Wilmot Blyden and the African American Alexander Crummell, both of whom resettled to Africa, although Crummell eventually returned to the United States.⁴⁵ In addition to Providential Design, South African Garveyism drew on a tradition of black South African celebration of African Americans as agents of modernity and models in the quest for a modern, regenerated Africa. South Africa and neighboring territories would become key centers of Garveyism in Africa, its transmitters including not just sailors, preachers, and newspapers, the usual vectors, but also migrant workers.

Women were a key part of the new Garveyite mass constituency. Women were seen, and heard, in the UNIA to a degree without precedence in black

internationalism. Those women included such high-profile figures as Henrietta Vinton Davis, Laura Kofey, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and Amy Jacques Garvey, the latter two wives of Marcus Garvey. Every UNIA branch had a “lady president,” complementing the (male) president. Rank-and-file Garveyite women were organized into the Black Cross Nurses and the Motor Corp, the female branches of the uniformed services.

Despite the visibility of women in the movement, Garveyism would not have been confused with feminism. The ideal Garveyite woman was the helpmeet. Official UNIA propaganda extolled the roles of mother and housewife, emphasizing women’s reproductive as well as productive work in the domestic realm. Marcus Garvey, now assuming the role of poet, celebrated the queenly black woman, an object of worship and an arbiter of (Victorian) morality. Such images bore little relationship to the lived experiences of most Garveyite women, who belonged to the working class. It is another anomaly of the UNIA that despite the formal reverence for bourgeois domesticity, practical Garveyism required women not in the private realm of the home but in the public arena. They were drawn there by, among others, the Black Cross Nurses and the Motor Corp, whose missions centered on social work, health care, and manufacturing. Meanwhile, Garvey continued to indulge his poetical imagination, obviously composing panegyrics to motherhood and to home and hearth.⁴⁶ A group of women in New Orleans, where female (and working-class) leadership in the local UNIA was especially strong, offered an all-encompassing assessment of the movement. The UNIA, they averred, “is our church, our clubhouse, our theatre, our fraternal order and our school, and we will never forsake it while we live; neither will our men forsake it.”⁴⁷

True to its reputation for being all things to all black folk,⁴⁸ Garveyism doubled as a religious movement—of the big-tent, Christian ecumenical sort. The UNIA had an official religious head, the chaplain-general, while branch meetings could often be mistaken for Sunday morning services, complete with hymns and prayers. Garveyism also inspired the creation of the African Orthodox Church, a pan-Africanist denomination whose founder, the former Anglican clergyman George Alexander McGuire, previously served as the UNIA’s chaplain-general. Despite a temporary tiff between Garvey and McGuire, everywhere in global Africa the UNIA and the African Orthodox Church became fellow travelers, the one movement helping to promote the other, including through their respective publications, the *Negro World* and the *African Churchman*.⁴⁹

More fascinating, perhaps, is Laura Kofey’s African Universal Church and

Commercial League, a riff on the Garvey movement's full name, the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. A charismatic personality, preacher, and organizer, Kofey deployed her considerable talents in the service of the UNIA in Florida and elsewhere. In time, she became a victim of her own success. Her star, having already surpassed that of many of the movement's male leaders, seemingly began to rival Marcus Garvey's, at least in her particular sphere of influence. Garvey, who in happier times had received the UNIA's "female John the Baptist" in his prison cell in Atlanta, publicly repudiated Kofey. Excommunicated from the UNIA, Kofey turned to inspirational Garveyism. Her vehicle for preaching Garveyism without Garvey was the African Universal Church and Commercial League, which, rather like the UNIA, elided the boundaries between religion and politics. Kofey's career as an independent operator was short lived; she was soon assassinated—not the first ex-Garveyite to suffer that fate.⁵⁰

Kofey's African Universal Church, along with the African Orthodox Church, was a direct offspring of the UNIA. But it was not just executive Garveyism that spawned religious progeny; so, too, did inspirational Garveyism. New manifestations of spiritualism, stimulated by the Garvey phenomenon to varying degrees, appeared in a number of places. Although assuming different forms, these groups were invariably syncretic: they fused multiple traditions—sacred and secular, old and new, eastern and western.

In the United States, for instance, a highly unorthodox form of Islam emerged, one decisively determined by black nationalist discourses and practices. The first group to organize on such principles was the Moorish Science Temple of America, but black-nationalist-determined Islam eventually found its most enduring redoubt in the Nation of Islam. Both groups were greatly influenced by Garveyism, although the Moorish Science Temple had been founded on the eve of World War I, before the postwar black renaissance.⁵¹ Islam, with its deep roots in the Western black diasporic past, was never fully erased by the slavery and postslavery experiences but became ensconced in the deep recesses of African American culture and consciousness.⁵² More overtly, the African American "rediscovery" of Islam coincided with the postwar renaissance, or the second moment of black internationalism. The engagement with Islam was promoted from various quarters; some of these were missionary efforts from outside the United States, while others were more indigenous.⁵³ Scholars have largely ignored the fact that the latter included groups like the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), the Harlem-based black radical formation that initially, though critically, supported the UNIA.⁵⁴ A

staunchly secular movement, the ABB commended the Muslim religion to black folk purely on political grounds, arguing that Islam, in sharp contrast to Christianity, opposed colonialism and supported racial equality. Christianity and Islam, ran a typical broadside in the ABB's official organ, "have an exactly opposite reaction upon the mind of the Negro convert. One as clearly induces to a servile state of mind and slavish acquiescence in white tutelage on the part of the Negro convert as the other inspires self-respect and love of liberty."⁵⁵ It is a cry that would later be taken up by representatives of the Nation of Islam, most famously by a second generation of converts led by Malcolm X, a descendant of Garveyism two times over—by religious-political choice and by family heritage, his parents having been ardent Garveyites.

Concurrent with the evolving black-nationalist-determined Islam in the United States, another variant of the new religious-cum-political movement emerged in Garvey's native Jamaica. Rastafari, even more so than the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam, was a testament to the impact of inspirational Garveyism and its ideological antecedents. Similarly Rastafari, like black-nationalist-determined Islam, appealed largely to the weaker segments of the working classes and the *Lumpenproletariat*. Both movements were steeped in a biblicism descended from the revivalist tradition in black internationalism, the founders of black-nationalist-determined Islam having much greater familiarity with the Bible than with the Koran. But Rastafari, hewing closer to the biblical line, eventually arrived at a novel theological conclusion. Its founders determined that Ras Tafari, the prince who in 1928 ascended the Ethiopian throne as Emperor Haile Selassie, was really the messiah.⁵⁶ A decisive factor in sealing Selassie's divinity in Rastafarian theology was the 1935 Italian invasion of Ethiopia, by far the single most important event in black internationalism in the years between the two world wars, and one that outraged African peoples everywhere.⁵⁷ If Selassie was the God of Rastafari, then Garvey was his noted forerunner—one who came, in the style of the biblical John the Baptist, to make straight the way of the Lord. Significantly, Garvey was assigned a similar role in the holy book of the Moorish Science Temple, the Holy Koran (not to be confused with the Koran of orthodox Islam), where he became the advance man for the Moorish leader Noble Drew Ali.⁵⁸

Garveyism, in both its executive and inspirational incarnations, may have ruled the roost of black internationalism in the period following the Great War, but its reign was not uncontested. One important contestant was the Pan-African Congress under the leadership of the African American intellec-

tual W. E. B. Du Bois. Four sessions of the Pan-African Congress were held between 1919 and 1927.⁵⁹ The inaugural session was convened in Paris in 1919 to coincide with the conference that produced the Treaty of Versailles, which the first Pan-African Congress, like the UNIA, tried but failed to influence.

The UNIA and the Pan-African Congress represented opposing tendencies in the black international. Initially, at least, the split was grounded in real programmatic and ideological differences. The UNIA, with its mass base, stood for transformation, while the Pan-African Congress, with its elite constituency, advocated accommodation. Whereas postwar Garveyism was founded on anticolonialism, the first two Pan-African Congresses called for reforming rather than ending colonialism. Indeed, the second Pan-African Congress, which officially condemned Garveyism, stood out for its decidedly procolonial rhetoric, especially by the Francophone delegates.

Yet by 1923, the year of the third Pan-African Congress, there was something of a seesaw change in the black international. Although a puny affair, even compared with the first two congresses, which were hardly mass events, the third Pan-African Congress heralded an important ideological revision, Du Bois having now rid himself of the procolonial Francophone contingent. The fourth Pan-African Congress of 1927 confirmed and deepened the critique of colonialism and global black oppression begun at the previous session. As Du Bois and the Pan-African Congress moved to the left, executive Garveyism headed in the opposite direction, since Garvey had drifted rightward in response to a number of political and personal challenges.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, though, the personal animus and bitter polemic between Garvey and Du Bois,⁶¹ each more bullheaded and egotistical than the other, had come to overshadow the substantive differences, and similarities, of the movements they represented.

Among the many resolutions passed by the fourth Pan-African Congress was one commending the Soviet Union for its “liberal attitude toward the colored races.”⁶² The nod to Soviet racial policy represented a marked departure from the first two congresses, which were no more hospitable to Bolshevik communism than to Garveyism. The fourth Pan-African Congress, held in New York (the previous three convened in Europe), broke new ground in another, related manner: the delegates included black members of the U.S. Communist Party and black fellow travelers.

The communist presence at the fourth Pan-African Congress highlighted another important tendency in black internationalism in the period after the Great War, namely, Black Bolshevism.⁶³ Black Bolshevism battled with Garveyism and the Pan-African Congress for leadership of the black inter-

national—that is, in articulating and mobilizing the grievances and aspirations of black folk globally.

Black Bolshevism resulted from the interface of the black international and the more formally organized communist international, the Comintern. After the triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the leaders of Soviet Russia declared for worldwide revolution, motivated by idealism and “internationalist duty” as well as by enlightened self-interest. Rejecting “socialism in one country,” an idea Joseph Stalin would later embrace, the “old” Bolsheviks, facing global capitalist hostility, even outright aggression, argued that the survival of Soviet Russia depended on successful revolutions in other parts of the world, especially in western Europe. The result was the Moscow-based Comintern, formed in 1919 and charged with promoting world revolution, the Bolsheviks having decided to throw down the gauntlet to the capitalists or, rather, to pick up the gauntlet the capitalists had thrown down.⁶⁴

Two items on the Comintern’s agenda commanded the attention of exponents of black internationalism: colonialism and racism. Bolshevism’s “liberal attitude toward the colored races,” as the fourth Pan-African Congress would style it, was the starting point of the black engagement with the international communist movement.

Hakim Adi’s chapter demonstrates the Comintern’s reach in the black world, extending from the United States to South Africa, from the Caribbean to Europe, from French-ruled to British-ruled Africa. In contrast to its competitors, the Garvey movement and the Pan-African Congress, the Comintern was an ideologically and organizationally coherent network, and it proclaimed the “Negro Question” a central part of the coming world revolution. The boldness of this assertion, together with the strength of its network, underpins Adi’s conclusion that the Comintern was, “perhaps, the era’s sole international white-led movement to adopt an avowedly antiracist platform, and certainly the only one formally dedicated to a revolutionary transformation of the global political *and* racial order.”

The Comintern’s great contribution to pan-Africanism, then, was its role in internationalizing, beyond global Africa, the black liberation struggle. In declaring the Negro Question integral to the world revolution it sought to promote, the Comintern broke new ground. For the first time, an organized body of white revolutionaries officially and unequivocally made nonracialism, even antiracism, part of a global struggle for social transformation.

The Haitian Revolution had arrived at a similar global antiracist posture nearly a century and a half previously, during an earlier age of revolution. In

making this ideological breakthrough, the Haitian revolutionaries practically stood alone. Their contemporaries, the French revolutionaries, granted equality to the free people of color, but only to cement the backing of Saint Domingue's mulattos, many of whom were slaveholders, in the campaign against the slave rebellion. Then, under military threat from Britain and Spain, each desiring to seize Saint Domingue, revolutionary France abolished slavery, aiming to retain control of the colony by wooing the slave revolutionaries to its side. Yet even these decisions, which were driven by expediency rather than principle, eventually would be reversed. The third great political transformation of that era, the U.S. Revolution, fared even worse on black liberation. Whereas the foundational French Revolutionary document, the Rights of Man and Citizen, passed over African slavery in silence, its U.S. equivalent, the Declaration of Independence, did the same and then hypocritically lambasted black folk as potential British allies. The other major document that came out of the U.S. Revolution, the Constitution of 1787, went further and explicitly endorsed slavery.

In seeking to make the Negro Question part of the world revolution, therefore, the Comintern broke decisively with the revolutionary tradition of the white Atlantic. Yet even in the international communist movement, white supremacy died hard. Indeed, as Adi shows, the Comintern often encountered obstacles from unexpected quarters: its own affiliates, the national communist parties. The communist parties of the United States and South Africa, along with those of Britain and France, were the most important so far as the Negro Question was concerned. White-minority-ruled South Africa was to Africa what the United States was to the world: its top industrial power. Each country had relatively large numbers of black industrial workers, the class the Comintern considered the linchpin of the revolution. Britain and France, for their part, were the major colonizers of black folk, ruling over far-flung empires in Africa and the Caribbean, among other places. Together, the four nations—the United States, South Africa, Britain, and France—controlled the greater part of global Africa, including its most economically dynamic sections. The communist parties of the same four nations frequently were uncooperative on the Negro Question; in many cases, they refused outright to implement the Comintern's antiracist and anticolonial policies.

Behind the Comintern's struggle with its national affiliates on the Negro Question stood the Black Bolsheviks. Whether in South Africa, the United States, France, Britain, or Cuba, Black Bolsheviks had little faith in the national communist parties and their predominantly white leaders, who often pan-

dered to nationalist, racist, and colonialist sentiments. On racial and colonial issues, black party members everywhere turned to Moscow for redress. From the national parties they expected little—except neglect, and perhaps worse. Accordingly, Black Bolsheviks looked to the Comintern to enforce its writ on the Negro Question and to impose the correct antiracist and anticolonial Bolshevik line on the national parties.

Those expectations would be fulfilled only in part, and then just for a season. Soon after its formation, the Comintern promised to hold a special Negro Congress, a conclave that would showcase its commitment to black liberation. Meanwhile, and as part of the disillusionment with the national parties, several Comintern congresses created Negro commissions. The idea was straightforward enough: a Negro commission, funded by the Comintern, staffed largely by Black Bolsheviks, and authoritatively backed by an extraordinary Negro Congress, would bypass the national parties and directly engage black struggles and strugglers globally. However, the proposed Negro Congress never materialized, while the various Negro commissions hardly functioned, explaining why successive congresses had to form new ones.

Finally, in 1930 the Comintern, in its most important *organizational* foray into black liberation ever, formed yet another Negro commission: the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. The acronym-unfriendly Committee of Negro Workers descended lineally from the Comintern's watershed sixth congress of 1928, which ratified, on the stage of international communism, the new Soviet dispensation. Following the death of Vladimir Lenin, the chief architect of the Bolshevik Revolution, Stalin variously eliminated and sidelined his rivals in a brutal succession struggle, before emerging triumphant. In the Comintern, as in the Soviet Union, Stalinism meant increased centralization of power. As originally constituted, the Comintern was a clearinghouse of revolution, organizing congresses and seeking to enforce their decisions. Real power over the national parties, however, the Comintern never had, as evidenced by its inability to impose its will on the Negro Question. Stalinist centralization inaugurated unprecedented Soviet dominance over the Comintern and its affiliates. Still, some affiliates remained defiant, including on the Negro Question, demonstrating that Soviet control of international communism, even in the Stalinist era, was never as complete as the anticommunist school of communist studies has claimed.⁶⁵

Stalinism intensified confrontation within and without the communist movement. The sixth Comintern congress, consequently, declared war on the noncommunist Left worldwide. For black internationalism, this meant doing

battle with “Negro reformism,” as Adi shows. According to the Comintern, Negro reformist organizations and leaders, or rather, “misleaders,” abounded on both banks of the Atlantic. The Comintern’s chief black target, however, was Garveyism. By the time the campaign against Negro reformism began, the UNIA, or executive Garveyism, was in terminal decline, a mere shadow of its former self. Yet the Comintern’s battle with Garveyism was no phantom war. The UNIA’s collapse as an organized body did not unduly affect Garveyism’s life as metaphor. In sum, the Comintern had taken up arms against the UNIA’s greatest legacy: inspirational Garveyism. The Trinidadian-born George Padmore, later to emerge as the most conspicuous combatant against Negro reformism, admitted as much. Although celebrating the disintegration of the UNIA, which he considered “the most reactionary expression in Negro bourgeois nationalism,” Padmore bewailed that Garveyism, as an inspiration, “continues to exert some influence among *certain* sections of the Negro masses.”⁶⁶

Soon after it was established, Padmore became head of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. Although it held the occasional meeting, the committee’s most important work was carried out through its official organ, the *Negro Worker*. Edited by Padmore during its most febrile phase, the *Negro Worker* was a monthly journal published from 1931 to 1937, initially in Hamburg, Germany. It was the Comintern’s answer to the *Negro World*, the now defunct Garveyite organ. Tendentious and polemical, the *Negro Worker* emphatically set Black Bolshevism apart from its black internationalist rivals, the Pan-African Congress and, especially, Garveyism. The *Negro Worker* focused on two broad, and related, themes. First, the *Negro Worker* argued that the black toilers, not the black middle classes—the despised reformists and petit bourgeois Negro misleaders—were the vanguard of black liberation globally. Second, and in accordance with the Comintern’s founding claims, the *Negro Worker* advanced the view that black liberation was inextricably linked to the global proletarian revolution.

But then the global proletarian revolution, as defined by the Stalinist Comintern, began to backpedal on black liberation. The rise of fascism in Europe led the Soviet Union to abandon its overt antagonism to the noncommunist Left, and even to the nonfascist colonial powers, meaning concretely Britain and France. Presently, communists everywhere received orders from on high to tone down the campaign against the “democratic imperialists,” Britain and France, and to focus instead on the “fascist imperialists,” Germany and Italy, which posed a more immediate threat to the Soviet Union. Ever the nationalist champion of socialism in one country, Stalin now determined on a course he

believed to be best for the Soviet Union. It was not, however, a policy consistent with black liberation. With the exception of certain individuals and organizations that supported Japan as a champion of the “darker races,”⁶⁷ black internationalism broadly agreed on the dangers of fascism to African peoples. Seeing fascism and colonialism as two sides of the same coin, however, most black internationalists rejected the notion of privileging antifascism above anticolonialism. After all, the “democratic imperialists,” Britain and France, were the preeminent colonizers of black folk. By contrast, fascist Italy was a minor colonial power in Africa, despite its brutal invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. Previously, the Treaty of Versailles had punished Germany by, among other things, dismantling its African empire and turning most of it over to Britain and France.

Black Bolshevism now faced a dilemma that was felt most acutely in the Comintern’s leading organs on the Negro Question globally, the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers and its mouthpiece, the *Negro Worker*. Deciding they could not support the most recent directive from Moscow, two of the committee’s leading lights bolted. The first to go was Tiemoko Kouyaté of French West Africa, the Comintern’s most prominent black Francophone. An organizer of black and other colonial sailors and allied workers in France, Kouyaté had long been a thorn in the side of the French Communist Party on account of his championship of the Negro Question. Following his close ally Kouyaté, George Padmore then resigned his positions as head of the Committee of Negro Workers and editor of the *Negro Worker*.⁶⁸ Short on forbearance and long on denunciation, as always, the Comintern retaliated by formally expelling both men, charging them with the same offense Padmore had so often leveled against others: Negro petit bourgeois nationalism. The *Negro Worker* survived intermittently for some time longer. For all practical purposes, though, the Comintern had abandoned its founding commitment and called off the engagement with the black international. For sure, individual communist parties, especially in the United States and South Africa, continued to engage black toilers and intellectuals, but mostly as part of a national rather than an international strategy.⁶⁹

Black women, a small but determined band among the Black Bolsheviks, were more consistent. In the United States, where they were most prominent, women were present at the founding of Black Bolshevism, and they would remain a crucial bloc in that tendency of black internationalism in the decades to come. The first outstanding female leader of Black Bolshevism was Grace Campbell. A charter member of the radical and black internationalist ABB,

Campbell pioneered a kind of Black Bolshevik feminism. She did not write much, but her ideology may be inferred from her actions, notably her keen interest in the “Woman Question.” Hers was a socialism attuned to the imperatives of women’s liberation, in and out of the workplace, including the particular gendered and racialized oppression of black women. Campbell remained with the ABB when it made its great metamorphosis, even as she retained her commitment to women’s liberation. The ABB, previously an uneasy ally of the UNIA, supporting as well as critiquing it, formally broke with executive Garveyism in 1921 and melded into the emerging U.S. communist movement.⁷⁰

The generation of female Black Bolsheviks that came after Campbell built on her work. Most of these women had proletarian backgrounds, but a few came from the ranks of the black middle classes; a number had Caribbean roots. Some—like Hermina Huiswoud, Maude White, Louise Thompson, Claudia Jones, and Esther Cooper—became political activists upon joining the U.S. Communist Party. Others—most signally Audley Moore, later Queen Mother Moore, who began her political career as a Garveyite—migrated to communism from black nationalism. To varying degrees all of these women, along with other black comrade sisters, were committed to the fusion of socialism, black internationalism, and women’s liberation initiated by Grace Campbell. Theirs was often an uphill struggle. They fought not just against male chauvinism in the party, including on the part of black male members, but also against the party’s ideology, which emphasized class unity above all other considerations, including those centered on gender and race.⁷¹ On the Woman Question, at least, the fight of female Black Bolsheviks, like that of their Garveyite sisters, was at once external and internal.

Part 3: The Long Black Sixties

The second wave of black internationalism was followed, in the post–World War II era, by the rise and improbable success of independence movements in the colonies and civil rights struggles in the United States. As Vijay Prashad traces in his chapter on the “Black Gandhi,” many of these struggles drew upon strategies and leaders forged in the black international cauldron of the inter-war years. Certainly this was the case with Gandhi, whose philosophy and movement developed first in South Africa, matured in British colonial India, and later inspired movements around the world, including in South Africa, the Gold Coast (later Ghana), and most famously in the United States.⁷² Yet

this postwar order, even as it resulted in independence for scores of African, Asian, and Caribbean states and civil rights gains for African Americans in the United States, was inimical to black internationalism. As self-determination became equated with state sovereignty, black identities increasingly assumed a national, even nationalist, form.

Black internationalism, however, witnessed a remarkable reversal of fortunes in what we call the long black Sixties, which is the subject of Part 3 of the volume. This moment in black internationalism was a reaction to the unfinished struggles of the previous two centuries, and especially the previous generation. The movements and activists that made up the long black Sixties were driven into combat by the unfulfilled dreams and broken promises of abolition, decolonization, and desegregation. The two decades before the onset of the long black Sixties were a period of heady changes in global Africa. World War II, which came at the end of the revival in black internationalism that followed the previous global war, introduced a new order in international politics, as the fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945 readily noted.⁷³ The subsequent contest between the United States and the Soviet Union for global hegemony, the Cold War, opened up new opportunities as well as posed new challenges for black liberation.⁷⁴ For global Africa as a whole, the major accomplishments of the Cold War era were juridical independence and formal racial equality—that is, the termination of colonial rule in most of Africa and parts of the diaspora, notably the Anglophone Caribbean, and the end of legalized racism and state-sponsored segregation, most significantly in the United States.

Decolonization and desegregation were far-reaching and costly achievements, wrenched from the claws of oppression, even terror, and paid for in blood, sweat, and tears. In the end, however, decolonization and desegregation failed to deliver on their major promise: a better life for the masses of black people. Kwame Nkrumah, who in 1957 led Ghana to independence, the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve that status, had argued that the better life could be achieved by ending European rule and transferring political power to the colonized. “Seek ye first the political kingdom,” Nkrumah, a sometime former preacher, exhorted in a riff on the King James Bible, “and all other things shall be added unto you.”⁷⁵ In many cases the addition amounted to little, if there was any addition at all.

The result was the onset of a new black internationalist wave. The long black Sixties lacked the organizational coherence of the preceding wave, devoid as it was of any umbrella movement with the global reach and influence of the UNIA, or even the Comintern or the Pan-African Congress. Ideologically,

however, the third wave of black internationalism was more cohesive than the second one. Unlike the previous two waves—which culminated in abolition and decolonization, respectively—the movements and activists of the third wave did not succeed in their avowed aims. Their success lay elsewhere, in undermining the postwar liberal order and U.S. hegemony, while showing the way to postliberal identities, alliances, and movements.

Signs of a new wave appeared in the early 1960s, when radical protest began to erupt in widely disparate locales across the black world. Among the most notable on the African continent was Patrice Lumumba's outburst at independence day celebrations in the Belgian Congo (presently the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Affronted by King Baudouin's speech celebrating Belgium's reputed civilizing mission in Africa, Lumumba, the incoming Congolese prime minister, seized the podium and denounced the whole colonial enterprise:

We have known ironies, insults, blows that we endured morning, noon, and evening, because we are niggers. . . . We have seen our lands seized. . . . We have seen that the law was not the same for a white and for a black, accommodating for the first, cruel and inhuman for the other. . . . We have seen that in the towns there were magnificent houses for the whites and crumbling shanties for the blacks, that a black was not admitted in the motion-picture houses, in the restaurants, in the stores of the Europeans. Who will ever forget the massacres where so many of our brothers perished, the cells into which those who refused to submit to a regime of oppression and exploitation were thrown? [*applause*].⁷⁶

There was to be no replay in the Congo of Nkrumah's long and felicitous transition to power in Ghana (1951–57). An incensed Baudouin fled from the stage and returned to Belgium before independence came at midnight. Lumumba simultaneously became a marked man. Within months he would be dead, the victim of neocolonial intrigues emanating from Belgium and the United States.⁷⁷

The confrontation at Congo's independence celebration was not an isolated event: Baudouin and Lumumba were well aware that a new wave of radical nationalism had broken out to the north and south as well as to the east and west of where they were standing. To the north, the armed revolt against French rule in Algeria was peaking amidst white settler and French army mutinies.⁷⁸ To the east, a state of emergency remained in effect in Kenya after the brutal suppression of the Land and Freedom Army, the armed resistance movement

the British colonialists called Mau Mau.⁷⁹ To the west and south, nonviolent nationalist movements were giving way to armed struggles, especially in the Portuguese colonies of Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique.⁸⁰ In apartheid South Africa, the police shot down scores of unarmed demonstrators in March 1960 in the town of Sharpeville. Following the Sharpeville Massacre, the apartheid regime declared a state of emergency and banned the Pan-Africanist Congress and the African National Congress, South Africa's leading liberation movements. Both movements, in turn, declared armed struggle against the apartheid state.⁸¹

Each of these developments rejected, implicitly or explicitly, previous nationalist struggles, their strategies, and the statehouses their leaders increasingly came to inhabit. Most prophetic was Frantz Fanon, the Caribbean-born theorist who made his name in the Algerian Revolution. Speaking on the "pitfalls of national consciousness," Fanon warned of the predatory nature of the African middle class, the group that would inherit the colonial administrative apparatus and corrupt the postcolonial state, turning it into a handmaiden of neocolonialism.⁸² Armed struggle, and the support it required from peasants and the urban *Lumpenproletariat*, led to new analyses of popular participation and the racial and class bases of colonial rule. Amílcar Cabral, the leader of the struggle in Guinea-Bissau, became renowned for working through these problems on the ground. In Cabral's view, there would be no greater obstacle to emancipation than the postcolonial state.⁸³

Similar eruptions and explorations were taking place on the other side of the Atlantic. In the United States, younger activists in the civil rights movement became increasingly impatient as white southerners countermobilized against any substantive dismantling of white power, wealth, and privilege. Meanwhile nonviolent, multiracial protest and an increasing number of elected black politicians failed to change de facto segregation in the North.⁸⁴ It was in this context that Malcolm X's voice found such a receptive audience, from his calls for the renewal of the tradition of self-defense and the necessity of independent black organizations, through his rejection of nonviolence and assimilation, to his emphasis on a common white enemy and international black action for *human*—as opposed to *civil* (state)—rights.⁸⁵ Central to this vision was a relinking of African American and African identities and struggles, a project facilitated by Malcolm's own trips across Africa. As the draft program of his Organization of Afro-American Unity stressed, "The time is past due for us to internationalize the problems of Afro-Americans. We have been too slow in recognizing the link in the fate of Africans with the fate of Afro-Americans."⁸⁶

Members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were reaching similar conclusions. By the mid-1960s nonviolence training sessions were being abandoned and attention increasingly turned to African affairs and armed movements worldwide. When SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael (later Kwame Ture) famously raised the cry of “Black Power” at a gathering in Mississippi in 1966, he found an immediate, explosive response.⁸⁷ In Oakland, California, the cry for Black Power found organizational expression in the formation in 1966 of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, which would eventually draw in so many stars of the young black movement. Thirty chapters quickly sprung up around the United States, and the Black Panther Party at one time or another worked with almost every radical U.S. organization of the day, including women’s and gay movements.

These developments gave rise to debate over sexuality and women’s participation within the wider black nationalist movement and the Black Panther Party in particular. As the paths of Elaine Brown, Kathleen Cleaver, and Angela Davis (to mention only the most celebrated) attest, a few women rose to prominent positions within the party, notwithstanding its masculinist character. Still, the Panthers were light years ahead of more openly patriarchal organizations, such as the Nation of Islam and Maulana Karenga’s U.S. organization.⁸⁸ By the early 1970s the Black Panther Party was publicly calling for alliances with the Women’s and Gay Liberation movements, reflecting internal gender struggles within the party and the Panthers’ public engagement with gay and feminist activists.⁸⁹ In contrast to women involved in the white New Left, fewer black women left black nationalist organizations to join feminist groups. And when they did, the continuing racism and class privilege within the emerging white feminist movement led them to launch new organizations, such as Third World Women’s Alliance, formed by Frances Beal and other SNCC women in 1968.⁹⁰ As the emphasis on “Third World” suggests, black feminists remained linked to an anti-imperialist and pan-Africanist vision.

As the chapter by Robyn Spencer traces, the Black Panther Party created an organizational network and a consciousness that were radically internationalist, weaving into a single tapestry a critique of U.S. imperialism abroad and capitalism at home. No longer was it possible to imagine national solutions to black international problems. Global solidarity links rapidly expanded, propelled in part by Panther leaders who had been driven into exile. This led inexorably to calls for a new black identity that was not wedded to U.S. citizenship but was based on international black alliances. Huey Newton, the top Panther leader, put it in words that Malcolm X (assassinated in 1965) would have appreciated:

“We cannot be nationalists when our country is not a nation but an empire.”⁹¹ Newton offered instead an alternative vision of a world of independent and allied communities, what he called “revolutionary intercommunalism.”

As Spencer demonstrates, the theory of intercommunalism was a long way indeed from the ideological and programmatic beliefs of the Old Left, the civil rights movement, liberal social democrats, and the white student movement. It even marked out new ground in relation to Stokely Carmichael’s and Charles V. Hamilton’s influential 1967 book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, which paved the way not only by rejecting essentialized notions of race but by recasting liberal “race relations” as a colonial relationship between global white supremacy and the “black nation within the nation.” The future, Newton proclaimed, was one of linking oppressed communities worldwide in opposition to a common enemy.

By the late 1960s, local eruptions had given way to international networks operating across the Americas, Africa, and Asia and beyond. Leaders of national liberation movements in Africa, such as Amílcar Cabral and Eduardo Mondlane of Mozambique, visited the United States, while U.S. movement leaders and personalities—including Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Eldridge Cleaver, Kathleen Cleaver, and Robert Williams, among others—traveled widely in Europe, the Caribbean (especially Cuba), and Asia, spreading the message of black revolt.⁹² African and Caribbean students resident in Europe and North America did likewise, protesting in support of various causes at home and elsewhere. In this way, a common language of black liberation gained worldwide prominence and currency.

Even old imperial centers were shaken. In Britain, West Indians and Asians in the early 1960s coalesced to oppose racism and increasing attacks on their basic rights, most notably by lobbying against the key 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Bill. These efforts failed, and the incumbent Labour Party subsequently moved against immigrants, particularly after losing seats in 1964 to Tory candidates who campaigned on the slogan “If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Liberal or Labour.”⁹³ In this climate the stirrings of Black Power, disseminated in part by visits by Malcolm X in 1965 and Stokely Carmichael in 1967, met a ready response among a new generation of British-born and -educated young people of African and Asian descent. As black militancy rose, older organizations pursuing integrationism and a legislative strategy, such as the National Committee against Racial Discrimination, collapsed. In their place arose new organizations espousing black consciousness and black control of black communities.

In Britain, 1967 was to prove a breakthrough year, marked by the founding of the Universal Coloured People's Association (UCPA), led by Obi Egbuna (who had traveled to the United States in 1966);⁹⁴ the banning of Stokely Carmichael; and the arrest of a major Black Power figure for "stirring up hatred."⁹⁵ More than fifty other radical black organizations joined the UCPA to create a broad Black Power movement. By 1969 the Home Office's Special Branch estimated that there were 2,000 active Black Power militants in Britain.⁹⁶

As elsewhere in the black world, Black Power organizations in Britain expressed local concerns. Yet these concerns were now no longer directed toward state-sponsored amelioration of the condition of new immigrants but were placed within global black networks, consciousness, and demands. As Sivanandan, a key activist of the time, recalls,

We related to both the struggles back at home and the struggles here, the struggles then and the struggles now, the struggles of Gandhi and Nehru, of Nkrumah and Nyerere, of James and Williams, of Du Bois and Garvey and the ongoing struggles in Vietnam and "Portuguese Africa"—Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde—and the struggles for Black Power in the United States of America. . . . And *black* was a political colour.⁹⁷

The language of Black Power was even heard in places without direct diasporic or African slave histories, such as Australia, where an avowed Black Power movement, formed in 1972, directly confronted the government. Australian black activists, like their counterparts elsewhere, deployed the term "black" to reject state-imposed classifications and to express solidarity with racially oppressed peoples everywhere. In the words of Bobbi Sykes, "In an effort to elevate the broad struggle being undertaken here [in Australia] to a Third World level, use of the word 'black' becomes highly desirable."⁹⁸

Back on the west bank of the Atlantic, the new black assertiveness sprouted forth from roots in Brazil's favelas, nightclubs, and schools, as military rule in that country became increasingly unpopular. Buoyed by the examples of national liberation movements in Portugal's African colonies and by growing ties to Black Power and soul culture in North America, black activists in Brazil charted new paths. Exposing the myth that Brazil was a "racial democracy," they unearthed local racial inequalities and practices, reclaimed ties to Africa and global black resistance, and began to redefine "black" to encompass both "preto" (literally, black) and "pardo" (roughly, mulatto or mestizo).⁹⁹ By 1978 this cultural and political renaissance led to the formation of a national organization, Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement).¹⁰⁰

Symbolically, and significantly, the Unified Black Movement rejected May 13, the traditional day for celebrating nationally the abolition of slavery in 1888. Instead, black activists created a National Black Consciousness Day, November 20, to mark the anniversary of the death of Zumbi, renowned leader of the Republic of Palmares, which was created by runaway slaves in the seventeenth century. As links with activists and movements in the Americas and continental Africa deepened, participants argued quite boldly, "Perhaps the most important contemporary phenomenon in the African world is the emergence and re-assertion of the African people of South and Central America within the context of Pan-Africanism. A new militancy and black consciousness has burst in Latin America."¹⁰¹

Black Power arose, too, amidst the horrors of apartheid. This was no isolated affair, peculiar to South Africa. As one chronicler of the movement there charted, "Waves generated by African independence lapped at American shores, slogans shouted in American ghettos echoed in Africa."¹⁰² In South Africa, the interlocution was most evident in the rise of Black Consciousness, the local name for Black Power. Inspired by radical movements and writings elsewhere in Africa, black students led by Steve Biko and the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) found SNCC's rejection of white liberalism and Fanon's rejection of Europe especially apt as they struggled as subordinates within multiracial organizations.¹⁰³ SASO training meetings, for example, involved close study of SNCC's work and its struggles with U.S. white liberals. In South Africa, again as elsewhere, the term "black" was radically recast along political lines, in this case to encompass all oppressed peoples defined as "non-white" by the apartheid state. Thus Indians, "Coloureds," and Africans were all included under a single flexible category, namely, black. As the SASO constitution stated, "We define Black people as those who are by law or tradition, politically, economically, and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society, and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle."¹⁰⁴ This redefinition marked a radical departure from South African norms, including those of the African National Congress, which had operated through links among racially distinct organizations.

Black international crosscurrents fused in the events of 1968 and its immediate aftermath. In the United States, the assassination of Martin Luther King was followed by a nationwide rebellion: revolts erupted on the streets of more than 100 cities, with scores killed, thousands injured, and tens of thousands of troops called out across the country to restore order. In Mexico City, coming on the heels of the Mexican government's slaughter of hundreds of protesting

students, U.S. athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised the Black Power salute on the Olympic reviewing stand. They were immediately expelled from the U.S. team, banished from the Olympic village, and sent back to the United States, where they were greeted with death threats.¹⁰⁵ In Detroit, a wildcat strike by the recently formed Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement shut down the Dodge Main auto plant.¹⁰⁶ The year 1968 also saw Huey Newton on trial for his life, while the Panthers came under murderous police attacks in California and Chicago. Again in 1968, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover announced that the Black Panther Party was the greatest threat to U.S. internal security.

In Africa, student protests against corrupt governments and neocolonial domination exploded in 1968 and later. In the Congo, student agitators declared that “the deep discontent from which we suffer is the colonialist spirit. . . . The [university] is an enclave of Belgium in the Congo.”¹⁰⁷ Next door in Tanzania, students at the University of Dar es Salaam marched in 1969 against the “American” curriculum. In the same year, but on the other side of the continent, Guinean students protested “an anti-Guinean plot hatched by French imperialism,”¹⁰⁸ even as their counterparts in Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta) denounced “the politic-bureaucratic opportunist bourgeoisie” and attacked the U.S. Peace Corps as a “nest of spies.”¹⁰⁹ Still in West Africa, similar sentiments at Senegal’s University of Dakar propelled a rolling confrontation with the state in 1968–69 that eventually led to a strike supported by unions, the closure of the university, and the arrest of hundreds of students. Back in East Africa, student protests in 1968–69 in Kenya and Ethiopia followed similar trajectories.¹¹⁰ All across the continent, meanwhile, students demanded action against the rebel white regime in Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe).¹¹¹

The global ideological commerce that was Black Power, and the attendant political protest, also crisscrossed the Caribbean.¹¹² As Brian Meeks states in the opening line of his chapter, “In 1968, Black Power swept across the Caribbean.” During the next three years, Black Power demonstrations, strikes, and riots would erupt in, among other places, Curaçao, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Aruba, Anguilla, Jamaica, and Trinidad, where a civil uprising/army mutiny threatened to topple the government.

The most visible trigger for the Black Power cascade across the Caribbean was the banning from Jamaica in 1968 of Walter Rodney. A Guyanese national and Black Power activist, Rodney taught at the Jamaican campus of the University of the West Indies. Even then, he was emerging as a key theorist of the drive to unite poor communities of African and Indian (South Asian) descent behind an international Black Power program — as revealed in his 1969 book,

The Groundings with My Brothers. University students marching in protest of Rodney's banning were joined by urban youths; the result was a virtual uprising.¹¹³ Nothing of the sort had been seen in Jamaica since the colonial era, in the 1930s.

The "Rodney riots" highlighted the interchange between Black Power in the Caribbean and on the North American mainland. The emergence of black nationalist groupings in Canada, particularly among West Indian students, provided a critical focal point for Caribbean intellectuals as well as a link to more prominent movements in the United States.¹¹⁴ Caribbean governments moved to cut those ties, including banning the works of U.S.-based black radicals, along with the radicals themselves. But the genie could not be returned to the bottle: protests continued, including by Caribbean students in North America, most notably in Canada.¹¹⁵ Indeed, protests in Canada would powerfully influence events in Trinidad, where things came to a head in 1970. Eric Williams—prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, noted historian, and erstwhile anticolonial bête noire—had little patience for Black Power. Its advocates, Williams announced, were "hooligans." Challenged by a Black Power movement reaching out to ever-expanding segments of society, Williams declared a state of emergency and arrested Black Power leaders. When the regime called on the army to enforce the state of emergency, however, a unit headed by junior officers mutinied, refusing to move against fellow "black brothers." The government appeared close to collapse.¹¹⁶

But then the wily Williams opened negotiations with the mutineers, agreeing to some of their demands, only to arrest them once they laid down their arms. Williams had been emboldened by the hemisphere's forces of order, which rushed to his support: Venezuelan gunboats appeared on the horizon, the British navy went on alert, U.S. warships set sail at high speed from Puerto Rico, and a U.S. airlift delivered fresh supplies of arms to Williams's government. Bereft of leadership, and unprepared to seize power, as a Leninist party might have done, the insurgency collapsed in the face of the countermobilization by Williams and his allies. Soon the island was still, the regime secured.

Trinidad's "aborted revolution" of 1970 would prove to be the apex of Caribbean Black Power, as Meeks argues in his chapter. Subsequent Black Power-inflected or -inspired attempts at mobilization receded or collapsed entirely, despite some initial successes. These include attempts at armed struggle, as in Trinidad in 1972–74;¹¹⁷ Indian and African working people's comity, as in the work of Walter Rodney (assassinated in 1980) and the Working People's Alliance in Guyana in the mid- to late 1970s;¹¹⁸ Black Power mobilization, as in

South Africa leading up to the 1976 Soweto rebellion;¹¹⁹ and Leninist vanguard politics, as in the Grenada revolution of 1979–83.¹²⁰ In the United States, Brazil, and elsewhere, once-vibrant black movements also declined.

An attempt in 1974 to create an international network, through the sixth Pan-African Congress, achieved little success, in no small measure because of the pitfall Amílcar Cabral had warned against: the unreformed postcolonial state. The state sponsors of the sixth Pan-African Congress, held in Tanzania, insisted on respect of the Organization of African Unity's principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. This decision excluded opposition activists not only from Africa but from the Americas and elsewhere as well. Pan-Africanism, as conceived by the sixth Pan-African Congress, would be an affair of states, standing firmly against civil society and black internationalists outside the state sector. The conference's plenary sessions naturally descended into "the self-adulation of governments as diverse as Cuba and Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire." Amidst the hubbub, there she was, the ubiquitous and always resplendent Queen Mother Moore, appearing alongside the equally redoubtable Ras Makonnen, the longtime clearinghouse of black internationalism and chef extraordinaire of pan-Africanism.¹²¹

The demise of Black Power globally remains a puzzle for its analysts and exponents alike. As Meeks deftly charts in his chapter, by the late 1970s, Black Power in the Caribbean, as in the United States and elsewhere, had become a shadow of its former self, increasingly isolated from its social base, particularly the working classes, and supplanted by Marxist-Leninist, vanguard party principles. Explanations for this rapid descent vary. Like the movements that came after it, Black Power's emphasis on identity and its rejection of bureaucratic state power posed a fundamental and unresolved dilemma. For some analysts, Black Power thus failed to appreciate the need to overthrow the postcolonial and post-civil rights orders and instead became rooted in community work, emphasizing race over class and rejecting vanguard revolutionary parties. In Trinidad, for example, it is argued that Black Power organizations could have seized power in 1970 but, at the critical moment, lacked the necessary ideological and organizational maturity.¹²² C. L. R. James's posthumous critique of Rodney's political practice in Guyana argued along similar lines.¹²³

Others point to the patriarchal and masculinist limitations of Black Power,¹²⁴ and to the emergence of alternate identities and new social movements for which Black Power could not provide a home. In the United States, the predominance of cultural black nationalism, often expressing the interests of a rising black petite bourgeoisie and political elite, is often cited for the inability

of black nationalists to construct broad-based political organizations.¹²⁵ In South Africa, the resurgence of the African National Congress after the 1976 Soweto rebellion is similarly attributed to its bureaucratic capacity to absorb the thousands of activists who fled the country in the wake of the repression that followed the rebellion.¹²⁶ This was so despite the fact that the Soweto rebellion was rooted in Black Consciousness, an ideology that explicitly rejected the form of political mobilization the African National Congress had pursued before it was banned in 1960. Organization, it seemed, had trumped ideology.

In addition to its own internal weaknesses, organizational and ideological, Black Power's demise was due to another major consideration: the sheer weight of the counterrevolution directed against it globally. The Thermidor, white and black, expressed itself most immediately in violent repression, as charted in the chapters by Meeks and Spencer. National liberation and Black Power leaders were everywhere imprisoned, exiled, and assassinated—including Malcolm X, Amílcar Cabral, Steve Biko, Fred Hampton, George Jackson, Eduardo Mondlane, Samora Machel, and Walter Rodney. In the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean, state repression resulted in death, exile, and imprisonment for thousands of lesser-known activists, even as their organizations were disrupted, infiltrated, and banned. In Africa, student activists were often arrested and impressed into the army. And although COINTELPRO, the U.S. intelligence operations against Black Power and other radicals, has received the most attention, it was hardly the only such undertaking.¹²⁷ Spymasters worldwide linked up to pursue black radicals, as seen in the cooperation of Jamaican, Guyanese, and U.S. (and apparently British) intelligence services in tracking the activities of Walter Rodney.¹²⁸

By the early 1980s, a more formative response, less dependent on overt repression, had emerged. Faced with unruly populations at home and abroad, powerful states and some of their leading intellectuals conceded key pillars of the postwar liberal order. The quest for integration was abandoned, the hubris of equality and progress was jettisoned, and national development planning, so extensively promoted by theorists of modernization in the preceding decades, was cast aside as the detritus of a bygone era. In their wake arose a new program, neoliberalism, which dictated the end of the welfare and social democratic state in the global North and the developmental state in the global South.¹²⁹ Simultaneously, the language of assimilation and equality was replaced with the discourse of a neoracist "multiculturalism," whereby difference could be accepted and celebrated even as racial and ethnic inequality accelerated.¹³⁰ These innovations went hand in hand with increasing racial and social

controls, marked most vividly by the criminalization and incarceration of black communities in the Americas and Europe and the erection of new barriers to protect white communities.¹³¹

This time around, as before, the white Thermidor provoked a black countermovement. Drawn from and appealing to communities increasingly marginalized by state design, a younger generation began to forge new forms of protest rooted in cultural, as distinct from organizational, politics. This reflected, in turn, the legacy of the long black Sixties, from which cultural nationalists emerged relatively unscathed and were thus well placed to seize the opportunities of a new stirring of black internationalism. A common thread connected the efforts of cultural nationalists across global Africa, from Afrocentrists in North America to promoters of Ubuntu in southern Africa. They all denounced the traducers of black folk and celebrated a common African humanity.

The channels of communication were global, coursing most notably through today's black telegraph, namely, the world-embracing black music community. One of its iconic figures, Tupac Amaru Shakur, was quite literally the product of the long black Sixties: his Black Panther mother, Afeni Shakur, was pregnant with him while in jail on bombing charges. Tupac, like many others, was inspired by the revolutionary chants of early rap that called for a return to a radical, African consciousness.¹³² Even those artists who became commercially visible—such as KRS-One, Public Enemy, and NWA—revived the historic black internationalist chant against the forces of Babylon and sang for those who were, increasingly, assigned to social death in the growing U.S. prison archipelago.¹³³

This miniwave in black mobilization reached its peak in the United States with the Million Man and Million Woman marches, apparently the largest black public political events ever in the United States.¹³⁴ Led and organized by neither black politicians nor civil rights organizations, the 1995 Million Man March marked a startling affirmation of a black nationalism that had been growing throughout the new neoliberal, neoracist era. It also marked the flourishing of cultural nationalism, but not yet any organized, political black nationalism. Thus it was left to cultural nationalist Maulana Ron Karenga to compose the founding statement of the Million Man March, while Louis Farrakhan, committed to both patriarchy and black capitalism, emerged as its most prominent figure. None of this prevented the now legendary Queen Mother Moore—one of the most redoubtable freedom fighters of the twentieth century, having made the journey from Garveyite black nationalism to

communism and then back to black nationalism—from making her last major public appearance at the Million Man March. She would die less than two years later, just shy of her ninety-ninth birthday.

The Million Woman March, held in 1997, offered a far more trenchant critique of the new world order than did the Million Man March. Indeed the second march, which attracted nearly as many participants, was a counterpoint to the first. The Million Woman March singled out the U.S. state, attacking its social retrenchment at home and imperial ambitions abroad. Unlike the Million Man March, whose leading lights saw much virtue in the fact that they made no demands on the state, the Million Woman March advanced a twelve-point program and excoriated U.S. policy at all levels. Going well beyond the Million Man March's mantra of personal redemption, the Million Woman March rejected the rule of capital and called for protection of the environment.

Sentimentally, the Million Woman March set the stage for the Black Radical Congress (BRC). Organized in 1998, the BRC's goal was to give organizational coherence to the insurgent ideas that had surfaced and spread in this period.¹³⁵ It was a bold attempt to mobilize the political consciousness that the two marches had so vividly displayed, but with an explicit rejection of the "end-of-politics" tendency associated with the Million Man March. Espousing a program that was proletarian, feminist, and internationalist, the BRC sought to be a big tent for all self-identified black radicals. Its inaugural meeting in Chicago was the most significant gathering of the African American Left since the Gary Convention of 1972, which attempted a similar undertaking in black radical coalition building.¹³⁶ The BRC, which soon became inactive, would prove to be no more enduring than the Gary Convention.

The consciousness that the BRC set out to cohere was hardly confined to the United States. Already in 1994, black activists from various parts of the world had gathered in Kampala, Uganda, seeking to stimulate black mobilization globally. Convened in a region that had just witnessed the Rwanda genocide, and one close to the center of the AIDS pandemic that has wreaked such death and destruction on global Africa, the seventh Pan-African Congress illustrated the revival of civil society in black internationalism. Accordingly, the state actors that had so thoroughly dominated the sixth Pan-African Congress of 1974 were conspicuous by their absence at the seventh Pan-African Congress.¹³⁷

These organizational efforts have yet to bear full fruit in the new millennium. What has formed a new, international black consciousness of surprising and continuing strength is hip hop culture, which has blossomed through music, dance, fashion, video, television, and advertising. Infused by rhythms

from beyond the shores of the United States, and infusing them in turn, hip hop emerged out of and brought together very diffuse youth cultures and music genres. As Marc Perry's chapter demonstrates, the growing global space of hip hop has also mobilized new black struggles that have at times contested and attempted to transcend nationally imposed racial identities and the neoliberal era's marginalization of black youth. Perry shows that this is a worldwide phenomenon rooted in local contexts, struggles, and identities. In Cuba, *raperos* have opened new black spaces and identities as the dollarization of the economy has exacerbated social and racial inequalities; in Brazil, rappers target racist police violence and government corruption; in South Africa, rap has expressed the struggle to forge postapartheid black identities from within apartheid's Coloured and African townships; in France, rappers from the elder statesman MC Solaar to younger artists like Disiz le Peste have challenged the neoliberal state and racism.¹³⁸ If the lyrics everywhere express locality, they also everywhere chant against the global processes seeking to control, marginalize, and racialize youth.

This global communicative process, involving movement back and forth across continents, is highly conflicted. On one hand, it has resuscitated an oppositional and transnational black identity attractive to black communities. On the other hand, hip hop's movement from creative play in the streets of poor neighborhoods to global success has channeled hip hop into the commercial service of a few global firms. Indeed, a central tension in hip hop everywhere is the battle between the culture's roots in oppressed communities and the currently dominant forces, propelled by corporate capital, that celebrate money, material things, and masculinity.¹³⁹ Lament at the loss of artistic grounding due to success is an old refrain and can be widely heard in today's hip hop.¹⁴⁰ However, its hip hop counterpoint is singular, highlighting the power of rapacious white corporations to control and profit from stereotypes of black men and women.¹⁴¹ The commodification and marketing of black youth culture is now very much in ascendance.

This speaks a common truth: both the political and cultural initiatives of the latest countermovement have yet to be carried forward to a new wave of black internationalism. Is the current moment a replication of the early 1960s, redolent of a latent sensibility that seeks to redefine the black and international agenda? We do not know. Of one thing, however, we can be certain: the struggle for black liberation in all its changing hues and places is now, as ever, an international one.

1. The writings of some of the foundational figures of black internationalism are contained in various anthologies. See, for example, Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers*, and Brooks and Saillant, "Face Zion Forward."

2. The point here is that black internationalism is a product of exile, and that it emerged among the Western diaspora (in the Americas and Europe) as opposed to the Eastern diaspora (in West Asia, the Mediterranean, and the Indian subcontinent). Although considerably older than the one in the West, the Eastern African Diaspora, for all its achievements, including any number of writers, soldiers, and leaders, never developed the transcendent sense of African consciousness that produced black internationalism. See, for example, Harris, *African Presence in Asia*; Hunwick and Powell, *African Diaspora in the Mediterranean*; Catlin-Jairazbhoy and Alpers, *Sidis and Scholars*; and Alpers, "Recollecting Africa."

3. The neglect of black experiences in the traditional Western metanarrative is discussed below. In the case of the national narrative, even studies that go against the grain of the standard storyline of "The Rise of the West," as in the best social history from below, remain burdened by Western universalism—national historicism. See, for example, the otherwise admirable text produced by the American Social History Project, *Who Built America?*

4. See, for example, across a very wide literature and number of perspectives, such works as Tilly, *Social Movements*; Sanderson, *Revolutions*; and McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*.

5. Among a wide range of highly cited works, see, for example, Appadurai, "Disjunction and Difference"; Castells, *Information Age*; and Hardt and Negri, *Empire*.

6. Representative samples from the early twentieth century include Du Bois, *The Negro*; Padmore, *Life and Struggles*; and James, *History*. Subsequent scholarship in this vein includes Shepperson and Price, *Independent African*; Harris, *Global Dimensions*; Robinson, *Black Marxism*; Walters, *Pan Africanism*; Lemelle and Kelley, *Imagining Home*; Okpewho, Davies, and Mazrui, *African Diaspora*; and Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*. Then there is Appiah, *In My Father's House*, which denies the existence of an African world.

7. West and Martin, "Introduction: The Rival Africas"; Martin and West, "Ascent, Triumph, and Disintegration." On the history and crises of African studies, see also Guyer, *African Studies*, and Zeleza, *Manufacturing African Studies*.

8. Huggins, *Afro-American Studies*; Hall, *In the Vineyard*; Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*; Grady-Willis, *Challenging US Apartheid*, 143–68; Joseph, "Black Studies."

9. On the isolation and the decline of the British African studies establishment, see Bundy, "Continuing a Conversation"; Fyfe, "Emergence and Evolution of African Studies"; Hodder-Williams, "African Studies"; and McCracken, "African History in British Universities."

10. See, for example, Asante, *Afrocentric Idea*. Asante was widely attacked in the culture wars of the 1990s, as in Howe, *Afrocentrism*. Bernal was also targeted for his criticism of European classicists' treatment of Africa in his *Black Athena*. For Bernal's critics, see Lefkowitz and Rogers, *Black Athena Revisited*, along with Bernal's response in Moore, *Black Athena Writes Back*.

11. On the revival and extension of the key term “diaspora,” see Brock, “African [Diaspora] Studies”; Palmer, “Defining and Studying”; Patterson and Kelley, “Unfinished Migrations”; Manning, “Africa and the African Diaspora”; Harris, “Expanding the Scope”; Alpers, “Recollecting Africa”; Akyeampong, “Africans in the Diaspora”; and Zeleza, “Rewriting the African Diaspora.”

12. The phrase is borrowed from St. Clair Drake, who in turn partly riffs on Du Bois. See Drake, *Black Folk Here and There*, and Du Bois, *Black Folk*.

13. The critique began at the Pan-African Conference of 1900 and continued in other forums in the years leading up to World War I, including the Universal Races Congress. See Mathurin, *Henry Sylvester Williams*; Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*; and the *Radical History Review* special issue on the First Universal Races Congress of 1911.

14. Scott, “Common Wind”; Santiago-Valles, “World-Historical Ties.”

15. See, for example, Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*; Craton, *Testing the Chains*; and Price, *Maroon Societies*.

16. Quarles, *The Negro*; Frey, *Water from the Rock*; Rael, *Black Identity*; Nash, *Forgotten Fifth*; Egerton, *Death or Liberty*.

17. Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 57–72.

18. Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*; Rael, *Black Identity*; Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers*.

19. Callahan, *Talking Book*; Wimbush, *African Americans and the Bible*; Kidd, *Forging of Races*, 247–70.

20. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*; Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*; Hempton, *Methodism*; Kidd, *Great Awakening*.

21. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*; Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*. The Evangelical Revival was not the first serious attempt to convert enslaved Africans to Protestant Christianity. A previous revival in the Danish Caribbean, one in which the black missionary Rebecca was centrally involved, proved quite successful. But, in contrast to the black internationalism that would become associated with the Evangelical Revival, “Rebecca’s revival” developed no sustained critique of black oppression or offered any vision of black liberation. See Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival*.

22. Rout, *African Experience*; Palmer, *Slaves of the White God*; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*; Sweet, *Recreating Africa*.

23. Acts 17:26.

24. It is cited, for instance, in Cugoano, “Thoughts and Sentiments,” 140, and Equiano, “Interesting Narrative,” 178.

25. See also Frey, *Water from the Rock*.

26. The Declaration of Independence denounced the British monarch because, among other reasons, he “excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.” The reference to “domestic insurrections” recalled the proclamation of Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, who offered slaves freedom in return for joining the British army.

27. In addition to our chapter below, for the broad scholarly treatment of the Haitian

Revolution, see, most notably, James, *Black Jacobins*; Fick, *Making of Haiti*; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*; and Dubois, *Avengers*.

28. See, most famously, Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*. But see, too, Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, which artfully bridges the Anglophone/Francophone divide.

29. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 70–101.

30. Scott, “Common Wind.”

31. The sonnet is titled “To Toussaint Louverture.” See <http://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=To_Toussaint_Louverture_-_poem_by_Wordsworth>.

TOUSSAINT, the most unhappy man of men!
 Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough
 Within thy hearing, or thy head be now
 Pillowed in some deep dungeon’s earless den;
 O miserable Chieftain! where and when
 Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou
 Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:
 Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
 Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
 Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
 There’s not a breathing of the common wind
 That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
 Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
 And love, and man’s unconquerable mind.

32. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*; Shick, *Behold the Promised Land*; Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*.

33. Farwell, *Great War*; Strachan, *First World War*; *Journal of African History*, special issue; Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*; Page, *Chiwaya War*.

34. Howe, *Race, War, and Nationalism*; Sweeney, *History of the American Negro*; Barbeau and Henri, *Unknown Soldiers*.

35. Trotter, *Great Migration*; Harrison, *Black Exodus*.

36. Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations*; James, *Holding aloft the Banner*.

37. Ferrell, *Woodrow Wilson*.

38. Kornweibel, “*Seeing Red*”; Schneider, *We Return Fighting*.

39. May and Cohen, “Interaction”; Jenkinson, “Glasgow Race”; Stovall, “Colour Blind France?”; Wilson, “Britain’s Red Summer.”

40. See also Putnam, *Company They Kept*.

41. The standard works on Garveyism include Vincent, *Black Power*; Martin, *Race First*; Hill, *Marcus Garvey*; Stein, *World*; and Lewis and Bryan, *Garvey*. Recent specialized studies include Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, and Harold, *Rise and Fall*. There is also Colin Grant’s recent biography, which, although offering few new revelations, is highly readable and engaging, if satirical at points. See Grant, *Negro with a Hat*.

42. Hill and Pirió, “Africa for the Africans”; Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*; Okonkwo, “Garvey Movement”; Williams, “Garveyism”; West, “Seeds Are Sown”; Robaina, “Marcus Garvey in Cuba”; Baba Kake, “L’influence”; Garcia Dominguez, “Garvey and Cuba.”

43. The metaphor has been popularized of late in Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*.
44. Adeleke, *UnAfrican Americans*, accuses African American supporters of Providential Design of complicity in European colonialism and of even being its advance guards. The censure of Providential Design is fair enough, if a tad ahistorical, but the African Americans had nothing like the power and influence Adeleke ascribes to them. The critique further fails to note that many among the first generation of Western-missionary-educated continental Africans, notably in the British colonies, also subscribed to Providential Design, albeit with an emphasis on the indigenous rather than the external black agency. Hence its currency with black South Africans, among others. See, for example, Willan, *Sol Platjee*, and Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*.
45. Crummell, *Future of Africa*; Moses, *Alexander Crummell*; Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*; Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden*.
46. Taylor, *Veiled Garvey*; Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*; Bair, “Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth”; Satter, “Marcus Garvey”; Martin, “Women in the Garvey Movement”; Ford-Smith, “Women and the Garvey Movement in Jamaica”; McDuffie, “Black Women”; Martin, *Poetical Works*.
47. Quoted in Harold, *Rise and Fall*, 45.
48. This includes the black underworld, most notably Casper Holstein. The top “numbers” man in Harlem, Holstein was also patron of the arts; defender of his native Virgin Islands against the United States, which had recently acquired the islands from the Dutch; supporter of the UNIA; and frequent contributor to the *Negro World*, largely on the Virgin Islands question. See Grant, *Negro with a Hat*, 235–36.
49. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement*; Terry-Thompson, *History*; Newman, “Origins.” On the African Orthodox Church in Africa, see Natsoulas, “Patriarch McGuire”; Johnson, *Archbishop Daniel William Alexander*; Wentink, “Orthodox Church”; and West, “Ethiopianism and Colonialism.”
50. Bair, “Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth.”
51. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*; Clegg, *Original Man*; Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience*; Gomez, *Black Crescent*; Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion*.
52. Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 128–275.
53. Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience*, 47–67, 109–46.
54. On the ABB, see Makalani, “For the Liberation.”
55. Valentine, “Two Religions.” “C. Valentine” was a pseudonym for the ABB leader and *Crusader* editor Cyril Briggs. Other black radicals, such as the learned Hubert Harrison, also evinced a keen interest in and knowledge of Islam. See, for example, Perry, *Hubert Harrison Reader*, 310–19. See also Jeffrey Perry’s biography, *Hubert Harrison*.
56. Post, “Bible as Ideology”; Hill, “Dread History”; Barrett, *Rastafarians*; Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance*; Murrell, Spencer, and McFarlane, *Chanting Down Babylon*; Zips, *Rastafari*.
57. Asante, *Pan-African Protest*; Scott, *Sons of Sheba’s Race*; Harris, *African-American Reactions*. The assault on Ethiopia, which for the black internationalists marked the onset of World War II, would have a profound effect on black politics in various localities. As is often the case, the literature on the United States is richest; see, for example, Plummer,

- Rising Wind*; Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*; and Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*.
58. Ali, *Holy Koran*.
59. Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*, 229–62; Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism*, 58–88; Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 80–94; Lewis, W. E. B. Du Bois, 37–84.
60. On this point see, most authoritatively, Hill, “Introduction.”
61. See, for example, Garvey, “Exposé of the Caste System,” and Du Bois, “Back to Africa.”
62. *Daily Worker*, August 30, 1927.
63. The term, apparently an old one, appears in Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*.
64. On the Comintern, see Degras, *Communist International*.
65. See, for example, Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, and Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, *Soviet World of American Communism*.
66. Padmore, *Life and Struggles*, 125–26 (emphasis in original).
67. See, for example, Gallicchio, *African American Encounter*.
68. On Padmore, see Hooker, *Black Revolutionary*. On Padmore, Kouyaté, black internationalism, and communism, see Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 241–305.
69. Naison, *Communists in Harlem*; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*; Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left*; Mullen and Smethurst, *Left of the Color Line*; Ellis and Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid*; Drew, *South Africa’s Radical Tradition*; Davidson, Filatova, Gorodnov, and Johns, *South Africa and the Communist International*.
70. James, *Holding aloft the Banner*, 155–84; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 3–21.
71. McDuffie, “Long Journeys” and “Black Women Radicals”; Turner, *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance*; Sherwood, *Claudia Jones*; Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*.
72. The connection between Gandhism and black internationalism is well exemplified in the life and labor of the African American Bill Sutherland, who expatriated to Ghana in the 1950s and moved on to Tanzania in the 1960s, working for both governments in the process. He was also engaged with anticolonial and peace (including nuclear proliferation) struggles and activists in Africa, the United States, and Europe. See Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi in Africa*; Sutherland, “Bill Sutherland”; and Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*. On Gandhi and South Africa, see Brown and Prozesky, *Gandhi and South Africa*, and Swan, *Gandhi*.
73. Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*, 385–408; Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?*, 152–70; Adi and Sherwood, *1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress*.
74. Among the challenges were Cold War–inspired, anticommunist attacks on movements and individuals most committed to radical change and black solidarity across national boundaries, including blacklistings, expulsions, deportations, and, in the case of British Guiana (Guyana), the termination of self-rule under colonial tutelage. Such attacks were carried out both by colonial and national powers and by nationalist movements fearful of being red-baited. See, variously, Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?*; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*; Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize*; Horne, *Black and Red and Red Seas*; Duberman, *Paul Robeson*; Smith, *Becoming Something*; and Rabe, *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana*.
75. Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all

these things shall be added unto you.” For Nkrumah’s own account of the rise of Ghana, see his *Ghana*. The standard scholarly treatment is Austin, *Politics in Ghana*.

76. Lumumba, “Independence Day Speech.”

77. De Witte, *Assassination of Lumumba*.

78. See, among others, Horne, *Savage War of Peace*; Quandt, *Revolution and Political Leadership*; Amrane and Djamila, *Femmes en combat*.

79. Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*; Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*; Presley, *Kikuyu Women*.

80. Birmingham and Ranger, “Settlers and Liberators in the South”; Davidson, *People’s Cause*.

81. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 231–60.

82. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 148–205.

83. Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea and Return to the Source*.

84. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*.

85. Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks*.

86. Malcolm X et al., “Program of the Organization of Afro-American Unity,” 2.

87. On the radicalization of SNCC, see Carson, *In Struggle*; Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom*; and Carmichael with Thelwell, *Ready for the Revolution*. For a guide to the growing literature on Black Power (still largely on the United States), see the historiographical surveys by Joseph, “Introduction,” and Self, “Black Panther Party.” As these surveys note, many of the hallmark elements of the radical black 1960s, such as armed self-defense and the critique of state power, predated the mid-1960s (on this last point, see also Wendt, “Protection or Path?”). For internationalist perspectives on the period, see Edmondson, “Internationalization of Black Power”; Singh, “Black Panthers”; Kelley, “Stormy Weather”; Wilkins, “Making of Black Internationalists” and “In the Belly”; and Johnson, *Revolutionaries*, 131–72.

88. The party’s misogyny and homophobia are cast wide in Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth*. See, by contrast, the perspective of former Panther Party chair Elaine Brown, *Taste of Power*; Cleaver, “Women, Power, and Revolution”; and more broadly, contrasting the United States and the party, Matthews, “No One Ever Asks,” and Brown, *Fighting for US*.

89. Newton, “Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements.”

90. On black and other feminisms of the period, see Collier-Thomas and Franklin, *Sisters in the Struggle*; Matthews, “No One Ever Asks”; Ward, “Third World Women’s Alliance”; Springer, *Living for the Revolution*; and Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*. For an overview that places gender at the center of the movement, see Grady-Willis, *Challenging US Apartheid*.

91. Newton, “Message to the Vietnamese,” 595.

92. The international connections of the Black Panther Party are summarized in Clemons and Jones, “Global Solidarity,” and Cleaver, “Back to Africa.” See also Carmichael with Thelwell, *Ready for the Revolution*; Marquese, *Redemption Song*; Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*; and Woodard, *Nation within a Nation*.

93. Hiro, *Black British*, 44; James and Harris, *Inside Babylon*.

94. See Obi Egbuna’s biography, *Destroy This Temple*.

95. Shukra, *Changing Pattern of Black Politics*, 24–25.
96. Hiro, *Black British*, 64.
97. Sivanandan, *Communities of Resistance*, 66 (emphasis in original).
98. Sykes, “Opening Statement,” 11–12.
99. Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power*; Leal, “Fárigá/Ifaradá”; Mitchell, “Blacks and the Abertura Democrática”; Fontaine, “Transnational Relations and Racial Mobilization.”
100. Gonzalez, “Unified Black Movement.” For the postemancipation backdrop to these developments, see Butler, *Freedoms Given*.
101. Nascimento, *Pan-Africanism and South America*, 1.
102. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 273.
103. Biko, *I Write What I Like*, especially the chapter “White Racism and Black Consciousness,” 61–72.
104. South African Students’ Organization, “South African Students’ Organization Amended Constitution,” C210.
105. Hartmann, *Race, Culture, and the Revolt of the Black Athlete*.
106. Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*; Geschwender, “Marxist-Leninist Organization.”
107. Hanna and Hanna, “Cynical Nationalists,” 54–55.
108. Cited in Hanna, “Student Protest in Independent Africa,” 180; for an overview, see Legum, “Year of the Students.”
109. Legum, “Year of the Students,” A9.
110. Hanna, Hanna, and Sauer, “Active Minority,” esp. 71–78; Dirlik, “Third World in 1968.”
111. Hanna and Hanna, “Cynical Nationalists,” 53; Legum, “Year of the Students,” A12, A14, A26.
112. See, among others, Meeks, *Radical Caribbean*; Oxaal, *Black Intellectuals*; Nettleford, *Identity, Race, and Protest*; and Thomas, *Modern Blackness*.
113. On Rodney, see Alpers and Fontaine, *Walter Rodney*; Bagues, *Black Heretics*, 125–50; Lewis, *Walter Rodney’s Intellectual and Political Thought*; and Rohlehr, *Transgression*, 338–73.
114. Austin, “All Roads Led to Montreal.”
115. Ibid.; Forsythe, *Let the Niggers Burn!*
116. Meeks, “1970 Revolution.”
117. Millette, “Guerrilla War in Trinidad.”
118. Abraham, “Exceptional Victories”; Lewis, *Walter Rodney’s Intellectual and Political Thought*, 202–53; Westmaas, “Resisting Orthodoxy.”
119. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 257–316.
120. Meeks, *Caribbean Revolutions and Revolutionary Theory*, 129–86.
121. Nascimento, *Pan-Africanism and South America*, 137. On the sixth Pan-African Congress, see also Rodney, “Towards the Sixth Pan-African Congress,” and Fuller, “Notes.” Born George Griffith in Guyana, Makonnen eventually made his way to England, where he came to prominence during the 1935 Italian invasion of Ethiopia, when he assumed the persona of an Ethiopian prince (*ras*), changing his name to Ras Makonnen. His restaurants served the dual function of meeting places and eating houses for pan-Africanists in England during the interwar years. Unlike Queen Mother Moore,

Makonnen left a published testament of his personal and political peregrinations. See his *Pan-Africanism from Within*.

122. Meeks discusses such views in “1970 Revolution.”

123. James, “Walter Rodney”; Bogue, *Black Heretics*, 143–46.

124. See Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth*; Brown, *Taste of Power*; and for Africa, Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe*.

125. This reflects the long-standing classification, based on the writings of Harold Cruse, dividing the integrationist tradition from the nationalist tradition and, subsequently, cultural nationalists from political nationalists. See Cruse, *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*; see also Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 292–308, and Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem*, 194–213.

126. Marx, *Lessons of Struggle*, 91–105; Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 321–62.

127. Grady-Willis, “Black Panther Party”; Churchill, “‘To Disrupt, Discredit, and Destroy’”; Churchill and Vander Wall, *COINTELPRO Papers*.

128. West, “Walter Rodney and Black Power.”

129. Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

130. Balibar, “Is There a ‘Neo-Racism’?”

131. The literature is diffuse and expanding. See, for example, Garland, *Culture of Control*; Sudbury, *Global Lockdown*; and Wacquant, *Deadly Symbiosis*.

132. See Dyson, *Holler If You Hear Me*; Keeling, “‘Homegrown Revolutionary’?”; Cobb, *To the Break of Dawn*; and as memoir, Bastfield, *Back in the Day*.

133. Allen, “Making the Strong Survive”; Rose, *Black Noise*, 99–125; Kelley, “Kickin’ Reality”; Chang, *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop*; Neal, *What The Music Said*, 134–35; Basu and Lemelle, *Vinyl Ain’t Final*. For a discussion of the broader cultural context in which hip hop emerged, see Cheney, *Brothers Gonna Work It Out*.

134. Madhubuti and Karenga, *Million Man March/Day of Absence*; West, “Like a River.”

135. Cha-Jua, “Black Radical Congress”; Zerai and Campbell, “Black Radical Congress.”

136. Woodard, “Amiri Baraka.”

137. Abdul-Raheem, *Pan-Africanism*; Bankie, *Globalising Africans*.

138. In addition to Marc Perry’s chapter, on these and related instances, see the essays in Basu and Lemelle, *Vinyl Ain’t Final*; Durand, *Black, Blanc, Beur* (France); West-Durán, “Rap’s Diasporic Dialogues” (Cuba); and Condry, *Hip-Hop Japan*.

139. Compare, for example, the interpretation of Kelley’s “Kickin’ Reality,” which celebrates and defends black youth culture, with Queely’s more critical stance in “Hip Hop”; see also Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads*.

140. See, for example, the Black Eyed Peas, “Going Gone.”

141. As in this sample from the Pete Rock and Black Ice collaboration, “Truth Is”:

So the business feed you all the weed and ecstasy
and a little bit of paper to provide some pacification
from all the bullshit frustration they serve you
Meanwhile they corrupt your perception of what the real is
See they takin’ all our businessmen, and givin’ ’em the mindsets of drug dealers

Took all our messengers, made 'em rappers
just flappin' they jaws afraid to admit their treason
Took all our soldiers for the cause, made 'em killers for no reason. . . .

I just know what the truth is

Been intertwined in this puddin' for 'bout a year now so I know where the proof is
See, it lines these midtown Manhattan skyscrapers
where former hustlers like myself sign papers
and pull off fucked capers like, 16 infamous stars of the time
They got us choppin' and baggin' and
servin' that shit to niggaz 16 bars at a time now

PART 1



General Toussaint Louverture (1743–1803), as conceived by Jacob Lawrence. Leader of the Haitian Revolution, Toussaint Louverture was born into slavery but led African armies that defeated French, British, and Spanish forces and abolished slavery in Haiti and Santo Domingo. He was eventually captured and shipped to a cold and damp prison fortress in France, where he died in solitary confinement. (Jacob Lawrence, “General Toussaint L’Ouverture” [1986], ©2009 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)

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The American Revolution and the Creation of a Global African World

SYLVIA FREY

The second half of the eighteenth century was a period of breathtaking historical change. It was an era in which peoples and ideas, commodities and cultures, crossed and recrossed regional and national boundaries from multiple corners of the world, transforming global demographics, building new Atlantic economies, and making connections in a variety of arenas—economic, political, linguistic, and religious. Africa was among the key points of circulation in this emerging world order, and African peoples made up a disproportionately large share of the human cargoes that traversed global waters. The African continent and its inhabitants were centrally involved in a vast process with overlapping and interacting parts, some of which were engaged in struggles against slavery and the expansion of capitalist modes of production. Within those transnational circuits lay the foundations of black internationalism, or pan-Africanism.

In this essay I argue that the era of the American Revolution played a seminal role in the development and spread of pan-Africanism. By contrast, North American historiography usually locates the origins of pan-Africanism in the nineteenth century, with the rise of emigration and colonization movements. An even more constricted temporal approach marks pan-Africanism as a twentieth-century phenomenon, associating it with W. E. B. Du Bois and the five Pan-African Congresses (1919, 1921, 1923, 1927, and 1945), along with Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association.¹ In fact, African Americans of the American Revolutionary era played a significant part in the foundational wave of pan-Africanism: they helped to create and spread a diasporic consciousness unified by a collective memory of a lost homeland.

Definitional problems bedevil the subject of pan-Africanism. I use the term in the sense suggested by George Shepperson, who distinguished *Pan-*

Africanism as a “clearly recognized movement associated with the five Pan-African Congresses” from *pan*-Africanism as “a group of movements, many very ephemeral,” in which cultural elements often predominate.² My conceptual boundaries are the Black Atlantic created by the Atlantic slave trade, as distinct from the African Diaspora, a term that refers to the worldwide migration of African peoples, which began some 1,500 years before the emergence of the Atlantic diaspora.³

The phenomenon of pan-Africanism did not sprout by happenstance but was driven by ideological forces with truly complex origins. Its lineage can be traced to three main sources: evangelical Protestantism, whose affirmation of a millenarian future was a source of inspiration and promise; the era of the American Revolution, when the messianic destiny seemed to be at hand; and the black writers whose living memories of Africa served as a cultural anchor for exiled African peoples. An essential first step in the development of pan-Africanism was the emergence of a corporate African or racial identity in place of numerous ethnic identities. This occurred at different rates in different places, developed in multiple centers and institutional structures, and drew from diverse sources, the threads of which twisted into a knot during the tumultuous era of the American Revolution. For generations of enslaved men and women born in Africa, memory of the homeland remained strong and vital. Such memory was not just visibly present in architecture and dance but was also preserved aurally in language and music. African consciousness faded more quickly in slave societies that ceased to import slaves directly from Africa early, such as Virginia and Barbados. As direct imports slowed and the slave trade gradually ended, firsthand knowledge of Africa faded. Africa, however, lingered in the collective memory secretly passed down through the generations, whispered as the home of the ancestors and a place of freedom, once upon a time. Indeed, it seemed that the greater the distance in time, and the more removed from its physical reality, the more compelling Africa became as a symbol for people exiled from their homelands.

Evangelical Pan-Africanism, Black Seafaring, and the New Black Identity

A preliminary step in the rise of pan-Africanism began in the eighteenth century, with the forging of a spiritual community within autonomous black churches that sprung up throughout the Caribbean and North America under black leadership during the period of international revivalism.⁴ Evangelical

revivalism was black and white, slave and free, more female than male, and unfolded within wide regional and transatlantic networks. At just about the time that John Wesley launched the Methodist movement in England, the Moravians, a pietistic offshoot of the Lutheran Church, inaugurated a revolutionary system of evangelization known as itinerancy. One of the pioneers of that system was a Dutch-speaking former slave named Rebecca Protten. Born in the Caribbean, Rebecca was in the vanguard of the first phase of a transatlantic black evangelical movement that had its genesis in white evangelical Protestantism but developed its own distinctive theology and ritual practices and provided some of the core beliefs of the black Atlantic revolutionary tradition. Decades before such better-known black evangelists as Olaudah Equiano, John Marrant, John Jea, George Liele, and David George began their worldwide itinerancy, Rebecca had traveled thousands of miles over two continents and several islands, broadcasting the evangelical message of divine deliverance from the bonds of sin.⁵

Rebecca is unique, but her story is not. David Margate was almost certainly the only black British missionary to work in the American colonies and quite possibly the first to articulate in unequivocal terms the biblical story of Exodus as both a spiritual pilgrimage and literal freedom from captivity, an idea that became a crucial motif in black diasporic discourse. “David the African” arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1775. Claiming he was a second Moses “called to deliver his people from slavery,” David “not only severely reflected against the laws of the Province respecting slaves but even against the thing itself; he also compared their state to that of the Israelites during their Egyptian Bondage [*sic*].” David preached in South Carolina only seven months before he had to be spirited out of the colony to escape a lynch mob. But he had planted the seed of African consciousness and antislavery that continued to flower in all kinds of ways and in a variety of different contexts.⁶ The journey from international evangelical revivalism to evangelical pan-Africanism had begun.

One of the forces driving the change was the black seafaring tradition. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of black sailors in the creation of a diasporic consciousness. Black seafaring men were broadcasters of news, creators of a black literary tradition, and prime movers of rebellion. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the maritime industry employed a significant percentage of the Atlantic male slave populations as sailors, wharf workers, or fishermen.⁷ Sailing vessels functioned as global conveyor belts circulating around ocean basins, connecting Caribbean island communities to the great metropolitan ports of Europe, the docks of Atlantic North America, and the

village markets and forts of Atlantic Africa. There were remarkable men among the black crews, pioneers in the antislavery movement and architects of a new diasporic consciousness formed around a remembrance of Africa.

Olaudah Equiano, John Jea, John Marrant, and others were not just sailors but, equally important, Christian ministers. In their professional identities as sailors, merchant mariners, fishermen, and preachers, they circulated through what Paul Gilroy calls “the black Atlantic world.”⁸ Men like Jea, who signed on as a ship’s cook, were as much part of the transnational circuit of evangelical preachers as John Wesley and George Whitefield, who launched the international movement known as the Great Awakening. Sailors wrote the first six autobiographies of blacks published in English before 1800. They included celebrated figures like Equiano, Marrant, Jea, Briton Hammon, Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, and Paul Cuffe. Their writings speak of a new sense of energy and power derived for the most part from a variety of religious and secular ideas, and they collectively contributed in major ways to shifting consciousness away from ethnicity and toward a collective psyche.⁹

Equiano embodied that experience, and his memoir served as a fascinating chapter in the development of a black diasporic consciousness. His ethnic or national identity was fluid. Whereas Jea and Cugoano identified closely with their native land, Equiano was not really from any single place, but an international figure. His *Interesting Narrative* related his personal journey from his birth in 1745 in Benin, Africa, to his kidnapping at age eleven. Subsequently he became, like so many other pan-African pioneers, a sort of vagabond, moving from country to country as an enslaved sailor, his name changing with the same frequency as he changed owners and crossed cultural and geographic boundaries—from Michael to Jacob to Gustavus Vassa, the last the name he came to use most often.¹⁰

Equiano’s writings are an extraterritorial mirror on pan-Africanism, more a state of mind than a specific place. Like Briton Hammon, Equiano demonstrated no unified sense of racial identity; if anything, he came to view himself as both African and European, an Afro-Briton perhaps.¹¹ In describing his native country and his fellow Ibos, Equiano used personal pronouns to characterize a certain “collective belonging,” which referred to his identity either or both as a European and as an African. Gradually, however, as his travels as a mariner took him through the Caribbean islands, he came to experience a sense of solidarity with the sufferings of enslaved people and to assign to them a collective identity as “Africans.” By the time he published his autobiography

in 1789, Equiano had finally come to understand himself as African and to return to the use of his Ibo name, Olaudah Equiano.

As Equiano's case demonstrates, the appropriation of Christianity by slaves and free black men and women did not obliterate their African identity. Rather, Christianity helped them to forge a new pan-African identity out of disparate and often antagonistic ethnic identities. Cugoano probably spoke for many Africans of the diaspora who asserted themselves as Christians. Kidnapped from his birthplace in the Fanti region of modern-day Ghana in 1770 and enslaved in the Caribbean for two years, Cugoano was brought to England in 1772, at age fifteen. A year later he was baptized. Cugoano accepted the Christian name of John Stewart as part of his ritual incorporation into the church but insisted it did not alter his ethnic identity: "Christianity does not require that we should be deprived of our personal name, or the name of our ancestors, but it may very fitly add another name unto us, Christian, or one anointed."¹² The same cultural past that was so crucial to Cugoano's sense of personal identity also centrally determined a collective sense of historical identity for diasporan Africans as a whole. The naming of black institutions offers a window onto that collective identity. It is impossible to say exactly when black churches in the United States began to assume racially specific designations, but with such names as the First African Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia, in 1775, African Americans celebrated both an African heritage and a Christian identity.¹³

For enslaved people, becoming Christian was more than simply a metaphorical escape from the bonds of sin into the land of spiritual freedom. Little by little, the connection between religion and politics emerged, and religious identity began to meld with a national, African American one. The American Revolutionary era was a key moment in that transformation. The congruence of an evangelical idiom with secular republican ideology dramatically shifted the intellectual basis and the actual grounds for the construction of pan-Africanism. Petitions, sermons, and the writings of the emerging black leadership reflected that process. In them are found the historical antecedents for what Marcus Garvey and various nineteenth- and twentieth-century black intellectuals would preach: race pride, African redemption, and the return to Africa, in some cases in spiritual form, in others physical.

Some of the embryonic pan-African tendencies are apparent in slave petitions of the American Revolutionary era. All of them tentatively contemplated an unfamiliar possibility, a return of freedom. Some contained seemingly modest notions of what freedom meant and what to do with it. Most made it clear

that enslaved people were cognizant of the antislavery principles articulated by churchmen and Revolutionary leaders, on one hand, and of British policies, on the other. The petitions marked the first phase in the development of an abolitionist movement. Black protests against slavery moved in tandem with white antislavery arguments, the two mutually influencing each other. In affirming the natural right of enslaved people to freedom, the petitions universalized the Revolutionary principles of liberty and equality. Some of the documents defined behavioral and moral values different from those practiced by white Americans; in many cases, they implied that white Americans had corrupted Christian teaching. This sense of spiritual superiority foreshadowed race pride and race memory and anticipated the politicization of spiritual salvation.

The back-to-Africa movement is clearly evident in a 1773 petition to the legislature of Massachusetts by four Boston slaves, Peter Bestes, Sambo Freeman, Chester Joie, and Felix Holbrook. The petitioners identified themselves as “*Africans*,” suggesting that they saw Africa as their historic homeland and a place to which they wished to return after years in exile. Their request for permission to work one day a week for themselves to “procure money to transport ourselves to some part of the coast of Africa, where we propose a settlement,” made them the ideological forebears of Prince Hall, Paul Cuffe, and Marcus Garvey.¹⁴ Though embryonic in form, this search for justice and representation in a racially hierarchical society would, over the course of the next decade, become the mission and motivation of emerging black politics in the Atlantic.

The American Revolution, Revolutionary Pan-Africanism, and Emigrants of Revolution

Eighteenth-century African consciousness was not limited to inchoate expressions in petitions and sermons. Side by side with the development of a cultural and essentially nonviolent diasporic consciousness emerged a tradition of armed resistance; thus a double heritage was created. Both traditions—the nonviolent and the revolutionary—drew from Christian theology, even though the two were quite at odds with each other in important ways.

No single event of the American Revolutionary era was more important in constructing a consciousness of kind, and in laying the basis for revolutionary pan-Africanism, than the organization of the Ethiopian Regiment by Virginia’s colonial governor, Lord Dunmore, who offered freedom to slaves who joined the fight on the British side. Dunmore’s designation of his black volunteers as “Ethiopian” represented a defining moment in the history of

the black diaspora's response to Africa. Since ancient times, the word "Ethiopian" referred to all of Africa and all Africans, not simply those from northeast Africa. Biblical references to Ethiopia in Psalm 68:31 proclaim that "Princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God." Whether Dunmore consciously used the term to imply that enslaved Africans would soon be free is, of course, purely conjectural. Regardless, the Ethiopian Regiment of armed black men fearlessly demanding "Liberty to Slaves" was visual language that needed no translation. It asserted a common heritage shared by all peoples of African descent and explicitly linked New World blacks to Africa. As such, the Ethiopian Regiment was a key factor in both the development of an African American diasporic consciousness and the history of pan-Africanism.¹⁵

The organization of the Ethiopian Regiment, furthermore, was an archetypal event in the history of a black revolutionary tradition. It marked the incorporation of the Exodus story into a militant self-liberation ideology that projected an image of the enslaved man as a latter-day Moses and, more broadly, proclaimed black people as agents of their own fate, responsible for the fulfillment of the biblical promise of deliverance.¹⁶ That historical development not only heightened African American participation in the Revolutionary War; it also foreshadowed a succession of formidable rebellions in the Caribbean and the United States in the nineteenth century.

Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment was eventually defeated, but its remnants independently kept alive the tradition of armed resistance. One of the most distinguished of those independent fighters, Colonel Tye, formerly Titus, fled his Quaker owner in New Jersey when the revolution began. On joining Dunmore's regiment, he changed his name to Colonel Tye, thereby signifying his personal transformation from slave to warrior-soldier. After Dunmore's defeat at Norfolk, Virginia, in 1776, Colonel Tye retreated to Staten Island, New York, with about 100 men, "the remains of the Aetheopian Regiment." Tye and twenty-four black former British soldiers continued their military service as members of the Black Brigade. In 1779 they joined the Queen's Rangers and waged guerrilla warfare in New York and New Jersey, until Tye's death from a gunshot wound.¹⁷

For some, like the African-born Thomas Peters, Dunmore's offer of freedom in return for military service opened an actual path back to Africa. A member of the Yoruba ethnic group, Peters was captured in what is now Nigeria around 1760 and enslaved on a sugar plantation in French Louisiana. Beaten, branded, and shackled, he was later sold into North Carolina, where he

was working as a millwright when news of Dunmore's proclamation broke. He escaped and joined the Black Guides and Pioneers, small companies of about thirty each that were assigned to various noncombatant duties, thus beginning a protracted personal struggle that would culminate in the 1790s in his African homeland. At the end of the war, Peters was evacuated to Nova Scotia along with thousands of other black loyalists, as the black supporters of the British cause were called. In Nova Scotia he became the principal spokesman for black emigrants dissatisfied with their land allotments and the discrimination they encountered at every turn. In 1791 he went to England to plead their case. There he met Granville Sharp, the noted British abolitionist, who put him in touch with the company that had founded the Sierra Leone colony as a haven for free blacks from the British Empire. Peters ended up serving as an intermediary for the resettlement of black loyalists from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone.¹⁸

Thomas Peters was an acknowledged leader of the movement to Sierra Leone, but the task of articulating the biblical, theological, and historical meaning of the journey was left to John Marrant. In roughly a hundred sermons between 1785 and 1790, Marrant argued that African Americans, including the black loyalists who had fled the United States, were "a chosen generation," "an holy nation, a peculiar people" with a divine ordination to restore Zion, God's holy city. His call to face "zion forward" struck a chord of racial consciousness among black loyalists in Nova Scotia, coming as it did at the moment when their dream of racial utopia had become a nightmare under the combined weight of white intimidation, violence, and fraud.¹⁹ A similar process was unfolding in England, where London's black community was also expanding on account of the global black dispersal in the wake of the American Revolution.

The result was the creation of Sierra Leone as the first permanent resettlement community in Africa for blacks from the diaspora. Its capital city, significantly, was named Freetown. Sierra Leone, and Freetown in particular, became a physical anchor for a variety of nineteenth-century pan-African projects designed by members of the black revolutionary generation. These included a trading society established by Paul Cuffe, the black nationalist and sea captain, to create economic opportunities for "my scattered brethren and fellowmen"; the West African Methodist Church, founded by Daniel Coker, cofounder with Richard Allen of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; and the American Baptist mission movement, led by Lott Carey.

In a significant variation on the same institutional-building theme, Prince Hall, a strong advocate of African colonization, "domesticated" the Freetown ideal in the United States. He appropriated the history and ritual of Free-

masonry as African history, the rightful legacy of Africans worldwide. In 1775, Hall, a Barbadian by birth, and fourteen other free black men joined a Masonic lodge attached to the British army in Boston. Rejected by segregated, pro-slavery white Masonry in the postrevolutionary era, the black Masons struck out on their own. Under Hall's leadership, they secured a full warrant from the Grand Lodge in London for their African Lodge, becoming a separate branch of Freemasonry in the United States.²⁰ As grand master of the African Lodge, Hall subsequently organized and chartered a network of black Masonic lodges in Boston, Philadelphia, and Providence.²¹ Hall also established a direct linkage between black churches and black Freemasonry, a nexus that became the primary institutional vehicle for disseminating ideas of race pride and race unity among ordinary black men and women.

African American Freemasonry, furthermore, promoted pan-African consciousness. At Hall's request, John Marrant, fresh from his itinerancy in Nova Scotia, delivered *A Sermon to the African Lodge*, in which he used sophisticated biblical arguments to reconnect historical Africa with African Americans. In an appeal to race pride, Marrant reminded his listeners that they, too, were descendants of the builders of Solomon's Temple. The development of a theology of social action was the logical and inevitable next step. The resulting pan-African civil religion, a fusion of the social and the spiritual, came into clear focus in Hall's *Charge to the Brethren of the African Lodge*, which elaborated on the theme of Ethiopianism while emphasizing a political mission of racial uplift. One of the duties of Masons, Hall told his audience, was to "help and assist all his fellow-men in distress, let them be of what colour or nation they may, yea even our enemies, much more a brother Mason."²² Marrant's *Sermon* and Hall's *Charge* can, in fact, be read as two parts of a single text. Together they contain all of the elements later associated with modern black liberation, black nationalism, and Afrocentric thought.²³

The Black Literary Tradition and the Articulation of Evangelical and Revolutionary Pan-Africanism

The link between pan-African consciousness and pan-African practice was mediated by the black literary tradition. Here, the discourses of John Marrant and Prince Hall, along with Richard Allen and Absalom Jones's 1794 *Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People during the Late Epidemic in Philadelphia*, represent "the first black texts that publicly expressed a corporate consciousness."²⁴ The emergence of a black print tradition in the late eighteenth cen-

ture was an important factor in shaping and articulating certain global themes and in broadening the geographic scope of pan-Africanism, evangelical and revolutionary.

The official separation of the thirteen colonies from Britain in 1783 marked a new era in the development of an African diasporic consciousness. The chaos of the Revolutionary War years created, for the first time, an opportunity for people to choose a national identity. Tens of thousands of people of African descent who fled to British lines chose to identify themselves as Afro-Britons. So, too, did a number of black writers, such as Equiano and Gronniosaw. Others opted for a new political identity as African Americans.²⁵

Regardless of national identity, black writers of the generation after the American Revolution spoke with one voice in constructing an intellectual genealogy of an African cultural unity, which was based on two principal biblical themes: Ethiopianism and the exodus from Egypt. Although modern critics of the New York slave poet Jupiter Hammon and the African-born Phillis Wheatley have complained about their failure to explicitly address issues of slavery and race, both affirmed black affinity.²⁶ Despite Hammon's seeming preoccupation with Christian salvation over social action and Wheatley's apparent preference for Christian America over Africa, their poetry and prose represent the biblical beginnings of not only African American literature but also a pan-African intellectual tradition linked to a new black global culture. One finds in Hammon and Wheatley an awareness that the Bible had been used as a tool for the historical oppression of African peoples.

Hammon's writings set out the major narrative skeins of the evolving black thought. The first black writer to describe enslaved people as a separate corporate nation, he repeatedly referred to his "brethren" as "African," "Ethiopian," and "African by nation" and as "a poor despised nation." His distinctive reading of sacred texts reenvisioned the landscape of the biblical world and populated it with Africans, whose "ancient" history and culture were older than those of their masters. Hammon was also the first black writer to establish the connection between Israel's bondage and African slavery. His admonition to black people to "stand still and see the salvation of God" recalled Moses' speech to the Israelites when he parted the Red Sea: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians who ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever" (Exodus 14:13).²⁷

Hammon and Wheatley appropriated the Bible abstractly. Some of their black contemporaries went further, mining biblical scriptures, along with natural rights philosophy, for their liberatory potentials. Writers who belonged to

this category included John Marrant, Prince Hall, Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Boston King, David George, George Liele, Olaudah Equiano, and Quobna Ottobah Cugoano. Collectively, their prose and sermons brought into clear focus a pan-African Christianity with race unity at its core. One skein linking all such voices is the idea of an ancient black history rooted in Africa as a source of common identity. Black Christian mariners like Equiano were acutely conscious of their relationship to the global African presence. Without surrendering their adoptive national identities, they embraced Africa as their special domain. Like Wheatley, who described her native Senegal as “the sable land of error’s darkest night,” Equiano was often torn by a contradictory desire to defend Africa from its detractors and to “redeem” it from “paganism.” But like Hammon, he stressed its biblical origins and traced the “pedigree of the Africans from Afer and Afra, the descendants of Abraham by Keturah his wife and concubine.”²⁸ In his sermon to the black Masonic lodge in Boston, Marrant suggested that paradise might have been in “African Ethiopia.” He also elaborated on Hammon’s efforts to ennoble the African origins of enslaved people: “If you study the holy book of God, you will find that you stand on a level . . . with the greatest kings on the earth, as Men and as Masons. . . . Ancient history will produce some of the Africans who were truly good, wise, and learned men, and as eloquent as any other nation whatever, though at present many of them in slavery.”²⁹

Consciousness of common African roots paved the way for an international network of descendant Africans. By the end of the American Revolutionary War, evangelical itinerancy and maritime slavery had produced a cadre of black leaders whose lives intersected at various points. The result was a transnational black network, which in turn was tied to the larger fabric of international revivalism and Atlantic revolutions. In terms of origins, the members of this network were a diverse lot. George Leile, a pioneer in the black foreign missionary movement, was a native Virginian; David George, Liele’s disciple, was the son of African parents; John Marrant was born into a free black family in New York; Ukawsaw Gronniosaw hailed from modern-day Nigeria; Ottobah Cugoano was a member of the Fanti ethnic group in what is now Ghana; Olaudah Equiano was born in Nigeria’s Iboland region. Although ethnically diverse, the emerging black leaders were drawn together into a self-defined network of *Africans* by their common experiences in slavery, as Christians, and often as Masons.

Members of the black evangelical network had achieved an international presence by the turn of the nineteenth century, even if their presence is largely ignored in the grand narrative of revivalism. The American Revolution was

followed by the largest migration of free blacks in the Atlantic world up to that point. In this way, the rolling waves of the Atlantic Ocean carried black forms of Protestantism outward in a continuously moving flow of ideas and people—across the Caribbean to Jamaica, north to Nova Scotia, and east to Sierra Leone. Each current had its own characteristics, but all overlapped and intersected at various points to form a global process that forged spiritual linkages between Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

Consider some individual cases of the black evangelical network. George Liele, a Baptist who began his itinerant ministry in Georgia, launched African American foreign missionary work with the founding of Jamaica's first Baptist church, out of which sprang the island's Native Baptist movement. David George's mission to Sierra Leone preceded the first West Indian Church Association missionaries to Africa by three-quarters of a century.³⁰ John Jea preached to large crowds in Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches in Liverpool and Manchester as well as in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Jea's travels took him to Ireland, where he preached in country villages from Limerick to Cork, then moved on from there to Amsterdam and Rotterdam. On returning to the United States from Europe, Jea traveled overland, enjoying success everywhere but in New Orleans, where, he complained, "the people were like those of Sodom and Gomorrah."³¹

The pan-African pioneers embraced a variety of evangelical creeds. Collectively, their spiritual lives reflected the cosmopolitanism of the emerging black leadership as well as the remarkable degree of interracial harmony that characterized eighteenth-century evangelicalism. Linked in dynamic relationships among themselves, the blacks were enmeshed in the larger Atlantic evangelical culture through personal relationships with one another and with the white leadership of the international revival movement. For instance, Gronniosaw was enslaved in New York by the evangelical Dutch Reformed pastor Theodorus Frelinghuysen. Baptized in England by the Baptist theologian Andrew Gifford, Gronniosaw was befriended by the Methodist founder Whitefield, whom he claimed as his "dear friend." Whitefield prayed daily with Marrant as the latter struggled through the throes of conversion. Marrant, a Huntingdonian Methodist, who may have learned of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion from David Margate, the first black British missionary in North America, was later ordained a minister in the countess's chapel in Bath.³² White evangelicals like Whitefield and Frelinghuysen influenced black evangelicals and were, in turn, influenced by them.

Brought into close contact with one another through their peripatetic lives,

the members of the black evangelical network skillfully navigated multiple connections, all the while maintaining close contacts with white abolitionists. The pan-African bond is explicit in Cugoano's pointed references to details in the lives and writings of Gronniosaw and Marrant.³³ As friends and "countrymen," the blacks provided the avenues through which British abolitionists like Granville Sharp and William Wilberforce were directly exposed to the consequences of slavery and to Afro-Atlantic cultures. In 1783, Equiano persuaded Sharp to intervene in the Zong case, in which slave traders dumped scores of their human cargoes at sea; through Cugoano's intervention, Sharp managed to free Harry Demane, who had been seized in London and put on a slave ship bound for the Caribbean.³⁴ John Wesley was one of the subscribers of Equiano's *Narrative* and was moved enough by it to write to Wilberforce, who was leading the antislavery fight in Parliament. Organized as the Sons of Africa, a name that might have been inspired by the American Revolutionary Sons of Liberty, twenty-four black men, including Equiano and Cugoano, petitioned Sharp and members of Parliament. Together, the black and white antislavery advocates created the abolitionist movement in England and America, establishing an immediate point of departure for liberationist struggles in the United States, Britain, Saint Domingue, and Jamaica.

The convergence of black theology and republican ideas that flourished at the grassroots level crystallized in the 1780s and 1790s in the globalization of the struggle against slavery and racism, with the aim of mobilizing black communities and transforming Atlantic societies. Although Christian salvation remained a constant, increasingly the emphasis came to center on temporal freedom and an end to racism. The geographic scope and intellectual reach of the black freedom struggle is nowhere more apparent than in the antislavery writings of the Afro-Britons Equiano and Cugoano. From England, both men tapped into the growing interest in the Atlantic slave trade and the less restrictive racial climate of Britain, writing powerful antislavery essays.

Although deploying conventional biblical and moral arguments, Equiano and Cugoano also displayed a "secularized consciousness" that reflected the growing influence of natural rights philosophy. In his *Thoughts and Sentiments*, Cugoano appealed to "the light of nature" and the "dictates of reason" to argue "that no man ought to enslave another." Slavery was, he contended, "the gross-est perversion of reason," while its defense was an "inconsistent and diabolical use of the sacred writing." Equiano's *Narrative* likewise charged that slavery "violates that first natural right of mankind, equality and independency, and gives one man a dominion over his fellows which God could never intend."³⁵

While Equiano's firsthand account of the physical and moral abominations of slavery is rightly considered by some to be "the most important single literary contribution to the campaign for abolition,"³⁶ it was the slave trade, not the institution of slavery, that his 1788 antislavery petition to Queen Charlotte addressed.³⁷ Despite Cugoano's bold demand that "a total abolition of slavery should be made and proclaimed; and that an universal emancipation of slavery should begin," like most eighteenth-century abolitionists, black and white, he proposed a gradual form of emancipation.³⁸

Conservative though they might seem in retrospect, the early black narratives of liberty disseminated ideas of racial unity, rebellion, and resistance in all directions, intensifying pan-Africanism even while leaving its meaning open to interpretation in different contexts. Although they did not propose a course of action, and indeed seemed to postpone action to a later date, the narratives brought the plight of suffering slaves to public attention and, in so doing, advanced the moment of action. But eighteenth-century black writers did more than that. In the face of violent racial injustice, they implicitly invoked the inalienable right of revolution espoused by white revolutionaries and so established two distinct processes of racial construction, one nonviolent and the other revolutionary. Noting the "artless tale" told him by a black creole in Montserrat who had his catch of fish repeatedly seized by whites, Equiano raised the possibility of violent action through his expression of sympathy for Moses as the slayer of an Egyptian (Exodus 7.1–25): "I could not help feeling the just cause Moses had in redressing his brother against the Egyptian."³⁹ The threat of violence also hung heavily over Prince Hall's lecture to black Masons in Boston. Reflecting on the frequent insults and injuries suffered by black people, Hall expressed admiration for the violent means of self-liberation pursued by Haitians, with whom, he emphasized, black Bostonians were united through common experience. "Let us remember what a dark day it was with our African brethren six years ago in the West Indies, but blessed be God, the scene is changed," Hall noted, before invoking the Ethiopianist trope. "Thus does Ethiopia begin to stretch forth her hand, from a sink of slavery to freedom and equality."⁴⁰

The American Revolution and the Spread of Revolutionary Pan-Africanism

One of the principal mediums for the transoceanic voyage of pan-Africanism was the dispersal of black war veterans at the end of the American Revolution.

The postrevolutionary migration scattered thousands of black Americans to islands throughout the Caribbean and Europe and halfway across the world to Tasmania.⁴¹ It is impossible to argue with any degree of certainty that revolutionary ideology inspired them. It is probably safe to say that, at the very least, their military experience in British regiments and the example of Dunmore's Ethiopian soldiers and the Black Carolina Corps, raised among ex-slaves and free blacks, were part of their political transformation.⁴² The black veterans carried their political experiences throughout the Atlantic world and beyond. Over time, the notion of military service as a political strategy became reconfigured, charged with new meaning in different social and racial settings.

Black veterans of the American Revolutionary War took to heart the idea that service to the king entitled them to freedom. The 1787 rebellion in the Bahamas clearly shows that connection. Transported from New York and Florida, the ex-slave soldiers claimed freedom by virtue of loyal military service. Instead, on arrival in the Bahamas many were reduced to a form of apprenticeship, or even outright bondage. Predictably, they resisted, fleeing to the bush. White militias rounded up some, but the rest continued to create havoc.⁴³ While there is no direct evidence of a connection between the Ethiopian Regiment and the 1787 Bahamas rebellion, the two were symbolically linked in the person of Dunmore, who was governor of the Bahamas from 1787 to 1796. Dunmore set up a court to hear black claims for freedom. Believed by whites to be a "friend of the Negroes," Dunmore's court ruled against the black claimants in all but one case.⁴⁴

The 1787 Bahamas rebellion marked the beginning of black soldiers' long march across multiple cultural frontiers that ended in West Africa, completing for many a geographic return to ancestral homelands and a journey from slavery back to freedom. During the turbulent decade of the 1790s, something profound began to change in politics and philosophy. Different ideas about humanity were emerging, some encouraged by the growing power of the antislavery movement, others by the 1791 slave revolution in Saint Domingue that eventually dismantled the old colonial hierarchies, and still others by the insatiable need of the European powers for soldiers during the long wars of the French Revolution. The Black Carolina Corps, like the Ethiopian Regiment, was both a model and a catalyst for a profound reorientation of black political culture based on an expansion of the meaning of military service as the prerogative of free, white propertied men to a new definition that included the enslaved. Following the British surrender in 1783, veterans of the corps were scattered throughout Europe and the Caribbean. The experience of one

veteran, Richard Durant, was perhaps not so much typical as generic, and it suggests how the personal decisions of hundreds, indeed thousands, of anonymous individuals affected the course of Atlantic history. Durant was born in America, and at the end of the war he shipped to Martinique, where he enlisted in the British army. By age thirty-eight he had sixteen years of military experience in British operations in the long wars of the French Revolution.

Roughly 300 of Durant's fellow soldiers from the Black Carolina Corps ended up on the neighboring island of Grenada, where they were reconstituted into a new military unit.⁴⁵ Ostensibly loyal to Britain, black veterans in Grenada and Tobago, in what can be considered a first step in the transition from slave-soldier to citizen-soldier, revolted against British authority on learning of the French Revolutionary decree of 1794 abolishing slavery. Already heavily dependent on black combat troops in the long and costly wars of the French Revolution, the British responded by creating a new system of Caribbean defense based on permanent black regiments.⁴⁶ The policy proved a success. The regiments, recruited mainly from slave ships, came to make up a third of all British forces in the Caribbean. In 1807, almost 10,000 members of the British West India regiments were freed, one of the largest single acts of manumission prior to the abolition of slavery in the British Empire.⁴⁷ After the War of 1812, several hundred freed American black veterans were settled in Trinidad, where they founded the famous "company towns." However, the majority of discharged soldiers and their families ended up in military communities in Sierra Leone, finally closing the Atlantic circle.⁴⁸ Taken together, these events permanently established a connection between military service and abolition, providing continuity between the revolutionary movements of the late eighteenth century.

Pan-Africanism and the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions

The logical consequences of the developments set in motion by the American Revolutionary War were fully revealed in the French Caribbean. The tendency of Anglo-American historians to examine the American Revolution through the narrow lens of Anglo-American history obscures the links between black history on mainland North America and in the Caribbean. Recent studies suggest that the American Revolution significantly influenced black popular politics in the French Caribbean. Ideas of liberty and equality penetrated the Caribbean during the Revolutionary War, when American corsairs and mer-

chant ships used some of the islands as strategic bases. Contraband trade was so extensive that the islands became, in the words of one historian citing a governor, “le principal theatre de la guerre d’Amerique,” where “aux idees de liberte et d’egalite, que tout de monde a la bouche.”⁴⁹ This contraband trade, in ideas as well as goods, constituted a Caribbean backdrop to the French and Haitian revolutions.

American Revolutionary War veterans formed human links in a chain that flowed from the American Revolution through the French Revolution and the Haitian Revolution and back around to mainland North America. The emerging scholarship on black resistance in the French Caribbean reveals deep connections between the islands and to the French and Haitian revolutions, including links in leadership and the circulation of words, symbols, and slogans. The story began with the American Revolution. Under the Franco-American alliance of 1778, France dispatched a force of about 4,000 to fight on the American side. The French forces consisted of regular French troops and units of Saint Domingue’s all-white militias, along with free black and mulatto volunteers from Saint Domingue, Guadeloupe, and Martinique.⁵⁰ Almost a thousand men of color responded to the call for service and were deployed with the rest of the French forces to Savannah, Georgia, in 1779. Among the volunteers of color were such future leaders of the Haitian Revolution as Andre Rigaud, Henri Christophe, Jean Baptiste Villatte, Louis-Jacques Beauvais, and Christophe and Martial Besse.⁵¹

Only a small number of the colored troops returned immediately to Saint Domingue at the conclusion of the Savannah campaign. More than a third were sent to Grenada and remained there for more than two years. Several detachments initially went to France, only later returning to Saint Domingue.⁵² The French interlude, occurring as it did amid an emerging discourse on notions of citizenship, identity, and equality, offered the men of color an opportunity to broaden their education in revolutionary politics. As early as the 1760s and 1770s, French writers like Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Raynal, and Diderot were using African slavery to criticize the monarchy and advocate radical equality. More than a decade before the formation of the Amis des Noirs, the French abolitionist group, French lawyers were developing arguments against slavery. In pleading the case of a Louisiana slave before a Paris naval court, one lawyer condemned the entire institution of slavery.⁵³ At just about the same time, the islands received news about the abolition of slavery in the northern states of the United States and the formation of the Amis des Noirs.⁵⁴ The convergence of events, exacerbated by the French Revolution,

precipitated a series of slave plots and revolts, beginning with the Martinique rebellion of August 1789.

Although largely a response to local issues, slave rebellions in French Martinique and Guadeloupe occurred in a broader context that included the circulation of Revolutionary news during and after the American Revolution. Moreover, individuals with ties to the American Revolution frequently appeared as leaders of rebellions and conspiracies. Martinican veterans of the siege of Savannah had witnessed the Revolutionary ferment firsthand, had been exposed to the new ideas of liberty and equality, and carried those experiences back home with them. An event in August 1789, two weeks before the news of the storming of the Bastille and the advent of the French Revolution reached the French Caribbean, reveals the evolution of a radical vision of emancipation to which Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment had given practical meaning. A group of enslaved Martinicans sent two anonymous letters to the governor and the military commander of Martinique, signing them "us blacks." The immediate inspiration for this action might well have been the publications of the *Amis des Noirs*, which were read to slaves in the main towns, except that the letters departed radically from the standard abolitionist advocacy of gradual emancipation and embraced violent self-liberation instead. "Remember that we the Negroes . . . are ready to die for this freedom, for we want to and will obtain it at any price, even with the help of mortars, canons, and rifles," the letters boldly announced. The repeated reference to "the entire Nation of the Black Slaves," even if used, as David Geggus suggests, in "a local, particularist" sense of ethnic consciousness rather than the "universalist outlook" of revolutionary France, showed how far notions of racial solidarity had progressed.⁵⁵

Geggus calls the subsequent 1789 St. Pierre rebellion in Martinique "a strikingly novel departure in Afro-American resistance." It represented, he asserts, a new type of rebellion based on false rumors of a royal emancipation decree allegedly blocked by local slaveowners and local authorities.⁵⁶ In fact, this strategy was part of a historical process that began as early as 1730 in Virginia, emerged again in South Carolina during the American Revolution, and came to full maturity during the turbulent revolutionary years in the French Caribbean. It was a rumor that "there was a great War coming soon to help the poor Negroes" that convinced the South Carolina slave Jeremiah that change was possible and that the time was right for enslaved people to seize their freedom through organized rebellions.⁵⁷ This same logic became generalized in the wave of revolts that spread through the French Caribbean between 1789 and 1791.⁵⁸ Conscious that "the whole nature of political rights and institutions

was being redefined and discussed,”⁵⁹ black people throughout the French Caribbean used rumors of expanded rights to demand the extension of rumored rights, as Laurent Dubois puts it.⁶⁰

Black politics in the French Caribbean navigated between two tendencies, one pressing for equality within the dominant white society and the other demanding an end to slavery. In the complex world of island politics, free colored and slave populations formed two distinct social and juridical groups. The free coloreds generally owned modest amounts of property, including one or more slaves, but were subject to various legal restrictions and social and economic limitations.⁶¹ Gabriel Gruel was typical of this group, which in 1789 began to agitate for political rights. The Gruel family exemplified what Anne Perotin-Dumon calls the integrationist faction of Guadeloupe’s free black population, those who formed an uneasy alliance with the “petits blancs” against the overwhelming black majority. In August 1791, Gabriel Gruel was chosen by a group of free people of color to present their request for full citizenship rights. Significantly, the petitioners emphasized that Gruel had served ten years in the colonial militia and had fought with the French forces in the American Revolution.⁶² Although framed in deferential language, the proud record of military service represented the political *vitae* of the free people of color. In the context of the 1789 French Revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the coloreds, however moderate their tone, were demanding full citizenship rights by virtue of demonstrated loyalty to *la patria*.⁶³

The 1793 Trois Riviere rebellion in Guadeloupe also stood on the geographic path between the American Revolution and black resistance in the French Caribbean. Although not directed against slavery, the rebellion inspired slaves to assert their rights. The Trois Riviere rebellion began on the plantation of Jacques Coquille Dugommier, a veteran of the American Revolution and the leading republican in Guadeloupe. Dugommier acted after the local authorities refused to supply troops under his command with wine to celebrate the feast of Saint-Louis. For days, Dugommier’s soldiers paraded through the streets, loudly proclaiming the republican ideals of equality and liberty. No one was quicker to perceive the connection between the rhetoric of freedom and the reality of slavery than slaves themselves. Led by Jean-Baptiste, a manager on Dugommier’s plantation, the enslaved people arose, mobilizing the language of republicanism to formulate their own notion of rights and defend their actions.⁶⁴

Again in 1793, and in the same Trois Riviere area of Guadeloupe where the Dugommier rebellion occurred, a remarkable transference of revolutionary

symbols, mediated by the American and French revolutions, reportedly helped to inspire a slave insurrection in which some twenty whites were killed. The event is said to have been triggered by “an unknown individual . . . walking around, saying that since a liberty tree had been planted, there would be no more slaves.”⁶⁵ The notion of the tree as a symbol of liberty and fraternity had ancient roots, but its use as a political metaphor became associated with the American Revolutionary tradition and was used after 1765 to protest British policies. The liberty tree later emerged as a staple of the French Revolution.⁶⁶ Its appropriation by black insurgents in Guadeloupe was a compelling link to both the American and French revolutions, but of a radically different sort. The circulation of rumors that “the liberty tree had been planted for all” apparently emboldened the insurgents, who transformed the symbol into a demand to end chattel slavery.⁶⁷

Nowhere did the liberty tree, as defined by the enslaved, sink deeper roots than in Saint Domingue, where the slave revolt of 1791 opened a new chapter in Atlantic revolutionary history. The Haitian Revolution regrouped descendant Africans in the Atlantic world around a revolutionary ideal and a newfound sense of African ethnicity, and so reconnected through a human chain the histories of Africa, North America, and the Caribbean. The mostly unforeseen revolt required a new ideology, one that transcended the muted abolitionism of the period. The revolution occurred in a region swept by powerful currents emanating from the American and French revolutions. But that was not all. European ideological currents gained force and energy from the new political tide of black self-liberation initially sparked by Dunmore’s recruiting of fugitive slaves as soldiers, a process amplified by radical black theology and by rebellions in Martinique and Guadeloupe.

Ideas and peoples of the black Atlantic united in a new way in Saint Domingue to produce what Michel-Rolph Trouillot has called “the most radical revolution of that age.”⁶⁸ If some of its leaders were mulattos with military experience in European armies, the revolution itself had genealogical links that reached back to Africa. The majority of enslaved men who fought in the ranks were born in Africa. Many of them may have served in African armies. Their military skills, as John Thornton has argued, contributed greatly to the success of the revolution in Saint Domingue.⁶⁹ Haiti, in throwing off the shackles of slavery and becoming an independent nation, also became a birthing ground for self-liberation movements around the Atlantic. The revolutionary violence from which Haiti emerged may have confirmed white opinion that blacks were a separate and degraded people, incapable of participating in civil society, but

people of African descent everywhere in the Atlantic drew inspiration for their own struggles for freedom and equality and recognized the black republic as “their spiritual fatherland.”⁷⁰

The violent conflict in Saint Domingue sent thousands of black and white refugees into permanent exile. After wandering in search of safe havens, some members of this diasporic community settled in American cities from Philadelphia to New Orleans. There, displaced black Haitians made transnational connections based on common experiences of oppression with other black communities, such as African, Afro-Louisianan, and Afro-Virginian. In Virginia, the migration from Saint Domingue greatly accelerated a shift in consciousness. On one hand, the refugees helped to create a common identity based on skin color. On the other hand, their presence increased black cultural distinctiveness, between the largely Baptist, native-born, English-speaking Afro-Virginians and the French-speaking black Catholics from Saint Domingue.⁷¹

The success of the Haitian Revolution encouraged revolutionary undertakings in other slave societies. Although not a “race” war, the 1795 Pointe Coupee Conspiracy in Louisiana was inspired by both the Haitian Revolution and Revolutionary developments in France. Well-organized, the Coupee Conspiracy was linked to an anticipated French invasion of Louisiana and was one of a series of actual or planned insurrections that swept the Atlantic world in the revolutionary era.⁷² The slave revolt in Saint Domingue was also a source of inspiration for Gabriel Prosser’s Revolt in Virginia in 1800, although Gabriel’s plan to march on Richmond, Virginia, under the banner of “Death or Liberty” was a deliberate reference to Dunmore’s Regiment as well as a paraphrase of an iconic slogan from the American Revolution: Patrick Henry’s demand for “liberty or death.”⁷³ Haiti’s revolution also helped to inspire the aborted slave revolt in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1822 under the leadership of Denmark Vesey. The biblical story of Exodus provided the basis for Vesey’s liberation theology, while Haiti was the promised land to which he expected to lead his followers out of slavery.⁷⁴

Conclusion

In sum, pan-Africanism has a complex genealogy. It emerged from an interweaving of revolutionary principles of liberty and religious notions of spiritual equality, on one hand, and the wartime experiences of enslaved people, on the other. Black evangelicalism helped to transform the religious and political landscape of the Atlantic world. Transported abroad during the postrevolutionary

exodus, black evangelicals left as their legacy black forms of Protestantism in Nova Scotia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Jamaica, and other Caribbean islands. Not coincidentally, their nonviolent struggles for the expansion of human rights coincided with the great Atlantic revolutions and the burgeoning antislavery movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁷⁵ The Exodus story that lay at the heart of evangelical expectations for the coming of the divinely appointed millennium melded easily with the impatient dreams of those who sought to hasten the day of deliverance. The impatient ones offered another historical model from which Afro-Atlantic peoples drew inspiration. Thus did the two traditions in early pan-Africanism emerge: the evangelical and the revolutionary.

The revolutionary tradition would incubate in curious places. Whatever Dunmore's intention, the Ethiopian Regiment he organized initiated rebellion aimed at changing the system of slavery. The words "Liberty to Slaves," emblazoned on the soldiers' uniforms, had a message that could not be missed. Dunmore may not have succeeded in suppressing the American Revolution, but the legend of the Ethiopian Regiment lived on. It was of paramount importance as an inspiration for other revolts throughout the Atlantic world, creating a tradition of resistance that grew in size and intensity and culminated in the revolution in Saint Domingue. Indeed, one could argue that the Haitian Revolution began not in Le Cap Francais in 1791, but onboard the *William*, near Norfolk, Virginia, in 1775, when Dunmore issued his famous proclamation. By the same token, one could say that the revolts in the United States led by Gabriel Prosser and Denmark Vesey began not in Richmond in 1800 or in Charleston in 1822, but in Le Cap Francais in 1791. Put another way, the cluster of rebellions and conspiracies that began with the American Revolutionary War and culminated in the Haitian Revolution must be viewed in a transnational and transcultural context. Only then will it be possible to appreciate the cumulative power of revolutionary pan-Africanism.

NOTES

1. The literature is vast. Some representative samples include Martin, *Race First*; Stuckey, *Ideological Origins*; Ullman, *Martin L. Delany*; Griffith, *African Dream*; Miller, *Search for a Black Nationality*; Walters, *Pan Africanism*; Lemelle and Kelley, *Imagining Home*; and Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism*.

2. Shepperson, "Pan-Africanism."

3. My definition follows that of Nelson, *Black Atlantic Politics*, 3–4.

4. Wilder, *In the Company of Black Men*, 36, 37, points out that the founding of African voluntary associations “preceded the establishment of the black church” in New York and served as a “prerequisite of the African church.”

5. Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival*.

6. Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, 112–14.

7. The seminal work on the subject of black seamen is Scott, “Common Wind.” An important work that portrays seamen as central to the formation of black America is Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 18–20, 36. See Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*.

8. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*.

9. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 37.

10. Carretta, in *Unchained Voices*, 16 n. 13, writes, “I accept Equiano’s assertion of his African identity” but notes that it is possible that Equiano “invented an African identity for rhetorical and/or marketing ends.” Carretta’s argument is based on baptismal and naval records, which give Equiano’s birthplace as South Carolina. See also Carretta, “Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa?” and *Equiano, the African*. The most recent contribution to the question of Equiano’s identity is Byrd, “Eboe, Country, Nation.” Byrd concludes, contrary to Carretta, that “the ethnographic language of his [Equiano’s] memoir supplies good internal evidence that the origins of *The Interesting Narrative* lie decidedly in the Biafran interior and were profoundly African” (125).

11. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 35.

12. Quoted in Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers*, 3, 126, 149.

13. Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, 114–17. Scholars do not agree on the meaning of the use of the term “African.” Stuckey, *Slave Culture*, 199–200, argues that “direct African cultural influence” was a primary factor in institutional naming by people of African descent in the northern United States. Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 248–49, maintains that terms such as “black” and “Negro” were used indiscriminately, sometimes in the same document. Melish traces the preference for “African” to Absalom Jones and Richard Allen’s establishment of the Free African Society in Philadelphia in 1787. Although Sobel makes no specific claim for when the name “African” became common usage, her chronological listing of early black churches implies that, at least in the South, the practice developed much earlier. See Sobel, *Trabelin’ On*. See also Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, 62–66.

14. Aptheker, *Documentary History*, 1:7–8.

15. For a very important discussion of the significance of Dunmore’s Ethiopian Regiment for racial identity, see Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords*, 32–34. Tony Martin also points to the centrality of Ethiopia to the Garvey movement. See his *Pan-African Connection*, 20–24. See also Schmeisser, “Ethiopia Shall Soon Stretch Forth Her Hands,” 265–67. At the climax of his conversion Equiano exclaimed, “Now the Ethiopian was willing to be saved by Jesus Christ.” See Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 144.

16. See, for example, the story of Yellow Peter, who escaped in 1775 or 1776 and was seen “in Governor Dunmore’s regiment with a musquet on his back and a sword by his side.” Significantly, Yellow Peter changed his name to Captain Peter. See Holton, *Forced Founders*, 156.

17. Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 144, 152.

18. Nash, “Thomas Peters.”

19. See Marrant, "Journal," and Saillant, "Origins of African American Biblical Hermeneutics."
20. Davis, "Documents Relating to Negro Masonry in America."
21. Wilder, *In the Company of Black Men*, 115–16.
22. Hall, "Charge," 192.
23. Brooks and Saillant, "*Face Zion Forward*," 17–18.
24. Brooks, "Early American Public Sphere," 82.
25. Carretta, *Unchained Voices*, 1.
26. For favorable assessments of Hammond, see O'Neale, *Jupiter Hammon*, and Gilyard, "Bible and African American Poetry," 209; for Wheatley, see Grimstead, "Anglo-American Racism." For a less sympathetic rendering, see Wilder, *In the Company of Black Men*, 64–71.
27. O'Neale, *Jupiter Hammon*, 84, 86, 102, 103, 151, 152, 231.
28. Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 31. For Cugoano's defense of Africa, see Cugoano, "Thoughts and Sentiments."
29. Marrant, "Sermon," 88–89.
30. Jacobs, *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement*, 17.
31. Hodges, *Black Itinerants of the Gospel*, 123–27, 136–37, 141–44, 149.
32. Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers*, 24, 40, 43, 45, 47, 78, 90.
33. Carretta, *Unchained Voices*, 154.
34. Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers*, 127, 165.
35. Wimbush, *African Americans and the Bible*, 156, 221, 227.
36. Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 337.
37. The petition is reproduced in Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 156, 221, 227; see also 286–88.
38. Carretta, *Unchained Voices*, 171.
39. *Ibid.*, xxv, 226.
40. Brooks and Saillant, "*Face Zion Forward*," 204.
41. Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 123–38.
42. Military service increased political consciousness among black soldiers in Continental service as well. In her essay on Lemuel Haynes, Roberts points out that Haynes's political awareness "increased while he was engaged in protecting the freedom of others." His "progression of thought from identification with colonists to identification with slaves" developed during his military activity in 1775 and 1776 and is apparent in two documents, "The Ballard of Lexington" and his antislavery essay "Liberty Further Extended: Or Free Thoughts on the Illegality of Slave-Keeping." See Roberts, "Patriotism and Political Criticism," 570–71.
43. Craton and Saunders, "Seeking a Life of Their Own," 2–3.
44. Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 184, 200.
45. Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 4, 20–22. Two of the leading proponents of the use of black soldiers, Earl Balcarres, governor of Jamaica, and General Sir John Vaughan, were veterans of the American Revolutionary War. See *ibid.*, 12, 43.
46. *Ibid.*, 78–79.
47. Buckley, *British Army in the West Indies*, 201.

48. Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 136–37; see also Buckley, *British Army in the West Indies*, 270–77.
49. Perotin-Dumon, *Etre patriote sous les tropiques*, 86, 106.
50. Rhodes, “Haitian Contributions to American History,” 79–80.
51. Haitian historiography tends to regard service in the American Revolutionary War as a major catalyst for the future leaders of the Haitian Revolution. See, for example, Laurent, *Haiti et l’indépendance américaine*, and Fick, *Making of Haiti*. For American history, see Steward, “How the Black St. Domingue Legion Saved the Patriot Army”; Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 192; and Garrigus, “Catalyst or Catastrophe?”
52. Garrigus, “Catalyst or Catastrophe?,” 119.
53. Peabody, “*There Are No Slaves in France*,” 96–97, 101.
54. Geggus, “Haitian Revolution,” 25–26.
55. In his analysis of the letters, Geggus discounts the influence of the French Revolution and concludes that the discourse in the letters was probably due more to the anti-slavery movement. See Geggus, “Slaves and Free Coloreds of Martinique,” 286–88, and Reinhardt, “French Caribbean Slaves Forge Their Own Ideal of Liberty,” 26–27, 29.
56. Geggus, “Slaves and Free Coloreds of Martinique,” 288.
57. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 62; Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 58.
58. Benot, “La chaîne des insurrections d’esclaves,” 179–86. See also Dubois, *Les esclaves de la République*, 73–75, and Perotin-Dumon, “Emergence of Politics among Free-Coloureds,” 128.
59. Perotin-Dumon, “Emergence of Politics among Free-Coloureds,” 128.
60. Dubois, *Les esclaves de la République*, 135.
61. Perotin-Dumon, “Emergence of Politics among Free-Coloureds,” 104–6.
62. Perotin-Dumon, *Etre patriote sous les tropiques*, 274–76.
63. Garrigus, “Catalyst or Catastrophe?,” 116, 124.
64. Dubois, *Les esclaves de la République*, 82–83, 114–15.
65. Perotin-Dumon, “Emergence of Politics among Free-Coloureds,” 118–19.
66. Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, 245–46, 286 n. 18.
67. Perotin-Dumon, *Etre patriote sous les tropiques*, 118–19.
68. Trouillot, “From Planters’ Journals to Academia,” 93.
69. Thornton, “African Soldiers in the Haitian Revolution.”
70. Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence on Antebellum America*, 99.
71. Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords*, 35–37, 40–41, 44, 47.
72. Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 236–74.
73. Egerton, *Gabriel’s Rebellion*, 42–47, 49, 51.
74. Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 114, 136–38.
75. Frey, “Cultural Migrations,” 91–98.

Haiti, I'm Sorry

The Haitian Revolution and the Forging of the
Black International

MICHAEL O. WEST & WILLIAM G. MARTIN

Haiti I'm sorry we misunderstood you. But one day we'll turn around
and look inside you. Haiti I'm so sorry. But one day we'll turn our heads,
restore your glory.—DAVID RUDDER, "Haiti," calypso song, 1988

Revolution came to the French slaveholding colony of Saint Domingue in 1791. When the upheaval finally ran its course more than a decade later, in 1804, the landscape had been completely remade. In one fell swoop, the Haitian Revolution banished slavery, colonialism, and white supremacy, the three foundational institutions of the post-Columbian dispensation in the Americas. It was a historical novelty, including a novel shock to the rising consumer culture of the Western world, now deprived of its foremost sugar bowl and coffee pot. The thoroughgoing transformation in Saint Domingue ended slavery in an entire society, the first such act of general emancipation in the annals of the human experience. And although it did not eliminate human bondage, meaning concretely African bondage, from the hemisphere as a whole, the Haitian Revolution left a deep imprint on slavery in the Americas, for masters and slaves alike. Neither would be quite the same again. More broadly, the Haitian Revolution powerfully influenced major changes in the Atlantic political economy, and thereby in the course of world history. The slave revolt turned revolution in Saint Domingue was, quite simply, the single most cataclysmic and transfiguring event of its time, the Age of Revolution, a historical verity recklessly omitted from the literature on that era.

For the black international, the events in Saint Domingue were iconic. The Haitian Revolution represented a culmination of decades of armed struggle

by enslaved Africans in the Atlantic world, even as it heralded exciting new developments in the black quest for universal emancipation. Like no other event before or since, the Haitian Revolution electrified African-descended people all over the Americas, the enslaved majority along with the nominally free minority. Haiti became the bellwether of black freedom in the Atlantic world, albeit one that would not be replicated, although not for want of trying. Haiti's symbolic value to black internationalism was a primary reason for the hostility and isolation it faced from slaveholders and white powers everywhere. To its great shame, however, the dominant historical narrative of the black international has largely neglected the Haitian Revolution, effectively reproducing the scholarly silence of those who write about the Age of Revolution. Actually, the Haitian Revolution was a central moment in the evolution of the black international, forcefully demarcating the two major paradigms in black internationalism that emerged in the Age of Revolution: the revolutionary and revivalist traditions. The one tradition had its origins in the long series of slave revolts that reached its zenith in the Haitian Revolution, while the other derived from the evangelical revival movement of the latter part of the eighteenth century. In time, the two black international traditions, the revolutionary and the revivalist, often merged. On the terrain of black international theory and practice, the Haitian Revolution continued to reverberate into the twentieth century, becoming both a cultural trope and a spark for activist politics in various parts of global Africa following the U.S. invasion of Haiti in 1915.

The Haitian Revolution Outlined

The event that inaugurated the Haitian Revolution was but the latest example, and, it turned out, the most dramatic and successful one, of slaves seizing the moment. Enslaved Africans had a long history of taking advantage of the misfortunes of their enslavers to seek freedom. So it had been since the onset of racial bondage in the Americas, and so it was with the slave revolt in Saint Domingue in 1791. When the French Revolution began two years earlier, in 1789, another group in Saint Domingue saw the potential for advancing its corporate interests and acted accordingly. The free people of color, consisting mostly, although not exclusively, of mulattos—that is, persons of African and European ancestry—had long felt the sting of white supremacy. In the Caribbean, even in the wider Atlantic world, Saint Domingue's mulattos occupied a peculiar place. As a group, they were unusually wealthy, owning a fourth of the colony's slaves and an equal proportion of its land. Yet the mulattos remained

pariahs in the larger white-dominated society, their low social and political status belying their economic prowess. In the mulatto struggle for equality with the whites, the upheaval in France came as a godsend. The most fervent partisans of the French Revolution in Saint Domingue were mulattos, their ideological armor its touchstone document, the Rights of Man and Citizen. Most of the colony's whites, unmoved by revolutionary idealism and unconvinced of the mulattos' humanity, disdainfully rejected their demands for full citizenship rights. The ensuing confrontation worsened, and soon white and mulatto militias were at war.¹

It was then that the slaves made their move, determined to extract freedom from chaos. The chief obstacle to this attempt at self-liberation was the French Revolution. Mindful that Saint Domingue's slave-produced sugar and coffee accounted for the greater part of their country's foreign trade, the French revolutionaries concluded that the Rights of Man and Citizen did not apply to enslaved Africans. High-sounding rhetoric about the universality of liberty could scarcely be allowed to trump the business of the nation. After all, the French revolutionaries, no less than the monarch they had replaced, were duty bound to protect the national interests. Accordingly, the French revolutionaries declared war on their putative ideological equivalents in Saint Domingue, the revolting slaves. Eager to bring the insurgent bondsmen and bondswomen to heel, the French revolutionaries struck on two fronts, military and political. In addition to sending troops to Saint Domingue, they moved to impose a class alliance on the colony's warring white and mulatto slaveholders, acting on the theory that the whites' love of property exceeded their hatred of mulattos. Thus did the French Revolution grant the mulattos their long-sought wish: equality with the whites, which is not to be confused with full racial equality, since the shift left slavery intact; indeed, its whole purpose was to protect African bondage. Legalized racism, insofar as it applied to mulattos, would be sacrificed on the altar of slavery, now designated by the French revolutionaries as a nonracial gathering point for Saint Domingue's diverse men of property.²

As a strategy for defeating the slave revolt, the granting of equality to the mulattos failed. Despite serious setbacks, the black servile revolution continued, now supported by the Spanish in the neighboring colony of Santo Domingo (the Dominican Republic). Appalled by the overthrow of a fellow monarch in France, the king of Spain, like his counterparts everywhere in Europe, pledged implacable enmity to the French Revolution. Supporting the slave rebellion in Saint Domingue was part of that policy. Subsequently Spain and

Britain, at war with revolutionary France and coveting the rebellious colony, prepared to invade Saint Domingue.

For the second time, the French revolutionaries faced a momentous colonial crisis. On the first occasion, they had officially abandoned racism against the mulattos in order to save slavery, to no avail. Indeed, the failure to check the slave rebellion had created an opening for France's enemies, Spain and Britain, to invade Saint Domingue, causing a second colonial crisis. This time around, it was not just slavery but also colonialism—French rule over Saint Domingue—that was at stake. The French obviously could not have slavery without colonialism, and yet they could not have both. Having already disavowed racism, partly, in a futile attempt to safeguard slavery, France was now being forced to forsake slavery to preserve colonialism. Emancipation thus became a French political and military imperative, and suppressing the slave revolt was not just impossible but in the new circumstances also undesirable. The rulers of haughty France were reduced to supplicants before erstwhile chattels. To hold Saint Domingue, the French would have to persuade the black revolutionaries to renounce their alliance with Spain and, what is more, turn their guns on the foreign invaders, the Spanish and the British alike. Official acknowledgment of the freedom the blacks had seized by force of arms was the price for winning them over to the French side. Notably the Spanish, who continued to practice slavery, had made no such abolitionist commitment, having backed the Saint Domingue rising out of sheer expediency, as part of the campaign against the French Revolution. France, realizing it would have to make the black revolutionaries a better offer, countered by abolishing slavery, or, to be precise, by ratifying the self-liberation of the enslaved.³

France having made an about-face and committed itself to emancipation, the black revolutionaries responded in kind. Now commanded by the ex-slave and brilliant strategist Toussaint Louverture, they too reversed course, coolly abandoned Spain, and declared for French liberty, equality, and fraternity. It was an independent black revolutionary movement that allied with the French Revolution. The black revolutionaries, although receiving French support, were no more beholden to France than they had been to Spain, their late underwriter. As if to underscore the point, Toussaint, in his new role as the undisputed strongman of Saint Domingue, expelled a number of meddling French representatives, even as his army drove out the Spanish and British invaders.⁴

By 1798, peace had returned to the colony. The new order could not have

been more different from the one obtained on the eve of the revolution seven years earlier. Slavery had ended, the plantations lay in ruins, most of the whites had fled, and blacks were in charge. The world of Saint Domingue had been turned upside down. It was independent in all but name; Toussaint refrained from making an official declaration of sovereign nationhood, apparently because he thought the French connection useful, politically and economically. However, as he turned to the issue of reconstruction, in the wake of the ruinous years of war, Toussaint paid scant attention to France. Ever the authoritarian, he ordered a constitution that designated him ruler for life, and even beyond, since the constitution also allowed him to name a successor. On the economic front, Toussaint proposed a longer tenure still for the plantation system. Instead of redistributing the land to the freed people, as they evidently desired, he resurrected the plantations. The workers, although now paid, were bound to the worksite, as in the days of slavery. This was hardly the freedom the ex-slaves envisioned, and they resisted the new regime, as they had the old one, including violent resistance. Toussaint put down such uprisings. For good measure, he executed the official most closely associated with the opposition to the plantation model of reconstruction, the military commander Moise, who was also his adopted nephew.⁵ Toussaint the liberator, it now seemed, was metastasizing into Toussaint the liquidator.

Toussaint could ill afford to alienate the masses of the freed people at this historical juncture, for a mortal threat to the revolution in Saint Domingue was brewing. Back in France, Napoleon Bonaparte had staged a military takeover, unofficially ending the French Revolution. Napoleon believed one dictator was enough for the whole French empire, if not the world, and could find no more suitable candidate for the post than himself. He certainly had no intention of sharing the stage with an upstart ex-slave in Saint Domingue. His hatred of black folk every bit the equal of his vainglory, Napoleon intended to reestablish the old regime in the colonies, beginning with Saint Domingue, where the freed people would be put back in chains and the mulattos returned to social and political helotry. As for the black consul, Toussaint, he would be retired, to a cold prison cell in the French Alps.

So important was suppressing the Saint Domingue revolution to Napoleon that he entrusted the task to his brother-in-law, dispatching him to the colony with an appropriate army in tow. On arrival, the French concealed their true intention. Nonetheless Toussaint, unconvinced they were on a fact-finding mission, attempted to mobilize against them. He failed. His base of support had fallen away. In opting for the plantation model, he had given the masses

nothing to fight for. After initially resisting the invaders, Toussaint's army also seemed to lose the will to fight. One by one his military commanders, lulled by French reassurance of the safety of their positions and perquisites, defected to France. Increasingly isolated, Toussaint's government fell. He retired to his plantations, but not for long. The French soon put him in chains and bundled him off to the alternate retirement home they had prepared.⁶ There he would die a cruel death. This was, perhaps, the nadir of the Haitian Revolution. Whatever his flaws and failings, and they were numerous and serious, Toussaint had guided the struggle from near collapse to its greatest triumphs. With his strong and determined hand, he became the great helmsman of the revolution. Now he was gone. No single person, however, was indispensable, not even Toussaint Louverture. There was more leadership material where he came from, as he avowed in a parting note of revolutionary humility. In taking him, he assured his French captors, they had cut down "only the trunk of the tree of the liberty of the blacks; it will grow back from the roots, because they are deep and numerous."⁷

With Toussaint out of the way, the French revealed their mailed fist and ferociously set out to re-create the old order. Concluding that the freed people, hardened in battle, were no longer fit for slavery, the French determined on a genocidal solution to the Saint Domingue problem. Sparing only those who had not yet reached their teenage years, they would exterminate the population and restock the colony with fresh supplies of human cargo from Africa. It was an astonishing blueprint for mass murder, even by the dastardly standards of European colonialism in the Americas, and the French began actually to implement it. Their weapons included live burnings, crucifixions, and imported killer dogs specially trained to tear black people apart.⁸

The people of Saint Domingue now had something to fight for: their liberty, indeed, their very lives. Urgently recalled to revolutionary struggle, they proved equal to the atrocious French challenge.⁹ Their new leader was Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who had a reputation as the most fearsome officer in the revolutionary army. Dessalines's background was notably different from that of Toussaint, his former commander in chief. Toussaint had obtained his freedom before the revolution began; even as a slave, however, he was relatively privileged, serving as a coachman. Dessalines, by contrast, never became more than a field hand in his career as a slave and only tasted freedom with the revolt of 1791. Perhaps more than any other top official, he was a product of the revolution. On joining the struggle, he rose rapidly through the military ranks to become Toussaint's top deputy. As a commander, Dessalines was partial to

scorched earth and left little in his wake. Toussaint, always fond of the arborist metaphor, once reprimanded him for overzealousness, noting he had been ordered to prune the tree, not to chop it down. Dessalines, with his blunt ax and avid demeanor, was ill-suited for the precision of pruning, demolition being his forte. The slaveholder's lash still vivid in his memory, reputedly even engraved on his body, he vowed never again. For ruthlessness and cunning, Napoleon had nothing on him. The French had met their match.

Dessalines may have been at its head, but the final campaign of the Haitian Revolution was not of his making. The bloody path to his ascendance, rather, was the handiwork of others. Indeed, he was complicit in the shedding of some of that blood. Dessalines, it turned out, was among the commanders who went over to the side of the French invaders, even if his defection was tactical and temporary. As he contemplated defecting, Dessalines, speaking in the third person, told soldiers under his command, "If Dessalines surrenders to them [the French] a hundred times, he will betray them a hundred times. . . . Then I will make you independent. There will be no more whites amongst us."¹⁰ He would prove to be as good as his word, but only because of the steadfastness of various guerrilla groups, which kept up the resistance, even as Dessalines, in the service of France, deployed his fierce military skills against them.¹¹ Yet it was that very resistance that made it possible for Dessalines to fulfill his promise to betray France and to return to the revolutionary fold. Rallying under a single banner the whole nation, the freed blacks and the mulattos alike, Dessalines ultimately proved his mettle, presiding over the fiercest struggles of the Haitian Revolution. In victory, he made good on the rest of his promise, declaring independence and getting rid of the whites, expelling or killing the ones who remained. "I have given the French cannibals blood for blood," he exulted triumphantly.¹²

The Haitian Revolution, of course, was far bigger than the colony of Saint Domingue. It was not just imperial powers and slaveholders, however, who staked out claims on revolutionary Haiti. Enslaved and oppressed people throughout the Atlantic world also became stakeholders, political and emotional, in the unfolding drama. By its very nature and its impact on world history, the Haitian Revolution had major black internationalist implications, among others. Independent Haiti's first constitution, commissioned by Dessalines in his capacity as head of state, acknowledged as much. It defined Haiti as a "black" nation and offered citizenship to anyone of African or Native American descent. Symbolically as well as substantively, the Haitian Revolution reshaped the Age of Revolution in ways European and North American policymakers

and image-shapers would not understand or appreciate, and indeed still refuse to do.

The World-Historical Impact of the Haitian Revolution

In the grand narrative of Western scholarship, the Age of Revolution ushered in the modern world. From the United States and France, it is said, came modern democracy, while an industrial revolution in Britain changed the world of work forever. If, however, revolutions are defined by mass participation and social and political transformation, then the most substantial revolution of the Age of Revolution did not take place in Europe or North America. Rather, that revolution, forged in a black internationalist cauldron, happened in Saint Domingue.

Haiti's pride of place in the Age of Revolution is absent from the historical accounts of that era, which stress the achievements and continuing legacy of the U.S., French, and British revolutions. None of the classic works on either the period or revolutions generally—such as those by Crane Brinton, Eric Hobsbawm, Barrington Moore, and Theda Skocpol—makes more than passing mention of Haiti, if that.¹³ With few exceptions,¹⁴ more recent work equally fails to address the Haitian Revolution, whether the subject is the past and future of revolutions¹⁵ or specific studies on the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution.¹⁶ Yet by comparison to the revolutions of the white Atlantic, the revolution in Saint Domingue effected far greater political, social, and economic change. In Britain an industrial revolution proceeded during a period of political stability, while in the United States and France radical political changes brought little transformation in either the world of work or class and racial hierarchies. Haiti, by contrast, would experience not only the violent overthrow of an old political regime, but the thoroughgoing destruction of the ruling class (the white slaveholders) and the economic system (plantation slavery). Indeed the drive to replace Haiti's slave plantations, which had produced half the coffee and sugar consumed in Europe and the Americas,¹⁷ led to the expansion of slavery elsewhere, most notably in the United States, Cuba, and Brazil.¹⁸ Attempts to circumvent the implications of the Haitian Revolution over the long run would also lead to innovative forms of labor, race, and empire, as the world economy extended from the Americas to Africa, Asia, and the Pacific.

In the Americas, there is much evidence of Haiti's contribution to the demise of colonial empires and, more broadly, in shaping the balance of

power among the great powers of Europe. British, Spanish, and French forces suffered staggering losses in defending their colonies and in invading Saint Domingue. Britain's attempt to secure its Caribbean colonies and defeat the Saint Domingue rebels cost the lives of tens of thousands of British troops and untold millions of pounds. Spain would eventually lose its American colonies, with direct Haitian support. Haiti assisted movements to overthrow Spanish rule in Venezuela (1806) and Mexico (1816) and, most notably, Simon Bolivar's expeditions in Venezuela (1816).

For France, the Haitian Revolution meant the loss of its greatest source of colonial products, trade, and profits; Saint Domingue alone had accounted for two-fifths of France's overseas trade.¹⁹ Millions of jobs in port cities like Bordeaux depended on the slave trade, of which Saint Domingue was the center, while state revenues were highly dependent on the slave and colonial trades. Napoleon's attempt to reconquer Saint Domingue and reimpose slavery—with the blessing this time of the United States and Britain—led to the greatest losses of all, almost the entire French expeditionary force of 80,000. In the continuing war between France and Britain for global hegemony, the French struggled with fewer and fewer colonial resources after being defeated in Haiti. In desperation, France pulled out of the North American mainland altogether, selling those colonial possessions to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.²⁰

In the realm of human consciousness, the Haitian Revolution was the single most important event in bringing about that epoch-making shift of the Age of Revolution: the demise of the legitimacy of slavery in the Western world.²¹ This did not translate into equality: freedom for slaves over the course of the nineteenth century moved hand in hand with the rise of new ideologies of domination, most notably scientific racism.²² At the same time, the major European powers set out to create a new international division of labor that would be less dependent on chattel slavery and less vulnerable to slave revolts. Accordingly, vast new pools of coerced labor were opened up, with Asia coming to replace Africa. By the mid-nineteenth century, coerced labor from China and South Asia was flowing into the Americas, other parts of Asia, the Pacific, and even Africa.²³ Furthermore, the obstacles to colonial accumulation imposed by the abolition of slavery and decolonization in the Americas, of which Haiti remained the most dreaded example, led the Europeans to turn to Asia and Africa for raw materials and precious metals.²⁴ In this sense, the Haitian Revolution sealed off the history of Atlantic slavery:

the new British-dominated world economy that emerged in the nineteenth century was explicitly constructed to be less vulnerable to black revolt.

The Haitian revolutionaries were not unmindful of the world-historical drama they had wrought. Dessalines, at the moment of final victory, paid homage to the past: he dedicated the Haitian Revolution to the vanquished Native Americans, in whose honor the country was also named, Haiti reputedly meaning “rugged, mountainous” in the Taino Arawak language. Personalizing the tribute at that foundational and inebriating moment of nationhood, Dessalines famously asserted, “I have avenged America.”²⁵ This was the autobiographical rendition of the Haitian Revolution, a transgression for which the remarkable field slave turned head of state may be forgiven. Of course, Dessalines had many coauthors. In fact, it was the Haitian masses who paid dearest of all for victory; half of Haiti’s population, some 250,000 souls, died during the course of the revolutionary upheavals. The imperial “we” would have better served the emperor, a title Dessalines assumed at the time of independence in 1804.

The Haitian Revolution, Black Struggle, and Black Internationalism

The violent course of the Haitian Revolution, as charted in C. L. R. James’s magisterial *The Black Jacobins* and subsequent monographs, involved shifting alliances among competing world powers, local white colonists, free people of color, and slaves.²⁶ Most accounts tightly contain the revolution within the boundaries of Saint Domingue, admitting only the determinant influence of the French Revolution. Few scholars dare to broach the broader lessons of the Haitian Revolution and its potential for replay in other slave societies. Noted slavery historian Seymour Dresner is typical. Citing David Geggus, the most widely published current chronicler of the Haitian Revolution, Dresner pronounced, “The one successful slave revolution was the outcome of a unique combination of circumstances. Haiti was both unforgettable and unrepeatable.”²⁷

That the Haitian Revolution was unforgettable is beyond doubt. It was not, however, the unique and isolated event that Dresner’s assertion of unrepeatability implies. Whatever the *ex post facto* judgment of modern historians, it was not at all self-evident to the ruling and governing classes of the day that Saint Domingue–like events could not happen elsewhere. How else to explain the vast expansion in the regime of control instituted in the other slave societ-

ies of the Americas in the wake of the Saint Domingue rising, or the severe repression visited on anything smacking of attempts at another Haiti? Further, the unrelenting hostility to the Haitian Revolution, including major military campaigns against it by the three leading Atlantic powers—France, Spain, and Britain—was driven by more than just a desire to return Saint Domingue to its former status as the crown jewel of Caribbean slave colonies. Political leaders and slaveholders everywhere in the Americas, fearing the contagion of revolutionary slave insurrection, also wanted to create a military cordon sanitaire around Haiti and isolate it from the rest of the hemisphere.

The issue of the Haitian Revolution and its potential for replication turns on conception. It is a matter of imagining black resistance and political organization outside territorial boundaries and Euro–North American categories (the institutionalized, nonviolent social movement; the modernizing state-centered revolution; and the modernizing national identity).²⁸ Africans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were unencumbered by such Enlightenment classifications. The freedom struggles of enslaved Africans throughout the Americas showed little of the modern historian's deference to imperial and national sovereignty; slave insurrectionists, on the contrary, were blithely oblivious to established political boundaries. Interrogating the hemisphere-wide African quest for emancipation on its own terms makes it possible to chart the interlocution between events in disparate localities and, in so doing, uncover a formative phase in black internationalism.

The starting point of such a project is a recognition that the Haitian Revolution, for all its majesty and iconoclasm, did not emerge in a historical void. It had a prehistory in black resistance. A long series of revolts throughout the Atlantic preceded the Haitian Revolution, revealing a widespread anti-slavery surge. This trend, paradoxically, was not apparent in prerevolutionary Haiti, with the possible exception of the Makandal poison conspiracy of 1757. Elsewhere in the Americas, however, slave revolts and conspiracies advanced steadily from the 1730s onward, notably in North America, the Caribbean, South America, and even Atlantic West Africa.²⁹ Jamaica's massive Tacky's Revolt of 1760 rounded out more than a generation of violent antislavery resistance.³⁰ With the Haitian Revolution standing at the apex, another round of revolts began in the 1790s, including uprisings in Saint Lucia (1795–97), Grenada and Saint Vincent (1795–96), and Guadeloupe (1802) and wars against maroons in Surinam (1789–93) and Jamaica (1795–96).³¹ These events emerged from lived experiences in a highly racialized Atlantic political economy and, as such, defy portrayals that cast them as atavistic and isolated.

Indeed, a transnational slavery underground was alive and well throughout the eighteenth century, if not before, and various individuals, acting as itinerant revolutionaries, personally linked multiple revolts in different territories. As a group, these revolts were bound together by a common rejection of plantation slavery, the most fundamental pillar of mass production and accumulation in the capitalist world. In this sense, even apparently disconnected revolts, by their very character and synchronicity, reveal a transnational African response to capital and the political masters of the capitalist world.

The claim for a nascent black international before the advent of the Haitian Revolution runs counter to a scholarly tradition that stresses the difficulty of even local coordination among Africans, in view of the linguistic and cultural differences that separated them. Such divisions, to be sure, were real enough. Moreover, the massive mortality rate among the enslaved everywhere in the hemisphere (with the exception of North America, and then only after the late eighteenth century), and the attendant need to continuously introduce new slaves reinforced the diversity of the various slave societies.³² Yet, as Tacky's Revolt and, even more emphatically, the Haitian Revolution demonstrate, internal divisions among enslaved Africans was no impassable barrier to mass antislavery insurrections. Revolutionary activity by the enslaved did not require homogeneity—linguistic, cultural, or religious.

In their majestic work *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker show how the construction of Anglo-Atlantic capitalism gave rise to an unruly, multiethnic, “motley crew” of coerced workers, slaves, and seamen on all sides of the Atlantic. Impressed seamen, working under extremely oppressive conditions, carried ideas and tactics of resistance throughout the Americas, with black seaman playing a central role. Julius Scott's equally magnificent work on black resistance in the greater Caribbean in the era of the Haitian Revolution offers detailed evidence of the “common wind” that propelled resistance, showing how sailors, including enslaved ones, carried news of revolts and revolutions and rumors of freedom to come.³³ Nor were seamen the only traveling vectors of revolution and discontent. Uprisings in British Honduras drew on the hundreds of rebels exiled there after Tacky's Revolt, while veterans of the French brigade that fought for the U.S. Revolution later emerged as leaders of the Haitian Revolution (e.g., Henri Christophe and André Rigaud).

The Haitian Revolution electrified the nascent black international circuits, which irrupted with news of emancipation, of slave armies defeating great white powers, and of the emergence of a mighty black republic. Slaves every-

where celebrated Haiti, from Philadelphia to Trinidad, from Havana to Curaçao. In Kingston, Jamaica, captives yearning for freedom composed a hymn to the anticipated new order, singing, “black, white, brown, all the same.”³⁴ Surveying the political landscape, slaveholders feared ruin for themselves and a dim future for their scions. Thomas Jefferson, ever the spokesman for his class, summed up the apprehension. “The revolutionary storm now sweeping the globe,” he allowed, “will [soon] be upon us.”³⁵ The prediction was not unfounded. Veterans of the Haitian campaigns, or witnesses to them, could be found in the vanguard of revolts in other territories. Some of the seeds of insurrection were unwittingly sown by masters who fled Saint Domingue with their human chattel; at the new destinations, a number of slaves so transported promptly took to the revolutionary path, as in Curaçao, Venezuela, and most notably, Louisiana.³⁶ In some cases, slave revolutionary leaders looked to Haiti for inspiration, even direct assistance, or else falsely created the impression of such assistance, apparently as a way to gain and solidify support among the enslaved. Thus Denmark Vesey, head of the 1822 conspiracy in Charleston, South Carolina, told his followers Haitian help would arrive to support the capture of the city.³⁷ Aponte had done pretty much the same in Havana, Cuba, in 1812, using portraits of Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe to solicit support and to inspire fellow rebels.³⁸ These connections, forged by Julius Scott’s common wind, point to the existence of vast antislavery efforts among the enslaved across imperial and national boundaries, *in fine*, to a nascent black international.

Black internationalism in the Atlantic world was defined by the emergence of a common black identity rooted in the struggle against slavery and, despite the efforts of some revolutionaries to counter such trends, the polarization of racial identities. Notably, the racial and territorial contours of the black international rested not on biology nor on a single ancient culture, but on common experiences, that is, actual struggles against white world supremacy.³⁹ The black international, then, only emerged with racial slavery and Atlantic capitalism and altered, waxed, and waned with successive emancipatory struggles. Such dynamics can be seen in the great struggles of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when racial as well as class conflicts accelerated, driven by black insurrections and the ensuing counterrevolution of the white Thermidor.

The juxtaposition of black revolution and white reaction throws into sharp relief a major achievement of the black international in its formative stages: common visions of life outside the bounds of capitalism, and the active pur-

suit of those visions. Such a reading flies in the face of accounts that portray black revolts and uprisings as premodern, backward-looking, and seeking only to return to a precapitalist mode of production. In this interpretation, it was the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and specifically its French incarnation, that opened the door to the modern black pursuit of freedom, beginning with the Haitian Revolution.⁴⁰ Actually, neither the French nor the U.S. republic facilitated, much less promoted, slave emancipation, a fact stubbornly ignored in French Revolutionary studies, especially.⁴¹ Rather, it was black rebels who opened the door to freedom. Only black resistance and black revolution consistently stood for liberty without regard to race, class, or condition of servitude. Black struggles, culminating in the Haitian Revolution, did not just expand but redefined notions of freedom.

Negating the Black International: Haiti and the White Thermidor

The white Thermidor, full of fear and loathing for the black internationalism Haiti had come to symbolize, was brutal to the newly independent state. Faced with rebellious slaves and natives, white planters, merchants, and imperial powers coalesced to enforce white power. If the Haitian Revolution could not be rolled back, it would certainly be contained. Having won the war, the Haitians would be denied the fruits of victory: they would be made to lose the peace. The cost of throwing off the shackles of colonialism, slavery, and white supremacy would be very high, even crippling. European powers and white-run states variously isolated Haiti, embargoed its goods, demanded reparations, and barred from their shores its dangerous achievements and citizens. Everywhere in the Americas, the authorities circumscribed and repressed suspected black middle classes—free blacks and mulattos—further cementing racial polarization and identities. Meanwhile, scientific racism as a mode of securing postabolition global racial hierarchies flourished, initially and not accidentally, in post-Napoleonic France, most notably in the writings of Count Gobineau, “the father of racist ideology.”⁴² The multiracial motley crew that formed in the previous era of revolution, and about which Linebaugh and Rediker write with such feeling, could not survive the pressure and dissolved into separate racial and class components.⁴³ This was irony of a large order: through counterrevolution, the struggle for emancipation from racial slavery would result in a sharper and wider racial order than had existed in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world.

Faced with the new order in Haiti and its possibilities, white revolutionaries made an abrupt about-face. The case of the Jeffersonian republicans in the United States is instructive. The self-proclaimed keepers of the U.S. revolutionary flame, Jefferson and his acolytes recoiled in horror at the events in Haiti and attempts to reproduce them in the United States, most conspicuously in the Gabriel Prosser conspiracy of 1800.⁴⁴ Accordingly, the Jeffersonians forsook the notion of global and permanent revolution, a notion they had previously affirmed. In their minds, the pursuit of liberty and happiness was no longer the exclusive preserve of orderly white men of property and scions of the European Enlightenment, since enslaved Africans and other lesser breeds had taken up the cry.⁴⁵ In yet another irony, however, it was the Haitian Revolution that made possible Jefferson's most enduring legacy as U.S. president: the humiliating defeat in Haiti forced France to abandon its imperial ambitions on the North American mainland. The resulting Louisiana Purchase, under Jefferson's presidency, opened the door for the emergence of the United States as a "slave country."⁴⁶

Naturally, the legacy of the Haitian Revolution was anathema to the United States in its capacity as both slaveholding power and emerging hegemon of the Americas. Accordingly, a letter from the Haitian government requesting diplomatic ties between the two countries elicited scorn; U.S. president John Quincy Adams (1825–29) penned in the margins, "Not to be answered."⁴⁷ U.S. senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, a slaveholding state, explained why:

Because the peace of eleven states in this Union will not permit the fruits of a successful negro insurrection to be exhibited among us. It will not permit black Consuls and Ambassadors to establish themselves in our cities, and to parade through our country, and give their fellow blacks in the United States, proof in hand of the honors that await them, for a like successful effort on their part. It will not permit the fact to be seen, and told, that for the murder of their masters and mistresses, they are to find *friends* among the white People of these United States.⁴⁸

The resulting embargo on Haiti ran the gamut from the political to the economic and the discursive. Haiti was the only independent state excluded from the pioneering Pan-American Conference of 1826.⁴⁹ Writers of various stripes, scholarly and popular, joined the blockade. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot has so eloquently chronicled, Western scholarship declared a blackout of the events that unfolded in Saint Domingue from 1791 through 1804. Haiti was both cen-

sured and censored: the country having become a nonentity, its revolution became, in Trouillot's formulation, a "nonevent."⁵⁰ Yet this intellectual embargo, which few dare to breach,⁵¹ was only imposed after the fact. Many Western observers and commentators, including slaveholders who had fled Haiti, wrote and published about the revolution while it was still in progress.⁵² The whitening out, which came after Haiti became independent, negated, at the level of written historical memory, not just the Haitian Revolution but also the black internationalism it had come to symbolize. The one as well as the other would be suppressed, whether by omission or commission.

The Haitian Revolution and the Narrative of the Black International

To contemporary friends and foes alike, the Haitian Revolution was an event of momentous black international import. Yet, incredibly, published accounts of the black international largely ignore the Haitian Revolution. Inspection of the literature reveals little about the Haitian revolutionary antecedents of black internationalism. There are two notable exceptions, standing two generations apart. The first is C. L. R. James's little gem of 1938, *A History of Negro Revolt*, which began with the Haitian Revolution and used it as a yardstick for judging a number of subsequent pan-African struggles.⁵³ Julius Scott's 1986 Ph.D. dissertation, which, alas, remains unpublished, greatly expanded on the black internationalism of the Haitian Revolution in its own era, using as an organizing principle the vast underground intelligence networks that circulated a common wind of revolutionary possibilities between Haiti and the greater Caribbean.⁵⁴ The pioneering and exceptional work of James and Scott aside, the pan-African narrative has been most unkind to the Haitian Revolution. The silence relegates the epochal and black internationalist transformation in Saint Domingue to the status of a nonevent, to use Trouillot's felicitous term for the burial of the Haitian Revolution in Western scholarship.

It need not have turned out that way. Some of the first chronicles of the struggling black international offered visions of a historiography much different from the one that became dominant, a narrative that would have centered, rather than silenced, the Haitian Revolution. One such pioneering text, a key if often forgotten one, is *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers*, published in 1931.⁵⁵ Its author, George Padmore, was himself an outstanding toiler in the realm of pan-African liberation in the twentieth century.⁵⁶ *Life and Struggles* charted the struggles of black workers and peasants—Negro toilers—in Africa, the

United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Such resistance—revolts, strikes, and other forms of discontent—demonstrated, the 126-page booklet concluded, “the tremendous revolutionary potentialities of the Negro toiling masses.”⁵⁷

Where Padmore led, his fellow Trinidadian and boyhood friend, C. L. R. James, followed. Making his maiden appearance on the stage of black international scholarship, James came out with *A History of Negro Revolt* in 1938, the same year he published his magnum opus, *The Black Jacobins*. The beauty and grace of the Haitian revolutionary book, at once a great work of history and literature, quickly overshadowed the comparatively puny ninety-seven-page booklet on the struggling black international. Yet *A History of Negro Revolt* made manifest a point that was only implied in *The Black Jacobins*. *A History of Negro Revolt* demonstrated the impact and relevance of the Haitian Revolution for black internationalism, in its own era and later.

Unlike *A History of Negro Revolt*, Padmore’s *Life and Struggles* neglected the Haitian Revolution, although it had a section on the plight of the Haitian toilers “under the yoke of Yankee imperialism,” that is, during the U.S. occupation of 1915–34.⁵⁸ Yet despite differences in emphasis, style, and interpretation, Padmore and James began their narration from a common foundation: both works privileged the toilers—slaves, peasants, and workers. The contrast with later narratives of the black international could not be greater.

After *A History of Negro Revolt*, the black masses lost their position at the forefront of pan-African intellectual inquiry, dethroned in favor of the elite. Henceforth, the major narratives of the black international would highlight the activities of the transatlantic black petite bourgeoisie, especially the intelligentsia. Not incidentally, the turn away from the toilers was also a turn away from the Haitian Revolution.

The first installment on the new narrative of the black international appeared in 1956. Authored by no less a personage than Padmore, the volte-face came with a stark and provocative title: *Pan-Africanism or Communism? The Coming Struggle for Africa*.⁵⁹ This was, above all, a Cold War text. Since writing *Life and Struggles*, Padmore had made a grueling political odyssey, from the pan-Africanism of the international communist movement to an anticommunist pan-Africanism. As such, his chief concern in *Pan-Africanism or Communism* was to demonstrate that the anticolonial revolt then sweeping Africa in no way owed its inspiration to communism, as alleged by the defenders of empire and their consorts, political and intellectual.

In the process of cleansing pan-Africanism of the communist taint, Padmore repudiated his 1931 work, albeit without actually saying so. All the essential premises of *Life and Struggles*, epistemic and organizational, were abandoned in *Pan-Africanism or Communism*. Gone was the expansive definition of pan-Africanism. Where *Life and Struggles* focused on three continents—Africa and the Americas—the much longer *Pan-Africanism or Communism* singled out one: Africa, and then with a predominant emphasis on the British territories. In his later work, Padmore also narrowed the social foundations of the black international. If *Life and Struggles* placed the emphasis on the toilers as a class, then *Pan-Africanism or Communism* privileged particular individuals. The masses and their movements had given way to the thoughts and actions of great men. One of those men was W. E. B. Du Bois, whom Padmore had thrashed in *Life and Struggles* as a petit bourgeois reformist misleader but rehabilitated in *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, where he was elevated to the lofty status of “Father of Pan-Africanism.” According to this rendition, pan-Africanism “came of age” in the immediate post–World War II era, when Padmore himself succeeded Du Bois at the helm. In a final changing of the guard, Padmore in turn gave way to his star student, the Gold Coast nationalist and future Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah, the two men having jointly organized the pivotal fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945. In Padmore’s estimation, Nkrumah embodied all the virtues of pan-Africanism as conceived by Du Bois and refined at the 1945 congress. In sum, Du Bois had planted, Padmore had watered, and Nkrumah was bringing forth the increase. The pan-African triumvirate, or rather, trinity, stood triumphant.

With such Whiggish tales of the heights that great men reached and kept, *Pan-Africanism or Communism* scarcely had a word to spare for the Haitian Revolution, even for such presumably towering figures as Toussaint and Desalines. But the die was cast. The framework of *Pan-Africanism or Communism* would prove enduring. Imported into the academy, the Padmorian teleology exercised a determining influence on the narrative of the black international for the remainder of the Cold War and, indeed, continues to do so down to the present time.⁶⁰

Even Imanuel Geiss’s *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe, and Africa*, a work widely considered the standard text on the subject, failed to break with Padmore’s framework, and indeed duplicated it.⁶¹ Although offered as a corrective to Padmore’s rendition of the black international, *The Pan-African Movement* accepted the major assumptions of *Pan-*

Africanism or Communism. Geiss merely transposed Padmore's interpretations, casting as irrational many of the ideas, actions, and events that were celebrated in *Pan-Africanism or Communism*—but without questioning its basic structure or the validity of its narrative line. On the great slave revolt turned revolution in Saint Domingue, Geiss was not quite as silent as Padmore. Still, the various references to the Haitian Revolution in *The Pan-African Movement* remained peripheral and were never systematically developed.⁶²

The rise in the post-Cold War era of African Diaspora studies in the Anglo-American academy and beyond has hardly disrupted the dominant narrative of the black international. The reigning teleology, so fundamentally shaped by *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, remains ascendant in its main features. Thus the text that would become the touchstone of the revived African Diaspora studies, as well as a virtual canon of postmodern and cultural studies black internationalism, reproduced in important ways the narrative line of *Pan-Africanism or Communism*. That text, of course, is Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Double Consciousness and Modernity*, with its quintessentially Du Boisian subtitle.⁶³

The Black Atlantic, despite mentioning Padmore only in passing,⁶⁴ has much in common with *Pan-Africanism or Communism*. For one, the authors share an Afro-Saxon bias: Padmore for the east bank of the black Atlantic and Gilroy for the west. In substance, if not in tone, Gilroy is no less fulsome than Padmore in celebrating the great pan-African man, most tellingly Du Bois and his fellow African American Richard Wright, a communist apostate like Padmore and the contributor of a laudatory foreword to *Pan-Africanism or Communism*. The corollary snubbing of masses and mass movements explains, to a large extent, the virtual silence of both texts on the Haitian Revolution. Yet Gilroy could well have accommodated the Haitian Revolution within his own paradigm, even if not as a mass movement. Few figures in black internationalism, surely, exemplify the ordeal of modernity and double consciousness more poignantly than Toussaint—who, in the event, does not even merit a single reference in *The Black Atlantic*.⁶⁵ Despite such limitations, Gilroy's book skillfully deploys certain tropes, most notably the ship, that offer the possibility for a different kind of narrative of the black international—one that would reserve a rightful place for the Haitian Revolution. Seven years before *The Black Atlantic* appeared, Julius Scott had done just that, deepening the pioneering insights offered by James in *A History of Negro Revolt*. Gilroy's influential work, on the contrary, took the well-trodden path on the Haitian Revolution, thereby perpetuating a serious lacuna in pan-African scholarship.

Emergent Black International Traditions: Revolutionary and Revivalist

Beginning in the Age of Revolution, the black international evolved into two traditions, which we will call revolutionary and revivalist. The Haitian Revolution, which capped a long line of violent antislavery resistance, even as it qualitatively altered the nature of that resistance, became an emblem of the revolutionary tradition. Evolving alongside the revolutionary tradition, and serving as both its counterpart and its counterpoint, was the revivalist tradition, with its center in the Anglo-American world and its origins in the Evangelical Revival. The dominant narrative of the black international is derived largely from the revivalist tradition and its permutations.

The two traditions in black internationalism, the revolutionary and the revivalist, emerged under different conditions, the one grounded in armed struggle and the other formally, although not always actually, committed to nonviolent resistance. Frequently, if not in all instances, epistemic distinctions further set the two traditions apart. Scholars of the Haitian Revolution, a defining event in the revolutionary tradition, are broadly agreed that it originally cohered around vodun, the dominant slave religion of Saint Domingue.⁶⁶ Boukman Dutty, the first leader of the Haitian Revolution, was a noted practitioner of vodun. Of syncreticism, a term that would later be used to describe the melding of African and European (and often Native American) cultures, Boukman was disdainful, at least in the realm of religion. At the Bois Caiman ceremony, simultaneously the inaugural moment of the Haitian Revolution and the most iconic of vodun events, Boukman categorically rejected Christianity. “The God of the white man calls him to commit crimes,” he informed the assembled vanguard of the coming revolution, in what amounted to the keynote address at Bois Caiman, whereas “our God asks only good works of us.” But a good God demanded justice, even vengeance. “This God who is so good,” Boukman continued, “orders revenge! He will direct our hands; he will aid us.” He then concluded, no doubt on a note of high drama and perhaps even to acclamation, “Throw away the image of the God of the whites who thirsts for our tears, and listen to the voice of liberty that speaks in the hearts of all of us.”⁶⁷

The adherents of the black international revivalist tradition also listened to the voice of liberty, even as they rejected Boukman’s binary religious categories. The revivalists did not so much discard the God of the whites as to make

him anew, transforming him into the God of the blacks, all the while preserving his universality. It was a deft maneuver, ideologically speaking, and it began with the Evangelical Revival.

Before the Evangelical Revival, enslaved Africans in the British colonies, whether on the North American mainland or in the Caribbean, had little real contact with Christianity. The Evangelical Revival inaugurated the meeting of African spiritualities and Protestant Christianity.⁶⁸ A movement that came out of the Church of England, or the Anglican Church, the Evangelical Revival was, in part, a reaction to the European Enlightenment, then nearing its end. Rejecting Christianity as part of the dark past best consigned to the dustbin of history, the Enlightenment proposed to replace faith with reason, tradition with progress, and contentment with happiness. The Evangelical Revival came to defend faith and to affirm the truth of revealed religion. In the process, the Evangelical Revival launched a critique of the established church, insisting on a more vibrant, engaged, and relevant Christianity. The Enlightenment argued that Western society, which it assumed to be the human norm, was excessively religious. On the contrary, the Evangelical Revival countered, the problem was not too much religion but not enough of it.⁶⁹

In the colonies, if not in the center of the empire, the message of the Evangelical Revival appealed most to the disinherited and the dispossessed. In British North America, where it would become known as the Great Awakening, the outstanding organizing mechanism of the Evangelical Revival was the camp meeting. Spiritual conversion, not familiarity with the catechism or mastery of the minutiae of Christian doctrine, the evangelists insisted, constituted evidence of salvation. The Holy Spirit, they continued, was readily and freely available to all, irrespective of class, servile status, race, or gender. It was simply a matter of heeding the revelation, that is, the revelation of the Holy Spirit. To the enslaved Africans and their descendants who flocked to the camp meetings, the concept of revelation would have been quite familiar; it was an established feature of most African religions. The correspondence facilitated conversion, allowing the slaves to accept the new without rejecting the old.⁷⁰ Thus began the mass conversion of Africans in British lands, and with it the origins of the black international revivalist tradition.

The U.S. Revolution would prove to be a boon to the revivalist tradition. Out of the free black community that emerged from the U.S. Revolution would come some of the notable exponents of that tradition.⁷¹ Then there were the black refugees from the U.S. Revolution, a diaspora within a diaspora. Armed

with the gospel of the Evangelical Revival, sometimes combined with the founding ideals of the U.S. Revolution, these refugees would have a profound effect on the societies in which they resettled. Scholars are still pursuing their footprints in places as diverse as the Bahamas, Bermuda, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, Canada, and England, among others.⁷² In this way, the U.S. Revolution unwittingly produced vectors of black internationalism, in its revivalist guise, on both banks of the Atlantic.

It was not just the revivalist tradition, however, that benefited from the U.S. Revolution. As Sylvia Frey so incisively shows in her essay, some among the enslaved seized the opportunity offered by the war for U.S. independence to launch armed struggles of their own making against racial bondage. A number of these self-organized freedom fighters previously belonged to the black units of the British army, and some were steeped in evangelical Christianity. The result was a merger of the revivalist and revolutionary traditions in black internationalism, or what Frey calls, respectively, “evangelical pan-Africanism” and “revolutionary pan-Africanism.” In the main, though, the revivalist tradition was more closely linked to the U.S. Revolution and its black internationalist consequences than was the revolutionary tradition.

Pioneers of the revivalist tradition produced an important body of literature, part of it destined to be incorporated into later chronicles of the black international. These founding texts, which began to emerge in the late eighteenth century, consisted of poetry, sermons, autobiographical accounts, and philosophical musings by ex-slaves, some of whom had personally experienced the transatlantic journey of the Middle Passage.⁷³ Part of the Western canon, even as they challenged that canon, such works mirrored the position of black folk in the white-dominated Atlantic world. The founding texts thus occupied a peculiar intellectual and political space, precariously perched between the Evangelical Revival and its ideological nemesis, the Enlightenment. From an uneasy synthesis of the two—the Revival and the Enlightenment, the sacred and the profane—arose abolitionism, which became the first great organizing principle of the revivalist tradition.

Abolitionism, then, was not the exclusive product of the white imagination, as the Eurocentric master narrative would have it.⁷⁴ For one, the black founding narrators of the revivalist tradition powerfully mediated abolitionism, as only they *experientially* could do. In any case, abolitionism was hardly an intellectual abstraction. Whether as an idea or as a movement, it emerged in concert with slave resistance, especially slave revolts.⁷⁵ The violent attempts

at self-liberation spurred the literary and organizational exertions of the abolitionists, whose campaign, it bears remembering, initially targeted not slavery but the slave trade. It remained for the enslaved themselves, in the midst of their essays in self-liberation, to formulate the “genius of universal emancipation,” to borrow the title of an early-nineteenth-century African American publication. In sum, the *plan* to end slavery as a form of social organization was conceived not in the heads of the abolitionists, black or white, but in slave revolts, culminating in the Haitian Revolution, which decisively shifted the locus of abolitionism from the slave trade to slavery. The official termination of the slave trade by Britain in 1807, and by the United States the following year, confirmed that shift. In both cases, but especially that of the United States, a major consideration in abandoning the commerce in human cargoes was the fear of slave revolts, behind which stood the greatest specter of all, the Haitian Revolution.⁷⁶

The boost to abolitionism was also a boost to the revivalist tradition in black internationalism, its ideological helpmeet. Broadly, the revivalist tradition shared the goals of the revolutionary tradition—namely, antislavery, antiracism, and more equivocally, anticolonialism. Unlike the revolutionary tradition, though, the revivalist tradition was constrained by its alliance with white abolitionism. With few exceptions, white abolitionists throughout the Atlantic were committed to a pacific, and often gradual, approach to emancipation. Generally, white abolitionists saw the Haitian Revolution as unhelpful, even as a setback to their cause.⁷⁷ Some revivalists rejected that depiction, extolling the emancipationist glory of the Haitian Revolution. Already in 1797, seven years before Haiti officially became independent, Prince Hall rejoiced in the outcome of the revolt there. A staunch revivalist and pioneer of African American masonry, Hall asserted that events in Saint Domingue had shown that “God hath no respect of persons,” paraphrasing a biblical passage (Acts 10:34) much beloved by the founders of the revivalist tradition. Invoking another scripture (Psalms 68:31) that would gain even greater popularity, becoming a rallying cry in black internationalist circles down to the Garvey movement, Hall concluded of the Saint Domingue revolt, “Thus doth Ethiopia begin to stretch forth her hand, from a sink of slavery to freedom and equality.”⁷⁸ Not all revivalists, however, followed Hall’s lead. Others, more closely allied with white abolition, remained mum on the Haitian Revolution. Thus publicly, at any rate, the founding generation of revivalists was not of one mind on the subject of Haiti.

The heirs to the revivalist tradition would help to keep alive memory of the Haitian Revolution outside Haiti. One such individual was James Theodore Holly, the African American clergyman and staunch supporter of the emigration of free blacks to Haiti in the years leading up to the U.S. Civil War. A sectarian Protestant, like so many of his generation of black international revivalists, Holly's enthusiasm for Haiti was tempered only by his disdain for its official religion, Catholicism (he largely ignored vodun, the faith of most Haitians). Holly proposed to replace Catholicism, which he apparently considered effete, among other errors, with a "manly" Protestantism. Otherwise, Holly's fervor for Haiti seemed boundless. In his view, the Haitian Revolution was an epochal event, "vindicating" as it did the capacity of black folk for "self-government and civilized progress," in short, to attain modernity and rise in the scale of white bourgeois culture.⁷⁹

The black masses were equally buoyant on Haiti. In various parts of the Caribbean and South America, enslaved people and free people of color incorporated tropes of the Haitian Revolution into their culture—music, dance, visual art, and folkways.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, free African Americans also embraced the Haitian revolutionary legacy, turning January 1, Haiti's independence day, into a popular, if unofficial, public holiday. The embrace of Haiti was facilitated by the exclusion of black people, often by violent means, from U.S. independence celebrations.⁸¹

David Walker had a keen appreciation of the legacy of the Haitian Revolution, at both the intellectual and popular levels. His iconic pamphlet hailed Haiti as "the glory of the blacks and the terror of tyrants,"⁸² even as he helped to organize Haitian independence celebrations in Boston, his adopted hometown. Walker came a generation before his fellow African American James Theodore Holly, for whom he may as well have been a model, balancing enthusiasm for Haiti with a Protestant chauvinist aversion to its official religion, Catholicism, "that scourge of nations," all the while displaying a vibrant black internationalism. Walker linked the fate of African Americans, slave and free, to the liberation of black folk globally, a pan-African connection evident in the title of his deeply biblical and black text, *David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*. Walker wrote in the urgent tone of the prophetic tradition—the tradition of speaking truth to power, damn the consequences.⁸³ In his vacillation between the pacific tendencies of abolitionism, on one hand, and armed struggle, on the other, he stood athwart the two traditions in black internationalism: the revivalist and the revolutionary. Similarly, Walker's epis-

tle was situated between a biblically based teleology of emancipation and a Christian theology of liberation—the one founded on providential predetermination and the other appealing to the agency of the oppressed.

Two years after Walker wrote, the two conceptions—the hand of God and the human hand—found a synthesis in revolutionary praxis. The year of reckoning was 1831, when the Nat Turner Revolt in Virginia and the Christmas Rising in Jamaica, two attempts at self-emancipation, occurred just four months apart. Whatever their other connections (and Julius Scott's common wind, although calmed by repression, had hardly faded away), the two rebellions were related, ideologically, through a common adherence to the Baptist faith. Turner was a Baptist preacher, while the Jamaican insurrection is also known as the Baptist War, black Baptist refugees from the U.S. Revolution, among others, having brought their faith to the island.⁸⁴ With the Turner Revolt and the Christmas Rising/Baptist War, black Christianity had given rise to a liberation theology based on armed struggle, much more explicitly than the independent black revolutionary activities attendant on the U.S. Revolution. For the first time since the Haitian Revolution, the revivalist and revolutionary traditions in black internationalism had merged on the field of battle, if ever so briefly. It was a meeting, finally, of Boukman and the Baptists.

It was only partially, however, a rendezvous of victory.⁸⁵ The revolutionary antislavery crusades of 1831, the Turner Revolt and the Christmas Rising, had quite different historical outcomes. In yet another demonstration of the dialectical interrelationship between slave revolts and abolitionism, the Christmas Rising served as an important and final impetus for emancipation in the British Empire. Relative to its economic value in the emerging British industrial order, the cost of slavery had become prohibitively high.⁸⁶ Moreover, suppressing revolts and maintaining armies in the slave colonies were burdens the British treasury had grown tired of bearing. Given the frequency and ferocity of such uprisings, Britain seemed to face two choices: risk another Haiti or decree abolition from above. With the Abolition of Slavery Act, which was passed in 1833 and became effective the following year, the British authorities chose the safer option.⁸⁷

The situation was quite different in the United States, where slavery had become more important than ever, centering increasingly on the production of cotton, primarily for the British textile industry. Accordingly, the U.S. slaveholders and the state, over which they exercised ever more dominance, responded to the Turner Revolt with even more repression. The revolutionary tradition negated, there would be no more major slave insurrections in

the United States. Yet, the tradition of black self-organization, everywhere the foundation of antislavery revolutionary activities, remained alive and well among African American slaves, in their cultural and religious institutions and practices. The “sable arm,” recalled to martial duty by a repentant state more than three decades after the Turner Revolt, during the U.S. Civil War, would play a major role in bringing about emancipation.⁸⁸ For many of its black participants, the Civil War effectively constituted a synthesis of the revolutionary and revivalist traditions in black internationalism. All they needed was President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, which actually freed not a single slave but, rather, appealed to the agency of the enslaved and incited them to rebellion. Thus unchained, the sable arm would become its own liberator.⁸⁹ The Emancipation Proclamation, then, was the equivalent of the Bois Caiman ceremony in the Haitian Revolution—not a bestowal of freedom but a clarion call for the enslaved to revolt against bondage and make real the promise of liberty.

The connection between the two emancipation campaigns—the Haitian Revolution and the U.S. Civil War—was deeper still.⁹⁰ Matthew Clavin has recently shown how the transformation of black men, free and slave, into soldiers during the Civil War at once deepened and brought to light hidden identification among African Americans with the Haitian Revolution, and especially with Toussaint Louverture. For many African American soldiers and their boosters, “Toussaint and the men who followed him into battle affirmed the redemptive quality of violence to prove black manhood.”⁹¹ This black international legacy, in the form of memory of the Haitian Revolution, was transmitted through both the literary and oral traditions—that is, the writings of the free blacks and the word of mouth of the slaves, including a handful of old bondsmen who claimed to have seen action in Toussaint’s army. The resulting consciousness and cultural tropes deeply inspired African Americans in the theater of war and beyond, as revealed in matters ranging from martial music to naming practices, including the names of military units, places, and individuals.⁹² Here, indeed, was an affirmation of the unbroken circle of emancipation envisioned at the foundational moment of black internationalism, a vision most readily symbolized by the Haitian Revolution and its legacy.

Coda

Since assuming more definite form in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the black international had ebbed and flowed. The revolutionary tradition, on

becoming associated with the Haitian Revolution, caused much excitement and helped to fuel insurrectionary activities among the enslaved throughout the Americas. But the vigilance and repression of colonial and slaveholding powers, not some preordained historical force, ensured that despite repeated attempts, the revolutionary tradition would not gain any real traction outside Haiti after the revolution there. Meanwhile, the other paradigm in black internationalism, the revivalist tradition, adopted as its guiding principle universal emancipation, a principle first proclaimed *and* put into practice by adherents of the revolutionary tradition. Later, champions of the revivalist tradition would draw inspiration from the Haitian Revolution and defend Haitian sovereignty. At certain moments, the two traditions merged, as in the black guerrilla warfare on the sidelines of the U.S. Revolution, in the Turner Revolt and the Christmas Rising, and rather more tentatively, among the black contingent in the U.S. Civil War. In the main, though, the revivalist tradition remained dominant in black internationalism in the post-Haitian Revolution era, certainly in Anglo-American lands. In the United States, meanwhile, some among the free blacks advocated leaving the country in search of real liberty, and Haiti was one of the suggested destinations for potential African American emigrants in the period leading up to the Civil War.

Then, in the early twentieth century, Haiti and the legacy of the Haitian Revolution dramatically reappeared in black internationalism. The cause was the U.S. invasion of Haiti in 1915, followed by a generation-long military occupation lasting until 1934.⁹³ Historically and symbolically, this violent repudiation of Haitian sovereignty constituted a payback for the revolution against slavery, white supremacy, and colonialism over a century earlier. As such, it amounted to Jefferson's revenge. Accordingly, Haiti and the Haitian Revolution became an important, if not fully appreciated, trope in the black international renaissance, political and cultural, that followed World War I.

Since the aggression emanated from the United States, the cause of "bleeding Haiti" became especially dear to African Americans.⁹⁴ Black folk in the United States were all the more outraged because the invasion of Haiti came just weeks after the premiering of the film *Birth of a Nation*, a vilely racist attack on African American political rights and a vindication of the violent white-supremacist overthrow of Reconstruction, the brief but remarkable experiment in nonracial democracy that had followed the Civil War.⁹⁵ In the circumstances, African American activists, writers, and artists swung into action, protesting the occupation of Haiti in multiple forms, including demonstrations, commissions of investigations, essays, books, paintings, plays, and

poems. “Black Majesty,” an ode by Countee Cullen, among the most equivocal of the African American poets of that era, his racial eulogy frequently tinged with apologia, was typical of the outbreak of celebration of Haitian revolutionary figures:

These men were kings, albeit they were black,
 Christophe and Dessalines and L’Overture;
 Their majesty has made me turn my back
 Upon a plaint I once shaped to endure. . . .
 Stifle your agony; let grief be drowned;
 We know joy had a day once and a clime.

Still in verse, the lesser-known Ben Burrell, in one of the radical, U.S.-based pan-African journals, went beyond celebration of the past and issued a call to arms against the U.S. occupation. Listen to Burrell’s “Haiti, Awake!”:

Haiti, Awake! A hundred years
 Of toil is marked upon thy brow. . . .
 Oh, brethren, for your fathers brave
 Assert your free and ancient rights. . . .
 The Haitian nation never dies. . . .
 Great champion of the Indies West,
 Arise! The world shall guard your fame. . . .
 The memory of thy dead endure;
 The Dessalinos of faith sublime.
 The noble knight; L’Overture.⁹⁶

In fact, the U.S. occupation did produce vigorous martial resistance in Haiti, guerrilla warfare, along with a cultural resurgence.⁹⁷ Interestingly, a central figure in the Haitian cultural rebirth was the physician and man of letters Jean Price-Mars, a scion of the nineteenth-century African American emigration to Haiti.⁹⁸ Concurrently, Haiti and its revolutionary inheritance also attracted the attention of the apostles of Negritude, the cultural movement produced on French soil by colonial subjects from Africa and the Caribbean, in dialogue with the Haitian and African American renaissances, among others.⁹⁹ Indeed, Price-Mars was a founder of Negritude, albeit an oft-neglected one.¹⁰⁰ Aimé Césaire, in his long prose-poem, the single most famous work of Negritude, lauded “Haiti, where negritude stood up for the first time and swore by its humanity.”¹⁰¹ The great irony is that the historical narrators of the black international, who began to emerge around the same time, failed to

take a cue from the literary figures. As is often the case in telling the story of African-descended peoples, “fiction” turned out to be truer than “fact,” imaginative productions offering a more accurate portrayal of lived experiences than historical accounts.¹⁰² Accordingly, the greater body of pan-African historical scholarship would pass over in silence an epic moment in the making of the black international. It remains for the reconstituted field of African Diaspora studies to correct the record and affirm the black international majesty that was the Haitian Revolution, sparing others from having to wail, like the calypso singer David Rudder, “Haiti, I’m sorry.”

NOTES

1. For the broad scholarly treatment of the Haitian Revolution, see, most notably, James, *Black Jacobins*; Fick, *Making of Haiti*; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*; and Dubois, *Avengers*. See also, most recently, Bell, *Toussaint Louverture*, which credits the claim, rejected by almost all modern historians, that the revolution began as a royalist conspiracy.

2. James, *Black Jacobins*, 163–98; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 157–70; Fick, “French Revolution.”

3. Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution and Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 171–78; Dubois, *Avengers*, 152–70.

4. James, *Black Jacobins*, 199–240; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 119–36.

5. James, *Black Jacobins*, 241–68; Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 157–203.

6. James, *Black Jacobins*, 269–321.

7. Quoted in Dubois, *Avengers*, 278.

8. *Ibid.*, 290–93.

9. Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 204–36.

10. Quoted in *ibid.*, 211–12.

11. Long an autonomous force within the revolution, these guerrillas were heavily African-born, compared to the leadership of the mainline revolutionary army, which consisted mainly of Creoles (individuals born in the Americas), men like Toussaint and Dessalines. For a portrait of Sans Souci, whose career illustrates the African-born/Creole divide, see Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 31–69.

12. Quoted in Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 27.

13. Brinton, *Anatomy*; Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution*; Moore, *Social Origins*; Skocpol, *States*.

14. The most notable exception is perhaps Langley, *Americas*, which discusses the experiences of the United States (“the revolution from above”), Haiti (“the revolution from below”), and Spanish America (“the revolution denied”). See also Blackburn, *Overthrow*, 161–211; Benot, *La révolution française*; and from the side of Haitian studies, Fick, “French Revolution.”

15. See, for example, Defronzo, *Revolutions*; Foran, *Future*; and Goldstone, *Revolutions*.

16. See, for example, the special issue of *Social Research*, 56, no. 1 (Spring 1989), and the summary of bicentennial debates in Doyle, *French Revolution*, 98–108.
17. Geggus, “Haitian Revolution,” 402–20 (citation from 402).
18. Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*; Knight, *Slave Society*; Stein, *Vassouras*.
19. Geggus, “Haitian Revolution,” 402.
20. While most historians attribute this to European balance of power politics, the loss of Haiti had a key role; see Paquette, “Revolutionary Saint Domingue,” and Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*.
21. See, especially, the following works by David Brion Davis: *Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, *Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, *Slavery and Human Progress*, and *Inhuman Bondage*.
22. Drescher, “Ending of the Slave Trade”; Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology.”
23. Northrup, *Indentured Labor*; Jung, *Coolies and Cane*; Yun, *Coolie Speaks*.
24. See Lewis, *Growth and Fluctuations*; Wallerstein, *Modern World-System III*, 127–89; and Wolf, *Europe and the People*, 310–53.
25. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 27, 207; Dubois, *Avengers*.
26. See, most notably, Fick, *Making of Haiti*; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*; and Dubois, *Avengers*.
27. Drescher, “Limits of Example,” 13.
28. Beckles, “Caribbean Anti-Slavery”; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.
29. Santiago-Valles, “World-Historical Ties.”
30. Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 221–24.
31. See the list of rebellions and conspiracies in Geggus, “Slavery, War, and Revolution,” 46–49.
32. Klein, *African Slavery*; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*.
33. Scott, “Common Wind.”
34. Geggus, “Slavery, War, and Revolution,” 14; Childs, “Black French General”; Branson and Patrick, “Étrangers dans un pays étrange.”
35. Quoted in Newman, “American Political Culture,” 79.
36. LaChance, “Repercussions”; Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue*.
37. Robertson, *Denmark Vesey*, 51–53; Starobin, *Denmark Vesey*.
38. Childs, “Black French General.”
39. Robinson, *Black Marxism*.
40. This argument is most clearly articulated in Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*.
41. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Fick, “French Revolution.”
42. Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology*.
43. Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 33–34.
44. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion*.
45. Newman, “American Political Culture.”
46. Rothman, *Slave Country*; Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*.
47. Quoted in Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 4.
48. *Century of Lawmaking*, col. 330 (emphasis in original). See also Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*.

49. Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 4.

50. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

51. Among the most curious exceptions at the turn of the twentieth century was the white-supremacist ideologue Lothrop Stoddard, whose work on the Haitian Revolution studiously avoided that term, underlining Trouillot's point. Stoddard considered the "French Revolution in San Domingo," as he called it, "the first great shock between the ideals of white supremacy and race equality, which erased the finest of European colonies from the map of the white world and initiated that most noted attempt at negro self-government, the black republic of Haiti." See Stoddard, *French Revolution*, vii.

52. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution*.

53. James, *History of Negro Revolt*; this text was refurbished and published anew in 1969 as *A History of Pan-African Revolt*.

54. Scott, "Common Wind."

55. Padmore, *Life and Struggles*.

56. On Padmore's life and politics, see Hooker, *Black Revolutionary*, and Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 241–305.

57. Padmore, *Life and Struggles*, 78.

58. *Ibid.*, 64–68.

59. Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* This book reappeared in 1972 under a new, more politically anodyne title, simply, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, without the question mark and the subtitle.

60. See, for example, such otherwise admirable works as Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism*; Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*; and Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*.

61. Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*.

62. *Ibid.*, 37, 80, 127–28.

63. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*.

64. *Ibid.*, 13, 18.

65. For a discussion of Toussaint and modernity, see Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 132–69.

66. James, *Black Jacobins*, 86; Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 104–5; Dubois, *Avengers*, 101.

67. Some scholars of the Haitian Revolution have questioned whether the Bois Caiman ceremony really happened. The weight of opinion, however, supports its authenticity. See, most authoritatively, Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 81–92.

68. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*; Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*.

69. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*; Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*; Hempton, *Methodism*; Kidd, *Great Awakening*.

70. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 235–71.

71. On blacks and the U.S. Revolution and the resulting free black community, see Quarles, *The Negro*; Frey, *Water from the Rock*; Rael, *Black Identity*; and Nash, *Forgotten Fifth*.

72. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*; Walker, *Black Loyalists*; Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*; Pulis, *Moving On*; Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*; Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers*.

73. Such figures include James Gronniosaw, John Marrant, Quobna Ottobah Cugoana, Olaudah Equiano, Phillis Wheatley, and John Jea. A number of anthologies contain

their writings, in whole or in part. See, for example, Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers*; Gates and McKay, *Norton Anthology*; and Gates and Andrews, *Pioneers*. Marcus Rediker has discoursed incisively on the impact of the Middle Passage on the ideas of some of these figures, most notably Equiano. See Rediker, *Slave Ship*.

74. The standard statement in this regard is Coupland, *British Anti-Slavery Movement*. For more recent, and nuanced, recapitulations, see Brown, *Moral Capital*, and Schama, *Rough Crossings*.

75. Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 211–47.

76. Rothman, *Slave Country*, 19; James, *Black Jacobins*.

77. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 2.

78. Hall, “Charge,” 204.

79. Holly, *Vindication*.

80. Geggus, *Impact*; Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*; Geggus, “Influence.”

81. Sweet, “Fourth of July”; Rael, *Black Identity*, 223–26. See also White, “‘It Was a Proud Day.’”

82. Walker, *David Walker’s Appeal*, 23.

83. On the black prophetic tradition internationally, see Bogue, *Black Heretics*. On the same phenomenon in the United States more specifically, see Howard-Pitney, *Afro-American Jeremiad*.

84. Rugemer, *Problem of Emancipation*; Greenberg, *Nat Turner*; French, *Rebellious Slave*; Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 148–78; Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 291–321; Pulis, “Bridging Troubled Waters.”

85. The expression is borrowed from Césaire, *Notebook of a Return*, 140.

86. The classic statement on this subject is Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*.

87. As J. R. Kerr-Ritchie has so ably shown, British emancipation would have considerable impact on African Americans, notably the free blacks, including those who took refuge in Canada, especially after the U.S. Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. See Kerr-Ritchie, *Rites of August First*. In the same connection, see also Rugemer, *Problem of Emancipation*.

88. Cornish, *Sable Arm*.

89. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*.

90. British emancipation, along with the Haitian Revolution, had provided an important template for the struggle between the defenders and opponents of slavery in the decades leading up to the U.S. Civil War. See Rugemer, *Problem of Emancipation*.

91. Clavin, “American Toussaints,” 89.

92. *Ibid.*, 87–113.

93. Schmidt, *United States Occupation*; Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*.

94. Plummer, “Afro-American Response”; Pamphile, “NAACP and the American Occupation”; Suggs, “Response.”

95. Boston Branch, *Fighting a Vicious Film*.

96. *Crusader*, May 1920, 11.

97. For an effective roundup of the Haitian experience, from colonial times to the Duvaliers, including the impact of the U.S. occupation, see Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*.

98. Shannon, *Jean Price-Mars*.

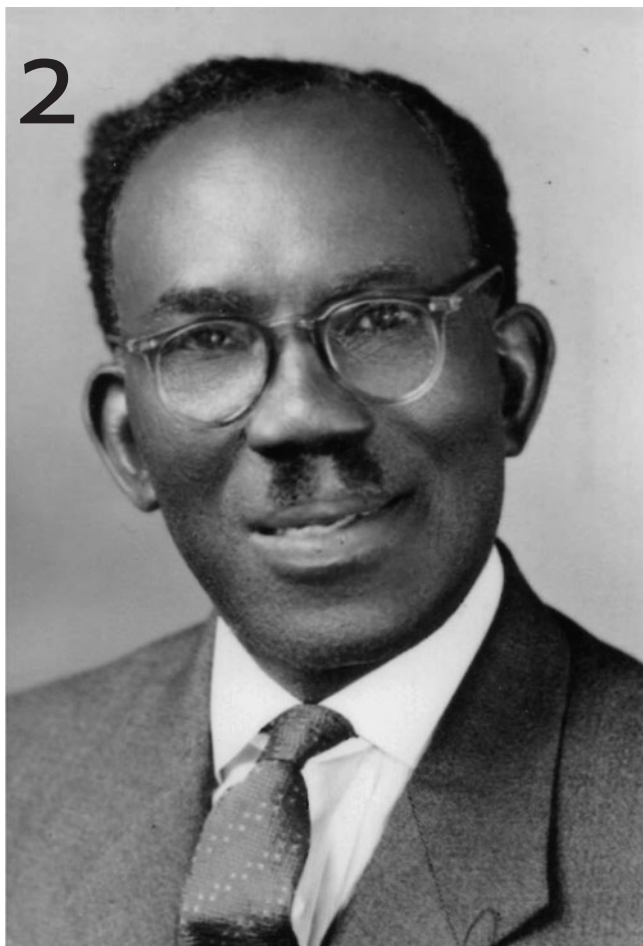
99. Irele, *African Experience*; Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris*; Ellis, “Nicolas Guillen and Langston Hughes.”

100. See, however, Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*, 305–21, which places Price-Mars at the center of Negritude’s origin.

101. Césaire, *Notebook of a Return*, 66. Césaire would later write a play about Christopher, Dessalines’s successor, in addition to a biography of Toussaint.

102. On this point, see Depelchin, *Silences in African History*.

PART 2



Isaac Theophilus Akunna Wallace-Johnson (1894–1965). Born in Sierra Leone, Wallace-Johnson was an anticolonial activist, founder of the West African Youth League, a political prisoner during World War II, and a pan-Africanist. (Courtesy of Hakim Adi)

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Nothing Matters but Color

Transnational Circuits, the Interwar Caribbean,
and the Black International

LARA PUTNAM

In the first decades of the twentieth century, sojourners from the British West Indies created a migratory sphere that stretched from northern Venezuela to southern Harlem. Not only did individual lives and family units cross national boundaries, but so, too, did social networks, formal institutions, and cultural consumption. Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) had chapters across the region, and the UNIA's newspaper, *Negro World*, everywhere read, published news and letters from correspondents in Cuba, Panama, Jamaica, Barbados, and beyond. The Anglican and Wesleyan Methodist churches, the Salvation Army, and other Christian missions had a similar spread and helped members of distant chapters keep in touch. Records and radios let sounds circulate even faster than singers, shaping a musical tradition in which calypso, mento, plena, son, and jazz acquired echoes of mutual influence.¹

Local newspapers played an important role in uniting distant settlements into a single social world. British West Indian–owned newspapers published in Kingston (Jamaica), Port Limón (Costa Rica), Panama City (Panama), and Port of Spain (Trinidad) circulated far and wide, as did the UNIA's New York–based *Negro World*. News articles, social notes, and obituaries were commonly picked up and reprinted among these papers.² Unusually high rates of literacy among British West Indian emigrants in these years assured a wide readership.³ The *Negro World*, the *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, the *Limón Searchlight* and *Atlantic Voice*, the Bocas del Toro *Central American Express*, the *Panama Tribune*, and the “West Indian News” page of the *Panama Star and Herald* bridged elite and popular culture within their sites of publication even as they

linked these sites together. The frequency of steamer traffic also facilitated private correspondence. As early as 1883–84 (the heyday of Jamaican migration to the French Panama canal project), more than 82,000 letters were dispatched from Jamaica to Colombia in the space of twelve months.⁴ Oral, epistolary, and print lines of communication together cycled rumors, ideas, and news around the region.⁵

At the height of migration in the late 1920s, British West Indian immigrants and their children made up roughly 16 percent of the population of Panama, 3.8 percent of that of Costa Rica, 1.2 percent of that of Cuba, and almost one-quarter of that of Harlem.⁶ Smaller but significant communities resided in the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Venezuela. Put another way, by 1930, at least 150,000 first- or second-generation British West Indians lived in the Spanish-speaking circum-Caribbean, while 145,000 more resided in the United States.⁷ Nearly 300,000-strong, then, the British West Indian diaspora was almost twice as large as the population of Barbados and fully six times that of Belize. Yet because these men, women, and children did not reside in a single nation, scholars have rarely seen them for the interrelated whole they were. True, the transnational world they created did not endure. Economic crisis and racist immigration laws cut short the circulation of migrants in the 1930s, and post–World War II political and economic shifts redirected migratory circuits toward the North Atlantic. Yet the legacy of that early British West Indian diaspora is extraordinary and marks black internationalism to this day.

Scholars have long recognized the disproportionate number of foundational pan-African thinkers that came from the Caribbean, among them Marcus Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey, Cyril V. Briggs, Richard B. Moore, Claude McKay, George Padmore, C. L. R. James, and Eric Williams. Winston James has argued that the migration experience itself was a key factor in their radicalization.⁸ I would go further to note that they were not just products of one particular migratory system; they were also products of a particular moment in its history. All stepped on the public stage in the interwar years, a critical juncture for British West Indians abroad. Most importantly, these leaders were not unique. In this same era, voices across the Caribbean public sphere were speaking out about the common experiences of African peoples around the globe, about their common suffering and common aspirations, and about the need for collective action to make shared dreams a united reality.

Such a vision of brotherhood and sisterhood among African-descended peoples on all sides of the Atlantic was built both against something and out

of something. It was built against something: the racially defined nationalism of Latin American states, which across the region imposed race-based exclusions (often for the first time) in the late 1920s and 1930s. It was also built in opposition to the racist imperialism of U.S. military interventions, most especially in Panama, Cuba, and Haiti. But it was at the same time built out of something: a diverse yet interdependent array of voluntary associations, evangelical movements, and moral reform movements, all of which reinforced and in turn were reinforced by British West Indian newspapers that combined international circulation with detailed local commentary. Many of these moral reform movements and voluntary associations were of British origin (such as the Salvation Army and the Boy Scouts); others were originally British but reached the Caribbean via African American adaptations in the United States (such as the Independent Benevolent Order of Elks and the Oddfellows). With striking consistency, the lodges, churches, scouts, and newspapers preached a doctrine of racial uplift through individual self-improvement and collective brotherhood.

This essay presents a three-part argument. First, that migration and migrants' activities created a West Indian-centered black internationalist world in the first decades of the twentieth century; second, that this world came under attack as a result of the rise of narrow, racially defined nationalisms and imperial closures in the interwar years; and third, that the attacks reinforced "race consciousness" among migrants, spurring increasingly explicit black internationalist critiques of imperial and neocolonial power. The story unfolds in many places, at sites distant in space yet closely linked by individual travels, institutional ties, and the flow of news of shared concerns. It is a history made in places like the Methodist Episcopal church of Guachipali, Panama, where returned veterans of the British West Indies Regiment, barely out of adolescence themselves, gathered boys and girls into troops, drilled them in marches, and instilled the gospel of a scout's loyalty to fellow scouts.⁹ It was made, too, on docksides at ports across the Caribbean, where black merchant seamen surreptitiously passed along copies of the *Negro World* in the years when employers and officials did everything they could to block its circulation.¹⁰ It was made, as well, in the slums of West Kingston, where migrants returning from Cuba in the 1930s gathered in crowded yards to hear about the divinity of an Ethiopian monarch named Ras Tafari.¹¹ The saga here presented was made, yet again, on railroad sidings like the one in Ciego de Avila, Cuba, where one hot afternoon in 1925 a mother stood with her three children, looking in vain for the husband she had traveled all the way from Barbados to rejoin. Another man

walked by. She stared. “Joseph Goodridge, that’s you? Joseph, Joseph, Joseph.” “Ms. Greaves? Wait, what you doing here?” They had known each other years before in the cities of Panama, and now they met by chance at a crossroads amid the canefields of Cuba. A Barbadian bar owner and his Jamaican wife fed the family that day, Mrs. Greaves’s son Earl would recall some seventy years later, while another gentleman went to tell Earl’s father his family had arrived two months ahead of schedule. “And when Mr. Greaves was coming up to us mama says ‘Look at your father coming there.’ And he says ‘Oh Lord, look at my children. Look at my children.’ And he start to cry.”¹² Such repeat encounters, open doors, and long-awaited reunions wove distant sites into a single social world that stretched across the interwar Caribbean.

Self-Help, Salvation, and Solidarity: Overseas West Indian Civic Activism

A UNIA Mass Meeting Hymnal printed in Panama in 1948 lies today under glass in the tiny Museo Afroantillano (Afro-Caribbean Museum) in Panama City. “Blessed be the tie that binds / Our hearts in Christian love. / The fellowship of kindred minds / is like to that above,” read the lyrics labeled “Introduction Hymn.” The Ethiopian National Hymn follows. Christian conviction suffused fraternal rituals in the early-twentieth-century Caribbean, and in this regard Garveyism was no different. Its collective affirmation of black brotherhood built upon familiar models. One elderly Jamaican, interviewed in 1973, described how UNIA meetings in eastern Cuba in the 1920s always began with a “political song and a church song. . . . You see we get up and we sing and after we sing, we talk about how the whites have us trampling and how they treat us.”¹³

Like this man, countless Garveyites first encountered the movement while far from home.¹⁴ The UNIA was very much a phenomenon of the British West Indian diaspora. While the association had chapters in forty-two countries by 1926, 45 percent of all non-U.S. chapters were located in just three countries: Cuba, Panama, and Costa Rica. The importance of the UNIA to British West Indian migrants—and the migrants to the UNIA—is evident when one compares membership statistics from sending and receiving societies. The association had four times as many chapters in Panama as it did in Jamaica.¹⁵ And the Garveyites were not the only black organization whose membership spanned the Caribbean in these years. Nor were the Garveyites the first to make black pride and racial solidarity the cornerstone of their philosophy. To give just one

example, the Mosaic Templars of America was an African American fraternal society founded in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1882 that provided death, burial, and loan benefits to its members. By the 1920s, the Mosaic Templars had chapters totaling tens of thousands of members worldwide.¹⁶ Advertisements in Port Limón's English-language press in 1911 read, "Join the people's fraternity. No discrimination because of your color, no privileges debarred. A Templar in Costa Rica is welcomed in the U.S. or elsewhere. A Policy by a member here is paid equally as in the U.S. We aim at the protection of our race and people as members of one family. If you deem yourself worthy of the name and claim, then be a member of our order."¹⁷

Within the Canal Zone in Panama, the U.S. authorities maintained strict Jim Crow segregation, affecting everything from pay scales (labeled gold and silver, after the different coinage that had been used for white and black employees at the start of canal construction) to drinking fountains. White U.S. citizens, who drew their pay from the "Gold Roll," enjoyed superior facilities in YMCA clubhouses, while the Jamaican, Barbadian, and other Afro-Caribbean immigrants on the "Silver Roll" were relegated to the "Colored" clubhouses. Yet, even in such circumstances of economic and social apartheid, West Indian workers created an extraordinarily vibrant civic life in the "Silver Y's," Anglican and Methodist churches, and UNIA halls in and around the Canal Zone. Among groups meeting in one month in 1920 were the West Indian Democratic Club, the Chorillo Dominoe Team, the Boys Brigade, the Anti-Cussing Club for Boys, a half-dozen cricket teams, a like number of literary societies, multiple UNIA and Black Cross Nurse chapters, and dozens of local lodges of the Independent Benevolent Order of Elks, the Independent United Order of Mechanics, the Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds, the Lebanon Foresters, and the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (GUOOF).¹⁸ Memberships necessarily overlapped. Obituaries listed the highest offices the deceased held in each of the lodges to which he or she belonged, then specified the order in which those lodges were to march in the funeral procession.¹⁹ Island-specific friendly and benevolent societies, with primarily mutual aid and banking functions, made up an additional layer of associational life.²⁰

Fraternal lodges blanketed overseas West Indian communities, literally one atop the other: in 1916, in the tiny town of Guácimo, Costa Rica, the "Beacon Lodge" of the Independent United Order of Mechanics rented hall space to the Mosaic Templars, the Good Samaritans, and the Star of Bethlehem Lodge.²¹ Providing sickness, injury, and burial benefits; in some cases widows' pensions; and a host of informal support from job referrals to help hiding from the law,

the lodges cushioned the risks and the sorrows of peripatetic lives. Printed “Traveling Cards” or “Clearance Cards” ensured that lodge brothers and sisters would be recognized as such wherever they went.²² The promise of welcome was no mere formalism. Lodge meeting minutes from Limón from the second decade of the twentieth century record constant arrivals of new brothers presenting credentials from Panamanian lodges.²³ Over the decades, emigrating Barbadian members of Court Western Star of the Ancient Order of Foresters (AOF)—which had been founded in 1846 and included men and women of color from 1847 onward—set up AOF lodges in St. Vincent, the United States, British Guiana, Grenada, St. Lucia, Panama, and British Honduras.²⁴ The British West Indian migrants who moved north to Harlem from Panama or from the islands in the interwar years joined African American fraternal orders, but they also established U.S. branches of orders that had been exclusively British and British Caribbean until then, including the Ancient Order of Shepherds and the Mechanics. Men who had joined the Lebanon Foresters in Panama found themselves obliged to found a new incarnation of that body in New York after all-white local chapters refused to recognize black immigrants as lodge brothers.²⁵

If the lodges most immediately linked members to other black lodges within the West Indian migratory sphere, they also tied members to a broader African American civic world. These were transnational voluntary associations, and the flow of paperwork they entailed meant no one could forget it. In the second decade of the twentieth century, the Limón Lodge of the GUOOF received quarterly circulars from the Sub-Committee of Management in Philadelphia and filled out annual reports to send to the same. The circulars included the names and addresses of lodge officers from Thelma, North Carolina, to Ponce, Puerto Rico.²⁶ The “Ritual of the Juvenile Society of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows” followed in Port Limón had been “Prepared by Sister Tillie M. Brooks, of Household of Ruth No. 48, Paducah, Ky., and Sister Rhoda A. Moore, of the Household of Ruth No. 197, Houston, Tex.”; the juvenile society’s founding, readers of the printed ritual learned on page 15, had been proposed by the Grand Household in St. Louis, reaffirmed by the Grand Household in Chicago, and approved by the General Meeting of the Order at Indianapolis.²⁷ This expansive geography of fraternal action stretched lodge members’ sphere of belonging beyond their own potential destinations to encompass the New World African Diaspora more broadly.

Enterprises from life insurance to evangelical missions followed the fraternal template in the British West Indian diaspora. For instance, the Salvation

Army, founded in London in 1878, began missionary work in the West Indies in 1892. By 1912 it had twenty-nine local “Corps and Outposts,” carrying out spiritual “rescue missions” and social work in Jamaica, Panama, Costa Rica, British Honduras, Barbados, Trinidad, British Guiana, and the Leeward Islands.²⁸ This evangelical mission functioned much like the fraternal lodges described above, speeding the flow of information within the migratory system through interpersonal networks and publications, creating ready-made communities for incoming immigrants, and innovating social services.²⁹ The Salvation Army’s regional newspaper, the *West Indies War Cry*, began publication in Kingston in 1905 and was sold by “boomers” on street corners and in ports across the Caribbean. By 1913, the paper had a monthly circulation of 10,000.³⁰ Readers used the *War Cry* to reach across the political boundaries their own lives crossed so routinely. The “Enquiry Department” published notes like the following, from 1906: “News Wanted of Marcus Solomon Samson, native of Suriname, Dutch Guiana, who about twenty years ago left there for Brazil, Panama, or Colón. Age about 60. Any information will be thankfully received by his daughter.”³¹

It is not coincidental that the *War Cry* sold best in the same places where Garvey’s UNIA was most popular. Both the Salvation Army and the UNIA benefited from the heyday of Christian civic enthusiasm and “joining” that swept the British West Indian diaspora as it did North America.³² Migrants used the UNIA and the Salvation Army, as they did the far more numerous fraternal societies, to cushion the risks and loneliness of an economic system built on extreme mobility. Remittances from Panama fueled an explosion of friendly societies in Barbados during canal construction; migrants returning to the Leeward Islands from Central America and the United States led the burgeoning friendly society movement there in the same years.³³ The lodges, the friendly societies, the UNIA, and the Salvation Army each linked members to broader circum-Caribbean or transatlantic social movements that promised collective uplift through clean living, Christian prayer, and brotherly love.

The enthusiasm for communal uplift through civic participation spawned another set of transatlantic associations in the interwar period, as enterprising young men founded “scout” troops across the western Caribbean. A generation after preachers William and Catherine Booth had founded the Salvation Army to transform London’s slum dwellers into stalwart Christian soldiers, Robert Baden-Powell, a former British regimental officer, decided to renew the vigor of the empire by providing a quasi-military outdoor experience for England’s youth. His foundational essay, *Scouting for Boys*, was published in 1908. By 1909

there were more than 130,000 “Baden-Powell boy scouts” enrolled in troops in Great Britain, and affiliated troops were being founded rapidly across the British Empire. Soon other international movements created youth brigades with similar aims and activities. Youth scouting found eager adherents in Colón, Bocas del Toro, and Port Limón, destinations of the first generation of British West Indian emigrants and places that, by the post-World War I years, had sizable numbers of locally born youths. Repeatedly, we find boys’ groups founded by returning veterans of the British West Indies Regiment (BWIR), which had served in Europe, Egypt, and East Africa during World War I.

Black men had demanded the right to serve in a spirit of proud imperial patriotism.³⁴ Volunteers came from overseas West Indian communities as well as the islands. An open letter to “His Majesty’s Recruiting Agent for the Republic of Panama” in the *Central America Express* in 1917 applauded the “rush to the colors” in Panama and Colón and noted that some eager volunteers from Bocas del Toro had gone so far as to pay their own way to Jamaica in order to enlist. “As Britishers we demand our share of the privilege of having you here in your official capacity.”³⁵ In the end the regiment’s volunteers totaled more than 15,000 men, including more than 2,000 from Panama alone.³⁶ Those who survived returned home deeply disillusioned by the open racism and discriminatory treatment they had endured. After BWIR troops rioted in Italy in 1918, colonial authorities feared violent uprisings would accompany their return to the Caribbean. In fact, returnees did lead violent protests in British Honduras and fueled a strike by longshoremen in Trinidad.³⁷ Ultimately, though, few veterans led riots back home. Yet the war had changed all. New loyalties had been forged, new strategies learned, new possibilities revealed. In the western Caribbean, at least, wartime experiences seem to have fed renewed community activism with a view to the future of “the race.”

In 1920, David Watson founded the Colón Boys Institute. A “native of Jamaica, and ex-corporal in the British West India Regiment,” Watson, “while a soldier at the front . . . formed his idea to help the unfortunate youths of the city of Colón, should he return.”³⁸ That same year, the “West Indian News” page of the *Panama Star and Herald* announced the founding of a “Boys’ Brigade . . . under the auspices of Grace Church, Methodist Episcopal, at Guachipali. The Staff of officers in command consists of ex-soldiers of the Ninth Battalion, West Indian Regiment. . . . The primary object of the brigade is to assist in the physical and moral training of our boys and girls and keep them out of mischief.”³⁹ Significantly, and perhaps not coincidentally, it was this very same unit, the Ninth Battalion, that had rioted in Italy during the war. In the weeks after

the riot, fifty to sixty sergeants from the Ninth Battalion formed a “Caribbean League,” arguing that the black man “should have freedom to govern himself in the West Indies” and that “force must be used, and if necessary bloodshed to obtain that object.”⁴⁰

Some veterans seem to have brought this same vision to their work as scout leaders. Like their counterparts elsewhere in the region, in 1922 former BWIR servicemen in Bocas del Toro organized a scout troop, this one loosely tied to the UNIA. As they led the boys in drills with wooden rifles, the scout leaders reputedly declared that they were training to seize control from “the white people.” In response, the Panamanian authorities arrested twenty-seven men, who were then blacklisted by the United Fruit Company, the region’s chief employer.⁴¹ Why such fear over a group of boys with sticks? The authorities knew imperial experience, race consciousness, and local grievance to be an explosive mix. Three years earlier in Bocas, labor leaders had summoned United Fruit workers to a violent strike precisely by recalling the rhetoric of rights that had accompanied BWIR recruiting. “Do you remember what the white man told us during the war that we were fighting for democracy, equality and therefore to become free subjects? . . . If we could have given a good account of ourselves in the bloody war, why not here too. Why must we be afraid of the few white parasites around here, we will teach them a lesson for life.”⁴² In arresting scout leaders in 1922, bosses may have been overreacting to a mocking joke. Or the scout leaders may indeed have been planning revolution. They certainly were not alone in pairing civic activism and racial allegiance. In the interwar years, West Indian community leaders of diverse class positions and ideologies came to a common conclusion: only by putting race first could people of African descent attain collective uplift in a modern, racist world.

Mestizo Nationalism, Antiblack Legislation, and the Impact of Returnees

Across Latin America in the 1920s and 1930s, faith in scientific racism was ceding to a new nationalism that celebrated *mestizaje*—racial and cultural mixing—in each nation’s distant past.⁴³ But when global market crises devastated the export-based economies of the Caribbean basin, black immigrants and their children became nationalist politicians’ favorite scapegoat. Left- as well as right-wing leaders embraced xenophobia even as they insisted their opposition to black—and only black—immigration was based on culture, and thus not racist.⁴⁴ In 1927, a typical editorial asked, “Is Cuba Being Africanized?”

“The term *Africanization* is used, as all of the Cuban authors who have turned their attention to our ethnic problems have used it, in the sense of undesirable immigration, not because it is African, but rather because it is less civilized, weaker, and more easily exploited by foreign capitalism, more easily enslaved by it.”⁴⁵

Nationalist intellectuals’ diagnoses were strikingly similar across the region. A pamphlet titled *The Antillean Menace in Central America (Defending the Race)* went through multiple printings in Panama in the early 1920s.⁴⁶ An influential newspaper there wrote in 1924, “The *antillanos* [Afro-Caribbeans] who abound in our terminal cities lower our standards of living and with their alien customs imprint upon Panama, Colón, and Bocas de Toro the appearance of African cities; they constitute one of the most serious problems that this country must solve.”⁴⁷ Meanwhile in Costa Rica, “the black race” found itself lumped together with the “vice-ridden Chinese” in official rhetoric and immigration law alike for the first time.⁴⁸ In a 1934 interview on the occasion of El Día de la Raza (Columbus Day; literally, “The Day of the Race”), Limón’s school superintendent accused Costa Rican celebrants of hypocrisy. “Have we indeed conserved the purity of the Spanish race?” he asked. “Haven’t we instead darkened it a bit, or given it a yellowish tint?” He called for “the imposition of drastic measures which will impede the crossing of our pure Spanish blood with other races, which we consider inferior, so that the gentility and grace of our ancestors may be reborn and we can take pleasure in celebrating with real pride the festival of the race.”⁴⁹ “Drastic measures” were in fact being implemented even as he spoke. The same issue of the newspaper announced the expulsion of undocumented Chinese residents. Two months later, Costa Rica’s congress passed a law forbidding the employment of “colored” workers on the United Fruit Company’s new Pacific coast plantations, devastating the country’s long-settled British West Indian community, who with their seniority and expertise had dominated skilled employment in United Fruit’s operations on the Caribbean coast.⁵⁰

Doors slammed shut across the region in the 1920s and 1930s. The United States, which had become the single most important destination for West Indian migrants in the postwar years, passed race-based restrictions in 1924 that cut annual black immigration by 95 percent in a single year.⁵¹ Panamanian legislators incrementally restricted access to employment and citizenship by “foreign” blacks in 1926, 1928, and 1941.⁵² Honduras limited foreign black employment in 1923 and 1926 and entry in 1929 and 1934; Venezuela prohibited black immigration in 1929; and the Dominican Republic limited

seasonal migration by British West Indian workers in the same year.⁵³ (Eight years later, the regionwide pattern of official scapegoating of black migrants reached a grotesque extreme with the massacre of some 15,000 ethnic Haitians by Dominican troops.)⁵⁴ More than 100,000 British West Indian and Haitian migrants had flocked to Cuba during the immediate postwar sugar boom, but as exports collapsed, scores of thousands of Haitians were deported between 1933 and 1939, while hunger and lack of work pushed tens of thousands of British West Indians out, in some cases back to islands where their parents or grandparents had been born but which they themselves had never known.⁵⁵

With each large-scale wave of returnees, the islands witnessed new labor activism and political agitation by their disenfranchised black majorities. This, in part, reflected the fact that hard times spurred both return migration and popular unrest. Economic crises hit hard across the region, given that island and rimland economies alike depended on the same export crops (prominently sugar, bananas, and cacao), the same sources of capital, and the same North Atlantic markets. Lean years triply impacted the sending societies. Island economies contracted, remittances dropped, and emigrants (or, in the dire years of the 1930s, the children and grandchildren of previous generations of emigrants) returned to join the ranks of the unemployed. But the link between the returnees' arrival and political and labor agitation seems to go beyond shared structural causes. Again and again, we find returnees playing leadership roles in island agitation. In a typical example among many, in 1918 a St. Kitts police inspector warned the colonial secretary that the leaders of that island's Universal Benevolent Association had apparently "associated in America with men of their own colour imbued [*sic*] with racial hatred of the white man and, perhaps also with extreme labour movement views of a physical force type."⁵⁶ The mix was unmistakable. Calls for black loyalty and white comeuppance rang out in every labor upheaval led by returnees in the interwar era.

A few examples must suffice to illustrate the trend.⁵⁷ In Barbados, British West India Regiment veteran Clennell Wickham edited the *Barbados Herald* from 1919 to 1930, providing the first sustained forum for working-class criticism of planter hegemony.⁵⁸ In Jamaica, where labor organizing surged in the 1920s and 1930s, the most prominent leaders, from Marcus Garvey to Alexander Bustamante, were veterans of the Caribbean migratory system. "The radical group of young, racially conscious, black labour leaders" of the Jamaica Workers and Tradesmen Union in 1936 included L. E. Barnett, who had become a UNIA and union leader in Costa Rica, and Hugh Buchanan, whose years in Cuba had brought him into contact with both Garveyite and Communist

organizing.⁵⁹ Other returnees preached an even more radical rejection of colonial rule, hailing Ras Tafari, who had become Haile Selassie on being crowned emperor of Ethiopia in 1928, as the divine “King of Kings” and rejecting the legitimacy of imperial authorities. Indeed, all three initiators of what would become known as Rastafari were former emigrants who returned to Kingston in the 1930s from Cuba, Costa Rica, and Panama.⁶⁰ Deprivation and hunger, together with the ever-more-explicit denunciations of the racist colonial order as the underlying problem, culminated at the end of the decade in a wave of “labour rebellions” across the British colonies. Returnees abounded among leaders and rank and file alike.⁶¹

In contrast to the labor activism and open insurgencies led by veterans of the British West Indian migratory sphere in the sending societies of the Greater Caribbean, their cousins, nieces, and nephews who remained in the receiving societies may at first glance appear to have been absent from the public stage in the 1930s. The West Indian communities of Panama, Costa Rica, and Cuba in the lean years of the 1920s and 1930s have been described as isolated, defensive, and dependent; yet I would suggest that this judgment rests on a falsely truncated view of those communities’ boundaries. Yes, times were hard and xenophobic slander was common. Demography and employment patterns, combined with cultural divides and racist suspicions, largely kept these first- and second-generation immigrants outside the expanding labor movement in each country.⁶² Yet such local isolation should not obscure the fact that the immigrants were connected, vitally so, to something much bigger. They were becoming “race enthusiasts”; they were speaking of, and speaking to, the “Negro World” the Atlantic system had wrought. To the extent that nations are imagined communities, these West Indian emigrants were creating a new nation.⁶³

Racial Uplift and the Overseas

British West Indian Press

Sidney Young founded the *Panama Tribune* in 1928 in the wake of a new constitutional amendment withholding citizenship from locally born West Indians until their twenty-first birthday. Young and others had mobilized unsuccessfully against the proposed amendment. The *Tribune* was Young’s vehicle to carry on the same battle by other means and to strengthen the West Indian community through civic participation and racial solidarity. Its masthead drawing was a radiant book with the inscription, “Let the people have light and they shall find

their way.” Young’s highest praise was reserved for “race enthusiasts”—men and women who chose to speak to and for the Negro race.⁶⁴

This is the creed of the West Indian, to be exacting and hard with his own people and to be as meek as the lowly worm in his dealings with others of a different race and color, particularly those who do not give as much as the well known tinker’s damn about him. . . . We need a new sort of education. Unfortunately we have never developed either a fierce spirit of nationalism or a deep pride of race. . . . What we need, friends and countrymen, is a little more holding together, a little more toughness where other people are concerned and a little more softness, understanding and cooperation where we ourselves are concerned.⁶⁵

The *Panama Tribune* would become an enduring community institution, in large part because Young and George Westerman, his protégé and the paper’s onetime sports writer, were extraordinary leaders.⁶⁶ Yet Young’s articulation of the crises facing the West Indian diaspora in the 1930s was hardly unique. Up the coast in Costa Rica, British West Indian–run newspapers like the *Limón Searchlight* offered similar diagnoses and remedies. Like Young, the editors of the *Searchlight* insisted “cooperation” was the first step toward surviving antiblack racism.

In these Latin countries there is the tendency among the more ignorant, the unwashed to feel that because one is a Jamaican he is inferior to him; the most abject depraved wretch will be ignorant enough to feel that he is superior to you because you happen to be a Jamaican, be your intellectual abilities and moral standing in the Community ever so much appreciated by the best blood of the country. It is now necessary therefore that we ought to cooperate and put away trivial objections to the contrary, and strive to support anything that will tend towards the improvement of the Negro Race.⁶⁷

A similar letter published in the *Searchlight* in 1931 under the heading, “Deplores Lack of Racial Sentiment,” called for unity in the face of hostility. “One of our black men,” a public employee, had called a Jamaican teen “Nigger Girl.” “Well now, if this is the attitude our black men hold toward their black girls, what can we expect our white brothers to hold for us? . . . We should protect our women, especially those who try to lead righteous lives.” The young woman in question, the writer explained, sang in the Anglican church choir and was a founding member of a local civic club.⁶⁸ “Therefore now is the time for us

to cultivate a better opinion of the race, and steer to national recognition and equal rights. Let us have a greater respect for our women, whether they be nearer white, or ebony black [they are all Negritos].”⁶⁹

In the midst of calls for color-blind racial solidarity, the phrase “especially those who try to lead righteous lives” should give us pause. It was not atypical. The West Indian businessmen who published these papers and the men and women of the black middle class who wrote for them often promoted criteria of respectability that highlighted their distance from those they sought to uplift. Elite West Indian authors, like the one quoted above, indignantly complained that “ignorant . . . unwashed” Latins denied them the public respect that their “intellectual abilities” and “moral standing” merited. They also employed the identical criteria—“intellectual abilities” and “moral standing”—to distinguish among black people. The same correspondent quoted above demanding “greater respect for our women” frequently castigated the locally born generation of “our Negro community” for their lack of ambition and disinterest in education. “These people are contented to remain a dark race all the days of their lives,” he sneered.⁷⁰

Class tensions were real, as were elite notions of culture that denigrated the African in Afro-Caribbean popular culture. Yet equally real was the call for pan-African unity as the best form of communal defense in a hostile age.

The Negro who does not desire a betterment of his condition is today a dead man—one who is but an obstacle in the path of progress. Allow me to ask this pertinent question. “Can we attain our ends without a united resistance against the forces that are keeping us down?” . . . Instead of limiting our efforts to our own island groups, let us cultivate the tendency to devise plans for the Universal Coloured Brotherhood. When we have developed ourselves to that stage where we can sincerely say “brother, I am from Demerara, and because you are my own, as you hail from Dominica, whatever hurts you hurts me also,” we will have entered a broader field where the opportunities for racial success will be unlimited.⁷¹

That success also depended on the appropriate union of male and female efforts. The *Tribune’s* editors hoped that “women of our community will avail themselves of the opportunity to contribute articles that will help to uplift their sisters and thereby uplift our race. For is not the mother the one in whose hand the prosperity and the future of our race depends, and on whose shoulders the future advancement lies?”⁷² A follow-up letter from a female correspondent underlined the Victorian morality of the message. “It is said a people cannot

rise higher than its women and so the responsibility hangs on us fellow West Indian women to raise the standard by aiming high and living clean lives. . . . God first, business next, pleasure last, we must succeed.”⁷³

This language of gendered virtue and racial solidarity, with its implicit disdain for the bawdier elements of lower-class culture, has far more in common with Baden-Powell’s mission of imperial renewal and with Latin American mestizo populism than with earlier expressions of African identities in the Caribbean. For centuries poor black Caribbeans had created and sustained cultural practices (in religion, song, dance, sport, speech, and collective action) whose signal elements and underlying aesthetics were manifestly African in origin.⁷⁴ Far from embracing these expressions of Africa in the Americas, the same community leaders and newspaper editors who praised Garveyism and denounced white racism disparaged or even attacked Revivalism, Pocomia, and other popular religions with African associations.⁷⁵ The black internationalism articulated by British West Indian migrants in the interwar years was not a revival of tradition but a particular vision of the future, developed in dialogue and in step with the other nationalisms that defined North Atlantic modernity.⁷⁶

Unlike many of its interlocutors, though, black internationalism could be amply inclusive. Perhaps reflecting the experiences of West Indian troops in British colonial domains in World War I, or perhaps reflecting the frequency with which Chinese and South Asian migration was restricted alongside black migration to circum-Caribbean destinations, some authors stretched the notion of racial solidarity to incorporate not only those of African origin but all “colored races.” In 1930, the British West Indian press in Port Limón reported frequently on Gandhi’s anticolonial struggle on the Indian subcontinent, reprinting sympathetic articles to demonstrate, the editors wrote, “how intrigues by religion, and other diplomatic propaganda, are brought to divide the solidarity of any subjected races.”⁷⁷ That same year the editors used the occasion of Empire Day to denounce the British government’s “indifference to these what she calls inferior races which in reality are only inferior in ‘opportunities.’ . . . For after all what is it worth to be a British subject in foreign parts, especially to the Negro, the Chinese, or Hindu? Nothing but indignities by depreciation and discrimination against in trade, in labour, in social equality.”⁷⁸

These were not radical activists speaking, but the most upright of businessmen. Ultimately, the print circuits of the western Caribbean reinforced antiracism and anti-imperialism as essential components of an expansive sense of Afro-Caribbean commonality shared across class lines. While this was most

explicit in the pages of the UNIA's *Negro World*, all the West Indian-run papers of the region contributed to the process. The *Panama Tribune* frequently criticized U.S. racism abroad, including atrocities committed by "Yankee Marines" against "the Haitian People," and, in 1929, denounced the violent arrests of editors of *Le Petit Impartial* in Port-au-Prince "for protesting against the vile policy and race prejudice of U.S. imperialism."⁷⁹ The editors insisted that the "inability of the American occupation to regard the Haitians in any other way except as 'niggers' is responsible for the recent outbreaks on the island." The English-language press in Port Limón reprinted these and similar articles from the *Panama Tribune* at length.⁸⁰ The *Tribune*, in turn, offered its readers a panoramic view of the African Diaspora by reproducing articles from black papers around the globe, including the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and *La Depeche Africaine* (identified for readers as "a Negro newspaper published in Paris").⁸¹

This was a world peopled by outsized heroes, from Marcus Garvey to Ras Tafari to boxer "Kid Chocolate, the Cuban 'buzz-saw,'" to the first "Bantu" to obtain a bachelor of divinity degree at London University.⁸² It was also a world in which allies were not always black. Thus the editors of the *Tribune* could identify Clarence Darrow simply as the "hero of the celebrated Sweet case." They apparently trusted *Tribune* readers in Panama to remember that Darrow, a white lawyer, had won acquittal in 1926 for Dr. Ossian Sweet, a black man charged with firing on a threatening white mob. On that occasion, Darrow had acclaimed the right of blacks to "fight even to the death for their home, for each other, for their people, for their race, for their rights."⁸³ Now the *Tribune* reprinted the text of a speech by Darrow under the headline "Nothing Matters but Color." "The tariff, the labor question, the power question, even religious liberty, is of no consequence compared with the question of the right of the colored man to have an equal opportunity in the world with the white."⁸⁴

Conclusion

Barbara J. Fields once wrote that while Euro-Americans invented the fiction that defined Afro-Americans as a race, "Afro-Americans invented themselves, not as a race, but as a nation. They were not troubled, as modern scholars often are, by the use of racial vocabulary to express their sense of nationality."⁸⁵ In the interwar Caribbean, West Indian migrants increasingly used racial vocabulary to capture a sense of belonging that went beyond the borders of any single nation. As they traveled from the commissaries of the Canal Zone

to the army tents of northern Africa, as they read dispatches from Paris and Ethiopia and Bridgetown and Detroit mixed among their local news, they recognized a commonality of experience in the present even more than a unity of origins in the past. Like other working- and middle-class men and women of the turn-of-the-century Atlantic world, British West Indian emigrants sought self-improvement and collective betterment through fraternal “combination” and Christian faith. Like others, they founded lodges and chapters, and missions and publications, and they sought to organize and guide a young generation they perceived as menaced by the deceptive pleasures of modern life. But there are key particularities here. Buying burial insurance and paying lodge dues, and singing “Onward Christian Soldiers” in Salvation Army halls and at UNIA assemblies, British West Indian emigrants partook of a civic world that had international membership and universal moral claims—and a pervasively black public face.

Global commodity crises in the 1920s made anti-immigrant xenophobia an irresistible alibi for Hispanic nationalist politicians, and a wave of immigration restrictions truncated the travels on which the West Indian migratory sphere depended. Antiblack racism rang out in politicians’ oratory and scraped the soul in a thousand daily insults. Given the transatlantic frame of reference West Indian migrants had acquired, they had a panoramic vision of *who* was under attack: the members of the Negro Race, wherever they lived, whatever their citizenship or allegiance, whatever their claims to “intellectual abilities” and “moral standing,” and whatever the shade of their skin. If we think of ideology as “the descriptive vocabulary of day-to-day existence, through which people make rough sense of the social reality that they live and create from day to day,”⁸⁶ we see clearly why black internationalist ideology achieved such wide currency throughout the British Caribbean in these years. It expressed a reality lived daily not only by well-known figures like Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, or C. L. R. James, but by their neighbors and classmates and bunkmates and kin: anonymous, indispensable interlocutors of the thinkers whose words we read to this day.

Recognizing the vast participation in the making of their black internationalist vision requires acknowledging the synergy between early-twentieth-century moral reform movements and voluntary associations, often of British origin, and the emerging “race consciousness” that insisted “nothing matters but color.” The former have generally been seen as British imperial impositions—and, as such, the essence of accommodation—while the latter has been seen as the vanguard of post-World War II anticolonialism and, as such,

the essence of radical resistance.⁸⁷ Yet for “race enthusiasts” like Sidney Young, or for the Ninth Battalion veterans who drilled Boy Scouts week after week, or for the loyal matrons of the Household of Ruth, collective civic engagement and political and economic empowerment, far from being mutually exclusive, constituted a single, indivisible mission.

NOTES

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1. See Monestel, “El calypso en Costa Rica,” and Hutton, “Cuban Influence on Popular Jamaican Music.”

2. Senior, “Colón People,” 62.

3. On literacy, see James, “Explaining Afro-Caribbean Social Mobility”; Putnam, *Company They Kept*, 170; Murphy, *Dominican Sugar Plantations*, 43; and McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens.”

4. Senior, “Colón People,” 70 n. 47. Panama was a province of Colombia at the time.

5. Eloquent examples are provided by the Dowridge-Challenor correspondence excerpted in Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations*, chap. 2.

6. Conniff, *Black Labor*, 47; Putnam, *Company They Kept*, 64–75; McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens,” 4–5; Cuba, Dirección General del Censo, *Informe general del censo de 1943*, 888–89; Foner, “Introduction”; James, *Holding aloft the Banner*, 12.

7. James, “Explaining Afro-Caribbean Social Mobility,” 220; James, *Holding aloft the Banner*, 357. The clearest regionwide accounts of the timing and extent of the migratory movements that created overseas British West Indian communities are Thomas-Hope, “Establishment of a Migration Tradition,” 66–81; Marshall, “History of West Indian Migrations”; and Richardson, “Caribbean Migrations.”

8. James, *Holding aloft the Banner*, esp. 50–100.

9. Cf. “Boys Brigade Organized,” *Panama Star and Herald*, December 3, 1920, 3.

10. Elkins, *Black Power in the Caribbean*, 29–45; United Fruit correspondence, Costa Rica Division, 1919, reproduced in Hill, *Marcus Garvey*, vols. 11 and 12.

11. Chevannes, *Rastafari*, 119–44.

12. Marshall, “Nothing in My Hands,” 22–23.

13. “Life in Jamaica in the Early Twentieth Century,” volume: St. James, Respondent:

64StjMb, 3–4. Local chapters of the UNIA remained active in Costa Rica and Panama long after the movement had collapsed elsewhere. Indeed the “Black Star Line” UNIA meetinghouse in Port Limón was central to Afro–Costa Rican community life there through the 1970s. See Capelli, “Promised Ship.”

14. Consider the example of Victor Cohen, who left Jamaica to work in Costa Rica, Bocas del Toro (where he first encountered Garveyism), Cuba, and eventually New York, where he would become associate editor of *African Opinion* magazine. See Lewis, *Marcus Garvey*, 113.

15. Martin, *Race First*, 16; James, *Holding aloft the Banner*, 196–97, 366; Lewis, *Marcus Garvey*, 97–123. A rich range of primary sources on Garvey and the UNIA in Central America and the Caribbean will soon become available in *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, edited by Robert A. Hill, vols. 11–12, forthcoming.

16. See Smith, “John E. Bush.”

17. See *Times* (Limón, Costa Rica), June 2, 1911.

18. *Panama Star and Herald*, November 28–December 31, 1920.

19. E.g., “Old Timer’s Lamented Death,” *Panama Tribune*, November 18, 1928, 5. Copies of the *Tribune* were consulted in the Museo Afroantillano in Panama City.

20. Cf. Conniff, *Black Labor*, 70–71; Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations*, 56–74; Westerman, *Los inmigrantes antillanos*, 113–15; Richardson, *Panama Money*, 223–28; Duncan, “El negro antillano”; and Fletcher, “Friendly Societies.”

21. *Costa Rica District No. 1, I. U. O. of Mechanics* (Kingston, Jamaica: Educational Supply Company Printers, n.d.), 13–14, Limón Lodge materials, personal collection of Miguel Guzmán Stein, Cartago, Costa Rica (hereafter PCMGS).

22. Clearance card, Costa Rica District No. 1, Independent United Order of Mechanics, PCMGS.

23. See, for instance, bound minutes, Limón Lodge 16 (9180) G.U.O. of O.F., April 23, 1910, through March 6, 1912, PCMGS.

24. *125th Anniversary of the Ancient Order of Foresters, Caribbean and Western Hemisphere, Souvenir Brochure* (n.p., 1971), Barbados Department of Archives, Pamphlet A 806. Apparently one year after the lodge was founded, many of its white elite members left in a dispute over whether persons of other classes and colors would be admitted; they set up an all-white lodge instead. See “Origins of A.O.F. in W.I.,” by Sister Enid Harris, in *ibid.*

25. Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations*, 72.

26. *Fourth Quarterly Circular, 1915 . . . G.U.O. of O.F., Phila., PA*, 10, PCMGS (printed book, title page lost).

27. *Ritual of the Juvenile Society of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows . . . Prepared by Sister Tillie M. Brooks, of Household of Ruth No. 48, Paducah, Ky., and Sister Rhoda A. Moore, of the Household of Ruth No. 197, Houston, Tex.* (Philadelphia, 1912), 15, PCMGS.

28. “West Indian Progress,” *All The World*, May 1912, 243.

29. These functions are well-illustrated in the pages of the *West Indies War Cry*, a complete run of which is held in the internal archive of the Salvation Army regional headquarters in Kingston, Jamaica.

30. Jamaica, *Blue Book*, 6V.

31. *War Cry*, April 1906, 4. See, similarly, *War Cry*, September 1906, 3.

32. This was the heyday of joining in the United States as well, in a pattern shared across the stark divides of ethnicity, class, and region that fractured the nation. See, for instance, Beito, "To Advance the 'Practice of Thrift And Economy,'" and Gamm and Putnam, "Growth of Voluntary Associations."

33. Richardson, *Panama Money*, 205–12; Richards, "Friendly Societies."

34. The region's black-owned newspapers, in particular T. A. Marryshow's *West Indian*, advocated black military service as a strategic move toward greater political rights. See Howe, *Race, War, and Nationalism*, 16–40, and Phillips, "'Go Ahead, England; Barbados Is Behind You.'"

35. "An Open Letter to Mr. Hitchens," *Central American Express* (Bocas del Toro), June 23, 1917, 4, Hermeroteca, Biblioteca Central Simón Bolívar, Universidad de Panamá, microfilm roll 13. The authors wondered darkly whether "influential pressure [was] being exerted" to prevent direct recruitment in Bocas, presumably by United Fruit Company officials anxious to maintain their workforce.

36. Howe, *Race, War, and Nationalism*; James, *Holding aloft the Banner*, 52–62; Conniff, *Black Labor*, 68.

37. James, *Holding aloft the Banner*, 62–69; Elkins, *Black Power in the Caribbean*, 5–15, 64–76; Bolland, *Politics of Labour*, 216–20.

38. "Colón Boys Institutes Tops All Community Effort," *Panama Tribune*, December 2, 1928, 13.

39. "Boys' Brigade Organized," *Panama Star and Herald*, December 3, 1920, 3. The Boys' Brigade movement, like its more famous rival, Baden-Powell's Boy Scout movement, had been founded in England at the start of the century. See Rosenthal, *Character Factory*.

40. Elkins, *Black Power in the Caribbean*, 9. Richardson quotes a British observer who reported that "most of the men" of the Ninth Battalion had come from Panama; see *Panama Money*, 217.

41. Harpelle, *West Indians of Costa Rica*, 61.

42. Anonymous report from company informer to United Fruit Company manager H. S. Blair, April 16, 1920, reproduced in Bourgeois, "One Hundred Years" (quotation on 135).

43. Graham, *Idea of Race in Latin America*; Stepan, *Hour of Eugenics*.

44. Chomsky, "West Indian Workers" and "'Barbados or Canada?';" Tinker Salas, "Relaciones de poder y raza"; de la Fuente, *Nation for All*, 46–50.

45. Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, "¿Se está Cuba africanizando?," *Carteles* 10, no. 48 (November 27, 1927): 27, cited in Chomsky, "'Barbados or Canada?," 458–59. For similar antiblack declarations by Costa Rican anti-imperialists, see Chomsky, "West Indian Workers."

46. Olmedo Alfaro, "El peligro antillano en la América Central (La Defensa de la Raza)" (1925), quoted in Westerman, *Los inmigrantes antillanos*, 96–97 (author's translation). For a subtle discussion of Panamanian nationalism in this era, see Szok, *La última gaviota*.

47. *Gráfico* (semanario de Panamá), August 30, 1924, quoted in Westerman, *Los inmigrantes antillanos*, 96 (author's translation).

48. On the history of anti-immigrant thought in Costa Rica, including the long tradition of anti-Chinese discrimination, see Quirós, “Inmigración e identidad nacional.” On antiblack policies in the 1930s, see Chomsky, “West Indian Workers”; Harpelle, “Racism and Nationalism” and *West Indians of Costa Rica*; and Putnam, *Company They Kept*, 71–75, 165–72.

49. *La Voz del Atlántico* (Limón, Costa Rica), October 13, 1934 (author’s translation).

50. Harpelle, “Racism and Nationalism,” 29–51; Chomsky, *West Indian Workers*, 235–53.

51. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*; King, *Making Americans*.

52. Davis, “West Indian Workers on the Panama Canal,” 141–42; Newton, *Silver Men*, 162–63; Conniff, *Black Labor*, 65–66, 80–84, 98–106, 127–30. The retroactive denationalization was reversed in 1945, but exclusions in employment and access to public education persisted. See Westerman, *Los inmigrantes antillanos*, 95–101.

53. Euraque, “Banana Enclave,” esp. 152; Proudfoot, *Population Movements*, 15; Tinker Salas, “Relaciones de poder y raza,” 95–97; Richardson, “Caribbean Migrations,” 211–12, 215; del Castillo, “La inmigración de braceros,” 49–54.

54. Turits, “World Destroyed.”

55. De la Fuente, *Nation for All*, 104–5, 194–98.

56. Quoted in Richards, “Friendly Societies,” 142.

57. The best overall accounts of this era are Bolland, *Politics of Labour*, 155–211, and *On the March*.

58. Beckles, *History of Barbados*, 155; Howe, *Race, War, and Nationalism*, 191.

59. Richards, “Race, Class, and Labour Politics,” 358; Post, *Arise Ye Starvelings*, esp. 5, 242.

60. Post, *Arise Ye Starvelings*, 159–95. On the influence of black newspapers from abroad, in particular the *Pittsburgh Courier*, on the developing Rastafarian philosophy in the 1930s, see Chevannes, *Rastafari*, 133–36. Coverage of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia by black-run newspapers in the islands and rimlands alike also contributed importantly to radicalizing black internationalism in this era. See Yelvington, “War in Ethiopia and Trinidad.”

61. Think, for instance, of Charles Payne, the Trinidad-born child of Barbadian emigrants, whose speeches and eventual deportation sparked the 1937 riots in Barbados. See Beckles, *History of Barbados*, 154–69, and Richardson, *Panama Money*, 239–47.

62. There were exceptions, and Communist labor leaders in particular were consistently antiracist and pro-inclusion in this era. See Carr, “Identity, Class, and Nation”; Chomsky, “West Indian Workers,” 28–31, 35–36; and Euraque, “Banana Enclave,” 157.

63. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

64. See, for instance, “Happenings in the Zone Towns,” *Panama Tribune*, November 11, 1928, 12.

65. “Sid Says,” *Panama Tribune*, January 20, 1929, 8.

66. Westerman’s collected papers today form part of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library. On Young and the *Tribune*, see Westerman, *Los inmigrantes antillanos*, 123–28, and Conniff, *Black Labor*, 71–72, 80–81.

67. “Cooperate,” *Searchlight* (Limón, Costa Rica), January 4, 1930, 2.

68. See Putnam, *Company They Kept*, 169–70.

69. Dolores Joseph, "Deploras Lack of Racial Sentiment," *Searchlight* (Limón, Costa Rica), June 13, 1931 (brackets and bracketed material in original).
70. Dolores Joseph, letter to editor, *Searchlight* (Limón, Costa Rica), June 14, 1930.
71. C. G. Whittingham, "Perils That Confront Our Race," *Panama Tribune*, January 13, 1929, 8.
72. "Hope for a Woman's Page," *Panama Tribune*, December 9, 1928, 16.
73. "A Word to My People," *Panama Tribune*, January 6, 1929, 16.
74. The literature on African culture and identity in the Caribbean is, of course, vast. A helpful point of entry is Bolland, "Creolization and Creole Societies." An interpretive synthesis is Burton, *Afro-Creole*. The risk of describing pan-Africanism as the fruit of a long tradition of Afro-Caribbean "resistance" to white hegemony is that such a perspective can obscure just how *modern* pan-Africanism was. On the fallacy of ascribing Afro-Caribbean cultural creations to the realm of the "traditional" rather than the realm of "modernity," see Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*.
75. Harpelle, "Ethnicity, Religion, and Repression"; Putnam, *Company They Kept*, 165–72; Bryce-Laporte, "Crisis, Contraculture, and Religion." The Afro-Christian religion known in Jamaica as Pocomania or *pukumina* was known in Limón as Pocomia; see, for instance, Duncan, "Pocomia Rebellion."
76. The early twentieth century has been described as the heyday of "integral nationalism," in which racial/ethnic/language criteria were promoted to strengthen national ties and demote the importance of religion and class. See Alter, *Nationalism*, and Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*. Baden-Powell, writing about the British Empire, used rhetoric almost identical to the *Tribune* editors': "If our empire is to stand Britain cannot be divided against itself. . . . Remember that whether rich or poor, from castle or from slum, you are all Britons in the first place. . . . If you are divided amongst yourselves then you are doing harm to your country. You must sink your differences" (*Scouting for Boys*, 278). See discussion in Pryke, "Popularity of Nationalism," 317.
77. *Searchlight* (Limón, Costa Rica), August 23, 1930, 1.
78. *Searchlight* (Limón, Costa Rica), May 31, 1930. On the other hand, British West Indian writers could be as negative about Chinese immigrants as the societies around them. When a newspaper in Costa Rica's highland capital published an antiblack caricature, the *Searchlight's* editors held it up as evidence of how right Garvey was in promoting a "spirit of clannishness and adhesion to the cause of Africa for Africans. . . . We could more understand the cartoonist if he had caught the Chinaman or the habitual drunkard as the subject of his theme, but no, the Negro is unprotected, so anything can be done with him" (*Searchlight* [Limón, Costa Rica], January 18, 1930).
79. "U.S. Charged with Atrocities in Haiti," *Panama Tribune*, February 3, 1929, 3.
80. *Searchlight* (Limón, Costa Rica), May 3, 1930.
81. "Garveyites Warn Editor of Times," *Panama Tribune*, November 18, 1928, 10; "French Officers Back Up Negro Colleague," *Panama Tribune*, December 2, 1928, 4.
82. "Oh for a leader!," *Panama Tribune*, November 18, 1928, 1; "New Colored Champion Looms," *Panama Tribune*, December 16, 1928, 6; "Bantu Wins Difficult Degree," *Panama Tribune*, November 11, 1928, 14.
83. The passage is from Darrow's closing arguments in Sweet's trial. See Weinberg, *Attorney for the Damned*, 248.

84. "Nothing Matters but Color," *Panama Tribune*, December 2, 1928, 8.

85. Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology," 115.

86. *Ibid.*, 110.

87. But see the nuanced analyses of fraternal and voluntary associations in Downes, "Freemasonry in Barbados" and "Sailing from Colonial into National Waters."

Providential Design

American Negroes and Garveyism in South Africa

ROBERT VINSON

The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA) was the largest and most widespread black movement ever. At its height in the early 1920s, the UNIA had an estimated 2 million members and sympathizers and more than 1,000 chapters in forty-three countries and territories. Founded and led by the Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey, the New York-based UNIA's meteoric rise resulted from an agenda that included shipping lines, corporations, and universities; a Liberian colonization scheme; a resolute desire to reconstitute African independence; and a fierce racial pride. Outside North America and the Caribbean, these aims and ideals—generically called Garveyism—had their greatest impact in South Africa, as reflected in that country's eight official and numerous unofficial UNIA chapters. Garveyism, furthermore, pervaded black South African political, religious, educational, and socioeconomic movements throughout the 1920s and 1930s.¹

In this essay I make three arguments. First, Garveyism in South Africa was related to notions of "Providential Design" and modernity, which were central to the racial interface between black South Africans and "American Negroes," a category that encompassed black West Indians as well as African Americans. Second, an international black sailing community played a crucial role in transmitting Garveyism from the Americas into South African political culture. Third, in South Africa, as elsewhere in the black world, religion was an important aspect of Garveyism.

The conclusions here offered contrast sharply with interpretations that confine the UNIA to South Africa's national boundaries, only to assert in the end that Garveyism was a "rather remote model" in that country's black freedom struggle.² Far from being peripheral, I argue, Garveyism was a central

aspect of black South Africa's political culture in the interwar years. Besides charting a transnational dimension of the black South African experience in the twentieth century, I also seek to call attention to the relative neglect of Africa and Africans in African Diaspora studies. In short, I make the case for a "homeland and diaspora" model that bridges the study of Africa and the African Diaspora.³

Segregation, Black Modernity, and Providential Design: The Making of a Transnational Relationship

Britain's conquest of various independent African states in the nineteenth century, along with its war against the Afrikaner Republics between 1899 and 1902, culminated in the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The Union of South Africa was part and parcel of a crystallization of segregation, in both thought and legislation, into a race-based political and socioeconomic program that would spur rapid industrial growth. The discovery in the late nineteenth century of gold and diamonds made South Africa the world's largest producer of both commodities, setting the stage for its transformation from a rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrializing one that relied on cheap African labor. Ultimately, segregation aimed to make the agricultural self-sufficiency of many Africans virtually impossible, thus compelling them to sell their labor to white-controlled mines, farms, and industry.⁴

As official government policy, South African segregation was implemented through a coordinated set of racially discriminatory legislation, the most significant of which included the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923. The Natives Land Act rendered millions of Africans landless, forcing them to sell their labor cheaply to white-owned mines, farms, and other industries. The architects of South African segregation were hardly bashful about their objectives. Jan Hofmeyr, one of the most prominent among them, stated, "It is inconceivable that the white man should be able completely to dispense with the black man's labor on his farms, in his mines, in his factories; it is just as inconceivable that there should be set aside for the black man's occupation land sufficient to provide for all his needs independent of the white man's wages."⁵ The Natives (Urban Areas) Act was the urban equivalent of the Natives Land Act. The Urban Areas Act undergirded a policy that sharply controlled and restricted the movement of Africans from country to town, allowing them into the urban centers only insofar as their labor was necessary to "minister to the white man's needs." Africans were also denied the right to

vote, were condemned to the lowest-paying jobs by “color-bar” legislation, and had little judicial recourse against their systematic subordination.

The rise of segregation in South Africa paralleled the emergence of Jim Crow in the United States, and there was a direct relationship between the two systems of racial oppression. In this context Garveyism arrived and flourished in South Africa. Indeed, the black South African encounter with Garveyism merely continued, and deepened, a decades-long transatlantic relationship. Since the late nineteenth century, at least, black South Africans had seen African Americans as quintessential modern black people and as models. African Americans, for their part, engaged black South Africa as part of Providential Design, a divinely ordained mission to forge a decolonized “Africa for Africans.” This transnational relationship, which became particularly close during the period of Garveyism, challenged an international color line that denied both groups full citizenship rights in their respective societies and also manifested itself in European colonialism of Africa.

The African American presence in southern Africa began as early as the 1780s, with a trickle of sailors, traders, and adventurers.⁶ In 1890 the Virginia Jubilee Singers, an African American theatrical troupe, began a five-year tour of South Africa. This launched a period of intense black South African admiration for African Americans that laid the groundwork for South African Garveyism and a wide array of other transatlantic institutional and personal linkages. Orpheus McAdoo, the leader of the college-educated Virginia Jubilee Singers, had been born into slavery. He often opened performances with a Booker T. Washington–esque “Up from Slavery” recitation of African American history and culture, beginning with the degradation of slavery and ending with an impressive catalog of achievements during the first generation of freedom. Black South African journalist Josiah Semouse typified the rapturous African reaction to the Jubilee Singers: “Hear! Today they have their own schools . . . and also universities. They are run by them without the help of the whites. They have magistrates, judges, lawyers, bishops, ministers, and evangelists, and school masters. Some have learned a craft such as building, etc. When will the day come when the African people will be like the Americans? When will they stop being slaves and become nations with their own government?”⁷

In late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century South Africa, the Jubilee Singers and other African American visitors and residents were treated as “honorary whites,” exempt from the segregationist legislation that hobbled the lives of black South Africans. Such a status was a tacit admission by the South African authorities that African Americans possessed the supposed character-

istics of modern, “civilized” citizens.⁸ The concession was important, coming as it did at a time when European colonialism was becoming entrenched in Africa and Asia and South African whites were justifying the denial of citizenship rights to black South Africans on the ground that blacks were an inferior, backward race that lacked the attributes of modern Western civilization. Such attributes included Christianity, Western education, Western dress, English language skills, an industrious work ethic, and an abiding faith in capitalism.

White South Africans further rationalized their dominance over blacks as the culmination of a 2,000-year European ascent from barbarism to a position as the world’s most “civilized” race. It was the “White Man’s Burden,” they claimed, to uplift the lesser race by “civilizing” the Africans. In 1884 James Stewart, South Africa’s most famous missionary and educator of the late nineteenth century, responded to African demands for equality by invoking a social Darwinist “racial time,” an argument popular among white South African politicians, colonial officials, and scholars: “Starting but as yesterday in the race of nations, do you soberly believe that in the two generations of the very imperfect civilisation you have enjoyed and partially accepted, you can have overtaken those other nations who began that race two thousand years ago, and have been running hard at it for a thousand years at least?”⁹ African Americans, including the members of the Virginia Jubilee Singers, debunked such claims because they seemed to possess all of the characteristics that defined modern, “civilized” people, as acknowledged by their “honorary white” status. More importantly, they had “civilized” themselves in *just one generation out of slavery, not two thousand years*. Black South Africans eagerly pointed to African Americans as proof that the attributes of modern civilization, far from being racially exclusive, were a universal human heritage, and that such attributes could be acquired in a relatively short span, even a lifetime. With the acquisition of modernity, particularly Western education, there could be no justification for relegating Africans to the status of hewers of wood and drawers of water. Western-educated Africans, inspired by African Americans, would demand full participation in society and perhaps even seek to regain their lost independence in a modern, regenerated continent of “Africa for Africans.”

For African Americans, the engagement with South Africa centered on Providential Design, which assigned diasporic blacks a divinely ordained role in the “redemption” of Africa. Henry McNeal Turner was a leading exponent of Providential Design. A bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, an African American denomination founded in the late eighteenth century, Turner inaugurated his church’s mission in South Africa in 1896. In typical

Providential Design fashion, he argued that God had willed the enslavement of diasporic blacks so that they would be taught the “civilizing” traits of Christianity, the Protestant work ethic, thrift, and moral rectitude, qualities they would then return to Africa to promulgate. In other words, diasporic blacks would transmit the “light of civilization” to a slumbering “Dark Continent” that would be regenerated as a modernized, independent Christian Africa resplendent in God’s favor. For diasporic blacks, an independent “Africa for Africans” would be a “Promised Land”: an emigrationist homeland that would provide historical and cultural grounding and serve as a source of protection.¹⁰

The claims of Providential Design, along with notions of black modernity, cohered African-descended peoples across a wide spectrum, including many African Americans and black South Africans. In the diaspora, even such political adversaries as Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey were linked by a common belief in various strands of Providential Design and black modernity. In the interwar period, those providential and modernist ideals were most powerfully expressed in Garveyism, which exploded across South Africa’s political landscape during those years.

Black Sailors and the Transmission of Garveyism to South Africa

A combination of black sailors, ships, and newspapers—the era’s most effective means of pan-African communication—transmitted Garveyism into South Africa. In May 1919, Garvey announced the UNIA’s plans to operate the Black Star Line, a steamship corporation.¹¹ By September 1919, the UNIA had purchased its first ship, the *Yarmouth*, which was promptly renamed the *Frederick Douglass*.¹² Before the commonplace usage of airplanes, ships were quintessential symbols of modernity and nationhood. Black South Africans, relentlessly told by white segregationists that they were outside the realm of modernity, saw the Black Star Line as evidence to the contrary.

Black sailors, particularly from the Caribbean and North America, were especially effective pan-African vectors, disseminating news of Garveyism throughout the black world, including South Africa. In 1920 a Jamaican sailor, identified only as “Ennis,” proclaimed, “We all come out to South Africa to free our brothers and sisters out there.”¹³ Subsequently, the Natal branch of the African National Congress (ANC), black South Africa’s leading political movement since its founding in 1912, convened a meeting in Durban that reportedly attracted more than 1,000 people. The highlight of the affair was an unsched-

uled appearance by an “American Negro” sailor known only as “Moses,” who had recently arrived from New York, site of the UNIA headquarters. Moses told his audience that “Marcus Garvey was the man they relied upon, and [that he] would free Africa: that the first vessel of the fleet was named ‘Frederick Douglass,’ and this vessel had been sailing to different places. . . . Africa would be freed . . . by Marcus Garvey.”¹⁴ Vectors of Garveyism like Ennis and Moses had an important advantage over resident Garveyites: as sailors they could enter and leave South Africa before the authorities, who were openly hostile to Garveyism, even became aware of their presence.

Garveyism spread quickly in South Africa. In the port city of East London, there were persistent rumors that the “Americans” would arrive in ships with weapons to help Africans kill whites.¹⁵ Kenneth Spooner, a West Indian missionary, joyously proclaimed that “his people were now on the seas coming to South Africa with a view to beating the European people here, and that in about six months time changes would be observed.”¹⁶ Addressing a meeting of the Transvaal branch of the ANC, an African known only as “Mgoja” raised the emphatic cry that “America had a black fleet and it is coming.”¹⁷ In neighboring Basutoland (now Lesotho), ardent nationalist Josiel Lefela editorialized, “Let us look forward to his Excellency Marcus Garvey the President of Africa, and the Americans, with anxious anticipation.”¹⁸ These prophecies were also proclaimed in the Eastern Cape and the Transkei. Gilbert Matshoba, a young African clerk, reported rapturously to his uncle, Enoch Mgijima, the leader of a religious group called the Israelites, that Garvey had predicted that the “blood of all wars is about to arrive” and that the UNIA would soon force European colonizers to leave Africa. “Father, that is the news of our black countrymen. It is published in the newspaper.”¹⁹

West Indian Sailors and Garveyism in Cape Town

As transmitters of Garveyism, black sailors enjoyed a mobility that made it difficult for the authorities to apprehend them. But the peripatetic nature of their work also precluded the sailors from transforming rhetoric into sustained political organization. In South Africa, that task was assumed by, among others, a 200-member “American Negro” community in Cape Town.²⁰ Actually, most of these “American Negroes” were West Indians, who, beginning in the 1880s, had fled the economically depressed Caribbean for the relatively brighter prospects of South African port cities, especially Cape Town, where they formed distinct communities. According to a 1904 Cape Colony census, there were 298

black West Indians in the region, many of whom worked in the dockyards.²¹ The West Indians had a reputation as “tough, hard back-boned Negroes . . . of the he-man type, aggressive and daring,” and they displayed pan-African sensibilities, fostering “notions of Combination and Co-operation amongst the disparate ethnic groups” of Africans and mixed-race people called “Coloureds” in the Cape Town dockyards.²²

The West Indians were especially attracted to Cape Town, the site of South Africa’s earliest European settlement, because of its employment prospects, its large English-speaking population, and its racially liberal reputation in relation to the rest of the country. Cape Town, as part of the Cape Province, had a nonracial franchise that accorded voting rights to blacks who met certain property requirements, unlike South Africa’s other three provinces, which totally excluded Africans from the political process. By the early twentieth century, Cape Town had developed into an industrial town of approximately 80,000 inhabitants, most of whom were Africans and Coloureds. The Africans lived mainly in segregated townships outside the city, while the majority of black workers were subjected to the industrial color bar, which excluded them from many lines of work.

West Indians in Cape Town, many of whom were Garveyites, were prominent in the leadership of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU), South Africa’s first major black trade union, which claimed 100,000 members at its peak in 1927.²³ In January 1920, ICU members elected “out and out Marcus Garvey” West Indians A. James King as president and James Gumbs as vice president.²⁴ Gumbs, a shipwright and former chemist, would later become an executive officer of the Cape Town UNIA branch. Another Caribbean, Emmanuel Johnson, an agent for the *Negro World*, the UNIA’s official organ, and the future organizing president of the Cape Peninsula UNIA branches, also served as an ICU vice president.²⁵ Clements Kadalie, the ICU founder and general secretary, came from Nyasaland (now Malawi), and he, too, exemplified the movement’s cosmopolitan character, including at the leadership level. By his own account, Kadalie’s “essential object is to be the great African Marcus Garvey and I don’t mind how much I shall pay for that education.”²⁶ These men, along with the mercurial Samuel Bennett Ncwana, suffused Garveyism into the *Black Man*, the ICU’s official newspaper, which proclaimed that “we should show our cordial appreciation of the very first step taken by the Hon. Marcus Garvey to show his solidarity with us. . . . Liberty and freedom calls upon . . . Africans to respond.”²⁷

Cape Town Garveyites established the earliest and largest number of South

Africa's UNIA chapters (five), and they also subscribed to claims of Providential Design.²⁸ West Indians founded the first two chapters, but the leadership and membership included West Indians, Africans, and Coloureds—a demographic mix quite unusual for segregationist South Africa. The branches generally held weekly Sunday meetings that were an eclectic mix of Christian worship and political exhortation. Branch chaplains and officers led the membership in religious songs and made fiery sermons that cast Garvey as a new Moses, poised to lead his people from the Pharaoh's Egypt that was South Africa. William Jackson, the Cape Town UNIA president and a native of Jamaica, appealed to the Providential Design motif that linked blacks in Africa and the diaspora. For Jackson, Africans of the diaspora had been enslaved in the Western Hemisphere as a necessary prelude to acquiring the technological, economic, and educational skills to liberate Africans: "Ethiopia will be taken naked from Egypt to a foreign country, there to be lynched, whipped, gimcrowded (jimcrowed), killed and finally, after experiencing many vicissitudes of torments and misery, will return to Africa and impart the civilization and knowledge obtained in the foreign country to his people."²⁹ The agents of African liberation, according to Jackson, were the "15,000,000 negroes of America who have to-day reached the highest scientific attainments in the world. Those Negroes are now preparing to come back to the land of their forefathers and impart the knowledge gained in foreign countries to their brethren in Africa. Your slogan must be 'One Aim, One God, and One Destiny.'"³⁰ UNIA branch meetings were also occasions to collect membership dues, to sell stocks in the Black Star Line, and to promote the *Negro World*.³¹

The religious character of the UNIA in Cape Town was broadly similar to that of the U.S.-based parent body, the religiosity of which remains underappreciated. Clergy constituted one-fifth of the signatories to the UNIA's "Magna Carta," the 1920 "Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World."³² Garvey's speeches, reprinted in the *Negro World*, often employed a sermonic character that utilized biblical references and imageries. In the United States, UNIA Sunday meetings featured processional, recessional, and missionary hymns, sermons, and benedictions, while the organization's official motto was "One God, One Aim, One Destiny." Predictably, Psalms 68:31 ("Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hand unto God"), a passage much beloved by the exponents of Providential Design, was also a UNIA favorite. But other biblical verses were popular with the UNIA, too, such as Acts 17:26 ("He created of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth"), which appeared on the group's stationery.³³ In short,

providential religious language suffused the political objectives of the UNIA, and its self-described “missionaries” set out to “convert” unbelieving blacks to the project of African “salvation” and “redemption.”³⁴

The Cape Town UNIA branches responded to Garvey’s 1925 incarceration for alleged mail fraud by inaugurating Garvey Day mass meetings on the first Sunday of each month. These meetings often included processions through the streets of Cape Town, and members donated monies to their leader’s legal defense fund.³⁵ The UNIA, in conjunction with the ICU and the ANC, also organized against segregationist legislation, low wages, and massacres of blacks by the security forces in Port Elizabeth and Bulhoek, both in South Africa, and in Southwest Africa (now Namibia), the former German colony ceded to South Africa after World War I. Reaching out to other oppressed racial groups in South African society, the UNIA, ICU, and ANC made links with the Cape Indian Council and the Indian nationalist and poet Sarojina Naidoo, who visited South Africa. James Thaele, president of the ANC’s Cape Town branch and recipient of two degrees from Lincoln University, an African American institution, was a key player in all of these endeavors. Thaele, along with Jamaican Arthur McKinley, replicated the stepladder speeches that West Indian immigrants like Garvey had made famous in Harlem. Open-air political speeches, Thaele’s Garveyite newspaper the *African World*, and the frequent translation of *Negro World* articles into African languages all were instrumental in spreading Garveyism.³⁶

The Cape Town UNIA branches also distributed Garveyite literature to other parts of South Africa, creating an internal black communication network beyond the reach of white authorities. In 1920, for example, Cape Town Garveyites placed copies of the UNIA’s classic manifesto, the Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World, in packages of goods to be shipped to stores in the country’s interior. Black workers who opened these packages would remove the documents and further disseminate them. Cape Town Garveyites also sent Garvey’s books and pamphlets and copies of the *Negro World* to the diamond-mining town of Kimberley, where Garveyism found fertile ground in the House of Athlyi, a religious organization with internationalist links to the United States and Jamaica.³⁷

Garveyism in Kimberley: The House of Athlyi

Joseph Masogha, the founder of the South African branch of the House of Athlyi, was the key disseminator of Garveyism in the diamond-mining town

of Kimberley. Masogha distributed UNIA books and pictures, the *Negro World*, and other “American Negro” newspapers throughout South Africa and in his native Basutoland. Educated up to Standard IV (grade five), Masogha’s Garveyite activities earned him the enmity of government officials, who considered him a “notorious agitator.” He was dismissed from his jobs as a postman and a constable for “drunkenness,” presumably from the intoxicating ideology of Garveyism.³⁸ White postal workers regularly pummeled Masogha with “kicks, punches, sneers, [and] insults” as he collected *Negro World* shipments from the Kimberley post office, threatening ominously that he would soon be a “dead nigger.”³⁹ Yet the indefatigable Masogha persevered, telling the UNIA headquarters in New York that he made professional and personal sacrifices to disseminate Garveyism in order to “spread this spirit of the New Negro. I have given my heart as an offering for this land of ours. I quite follow that there must be a sacrifice. I hope the UNIA will guide me.”⁴⁰

Masogha’s efforts were instrumental in making Kimberley a Garveyite stronghold. South Africa’s diamond center, Kimberley was an early model of urban segregation, with its townships, restrictive pass laws, closed compounds, migrant-labor system, and color-bar policies. De Beers Consolidated Mines, the world’s largest diamond company, was headquartered in Kimberley, giving it the feel of a “company town.” Correspondents to the *Negro World* attested to the paper’s extensive circulation in Kimberley, and they railed against the town’s segregationist practices; one writer asserted that “the time has arrived for the black races to assert themselves and throw off the white yoke.”⁴¹ James Charles Diraath, a Kimberley hospital worker and amateur photographer, noted of the *Negro World* that “every copy is carefully preserved and passed from hand to hand so that as many as possible may hear the truth.” He concluded, “Thousands of our native people here . . . are greatly encouraged by the efforts of the Hon. Marcus Garvey and the splendid work of the UNIA.”⁴²

Such were the circumstances in which Masogha, in 1924, established a branch of the House of Athlyi.⁴³ Headquartered in Newark, New Jersey, the House of Athlyi was founded by Richard Athlyi Rogers, who hailed from the Caribbean island of Anguilla. Rogers articulated a version of the Providential Design ideal, and he assumed the title of shepherd, watching over his Ethiopian flock. God, he asserted, had commanded him to become a modern-day Moses to lead “Ethiopia’s generations from the oppressive feet of the nations” and to transform them into a “nation among nations.”⁴⁴

In 1922, after they both addressed a UNIA meeting in Newark, Rogers “anointed” Marcus Garvey as his chief apostle. Impressed by Garvey’s mes-

sage, Rogers proclaimed him “an apostle of the Lord God for the redemption of Ethiopia and her suffering posterities.” He commanded his congregation, estimated at 500, to join the UNIA, asserting further that he and Garvey “were anointed and sent forth by the Almighty God to lay the foundation of industry, liberty and justice unto the generations of Ethiopia that they prove themselves a power among the nations and in the glory of their God.”⁴⁵ Defending Garvey against his detractors, Rogers commanded, “Raise not the weight of your finger on Marcus Garvey, neither speak ye against Him.”⁴⁶

Rogers and Garvey agreed on a number of issues, spiritual and material, including a belief that black people should conceive of God in their own image and seek economic empowerment. Garvey believed his program of economic self-reliance, which included the Black Star Line, the Negro Factories Corporation, and the Black Cross and Navigation Company, was a necessary complement to spiritual prophecies of African redemption. Rogers concurred: “For as much as the children of Ethiopia, God’s favorite people of old, have turned away from his divine Majesty, neglecting *life economic*, believing they could on spiritual wings fly to the kingdom of God, consequently became a dependent for the welfare of others.”⁴⁷

Rogers wrote the *Holy Piby: The Black Man’s Bible*, the preeminent sacred book of the House of Athlyi. The *Holy Piby* articulated an aggressive black liberationist theology, and it would later become a foundational text of Jamaica’s Rastafarian movement.⁴⁸ Rogers’s narrative included Twelve Commandments, otherwise known as the doctrine of Athlicanity. These commandments shared the Holy Bible’s injunctions to observe thriftiness, cleanliness, and honesty but made several significant departures. The *Holy Piby* interpreted the Battle of Adwa, in which Ethiopia defeated Italy in 1896, as a sign of impending black liberation.⁴⁹ Rogers also claimed that blacks could only attain the “Kingdom of God” if they demanded social justice on earth, instead of passively waiting for heavenly rewards.⁵⁰ The *Holy Piby* advocated the establishment of a powerful black nationality through unity and self-reliance and forbade blacks from fighting one another. Rogers’s text further refuted the “Hamitic Hypothesis,” said to be a biblical curse on blacks as the supposed descendants of Ham, a claim long used by white Christians to justify the oppression of African peoples. Rogers warned black Christians to eschew such biblical interpretations: “Woe be unto a race of people who forsake their own and adhere to the doctrine of another. They shall be slaves to the people thereof.”⁵¹ Rather, blacks should use the *Holy Piby* as their guiding religious text, as it contained “all worthy prophecies and inspirations endowed by God upon the sons and daughters of Ethiopia.”⁵²

The House of Athlyi, according to Rogers, had been established to provide “a real religious and material brotherhood among the children of Ethiopia” and to combat the “confusion and hatred” practiced by white Christians. Resorting to the language of Providential Design, Rogers asserted that God would “tear down the walls” of oppression he had “permitted to hold Ethiopia in bondage, that she may know the devil and his unrighteousness.” “Now I shall send forth an army of Athlyians who shall redeem my children and deliver them again to my arms.”⁵³ “When the Lord God of Ethiopia is with us in the battle for that to which we are entitled, show me the foe so powerful to set us down? Verily I say unto you there is none.”⁵⁴

In South Africa, such doctrines predictably met with strong official reproof. The local authorities in Kimberley denied Masogha land on which to build a church and school, while the national government refused to grant him and his ministers marriage licenses, denying them the right to marry congregants.⁵⁵ Considering the movement subversive, the authorities speculated that the term “Gaathly” was a contraction of Garvey and Athlyi, which “proved” that the “notorious Marcus Garvey” was a prime instigator of the House of Athlyi. Somehow, Masogha and his coworkers apparently managed to weather the storm of hostility: the House of Athlyi, or some remnants thereof, is reported to have been in existence as late as the 1980s.

“Dr. Wellington” and the Promise of American Negro Deliverance in the Transkei

Garveyism in South Africa took a particularly fascinating twist in the mid-1920s in the Transkei, when an African named Wellington Butelezi claimed the alternate identity of Dr. Butler Hansford Wellington, an “American Negro” and Garvey disciple. A largely rural area, the Transkei was quite different from Cape Town and Kimberley, the other two major centers of Garveyism in South Africa. Africans in the Transkei (and other rural districts) were subjected to a dizzying array of taxes, restrictions on landholding and cattle, economic exploitation by white traders, and pass laws that controlled their movement.

Wellington became an “American Negro” to legitimate his crusade against oppression in the Transkei and, not coincidentally, to advance his personal interests. Taking advantage of the high esteem in which many Africans held African Americans, he found fertile ground for his millenarian prophecies of imminent liberation, the agents of which would come from the other side of the black Atlantic. Wellington’s ingenious, if opportunistic, use of existing

African American liberatory myths created a brief but electrifying Garveyism in the Transkei, a movement that featured millenarian prophecies, churches and schools, and an increased identification with African Americans.

Wellington was an outsider to the Transkei, which is populated largely by Xhosa-speaking Africans. Wellington, by contrast, was a Zulu-speaker from the neighboring province of Natal. The oldest of five children, he was born on January 26, 1899, and named Wellington Elias Butelezi.⁵⁶ After attending a Lutheran mission school, he enrolled briefly at Lovedale Institute, a training ground for those aspiring to become members of the small African elite. On leaving Lovedale, Butelezi worked variously as salesman, clerk, teacher, and herbalist.⁵⁷

Then, in 1923, Butelezi took an important step toward becoming an “American Negro.” He petitioned the government to “alter or conceal my name as Elias Butelezi and put it for Butler Hansford Wellington,” a “Homeopathic Medical Practitioner and Specialist in Pediatric Diseases.”⁵⁸ The nomenclatorial transformation apparently was associated with an increasing interest in Garveyism. Wellington subsequently became acquainted with the Caribbean-born Ernest Wallace and other “American Negroes,” who had established UNIA branches in various parts of South Africa.⁵⁹ Soon, Wellington was organizing under his own UNIA banner, but he would achieve his greatest success in the Transkei.

“Dr. Wellington” attracted numerous followers with an intriguing tale. African American troops under the command of “General Garvey,” he told transfixed audiences, would descend on South Africa in airplanes. Armed with flaming balls of charcoal—the imageries were drawn from the Book of Revelation—the Americans would destroy the whites, along with those Africans who had refused to join the UNIA, or Wellington’s version of it. A modern black state would replace the segregationist regime, ushering in a new dispensation: “You are not going to pay taxes nor dip cattle. . . . Forces are coming, armies coming from America to drive the white people from Africa, to go to their own country. . . . People who did not register their names with him in his book will die together with the white people.”⁶⁰ The transatlantic black liberators, according to Wellington, were motivated by pan-African racial affinities, by a desire to return to their African homeland, and by a determination to redeem a promise, made by the British during World War I, to cede South Africa to the United States in exchange for military assistance.⁶¹ As if to give credibility to these fantastic assertions, Wellington claimed personally to have been wounded in the war while serving as a general in an exclusively African American army.⁶²

Wellington further maintained that the UNIA had sent him to Africa, along

with forty other men, to ascertain African interest in African American emigration. Those in favor of the return of transatlantic blacks would take out UNIA membership, which would offer them protection during the coming invasion.⁶³ The UNIA's shipping line, plus Garvey's stated intention to establish an aerial fleet to liberate Africa, seemed altogether consistent with Wellington's assertions that a "new and powerful race from the sea . . . dreaded by all European nations . . . will end tyranny and wrong."⁶⁴

So as to not be confused with unbelievers, who would perish with the arrival of the Americans, Wellington's followers took steps to distinguish themselves. They sported badges with red, black, and green (the colors of the UNIA), symbolizing a determination to "pull down the British Empire"; painted their houses black; and slaughtered pigs, white goats, and white fowl.⁶⁵ Wellington proclaimed the killing of pigs, which he said represented degradation, decay, and death, a necessary precondition for liberation.⁶⁶ On his account, the indiscriminate eating habits of the swine and its unsanitary ways made it an ideal carrier of tapeworms, which gave consumers of pork parasitic illnesses. Furthermore, the despised whites had introduced pigs and chickens into the region.⁶⁷ For good measure, Wellington announced, the American liberators would set pigs on fire with burning coals, using the animals as conduits to spread the fatal flames to unbelievers and their properties alike.⁶⁸ These apocalyptic predictions unnerved some unbelievers, whose public disavowals of Wellington did not prevent them from hiding in the forests to avoid detection by the coming Americans.⁶⁹

Wellington's American persona was crucial to his attempts to establish his legitimacy. He benefited from the fact that few Africans in the comparatively remote Transkei had ever met an "American Negro" and thus had difficulty uncovering his fraudulence. He also took advantage of the image of African Americans as quintessential black moderns, individuals with both the ability and the will to liberate their African fellow blacks. "Dr. Wellington" reinforced his modernist image by speaking only English at his meetings, by changing suits several times a day, and by touring the Transkei in a chauffeur-driven, American-made Dodge sedan. His supposed American medical degree further added to his allure.⁷⁰ These modernist means of deliverance seemingly confirmed a widespread belief that African Americans possessed the requisite educational, technological, and military capabilities to overthrow white supremacy in South Africa.

Wellington's success was due, in part, to his ability to weld the unfamiliar with the familiar. Thus he framed his prophecies in ways that resonated with

existing religious conceptions of the colonial state, to which many Africans attributed malevolent spiritual qualities. Africans believed Europeans to be “possessed of powerful materials for sorcery. . . . All *ubuthi* (magical substances) comes from Europeans. They are the real *amagqwira* (witches).”⁷¹ For the colonized Africans, taxation was a primary means by which the government demonstrated its tyrannical power. Payment of hut taxes allowed Africans access to land; poll taxes facilitated the acquisition of the passes needed by prospective migrant workers; and livestock levies allowed one’s cattle to graze freely and enabled one to borrow money against the cattle’s value.⁷² By the same token, nonpayment of taxes could mobilize the state’s powerful *ubuthi*, which partly explains why the vast majority of Africans paid the onerous levies that contributed to their material deprivation. This mindset also explains why Africans referred to the poll tax as *impundulu*, the common term for the destructive lightning storms that regularly killed people and livestock and burned homes. Tellingly, an alternate name for the poll tax was *inkosi*, or chief, a term that recognized the state’s dominant position.⁷³

Wellington, the respected herbalist with reputed magical powers, was now arguing that the *impundulu* of African Americans would overwhelm that of the Europeans. In this context, the fact that the Mpondo, an ethnic group in the southern Transkei, visualized the *impundulu* bird as red, white, and blue, the colors of the U.S. flag, is significant. Wellington beckoned his followers to gaze into a crystal ball that showed American airplanes, ships, and flying automobiles ready to attack, once Africans demonstrated their receptiveness to the plan. His magic mirror, reputedly an American invention, would turn British bullets into water. To alleviate widespread hunger exacerbated by recent droughts, Wellington held out to his followers the prospects of American ships loaded with cornmeal, which bounty could be supplemented by the harvests left by the vanquished unbelievers.⁷⁴

Some of Wellington’s lieutenants claimed to have actually seen the Americans and their military fortifications, and they repeatedly promised liberation on a date certain.⁷⁵ Forsaking the theme song of the British Empire, “God Save the King,” Wellingtonite children’s choirs now sang “Nkosi’ Sikeleli Afrika,” the anthem of African liberation, and other freedom tunes.⁷⁶ Other Wellingtonites boldly informed shocked magistrates that they would pay their movement’s membership dues instead of state taxes, and they refused to submit to mandated vaccinations.⁷⁷ One flabbergasted magistrate exclaimed, “I have never known any man to get such an influence over the natives in such a short time.”⁷⁸ Another official concurred: “The natives who to some extent resent the

increased taxation, firmly believe this man's saying and look to a happy time of release from European rule which the American Government will bring."⁷⁹

Wellington acolytes did not wait passively for the American liberators. They established some 200 churches and nearly as many schools as alternatives to white-controlled religious and educational institutions.⁸⁰ These independent churches and schools formed the institutional bedrock of Wellington's movement.⁸¹ The churches allowed members a religious space to articulate a liberationist Christianity and a setting in which to perform such functions as marriage ceremonies, thereby avoiding the onerous fees, burdensome documentation, and other alien requirements demanded by the colonial state and European ministers.⁸² Wellington also established a pair of more ambitious educational institutions, which he generously dubbed universities. And while the number of his most ardent adherents is impossible to ascertain, incessant complaints by government officials and other detractors suggest that his churches and schools were relatively, if perhaps fleetingly, well-attended. South African white supremacy ensured as much. As Wellington himself noted, "In schools you are taught to say Boss to any white man young or big all the same. Your names are Jim, John, George, Jack, etc. You go to Church but they won't mix with you."⁸³

Wellington's institutions featured a political, religious, and educational content that reaffirmed Garveyite principles and had an overt Africanism. Walter Sisulu, a onetime secretary general of the ANC and mentor to Nelson Mandela, attended one such school. His mother also taught at a Wellington institution. Sisulu remembered that African cultural values infused a curriculum that was otherwise similar to the one approved by the government. At the Wellington schools, for instance, the pupils prayed to "the God of Mtirara, or Langalibalele," precolonial African political figures, not to "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, because they were white people."⁸⁴

Wellington's schools were subsidized by a portion of the dues paid by the members of his movement. Additional collections were supposed to pay for new schools, textbooks, and teachers from the United States. School fees provided yet another source of income. Most teachers came from the surrounding communities. Few of them, however, were educated above the eighth-grade level or had undergone teaching training. The problem of poorly educated and poorly paid teachers was exacerbated by inadequate facilities and equipment. Some teachers, left without formal school buildings, resorted to scribbling lessons on the walls of huts.⁸⁵ Harassment by the state, the missionaries, and other opponents of Wellington constituted another set of challenges. In time,

Wellington's own supporters became increasingly frustrated with his unfulfilled promises, especially of American teachers and textbooks.

Still, many of the Wellingtonite schools and churches persisted for many years, and they contributed greatly to a generalized unrest that characterized much of the Transkei in the late 1920s.⁸⁶ The missionary-run educational centers suffered drastic declines in enrollment during this period, as students defected to the Garveyite schools, sometimes in the face of physical attacks by the "Americans," as Wellington's followers called themselves. Government officials who sought to forcibly close the alternate schools were met with "assegais and sticks as though the enemy had approached." Some Wellingtonites even turned the tables, using boycotts and intimidation to force the closure of several white-run schools.

Yet, by the late 1920s, Wellington was under increased scrutiny from both friends and foes. His failure to produce the American liberators and promised American teachers and textbooks caused much disillusionment. Support faded, as "the Americans were said to be coming to Africa and people will not join the movement as they don't see the Americans."⁸⁷ Members increasingly resented Wellington's incessant demands for monies, much of which seemed only to line his pocket. External attacks joined the growing internal dissent. In 1927 the South African authorities banned Wellington from the Transkei. Henceforth, followers had to journey to the Cape Colony, a considerable distance for many, to see him.

To add insult to injury, Wellington's claims to be tied to the UNIA were exposed as fraudulent. Garvey himself disavowed the "Doctor," warning in the pages of the *Negro World* that Wellington was not a UNIA officer and had no authorization to collect money or establish chapters on its behalf.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, detractors inside South Africa disproved Wellington's other claim to fame, that is, his Americanness. Hecklers mocked Wellington by calling him Butelezi, his Zulu surname.⁸⁹ A Zulu headman noted Wellington's "Zulu tribal mark, a cut in the right ear, which he has sewn up."⁹⁰ Samuel Bennett Ncwana, formerly an ardent Garveyite, spoke of his personal knowledge of Wellington's Zulu birth.⁹¹ Wellington's own father delivered the coup de grace, affirming his son's Zuluness.⁹² Forced to abandon the charade that "nobody knows me in this country,"⁹³ Wellington fell silent on his origins. He subsequently confined his pronouncements to the familiar themes of white injustice, black institution building, and black liberationist Christianity.

In 1935 Wellington sought to reverse his declining fortune by capitalizing on widespread African revulsion to Italy's threats to, and eventual invasion of,

Ethiopia. Attendance at his meetings increased dramatically. He demanded a South African economic embargo on Italy and urged black South Africans to embark to “East Africa to defend your own people.”⁹⁴ Despite the popularity of the cause he now espoused, however, Wellington could not live down his past. Considering him untrustworthy, at least where money was concerned, his newfound listeners rebuffed his requests for funds, allegedly to support the Ethiopian resistance.⁹⁵

Throughout the 1930s Wellington repeatedly appealed to the government to reverse its ban and allow him to enter the Transkei and other prohibited areas for “educational and spiritual purposes only” and to visit his wife and child. He disavowed any political intent. The hostility of many white (and some black) churchmen toward him, he argued, was due to jealousy, notably the defection of African parishioners and schoolchildren to Wellingtonite churches and schools. He also invoked America to support his claims, stating that “there are lawful private schools in the U.S.A.”⁹⁶ The government, however, adamantly rejected his requests. Instead, the authorities jailed Wellington several times between 1937 and 1944 for, among other offenses, entering the Transkei without a pass, nonpayment of taxes, theft, and possession of alcohol.⁹⁷

An increasingly frustrated Wellington saw no end to government persecution and unsuccessfully attempted to leave the country. In the 1940s he resurfaced in various parts of South Africa, including the industrial center of Johannesburg. A somewhat sheepish sister, embarrassed by her brother’s infamy, admitted to one researcher that Wellington had visited her in the early 1950s, but she claimed no knowledge of his subsequent whereabouts. Wellington, who had electrified followers and vexed government officials in the 1920s and 1930s, simply disappeared from the public record, with no indication of his final fate.⁹⁸

In the end, however, Garveyism in the Transkei transcended Wellington. Many of the churches and schools established during the heyday of his movement continued to operate after his personal demise. Wellington’s decline and fall also opened the door for the emergence of an official Garveyite presence in the Transkei. Paul Gulwa, in direct communication with Garvey, established UNIA chapters in the Transkei, repeatedly donated monies to the international UNIA, and enrolled in Garvey’s School of African Philosophy. Furthermore, the prophetic tradition of externally driven liberation, which Wellington had exploited so well, survived him. During World War II, for example, UNIA adherents improbably put out word that the “Americans,” in conjunction with, of all forces, Hitler’s Germany, would overthrow the South African state.⁹⁹ The

Wellington phenomenon may also be seen as representing, at the rural and popular levels, a culmination of the intense reverence black South Africans had for their black American cousins, a feeling that had been in the making for decades, since the time of the Virginia Jubilee Singers, if not before. Most fundamentally, perhaps, the considerable currency given to the mythic promises of “American Negro” liberation reflected the profound alienation of the black South African masses from the segregationist state and their desperation for salvation from white domination.

Conclusion

“American Negroes” as models, metaphors, political icons, and disseminators of political thought were central to black internationalist politics in South Africa between 1890 and 1940. Garveyism was the culmination of this dynamic between the two world wars, and its pan-Africanist race-conscious ideals would remain important to successive African political groupings, such as the ANC Youth League of the 1940s and the Pan-Africanist Congress of the 1950s. The pan-Africanism and self-determination ethos of Garveyism are also reflected in the ideologies of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s and 1980s and, later still, in former president Thabo Mbeki’s African Renaissance. Garveyism itself surfaces in eclectic geographical and cultural spaces in postapartheid South Africa. The country’s expanding Rastafarian communities are impassioned followers of Garvey, and there is a Rasta squatter settlement named Marcus Garvey near Cape Town’s airport. A mural at the University of Cape Town bears Garvey’s image, while South African musical icons from Kwaito groups like Bongo Maffin to reggae superstars like the late Lucky Dube articulate Garveyite perspectives. The recently revived Johannesburg-based UNIA has sought to harness this diffused energy in organizational politics. In a state visit to Jamaica, Mbeki took time to lay flowers at Garvey’s tombstone.

African Americans, exemplified most prominently by the Council on African Affairs in the 1940s and 1950s and the Congressional Black Caucus and TransAfrica in the 1970s and 1980s, were at the forefront of the antiapartheid movement in the United States. Today, thousands of African American entrepreneurs, corporate employees, diplomats, religious personnel, exiles, and tourists flock to South Africa. African American entertainers are a particularly ubiquitous presence in South African theaters, television and radio programs, and newspapers, thereby complementing the physical presence of American blacks. Though a dwindling number of South African octogenar-

ians remember the Garveyite-dominated interwar years as “the time of the Americans,” it is clear that the time of the Americans has not yet passed.

NOTES

1. See Vinson, “In the Time of the Americans” and “Americans Are Coming.” See also the important work of Edgar, “Garveyism in Africa,” and Hill and Pirio, “Africa for the Africans.” A recent article on Garveyism in southern Africa is West, “Seeds Are Sown.”

2. Rich, *State Power*, 39, 43. Standard texts on black South African politics include Walshe, *Rise of African Nationalism*; Odendaal, *Black Protest Politics*; and Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*.

3. The general lack of focus on Africa in African Diaspora studies is reflected in the “African Diaspora” special issue of *African Studies Review* 43 (2000) and in the recent “transnational black studies” issue of the *Radical History Review* 87 (2003). Manning invokes the term “homeland and diaspora model” in “Africa and the African Diaspora.”

4. Beinart and Dubow, *Segregation and Apartheid*.

5. Hofmeyr, *South Africa*, 313–14.

6. Atkins, “Black Atlantic Communication Network,” 6–11.

7. *Leselinyana*, October 1, 1890, cited in Erlmann, *African Stars*, 44.

8. After 1902, South African governments became increasingly concerned that “American Negroes” were fomenting political discontent amongst Africans. The popularity of Garveyism contributed greatly to the virtual ban of African Americans from South Africa and was the death knell of their “honorary white” status. The apartheid-era South African government would revive the “honorary white” designation for visiting African Americans, including Max Yergan, Roy Wilkins, Arthur Ashe, and Eartha Kitt. See Vinson, “Citizenship over Race?” On Yergan, who had an especially long and complex history of engagement with South Africa, see Anthony, *Max Yergan*.

9. Cited in Moeti, “Ethiopianism,” 155.

10. For the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in South Africa, see Campbell, *Songs of Zion*. For historical context to the notion of Providential Design, see Moses, *Alexander Crummell*, and Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*. For Henry McNeal Turner, see Redkey, *Respect Black*.

11. Stein, *World*, 64; Martin, *Race First*, 152. Other essential texts on Garveyism include Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions*; Hill, *Marcus Garvey*; Lewis and Bryan, *Garvey*; Vincent, *Black Power*; Cronon, *Black Moses*; and Tolbert, *UNIA and Black Los Angeles*.

12. Martin, *Race First*, 153.

13. South African Government Archives (hereafter SAGA), Papers of the Union Department of Native Affairs, Transvaal Archive Depot (hereafter NTS), Interior Department, Reports on Bolshevism 168/74B, vol. 2, file 7/168/74, “Ennis” to Marcus Garvey, May 9, 1920.

14. *Ibid.*, Secretary for Justice to Secretary for the Interior, December 8, 1920.

15. SAGA, Cape Province Depot (hereafter CA), 1/KNT 40 N1/9/2, affidavit of “Golifli” to Kentani Assistant Magistrate, December 14, 1920.

16. SAGA, NTS, Interior Department, Reports on Bolshevism 168/74B, vol. 2, file 7/168/74, Secretary for Justice to Secretary for the Interior, October 18, 1920.
17. Hill and Pirio, "Africa for the Africans," 211.
18. Josiel Lefela, article excerpt, *Naledi*, November 18, 1921, Public Records Office (England), Co 417/665/02597.
19. SAGA, GG 1728, file 51/6670, Gilbert Matshoba to Enoch Mgiijima, August 1920. Matshoba was referring to the August 14, 1920, edition of *Umteteli wa Bantu*, which had reported on the 1920 UNIA convention in New York City, which took place that month.
20. The *Cape Argus*, a Cape Town newspaper, estimated the "American Negro" community at somewhat less than 200 persons; see *Cape Argus*, January 29, 1923.
21. "Census of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, 1904," cited in Cobley, "Far from Home," 358. For West Indians and black Americans in Port Elizabeth, see Kirk, *Making a Voice*.
22. James Ghazu in the *Negro World*, July 16, 1932. Ghazu was a black South African sailor who eventually became the president of the South African UNIA in the late 1930s. See Page, "Black America in White South Africa," 332.
23. The union's initials were ICU instead of the seemingly correct ICWU because the enunciation of ICU was an ominous threat by blacks to whites; "I see you" connoted the transparency and insecurity of white domination. The phrase has resonated in South Africa's black nationalist circles, being powerfully revived during Nelson Mandela's first speech after his February 1990 release from prison, when he rallied the crowd with the phrase, "I see you."
24. Kadalie, *My Life*, 220–21.
25. Wickins, *Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union*, 85. For Johnson, see *Black Man*, August 1920, and *Workers Herald*, March 27, 1926.
26. Killie Campbell African Library, University of Natal, J. S. Marwick Papers, Clements Kadalie to Samuel Ncwana, May 20, 1920, in Hill and Pirio, "Africa for the Africans," 215.
27. *Black Man*, August 1920.
28. The five branches were in Cape Town proper and in the city's suburbs of Woodstock, Claremont, Goodwood, and West London. The July 24, 1920, meeting of the Goodwood branch is the earliest documented Cape Town UNIA chapter.
29. SAGA, Transvaal Depot, 3/1064/18, Cape ANC meeting, 1923.
30. *Ibid.*, GG 1556, 50/1058, June 3, 1923. Of course, the slogan "One God, One Aim, One Destiny" was a UNIA invention; it was ubiquitous on UNIA printed material like the *Negro World*.
31. *Negro World*, June 20, July 18, 1925, April 24, 1926.
32. Burkett, *Black Redemption*, 5–6, 9–10.
33. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement*, 33–34. AME ministers Richard Allen and Absalom Jones made the earliest documented articulation of Psalms 68:31, which AME-affiliated Ethiopianist ministers found so powerful a century later. See Jones and Allen, "Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People."
34. *Negro World*, February 19, 1921, 4. See also Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement*, 25.

35. *Negro World*, December 1, 1923, June 20, 1925.

36. *Negro World*, September 12, 1925, April 30, 1927.

37. Vinson, "In the Time of the Americans," 53; *Black Man*, November 1920; Hill, "Dread History"; Hill and Pirio, "Africa for the Africans," 219.

38. SAGA, NTS, 1455 file 128/214, memorandum of A. W. Richards, Divisional Inspector, Eastern Cape Division to District Commandants, South African Police, Eastern Cape Division, June 16, 1928; Superintendent, Native Locations, to the Chairman and Members, Locations Committee, October 3, 1925; Detective Constable J. D. Justus to Divisional Criminal Investigation Officer, Kimberley, May 14, 1928.

39. *Negro World*, April 18, 1925.

40. *Negro World*, September 13, 27, 1924, August 14, 1926.

41. *Negro World*, January 14, 1922.

42. *Negro World*, June 27, 1925, October 18, 1924, January 17, 1925.

43. The Afro-Athlican Constructive Gaathly Mamatic Church Hymn Book, published in 1926, listed "the House of Athlyi, World's Headquarters" at 253 Nyembane St., Kimberley, South Africa. See Hill, "Dread History," 34, 62 n. 18. For Masogha's address, see SAGA, NTS, 1455 file 128/214, Joseph Masogha to the Secretary for Native Affairs, June 30, 1925.

44. Rogers, *Holy Piby*, 10.

45. *Ibid.*, 6.

46. *Ibid.*, 54–55.

47. *Ibid.*, 25 (emphasis added).

48. There is virtually no scholarship on Rogers, an undeservedly neglected figure in pan-Africanist historiography. The notable exception is Hill, "Dread History." The *Holy Piby* was published on January 15, 1924. It and the Reverend Fitz Ballentine Pettersburgh's *Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* were the foundational texts of the emergent Rastafarian religion in 1930s Jamaica. According to Hill, Leonard Howell's more famous text, *The Promised Key*, plagiarized heavily from the Pettersburgh book, which was reputedly published in 1926. There are few, if any, original copies of this work, though the text can be found online at <http://www.sacred_texts.com/afr/rps> (accessed February 1, 2008).

49. Rogers, *Holy Piby*, 9, 26–27, 30–31, 36–39, 42–46.

50. *Ibid.*, 9–10, 14, 22.

51. *Ibid.*, 45.

52. *Ibid.*, 7–10, 19.

53. *Ibid.*, 64.

54. SAGA, NTS, 1455 file 128/214, Application for Church Site, April 20, 1926.

55. *Ibid.*, Masogha to Secretary for Native Affairs, June 30, 1925; undated letter of R. A. Rogers to Secretary for the Interior; Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary for the Interior, May 26, 1926; Superintendent, Native Locations, to Joseph Masogha, October 24, 1925; Superintendent, Native Locations, to Native Locations Department, May 20, 1926.

56. Another document gives his birth as January 1, 1899. See SAGA, Department of Native Affairs, 7602 file 25/328, pt. 2, R. D. Lyle, Pietermaritzburg Magistrate, to Natal Chief Native Commissioner, January 30, 1928.

57. Edgar, "African Educational Protest," 184–91 (esp. 184); SAGA, CA, 2/SPT 16 file NI/9/2, undated article by Rev. Allen Lea. In 1919, the Church of Sweden, which had baptized Wellington, excommunicated him for unexplained reasons. See SAGA, NTS, 7603 file 25/328, statement by J. E. Hallendorff, Church of Sweden missionary.

58. Wellington cited religious reasons for the requested name change and did so as part of an unsuccessful attempt to study medicine at Oxford University. See SAGA, CA, 2/SPT v. 16 file NI/9/3, P. Nkala, Secretary to B. H. Wellington, to the Secretary for Native Affairs, July 16, 1926.

59. SAGA, NTS, 7603 file 25/328, Matatiele Magistrate to Secretary for Native Affairs, August 14, 1928. The quote is reprinted from the *Matatiele Mail*, December 23, 1925.

60. *Umteteli wa Bantu*, January 15, 1927 in SAGA, CA, 1/TSO 5/1/19 file 3/16/6.

61. SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 26/328, Rex vs. Albert Rulashe, Umtata, case no. 663/1928, June 11, 1928; Wilson, *Reaction to Conquest*, 371.

62. SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 26/328, undated report of J. Z. Makongolo, court interpreter. The report details events that occurred on June 9, 1927.

63. *Ibid.*, affidavit of Daniel Dabulamanzi Mbebe, May 16, 1926; pt. 2, affidavit of Edgar Lonsdale, Tsolo Magistrate, March 12, 1927.

64. *Umteteli wa Bantu*, October 8, 1927.

65. *Umteteli wa Bantu*, January 8, 1927; SAGA, CA, 1/NKE 58 file NI/9/3, undated correspondence from Enoch Mgushulu to one Mr. Nyembezi; NTS 7602 file 26/328, pts. 2 and 3, R. Fyfe King, Tabankulu Magistrate, to Chief Magistrate, September 13, 1927.

66. SAGA, CA, 1/ECO 6/1/99 file 2/16/12, Engcobo Magistrate W. J. Davidson to Chief Magistrate, December 31, 1927. See also NTS 7603 file 26/328, Mount Ayliff Magistrate W. H. P. Freemantle to Chief Magistrate, September 19, 1927; pt. 4, F. N. Doran, Qumbu Magistrate to Chief Magistrate, September 26, 1927.

67. Bradford, *Taste of Freedom*, 225.

68. SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 26/328, statement by Benson Gcina, Harding Natal, January 12, 1928; Natal Chief Inspector of Locations to Natal Chief Native Commissioner, January 23, 1928.

69. Personal communication with Jeff Peires, August 3, 2000. Wellington's "American Negro" prophecies tapped into similar "outside liberator" mythologies that had circulated in central and southern Africa since the nineteenth century. See Ranger, "Myth of the Afro-American Liberator," and Higginson, "Liberating the Captives."

70. SAGA, NTS, 7603 file 25/328, affidavit of Samuel Nkwali, January 5, 1927; James Coombs, Qumbu Sergeant, to SAP District Commandant, January 18, 1927; statement by Milton Majola, Matatiele CID Detective, December 12, 1928; Allen Lea, "Bantu Leadership: The Escapade of Wellington," *East London Dispatch*, November 29, 1927.

71. Wilson, *Reaction to Conquest*, 316–17.

72. Redding, "Government Witchcraft."

73. Wilson, *Reaction to Conquest*, 302.

74. SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 25/328, James Coombs, Qumbu Sergeant, to District Commandant, January 18, 1927; undated affidavit of Frank Nolan Doran; affidavit of Qumbu constable Robert John Waldeck, March 10, 1927; undated affidavit of Umtata CID Detective Joseph Mho; pt. 2, statement by Constable Obed Sigenu, August 8, 1928. Wellington

later claimed to be “the doctor in Israel that will heal you of your leprosy” (statement by Eliezer Mguni, Umtata, January 31, 1929).

75. *Ibid.*, pt. 4, Frank Brownlee, Butterworth Magistrate, to Chief Magistrate, October 14, 1927; D. W. Semple to Qumbu Magistrate, November 26, 1927; Ngqeleni Sergeant to SAP District Commandant, December 10, 1927; SAGA, CA, 1/NKE 58 N1/9/2, Nqamakwe Magistrate to Chief Magistrate, October 29, 1927. According to these documents, the actual day of apocalypse shifted from several dates in April and May to November 7, December 5, and the vague “before Christmas.”

76. SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 25/328, affidavit by Ncanywa Giyose, Nqamakwe, May 27, 1927.

77. *Ibid.*, pt. 4, undated affidavit of Joseph Mho, Umtatata CID Detective; F. N. Doran, Qumbu Magistrate, to Deputy Commissioner of Police, July 5, 1927. In two Qumbu locations known for their strong Wellington allegiance, only 142 of 1,600 Africans submitted to vaccination.

78. SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 26/328, pts. 2 and 3, affidavit of Edgar Lonsdale, Tsolo Magistrate, March 12, 1927.

79. SAGA, CA, 1/TSO 5/1/19, file 3/16/6, statement by Edward Chalmers Bam, March 12, 1927. Bam was an interpreter in the Tsolo court and a perennial Wellington critic.

80. Edgar, “African Educational Protest,” 187; SAGA, NTS, 7603 file 26/328, pt. 4, Nqamakwe Magistrate A. L. Barrett to Chief Magistrate, October 6, 1927; NTS, 7602 file 26/328, pt. 4, undated report of N. A. Mazwai.

81. SAGA, CA, 1/MFE 8/1/14, file 2/12/4, SAP Sergeant to SAP District Commandant, December 19, 1927. The sergeant concluded that “it is not the uncivilized native who is keen on joining the organization but the half educated dressed native.” However, Wellington did attract some non-Christian, nonliterate Africans.

82. SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 26/328 (A), Umtata Police Report, July 6, 1932; Lady Grey constable to Aliwal North Commandant, January 29, 1929.

83. SAGA, CA, 2/SPT 16, CID Report, August 15, 1928.

84. Interview by Robert Vinson of Walter Sisulu, Cape Town, April 26, 1998; 47th Annual Report of the South African Missionary Society (1928), cited in Edgar, “African Educational Protest,” 187.

85. SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 26/328, Magisterial Court documents of Albert Rulashe, June 11, 1928.

86. SAGA, CA, 1/ECO 6/1/99 file 2/16/12, Engcobo district, was but one example of these multiple difficulties. See C. C. Harris to Engcobo Resident Magistrate, November 10, 1927; Engcobo Magistrate to Chief Magistrate, March 27, 1928, and the affidavit of Chief Alex Mgodlwa, May 20, 1929.

87. SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 26/328, statement by Eliezer Mguni, January 31, 1929.

88. *Negro World*, July 30, 1927. The government, after considerable deliberation, decided not to publicize Garvey’s denunciation, not wishing to give free publicity to Garvey himself. See SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 25/328, pt. 4, undated correspondence of the Secretary for Native Affairs to the Chief Magistrate. However, rival organizations like the Cape African National Congress utilized Garvey’s denunciation in their efforts to

discredit Wellington. See the article by E. Mdolomba in *Imvo Zabantsundu*, February 14, 1928, reprinted in SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 25/328, pt. 2, February 17, 1928.

89. SAGA, CA, 2/SPT 16 file N1/9/2, Native Constable Sigenu to Herschel Magistrate August 15, 1928; CA, 1/ELN box 86, South African Police Report, January 24, 1929.

90. SAGA, CA, 1/QBU 2/17, Frank Doran, Qumbu Resident Magistrate, to Robert Welsh, Mount Fletcher Resident Magistrate, February 15, 1927.

91. SAGA, CA, 2/SPT 16 file N1/9/2, statement of Samuel Michael Bennett Ncwana, August 23, 1928.

92. *Ibid.*, Tandinyanoso, "Concerning Herschel," *Umteteli wa Bantu*, April 21, 1928.

93. *Ibid.*, Native Constable Sigenu to Herschel Magistrate, August 15, 1928.

94. SAGA, NTS, 7603 file 25/328 (A), CID reports of April 6, September 5, December 6, 1935.

95. *Ibid.*, CID report, January 3, 1936.

96. SAGA, NTS, 7602 file 26/328 (A), Wellington to Minister of Native Affairs, November 4, 1936.

97. SAGA, NTS, 7603 file 25/328, pt. 4, Magistrate to the Secretary for Native Affairs, December 4, 1939; B. H. Wellington to Minister of Native Affairs June 23, 1944.

98. *Ibid.*, Secretary for Native Affairs to B. H. H. Wellington, December 8, 1947. The interviewer was Lwandle Kunene, who visited his sister, a nun, in Swaziland during the 1970s.

99. Beinart and Bundy, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa*, 199; SAGA, NTS, 1681 file 2/276, pt. 2, affidavit of Melvin Hlamvana, June 13, 1940. The African American liberation myth also extended beyond Garvey. For example, in 1937 the Transkeian Bunga reported that an unnamed ex-Wellingtonite now followed "the Negro Father Divine, an American about whom there was something in the papers yesterday." See NTS, 7602 file 25/328, Minutes of the 1937 United Transkeian General Council.

The Negro Question

The Communist International and Black Liberation
in the Interwar Years

HAKIM ADI

At its inception in 1919 the Third Communist International,¹ to its great credit, proclaimed its commitment to the liberation of Africa and people of African descent worldwide. In so doing, it became, perhaps, the era's sole international white-led movement to adopt an avowedly antiracist platform, and it was certainly the only one formally dedicated to a revolutionary transformation of the global political *and* racial order. The Third Communist International, popularly called the Comintern, presented the Russian Revolution as an epoch-making event, a harbinger to the emancipation of all peoples, including those of African descent. In the period between the two world wars, people of African descent globally found merit in this claim. They lauded the Soviet model of economic development and the Soviet Union's approach to racism and national oppression within its borders and welcomed its opposition to colonialism and racism internationally. Many black activists became members of communist parties or became closely associated with the Comintern. Indeed, the Communist International would play a pivotal role in a number of key events affecting black people globally during the interwar years.

This essay examines the interaction between the Communist International and the black liberation struggle, particularly in the United States, South Africa, Britain, and Britain's colonies in Africa and the Caribbean. It highlights the Comintern's position on the "Negro Question," as black-related issues were then called, an approach that played a pivotal role in the evolution of pan-Africanism, or black internationalism, in the interwar years.² Three broad conclusions emerge from the inquiry. First, black activists were crucial in the development of the Comintern's pan-African approach to the Negro Question.

Second, the Communist International's repeated expressions of support for black liberation empowered black communists on the ground, strengthening their position within various national communist parties. Third, the Communist International, more than any other political movement in the interwar years, emphasized the capacity of black workers for self-organization and for leadership in the struggle for black liberation globally.

The Backdrop

The Comintern's interest in the Negro Question was not entirely without precedent. The nineteenth-century founders of communism recognized the oppression and exploitation of Africa and people of African descent. Karl Marx noted that in addition to the exploitation of America and Asia, the "turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production." The "veiled slavery of the wage-workers in Europe," he continued, "needed for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world."³ Friedrich Engels, Marx's close collaborator, condemned the European colonization of Africa as an enterprise designed to benefit the stock exchange.⁴ Both Marx and Engels took a keen interest in the antislavery struggle in the United States.⁵ Their ideas were developed further by the Russian revolutionary leader V. I. Lenin, who was particularly attentive to the political problems of the imperialist era of the early twentieth century and to national and racial oppression and colonialism. However, a more systematic communist line on the Negro Question only came with the emergence and evolution of the Comintern.

The Comintern was created in the wake of the Russian Revolution in order to build an international communist movement and organize revolution worldwide. Lenin and the founders of the Comintern viewed the anticolonial movement as vital in this struggle against imperialism and therefore called for an alliance between the working-class movement in the advanced capitalist countries and the struggles of the oppressed peoples in the colonies. Accordingly, the *Manifesto of the Communist International to the Proletariat of the Entire World*, the Comintern's foundational document of 1919, stressed global revolutionary solidarity. Asserting that the "emancipation of the colonies is possible only in conjunction with the emancipation of the metropolitan working class," the manifesto called on the "Colonial Slaves of Africa and Asia" to rise up against their oppressors.⁶

The victorious Bolshevik Revolution and the Comintern's call struck a chord throughout the black world. Wilfred Domingo, a U.S.-based radical of Caribbean origin, wrote in 1919,

The question naturally arises: Will Bolshevism accomplish the full freedom of Africa, colonies in which Negroes are the majority, and promote human tolerance and happiness in the United States by the eradication of the causes of such disgraceful occurrences as the Washington and Chicago race riots? The answer is deducible from the analogy of Soviet Russia, a country in which dozens of racial and lingual types have settled their many differences and found a common meeting ground, a country which no longer oppresses colonies, a country from which the lynch rope is banished and in which racial tolerance and peace now exist.⁷

Domingo was hardly alone in his enthusiasm for Bolshevism. Another Caribbean immigrant to the United States, the writer Claude McKay, called the Russian Revolution "the greatest event in the history of humanity," and he, too, hoped the Communist International would make his adopted country "safe for the Negro."⁸ At the organizational level, the Comintern inspired the African Blood Brotherhood, founded in 1919 in New York by Cyril Briggs, yet another Caribbean immigrant. Combining Marxism and Black Nationalism, and claiming a membership of several thousand in the United States and the Caribbean, the brotherhood aimed at the "immediate protection and ultimate liberation of Negroes everywhere."⁹ A number of African Blood Brotherhood members would go on to join the U.S. communist party and to play significant roles in the Communist International.¹⁰

The impact of the Bolshevik Revolution extended to the African continent, too, and it was especially significant among African soldiers who served in the British and French armies during the Great War.¹¹ A military officer from Senegal reportedly lost his life leading a Red cavalry regiment against counterrevolutionary forces in Russia.¹² The Comintern's influence in Africa was most pronounced in South Africa, where the continent's first communist party emerged in 1921. At its founding, the South African party was almost exclusively white, with just one black member, but it broke decisively with the racial divisions then existing and appealed to all workers "white and black" to join together to overthrow the capitalist system.¹³

The Comintern and the Negro Question

158

HAKIM ADI

At its second congress in 1920, the Comintern restated its commitment to nonracial proletarian internationalism and adopted statutes that proclaimed, “In its ranks the white, the yellow and the black-skinned peoples—the working people of the world—are fraternally united.”¹⁴ The oppression faced by African Americans had already been discussed at the Comintern’s first congress in 1919. In 1920 Lenin himself asked for information on “Negroes in America” and specifically demanded “all Communist parties should render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and under-privileged nations (for example, Ireland, the American Negroes, etc.) and in the colonies.”¹⁵ Although there was continuing debate as to whether African Americans constituted a nation, the congress had made a decision that would have important implications for the nexus between the Comintern and black liberation: the African American struggle had been linked to the anticolonial struggles in Africa and elsewhere. The issue of black liberation came up again the following year, in 1921, at the Comintern’s third congress, where the gathering proposed a commission to study “the question about the blacks.”¹⁶

From the standpoint of the Negro Question, however, the fourth congress of 1922 was the most important to date and was a key moment in the development of the Comintern’s revolutionary black internationalism. The congress established a Negro Commission and advanced a “Thesis on the Negro Question” that established Comintern policy in regard to Africa and the diaspora. Easily, the most colorful black personality at the fourth congress was Claude McKay, who had so effusively welcomed the Bolshevik Revolution. Although not formally a member of the U.S. communist party, McKay had a “dominant urge” to make the “magic pilgrimage” to the Soviet Union and was invited to Moscow by the white U.S. communist John Reed.¹⁷ At the congress, McKay criticized the U.S. communist party for ignoring African Americans, arguing that the Negro Question was the central factor in the class struggle in the United States. He urged the Comintern to organize a “Negro Congress,” claiming it would be “amazed at the fine material for Communist work there is in the Negro Race.”¹⁸

The other black person attending the fourth congress from the United States was Otto Huiswoud. Originally from the Caribbean, like McKay, Huiswoud was an official delegate to the congress, representing the U.S. communist party, which he was the first black person to join. Huiswoud was among the first in the Communist International to argue that African Americans could play a

vanguard role in the liberation of black people globally and was subsequently made chairman of the Negro Commission created by the congress.¹⁹

The creation of the Negro Commission inaugurated a more active pan-African policy on the part of the Communist International. The new approach was outlined in the “Thesis on the Negro Question,” approved by the fourth congress, which both Huiswoud and McKay played a key role in drafting. The resolution declared that the colonization of “regions inhabited by black races is becoming the last great problem on the solution of which the further development of capitalism itself depends.” The “Negro problem,” consequently, had “become a vital question of the world revolution.” The Comintern recognized “the international struggle of the Negro Race is a struggle against capitalism and imperialism” and therefore called for “an international organization of the colored people.”²⁰ The Comintern’s concern with the Negro Question was also based on the fear that the colonial powers could use African troops to crush revolutionary attempts in Europe, or even to attack the Soviet Union. Several speakers at the fourth congress, including McKay and Soviet War Commissar Leon Trotsky, alluded to such a possibility.²¹

The emergence of the Comintern’s pan-African policy coincided with a new awakening among black people globally. The black political revival was epitomized by Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and by the Pan-African Congresses, organized by W. E. B. Du Bois. The UNIA, with its Black Nationalist ideology and its mass base, made an especially strong impression on black communists in the United States, including the members of the African Blood Brotherhood, which by this time had become closely linked to the U.S. communist party. At the same time, Garvey, although ideologically opposed to Bolshevism, was not unaffected by the revolutionary events in Russia. He welcomed the emergence of Soviet Russia and mourned the death in 1924 of Lenin, calling him “probably the world’s greatest man” and sending a telegram to Moscow “expressing the sorrow and condolence of the 400,000,000 Negroes of the world.”²²

The Communist International, for its part, implicitly recognized the importance of Garveyism and attempted both to undermine it and to have some influence on its members. The fourth congress of 1922, therefore, pledged both to organize a “general Negro conference or Congress in Moscow” and to support “every form of Negro movement which tends to undermine or weaken capitalism or imperialism.”²³ The Comintern’s approach was fully consistent with that of the African Blood Brotherhood, which vied with the UNIA for leadership of the black masses in the United States and tried to organize among

UNIA members. It was also consistent with the approach of the U.S. communist party, which produced its own pan-African-oriented literature. The brotherhood's program also anticipated many of the points in the Communist International's "Thesis on the Negro Question," including an insistence on the vanguard role of African Americans in global black liberation, the view advanced at the fourth congress by Huiswoud, who was also a member of the brotherhood. From its inception, the brotherhood had announced that "Negroes in the United States—both native and foreign born—are destined to play a vital part in a powerful world movement for Negro liberation."²⁴

Not all communists, however, agreed that African Americans were best placed to lead the movement for black liberation internationally. David Ivon Jones, a white South African communist who had shown a strong interest in the Negro Question, insisted on the primacy of the African continent. "Negro emancipation," he declared, "is not an American question; it is a question of Africa."²⁵ But because at that time there were so few black communists in Africa, the Comintern accepted Huiswoud's countervailing argument that "the history of the Negro in America fits him for an important role in the liberation struggle of the entire African race."²⁶ Accordingly, African American members of the U.S. communist party were sent to the Moscow-based University of the Toilers of the East, an institution that trained revolutionaries from colonial countries and oppressed nations.²⁷

As part of its pan-African policy, the Communist International pressed its affiliates in the imperialist countries to encourage the development of "revolutionary movements" in the African colonies. Officially, both the British and French communist parties claimed to do just that. In the early 1920s, the French party became active in Africa, especially in North Africa, establishing branches in Algeria and Tunisia. The Comintern instructed other parties to follow the French example and especially to publish revolutionary literature in African languages, so as "to establish a closer contact with the oppressed colonial masses."²⁸ The British party, despite its pronouncements to the contrary, showed little real interest in organizing in Britain's African colonies. The French party also was found wanting on the Negro Question. The neglect earned both parties rebukes at the fifth congress of the Communist International in 1924: the French for not doing enough to organize Africans living in France, and the British for not openly demanding independence for the colonies.²⁹ The fifth congress, consequently, established a Negro Propaganda Commission and again discussed organizing a special Negro Congress.

Yet no such meeting ever took place. Partly this was because there were numerous logistical problems associated with bringing delegates from the colonies to Moscow, where, it had been envisaged, the congress would be held. The European communist parties also did little or nothing to mobilize black delegates. Then the task of organizing such a congress was given to the U.S. communist party, which largely failed to take up its responsibilities. It was hoped that the American Negro Labor Congress, which was organized by the U.S. communist party in Chicago in 1925, would lead the work to convene the World Negro Congress, but it, too, failed to make the necessary breakthrough. An international conference of “Negro workers” was eventually held under the auspices of the Comintern’s trade union center, the Red International of Labor Unions, or Profintern, in Hamburg, Germany, in 1930.

The World Anti-Colonial Conference and the League Against Imperialism

Meanwhile, in 1927, the Comintern sponsored an international conference that had important implications for the Negro Question. Held in Brussels, Belgium, the gathering was called the World Anti-Colonial Conference. Its most important outcome was the creation of the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence, a broad-based anticolonial organization, often led by communists, but which worked with all those forces opposed to colonialism and imperialism. Nearly 200 delegates, representing all the world’s major colonial regions, attended the World Anti-Colonial Conference. Representatives from the African world included Lamine Senghor, a member of both the French communist party and the Paris-based Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre; Isaac Wallace-Johnson, head of the Sierra Leone Railway Workers Union; Josiah Gumede and James La Guma of the African National Congress of South Africa; and Richard B. Moore, representing the American Negro Labor Congress and the Garvey movement.³⁰

The Negro Question featured prominently at the World Anti-Colonial Conference. Moore played a particularly active role in the proceedings, presenting the “Common Resolution on the Negro Question,” which demanded “complete freedom of the peoples of Africa and of African origin.” Toward this end, the resolution called for “the organization of the economic and political power” of black people and for a global struggle against “imperialist ideology.”³¹ The conference was an important site for networking, allowing African

activists to consult with one another and to learn from the wider experience of the Communist International. La Guma and Gumede, the South African delegates, along with Sierra Leone's Wallace-Johnson, subsequently visited the Soviet Union. On returning to South Africa, Gumede famously proclaimed, "I have seen the new world to come, where it has already begun. I have been to the new Jerusalem."³² More broadly, La Guma's participation in the World Anti-Colonial Conference, and especially his visit to Moscow, would prove vital to the subsequent development of the South African communist party, in which he became a leading figure.³³

The Sixth Congress of the Communist International

During the sixth congress of the Comintern, held in 1928, there were important developments in policy on the Negro Question in general and with regard to South Africa and the United States in particular.³⁴ The sixth congress was held at a time when the Comintern was already in the process of adopting a new political line which emphasized that the world was entering a new period of economic and political crisis in which there would be an increasing likelihood of wars and an intensification of the revolutionary struggle both in the imperialist countries and in the colonies. The Negro Question, affecting as it did large parts of Africa and the Caribbean, became even more important, while in those areas in which communist parties operated, such as the United States and South Africa, the need to "bolshevize" the parties and rid them of any manifestations of "white chauvinism" became even more urgent. The policies adopted during this "Third Period" also called for a less conciliatory approach to rival political ideologies, leaders, and organizations that were often condemned as "reformist," such as Garvey and the UNIA. In part however, the changes in policy that occurred during 1928 had been discussed for some years before and had often been urged by black communists themselves. One of these changes was a much greater emphasis on "Negro workers," which consequently led to the Negro Question becoming a major concern for the Profintern.

The sixth congress adopted two resolutions, or "theses," on black self-determination in the United States and South Africa, respectively. The thesis on the "Black Belt" of the United States, that is, those southern states and parts thereof in which African Americans formed a majority of the population, argued that they constituted a nation, with the right to govern themselves and to demand independence from the rest of the United States if they so wished. The other thesis advocated what was termed a Native or Black Republic in

South Africa, that is, South Africans should strive for what was later termed black majority rule.

That the Comintern played the decisive role in the adoption of the new line there may be little doubt. It was not, however, simply a matter of centralized imposition. Black delegates to the sixth congress actively participated in the debates on the Negro Question and played a leading role in drafting and advocating the two theses, alongside delegates from the U.S., South African, and other communist parties. The more voluble black participants included South Africa's James La Guma³⁵ and the African Americans James Ford, who later stood as a vice presidential candidate for the U.S. communist party, and Harry Haywood, then a student at the University of the Toilers of the East. Indeed, for some black communists, such as La Guma and Haywood, the theses on self-determination were an empowering tool, forcing as they did the Negro Question to the center of communist policy not just in the United States and South Africa but throughout the international communist movement.

In South Africa, black self-determination meant increased Africanization of the party, the membership as well as the leadership. The Native Republic thesis specifically instructed the South African party to "orientate itself chiefly upon the native toiling masses," noting that "the Party leadership must be developed in the same sense."³⁶ The Comintern created all the conditions for African ascendancy in the South African communist movement and for a policy that put Africans at the center of the struggle for liberation in that country. Ultimately, however, it was up to the South African communists to Africanize the party.

The Native Republic thesis met considerable resistance from South African communists, showing that the notion of complete Comintern hegemony, or alleged domination by Moscow, is often at variance with the reality. In 1928 many leaders of the South African party still regarded white workers as the major force for change in the society. Other South African communists, white as well as black, rejected the new policy as "Garveyism," despite its critical stance toward that movement, and as endorsing the Garveyite slogan of "Africa for the Africans," a notion they had long opposed. However, supporters of the Native Republic thesis, such as La Guma, enjoyed the strong support of the Communist International. In the deliberations before the sixth congress, Comintern president Nikolai Bukharin had declared that the Comintern "must say very clearly that in the struggle between the Negroes and the whites that it is on the side of the Negroes."³⁷ Yet such unequivocal endorsement from the

top failed to quell the dissent within the South African party, which continued for several years.

The situation in the United States mirrored that in South Africa, with the Black Belt thesis causing as much contentiousness as did the Native Republic thesis. African Americans, the thesis asserted, were not just a racial minority but also a “nation within a nation,” a people for whom racism was a “device of national oppression.”³⁸ Within the U.S. communist party, Harry Haywood became the most ardent champion of black self-determination, defending it against its many critics, white and black alike.

Haywood’s position had ample precedence in the African American experience. The notion that black people in the United States constituted a “nation within a nation” had been advanced since the nineteenth century by black writers, such as Martin Delany. Well before the Comintern did so, in 1917 Cyril Briggs, the founder of the African Blood Brotherhood, also had demanded self-determination and a “separate political existence” within the United States for African Americans.³⁹

The Black Belt thesis, as Mark Solomon has noted, highlighted several key issues: the right of African Americans to decide their own future and the revolutionary potential of the black struggle in the United States. At the same time, the Black Belt thesis provided a new basis for the struggle against racism and for encouraging a new approach and reevaluation of African American history and culture.⁴⁰ The result, according to Robin Kelley, was a new chapter in the development of the U.S. communist party: for the first time, communist ideas began to circulate among African Americans in the southern states, precisely the area where the struggle for civil rights later emerged.⁴¹ Hosea Hudson, an African American communist in the South during the 1930s, remembered the discussions about the right to self-determination and how that concept might empower black people to demand “democratic rights” in the United States. “In the present set-up,” ran the black collective wisdom, as related by Hudson, “everybody supposed to have the same rights, but we didn’t have no rights.”⁴²

The Native Republic and Black Belt theses were therefore important developments in the Comintern’s pan-African program that continued to be based on the perceived “common tie of interest” that linked people of African descent throughout the world. After the sixth congress, the Negro Question became an even more central concern for the international communist movement, with greater concern being expressed regarding the Negro Question in Africa, South America, and Europe. Black communists were in a stronger position,

too, and some, like Haywood and Ford, rose to influential positions within the Comintern.

The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers

Consistent with the resolutions of the sixth congress, in 1928 the Communist International also created a new body to organize black workers: the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW). This organization was formally part of the Profintern. Led initially by James Ford, the ITUCNW was assigned the “task of drawing Negro workers into the existing trade unions, of further creating new trade unions and of unifying the wide mass of Negro workers on the basis of the class struggle.”⁴³ Toward that end, the committee called a meeting in Hamburg, Germany, in 1930, the First International Conference of Negro Workers. This conference was the closest the Comintern came to organizing a World Negro Congress, and it marked an important landmark in its approach to the Negro Question.

Although colonial governments barred a number of delegates from attending, the First International Conference of Negro Workers featured representatives from the various parts of the black world, including Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean.⁴⁴ The relatively large number of delegates from the African continent was especially noteworthy and reflected Comintern concern for a much greater focus on Africa. By contrast, the movements that competed with the Communist International for the allegiance of black people globally, Garveyism and the Du Boisian Pan-African Congresses, were both dominated by Africans of the diaspora. The participants in the First International Conference of Negro Workers included several figures destined to rise to prominence in pan-Africanism and in the anticolonial struggle in Africa, including Isaac Wallace-Johnson of Sierra Leone and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and the conference was, in many ways, the model for the 1945 Pan-African Congress organized by George Padmore. The conference reaffirmed the Comintern’s position on the proletarian foundations of black liberation, and it elected a new executive committee “to give concrete aid and assistance to all Negro workers and to help them build up class unions in their countries.”⁴⁵

The First International Conference of Negro Workers was also a major event in the career of George Padmore, who afterward was for several years a top official in the Comintern’s black internationalist work. From 1930 to 1933, the Trinidadian-born Padmore edited the *Negro Worker*, the official organ

of the ITUCNW. Padmore personally wrote many of the articles in the *Negro Worker*, which was distributed globally, often by black seamen, and sometimes disguised as a religious tract.⁴⁶ Simultaneously, he authored a number of related pamphlets, most famously *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers*.⁴⁷

These and other publications of the ITUCNW chronicled the struggles of black workers in Africa, the United States, the Caribbean, South America, and Europe. They consistently identified the main enemy of the “Negro toilers” as British, French, and U.S. imperialism, while presenting the Soviet Union as the “champion of the oppressed.” In this era, the height of the Comintern’s Third Period, with its strong opposition to “reformism,” readers of the *Negro Worker* also were warned against the dangers posed by a host of “misleaders,” among them the British Labour Party, the American Federation of Labor, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa, South Africa’s leading black labor group. Garveyism, however, was presented as the most dangerous form of “ideological deceit,” guilty of denying the class struggle and the “possibility of the revolutionary struggle of the Negro masses for self-determination.”⁴⁸ Perhaps most importantly, though, the *Negro Worker* offered practical advice to those directly involved in struggles, suggesting concrete demands around which to rally. In addition to disseminating communist ideology, then, the paper served as something of a collective organizer, helping to foster a sense of unity of struggle throughout Africa and the African Diaspora.⁴⁹ It is a tribute to its effectiveness, or perceived effectiveness, that the authorities in various African and Caribbean colonies banned the *Negro Worker*.

The Caribbean

The ITUCNW, along with the *Negro Worker*, took an important interest in the Caribbean. Indeed, the committee’s founders included a Guadeloupean and a Cuban,⁵⁰ and, partly through Padmore’s contacts, it maintained a strong influence in Trinidad.⁵¹ In the Caribbean, the ITUCNW organized among the workers in Jamaica, British Guiana, Grenada, Haiti, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, and the Dutch colonies.⁵² The *Negro Worker*, too, carried many articles on the region. It was especially attentive to the 1932 visit to Moscow of Vivian Henry and Hubert Critchlow, respectively the leading trade unionists in Trinidad and British Guiana (now Guyana).⁵³

Even before the formation of the ITUCNW, the Communist International had paid attention to the Caribbean. In the late 1920s, the U.S. communist

party, which had been given responsibility for the region by the Communist International, dispatched Otto Huiswoud and Cyril Briggs to the Caribbean.⁵⁴ During the 1930s, the U.S. communist party was able to strengthen its links with workers in Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico and with the communist party in Cuba.

The only communist party in the Caribbean was founded in Cuba in 1925 and was initially dominated by European immigrants. Initially there was some reluctance to recruit large numbers of black members to the Cuban communist party, which had a low estimation of the revolutionary potential of immigrant workers from Haiti and Jamaica, who were described as having “a cultural level below that of Cuban workers and no tradition of struggle or organization.”⁵⁵ However, after 1929 the Cuban communist party, partly under the influence of the Comintern and the U.S. communist party, began to pay much more attention to the recruitment of black members, especially among the sugar workers. By the time of the second congress of the party, in 1934, several black workers had risen to leadership positions. The congress discussed the necessity of winning over the “Negro toilers” to the revolution and attacked any manifestation of “discrimination against Negroes.” The congress also discussed the need for “greater clarification of the Negro Question as a national rather than a ‘racial’ question typified in the slogan for self-determination of the Negroes in the Black Belt of Oriente Province.”⁵⁶ Although the Cuban communist party evidently had some weaknesses during its early years, even then its influence spread throughout the Caribbean. One of its members was a Jamaican, Cleveland Antonio King, who is reported to have introduced the communist ideology to Jamaica.⁵⁷

Britain and the Negro Welfare Association

Much of the Comintern’s work on the Negro Question centered on the British Empire, since Britain was the world’s leading imperialist power, with colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, among other places. Yet the British communist party, to the consternation of the Communist International, consistently resisted all entreaties to engage seriously in anticolonial agitation in Africa and the Caribbean or among black people in Britain.⁵⁸ The void was filled, to some extent, by the Negro Welfare Association, which was founded in London in 1931. The association was linked to the Communist International through a number of organizations, most importantly the ITUCNW and the League Against Imperialism. With a disinterested British communist party, the Negro

Welfare Association assumed the task of communist organizing among black people in Britain and in some of the British colonies. One of the association's more important constituencies consisted of African and Caribbean seamen in the major British ports, such as London and Cardiff.⁵⁹ Black communists, once again, were pivotal to this endeavor, which was spearheaded by individuals like the Barbadians Chris Jones, who led a committee of black seamen in London, and Arnold Ward, who became secretary of the Negro Welfare Association.⁶⁰

Although charged with organizing blacks and effectively a branch of the ITUCNW, the Negro Welfare Association initially was led by white communists. Its goal was unmistakably pan-Africanist: "to work for the complete liberation and independence of all Negroes who are suffering from capitalist exploitation and imperialist domination . . . [and] to analyze, expose and combat capitalist exploitation and oppression in Africa, the West Indies, the other Negro colonies as well as in the USA."⁶¹ Certainly all the leading black communists in Britain were active in the Negro Welfare Association. So, too, were a number of other black activists who would later become key figures in the anticolonial struggle in Africa, such as Jomo Kenyatta and Isaac Wallace-Johnson, both of whom we have already met in association with Communist International-related activities.

The Negro Welfare Association took up a variety of issues, among them racist legislation in South Africa, land alienation in Kenya, and self-determination in the Caribbean. Most significantly, however, the association, together with the League Against Imperialism, championed the anticolonial struggle in West Africa, a focus that was influenced by two of its most important interlocutors: the British-based West African Students' Union and the Sierra Leonean Isaac Wallace-Johnson.⁶² The Negro Welfare Association's anticolonial efforts had both a parliamentary and an extra-parliamentary focus. Its allies in Parliament were kept fully briefed on West African and other colonial issues, enabling them to question official policy. Outside Parliament, the association appealed directly to the British working class to support the anticolonial cause, organized among black people throughout Britain, and established important political links and networks among black people globally.

Scottsboro and Ethiopia

Two events were particularly significant to the development of the black international in the 1930s, namely the Scottsboro case in the United States and

the invasion of Ethiopia by fascist Italy. The Communist International was centrally involved in both.

In 1931, nine African American youths were arrested in Scottsboro, Alabama, on bogus charges of raping two white women aboard a freight train. Predictably, the ensuing kangaroo trial resulted in the conviction of all nine defendants, with all but one being immediately sentenced to death. The trial was followed by a bitter struggle over the appeals process. The NAACP, which preferred a fight confined to the U.S. judicial system and was initially reluctant to become involved, eventually lost control of the case to the communist-aligned International Labor Defense, with its call for a broad-based global campaign against the oppression of African Americans. The Communist International turned the case of the Scottsboro Boys, as the youths were dubbed, into a metaphor for racial injustice in the United States, and its campaign has been widely credited with saving the lives of the defendants. The campaign, from 1931 to 1937, was a huge international event: "Workers and activists rallied in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, across Europe and the United States, in parts of the British Empire and its dominions, and in the farming collectives of Russia."⁶³ Ada Wright, mother of two of the Scottsboro Boys, became a symbol of the campaign, both in the United States and in Europe, her speaking tours largely sponsored by the international communist movement.

The campaign on behalf of the Scottsboro Boys offered the Communist International an opportunity to raise other aspects of the global Negro Question. Black communists and their allies, especially, were inclined to link the Scottsboro case to the anticolonial struggle in Africa.⁶⁴ Indeed, the Scottsboro campaign helped the Communist International to expand its pan-African work in multiple ways. The International Labor Defense, in particular, benefited from the goodwill created by its defense of the condemned youths. By the time of its first congress in 1932, the Comintern's legal arm had established branches in South Africa and Madagascar, while delegates from Trinidad, British Guiana, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Liberia addressed the congress.⁶⁵

In 1935, at a time when communists in the United States were finally uniting with the NAACP over the Scottsboro campaign, fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia, the only African country that had successfully defended its independence against European colonial invasion. The attack on a largely defenseless Ethiopia became an even bigger pan-African cause célèbre than the Scottsboro case. Ethiopia, long a symbol of hope for black people throughout the world, now faced national extinction. Black people globally rallied to its defense, a struggle in which communists played a key role.

The Communist International, and especially blacks in the Communist International, vigorously supported the Ethiopian cause. Appearing at the seventh (and last) Comintern congress in 1935, just a couple of months before the invasion began, the African American James Ford strongly condemned Italy's designs on Ethiopia. The clouds of war gathering over Ethiopia, Ford warned, signaled a wider fascist threat to world peace. Consequently, "the international proletariat must regard the struggle of Ethiopia as a just war, as a national defensive war, and support the Ethiopian people."⁶⁶

As Ford spoke, the seventh congress was debating the need for the broadest unity against the growing danger of fascism and war. It approved a new policy advocating a broad alliance of all progressive and democratic forces against the growing threat of fascism, represented most dangerously by Germany, Italy, and Japan but also by elements within the ruling circles in many other countries. In particular the Comintern emphasized the need for the unity of the working class against fascism, and it even appealed to the social-democratic Second (Amsterdam) International, an organization it had previously denounced, to join it in opposing Italian aggression in Ethiopia.⁶⁷

In the United States, African American communists played an active role in the various Ethiopian defense committees, just as they did in the Scottsboro campaign. The campaign in support of Ethiopia, in turn, helped to create the conditions for the emergence, in 1936, of the historic National Negro Congress. Formed on the initiative of the U.S. communist party, the National Negro Congress, which elected A. Philip Randolph as its president, was one of the broadest political bodies in African American history, with more than 500 organizations represented, including the NAACP, the Urban League, and many churches and lodges.⁶⁸

Everywhere in the black world, people rallied in defense of Ethiopia. In Trinidad, the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association spearheaded a "Hands off Abyssinia" campaign, just as it had previously organized support for the Scottsboro Boys and for Angelo Herndon, an African American communist convicted of "insurrection" and sentenced to twenty years on a Georgia chain gang for leading a protest.⁶⁹

On the African continent, at a meeting in Kenya organized in the Kikuyu Central Association, Kenyans vowed to "march to Ethiopia to defend their brothers."⁷⁰ In West Africa, Wallace-Johnson, then based in the Gold Coast, took part in organizing an Ethiopian Defense Committee. Meanwhile in South Africa, the communist party organized "Hands off Ethiopia" demonstrations,

even persuading dockworkers to refuse to load ships with supplies destined for the Italian military.⁷¹

In Britain, the Negro Welfare Association took up the Ethiopian cause. In a resolution proposed by Jomo Kenyatta, the association emphasized the symbolic importance of Ethiopia's struggle against fascist aggression. "Millions of colonial and semi-colonial people in Africa and throughout the East," the resolution asserted, "are gaining strength from the magnificent fight which is being put up by the Abyssinians to maintain their independence."⁷²

Conclusion

Although often overlooked, the Communist International played an important role in the development of black internationalism during the critical interwar period, leaving a legacy for succeeding decades. One important aspect of this legacy, for example, was the influence of communism on major African American writers, such as Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, and Ralph Ellison.⁷³ As the evidence demonstrates, the Comintern advanced the black struggle globally, both directly and indirectly. The Comintern established two organizations, the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence and the ITUCNW, along with its journal, the *Negro Worker*, that helped to advance the black liberation struggle. Consistently, the Comintern, in which black communists played a key role, took the lead on the Negro Question, variously cajoling and directing the national parties to put the issue of black liberation on their agendas and empowering black communists on the ground. The experience of Hosea Hudson in the U.S. South during the 1930s is instructive. The communist press, he noted, "was always carrying something about the liberation of black people, something about Africa, something about the South, Scottsboro, etc. etc. We would read this paper and this would give us great courage."⁷⁴ The post-World War II struggle for civil rights benefited from the fruit of such courage.

In other areas of the black world, the Comintern's black internationalism provided similar inspiration. For example, despite a ban on its organ, the *Negro Worker*, the ITUCNW exercised considerable influence on various Caribbean labor and mass movements. This was especially the case in the British colonies, where large-scale strikes and anticolonial rebellions broke out in the late 1930s. Labor leaders such as Vivian Henry in Trinidad and Hubert Critchlow in British Guiana were closely associated with the ITUCNW, with Critchlow

serving as a contributing editor to the *Negro Worker*. In Trinidad, the Negro Welfare and Cultural Association, which was closely linked to the ITUCNW, played a leading role in the labor rebellions of 1937.⁷⁵ The leaders of the association included Jim Headley, formerly a member of the youth league of the U.S. communist party, and Rupert Gittens, who had been deported from France on account of his association with the French communist party.⁷⁶

In the British West African colonies, the ITUCNW also influenced the budding labor movements, which would play key roles in the post–World War II political events. West African labor militants like Wallace-Johnson and the Gambian E. F. Small had close links with the Comintern, as did the Gold Coast’s Bankole Awoonor-Renner, who was one of the first continental Africans to attend the Communist International’s University of the Toilers of the East.

The impact of the Comintern can be seen, too, in various pan-African networks that emerged during the interwar years. Thus although George Padmore broke with the Communist International,⁷⁷ he continued to use the contacts and connections he had forged while in the Comintern in his postcommunist, pan-Africanist career, including associations with Jomo Kenyatta and Wallace-Johnson. The Comintern’s black internationalist perspective created the conditions for the new Marxist-influenced pan-Africanism that emerged during the 1930s and reached its height with the convening of the 1945 Pan-African Congress by Padmore and others.

While largely unknown in Britain today, the Negro Welfare Association leader Arnold Ward was a significant figure in the network of black communists that stretched across Europe, the Americas, and Africa in the 1930s. It was Ward, apparently, who first interested Paul Robeson, one of the most famous African American communists of the 1930s and beyond, in the Soviet Union and communism.⁷⁸

The networks established by black communists and the Comintern endured for many years. In 1945, for example, a British-based communist, Desmond Buckle of the Gold Coast, drafted a pan-African document to present to the founding conference of the United Nations. The text, *Manifesto on Africa in the Post-War World*, was delivered by a group of British and U.S. pan-Africanists under Padmore’s leadership. In that same year, 1945, Buckle also represented the Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions, a major black South African labor group, at the inaugural meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions.⁷⁹

Most importantly, perhaps, the Communist International powerfully reinforced the internationalist and revolutionary perspectives in the black liberation struggle—perspectives that offered a vision of a world in which working and oppressed people would cast off the yoke of oppression and take control of their own destinies.

NOTES

1. The International Workingmen's Association, or First International, in which Marx and Engels played an important role, was established in 1864 in London. The Second International was formed in Paris in 1889 but was split in two when most of its members refused to condemn the Great War.

2. Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*.

3. Marx and Engels, *On Colonialism*, 258, 268.

4. *Ibid.*, 273.

5. Marx and Engels, *Civil War in the United States*.

6. Daniels, *Documentary History*, 2:89.

7. Quoted in James, *Holding aloft the Banner*, 165.

8. Quoted in *ibid.*, 166.

9. *Summary of the Program and Aims of the African Blood Brotherhood*. See also Hill, "Cyril Briggs."

10. On Briggs and the African Blood Brotherhood, see James, *Holding aloft the Banner*, 155–84.

11. Gromyko and Kosukhin, *October Revolution and Africa*.

12. Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa*, 95.

13. Johns, *Raising the Red Flag*, 111–27. See also Drew, *Discordant Comrades*, 46–57, and Johns, "Birth of the Communist Party."

14. Quoted in Bunting, introduction.

15. Lenin, *Selected Works*, 3:435.

16. Davidson, Filatova, Gorodnov, and Johns, *South Africa and the Communist International*, 63.

17. McKay, *Long Way*, 153.

18. Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 41.

19. *Ibid.*, 42.

20. Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa*, 130.

21. *Ibid.*, 128–29.

22. Quoted in Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 105.

23. Kanet, "Comintern," 90.

24. *Summary of the Program and Aims of the African Blood Brotherhood*.

25. Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa*, 131.

26. *Ibid.*, 133.

27. Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 42–43. For more on black students at the University of

the Toilers, see McClellan, "Africans and Black Americans." For the experience of a black alumnus, see Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 148–76.

28. Quoted in Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa*, 138.

29. *Ibid.*, 140.

30. Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*, 326.

31. "Statement at the Congress of the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence," in Turner, Turner, and Turner, *Richard B. Moore*, 143–46.

32. Quoted in Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 36.

33. Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, 389–90.

34. Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa*, 160–75; Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 68–95; Kanet, "Comintern," 102–11; Berland, "Emergence of the Communist Perspective"; Kelley, "Third International"; Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 218–81.

35. La Guma and Adhikari, *Jimmy La Guma*; Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*.

36. For the resolution on "The South African Question," see South African Communist Party, *South African Communists Speak*, 91–97.

37. Davidson, Filatova, Gorodnov, and Johns, *South Africa and the Communist International*, 155.

38. Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 218.

39. Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, 323.

40. Solomon, *Cry Was Unity*, 86–87.

41. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 13.

42. Painter, *Narrative of Hosea Hudson*, 105.

43. International Conference of Negro Workers, *Report of Proceedings and Decisions*, 9.

44. International Conference of Negro Workers, *Report of Proceedings and Decisions*.

See also McClellan, "George Padmore and the Hamburg Conference."

45. International Conference of Negro Workers, *Report of Proceedings and Decisions*, 40.

46. On the *Negro Worker's* disguises, see the introduction by Cohen in Nzula, Potekhin, and Zusmanovich, *Forced Labour*, 14.

47. Padmore, *Life and Struggles*.

48. "Special Resolution on Work among Negroes in the US and the Colonies: Adopted by the 5th Congress of the RILU," *International Negro Workers Review* 1–2 (February 1931): 19.

49. See, for example, Padmore, "The Fight for Bread," *Negro Worker* 6–7 (June–July 1933): 2–4, and "To Our Brothers in Kenya," *Negro Worker* 8–9 (August–September 1933): 19–25.

50. Sherwood, "Comintern and the Colonies," 6.

51. Reddock, *Women, Labour, and Politics*, 108.

52. "Plan of Work of the Negro TU Committee for February–July 1932," Library of Congress, Records of the CPUSA (hereafter LOC), 515/234/3038.

53. "Report of Negro Workers' Leader on Soviet Russia," *Negro Worker* 4–5 (April–May 1933): 28–31.

54. "Meeting of Negro Department," November 22, 1929, LOC, 515/130/1685.

55. Quoted in Carr, "Caribbean Backwater," 238.

56. "Cuban Workers Strengthen their Organisations," *Negro Worker* 4, no. 3 (July 1934), 30. See also Carr, "Caribbean Backwater."
57. Hart, *Rise and Organise*, 18.
58. Sherwood, "The Comintern."
59. Squires, "Communists and the Fight against Racism."
60. Sherwood, "Racism and Resistance." See also O'Connell to the Editor, *Negro Worker* 4-5 (April-May 1933): 24-25, and *Report of the Annual Conference of the NWA*, October 25, 1935, LOC, 515/301/3943.
61. Report of the International Secretariat of LAI, League Against Imperialism, London, 1935, Bridgeman Papers (DBN 25), University of Hull Archives, U.K.
62. On Wallace-Johnson, see Spitzer and Denzer, "I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson and the West African Youth League," pts. 1 and 2.
63. Miller, Pennybacker, and Rosenhaft, "Mother Ada Wright," 388.
64. Squires, "Communists and the Fight against Racism," 15-16.
65. Thomas Jackson, "The International Defence and Negro Peoples," *Negro Worker* 2-3 (February-March 1933): 9.
66. Ford, "Defense of the Ethiopian People," 159-60.
67. Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa*, 259.
68. Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 447-62.
69. Reddock, *Women, Labour, and Politics*, 108-10.
70. *Report of Annual Conference of the NWA*, October 20, 1935, LOC, 515/301/3943.
71. South African Communist Party, *South African Communists Speak*, 124-25.
72. *Negro Worker* 5, no. 2 (December 1935): 8.
73. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left*, 1-13.
74. Painter, *Narrative of Hosea Hudson*, 102.
75. Lewis, *Labour in the West Indies*, 31.
76. Reddock, *Women, Labour, and Politics*, 135-36.
77. Padmore left the Comintern in 1933. He was formally expelled the following year for "contacts with a provocateur, for contacts with bourgeois organisations on the question of Liberia, for an incorrect attitude to the national question (instead of class unity striving towards race unity)." See "Expulsion of George Padmore from the Revolutionary Movement," *Negro Worker* 4, no. 2 (June 1934): 14. See also "A Betrayer of the Negro Struggle," *Negro Worker* 4, no. 3 (July 1934), and Helen Davis, "The Rise and Fall of George Padmore as a Revolutionary Fighter," *Negro Worker* 4, no. 4 (August 1934): 15. Padmore published his own version of events in "An Open Letter to Earl Browder," *The Crisis*, October 1935, 302, 305. For Browder's response, see "Earl Browder Replies," *The Crisis*, December 1935, 372. It is interesting that for many years afterward Padmore continued to defend the Soviet Union's approach to the "national question." See, for example, his *How Russia Transformed Her Colonial Empire*.
78. Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 628 n. 59.
79. *World News and Views* 41 (1945): 324-25; Adi and Sherwood, *1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress*, 29 n. 21.

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PART 3



Tupac Shakur (1971–1996). Tupac Amaru Shakur, born in prison to a Black Panther mother, became an icon of resistance to black youth worldwide. He is shown here as lived by a hip hop fan at a rapero performance in Havana, Cuba, 2006. (Courtesy of Marc D. Perry)

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Waiting for the Black Gandhi

Satyagraha and Black Internationalism

VIJAY PRASHAD

Mohandas Gandhi, the Indian apostle of satyagraha, had the kind of serenity that disarmed even his fiercest opponents. Visitors came away overawed by his presence. His quiet demeanor yet sharp political analysis, while comforting to his allies, drove his enemies to distraction. Gandhi, in his lifetime, came to symbolize a new kind of politics, but his tactics had the weight of history behind them. The elements that distinguished Gandhianism — marches and fasts, disobedience and strikes — had little novelty. What was decidedly new was that Gandhi spoke of peace and compromise even as his people fought an unarmed war, and that at a time when workers' movements were gaining strength and demanding everything. Trade unionism and Bolshevism gained ground and terrified the owners of property and the managers of colonial states. Gandhi, by comparison, seemed serenely safe. In his first years in India, and especially during the Ahmedabad troubles of February–March 1918, he disavowed strikes and workers' organizations, earning the trust of the owners of property and the distrust of the radicals. Workers' groups, the district magistrate wrote, "assailed [Gandhi] bitterly for being a friend of the mill owners, riding in their motorcars, and eating sumptuously with them, while the weavers were starving."¹ Gandhi may not have been unacceptable to the captains of industry, but that does not detract from the sheer force of the movement he engendered, a movement that led him every bit as much as he led it.

In the 1920s and 1930s, as the Indian freedom struggle became synonymous with Gandhi, colonized and oppressed people in the darker nations took notice. From Jamaica, African America, and southern Africa, among other places, came the query, Where is our Black Gandhi? Will our Black Gandhi come?² Implicit in such queries was a demand for a replication, across the globe, of

the type of anti-imperialist mass movement that Gandhi is believed to have fashioned in India.

Yet Gandhi was no unalloyed radical. Given a choice, the powers would much rather have dealt with him than with Lenin. Both encouraged mass revolt against injustice, both rallied the people for a permanent revolution against imperialism, but something very important set them apart. While Lenin embodied the socialist and communist specter, Marxism and all that it implied in the way of an assault on property, Gandhi symbolized the Orient. The way he dressed, the way he spoke, and the language he used to describe his tactics (some of them quite similar to those of the Bolsheviks) all afforded Gandhi and his movement some legitimacy in certain respectable circles. Instead of being a war on property, his struggle was seen as the spiritual work of an Eastern seer, one more interested in the purification of Indian society than in the radical transformation of the world. That Gandhi made the requisite noises against working-class-led strikes in Ahmedabad in 1918 offered further reassurance that this Oriental seer had more elevated goals than did the Bolsheviks.³

Gandhi thus provided many social movements the cover to do just what they might have done anyway, nicely shrouded in the cloak of Eastern pacifism. Nonviolent activism had a very long trajectory, from ancient times onward. However, while most political movements used nonviolent *tactics*, Gandhi raised nonviolence to a moral ethic, to a strategy with a vision for re-creating the world. Other political traditions shared the Gandhian adherence to strikes, fasts, and other nonviolent forms of protest, but without rejecting other tactics, such as sabotage, destruction of property, and militant confrontation with the police. Gandhianism alone affirmed that the end of peace could only be attained through the means of peace. No violent means, according to the Gandhians, could possibly create a nonviolent society. Violence, in this scheme of things, breeds violence.

The black international engaged aspects of Gandhianism that centered on whether it was possible to entirely eschew violence when confronted with an extremely violent colonial or racist regime, such as those in southern Africa and the southern United States. Could nonviolence, as a hard standard, succeed in bringing about popular mobilization when racist violence had shattered the confidence of a people? Would the oppressed not need a violent revolution to restore their sense of self? Despite occasional bouts of violence, the bulk of the population throughout most of the black world came to a simple conclusion: unless forced into guerrilla warfare by a ruthless adversary, it was far better to engage the last ounce of goodness in the enemy through moral nonviolent

confrontation. That is the genius of Gandhianism that appealed to many in the black international.

Gandhianism and African America: The Initial Phase

In March 1924, *The Crisis*, the official organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a journal edited by W. E. B. Du Bois, published a short, characteristically pungent note from the African American sociologist E. Franklin Frazier. Titled “The Negro and Non-Resistance,” Frazier’s piece deplored the tendency among “a growing number of colored people” to “repudiate the use of force on the part of their brethren in defending their firesides, on the grounds that it is contrary to the example of non-resistance set by Jesus.” Drawing from the biblical injunction to “turn the other cheek” to violence, the Christian critics of violent and direct resistance enjoined the black masses that those who do injustice to them must be met with love. The lynchers, being human, might also grow to love black people. Frazier rejected this argument. “While [those who criticize violence] pretend to emulate the meekness of the Nazarene,” he countered, “they conveniently forget to follow his example of unrestrained denunciation of the injustice and hypocrisy of His day and His refusal to make any truce with wrong-doers.” Jesus may not have fought oppression with guns, but he did give his life for justice and not for accommodation.⁴

Frazier had good reasons to be frustrated and despondent. Already in the late nineteenth century, lynching had become such a horrifying epidemic that journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett turned her career over to exposing it.⁵ In 1919 the NAACP held a conference on lynching and later published a report documenting more than 3,000 cases of vigilante racist murders between 1889 and 1919.⁶ Previously, in 1918, Congressman Leonidas Dyer had introduced antilynching legislation into the House. Then, in 1922, Mary Talbert, Mary Jackson, Helen Curtis, and other women in the NAACP formed the Anti-Lynching Crusaders, but their efforts came to naught in 1923, when the Dyer bill died by a filibuster in the Senate. While the bill languished in Congress, another 200 African Americans fell victim to the lynch mob.⁷

It was in these circumstances that Frazier became disillusioned with non-resistance. His idea of fighting fire also had foundation in African American reality. From the borderlands with Mexico to the Carolinas, African Americans with military experience turned against white supremacy and the lynching regime. During World War I, the government worried about African American,

Mexican, Japanese, and German plots to foment armed strife in the United States (the “Plan of San Diego” of 1916 being the most famous, and the Houston Mutiny of 1917 the most savage response).⁸ The authorities were seriously concerned about the loyalty of their second-class citizens. That the disfranchised might take to the gun against white supremacy was not an academic question, especially in the wake of the panic caused by the 1911 Mexican Revolution.⁹ The loyalty of African Americans, even though well-demonstrated in the savage campaigns against the Amerindians and in the wars of 1898, could not be vouchsafed in the minds of the elevated citizenry, who feared “Negroes with guns.” Frazier’s rejection of nonresistance has to be read in this context.¹⁰

Frazier’s position shocked Ellen Winsor, a white Quaker ally of the NAACP and veteran suffragette. She denied that nonviolent protest amounted to passivity and urged Frazier to study the ways of M. K. Gandhi, “who has not one drop of white blood in his veins.” Perhaps with the harsh retribution visited upon any retaliation against the lynch mob in mind, Winsor asked, “Has not the Negro learnt to his sorrow that violent methods never win the desired goal?” She concluded, “Who knows but that a Gandhi will arise in this country to lead the people out of their misery and ignorance, not by the old way of brute force which breeds sorrow and wrong, but by the new methods of education based on economic justice leading straight to Freedom.”¹¹

Du Bois, in his capacity as editor of *The Crisis*, decided not to publish Winsor’s response. Instead, he sent her a kind personal note, albeit one with an edgy conclusion: “I am, I must say, compelled to smile at the unanimity with which the great leader, Mr. Gandhi, is received by those people and races who have spilled the most blood.”¹²

Du Bois then showed Winsor’s letter to Frazier and published his reply in June 1924. The use of violence, Frazier reiterated, anticipating an argument that would be made more famously by Frantz Fanon decades later, was indispensable in self-defense against white supremacist aggression and would gain African Americans self-respect. “A Britisher remarked to me in England a couple of years ago,” Frazier continued, “that once in the Far East you could kick a Japanese with impunity, but since the Russo-Japanese war, the Japanese had become so arrogant that they would take you into court for such an offense.” Struck by Winsor’s call for an American Gandhi, Frazier responded acerbically: “Suppose there should arise a Gandhi to lead Negroes without hate in their hearts to stop tilling the fields of the South under the peonage system; to cease paying taxes to States that keep their children in ignorance; and to ignore the iniquitous disenfranchisement and Jim Crow laws, I fear we would witness an

unprecedented massacre of defenseless black men and women in the name of Law and Order and there would scarcely be enough Christian sentiment in America to stay the flood of blood.”¹³

Whatever the merits of the debate, neither Frazier nor Winsor really understood Gandhi and the Indian freedom struggle. For them, as for many in the United States, Gandhi had become a mythical figure for whom nonviolence had religious qualities and whose movement had been entirely motivated by an immense faith in him and in his ethical approach. Winsor wanted the black movement to adopt Gandhian pacifism as much as Frazier rejected the purity of that approach. Neither, however, showed an appreciation of the historical Gandhi.

Du Bois came closer to the mark. In July 1929, for the twentieth anniversary issue of *The Crisis*, Du Bois invited Gandhi to submit a message. Gandhi did so, and in the margins Du Bois penned his own thoughts on Gandhian politics: “Agitation, non-violence, refusal to cooperate with the oppressor, became Gandhi’s watchword and with it he is leading all India to freedom. Here and today he stretches out his hand in fellowship to his colored friends of the West.”¹⁴ The techniques of direct action, the ethos of solidarity, and the refusal to bend to imperialism were far more important to Du Bois than Gandhi’s philosophy of ahimsa, life without violence. Individual heroism and self-abnegation meant little to those who suffered the long arm of white supremacy. Even in India Gandhianism was often understood by the masses as the license to rebel violently against authority (as in Chauri Chaura in 1922 and during the mass “Quit India” uprising of 1942). Du Bois recognized the centrality of Gandhi to the rejuvenated mass movement of Indian nationalism, and while he saw Gandhi warts and all, he regarded him as one of the most important figures of his time.

Such a practical approach to Gandhi was rare in the United States, where Gandhi’s adherents were prone to depict him as a saint. A popular 1923 account by the University of Michigan’s Claude Van Tyne noted, “Millions of Indians believe Gandhi to be a reincarnation of Vishnu.”¹⁵ That view irked Gandhi’s main Indian interpreter in the United States, Krishnalal Shridharani, who wrote, “Whatever religious and mystical elements there are in the Indian movement, and they are greatly exaggerated by the American journalists and scholars—are there for propaganda and publicity reasons as well as for the personal satisfaction of deeply conscientious men like Gandhi and the members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh.” What drew the millions, Shridharani added, was the fact that “the movement has been a weapon to be wielded by masses

of men for earthly, tangible and collective aims and to be discarded if it does not work." Shridharani minimized the role of religion in the Indian movement precisely because it was exaggerated in the United States. In fact, religious iconography and ideas did play quite a significant role in Gandhi's attempt to mobilize the population. Nevertheless, Shridharani was right to note that "American pacifism is essentially religious and mystical. West can be more unworldly than East, and the history of the peace movement in the United States is a good illustration of that."¹⁶ In writing these lines, he could very well have had Ellen Winsor, not just her Quaker community, in mind.

The South African Sojourn: How Gandhi Became Mahatma

Gandhi's adoption by American pacifism as an Oriental saint faced a significant contest not only from the diligent analysis by Du Bois but also from Gandhi's own biographical details. Gandhi's history has to be recovered from mythology or else it becomes impossible to understand what attracted him to anti-imperialist movements across the darker nations. Gandhi was not always Gandhi, and the Gandhi that we know only emerged because of his experience in the struggles for justice in southern Africa.

Gandhi arrived in South Africa in 1893 at age twenty-four and left in 1914, aged forty-four. These were his formative years, when the naive man and mediocre lawyer became a major political and moral force in world affairs. How, exactly, did Gandhi become the Mahatma, the Great Soul?

In the 1860s the British imperial project drew people from India as indentured laborers to work in the Natal province of South Africa. There, more than 150,000 Indian laborers worked in a variety of occupations, notably in the coal mines and the sugarcane fields, as well as built railroads. They suffered from the callous indifference of the colonial state, which valued them for their labor power and cared little about their welfare. Women among the indentured lived the harshest lives: all that the colonial state disavowed in the way of social life had to be manufactured with scant material by women within the gendered division of labor.¹⁷

When their indenture contracts ran out, many "ex-indentured" sought to stay on the land that had become their home. This desire posed a challenge to the colonial state, as did the arrival of a merchant class of Indians who came to sell goods and services to the indentured. The Indian merchants were known to the state as "Passenger Indians" (because they paid their own passage from

India to South Africa) and to themselves as “Arabs” (to differentiate themselves from the indentured laborers). A firm owned by one of these “Arabs” or “Passenger Indians” engaged Gandhi’s legal services to resolve one of its internecine disputes. Frustrated by the general lack of dignity accorded the merchants, Gandhi opposed laws that, to his mind, reduced the Indian merchant to a “kaffir” (the stereotypical word used by the white supremacist state to designate black Africans). In 1894 he helped found the Natal Indian Congress, whose goal was to repeal the discriminatory laws that fettered the lives of the Indian merchants. Thus far, actually until 1907, Gandhi had little to say about the oppression of black Africans and working-class Indians. His professional class, caste Hindu, and pro-imperial optic failed to detect them on the political horizon.¹⁸

From 1894 to 1906, Gandhi and the merchants eschewed mass struggles. According to historian Maureen Swan, the class divide “was a requirement of a colonial situation in which legal distinctions were increasingly being made on a racial basis, and in which the major threat to the merchants’ economic interests thus happened to be posed in terms of their being identified as part of a certain group which was placed low in the racial hierarchy.”¹⁹ In other words, to preserve their own narrow class advantages, the Indian merchants had to separate themselves from their indentured brethren (although it should also be said that this same class had little confraternity with oppressed castes and exploited classes within India). The Passenger Indians not only feared an alliance or a mass uprising, but they also could not countenance fiscal losses and imprisonment.²⁰ Even if Gandhi or the merchants had wanted to use the mass power of the indentured laborers, finding common causes on issues would have been difficult. In 1896, when the South African government and press attacked him for his caustic remarks about discrimination against Indians, Gandhi announced, “The lot of the indentured Indian cannot be very unhappy; and Natal is a very good place for such Indians to earn their livelihood.”²¹ No wonder the Indian indentured did not flock to Gandhi in this period.

In 1906 the South African government introduced a bill to require the registration of all Indians and to control the entry of Indians into the country. The proposed law would have hampered freedom of commerce for the Indian merchants. Incensed, they tried every available tactic: resolutions, petitions to the Colonial Office, requests for meetings with senior officials, and letters and articles in the press. The government remained obdurate, and no compromise seemed possible (unlike in 1894, when 9,000 signatures forced the state to hold

back on its attempt to abolish Indian enfranchisement). It is in this context that the merchants acceded to Gandhi's call for "passive resistance" in September 1906.

Amid his call for passive resistance, Gandhi grappled with the failure of the Indian merchants' polite strategy as well as the violent strategy of the 1905 Russian Revolution. "Under British rule," Gandhi wrote, "we draft petition, carry on a struggle through the Press, and seek justice from the King. All this is perfectly proper. It is necessary, and it also brings us some relief. But is there anything else that we should do? And, can we do it?"²² The "it" referred to the Russian people, notably those whom Gandhi called the anarchists (although they included communists and others), who "kill the officials openly as well as secretly."

Gandhi considered such armed action a mistake, because it kept both rulers and ruled "in a state of constant tension." Nevertheless, the bravery and patriotism of the Russians appealed to him, for these men and women "serve their country selflessly." Indians in South Africa, by contrast, had not attained that level of patriotism. "We are children in political matters. We do not understand the principle that the public good is also one's own good. But the time has now come for us to outgrow this state of mind. We need not, however, resort to violence. Neither need we set out on adventures, risking our lives. We must, however, submit our bodies to pain."²³ Gandhi struggled with the gap between the class interest of the Passenger Indians and the "public good" of the society. This is the first indication of his public disavowal of the narrow class strategy pursued by the Passenger Indians, and of his entry into the broader, messy world of populist, anticolonial nationalism. Indians, he wrote, henceforth should refuse to abase themselves to unjust laws and should, rather, suffer in jail. On September 11, 1906, before a room of merchants, Gandhi pledged to go to jail before submitting to the unjust laws. He asked those in the room to join him. "Imagine that all of us present here numbering 3000 at the most pledge ourselves." But even fewer would suffice: "I can boldly declare, and with certainty, that so long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge, there can only be one end to the struggle, and that is victory."²⁴

Two years later, Gandhi reflected on the 1906 struggle. He noted, "The entire campaign was intended to preserve the status of the well-to-do Indians. . . . It was chiefly a businessmen's campaign."²⁵ The businessmen, however, did not lead the campaign. It was left to the working class and the small merchants to assume that function. In 1910 Gandhi singled out the hawkers of Transvaal for their important role: "Because of their courage, the campaign has created

so fine an impression. It is because hundreds of them went to gaol that it has come to be recognized as a great movement."²⁶ The strong stand of the workers and small merchants surprised Gandhi, because "questions of self-respect or honour, it was thought so far, could have little meaning for hawkers." But things had changed: "Now, everyone admits that hawkers do care for self-respect and they have risen in the esteem of others."²⁷

The masses came forward, mobilized either by class interest (the hawkers, the merchants) or by religious or ethnic fealty (through caste and creed associations, a central player being the Hamidia Islamic Society). Their arrival allowed Gandhi to lay out his theory and to develop his concepts: satyagraha (action on the basis of truth), ahimsa (action without violence), swaraj (self-rule), and sarvodaya (welfare for all). Gandhianism began to be formulated in relationship to the mass upsurge. One crucial element of the revolt and of the theory is that it occurred in the context of widespread deprivation for the indentured and ex-indentured, but also under the heel of a state that, at this point, was more disposed to structural violence than to public and relentless physical violence. Despite the many protests engineered by the merchants and others, the state did not go after the Indian protesters with vehemence. Its rulers played politics with them, which they did not do with the Zulus, who in 1906 rose up in rebellion against colonial rule. The hierarchy of racism and the mediation of an educated, "reasonable" class of adepts provided the Gandhian revolt with a far more genteel state than that experienced by the Zulus and others.

In 1913 the struggle picked up again, when Indians refused to concede to a poll tax and various other indignities. In 1908 Gandhi had signed an agreement with the South African government, but the authorities had only honored it in the breach.²⁸ In order not to antagonize the merchants, the government deployed measures that disproportionately affected the working class. Gandhi wrote to one of his confidants, "I am resolving in my own mind the idea of doing something for the indentured man."²⁹ It was in this spirit that Gandhi drafted a strong resolution against the poll tax, and although he called for resistance, he did not draft a program or a plan of action for the campaign. Gandhi wanted to help the indentured, but he made no attempt to organize them. "Gandhi hoped to avoid an attempt to mobilize the underclasses, with whom he had no direct contact," writes historian Maureen Swan, "and he relied on an elite campaign, supported by the threat of mass mobilization which was implicit in the inclusion of the £3 tax question, to put pressure on the government."³⁰ Gandhi's various ashrams trained fewer than forty satyagrahis, whom

he hoped to unleash to conduct moral actions to challenge the government. He did tell the minister of the interior that he would urge a general strike of the indentured, although he had no expectation that this call would amount to much beyond its value as a threat to the government.

Looking back at this event on August 8, 1914, Gandhi marveled at the workers who struck work and held fast. "There were 20,000 strikers who left their tools and work because there was something in the air. People said they did not know why they had struck."³¹ Actually, the record shows that the workers struck for a host of reasons: some had heard that a rajah would come from India to liberate them; others, that the rajah would come to decapitate them if they did not stop work; yet others acted against the atrocious conditions in the mines and fields; and some hoped to join a rumored column of Indian troops that would overthrow the government. For Gandhi, the strikers "went out on faith."³² But the Reverend A. A. Bailie perhaps put it best when he noted that the workers did not have a coherent reason to strike, not because they had no grievances, but because they had so many.³³ The movement, Gandhi wrote, "spread beyond expectations":

I never dreamt that 20,000 poor Indians would arise and make their own and their country's name immortal. . . . South African Indians became the talk of the world. In India, rich and poor, young and old, men and women, kings and labourers, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, citizens of Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Lahore—all were roused, became familiar with our history and came to our assistance. The Government was taken aback. The Viceroy, gauging the mood of the people, took their side. All this is public knowledge. I am stating these facts here in order to show the importance of this struggle.³⁴

From these working-class people Gandhi learned an enormous lesson: mass action can paralyze a state and force it, if the action is nonviolent, to its knees. The South African government tried to retaliate with viciousness, with police brutality and murder. But the strike held, and the government lost any moral legitimacy before the people.³⁵

Gandhi returned to India in 1916 after being pushed to the fore by this mass movement. He did not start a new movement in India but once again got carried by forces that had almost five decades of organization behind them. The modern Indian nationalist movement began with the resolute struggle of the Indian peasantry, who turned to the leadership of people like Gandhi for a host of reasons. Gandhi represented a class that could stand between the inchoate

utterance of mass rebellion and the bureaucratic speech of the state: he was part of the infrastructure of the emergent national bourgeoisie, frustrated into organization as the Indian National Congress (from 1885) but, until his arrival, fairly lackadaisical in its annual meetings. Gandhi adopted the style and idiom of the peasants in an attempt to earn their trust and loyalty.³⁶ For the peasantry, as for many of the other social classes in British India, Gandhi's power lay in the organization of the congress, the rebelliousness of the oppressed classes, the enthusiasm of the middle-class students, the ideology (nonviolence) that he forged out of his experiences, and the early tactical successes of the mass mobilizations he had provoked (the 1917–18 satyagrahas of Champaran, Kheda, and Ahmedabad).³⁷

The Uncrowned King: African America and Gandhi Reprised

In the early 1940s, the pace of black struggles in the United States picked up. The wartime economy opened up some opportunities for blacks. Despite this, whites fiercely maintained their Jim Crow privileges. Tensions grew, particularly in congested spaces where the white and black working class confronted each other; they had less opportunity to segregate themselves into protected spaces. Sociologists Charles Johnson and Howard Odum, among others, wrote at that time of the impending antagonism between whites and blacks, with Odum warning of black soldiers who were “organizing shock troop units all over the country” and putting weapons aside for the inevitable “race war.”³⁸

With the tempo of struggle being pushed from below, the veteran black activist A. Philip Randolph gave the government an ultimatum to end Jim Crow in wartime industries or else he would lead 10,000 people on a march on Washington on July 4, 1941. Freedom had to be fought for, Randolph wrote, “with our gloves off.” Responding to the immense majority of blacks, Randolph readied himself for a stiff confrontation. The government quickly capitulated, and the president issued an executive order meeting Randolph's demand.

Alongside Randolph was Bayard Rustin, who had just broken with the communists to become a leader in the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). In FOR's magazine, Rustin warned, “Many Negroes see mass violence coming. Having lived in a society in which church, school, and home problems have been handled in a violent way, the majority at this point are unable to conceive of a solution by reconciliation and nonviolence.”³⁹ Bitterness, fear, and frustration governed the imagination of those who had begun to squirrel away arms or else hoped for a Japanese victory because, as one person told Rustin,

“it don’t matter who you’re a slave for.”⁴⁰ To shift the tenor, Rustin argued that civil rights activists had to “identify” in an organic way with the black masses, by fighting daily for justice. “This demands being so integral a part of the Negro community in its day-to-day struggle, so close to it in similarity of work, so near its standard of living that when problems arise he who stands forth to judge, to plan, to suggest, or to lead is really at one with the Negro masses.”⁴¹ But all this talk of nonviolence remained premature.

In 1943, when Randolph began to talk about the need for a nonviolent movement against racism, he faced a great deal of resistance.⁴² Du Bois wrote a searing attack on Randolph’s desire to adopt Gandhianism.⁴³ Du Bois conceded that blacks had made some gains from their economic perseverance and from their legal struggles: “Our case in America is not happy, but it is far from desperate.”⁴⁴ The African American situation, however, was different from India’s. Gandhi’s struggle thrived in a context where a tiny minority oppressed the vast majority, whereas in the United States blacks comprised a small percentage of the population, and any call for nonviolent resistance “would be playing into the hands of our enemies.” Du Bois’s major point was that Gandhian tactics were alien to the United States. Fasting, public prayer, and self-sacrifice had been “bred into the very bone of India for more than three thousand years.” But African Americans would mock that approach, should the black leadership “blindly copy methods without thought and consideration.”⁴⁵

In fact, few Gandhians in the United States advocated or adopted fasting as a method. Shridharani wrote that Gandhianism “should merely point the way,” as fasting “may appear ridiculous in America,” where it lacked “the same social significance” it had in India.⁴⁶ “Other countries,” Shridharani wrote in 1939, “are likely to evolve different forms of self-purification, when and if they engage in a Satyagraha.”⁴⁷ Du Bois’s association of Gandhianism with fasting, without engaging the meaning of self-purification in nonviolent resistance, encouraged the view of Gandhi as mystical and Gandhianism as a specifically Indian political philosophy.

Two activists of FOR traveled to India, where they learned of Gandhianism first hand. In 1941 Ralph Templin and Jay Holmes Smith returned to the United States, set up the Harlem ashram in New York City, and translated Gandhian ideas into the theory of Kristagraha, or action on the basis of Christ, an amalgam of Christianity and satyagraha. One of the residents of the ashram was James Farmer, who joined in the creation of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) from this base camp.⁴⁸ They began to experiment with their version of truth just as ordinary African Americans in southern cities had begun to test

the limits of Jim Crow. In Birmingham, Alabama, historian Robin Kelley notes, various organizations (the National Urban League, the Interracial Committee, and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights) spent a decade, from the early 1940s to the early 1950s, trying to harness the everyday frustrations of blacks: a lack of employment, a lack of decent housing, a lack of good schools, and a denial of dignity.⁴⁹ Both the minimal demands (better housing, better schools) and the maximum demands (total social transformation) had become clear to the black masses and, to an extent, to the black leadership. What was also clear to the leadership, at the very least, was that the fight had to be nonviolent or else the retribution would be stronger than the people could bear. What had not emerged clearly as yet was the form of struggle, the instrument that would emerge from popular protests. The anarchy of protests, helped along by organized forces, would reveal the tactical form of struggle. The commune, the soviet, the workers' council, and others emerged from the heart of the collision between spontaneous unrest and organization.

In 1955 Rosa Parks's action set in motion a well-organized rebellion against Jim Crow. Thousands had been prepared for action by small forays into nonviolent resistance and by more militant confrontations with the police and white supremacists.⁵⁰ Protesters took to the streets, withdrew from the buses, and inaugurated the mass struggle called the civil rights movement. The tactical form was simple: the sit-down strike, the refusal to leave a place where the body was not wanted. Such actions uncovered the essence of Gandhian civil disobedience. For CORE's James Farmer, "It was Martin Luther King, Jr., who established the shrine of Gandhian nonviolence in a southern city in the United States of America, drawing to him, as a magnet, pilgrims and press from all over the world."⁵¹ King's use of Gandhian and Christian imagery, of love and suffering, drew from the decade-long Kristagraha tradition. But in truth, as historian Taylor Branch records, "nonviolence, like the boycott itself, had begun more or less by accident."⁵² It is by such accidents that history is propelled.

The civil rights movement, like the freedom movement in India, did not start with its leadership. It began in the acts of the southern black working class, whose refusal to quietly ride at the back of the bus or accept second-class employment in a racist job market was spurred by experience in the world wars and by the legacy of the Congress of Industrial Organization unions. If Gandhi learned his politics among the working class in South Africa and India, King, too, learned to bend to the will of the people while he picked tobacco in the outskirts of Hartford, Connecticut. Protected from the worst of white

supremacy by the elite black circles of Atlanta in which he grew up, King did not face the everyday racist trauma as the black working class faced it. With a few fellow Morehouse College students in the summer of 1944, King worked in the fields of Connecticut with black workers, many from the U.S. South and others from the Caribbean.

While toiling with the workers, King called his mother and told her that he wanted to be a minister; he had found his calling here, among the people who survived to struggle for a better day. King, like Gandhi, was led by the will of the masses, by such stalwarts as high school student Claudette Colvin and seamstress-activist Rosa Parks. The courage of ordinary people drew King into the struggle, and the Gandhian experiences of Farmer, Rustin, and eventually James Lawson served him well. King took the everyday commonsense non-violence of the movement and raised it to philosophy, which, along with his immense charisma, was his contribution to freedom. In 1958 King wrote, "Non-violent resistance had emerged as the technique of the movement, while love stood as the regulating ideal. In other words, Christ furnished the spirit and motivation, while Gandhi furnished the method."⁵³ King could have added, "The Churches provided the institutional framework, the radicals provided the disciplined leg-work, and the people provided the energy and enthusiasm as well as the resilience." King was pushed by the socialism of his people out of his own narrow class confines into the solidarity of generations.

King's views did not go unchallenged. In the late 1950s Robert Williams, head of the Monroe, North Carolina, branch of the NAACP, had espoused the view that there is no substitute for armed resistance against a recalcitrant and hostile Jim Crow establishment.⁵⁴ As the NAACP expelled Williams, King addressed his case in *Liberation*. Williams, King argued, offered two paths of struggle, either "we must be cringing and submissive or take up arms." King disagreed, since the people of Monroe themselves had used "collective community action" to win "significant victory without use of arms or threats of violence." Then King offered his view on the power of nonviolence as he had learned it from Gandhi's example:

There is more power in socially organized masses on the march than there is in guns in the hands of a few desperate men. Our enemies would prefer to deal with a small armed group rather than with a huge, unarmed but resolute mass of people. However it is necessary that the mass-action method be persistent and unyielding. Gandhi said that the Indian people must "never let them rest," referring to the British. He

urged them to keep protesting daily and weekly, in a variety of ways. This method inspired and organized the Indian masses and disorganized and demobilized the British. It educates its myriad participants, socially and morally. All history teaches us that like a turbulent ocean beating great cliffs into fragments of rock, the determined movement of people incessantly demanding their rights always disintegrates the old order.⁵⁵

While King knew that the black working class in the South had responded well to the call for nonviolent mass resistance, he also knew that class fissures in the “community” had already prevented the formation of the kind of total resistance he had envisioned. King had read E. Franklin Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957), in which the sociologist cataloged the economic powerlessness of the African American middle class, who nonetheless wielded political power over segregated black neighborhoods.⁵⁶ In 1958, in *Stride toward Freedom*, King cited Frazier’s book, noted that it was unlikely that the middle class would bear the “ordeals and sacrifices” of nonviolence, pointed out that the method “is not dependent on its unanimous acceptance,” and then hoped that a few dedicated resisters could “serve as the moral force to awaken the slumbering national conscience.”⁵⁷

The American engagement with Gandhi moved from mass protest to individual witness to a combination of the two. But for the struggle against Jim Crow, Gandhi was never a mystical, almost extraterrestrial, Vishnu-like figure, but a shrewd political tactician whose weapons of the weak could, with care, be adopted elsewhere. The Indian Shridharani, Gandhi’s chief interpreter in the United States, had called him an “unwilling avatar.” Indeed he was. In black working-class and militant African American circles, the Mahatma was transformed into a comrade in arms.

Gandhi and King learned their nonviolence from the masses, whose courage and resilience surprised both of them. It was from these acts of resistance that they developed their theories. Gandhi’s Oriental and King’s Christian sheen allowed them space to maneuver. Their faith of nonviolence earned them the goodwill of the masses, who were ready to act, and it paralyzed the state, whose response could only turn the population against ruling classes who cannot act without the consent of large sections of the citizenry. Frazier’s frustrations with the nonviolent strategy reflected the impatience of those who wanted change to come fast but were not ready to find the organizational form to bring the masses into making that change happen. The real danger, not identified by Frazier, is that whereas Gandhi and King drew their lessons from

the masses, and drew the masses into ever-powerful mobilizations, they could just as easily betray the needs and aspirations of those very people.

NOTES

The material for this essay began to accumulate as I researched *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*. What I could not fit into that work I presented as a talk at the symposium in Madison, Wisconsin (2004), to honor the 100th anniversary of Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk*. Nellie McKay kindly invited me, Robert Warrior and I held it down for the Indians, and Maurice Wallace gave me very useful feedback. A raw version appeared in *Little India*, and for that I thank my editor Achal Mehra. I could not have written this essay without the pioneering work of Sudarshan Kapur's *Raising Up a Prophet* and Richard Fox's "Passage from India." Thanks to Michael West and Bill Martin for their patient encouragement.

1. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*, 118.

2. For example, in 1933 Leonard Howell, a founder of Rastafari, thought that he might become the Gandhi of Jamaica. See Lee, *Le premier Rasta*, 127.

3. General Jan Smuts had a more caustic view of Gandhi, whose departure in 1914 he welcomed in a letter to Sir Benjamin Robertson: "The saint has left our shores. I sincerely hope for ever" (Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*, 3). Winston Churchill's snide remarks (1931) speak to Gandhi's mobilization of Oriental tropes: "It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a *fakir* of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the viceregal palace, while he is still organising and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parlay on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor." See Churchill, *Never Give In!*, 97.

4. Frazier, "Negro and Non-Resistance" (March 1924), 213.

5. Wells-Barnett, *On Lynching*. For an excellent analysis of lynching and violence, see Feimester, "Ladies and Lynching."

6. NAACP, *Thirty Years of Lynching*.

7. Zangrando, *NAACP Crusade*.

8. All of this is from Horne's highly informed *Black and Brown*, 156–80.

9. *Ibid.*, 92, 110–11.

10. There is always a temptation to read Frazier as impetuous and exaggerated, given the reaction to his *Black Bourgeoisie*.

11. Du Bois, *Correspondence*, 283–84.

12. *Ibid.*, 284.

13. Frazier, "Negro and Non-Resistance" (June 1924), 58–59.

14. Gandhi, "To the American Negro," 225.

15. Van Tyne, *India*, 110.

16. Shridharani, *My India*, 276.

17. Beall, "Women under Indentured Labor."

18. His concentration on Indians is not an indication of a lack of alliance or support, for he worked very closely with the Transvaal Chinese Association and with the Natal Native Congress. On the Chinese, see Harris, "Gandhi, the Chinese, and Passive Resis-

- tance." On the Africans (and the Natal Native Congress), see Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, 94–96.
19. Swan, *Gandhi*, 50.
 20. I have relied on the outstanding, unpublished dissertation by the former speaker of the South African National Assembly, Frene Ginwala, "Class, Consciousness, and Control," notably 147 onward for this section.
 21. Swan, *Gandhi*, 64.
 22. Gandhi, "Russia and India," *Indian Opinion*, September 8, 1906, in *Collected Works*, 5:413.
 23. *Ibid.*
 24. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, in *Collected Works*, 5:421.
 25. Gandhi, "A Brief Explanation," *Indian Opinion*, February 22, 1908, 99–101, in *Collected Works*, 8:100.
 26. Gandhi, "Duty of Hawkers," *Indian Opinion*, January 8, 1910, in *Collected Works*, 10:123.
 27. *Ibid.*
 28. It was in the context of that agreement that Gandhi wrote, "A satyagrahi bids goodbye to fear. He is therefore never afraid of trusting his opponent. Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times, the satyagrahi is ready to trust him for the twenty-first time, for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed" (*Satyagraha in South Africa*, 159).
 29. Swan, *Gandhi*, 242.
 30. *Ibid.*, 244.
 31. Gandhi, "Speech at London Reception," *Indian Opinion*, September 30, 1914, in *Collected Works*, 12:523–24 (quote on 524).
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. Swan, *Gandhi*, 252.
 34. Gandhi, "The Last Satyagraha Campaign: My Experience," *Indian Opinion*, December 1914, 508–19, in *Collected Works*, 12:509–10.
 35. As Jan Smuts put it to Gandhi, "I often wish you took to violence like in English strikes, and then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness" (Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 325–26).
 36. Guha, "Discipline and Mobilise," offers an insightful analysis of Gandhi's relationship to the mass movement that developed around his persona.
 37. On Champaran, see Pouchepadass, *Champaran and Gandhi*; on Kheda, see Hardiman, *Peasant Nationalists*.
 38. Singh, *Black Is a Country*, 105.
 39. Rustin, "Negro and Nonviolence," 8.
 40. *Ibid.*, 9.
 41. *Ibid.*, 10.
 42. Pfeffer, *A. Philip Randolph*, 64.
 43. Du Bois, "As the Crow Flies."
 44. *Ibid.*, 110.

45. Ibid.

46. Shridharani, *My India*, 281.

47. Shridharani, *War without Violence*, 13.

48. A longer version of this essay will offer more details of the ashram.

49. Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 55–100, esp. 82–85.

50. Ibid.

51. Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart*, 185.

52. Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 195.

53. King, “Experiment in Love,” 17.

54. Robert Williams would eventually put his case in his 1962 *Negroes with Guns*, reprinted in 1998. For the context and Williams’s subsequent political career in Cuba and China, see Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*.

55. King, “Social Organization of Nonviolence,” 33.

56. Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*.

57. King, *Stride toward Freedom* and *Testament of Hope*, 485–86.

The Rise and Fall of Caribbean Black Power

BRIAN MEEKS

Whatever the objective forces propelling a people towards struggle, resistance and revolution, they would come to that struggle in their own cultural terms.—CEDRIC ROBINSON, *Black Marxism*

In 1968, Black Power swept across the Caribbean. The immediate trigger was a riot in Jamaica following the banning from the island of Black Power activist and scholar Walter Rodney. Then a lecturer at the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies, the Guyanese-born Rodney was attending a Black Power conference in Canada when the Jamaican government prohibited him from returning to his job.¹ Caribbean Black Power briefly rose to a crescendo in the “1970 Revolution” in Trinidad and Tobago,² when a mass movement climaxed in an aborted army mutiny against the government of Eric Williams, the famous historian and erstwhile anticolonial nationalist. The upsurge, however, was short lived: by the middle of the 1970s almost all the important radical Caribbean movements had switched to a Marxist-Leninist ideology,³ abandoning, at least overtly, the nationalist and populist insights of Caribbean Black Power.

What led to the eclipse of the Black Power movement? Was it the military success of Marxism-Leninism in the Third World? Was it the result of weaknesses and lacunae in the theory and praxis of the nascent Black Power movement? This essay examines these questions as it traces the paths of Caribbean radicalism, paths that led, ultimately, to the ascendancy of the Marxist-Leninist notion of the vanguard party in the Grenadian Revolution and its tragic collapse in 1983.

The Caribbean, 1968–1974: The Ascendancy of Black Power

198

BRIAN MEEKS

The name Black Power came from the effervescent struggle for racial justice in the United States, but the Caribbean movement had multiple roots, deriving from a complex interplay of local and international histories. The primary tributary in the twentieth century was Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which was a significant social and political force in Jamaica, Trinidad, and other Caribbean territories in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴ Another powerful local current emerged after the coronation of Haile Selassie as Ethiopian emperor in 1930. The Rastafarian movement, deriving its name from Selassie's original title, Ras (Prince) Tafari, combined millenarianism with militant pan-Africanism and biblical prophecy. Rastafari, diverse and multipronged in its organizational form, gradually developed followers among the Jamaican poor and spread by the early 1960s to other parts of the Caribbean.⁵ There is little doubt, however, that the U.S. movement, which was followed with immense interest in the Caribbean, particularly by young people, was the catalyst that brought these nascent trends together. When the civil rights movement made a leftward turn to Black Power in the mid-1960s, radical trends in the Caribbean found a ready-made slogan under which to organize their own deep dissatisfaction with their societies and governments.

Several striking features marked the Caribbean Black Power scene from roughly 1968 to 1973. In Jamaica, as the previous history might suggest, the movement was centrally influenced by powerful Rastafarian currents that stressed the importance of cultural determination in politics and asserted, against the official Jamaican ideology of peaceful multiracial coexistence, the saliency of race as a determining factor in people's lives. By design, Black Power in Jamaica was decentralized, multipolar, and community based. Its ethos was captured in the pages of that essential, radical Caribbean newspaper *Abeng*,⁶ which served as a popular forum for expressing a range of conflicting views, rather than as an organ with a single party line.

The various currents of the movement were concentrated around the University of the West Indies at Mona, although they were not exclusively found there. The dominant trends advocated a grassroots/populist notion of the role of intellectuals in the popular movement. In 1967 Garth White expressed such a position at a meeting of the radical intellectual forum, the New World movement.⁷ White, then a leading radical student at the University of the West Indies at Mona, attacked the view of Lloyd Best, the noted Trinidadian economist and activist, that intellectuals should focus on research that would pro-

vide the movement with feasible options. Rather, White argued, intellectuals should become activists, merging their lives with those of the people: "What about New World? The days of sipping tea and airily contemplating 'high issues' is past. . . . An opportunity for direct political action has been placed in the laps of those desirous to see social change. The possibility exists that existing structures may crumble. They certainly are crumbling. If they crumble the intellectuals will be in no position to move. . . . [We need to mobilize,] . . . actively becoming one of the people and not in any patronizing way."⁸

In Trinidad the 1970 Black Power revolution—by any measure the high point of this period—gave birth to a multiplicity of organizations with competing ideological streams and multiple poles of authority. Black Power groups like the United Movement for the Reconstruction of Black Identity, based in southern Trinidad, competed with Young Power and the island's version of the U.S. Black Panther Party. The trade unions brought to the movement their own spectrum of ideological perspectives, with Marxist trends having significant influence in organizations like Joe Young's Transport and Industrial Workers Union and George Weekes's powerful Oilfield Workers Trade Union. The Tapia House movement, despite being headed by Lloyd Best, one of the most capable Caribbean thinkers of his generation, stood aside from the mass movement and was subsequently marginalized.⁹

It was the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), a student-led group,¹⁰ that would emerge as the leading force in the marching phase of the movement when young, often unemployed people controlled the streets of Port of Spain and other Trinidadian urban centers. NJAC started from a radically anti-imperialist and Black Nationalist position, as elaborated in the pamphlet *Conventional Politics or Revolution?* "For the people of Tobago, for instance, politics involves the recovery of their land from the white parasites who control the villages, an end to the assault on their dignity by white tourism. . . . For the suffering workers, politics involves freedom from the exploitation in the factories, on the estates, in the offices, on the building sites and the right of control."¹¹

On a wider Caribbean level, the goals espoused by NJAC were more famously stated by Walter Rodney in his collected essays, *The Groundings with My Brothers*. Rodney defined Black Power as "(i) The break with imperialism which is historically white racist; (ii) the assumption of power by the black masses in the islands; and (iii) the cultural reconstruction of the society in the image of the blacks."¹² Although radically anti-imperialist and African centered, Rodney's views were far from exclusivist, as we shall see.

NJAC's primary and ultimately fatal weakness was its acceptance and reproduction of Trinidad's reigning political culture and leadership style. This syndrome, epitomized by Eric Williams, stressed reverence and obeisance to the *jefe maximo*. As Winston Suite, a contemporary activist not affiliated with it has suggested, NJAC, as a movement, took an exclusive and monopolistic approach to the struggle: "The leader of NJAC had a sense of messianic mission; he hears a voice from within; he identifies himself with everything as though revolution is not a drama. . . . NJAC behaved as though the movement was its own. . . . They wanted you to do whatever they wanted to be done; they did not want you as an independent entity."¹³ NJAC's failure to break with the past eventually resulted in the loss of its leading role in the popular movement. At the same time, the group's adherence to the old political culture and leadership syndrome anticipated the centralist, vanguardist politics that would come to prominence with the ascendancy of Marxism-Leninism.

Similar if distinctive trends emerged on the other islands of the eastern Caribbean. Forum, a nascent Black Power discussion and action movement, emerged autonomously in a number of territories, including Antigua, St. Lucia, and Grenada. Forum's Antigua branch eventually became the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement (ACLM), under the leadership of Tim Hector. Although notoriously unsuccessful in electoral politics, Hector's ACLM held together, and through the radical newspaper *Outlet* provided sustained resistance to corruption and venality in Antiguan politics for more than three decades.¹⁴

The greater focus inevitably has to be placed on Grenada, where the radical movement gained power through revolutionary insurrection. There, the Joint Endeavour for Welfare, Education and Liberation (Jewel) emerged out of Forum and operated as a grassroots, Black Power organization with a broad anti-imperialist, "New Worldist"¹⁵ platform that emphasized direct political action. The other notable Grenadian Black Power formation was the Movement for Assemblies of the People (MAP). As the name implied, MAP was heavily influenced by the notion of popular assemblies as alternative political structures to parliament—a notion associated with C. L. R. James, the celebrated Caribbean scholar and activist. Like Jewel, MAP supported spontaneous, direct action. The two movements eventually found common ground: in 1974 they came together to form the New Jewel Movement (NJM), united in their opposition to the government of Eric Gairy, Grenada's repressive and mercurial prime minister.¹⁶

From the very beginning, Black Power in the Caribbean connected with

popular currents and garnered broad, mass support. In Trinidad, NJAC initially stood at the head of a broad and popular mass movement. The Jamaican movement, always more inchoate, nonetheless generated *Abeng* and acted as the stimulus for a process of popular education and mobilization, the effects of which were not completely felt until the mid- to late 1970s. The 1972 electoral victory of the People's National Party (PNP), now headed by the charismatic Michael Manley, son of the late PNP founder and former prime minister Norman Manley, heralded a peculiarly Jamaican radical movement, albeit one in which anti-imperialism operated within the constraints of the traditional political framework. In Grenada, the two groups that eventually merged to form the NJM were able to organize relatively massive crowds, ranging from the 1972 La Sagesse protest against an English lord's attempt to privatize beaches, to the campaign against Eric Gairy's push for independence from Britain, which was seen as a diversion from the island's social problems.

By the early 1970s, then, Black Power had become a powerful force in various Caribbean societies. A burgeoning movement guided by notions of black nationalism and wedded to an anti-imperialist sense of autonomous Caribbean development, it was accompanied by populist and community-based notions of political participation¹⁷ and mobilization. More to the point, by the early 1970s Caribbean Black Power actually had the ability to influence and mobilize large bodies of people.

1974–1983: The Eclipse of Black Power and Rise of Marxism-Leninism

By the late 1970s, however, the political landscape had changed and Black Power had been eclipsed. With the defeat in April 1970 of the mass movement it had mobilized against the government of Eric Williams, Trinidad's NJAC retreated from the center to the margins, having lost its status as the country's primary revolutionary agency. This was due not only to its approach to leadership but also to a new, overwhelmingly "cultural" orientation, which served to reduce its influence in critical sectors, particularly among the unionized working class.

The Trinidadian movement, after a continued surge during which the radical guerrilla grouping NUFF¹⁸ emerged and militant action increased among students and workers, declined and then practically fell, as the twin-island nation settled into the long quiescence of the oil boom of the mid- to late 1970s. In Jamaica, Black Power divided into two. One section was won to the tradi-

tional party system and became the radical cutting edge of Michael Manley's resurgent PNP. The other section was won to Marxism-Leninism, eventually becoming, in 1978, the Workers Party of Jamaica (WPJ). In Grenada, the early NJM strategy of direct action and mass mobilization carried the movement forward to the 1973–74 islandwide general strike and a lockdown against the Gairy regime. Still, the NJM was unable to remove Gairy from power. When, in February 1974, the Grenadian prime minister proceeded to take the country into independence in the face of a strike, and against the wishes of the broad, popular opposition, it was evident that the movement and its chosen approach to politics had suffered a strategic defeat. This led to the important decision by the leadership of the NJM to abandon Black Power as an ideological and organizational strategy and to embrace a local version of Marxism-Leninism.

From 1974, then, with the emergence in Jamaica of the predecessor to the WPJ and the decision of the NJM to change course, we can observe the rise, growth, and partial consolidation of Marxist-Leninist organizations throughout the Anglophone Caribbean. This transformation was accompanied by an adoption of the principles of democratic centralism, hermetic-cell systems, and selective membership. If we take Garth White's notion of the "merging of the intellectual with the people" as a central theme in Caribbean Black Power organizational ethos, then the Leninist philosophy that replaced it saw the party and its members as above the people, patronizingly leading and guiding them. Thus the pamphlet published with the 1978 launching of the WPJ proclaimed, "Whether it is England or America, Angola or Mozambique, capitalism and colonialism prevent the majority of working people from really knowing themselves. . . . The first principle of the real communist working class party therefore is that only the most serious and conscious workers can join. Then it is their job to teach, to guide, to lead, to draw up the rest—not because they have title or position but because the communist workers are the ones who put out more sacrifice, more work and more struggle against oppression than anyone else."¹⁹

Vanguard party principles did allow for a strong and focused organization. In Grenada, the one place where a classic revolutionary situation emerged, the prior, though very brief existence of a vanguard party laid the basis for an insurrectionary politics leading to the seizure of power in 1979. The WPJ, however, was never able to seriously break into the mainstream of Jamaican politics and never became a truly national force. It garnered only a limited popularity in specific communities where it gave assistance in areas such as security, health care, and legal aid, or in areas where its cadres were particularly well-placed, as

in the media. Was this the result, as the party's central committee regularly intimated, of the strength of anticommunism and the absence of a revolutionary situation? While these provide part of the explanation for the party's weakness, it was the WJP's exclusivist organizational form and the limited appeal of its "proletarian" line that ultimately undermined its popularity.

The Power of an International Paradigm

The failure of Trinidadian Black Power to consolidate as a political movement as well as the inability of the early NJM to remove, or even thwart, Eric Gairy partly explains the waning influence of Black Power in the Caribbean by the mid-1970s. The critical factor in this process, however, was the rise of Marxism-Leninism, which eclipsed Black Power as the dominant, radical paradigm.

Many factors account for the rise of Marxism-Leninism. The Tet Offensive in 1968 seemed to indicate that the Vietnamese had not only survived the U.S. military onslaught but were capable of going on the offensive; this signaled the beginning of a sea change in support for Leninism as a political strategy. That view was further enhanced in the mid-1970s when all the important and successful African liberation movements claimed Marxist-Leninist credentials. In the classic case of Angola in 1975, the non-Leninist movements—Holden Roberto's National Front for the Liberation of Angola and Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola—suffered the opprobrium of being on the same side as the invading South Africans and the United States in opposing the legitimate (and Marxist) Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola government. In South Africa itself, the apartheid regime was opposed by the militant South African Communist Party (SACP) and the African National Congress, many of whose members either belonged to or were closely allied with the SACP.

In the Caribbean, the Cuban Revolution emerged as a more powerful example than any of these other cases. In addition to Cuba's struggle to survive in its early years (a period of high sugar prices and ample Soviet assistance), the nation's progressive social programs at home and concrete military and civilian assistance abroad, particularly in Africa, served to consolidate the view that if you were radical and anti-imperialist, then it was difficult not to be Marxist and Leninist.

The Marxist-Leninist paradigm of success translated into a number of subtheses. The first centered on the taking of power. Here a hybrid approach based on Bolshevik and Cuban examples emerged. Leninist practices contributed the

notion that a small, revolutionary, vanguard party could lead a mass revolution of working people, as so well exemplified in the Russian Revolution. From Third World armed revolts and especially Cuba came the notion of the guerrilla *foco*, as espoused by Régis Debray in his widely circulated book *Revolution in the Revolution?* In Debray's conception the guerrilla *foco*, a small vanguard guerrilla group would provide the model for revolution in rural Third World countries (Debray himself would be captured in 1967 while accompanying Che Guevara's failed guerrilla effort in Bolivia). This combination in essence asserted that it was necessary for a small, committed group of militants to prepare the revolution, which would most likely take the form of an insurrection against the existing state. Allied to the vanguard and *foco* approach was the view that in order to be truly Leninist, one had to work first and foremost among the working classes, as opposed to the "transitional strata" of the unemployed and the petite bourgeoisie.²⁰

Second, the political and economic strategy of the postrevolutionary regime was dominated by the notion of a noncapitalist path or socialist orientation. This anchored the new state's development to the false premise that the Soviet Union was willing to and capable of providing military and economic largesse to any successful, Third World, revolutionary government.

The third subthesis captured the ideology of the movement. Here the primary revolutionary literature consisted of the writings not just of Marx but also of Lenin and, occasionally, even Stalin. The works of these writers were easily available from the Soviet publishing house, Progress Publishers; by contrast, literature from other sources was much more difficult to obtain. Up to the early 1970s, the writings of those with the greatest influence on Caribbean Black Power—C. L. R. James, Walter Rodney, Frantz Fanon, Eldridge Cleaver, Malcolm X, and Amílcar Cabral—had been in limited circulation. After 1975, such works became even scarcer, replaced by the Marxist classics and Soviet writers like Karen N. Brutents and Rostislav Ulyanovsky.²¹ The rich debates in British Marxism, Antonio Gramsci's powerful work on hegemony, and the published debates surrounding prominent communist George Padmore's and literary star Richard Wright's prior ruptures with international communism were thus largely unknown to the radical movement that emerged after the collapse of Black Power.²²

The outcome of this Marxist-Leninist turn in the Caribbean radical movement is well known. In Grenada, the decision to adopt Leninist tactics provided the NJM with a tactical flexibility more in tune with the period of "calm" that followed the failed general strike. This approach facilitated the participa-

tion of the NJM in the People's Alliance popular front against Gairy in the 1976 elections. In what was generally considered a corrupt exercise, Gairy narrowly won. The NJM became a part of the parliamentary opposition, and as head of the party with the most seats in the alliance, the NJM's Maurice Bishop became Leader of the Opposition. This constitutional position served the party well. Unlike the earlier period when the NJM had no legitimate voice outside Grenada, Bishop now spoke in regional forums as the leader of Grenada's "loyal opposition." Thus when the NJM overthrew the Gairy regime and seized power on March 13, 1979,²³ it was not the work of unknown coup plotters but the action of the very familiar Bishop-led opposition that had been campaigning against Gairy's arbitrary actions for three years. The other critical dimension, of course, was the actual taking of power, which required many years of preparation. In any situation where secrecy is necessarily at a premium—and this was especially the case in tiny Grenada—a clandestine army could only be organized and trained in the context of a political organization with a quasi-military structure, strict compartmentalization, and top-down hierarchy. This was precisely what the vanguard party paradigm provided.

While the vanguard approach made the seizure of power possible, it also became a millstone around the NJM's neck in its four and a half years in power.²⁴ The party's highly selective criteria for membership severely constricted the number of people who could join it, especially at a moment when it was relatively popular and needed as many members as possible to run the state apparatus. The result was inordinate physical pressure on the few actual party members, which contributed immeasurably to a breakdown of the party in 1983. At the same time, the principle of selectivity served to alienate the NJM from the people. When, for instance, party comrades in September 1983 tried to defend the Central Committee's decision to detain Maurice Bishop, they were often met with the incredulous response, "What is the Central Committee?"

Most analysts argue that the 1983 crisis in the NJM, which led to the death of Bishop and a number of his closest associates, was the result of an ultraleft conspiracy led by Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard.²⁵ My position has been that there is little evidence and even less motive for such a long-standing conspiracy. A more convincing explanation may be found in the vanguardist structures of the party, which led to its alienation from its popular base. As external pressure from the U.S. regime of Ronald Reagan intensified in early 1983 amidst growing economic difficulties, support for the NJM began to ebb even further. The NJM, used to operating in a clandestine, hierarchical fashion, sought in the middle of 1983 to deal with these tests not by bringing the

people into the revolution in an unprecedented way but, rather, by juggling with the notion of leadership, as it had done in the past. A top-down solution was sought to a problem that required a massive popular intervention and the democratic reorganization of politics. The subsequent attempt to establish a joint leadership between Bishop and Coard was disastrous, leading to the detention of Bishop after he initially agreed to the measure and then reneged on his agreement. The flawed decision to solve the revolution's political problems from the top was demonstrated in the sequence of events that followed: a popular and successful attempt to release Bishop, the takeover of the fort by Bishop's forces, and then the murder of Bishop and the army's retaking of the captured fort.

The unraveling of the Left in Jamaica followed a different course. After being officially launched as a communist party in 1978, the WPJ grew in a limited but steady fashion over the following two years. In a period when the PNP and its more leftist Youth Organization dominated the anti-imperialist platform, there were clear strictures on the possibility of the growth of the WPJ, imposed first by the fact that in many respects the two parties were saying similar things. There was also the overwhelming popularity of Michael Manley, whose early social programs and "democratic socialist" rhetoric had inspired the poor. Nonetheless, the WPJ was able to establish strongholds in a few areas in Kingston, where its cadres had helped to defend the community against invading gunmen and provided invaluable legal and medical services. The WPJ also had some strength in a number of rural areas where the agricultural working class had long traditions of trade union struggle.²⁶

Several events combined to undermine the WPJ. After the electoral defeat of the Manley government in the bloody 1980 elections,²⁷ it became apparent how much the entire Left had depended on the relatively moderate, "democratic socialist" PNP for its survival. Whereas the PNP could, albeit with significant difficulty, resume its role as a traditional electoral opposition party, the communist WPJ remained in a no-man's-land, caught between a clandestine preparation for imminent insurrection and its attempt to establish itself as a "legitimate" opposition party.²⁸ This latter objective was fatally undermined after the Grenada events of October 1983. The party, aided by statements from its leaders, was branded in the Jamaican and Caribbean press as part of the regional ultraleft conspiracy against Bishop. Indeed, in the wake of the PNP's defeat, when anticommunist sympathies became widespread in Jamaica, the WPJ was portrayed as the very source of the anti-Bishop conspiracy.

The WPJ was certainly the party with the closest links to the Grenadian

leadership. A number of WPJ cadres worked in various capacities in Grenada, and WPJ leader Trevor Munroe consulted regularly with the NJM. It is highly unlikely that the WPJ could have “instructed” the proud NJM leadership to detain Maurice Bishop, but a concurrence with the decision would have been an important ideological green light. Whether this did occur is yet to be proven, but Munroe did not immediately condemn Bishop’s murder, leaving a strong impression that the WPJ was implicated in the decision to detain and execute the Grenadian leader. Whatever popularity the WPJ had gained up to this point²⁹ was lost, never to be regained. The party’s failure to win even a single seat in the 1986 local government elections signaled its death knell. By the turn of the decade, the WPJ had dissolved itself, and a phase in radical Jamaican politics had come to an end. Michael Manley was reelected by a landslide in 1989, but with a policy that eschewed the radical nationalism of his earlier regime and accepted the basic tenets of the brave new neoliberal world. The PNP’s ability to accomplish this volte-face was no doubt facilitated by the self-dissolution of the WPJ, and thus the absence of a strong popular force demanding more consistent resistance to U.S. and International Monetary Fund demands for a retreat from radicalism. In sum, the program of vanguard elitism weakened, undermined, and in the case of Grenada, the only instance in which an unambiguously leftist movement came to power, destroyed the Caribbean radical movement of the 1970s.

The Matter of Ideology

The failure of elite vanguardism leaves open the question of ideology. Was the adoption of Marxism by Caribbean radical movements a historical error? Or was the error not so much Marxism as an ideology as Leninism, that is, vanguardism, as political tactics?

To attempt to address these questions, I engage with an important intervention by Alex Dupuy, who some years ago wrote an article titled “Race and Class in the Postcolonial Caribbean: The Views of Walter Rodney.”³⁰ Dupuy argues that Rodney went through a transition. In his early work, as captured in *The Groundings with My Brothers*, Rodney is a Black Power advocate. He later travels to Africa, where he writes his classic *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*,³¹ and then returns to Guyana, where he engages in political activity and writes his posthumously published *History of the Guyanese Working People*.³²

These two periods, Dupuy argues, represented an ideological movement, as Rodney makes the transition to a Marxian mode of analysis. Rodney’s Black

Power, Dupuy asserts, is an essentialist discourse, a false consciousness that is exclusivist and therefore fundamentally antidemocratic: “(*Groundings*) . . . remained trapped in the essentialist and racialist categories and language created by . . . imperialism. The ultimate consequence of this racialist discourse is that despite Rodney’s claim that the Black Power movement did not aim to create a racially intolerant society, it could not but recreate exclusivist and hence fundamentally antidemocratic practices.”³³

Dupuy develops his reasoning as follows: Rodney recognizes that in the Caribbean there are different racial groups, yet he reduces them to black and white. Such an approach, Dupuy argues, robs distinctive ethnic groups of their cultural and class differences. This applies to both the “black” and “white” groups. For Rodney, Dupuy asserts, class differences among black people are seen not as fundamental social attributes but as aberrant behavior, a distortion of the love that should exist among “black brothers.” Black Power, Dupuy further maintains, simultaneously deprives white persons of their social distinctiveness and right to political choice. By fetishizing color, Dupuy argues, Black Power, as proposed by the early Rodney, made all whites exploiters of blacks and made all black exploiters dupes or traitors. Black Power further excluded revolutionary whites from participating in the struggle to overthrow capital.

Dupuy, however, misreads Rodney. While it is possible to find interpretations of Black Power that are indeed racially exclusive and deny the possibility of persons defined as white playing a role in “liberation,” this is not Rodney’s approach in *Groundings*. In this text Rodney explains at length that Black Power is not concerned with an exclusivist or narrowly racialist agenda. Here he uses an example from the famous Black Panther Party leader and later pan-Africanist Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture):

Cuba is the only country in the West Indies and in this hemisphere that has broken with white power. That is why Stokely Carmichael can visit Cuba but he can’t visit Trinidad or Jamaica. That is why Stokely can call Fidel “one of the blackest men in the Americas” and that is why our leaders in contrast qualify as “white.” . . . Here I’m not just playing with words—I’m extending the definition of black power by indicating the nature of its opposite—white power—and I’m providing a practical illustration of what black power means in one particular West Indian community where it has already occurred. White power is the power of whites over blacks without any participation of the blacks. White power rules the imperialist world as a whole.³⁴

Not only does Dupuy skew his presentation to miss this important emphasis, but he also misses the thrust of Rodney's argument. Rodney is not substituting a racial construction of society as false consciousness in place of a true capitalist construction (requiring a true class consciousness to understand and overcome it); rather, he is arguing that capitalism is inevitably linked to racism. Thus understanding the nature of imperialism as white is not a distraction, but getting to the heart of imperialism and class domination. This is evident in Rodney's definition, cited above, of the program of Black Power in the West Indies: imperialism is the main system of exploitation to be overcome, but in order to do so, it must be combated on the terms of its rule, which is through a racial and cultural system designed to keep black peoples in their place.

One cannot deny Dupuy's assertion that Rodney developed his outlook throughout his long period of travel; it would be hard to imagine that he remained static for a decade. Nor do I wish to suggest that there are not real theoretical problems with a perspective that conflates race as the sole determinant of social and political behavior. Yet Dupuy remains mistaken on the perception of a qualitative transformation in Rodney's outlook. He misses the obvious point that *Groundings* is written in Jamaica with a population overwhelmingly of African descent, a context in which a call to reconstruct the society in the image of black people not only is democratic but also addresses the history of covert denial of an African heritage. *A History of the Guyanese Working People*, by contrast, is written in Guyana, where two racial groups had been in sharp competition for social space and political power. In this context different tactics are required to combat "historically white" imperialism. Rather than a sharp dichotomy between the (flawed) Black Power Rodney and the (correct) Marxist Rodney, what we have instead is a continuum, starting from an approach that is seeking, under quite distinct conditions, to place Marx's insights into capitalist political economy at the service of oppressed Africans and Indians at home and abroad.

If Rodney is not perceived as moving from light to darkness, then perhaps we can see his analyses in *Groundings* and in *History* as part of a single project to grapple with a system of oppression that comes with a racial stamp deeply embedded within it, operating, as it were, as a central feature of its genetic code. Rodney seeks to apply this general insight with different approaches for the specific conditions of Jamaica and Guyana. The outlines of his approach are eloquently expressed in another document lost to the generation of the 1970s: the celebrated poet and playwright Aimé Césaire's famous resignation letter to the French Communist Party. As Césaire declared,

What I demand of Marxism and Communism is that they serve the black peoples, not that the black peoples serve Marxism and Communism. Philosophies and movements must serve the people, not the people the doctrine and the movement. . . . A doctrine is of value only if it is conceived by us and for us, and revised through us. . . . We consider it our duty to make common cause with all who cherish truth and justice, in order to form organizations able to support effectively the black peoples in their present and future struggle—their struggle for justice, for culture, for dignity, for liberty. . . . Because of this, please accept my resignation from the Party.³⁵

Conclusions

The points arising from Dupuy's article are critical for understanding the fate of the 1970s movements, when the adoption of Leninist tactics also brought with it the wholesale adoption of a certain approach to Marxism. This approach brought with it a "clear" class perspective, excluding a popular explanation of oppression as an interweaving of race and class. It certainly avoided grappling with Rodney's exploration of the "cultural" dimension of exploitation that denigrated anything out of Africa. Caribbean Leninism in the 1970s suffered, therefore, from its inability to construct a "counter-symbolic order"³⁶ that could address not only the reality of economic exploitation but also the more insidious reality of deeply embedded cultural and racial marginalization.

These considerations point to a further, perhaps overdrawn, conclusion, namely that a movement fully conscious of the political economy of imperialism, but grasping its racialist nature, may have had, in the specific circumstances of this era, a greater potential for mobilizing the population and moving beyond the narrow confines of a partial class theory. This does not deny that Black Power was always flawed, both organizationally and theoretically. Indeed, there are very substantial reasons why the Black Power movement was so rapidly superseded by Marxism-Leninism in the fluid political conditions of the mid-1970s. And yet, Black Power brought with it an openness and diversity of political forms and politics and, critically, an appreciation of the importance of countersymbolic and counterhegemonic popular forms. These features were lost in the transition to Marxism-Leninism. Popular movements of the future may wish to heed these lessons as they consider the construction of new organizational and theoretical approaches to resistance.

Assumptions by Caribbean radicals during the 1970s over the nature of

state power and its acquisition have a further, final lesson. In this area both Black Power and Marxist movements called for mass uprisings to seize power from corrupt or compromised regimes. The inevitable conclusion was that the Caribbean could eventually be full of little Cubas, each proceeding, with cooperation, on its own path of development. This, as has been suggested, was predicated—at least in its Marxist-Leninist form—on the false assumption that the Soviet Union would provide such regimes with the economic and military aid necessary for surviving and developing on a “path of socialist orientation.”

It is worthwhile, admittedly with the corrective lens of hindsight, to consider whether there were alternative strategies. The taking of power meant immediate opposition from imperialism with all the well-known tactics of destabilization, both overt and covert. The example of Nicaragua is only the most egregious illustration. There, the movement, despite adopting commendable democratic forms, including a popularly discussed and ratified constitution, was violently undermined by the Contra war until, physically exhausted and economically prostrate, it was defeated in “free and fair” elections.³⁷

Against these outcomes we might well ask, What if movements did not aim, in the short run, at taking power, but sought instead to build up effective communities of resistance, based on self-help, regional and international networks of solidarity, internally generated educational programs, and the like? What would have been the outcome, in other words, if an encircling, counterhegemonic, Gramscian strategy was adopted, as opposed to the tempting shortcut of overthrowing the state? To be sure, this may be entirely wishful thinking. On the night of March 12, when the NJM leadership got wind of Gairy’s plans to massacre them, perhaps there was no alternative but, as an act of self-defense, to take power. And state power, of course, may provide the best bulkhead of resources, protection, and legitimacy to enact a counterhegemonic strategy.

But consider for a moment the Rastafarian movement. In 1961 Ronald Henry, under the banner of Rastafari, sought to seize power in Jamaica and failed ignominiously.³⁸ The Rastafarian movement, complex and quarrelsome in its diversity, nonetheless heeded the failure of this tactic and proceeded on a cultural, multicentered, community-based path. By the late 1970s, the entire Jamaican reggae industry was dominated by Rasta philosophy, and singers were singing, “Everyone join Rasta bandwagon.” Then Bob Marley,³⁹ Peter Tosh, Dennis Brown, and a host of others brought Rastafarian philosophy with tremendous effect to a worldwide audience. And in the twenty-first century, under the banner of Bobo Shanti and other houses, Rastafari and its new chant-

ers like Sizzla, Anthony B, and Buju Banton are enjoying a qualitative revival. Meanwhile the once vibrant radical Left lies dormant, if not extinct. Perhaps there is, after all, virtue in a strategy of encirclement.

NOTES

1. For an assessment of the influence of Black Power on young people in Jamaica in the 1960s, see Lewis, *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought*, esp. 85–123.

2. Ryan and Stewart, *Black Power Revolution*; Meeks, “Development.”

3. Lewis, “Learning to Blow”; Meeks, *Radical Caribbean*; Mars, *Ideology and Change*.

4. Lewis, *Marcus Garvey* and “Garvey’s Perspective.”

5. See Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance*.

6. The radical Jamaican newspaper *Abeng* was one of the immediate by-products of the Rodney riots. It was published only from January to October 1969 but served a larger role, in that it brought together key individuals who would play a significant role in the politics of the 1970s. See Lewis, *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought*, 121 n. 32.

7. *The New World Quarterly* was a journal published in the 1960s at the University of the West Indies, Mona, and also from Georgetown, Guyana. It was the organ of the New World movement, a group composed primarily of university-based intellectuals that elaborated an extensive Caribbean “dependentista” approach to development.

8. White, “New World,” 57, 60.

9. See Meeks, “Lloyd Best.”

10. Geddes Granger (who later changed his name to Makandal Daaga), the charismatic leader of NJAC, had been a past president of the Guild of Undergraduates at the St. Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies.

11. National Joint Action Committee, *Conventional Politics*, 1.

12. Rodney, *Groundings*, 28.

13. Suite, “Arrogance.”

14. See Henry, “CLR James.”

15. The New World movement never elaborated a single program, but there was a dominant approach that stressed the severing of exploitative metropolitan linkages and the fostering of a regional, “bottom-up” economy. For an interesting retrospective and critique, see Green, “Caribbean Dependency Theory.”

16. For the early history of the NJM, see Jacobs and Jacobs, *Grenada*, and Meeks, “Social Formation.”

17. Not surprisingly, the community-based appeal of Black Power was often seen by aspiring Leninists as an inferior approach to political organization. This view is captured in Rupert Lewis’s diary entry of January 24, 1971. Lewis, then an emerging Marxist-Leninist, had just returned from the December meeting of radical Caribbean activists on Rat Island in St. Lucia and noted, in reference to the groups from the eastern Caribbean, “Hardly any of the groups showed any inclination for Leninist theory. . . . None had a clear stand on the working class but all showed a concern for community type groups.” See Scott, “Dialectic,” 126 fn. 55.

18. Meeks, *Narratives*, esp. 48–74.

19. Munroe, *Workers Party*, 8. It is interesting to note that in Guyana the pattern was somewhat different. The radical trend that consolidated in the 1970s was Marxist, but not Leninist. There, President Forbes Burnham and his People's National Congress (PNC) already occupied, though with a large measure of corruption and authoritarianism, the radical nationalist black platform. Cheddi Jagan's People's Progressive Party (PPP), with its long history of conventional political engagement, occupied the Marxist space. This forced the young, radical opposition in a novel direction, away from PNC's black nationalism and PPP's Marxism-Leninism. It is only here in Guyana, with the Working People's Alliance (WPA) (and debatably, the ACLM in Antigua), that we see the possibility of an organization learning from both the positive and negative experiences of the Black Power movement. But its leader, Walter Rodney, was cut down before the WPA was able to sink deeper political roots. See Lewis, *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought*, esp. 202–53, and Mars, *Ideology and Change*, esp. 105–28.

20. This often led to an ironic approach to mass work, with cadres standing, for instance, outside the Kingston industrial estate, waiting for the few workers to emerge from the factories, while thousands of people in nearby communities were often ignored.

21. See, for instance, Brutents, *National Liberation*, and Ulyanovsky, *Socialism*.

22. Padmore, head of the Negro Bureau of the Communist Trade Union International, left the communist party in 1933 in opposition to its colonial policies; see his celebrated book *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* Richard Wright broke with the communist party in 1944 and published "I Tried to Be a Communist," which was shortly and more widely distributed in Crossman, *God That Failed*.

23. Bishop and other leaders argued in the hours and days following the overthrow that Gairy had initiated a plan to arrest and even eliminate the NJM leadership. There was no alternative, they asserted, but to seize power.

24. Meeks, *Caribbean Revolutions and Revolutionary Theory*.

25. See, for instance, Lewis, *Grenada*.

26. A more fulsome history of the WPJ is yet to be written. For an early critique, see Campbell, "Progressive Politics." This reading is appropriately critical of its middle-class leadership but does not sufficiently capture the WPJ's mass work and the basis for its undoubted rootedness in a number of urban and rural communities.

27. The generally used, though largely mythical, figure for the number of people killed in the months before the 1980 election is 800. No serious empirical work has been done to confirm it, though my suspicion is that when it is done, the figure will be significantly greater.

28. Lewis elaborates on this point effectively in Scott's interview, "Dialectic," 159.

29. At perhaps the peak of its popular support, in July 1981, when the PNP had yet to revive from the electoral debacle of 1980, the WPJ could only obtain 3.1 percent support in a national poll of "citizens with a clear party preference." See Stone, *Political Opinions*, 14.

30. Dupuy, "Race and Class."

31. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

32. Rodney, *History*.

33. Dupuy, "Race and Class," 114.

34. Rodney, *Groundings*, 31.

35. Aimé Césaire, quoted in Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 260.

36. The term is taken from Sylvia Wynter. See “Politics of Black Culture,” in which she makes the case for the importance in Jamaica of the construction of a counter-symbolic order through Rastafari and other popular forms as an alternative to a middle-class, bureaucratically led movement.

37. For an analysis of the overt and covert attempts to destabilize and overthrow the Sandinista state in Nicaragua, see Sklar, *Washington’s War*.

38. Meeks, “Obscure Revolt.”

39. See, for example, Bogue, *Black Heretics*, esp. 187–205.

Merely One Link in the Worldwide Revolution

Internationalism, State Repression, and the Black Panther Party,
1966–1972

ROBYN SPENCER

Recent scholarship has combined analytical frameworks from diplomatic and social history to explore the complex relationship between the black freedom struggle in the United States and such events as the Bandung Conference, African decolonization, resurgent pan-Africanism, and guerrilla movements in the Third World.¹ Most importantly, this new literature has revealed the impact on radical black protest of the Cold War, “one of the ‘hottest’ moments in world history,” in the words of Robin D. G. Kelley.² On the eve of the Cold War, African Americans all across the political spectrum looked abroad for ideological inspiration, cultural affirmation, and political allies.³ As the Cold War became ever hotter, the U.S. government also became alive to the international implications of the emerging civil rights movement. The U.S. Justice Department, in its supporting brief to the Supreme Court for the pivotal *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, declared that the “problem of racial discrimination” had to be viewed “in the context of the present world struggle between freedom and tyranny,” noting further that “racial discrimination furnishes grist for the Communist propaganda mills, and it raises doubt even among friendly nations as to the intensity of our devotion to the democratic faith.”⁴

As it became more conscious of its image overseas, the U.S. government moved against citizens who raised doubts about its “devotion to the democratic faith,” especially if those doubts were shared with international audiences. In this regard, no issue was pricklier than that of racial injustice. As part of its response to the Red threat, the U.S. government sought to rupture the internationalist thrust that had been forged by the black freedom struggle in the decades leading up to the Cold War, persecuting key African American

intellectuals and political leaders like W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson. Flouting the official Cold War line, both Du Bois and Robeson, along with a number of other activists and organizations, continued to link the movement for racial justice in the United States with the worldwide struggle against colonialism and oppression.⁵

The sidelining of Du Bois, Robeson, and others of their ilk did not, to be sure, completely smash the tradition of black internationalism in the United States. Others soon stepped into the gap. Even in the heyday of the Cold War, African American leaders like Robert Williams and Malcolm X and organizations like the Revolutionary Action Movement remained committed to global solidarity among oppressed peoples, and they “flatly rejected unconditional racial unity and developed a nationalism built on a broader concept of revolutionary Third World solidarity.”⁶ As the civil rights movement developed, even some of the mainstream black leaders who previously had tended to steer clear of internationalist entanglements, in accordance with the wishes of the U.S. government, began to change their tune. Thus in 1960 Fellowship of Reconciliation activist James Lawson expressed the view that “all Africa will be free before the American Negro attains first class citizenship.”⁷ Similarly Martin Luther King Jr., in his 1963 testament “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” contrasted black Americans, who “creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter,” with African and Asian nations, who move “with jetlike speed towards gaining political independence.”⁸ At the 1963 March on Washington, perhaps the iconic event of the civil rights movement, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leader John Lewis proclaimed, “‘One man, one vote’ is the African cry, it is ours too.”⁹

Yet, although not totally obliterated, black internationalism in the United States suffered serious reversals during the heyday of the Cold War, in the 1950s and early 1960s. As a result, an “anti-imperialist and anticapitalist critique of the global political economy” only returned to a central programmatic position in the African American struggle in the mid-1960s, when once again, activists began to conceptualize the black liberation movement in the United States as part of a worldwide struggle for human rights.¹⁰ A number of movements and individuals, including some of those mentioned above, contributed to this ideological renewal. More than any other group, however, it was the Black Panther Party that led the way back to internationalism as a sustained programmatic expression of the black liberation struggle in the United States.¹¹

The Black Panther Party, this essay argues, offers provocative new ways to conceptualize the relationships between social movements, international poli-

tics, and state repression. The historiography of black internationalism during the Cold War centers largely on presidential politics, State Department policies, international diplomacy, and the activities of leading black intellectuals and middle-class civil rights organizations. Few scholars have taken to heart Mary Dudziak's observation that "an international frame need not eclipse a focus on the grassroots."¹² Much of the existing literature, consequently, takes a top-down approach—relegating to a postscript the Black Power movement's vibrant engagement with international politics. In the latter connection, the Black Panther Party is central. The Panthers fused a radical internationalist posture—anticolonialism, Third World solidarity, and opposition to U.S. imperialism—with an equally radical critique of U.S. society, exposing urban poverty, housing shortages, unequal education, and police brutality.¹³

With more than 5,000 members at its height and one of the country's most popular alternative newspapers, *The Black Panther*, the Panthers combined a mass base with a critique of U.S. foreign policy and a concomitant call for global justice. They argued that at a time when "the people of the world are making their final bid for full and complete freedom," the "American racial problem can no longer be spoken of or solved in isolation."¹⁴ The Panthers' prominence in the effort to heal the breach created by the Cold War in African American political culture was a central factor in the unprecedented state repression that would be unleashed on them. Indeed, the campaign against the Panthers aptly bears out Penny Von Eschen's assertion that "organized state repression" highlighted the enormous stakes involved in the struggle for a "global understanding of economic exploitation and the fight for human rights."¹⁵ At tremendous costs, collective and personal, the Panthers made significant contributions to the practice and theory of internationalizing the black freedom struggle in the United States.

Critiquing Uncle Sam

On a spring evening in 1966, Bobby Seale, who only months later would become one of two cofounders of the Black Panther Party, held forth on a street corner in Berkeley, California. Seale, a resident of the nearby black community of Oakland, was engaged in political theater. He recited a poem titled "Uncle Sammy Called Me Fulla Lucifer,"¹⁶ a witty, irreverent, profanity-laden dialogue between conscript Fearless Fosdick, a newspaper cartoon character, and Uncle Sam, the symbol of U.S. pride and military recruitment. The sheer spectacle of Seale's impromptu performance, coupled with the poem's echo

of growing anti-Vietnam War sentiment, attracted a crowd of young people, mostly students from the University of California at Berkeley. The poem recounted a political odyssey in which a naive Fosdick, “schooled . . . to sing red, white, and blue stars and stripes songs,” eventually rejected the racialized iconography of the U.S. nation-state, embodied by the pale-skinned, white-haired, star-spangled Uncle Sam. By the end of the poem, Fosdick, having undergone an epiphany, refused “to pledge eternal allegiance to all things blue-true, blue-eyes, blond-blond-haired, white-chalk, white skinned with USA tattooed *all over*.” Newly liberated, Fosdick defiantly declared, “I will *not* serve!” The crowd roared. The police, however, were less amused. After a brief scuffle, Seale and his companion, Huey Newton, soon to become cofounder of the Black Panther Party, were arrested for blocking the sidewalk.¹⁷

This incident is emblematic of the sequence of events that led to the formation, in October 1966, of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Seale, in his autobiography, framed the incident as evidence of early encounters with police authority and as confirmation that Berkeley, one of the epicenters of white student activism, was an important political crossroads for Oakland’s grass-roots activists.¹⁸ Seale may have added that the poem’s satiric disavowal of blind patriotism and military service suggests that the Berkeley incident can also be read as an embryonic articulation of the future Panther policy of not just critiquing U.S. policies, foreign and domestic, but also directly linking them.

Even before founding the Black Panther Party, Newton and Seale had turned to Marxist theoreticians at home and abroad for an explanation of the socioeconomic contradictions they saw around them. In time, the pair made two key conclusions: that capitalism was the root cause of oppression worldwide, and that the African American struggle was inextricably linked with the struggle for Third World liberation. In their studies, Newton and Seale were especially influenced by the ideas of guerrilla warfare and revolutionary violence found in the works of Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, and Robert Williams. And although initially founded on a program of combating police brutality, racism, and economic inequality, the Black Panther Party soon evolved into an organizational vehicle for highlighting and critiquing the linkages between U.S. domestic and foreign policies.

The Panthers’ ten-point program, their statement of goals and principles, made a direct connection between police brutality in black and Chicano communities, on one hand, and the misdeeds of U.S. troops in Vietnam, on the other.¹⁹ Accordingly, the sixth point demanded that black men be exempt from military service, so they “will not fight and kill other people of color in the

world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America.”²⁰ Such an analysis resonated in poor communities like Oakland, where African Americans organized more than twenty demonstrations against police violence in 1965 and 1966. The following year, 1967, almost 10,000 antidraft activists protested and engaged in civil disobedience at the U.S. Army induction center in Oakland, as part of a weeklong, nationwide protest called Stop the Draft week.²¹ In these circumstances, the Panthers’ strong antiwar stance electrified many young people, individuals like Sherwin Forte. An early recruit, Forte mentioned the “riotous atmosphere, the killings, the National Guard, the helicopters, the protest in Berkeley, [and] the anti-draft movement” as events that led him to join the Black Panther Party. “The Vietnam war was happening,” he continued, “and I had a choice whether I would go and fight the country’s battles in Vietnam or whether I wanted to take my life and use it to redress some wrongs in this country. I didn’t see the Vietnamese as the enemy. I saw the enemy as racist America.”²²

The Panther critique, although far more radical than most, emerged at a time when antiwar sentiment was beginning to gain traction nationally. In early 1966, even before the Panthers appeared, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee had come out against the war. When the Johnson administration abolished automatic student deferments for the draft in 1966, thousands flooded into Students for a Democratic Society and other predominantly white, antiwar organizations. Cultural icon Muhammad Ali publicly refused the draft, while antiwar rallies in major cities began to attract thousands. The Fulbright hearings—five televised hearings in 1966 by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, under its chairman, Senator J. William Fulbright—signaled the mainstreaming of dissent. Then, in early 1967, after a massive buildup of U.S. forces in Vietnam, Martin Luther King condemned the war, a move that garnered international publicity. King did not act solely on moral grounds. The adventure in Vietnam, he objected, was “some demonic destructive suction tube,” leading the United States to abandon antipoverty efforts at home, even as the war took a disproportionate toll on the poor, many of whom were being asked to fight for freedom they did not enjoy.²³ The TET offensive of January 1968, complete with graphic news footage and a high casualty rate, increased antiwar sentiment across the land.

The Panthers, however, distinguished themselves from the mainstream antiwar movement. Whereas the latter restricted its demand to “peace” and a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam, the Panthers went further, calling for solidarity with the Vietnamese resistance and for the defeat of U.S. imperial-

ism. In 1968, deepening their internationalist orientation, the Panthers created the position of international coordinator and appointed Connie Matthews to fill it. Matthews skillfully mobilized a far-flung network of international alliances to provide support for incarcerated Panthers. She promoted the party in Europe, speaking at public events and rallies and making linkages with leftist organizations.²⁴

In an interview with Angela Davis, Matthews outlined the Panther internationalist agenda. The party, she declared, sought to educate black people “to the importance of internationalism. To get them to understand that we are in the belly of the whale here and that imperialism, manifested in the U.S., is a monster with tentacles and the other oppressed peoples of the world are trying to cut off the tentacles but that we here have to get the monster from inside.”²⁵ In tandem with Matthews’s work, the Panthers reached out to U.S.-based representatives of various liberation movements and sent a delegation to the United Nations to meet with emissaries of “revolutionary countries.” The Panthers subsequently issued a press release warning of a civil war in the United States if Huey Newton, who had been jailed for allegedly killing a police officer, was not released. The press release called on “oppressed and colonized” people to demonstrate in front of U.S. embassies worldwide, demanding further that the United Nations station “Observer Teams throughout the cities of America wherein black people are cooped up and concentrated in wretched ghettos.”²⁶

Solidifying an International Base

In 1968 Eldridge Cleaver, a top Panther leader facing an assault conviction, fled the United States. After some months in Cuba, he moved on to Algeria, which, like Cuba, had no diplomatic ties with the United States. Cleaver’s flight opened a new phase in the Panthers’ internationalism: he oversaw the creation of the international section of the Black Panther Party, based in Algeria.²⁷ On a personal level, Cleaver also benefited from the Panthers’ global solidarity networks: after he went into exile, activists in four U.S. cities, joined by others in Paris, Rome, London, and Amsterdam, launched the International Committee to Defend Eldridge Cleaver.²⁸ Shortly after Cleaver relocated to Algiers, a Panther delegation joined representatives from twenty-four countries and six liberation movements there, for the Pan African Cultural Festival. The Panther delegates to the festival included David Hilliard, chief of staff; Raymond “Masai” Hewitt, minister of information; and Emory Douglas, minister of cul-

ture. Douglas's bold political drawings had previously received much acclaim internationally, and the Panthers mounted an exhibit of his works at the festival.²⁹ In Algiers, the Panther leaders discussed areas of potential cooperation with revolutionaries from Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Haiti, many of whom considered the Panthers the vanguard of the liberation movement in the United States.³⁰ Chief of Staff Hilliard recalled that his group's interlocutors in Algiers "were all aware of our problems before we got there. They knew that U.S. imperialism was their problem and that fascism was what Black people in America are faced with."³¹

The Algiers meetings produced a noted expression of moral support for the Panthers. After the festival, representatives of a number of liberation movements sent a strongly worded message to the United Nations. The message read, in part,

African political organizations are shocked and saddened to learn of the arrests and repressive fascist type crimes perpetrated against the leaders and members of the Black Panther Party on their return to the United States from the First Pan African Cultural Festival by U.S. authorities in flagrant violation of the Universal Human Rights Declaration enshrined in the charter of the United Nations. . . . United Nations would be ignoring its duties should it stand by unconcerned while the principles enshrined [*sic*] in its Charter are being trampled on at its very doorstep.³²

The Panthers also received some state support, including from Cuba and Algeria. Cleaver also established a close relationship with the North Korean embassy in Algiers. In 1969 he traveled to Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, to attend the International Conference on Tasks of Journalists of the Whole World in their Fight Against U.S. Imperialist Aggression. In his speech at the conference, Cleaver applauded North Korea and its leader Kim Il Sung for embracing their own brand of Marxism-Leninism, attacked U.S. imperialism, and proclaimed the Panthers' solidarity with the revolutionary peoples of the world.³³

Deeply influenced by the trip, Cleaver began to promote the writings of Kim Il Sung in *The Black Panther*.³⁴ In a related development, the newspaper created an international section with a masthead featuring pictures of Patrice Lumumba, Ho Chi Minh, and Che Guevara, along with a silhouette of a rifle. This section was filled with commentaries and news briefs on the political situation in Vietnam, Palestine, and South Africa, among other places, and with speeches by revolutionary thinkers like Amilcar Cabral, head of the armed

anticolonial movement in the Portuguese colonies of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.³⁵ *The Black Panther's* international section also chronicled the activities of Panther support committees overseas and carried statements of solidarity from various organizations, such as the Association of Democratic Jurists of Korea and the Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity of Korea, both based in North Korea.³⁶

As their international involvement deepened, the Panthers intensified their critique of the mainstream antiwar movement. In a typical broadside, Panther chief of staff David Hilliard, appearing at the San Francisco Moratorium Demonstration, one of the largest such events of the 1960s, castigated the antiwar movement for focusing on aggression abroad to the exclusion of oppression at home. "We're not going to let you talk about waging a struggle in support of people 10,000 miles from here, when you have problems right here in fascist America," Hilliard lectured his predominantly white audience.³⁷

Militant in their insistence on the connection between the domestic and the foreign, the Panthers offered a novel proposal. Incarcerated Panthers, they suggested, could be exchanged for U.S. prisoners of war in Vietnam. *The Black Panther*, accordingly, encouraged readers, "If you have sons, husbands, or friends who are prisoners of war in Vietnam, send us their name, rank and serial numbers. We will forward this information to Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party; and attempt to exchange their freedom for the freedom of the Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton and Chairman Bobby Seale who are political prisoners here in 'fascist Babylon.'"³⁸ Panthers in Oakland held a rally to popularize the idea.³⁹ The proposed exchange, needless to say, never materialized. It did, however, powerfully symbolize the Panthers' claim that their incarcerated comrades were political prisoners who deserved the same status and recognition as U.S. prisoners of war in Vietnam.

Huey Newton and Intercommunalism

Huey Newton, the top Panther leader who had become an international cause célèbre during his imprisonment, presided over a deepening of the party's international thrust on being released in August 1970. In an interview with *Sechaba*, the official organ of the African National Congress of South Africa, Newton noted the continuing influence of international revolutionaries on the Black Panther Party and asserted that the Panthers wanted to establish better communications with other liberation movements in order to coordinate their struggles.⁴⁰ Having, evidently, sharpened his Marxism during his confinement,

Newton continued, “The bourgeoisie that is based here in America has an international character, because it exploits the world, it controls the wealth of the world; it has stolen, usurped the wealth of the people of the world. . . . We feel that the only way that we can combat an international enemy is through an international strategy, unity of all people who are exploited, who will overthrow the international bourgeoisie, and replace it with a dictatorship by the proletariat, the workers of the world.”⁴¹ Subsequently, Newton wrote an open letter offering troops to the Vietnamese National Liberation Front. The offer, he told the Vietnamese, was a “recognition of the fact that your struggle is also our struggle, for we recognize that our common enemy is the American imperialist who is the leader of international bourgeois domination. . . . Therefore our problem is international, and we offer these troops in recognition of the necessity for international alliances to deal with this problem.”⁴² Nguyen Thi Dinh, a high-ranking commander in the Vietnamese resistance, expressed his gratitude but declined the offer of military assistance. The Panthers’ own “persistent and ever-developing struggle [within the United States] is the most active support to our resistance against U.S. aggression for national salvation,” he declared.⁴³

Some mainstream African American leaders took umbrage to Newton’s offer. The NAACP’s Roy Wilkins disparaged it, accusing the Panther leader of privileging the Viet Cong over “John Q. Black American.” Newton’s response underlined what, by then, had become a cornerstone of his party’s program. The Panthers, he retorted, were “internationalists because we believe our struggle must proceed on many fronts. While we feed and clothe the poor at home we must meet and attack the oppressor wherever he may be found.”⁴⁴

Newton’s most significant contribution to Panther internationalism was the theory of revolutionary intercommunalism. U.S. capitalist imperialism, according to this theory, had transformed understandings of sovereignty and self-determination that underlay the concept of nationhood to the point where nations no longer existed, “because of the development of technology, because of the development of the mass media, because of the fire power of the imperialist, because of the fact that the United States is no longer a nation but an empire.”⁴⁵ Newton’s intercommunalism effectively repudiated the old internal colonialism thesis, the idea that African Americans constituted a “nation within a nation” or an “internal colony” within the United States, which previously had been a mainstay of Panther ideology. The new reality, Newton now argued, was a world divided into oppressed and liberated communities, linked by common causes that united them across national boundaries against a common enemy: the U.S. empire.

In this new world order, Newton suggested, race, and even ideology, had declined in importance. The indispensable basis of global solidarity, rather, was common experiences of oppression. He explained: "We see very little difference in what happens to a community here in North America and what happens to a community in Vietnam. We see very little difference in what happens, even culturally, to a Chinese [*sic*] community in San Francisco and a Chinese community in Hong Kong. We see very little difference in what happens to a black community in Harlem and a black community in South Africa, a black community in Angola and Mozambique. We see very little difference."⁴⁶ Intercommunalism was a central topic in Newton's college tour after he left prison, and he spoke at length on the same subject at the Panthers' Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention of 1970. The Panthers, he warned, "cannot make our stand as nationalists, we cannot even make our stand as internationalists, we must place our future hopes on the philosophy of intercommunalism, a philosophy which holds that the rise of imperialism in America transformed all the other nations into oppressed communities."⁴⁷ He pointed to Algeria and North Korea as examples of liberated communities and argued for self-determination globally. "Whether on an intercommunal level, a regional level, or on a local level, we hold that all people have the right to proportional representation within the framework of revolutionary intercommunalism and communism," the Panther leader concluded.⁴⁸

Not all Panthers appreciated Newton's latest theoretical pronouncements. Some saw little difference between intercommunalism and the party's long-standing commitment to internationalism. Still, under Newton's prodding, the term was incorporated into the Panther organizational structure.⁴⁹ The group's news outlet, the Black Community News Service, was renamed the Intercommunal News Service, while the International chapter became the Intercommunal chapter. Solidarity committees in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Holland, and England also fell in line, nomenclatorially speaking at least. "Our intercommunal solidarity," they proclaimed in a joint communiqué, "is expressed in our political work to revolutionize our respective communities and to free the third world political prisoners within Germany, England, Holland, Denmark and Sweden."⁵⁰

Political Repression

The Panthers' efforts to build a mass constituency domestically, under a program advocating international revolution, earned them the lasting enmity of

the U.S. state, which responded with a campaign of repression. In 1967 the FBI launched COINTELPRO, a program to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters and to counter their propensity for violence and civil disorder.”⁵¹ The Black Panther Party, although not specifically mentioned in this initial memo, was the chief target of the coming onslaught. The FBI subsequently made that clear. Rectifying the previous omission, a later memo dubbed the Panthers “the most violence-prone organization of all the extremist groups operating in the United States.”⁵² All but officially designated the principal internal enemy of the U.S. state, the Panthers would bear the brunt of COINTELPRO actions.

The subsequent massive police raids and mass arrests of Panthers went hand in hand with the promised campaign of disinformation to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize” the party. The repression had the desired effect, exacerbating existing tensions within the organization and pushing it, ideologically speaking, further to the left. State repression also created a wave of political refugees, as Panthers fled overseas to escape the ever-widening dragnet.⁵³ The fleeing militants joined other party members who had preceded them into exile, most notably Eldridge Cleaver, in giving even greater publicity to the Panther cause on the international stage.

The resulting international networks would prove extremely helpful to the Panthers, offering them both moral and material support. As the raids and arrests began to decimate the organization, activists in Germany, France, Holland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, among other places, established solidarity committees, which organized demonstrations and held public hearings to raise awareness of the Panthers’ plight.⁵⁴ In one notable example of solidarity, the Black Panther Party Solidarity Committee in Sweden organized a march of 300 people to demand the release of Bobby Seale and other political prisoners.⁵⁵ After the arrest of twenty-one Panthers in New York, Panther international coordinator Connie Matthews sprung into action, urging the Danish government to use its influence to “convince the American government of the unjustness of their course, and to persuade them to cease immediately the unwarranted harassment of the Black Panther Party and its members.”⁵⁶ Meanwhile the Danish Socialist Party and allied groups held a demonstration in the course of which speakers highlighted the connections between the Vietnam War, the exploitation of the Danish working class, and the persecution of the Black Panther Party. The event culminated in more than 600 protesters marching on the American embassy in Copenhagen.⁵⁷

The FBI did not fail to note the Panthers' "connections with foreign revolutionaries" and carefully monitored those connections.⁵⁸ Chronicling Cleaver's travels in 1970 to North Korea, China, and North Vietnam, the FBI observed that from his base in Algiers, Cleaver "maintains close contact with communist nations and Arab guerilla organizations." On the radio in Hanoi, Cleaver is reputed to have urged African American servicemen "to desert, commit sabotage, and 'rip off' (kill) the United States Commander in South Vietnam."⁵⁹

Indeed, Attorney General John Mitchell justified warrantless electronic telephone surveillance of the Panther headquarters in Oakland by copying the Panthers: he invoked the links between the party's domestic and international activities. Mitchell mentioned the Panthers' strength, along with the threat he considered them to pose, notably, "(1) the large number of Black Panther Party branch organizations in this country; (2) the large number of Black Panther Party members; and (3) the fact that numerous threats of personal attack were being directed by the Black Panther Party against local law enforcement officers."⁶⁰ The attorney general feared that the group's allies abroad would finance revolution in the United States. The Panthers, he asserted, had "avenues for channeling foreign funds into this country for the purpose of supporting Black Panther Party revolutionary activities which included the advocacy of the violent overthrow of existing Federal and State government structures."⁶¹ Mitchell based the latter claims on three factors: "(1) the presence of Black Panther Party leader Eldridge Cleaver in Cuba, Algeria and North Korea; (2) contacts in Sweden of Panther members with representatives of the North Vietnamese government; and (3) contacts of Panther members with representatives of communist Cuba."⁶² These same foreign connections, the U.S. government maintained, were the source of Panther ideology. As the FBI saw it, the Black Panther Party "relies heavily on foreign Communist ideology to shape its goals," the party's "Marxist" orientation providing a "favorable environment for the support of the Panthers from other Communist countries."⁶³

A major result of the crusade against the Black Panther Party was an exacerbation of the differences, ideological and personal, between Huey Newton, its U.S.-based top leader, and the Algerian-based Eldridge Cleaver, the chief Panther spokesman overseas. The FBI's campaign to sow discord between the two men was international in scope, and it involved everything from phony letters to death threats. An FBI memo dated just eight days after Newton's release from prison in 1970 suggested that counterintelligence efforts should aim to "drive a wedge" between Newton and Cleaver.⁶⁴ Far from just an attempt to ignite a feud between two leaders, the FBI's maneuverings were an

attack on the very foundations of Panther ideology and strategy. In targeting Cleaver, the FBI hoped to undermine the Panthers' international standing and disrupt their attempts to sustain and deepen alliances overseas. If Cleaver was a key element in the Panthers' internationalist thrust, then Newton was their essential helmsman, presiding over the domestic base and standing at the core of the efforts to connect the national and global.

In the wake of the internecine conflict, the party began to decline. The FBI gleefully took the credit, a 1971 report claiming that the "chaotic condition of BPP and the split between BPP leaders Huey P. Newton and Eldridge Cleaver is possibly a direct result of our intensive counterintelligence efforts aimed at causing dissension between Newton and Cleaver and within the Party."⁶⁵ This was not the only factor; preexisting tensions within the party also played a major role in its decline. Still, the FBI's crowing was not without merit: its campaign of repression and disinformation contributed mightily to the eventual collapse of the Black Panther Party.

From its foundation in 1966 to its downward spiral in 1972, the Black Panther Party was seen by the U.S. government as a threat to national security. The Panthers' most enduring qualities—their ability to be both crucible and conduit for black internationalist consciousness in the United States, to maneuver on the international stage, and to leverage a global New Left network—made them largely impervious to co-optation. The organized violence of the state, physical and psychological, would have to be brought to bear against them. And it was. As the "greatest threat to the internal security of the United States,"⁶⁶ in the words of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, the Panthers were "savaged by a campaign of political repression that in terms of its sheer viciousness has few parallels in American history."⁶⁷ Political repression in the United States was hardly new; it certainly did not begin with the Panthers.⁶⁸ However, the repressive apparatus of the U.S. state increased greatly during the Cold War, and the Black Panther Party felt its full sting in the 1960s and 1970s, the peak of the effort to root out subversives and control grassroots protesters at home and abroad.

Conclusion

Although the Panthers no longer maintained missions overseas after 1971, their program and ideology remained internationalist. In September 1971, Newton led a delegation of more than a dozen Panthers to the People's Republic of China, where they met top officials and visited historical and cultural sites.⁶⁹

On returning to the United States, Newton issued a statement declaring that the Panthers had gone to China ahead of U.S. president Richard Nixon, whose subsequent visit to that country constituted a historic Cold War event, “so that we might ask the peace and freedom-loving Chairman Mao Tse-tung to be the chief negotiator . . . for the peace and freedom of the oppressed peoples of the world.”⁷⁰ Other Panther officials also continued to travel overseas. In 1971 Martin Kenner, a leading member of the Committee to Defend the Panthers, went to Europe to meet representatives of China, North Korea, Cuba, and the Vietnamese resistance. The Vietnamese, Kenner noted in reporting to Newton about the meetings, “were far and away the most outspoken in their desire for more help from us. They requested radio programs, leaflets, and drawings—in short propaganda they can use in Nam—as well as Party propaganda here in the paper about US aggression in S.E. Asia. . . . All of the governments wanted to receive party paper.”⁷¹

At the same time, the Panthers continued to provide material aid to African liberation support organizations, as well as to send medical supplies to liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Angola.⁷² The Panthers also remained a source of inspiration for oppressed groups around the world. In 1972 Australian aborigines independently created a branch of the party and requested official recognition from the Panther headquarters in Oakland, California.⁷³ Even in decline, then, the Panthers’ praxis remained consistent with their ideology. As late as 1972, they issued a revised ten-point platform that, among other things, attributed “the various conflicts which exist around the world” to the “aggressive desires of the U.S. ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world.”⁷⁴ In the throes of death, as in the prime of its life, the Black Panther Party remained committed to a vision of liberation in which the fate of African Americans was inseparable from that of other oppressed and colonized peoples globally.

Robin Kelley has argued that “too often our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they ‘succeeded’ in realizing their visions rather than on the merits or power of the visions themselves.”⁷⁵ The story of the Black Panther Party, its successes and its failures, is a testament to the merits of this argument. The Panthers both confirmed and tapped into a deep anti-imperialist consciousness that existed at the grass roots of the black community—a consciousness that was separate and apart from African-centered cultural affirmations and engagements with the dominant, white-led antiwar movement. With few resources, the Panthers managed to produce an impres-

sive body of political tracts, along with witty and sarcastic illustrations, cartoons, and poems that connected them to the often-forgotten protest tradition of the African American Left, with its deep commitment to internationalism. As Hilliard affirmed in 1970, the Panthers saw themselves as “merely one link in the worldwide revolution.”⁷⁶ They boldly operated on the international stage, waging their own version of diplomacy and making linkages with groups representing oppressed peoples in Africa, Asia, and Europe. The Panthers also made important theoretical contributions to the global struggle for freedom. Huey Newton’s concept of intercommunalism, although it was not systematically taught or popularized in his lifetime, anticipated much of the present-day critique of globalization. The Panthers may not have achieved the global revolution they envisioned, but their “alternative visions and dreams . . . inspire new generations to continue to struggle for change.”⁷⁷

NOTES

1. Dudziak, *Cold War*; Horne, *Black and Red*; Layton, *International Politics*; Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*; Plummer, *Rising Wind*; Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*.

2. Kelley, “Stormy Weather,” 69.

3. Dudziak, “Little Rock Crisis”; Fraser, “Crossing the Color Line”; Borstelmann, “Hedging Our Bets.”

4. Emerson and Kilson, “American Dilemma,” 644.

5. See Horne, *Black and Red*, and Plummer, *Rising Wind*.

6. Kelley, “Stormy Weather,” 87.

7. Lawson, “We Are Trying,” 314.

8. King, *Why We Can’t Wait*, 81.

9. Carson, *In Struggle*, 94.

10. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*, 187.

11. Kelley, “Stormy Weather,” 87.

12. Dudziak, *Cold War*, 253.

13. Cleaver, “Back to Africa”; Clemons and Jones, “Global Solidarity.” For examples of this frame of analysis in the study of other black nationalist organizations, see Woodard, *Nation within a Nation*, and Kelley, “Stormy Weather.”

14. “The Black Man’s Stake in Vietnam,” *Black Panther*, March 23, 1969, 16.

15. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*, 187.

16. A poem that began with the line “Uncle Sammy called us full of Lucifer” appeared in the Black Panther Party newspaper under the title “Bobby’s poem.” The poem appeared in different versions, shaped to fit different critiques of Uncle Sam. See *Black Panther*, October 12, 1968, 9.

17. Seale, *Lonely Rage*, 145–51, and *Seize the Time*, 27–29.

18. Seale, *Lonely Rage*, 145–51.

19. "Black Soldiers as Revolutionaries to Overthrow the Ruling Class," folder: Protest Movements, Black Panther Party Publications, San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society Archives, San Francisco, California; *Black Panther*, September 20, 1969, 2.
20. Seale, *Seize the Time*, 67.
21. "Police Brutality, Old Story," *Sun-Reporter*, February 26, 1955, 8; "What's Wrong with Our Police Department," *Sun-Reporter*, June 7, 1958, 6; "New Police Brutality Cases Anger Parents: Ask Police Chief and Mayor 'Stop Brutality,'" *Sun-Reporter*, November 14, 1959, 1; "Victim of Police Brutality?," *Sun-Reporter*, March 4, 1961, 1, 5. See also Lader, *Power on the Left*, 229.
22. Sherwin Forte, interview by author, October 9, 1997, tape recording, Oakland, California.
23. King, *Testament of Hope*, 233.
24. "Interview with Scandinavian Rep. of Black Panther Party: Connie Matthews," *Black Panther*, October 18, 1969, 9.
25. "Interview with Angela Davis," *Black Panther*, November 1, 1969.
26. "Panthers Move Internationally," *Black Panther*, September 14, 1968, 3.
27. Cleaver, "Back to Africa," 216–17.
28. "Project Resistance," 11, box 80, Huey P. Newton Foundation Papers, Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford, California (hereafter HPN Papers). I accessed the HPN Papers at Stanford University in 1996 when the archival recording process was just beginning; box and folder titles, contents, etc., may subsequently have changed.
29. *Ibid.*, 29–30.
30. "Black Panther Discussion with African and Haitian Liberation Fighters," *Black Panther*, August 23, 1969, 16–17.
31. *Ibid.*
32. "African Liberation Movement," *Black Panther*, October 4, 1969, 11.
33. Eldridge Cleaver, "Solidarity of the People until Victory or Death!," *Black Panther*, October 25, 1969, 12–13.
34. Cleaver, "Back to Africa," 226.
35. For example, see *Black Panther*, September 20, 1969, 16.
36. See various issues of *Black Panther* in October 1969.
37. "Text of Speech of David Hilliard at San Francisco, November 15, 1969," folder: "Hilliard, David. Expert Witness File," box 27, HPN Papers.
38. *Black Panther*, November 21, December 9, 1969.
39. "A Rally Announcing Action," folder: "Oakland, Protests, Demonstrations etc, 1920–1969," Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library, Oakland, California.
40. Newton, *To Die*, 201–3.
41. Folder: "MSS People's Revolutionary Intercommunalism," 2, HPN Papers.
42. Newton, *To Die*, 178.
43. *Ibid.*, 184.
44. *Ibid.*, 186, 190.
45. "Huey's Message at Boston College, November 18, 1970," 4, box 8, HPN Papers.

46. *Ibid.*, 5.

47. “Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention: Resolutions and Declarations, November 29, 1970, Washington, D.C.,” 2, folder: “Re: Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention,” box 15, HPN Papers.

48. *Ibid.*, 4.

49. Newton spoke at New Haven College on February 5, 1971, on “BPP—Ideology” and at Princeton University on February 9, 1971, on “Black Panther Party—New Ideology”; see folder: “Signed Contracts—executed,” box 8, HPN Papers.

50. “Joint Communique,” folder: “Communication Sheets,” box 2, HPN Papers.

51. “August 15, 1967” memo, folder: “Counterintelligence Program Case Histories—FBI files,” box 68, HPN Papers.

52. Churchill and Vander Wall, *COINTELPRO Papers*, 124.

53. Cleaver, “Back to Africa,” 224.

54. Seale, *Seize the Time*, 34.

55. *Black Panther*, October 25, 1969, 21.

56. “Open Letter to the Danish Foreign Ministry,” *Black Panther*, May 11, 1969.

57. “Free Huey Demonstration in Scandinavia,” *Black Panther*, June 21, 1969, 18.

58. Churchill and Vander Wall, *COINTELPRO Papers*, 124.

59. “Racial Disorders and law enforcement,” folder: “Books to be Written,” box 18, HPN Papers.

60. “Sworn statement by John Mitchell dated April 15, 1976,” box 80, HPN Papers.

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*

63. Donner, *Age of Surveillance*, 265.

64. “To SAC SF from Director FBI, 9/9/70,” 3, box 80, HPN Papers.

65. Informative note dated 3/4/71, box 80, HPN Papers.

66. Churchill, “‘To Disrupt, Discredit, and Destroy,’” 83.

67. *Ibid.*, 78.

68. See Donner, *Age of Surveillance*; Churchill and Vander Wall, *COINTELPRO Papers*; O’Reilly, *Racial Matters*; Schultz and Schultz, *It Did Happen Here*.

69. “Black Panther Party Delegation’s Book re: People’s Republic of China upon Return,” box 46, HPN Papers.

70. Folder: “The Servants Visit to the People’s Republic of China,” box 44, HPN Papers.

71. Folder: “Rev Rep. in U.S. and Canada, Western Europe, eg. China,” box 41, HPN Papers.

72. “Innerparty Memorandum #13,” October 25, 1972, 2, box 14, HPN Papers.

73. Folder: “Requests to Start Black Panther Party Centers,” box 14, HPN Papers.

74. “The Black Panther Party Program, March 29, 1972, platform,” 11, folder: “Misc. Articles,” box 41, HPN Papers.

75. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, ix.

76. Richard Harwood, “Black Panthers Striving Heartily for Revolution,” *Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser* (Honolulu), January 25, 1970, E4, HPN Papers.

77. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, ix.

Hip Hop's Diasporic Landscapes of Blackness

MARC D. PERRY

The narrative of hip hop's rise as a global cultural phenomenon has been a rather extraordinary one.¹ I recall in the mid-1970s being dragged to local "street jams" among Manhattan's Lower East Side public housing projects where neighborhood youth, almost exclusively African American and Puerto Rican, gathered summer afternoons to listen and dance to the music of local DJs and their makeshift audio equipment powered via illicit taps into city street lamps. I was clearly unaware at that age that what was going on around me, as was happening throughout New York's inner-city patchwork of public housing projects, would give birth to a cultural movement soon to be celebrated as hip hop. Indeed, I would come into budding self-awareness amidst that formative period of hip hop's early ascendance in New York City during the 1980s. It was during much later travels, however, that I became cognizant of how hip hop, once a collaborative expression of postindustrial cultural improvisation among African American, Puerto Rican, and West Indian inner-city youth, was now being refashioned by other marginalized youth globally to give critical voice to their own subjective experience and sense of selfhood. In the interim, of course, a onetime marginal youth culture encompassing expressive elements of music, verbal lyricism, dance, graffiti art, and fashion had evolved into a multibillion-dollar global industry.

Although hip hop has undergone radical transformation during this movement from street to international marketplace, it has at the same time retained a critical capacity to convey a signifying blackness of representational force and emotive meaning. To underscore this is by no means to suggest that there is something "essentially" black per se about hip hop, but rather it is a recognition of the significant, albeit highly mediated ways hip hop continues to communicate a "black," largely masculine discourse of urban marginality. Hip hop today has emerged globally as the most visible and widely disseminated conduit of

U.S. black popular imagery—commercially mediated not only through music but increasingly through film, television, and corporate merchandising. While the majority of scholarship to date has focused on the cultural politics of hip hop's domestic production and consumption within the United States, there have been more recent moves to examine the sociocultural dynamics involved in the trafficking and spread of rap music and hip hop culture globally.²

In this essay I address this second line of inquiry, mapping how the black racial significance of hip hop is received, interpreted, and redeployed transnationally. Rather than a broad survey, this exploration centers on the politics and poetics of hip hop as they find particular expression within the black diasporic world. Beyond simply questions of cultural consumption and reproduction, I argue that hip hop's expanding global reach has enabled the making of new black diasporic subjects in and of themselves. In ways evocative of Benedict Anderson's insights into the role of print media in forging modern national identities,³ hip hop today has assumed an increasingly significant role in shaping contemporary forms of black diasporic consciousness and subjectivity. Here, African-descendant youth in an array of locales are employing the performative space of hip hop to mobilize notions of black self in ways that simultaneously contest and transcend nationally bound racial framings. Within these contexts understandings of diasporic belonging are often paramount, if not vitally constitutive of such black self-fashioning. Thus, much like print media of a previous moment, hip hop has become a productive technology in the current global mapping and moving of black political subjects via the social workings of diaspora. In pursuing this argument, this essay examines hip hop movements in Brazil, Cuba, and South Africa comparatively as varying examples of how transnationally attuned identities of blackness are marshaled in the making of diasporic subjects through hip hop's performative lens.

When considering the international proliferation of hip hop, one needs to be cognizant of the differing ways hip hop's "black" cultural politics travel as they are engaged by communities beyond the United States. While such diffusion may move along similar global circuits as culturally and geographically divergent as Senegal and Japan, it is clear that hip hop's reception and recontextualization in the formation of local followings can often involve very different kinds of social meaning-making. While hip hop may indeed provide cultural resources in the global shaping of local identities,⁴ one must always remain attentive to questions of power and relative positionality. The query, then, becomes one of who is consuming whom, and to what ends.

It is, however, undeniable that hip hop has assumed a wide and particularly

marked resonance among more socially marginal communities of youth. This is as much the case for working-class urban youth in Chile as it is for their ethnically marked Basque contemporaries in Spain. In both settings we find examples of how young people appropriate markers of blackness as a means of expressing their own subjective conditions of marginality. Chile's Las Panteras Negras (The Black Panthers) coupled with the Basque nationalist group *Negu Gorriak's* self-identification as "Afro-Basque" are exemplary of such symbolic deployments.⁵ Palestinian hip hop poet Suheir Hammad's evocations of Public Enemy, Amiri Baraka, and Malcolm X in her 1996 collection *Born Palestinian, Born Black* is further illustrative of blackness's global resonance as a hip hop-informed marker of social marginality.⁶ Yet while shared understandings of social marginalization may indeed be involved in these examples, such identifications do not in the end constitute these young people in any historical sense as "black" per se. Where lie, then, these practices of black self-making of which I speak?

Within the current literature on hip hop's transnational dimensions there is little scholarship examining the politics of race and racial identification at play globally. In many treatments either African or African-descendant sites are absent from examination, or there is an analytical privileging of cultural or ethnic modes of differentiation vis-à-vis marginalized communities to the exclusion of the racialized processes that often shape the lived experience of these populations. While it is clear, as Tony Mitchell has suggested, that hip hop in a global sense "cannot be viewed simply as an expression of African American culture; it has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identities all over the world,"⁷ this does not mean that race (or blackness) is necessarily erased from the equation.

When assessing hip hop's transnational racial significance, one cannot deny the particular salience of the cultural form within the contemporary Afro-Atlantic world. Whether Haitian immigrants in Montreal, Afro-Colombians in Cali, Colombia, or Afro-Amerindian Garifuna in Honduras, African-descendant youth globally are using the performative space of hip hop as a vital site of critical self-expression. Yet beyond a simple claiming of voice, to what extent might hip hop's "black" cultural framings facilitate new, diasporically attuned identities of blackness themselves? Such a suggestion recalls those diasporic affinities that first gave rise to hip hop via the interchange of African American, Puerto Rican, and West Indian inner-city youth.⁸ Cultural agencies of the like found creative expression through the melding of overlapping histories of black diasporic experience coupled with shared conditions of social

marginalization as youth of color in postindustrial urban America. Indeed, it has been argued that this early period of hip hop's formation engendered new expressions of black urban subjectivity that found common groundings through a shared sense of Afrodiasporic belonging.⁹

At this moment, however, hip hop can be seen as an increasingly important conduit for just those kinds of global black identifications and emergent subjectivities that have historically constituted the African Diaspora as a lived social formation. The notion of diaspora here is dynamic and ever changing, one forged through historical plays of power and agency in the continual re-making of diaspora via transnational black identification and communicative interchange.¹⁰ Such an understanding foregrounds Brent Hayes Edwards's notion of a "mobilized diaspora" in distinguishing between a historically *given*, "involuntary" sense of diaspora versus a historically *responsive* recognition of the ways the African, or more appropriately, "black," diaspora is actively employed in the making of globally conscious black subjects and social movements.¹¹ This framing not only underscores the salience of what Paul Gilroy has termed the contemporary "routes" of diasporic identification¹² but additionally opens up space for an appreciation of how transnational affinities of blackness can be fashioned among communities of African descent who may not necessarily share histories of displacement. Such expansiveness holds particular currency when considering the vibrant presence of hip hop in Africa itself, where young people across the continent can be seen asserting their claim to a globalized space of "modern," postcolonial blackness through hip hop's diasporic spectrum. Yet while the source of such black self-imaginings may be initially grounded in the historical specificity of the United States, subsequent black self-constitutions are neither beholden to nor necessarily disarticulated from U.S. racial histories. The question, rather, as we shall see, concerns the complex manner in which such blackness is rearticulated globally by varying communities of "black" youth.

Brazil

The rise of Brazilian hip hop offers a critically insightful illustration of how black diasporic identities are currently mobilized through the performative spectrum of hip hop culture. Articulations of this kind carry added potential given Brazil's location as the most populous concentration of peoples of African descent outside the African continent—a historical legacy courtesy of the largest and most enduring slave system in the Americas. While hip

hop's foundations in Brazil were first laid in the 1980s through the circulation of music and images emanating from the United States,¹³ Brazilian hip hop's diasporic contours should be understood within a broader recent history of Afro-Brazilian engagement with U.S. black popular culture. Brazil's Black Soul movement of the 1970s represents a particularly notable example of such diasporically informed engagement. Here by way of music, dance, and fashion, young Afro-Brazilians of Rio de Janeiro drew upon the black cultural aesthetics and embodied self-awareness of 1970s U.S. soul music in the voicing of new, transnationally inspired expressions of Afro-Brazilian blackness. During this period parties were organized where young Afro-clad youth donned bell-bottoms and dashikis and gathered to dance to the likes of James Brown and Marvin Gaye.

Transcending questions of simple cultural importation, Michael Hanchard has argued that Black Soul represented an effort to construct alternative forms of self-affirming black identity as oppositional responses to Brazil's historical privileging of whiteness and persistent forms of racial subjugation.¹⁴ Emerging during the repressive era of Brazil's military dictatorship (1964–85), Black Soul events became important venues for the dissemination of information pertaining to the nascent Movimento Negro—a loosely coordinated affiliation of Afro-Brazilian organizations mobilized strategically around black identity claims. Endeavors of this kind, Hanchard suggests, were formative in the early framing of a black identity politics that continue today as an instrumental facet of Afro-Brazilian sociopolitical organizing. Here, politicized assertions of blackness have been central in efforts to contest Brazil's hegemonic claims as a “racial democracy,” where race and racism are alleged inconsequential, if not nonexistent, within an ostensibly racially amalgamated national populace with one of the highest levels of social inequality in the world.¹⁵

The emergence of Brazilian hip hop needs, therefore, to be viewed within this continuum of diasporically engaged Afro-Brazilian identity politics. Young, largely male Afro-Brazilian *favelados*—residents of Brazil's urban shantytowns known as favelas—in and around São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro were the first to take up rap music in the voicing of their own racially informed experiences and concerns. The highly popular São Paulo-based Racionais MC's (Rational MC's) are a prime example of this early movement in Brazilian hip hop. Establishing their reputation in the late 1980s and early 1990s while performing primarily in favelas and the “darker” suburbs on the fringes of São Paulo, the group's aggressive lyrics focused on social themes most pressing in these marginalized communities, such as racism, racially targeted police violence, drug

trafficking, and government corruption in the improvised *periferias* (peripheries). The opening salvo to “Capítulo 4 Versículo 3” from the platinum-selling 1998 album *Sobrevivendo No Inferno* (*Surviving in Hell*) stands as a dramatic case in point:

60% dos jovens de periferia sem antecedentes criminais já sofreram
 violência policial;
 A cada quatro pessoas mortas pela polícia, três são negras;
 Nas universidades brasileiras, apenas 2% dos alunos são negros;
 A cada quatro horas um jovem negro morre violentamente em São Paulo;
 Aqui quem fala é Primo Preto, mais um sobrevivente¹⁶

[60% of youth in the periphery without criminal records have already
 suffered police violence

In every four people killed by the police, three are black
 In Brazilian Universities, only 2% of students are black
 Every four hours, a young black person dies violently in São Paulo
 Speaking here is “Primo Preto” (“Black Cousin”), another survivor].¹⁷

As Primo Preto’s introduction testifies, blackness and marginality are imbricated realities in many of Brazil’s favelas and urban peripheral zones where systemic forms of racialized violence are quotidian. Indeed, Derek Pardue has suggested that São Paulo hip hop artists mediate marginality itself—in both social and geospatial terms—through discourses and practices of negritude in ways that gesture toward diasporic belonging.¹⁸ His discussion of these diasporic dimensions and their articulations vis-à-vis questions of identity, however, remain largely implicit rather than explicitly explored. Alternatively, Jennifer Roth Gordon contends that Brazilian MCs constitute, in effect, “an alternative black consciousness movement” largely through what she sees as their adoption of U.S. racial ideologies via hip hop’s transnational lens.¹⁹ My argument is that diasporic rather than U.S. understandings of blackness are in the end instrumental in fashioning critical expressions of black Brazilian self. The emphasis here is on dialogic engagements rather than reductive appropriations of blackness.

Similar mobilizations of blackness can be seen in Rio de Janeiro, where immediately following the infamous Candelaria murders of 1993, in which off-duty police systematically gunned down a group of black street children sleeping aside a Rio Janeiro church, a protest rally was coordinated in the city by a coalition of organizations within the Movimento Negro. Among the speakers and performers condemning the murders and the broader culture of racial

violence at the rally were the Rio-based rap duo Consciencia Urbana (Urban Consciousness). At the time of the event, member Big Richard described the political significance of his music this way:

In the U.S. blacks have a notion that racism exists. Not in Brazil. In Brazil racism is disguised. In Brazil we live in a racial democracy, believe it if you will. Here we have a small number of black youth who fight against racism, while the majority, even as they suffer racism every day like being harassed on the bus by the police, prefer to believe what is shown to them on television and in the media. So what happens is that we present the counterculture to this, and to fight as a counterculture is not easy, especially in Brazil.²⁰

In addition to employing rap as a pedagogic device in an effort to inform Afro-Brazilian counterhegemonic sensibilities vis-à-vis dominant Brazilian constructions of racial exceptionalism, Consciencia Urbana's songs evoke black diasporic imagery and identifications as a means of grounding the local within broader histories of black antiracist struggle. In referencing the significance of Malcolm X, for example, Big Richard explains: "We decided to make a rap song about Malcolm X because he was not solely a black American. He lost his Americanness when he fought against racism, for any person who fights against racism anywhere in the world is fighting for blacks, for the survival of black people."²¹

Here the figure of Malcolm X is resignified beyond his U.S. historical specificity in an effort to accommodate a more expansive diasporic reading. Similar moves are echoed in a song by Racionais MC's where baggy-jeaned, baseball-cap-adorned member Mono Brown riffs, "We need a leader with popular credit like Malcolm X as in other times in America, who is black down to the bones — one of us — and reconstructs our pride from ruins."²² These artists' adoption and rearticulation of Malcolm X's black nationalist imagery within the context of Afro-Brazilian struggle is a cogent example of the ways African-descendant communities draw inspiration transnationally from experiences and cultures of black populations elsewhere. By mobilizing such diasporic resources in this manner, to use Jacqueline Nassy Brown's term, Afro-Brazilian rap artists not only tie their struggles historically to others in the diaspora but, in effect, actively constitute the black diaspora itself as a *lived* social reality.²³ In the case of Malcolm X's imagery, such cultural appropriations were no doubt informed at the time by the revitalization of Malcolm X in the United States by rap artists such as Public Enemy, who along with Spike Lee helped to feed the

“X” fashion trend of the early 1990s. Although these commodified representations of Malcolm’s complex legacy were not devoid of their commercially tied contradictions, they nonetheless retained a capacity to transnationally convey and generate meanings of a radical blackness for others.

Rather than simple appropriations, these examples illustrate how U.S. rap music and hip hop—attuned black popular culture serves as a lens through which diasporically informed ideas, messages, and identifications can and are actively fashioned. Such black diasporic processes and understandings are clearly articulated by Big Richard, who elaborates:

By principle, we think that rap is not a [North] American music. Rap is a music of black people, and black people originated in Africa. In the case of those who are born outside of Africa, we are speaking of the Diaspora. Here in Brazil, it is a regional music, adapted to the Portuguese, to the Brazilian swing where we mix *timbalala* and samba-reggae with rap. We make a connection by joining American music with Brazilian music in creating our own style, but without ever losing the music’s roots, because in fact these two roots are sisters—they originated in only one place, Africa.²⁴

While emphasizing the African historical “roots” of rap music, Big Richard simultaneously evokes the contemporary routes of rap’s black diasporic significance in referencing its aesthetically conveyed blackness as the basis for constructing transnational black “connections” between Brazil and the United States. He suggests that such identifications are made most real not simply through the consumption of hip hop but, rather, through the ways hip hop is proactively transformed in the making of a new, culturally relevant, yet a signifyingly “black” Brazilian music form. Big Richard’s reference to “creating our own style” through the fusion of Afro-Brazilian musical elements and the use of Portuguese to indigenize rap further underscores the important interrelationality between style making and identity. On both aesthetic and linguistic levels, then, the creative reworking of hip hop’s conveyed blackness not only may give rise to a new Brazilian music genre but might, in fact, serve as an alternative modality for articulating blackness in Brazil altogether. The suggestion here is that hip hop may facilitate black social imaginaries that transcend nationally prescriptive, historically circumscribed fields of Brazilian blackness.

Within the broader space of Brazilian hip hop, style is also key to the ways blackness is performatively marked and bodily exhibited through popular fashion. Glossy hip hop magazines such as *Rap Brasil*, *Hip Hop en Movimiento*, and

Rap Rima that have emerged over the past decade are filled with images of young black and brown, primarily male, Brazilians dressed in U.S.-inspired hip hop attire. The enactive “rocking” of such hip hop fashion is often accompanied by overt body posturing stylistically evocative of that employed by young African American men and male rap artists. Many of Brazil’s most established rap groups signify themselves in one form or another through such U.S.-inspired black urban style. As a mode of self-representational practice, style in this way must be understood as “performative” in its own right—performative in the productive sense in which Judith Butler speaks of how individual subjectivities and the social categories that define them are in the end constituted only insofar as they are enacted or *performed* in everyday life.²⁵ Indeed, if we consider Stuart Hall’s suggestion that “it is only through the ways in which we represent and imagine ourselves that we come to know how we are,”²⁶ emphasizing the performative nature of black popular style in this way encourages considerations of the active self-representational force of style in its capacity to culturally articulate, more than simply reflect, identities of blackness and ways of being.²⁷

Afro-Brazilian rap duo Afro-X and Dexter further illustrate this performative mending of black urban style and the aesthetic production of black selfhood. The duo recorded their first album in 2000 while imprisoned in the infamous São Paulo Carandiru prison complex that first gained international attention in 1992 when 111 inmates were systematically massacred by military police following a prison uprising. Referring to themselves as “509-E” after their prison cell number, Afro-X and Dexter’s music assails a corrupt justice system while testifying to the violent realities of being black, male, and poor in contemporary Brazil. In addition to limited performances in prison, the duo recorded a video for MTV Brazil in which they can be seen sporting gold chains and designer sneakers.²⁸ Their state-regulation beige pants are worn baggy off the hip, stylistically evoking U.S. hip hop–associated fashion practices first coined by young African American males that, ironically, arose out of U.S. prison culture.

As these Brazilian examples suggest, rap music and associated hip hop culture can provide alternative cultural frameworks through which new meanings and identities of blackness can be strategically articulated and performatively mobilized. To the extent that these identifications are forged through transnationally projected black imagery, they are not predicated on linguistic intelligibility. Rather, hip hop’s black racial alterity is conveyed most tangibly through its marked blackness of style. Such blackness, in turn, is transformed

through both linguistic and stylistic innovations in the voicing and bodily performance of new kinds of critical black subjectivity that are both products of and responsive to the particular sociocultural imperatives of contemporary Brazil. Writing on Afro-Brazilian youth culture in Bahia, Brazil, Livio Sansone observes that the fashioning of new black-signified youth styles as exemplified in hip hop “offers black people new opportunities for redefining black difference in Western societies by aestheticizing blackness, in the first place, through highly visible styles and pop music.”²⁹ Indeed, the adoption of these transnationally informed youth practices provides young Afro-Brazilians with means of not only marking their blackness more visibly but actively linking their struggles to a broader black diasporic experience and transnational frameworks of black antiracism.

Cuba

Much as in Brazil, race and blackness have long been at the center of Cuba's historical narrative, dating back to the massive importation of enslaved Africans upon whose labor the island's sugar-based plantation economy grew to the largest in the colonial world by the mid-nineteenth century. Cuba's welding of race and nation was further deepened in the late nineteenth century during the island's anticolonial wars of independence in which recently liberated Afro-Cubans comprised the vast majority of the independence movement's fighting force. Here the struggle to free the island from Spanish colonial control was inextricably tied to the struggle for black emancipation and corresponding visions for a racially just and equitable Cuban nation.³⁰ Such expectations remained largely elusive until after 1959, when the Cuban Revolution took up socialism and placed racial equality, at least initially, at the center of its declared program to build a socially egalitarian society. While the extent to which the Cuban Revolution was able to eliminate racism and hierarchical racial privilege remains debated,³¹ it is unquestionable that many black Cubans did, on the whole, benefit significantly from the social reforms and programs undertaken during the early revolutionary period. This did not mean that the deep, historically rooted ideological structures of racism in Cuban society ceased to operate and to reproduce themselves in everyday life. To speak publicly of racism's persistence, however, became taboo under revolutionary socialism, which by the mid-1960s had declared racism and racial discrimination officially eradicated from the island. Assertions to the contrary were ultimately deemed divisive, counterrevolutionary if not counternational declarations.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc ushered in yet another critical phase of Cuba's racial history. With the 1990 suspension of Soviet subsidies upon which Cuba's economy and the revolutionary project had been largely underwritten, the island fell into a severe economic crisis known as the "special period." In a strategic move to revive the economy, the Cuban state initiated a series of economic reforms in the early 1990s that, in effect, represented a cautious opening of the heretofore-closed Cuban economy to global capital. Possibly the most dramatic consequence of this neoliberal shift has been the dollarization of Cuba's economy and its transformative impacts on everyday life in Cuba.³² In addition to engendering greater social stratification predicated upon differing levels of access to circulating dollars and other foreign currencies, race (re)emerged as a critical factor affecting who and how one gets such access within Cuba's new economy.³³ Within these workings, new levels, if not racialized modes, of socioeconomic marginalization have surfaced in Cuba today. Under such conditions the ideological claims of a unified, "nonracial" Cuba under revolutionary socialism and the subsequent silencing of race were now laid bare by the everyday lived social consequences of racial difference in Cuba. The critical question to be asked, then, concerns how black and darker-skinned Cubans are currently responding to these new racialized realities and to what extent and in what ways might such efforts be contestatory.

It is no coincidence that the emergence of hip hop in Cuba over the last decade or so has occurred precisely during this current period of rapid social transformation.³⁴ Though the early roots of rap music in Cuba can be traced back to the mid-1980s, it was not until the economic crisis of the 1990s that hip hop as a cultural movement in Cuba began to take shape. It is significant, moreover, that those who first and most ardently engaged in hip hop were overwhelmingly black and darker-skinned youth. It remained so as interest in rap music spread throughout the greater Havana area. A cultural space, almost exclusively black and young, began to evolve around the transnationally introduced music form. Within a relatively short time, parties began springing up across Havana where young people gathered to listen, dance, and otherwise participate in the collective making of Cuba's nascent hip hop movement.³⁵ By the mid-1990s these new black spaces had a brief footing in a few state-run cultural centers before garnering the distrust of some Cuban officials who viewed such gatherings with suspicion, ostensibly associating them with capitalist culture and antisocial influences.

Within today's vibrant self-identified Cuban hip hop movement, black youth frequent dance clubs and additional venues throughout the island's urban centers where the latest U.S. hip hop can be heard. Many of these youth, significantly, are drawn from poorer, more socially marginal neighborhoods. As scores of youth dance and sing along with the music—though most do not actually speak English themselves—they don baggy pants, foreign-made athletic shoes, and U.S. baseball caps and team jerseys. These commodified expressions of U.S. black youth culture are tied to the recent opening of the island to transnational flows of people, capital, and cultural influences, as well as a growing culture of consumerism in a once defiantly anticonsumerist Cuba. Yet like their Brazilian peers, these youth mobilize black-signified style as self-constituting practices.

Beyond questions of consumption, however, the cultural meaning-making within Cuban hip hop lies most significantly in the way young Afro-Cubans are critically refashioning rap music and hip hop's black-signified aesthetics into their own idioms of self-expression. With an estimated 500 or more rap groups currently islandwide, there are sites throughout Cuba where local *raperos*, as Cuban MCs are termed, perform original material before packed audiences. While frequently using body posturing and gestures evocative of U.S. rap performances, their lyrics are sung in a distinctly Cuban Spanish vernacular over rhythms often incorporating Afro-Cuban musical elements. At the center of the music, however, is a thematic emphasis on social critique in which many *raperos* evoke their identities as *los negros* (black people) as the basis from which their perspectives are critically voiced. It is important to note that a significant number of *raperos* and their followers who might not necessarily be categorized as “negro” (black) within Cuba's phenotypically graduated system of racial classification self-identify as such. In conversation with some of these individuals, many suggest that it was precisely through their involvement within the Cuban hip hop movement that they came to identify themselves as black. As Randy of the Havana-based duo Los Paisanos explained, “Me? I'm black. Well here in Cuba I'm *jabao*. This is what they tell me here in Cuba, *jabao*. This light brown hair and eyes more or less light, all the same color, and with light brown skin.” When asked how long he identified as black (*negro*), Randy replied, “Not very long. It has been a short time, since I began to take seriously the hip hop movement. Hip hop is a thing that frees the mentality, it is freedom. Many people don't understand but for us it is freedom. We have changed our way of thinking and we have completely opened our thinking.

I don't know, it's a powerful weapon. Hip hop is a force, it's life, it's a way of life."³⁶ As Randy's comments suggest, hip hop can indeed be instrumental in forging new understandings of black selfhood. Rather than simply a question of music, hip hop becomes for Randy a way of life, a transformative, liberating force associated with black self-actualization.

Yet such identities find their most active and politically demonstrative expression through their performance. In addition to everyday concerns, such as struggles for foreign currency and the social impacts of tourism and the related sex trade, *raperos* frequently address manifestations of and struggles against antiblack racism both locally and internationally. In doing so, these youth actively position themselves and their politics within a broader Afrodiasporic context of present-day black struggle. U.S. black radical figures such as Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, and more recently, Mumia Abu-Jamal have become important verbal references among many Cuban MCs. The transnational sites of contact for such black radical iconography stem primarily from two related sources. The first is *raperos'* long-standing engagement with critically oriented African American rap artists from the United States, and the second arises from the influence of African American political exiles, most notably Assata Shakur and Nehanda Abiodun. Abiodun has been particularly active in mentoring capacities within Havana's hip hop community, conferring on her something of a *la madrina*, or godmother, status within the movement.

Another key facilitator of these black radical connections has been the New York-based Black August Collective, which participated in a number of the early Cuban hip hop festivals held annually in Havana. Black August's participation along these lines has been twofold: organizing festival performances of more politically identified African American artists such as Mos Def and Talib Kweli, Common, and Dead Prez, while strengthening bonds with African American political exiles on the island. Largely as a result of these varying engagements, *raperos'* transnationally envisioned notions of social justice are often advanced within overlapping discourses of "revolution"—one rooted in post-1959 Cuban revolutionary society and another informed by U.S. black radical/nationalist traditions and their contemporary struggles.

Yet on another level and resonant with similar examples in other Afrodiasporic sites,³⁷ such diasporically attuned, self-consciously "modern" expressions of blackness overtly contest Cuba's dominant historical configuration of blackness within the nationally bounded trope of "folklore." Framings of this kind have tended to relegate Afro-Cubans to an ahistorical, unchanging "national" past, effectively freezing blacks within static representations

of the “traditional” rather than recognizing the dynamic and ever-changing nature of Afro-Cuban culture, identity, and social agency. The self-affirming, nationally expansive black modernity asserted by Afro-Cuban *raperos* clearly stands in stark juxtaposition to, if not in implicit critique of, such folklorized constraints.

Given the growing marginalization of darker-skinned Cubans from centers of economic activity in an increasingly socially stratified Cuba, *raperos* can be understood as employing the black-identified cultural space of hip hop to articulate and mobilize their racial difference in response to greater levels of racially lived social inequality. Hip hop's black-signified framings offer these youth a racially empowering, yet alternative, nationally transcendent source of black identification. Such diasporically aware blackness, in turn, serves as the basis upon which to act and move politically. Here, *raperos'* musical emphasis on social critique is often aimed at deconstructing the mounting contradictions between the claims of a socially just, racially egalitarian society under revolutionary socialism and the growing realities of class and racial polarization within the island's new neoliberally impacted economy.

Most *raperos*, however, are far from counterrevolutionaries, as some off the island might like to claim. Quite the contrary. The majority of Cuban MCs see their music as critically engaged in one form or another in advancing key principles embodied in the ideals of the Cuban Revolution. As Kokino, a member of Havana's Anónimo Consejo (Anonymous Advice), put it, “Our critique or our protest is constructive. The idea of Anónimo Consejo is not to throw the revolution to the floor. It is rather to make a revolution within the revolution. It is to criticize the things, or to protest the things that are not well within the Cuban revolution. But our objective is not to harass or be destructive, but it is to make a new Cuba for young people.”³⁸ Indeed, these youth represent a generation of socially engaged artists who remain shaped by the socialist-derived notions of egalitarianism embedded and still alive within Cuban society. Implicit critiques of capitalism and its debilitating effects on Cuban society are recurring themes within much of Cuban hip hop. Moreover, vocal challenges to U.S. imperialism—those articulated with Cuban revolutionary discourse as well as more radical voices within U.S. hip hop—hold significant sway among many Cuban MCs. All this said, *raperos'* central object of critique remains Cuban society and its lived contradictions.

MCs Zoandris and Pelón, who comprise the Havana-based duo Hermanos de Causa (Brothers of Cause), are among the most respected and politically outspoken *raperos* on the island. One of their signature tracks from their 2003

album is “Lágrimas Negras” (“Black Tears”). Taking the song’s title from a classic Cuban *bolero-son* made famous in the 1930s by the celebrated Cuban composer Miguel Matamoros, Hermanos de Causa’s “Lágrimas Negras” presents a lamentable though unabashed denunciation of the prevalence of racism in today’s Cuba.

Yo de frente todo el tiempo realista	I in front, all the time a realist
No digas que no hay racismo	Don't say that there isn't racism
donde hay un racista	where there is a racist
siempre y cuando donde quiera	Always, when and where ever I
que me encuentre el prejuicio	find myself, prejudice in one
de una forma o de otra	form or another is always
siempre esta presente	present
[...]	[...]
Siento odio profundo por tu	I feel profound hate for your
racismo	racism
Ya no me confundo con tu ironía	I am no longer confused by your
Ylloro sin que sepas que el llanto	irony
mío	And I cry without you knowing
Tiene lágrimas negras como mi	that my cry has black tears like
vida	my life
[...]	[...]
No me digas que no hay porque	Don't tell me that there isn't any
yo sé, lo he visto	because I know, I have seen it
No me digas que no existe porque	Don't tell me that it doesn't exist
lo he vivido	because I have lived it
No me niegues que hay oculto	Don't deny that there is a hidden
un prejuicio racial que nos	racial prejudice that condemns us
condena y	and
nos valora a todos por igual	values us all the same
No te dejes engañar	Don't be fooled
los ojos de par en par	Eyes wide open
No te dejes engañar . . .	Don't be deceived . . .

Hermanos de Causa in no uncertain terms seeks to expose the stark incongruities between long-standing revolutionary discourses that deny the workings of racism versus the lived realities and social consequences of racialized existence in Cuba today. Rather than a marker of romantic sorrow as conveyed

in the original rendition, in Hermanos de Causa's version of "Lágrimas Negras," the song's title is resignified to foreground a racial positionality at the center of its testimonial critique—in short, a critical black subject, "no longer confused," who refuses to remain silent.

A particularly significant marker of hip hop's Cuban ascendance has been the Cuban state's response to its racially signified cultural politics. In 1999 the Cuban minister of culture organized a meeting with representatives of Havana's hip hop community where he expressed the government's recognition of rap as a legitimate form of Cuban cultural expression. Prior to this moment, as suggested earlier, the Cuban state regarded rap music as an icon of U.S. capitalist culture with implied counterrevolutionary tendencies. Since this shift, however, the state became increasingly involved in the institutionalization of Cuban hip hop within the frame of revolutionary national culture.

The evolution of the annual Cuban Hip Hop Festival serves as a key indicator of the Cuban state's growing interest in, and attempted institutionalization of, the hip hop movement. Initiated in 1995, the festival was founded by a small group of black cultural activists interested in creating a space to showcase Havana's emerging rap talent. With little support from the Cuban government, these individuals ran the festival until 2000, when the cultural branch of the Union of Young Communists stepped in as the event's sole organizer. From this point on, state institutions have played an increasingly active role in making resources and public venues available to rap artists. At the same time, the Cuban state has made consistent efforts to assume a position as a key arbiter and representational face of the movement. The establishment in 2002 of the state-run La Agencia de Rap, or Cuban Rap Agency, represented the most dramatic expression of such incorporative institutionalizing moves. Yet in all its institutional expressions, the Cuban state has conspicuously—though not surprisingly—downplayed, if not completely ignored, the black racial significance of Cuban hip hop in its official dealings with the movement. To acknowledge this racial significance would open the Pandora's box of race and its contemporary dynamics, which the revolutionary leadership remains largely resistant to openly addressing.

Though initial reception on the part of many *raperos* to this new official attention was relatively positive, there was some ambivalence. On one level, the hip hop movement has long fought for recognition and the right to state resources within the context of a socialist society. Therefore, the recent access was much appreciated. Nonetheless, there remained at various levels caution, if not mistrust, on the part of many Cuban MCs regarding the extent to which

the state sought to hold the reins. While the Cuban state's recognition of hip hop may have signaled a move toward authorizing it as a valid part of Cuban national culture and thus bestowing upon it just resources, that recognition can also be read as an attempt to incorporate a previously marginalized youth culture—as well as its racial underpinnings—within institutional structures, thereby mitigating its oppositional potential.

While this may certainly be the case, I suggest that such incorporation has simultaneously enabled the development of an alternative space of racial articulation within an otherwise tightly controlled Cuban public landscape. I contend that Cuban hip hop has come to occupy an important site of racially positioned social critique and antiracist advocacy within contemporary Cuba and, in doing so, helps push critical accounts of racial and class dynamics further into realms of public discourse at this critical historical juncture. As such, hip hop can be understood as an increasingly important player in an evolving black public sphere predicated on the assertion of a contemporary black political difference within a previously configured, ostensibly “nonracial” Cuban national imaginary. Within this evolving black counterpublic,³⁹ Afro-Cuban intellectuals and artists are increasingly engaging *raperos* whose work is seen in vanguardist terms vis-à-vis the island's current spectrum of racial politics. Moreover, courses at the University of Havana are now accessing Cuban rap lyrics as important sources of contemporary social commentary on Cuban society.

The future of Cuban hip hop, as the future of Cuba as a whole at this transformative moment, remains to be seen. Yet the efforts of Afro-Cuban *raperos* illuminate the dialect interplay between shifting regimes of racialized power and emergent forms of race-based social praxis as they are increasingly forged at the intersection of the local and the global. Here, the transnational, black-signified space of hip hop has been instrumental in enabling new forms of diasporically engaged strategies of self-making and self-action in the face of new globally inflected imperatives of race.

South Africa

While traditional scholarship of the African Diaspora has tended to concern itself with populations of African descent that share a common historical experience of dispersion—often involuntary—from an African “homeland,” thus privileging the Atlantic as the primary locale of diasporic experience, others have underscored the necessity of (re)centering Africa as a contemporary site

in the making and shaping of black diasporic identities and related political expression.⁴⁰ When considering the transnational contours of hip hop as a modern-day route of black racial identification, Africa itself has to be reckoned with. The widespread proliferation of rap artists and hip hop culture throughout Africa's urban centers represents an important manifestation of hip hop's global black reach. The rise of vibrant local hip hop movements in Senegal, Ghana, Benin, Kenya, and Cote d'Ivoire—to name just a few—suggests that African youth today are increasingly engaging in the black-signified cultural space of hip hop as a medium of critical self-expression.⁴¹

The very real, structurally conditioned hardships that much of sub-Saharan Africa continues to live through have no doubt shaped the social commitments and political urgencies found in much of the hip hop produced on the continent. Before Kanye West's anti-"bling" single "Diamonds from Sierra Leone" (2005) helped draw U.S. attention to the economies of violence tied to Africa's diamond trade, Sierra Leonean youth in Freetown had long been active in using hip hop as a medium of social critique in the postwar nation.⁴² In East Africa, Swahili-language rap in cities like Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, have similarly become an important vehicle among urban youth for giving critical voice to present-day social concerns such as AIDS, joblessness, and state corruption.⁴³ For the purposes of this essay, however, the gaze is turned southward toward South Africa—one of the earliest sites of hip hop on the continent—as a poignant example of the ways critically positioned identities of blackness have been mobilized through the transnational lens of hip hop.

South African hip hop has undergone significant development since its emergence during the waning years of apartheid among Cape Town's coloured, or "mixed-race," youth in the late 1980s. Today, Johannesburg has joined Cape Town as one of South Africa's centers of locally produced hip hop, with each reflecting the particular cultural (and racial) dynamics of their regional settings. For one, Johannesburg-based hip hop has had to compete with the rise of *kwaito*—a frenetic, widely popular dance music out of Johannesburg's black townships that fuses older South African music genres, such as *mbaqanga*, with Western music styles, including hip hop. Heavily incorporative of the township vernacular *isicamtho*,⁴⁴ *kwaito* artists have generally tended to gravitate toward festive rather than explicit sociopolitical themes in their lyrics. Some have suggested such orientations reflect a celebratory postapartheid move among many black South African youth away from the more overt political imperatives of the apartheid era.⁴⁵ Given the widespread popularity of *kwaito* among Johannesburg's black township youth—the same demographic fan base from

which the region's hip hop traditionally draws—it is not surprising that the music has had a significant impact on the local hip hop scene, leading in some cases to a potential blurring of genres. There are those within Johannesburg's hip hop scene, however, who hold firm to what they see as a clear and necessary artistic distinction between the two genres.⁴⁶

While South Africa's top-selling, Soweto-born hip hop artist Pitch Black Afro may employ blackness satirically as a central performative trope (e.g., his ubiquitous oversized Afro wig), a differing and possibly more politically consequent mobilization of blackness can be found in the context of the genre's birth in Cape Town. Hip hop emerged in South Africa in the late 1980s primarily among coloured youth of Cape Town's sprawling Cape Flats region.⁴⁷ Coloureds, as peoples of "mixed race" were legally classified under apartheid's racialized caste system, literally occupied the racial middle ground, historically positioned by the apartheid state as a buffer between the worlds of white and black South Africa. Residentially, educationally, and frequently professionally segregated from both black and white South Africans, coloured communities often developed their own cultural identity, drawing variously upon their African, Indo-Malaysian, and European cultural histories.⁴⁸ And unlike black South Africans, coloureds generally spoke either Afrikaans or English as their primary, identifying language, rather than local African vernaculars. Moreover, in accordance with apartheid's divide-and-rule logic, coloureds were allotted limited class privileges over black South Africans. Such efforts contributed to the historical formation of a racialized class of South Africans who generally aspired to and identified more with white South African status, to the detriment of a nonwhite or "black" social identity—a development clearly attuned with the grand designs of apartheid.

As with the rest of South Africa, however, the 1980s were a highly charged time in the Cape Town region with the rise of mass antiapartheid political mobilization. During this period significant numbers of coloured youth were politicized through varying forms of activism. The critical turning point in the antiapartheid struggle culminated in 1990 with the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party. It was within this politically charged moment of social transformation that South Africa's self-defined Black Hip Hop Movement first found its footing among Cape Town's coloured youth. Though the movement's followers eventually adopted "African" in the place of "Black" as a self-identifying term, the initial choice was indicative of the movement's early

deployment of blackness as an identity-based social marker.⁴⁹ And while the later shift may have, in part, reflected the broader move in postapartheid South Africa toward nonracialism as a reconciliatory national project,⁵⁰ the use of “African” as a self-marker by historically configured coloured youth clearly carried with it additional political significance.

Probably the most influential hip hop group to emerge during this early period was the Cape Flats–based Prophets of Da City (POC), who are often celebrated as key pioneers of South African hip hop. Formed in 1990 during that critical year of political openings, POC was headed by members Ready D, Shaheen, and Ramone, who drew heavily upon Cape Town’s preexisting b-boy (break-dancing) culture in their performances. From its initiation, the group’s music embraced a strong sociopolitical focus often directed at addressing the everyday struggles of coloured township life, including those pertaining to poverty, unemployment, gang violence, and drug abuse.⁵¹ At the center of these concerns, however, were explicit critiques of apartheid and its various manifestations of racialized oppression.

Yet a key and defining component of POC’s early political voicings was their use of the term “black” as a self-referential marker. Through their music and other public engagements, POC’s members consistently positioned themselves as both black and African in oppositional stance to their historical classification as coloured under apartheid. This move was particularly significant when we consider that during this same period, the coloured population of the greater Cape Town region voted resoundingly for the white Afrikaner-led National Party—the very architects of apartheid—over Nelson Mandela’s ANC in South Africa’s first multiracial elections in 1994. POC’s assertion of a black Africanness as coloured youth, in turn, signified a political affront to a divisive racial paradigm designed to hinder political alliance between people of “mixed race” and the larger “black” South African majority. Cognizant of the political stakes of such ideological trappings, POC’s track “Black Thing,” released one year after the national elections, riffs,

The term “coloured” is a desperate case
of how the devil’s divided us by calling us a separate race.
They call me “coloured” said my blood isn’t pure, but G,
I’m not jakking my insecurity.
So I respond to this and ventilate my mental state with Black
Consciousness⁵²

Adam Haupt, who among others has chronicled the deployment of racial discourse within Cape Town's hip hop scene of the 1990s, draws attention to POC's allusion to South Africa's Black Consciousness Movement of the 1960 and 1970s as a "unifying narrative" that "provides an alternative to the divisive discourse of apartheid."⁵³ Indeed, such appeals not only posit a broadened and racially inclusive notion of blackness but also seek to situate POC members within a historical continuum of black political struggle and consciousness in South Africa.

While hip hop proves a performative frame through which such counter-hegemonic assertions of "black" subjectivity can be rooted nationally, it may also facilitate a forging of black self through transnationally expansive understandings of blackness. Black Noise, another key pioneering Cape Town-based hip hop crew comprised of historically situated coloured youth, illustrates this kind of strategic melding of national and transnational frames of blackness. As their name attests, Black Noise placed a self-signifying "black" African identity and social message at the very center of their music and public image. The group's 1994 track "Who Taught You to Hate Yourself?" stands out as a particularly vivid expression of such black political fusions. The song's title is drawn from an oft-cited quote of Malcolm X's in which he rhetorically chides his African American audience about internalized black self-hatred. The track's chorus builds around a sequence of audio samples in which we hear Malcolm X forcibly prompting, "Who taught you to hate yourself? This blue-eyed man," followed by "Don't let the white man speak for you / And don't let the white man fight for you." Embedded within the sequence we hear a South African voice intoning in Afrikaans, "*Kaffirs bly maar kaffirs*" ("Kaffirs (niggers) will remain kaffirs")⁵⁴ — or "You remain where you are." Through this intertextual montage a transatlantic dialogue is forged between South African and U.S. historical realities of race. I suggest that it is precisely through such dialogic references that these artists facilitate a nationally transcendent understanding of black political struggle and subjectivity. The outlines of such positioned identity are given active voice by member Emile Jansen, who follows in the track's second verse:

That's right the whites taught me to hate who I am
 They labeled us as coloured
 But now I know I'm a black man.

Apartheid's divide and conquer, Made us believe we're a separate race

And who wants to be a creation, of the supremacist pale face,
 And if you're not a perpetrator, of white supremacy,
 Then ask yourself
 Why you're now angry at me
 The word coloured implies
 That we're genetically 50/50
 But the black gene is dominant
 And therefore I'm black see
 You'll never say, Cause we know about our white past
 Making coloureds understand they're black, Is one hell of a task,
 Educated with self hatred
 Our black past was destroyed⁵⁵

Such lyrics not only provide a poignant critique of the fragmentizing logics of apartheid's system of racial classification but give narrative form to the political agency of black self-constitution through the performative dimensions of hip hop.

The transnational routes of such black self-makings found further groundings through Black Noise's active participation in the local South African branch of Afrika Bambaataa's Bronx-based Universal Zulu Nation.⁵⁶ The extent of these commitments brought Emile Jansen to New York in 1993 as South Africa's representative to the Zulu Nation's twentieth-anniversary celebration.⁵⁷ Such affiliations, however, were not without their ambivalences. Jane Battersby has suggested that the African American-derived Afrocentric imagery upon which Bambaataa's Zulu Nation drew was woefully incongruent with the political realities of South Africa's ethno-racial landscape.⁵⁸ The use of the expression "Zulu Nation" itself was particularly fraught because it evoked a complex set of politically charged meanings in South Africa, given Zulus' pivotal role in the country's recent history of ethnically manipulated political violence. While such cultural translations clearly had limitations, it would be wholly reductive to dismiss their social significance. The importance of such engagement lies, rather, in the transnational contours of Black Noise's articulations of, if not identifications with, the black-signified cultural symbolism of the Bronx-born Zulu Nation.

Political orientations of these kinds found active social expression through the numerous workshops and speaking engagements both POC and Black Noise have undertaken in South African schools, libraries, and prisons over

the years. Such efforts illustrate the creative fusion of the pedagogic tendencies of rap music with social activism as these youth take their message and concerns to a generation of young people throughout the Cape Town region. One noteworthy example of such engagement was the headlining participation in 2000 of POC and Black Noise in a youth AIDS-awareness campaign directed at mobilizing hip hop as a means to promote HIV education among secondary school students.⁵⁹ Black Noise member Emile Jansen has been particularly committed to community-based activism, embracing an acutely politicized position vis-à-vis questions of racial identity. Jansen initiated a series of local forums in the Cape Flats area dubbed the T.E.A.A.C.H. Project (The Educational Alternative Awakening Corrupted Heads), intended, as he explained, to “re-educate people to the proud past the black people have and to make them aware that respect for our people by themselves and others will only be attained if we know our past and supply our people with black role models that they can aspire to.”⁶⁰ Additionally, Jansen founded a school-based touring project titled “Heal the Hood,” directed toward promoting what he described as “respect for being African and using these talents responsibly for the benefit of Africa.”⁶¹

As these examples demonstrate, the politics of identity—in particular those embracing a recuperative notion of a black Africanness—stand central to the self-vision and social mission of groups like POC and Black Noise. From performative fashionings to political engagement, these South African youth can be understood not only as constituting new oppositionally positioned identities of blackness through the transnationally attuned space of hip hop, but as strategically deploying them in politically directed ways.

Concluding Thoughts

Reflecting on the political possibilities of global music circuits, George Lipsitz has suggested that transnational music flows can provide resources for “the recognition of new networks and affiliations [while] they become crucibles for complex identities in formation that respond to the imperatives of place at the same time they transcend them.”⁶² When considering the Afrodiasporic dimensions of present-day hip hop, such multivalent identity formations are decidedly at play. Here my attention has turned to local hip hop followings in Brazil, Cuba, and South Africa as testaments to how African and African-descendant youth employ the space of hip hop to fashion and marshal globally conscious notions of black selves toward liberatory ends. Identity-centered

mobilizations of these kinds recall what Leith Mullings has termed “racializations from below” in describing the transnationally inflected ways racially marginalized communities use the language of race itself as the basis to challenge globalized workings of racial subjugation.⁶³ Such maneuvers are forged through complex interplays of racializing forces, on one hand, and racially grounded social agencies, on the other.

As I have argued, it is precisely through the political framings of diaspora that such contestive self-racializations find their most poignant expression. Nationally transcendent modes of black diasporic identification prove strategic in challenging local conditions of racial oppression while remaining critically responsive to the ways global processes are increasingly reshaping such conditions. In the case of Brazil, hegemonic discourses tied to notions of “racial democracy” are increasingly unhinged as Afro-Brazilian youth utilize the diasporically configured black racial contours of hip hop to construct new identities to critically interrogate the racialized social realities of their everyday lives. Along analogous lines in Cuba, *raperos* are using hip hop to contest long-standing ideologies of Cuban national racelessness, while providing acute public critiques of the racialized workings of neoliberal transformations in a rapidly shifting Cuban social landscape. In South Africa, a new generation of racialized coloured youth have attempted to position themselves amidst shifting racial paradigms of “old” and “new” where current claims to “non-racialism” run counter to the continued lived consequences of hierarchical racial privilege.

Mapping such maneuvers elucidates the social significance of hip hop not simply in terms of its international circulation and consumption but, rather, through the ways it is actively lived and politically employed as a site of racial mobilization and self-formation. Among these black-identified youth, the space of diaspora — through the performative lens of hip hop — operates as a key paradigm of both identity and politics, and as such it has been instrumental in enabling transnationally engaged strategies of black self-fashioning and action in response to new, globally conditioned modes of racialization. In doing so, these young people not only mobilize black selves but ultimately realize the black diaspora as a lived social formation itself. In this way, hip hop can be seen as an active site for the global (re)mapping of black political imaginaries via social dynamics of diaspora. Or, to return to the poetics of Los Paisanos’ “El Negro”: “*Fundamentalmente hip hop quiere decir negro! Corto, pero penetrante*” (“Fundamentally hip hop means black! Concise, but penetrating”).

1. In this essay I use the term “hip hop” to refer to the broad set of cultural practices, the stylized aesthetics, and the larger cultural industry associated with, and inclusive of, rap music.

2. See Mitchell, *Global Noise*; Condry, *Hip-Hop Japan*; and Osumare, *Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop*.

3. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

4. See Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

5. Urla, “‘We Are All Malcolm X!’”

6. Hartman, “‘Debke Beat Funky as P.E.’s Riff.”

7. Mitchell, *Global Noise*, 2.

8. Rose, *Black Noise*; Chang, *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop*.

9. Rivera, *New York Ricans from the Hip Hop Zone*.

10. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*; Gordon and Anderson, “African Diaspora”; Patterson and Kelley, “Unfinished Migrations.”

11. Edwards, “Use of Diaspora.”

12. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*.

13. Magaldi, “Adopting Imports.”

14. Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power*.

15. For critical discussions of Brazil’s “myth of racial democracy” and its impact on black political mobilization beyond Hanchard, see Winant, *Racial Conditions*, and Lilly Caldwell, *Negras in Brazil*.

16. Original Portuguese lyrics accessed September 18, 2007, from <<http://www.coquim.hpg.ig.com.br/l1.htm>>.

17. Translation drawn from Roth Gordon, “Hip Hop Brasileiro.”

18. Pardue, “Putting Mano to Music.”

19. Roth Gordon, “Hip Hop Brasileiro.”

20. Personal interview, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 27, 1993.

21. *Ibid.*

22. McDaniels, “Striking Cord with Youths,” 7.

23. Brown, “Black Liverpool.”

24. Personal interview, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 27, 1993.

25. Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

26. Hall, *What Is This Black?*, 30.

27. Hebdige, *Subculture*.

28. Darlington, *Brazilian Rappers*.

29. Sansone, “New Blacks from Bahia,” 461.

30. Helg, *Our Rightful Share*.

31. For a discussion of varying scholarly readings of and the relative effectiveness of the Cuban Revolution’s approach to the problematics of race and racism, see Fernández, “Changing Discourse on Race in Contemporary Cuba,” and de la Fuente, *Nation for All*.

32. This scenario remained intact until November 2004, when the Cuban state, in an effort to reduce the island’s dependency on U.S. dollars, discouraged the flow of dollars

by way of exchange tariffs in favor of other forms of hard foreign currency. While such moves may have contributed to a de-dollarization of the Cuban economy, the fundamental mechanisms of foreign currency dependency continued to function intact, as Cubans remain largely dependent on some form of foreign currency in order to survive in Cuba's new economy.

33. Hammond, "High Cost of Dollars"; de la Fuente, *Nation for All*.

34. My analysis of the Cuban hip hop movement draws primarily from my two and a half years of ethnographic field research conducted in Havana.

35. Fernández, "¿Poesía urbana?"; Pacini Hernández and Garfalo, "Hip Hop in Havana."

36. Personal interview, Havana, Cuba, August 2, 2002.

37. See Thomas, *Modern Blackness*, and Godreau, "Folkloric 'Others.'"

38. Personal interview, Havana, Cuba, December 12, 2001.

39. Dawson, "Black Counterpublic?" Drawing on the work of Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," Dawson distinguishes an alternative, subalternly positioned black "counterpublic" from that of Habermas's bourgeois concept of the public sphere predicated on formal institutional civic structures such as the media, the academy, and other dominant organizational forms.

40. Diawara, *In Search of Africa*; Echeruo, "African Diaspora."

41. One only needs to glance at the website Africanhiphop.com to get a sense of the remarkable scope and depth to which hip hop has taken root in Africa. Africanhiphop.com is but one of more than 200 websites dedicated to locally produced hip hop in Africa. Networks of these kinds, in turn, provide a once-inconceivable space for communicative interchange among African practitioners and followers of hip hop, while testifying to the technological savviness of those engaged in the production and promotion of hip hop in Africa despite the continent's endemic levels of poverty and resource scarcity.

42. See, for instance, BBC Radio 1's audio documentary *The Beautiful Struggle* (2005).

43. Perullo, "Hooligans and Heroes." Regarding Kenyan hip hop, see the documentary *Hip Hop Colony: The African Hip Hop Explosion* (2005), produced/directed by Michael Wanguhu.

44. *Isicamtho* is derived from a fusion of regional African languages such as Zulu, Tswana, Sesotho, and Afrikaans. In the shifting parlance of the townships, the term has come to replace the expression *tsotsitaal*, or gagster-speak, previously used to refer to the ever-evolving township vernacular.

45. Stephens, "Kwaito"; Boloka, "Cultural Studies and the Transformation of the Music Industry."

46. Interview with Johannesburg-based Skwatta Kamp, one of South Africa's most commercially successful hip hop crews, <http://www.musica.co.za/eMusica/news_article.asp?segmentID=99&GenreID=99&ArticleID=1296> (accessed April 10, 2006).

47. A vast network of townships was erected in the 1960s along Cape Town's sandy floodplains to accommodate large numbers of coloureds forcibly displaced by apartheid's social geography.

48. Significant numbers of enslaved and indentured laborers from what are today Malaysia and Indonesia were brought to the Cape Town region in the late 1600s by Dutch traders. These "Malays" later intermixed with European settlers and indigenous

Africans, resulting in the racial codification of “coloureds” as a population group under apartheid. Large segments of Cape Town’s coloured community still practice the Islam first introduced via Malay/Indonesian influences, and the religion continues to be an important component of a distinct cultural identity for many. Within the broader coloured population, both Afrikaans and English are spoken with a distinctive vernacular accent, cadence, and intonation.

49. This observation is drawn from my personal experience in Cape Town in 1991 during the early formation of the region’s hip hop movement. At this juncture, youth participating in the scene, the vast majority of whom were coloured, titled themselves as the Black Hip Hop Movement.

50. See Frederikse, *Unbreakable Thread*.

51. Faber, “Cape Town’s Hip Hop Scene.”

52. Cited in Haupt, “Hip-Hop in the Age of Empire.”

53. *Ibid.*, 217. See also Watkins, “Simunye, We Are Not One,” and Battersby, “Sometime It Feels Like I Am Not Black Enough.”

54. “Kaffir,” a word originally derived from Arabic and meaning unbeliever, was used in South Africa by whites to refer to blacks in ways historically resonant with the term “nigger” in the United States.

55. Cited from <<http://africasgateway.com/sections-viewarticle-105.html>> (accessed September 24, 2007).

56. The Zulu Nation was a social-cultural organization founded in the early 1970s in public housing projects of the South Bronx by Afrika Bambaataa and is credited as a key cradle of early hip hop culture in New York City. The now “Universal” Zulu Nation has its own website (<www.zulunation.com>) containing information ranging from the history of hip hop, to Afrocentric teachings and readings of world events, to black-produced consumer products. The site even provides an online application service for membership, enabling the expansion of what is now the organization’s global network of local branches.

57. See <http://www.zulunation.nl/projects/southafrica/introducing_emile_yx.php> (accessed April 12, 2006).

58. Battersby, “Sometime It Feels Like I Am Not Black Enough.”

59. See <<http://www.africanhiphop.com/update/hivhop.htm>>.

60. Mario Pissarra, *Contemporary African Database*, <<http://people.africadatabase.org/en/profile/11711.html>> (accessed September 24, 2007).

61. *Ibid.*

62. Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads*, 6.

63. Mullings, “Race and Globalization.”

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INDEX

- ABB. *See* African Blood Brotherhood
- Abeng* (newspaper), 198, 201, 212 (n. 6)
- Abiodun, Nehanda, 244
- Abolitionism: black writers on, 93–94;
politics and religion joined in, 59–60;
slave petitions and, 51–52. *See also* Slavery
and slave trade; Slaves
- Abolition of Slavery Act (Britain, 1833), 96,
103 (n. 87)
- Abu-Jamal, Mumia, 244
- ACLM. *See* Antigua Caribbean Liberation
Movement
- Adams, John Quincy, 86
- Adeleke, Tunde, 39 (n. 44)
- Africa: academic studies of, 2–4; Cold
War–era accomplishments of, 22; hip
hop in, 248–49, 257 (n. 41); neglected in
diaspora studies, 131, 149 (n. 3); “outside
liberator” mythologies in, 152 (n. 69);
response to Bolshevism in, 157; as symbol,
48; vernaculars of, 249–50, 257 (n. 44)
- African Americans: Africans’ progress
compared with, 216; as agents of
modernism, 11; daily frustrations of,
191–92; and engagement with South
Africa, 132–34, 149 (n. 8); as free black
community, 5–6, 92–93, 95; Gandhianism
and, 181–84, 189–94; identification as,
56; migration of, 9; and protest of draft,
218–19; Providential Design and, 39
(n. 44); response of to U.S. invasion of
Haiti, 98–100; use of term, 130. *See also*
American Negroes; Black Power; Civil
rights movement
- African Blood Brotherhood (ABB): and
break with UNIA, 21; communist links
of, 159; description of, 13–14; goal of, 157,
159–60; women in, 20
- African Churchman* (periodical), 12
- African Diaspora: academic studies of, 90,
131, 149 (n. 3); concept of, 48; evidenced
in British West Indian newspapers,
121–22; first resettlement community of,
54; homeland memories in, 48; Islamic
influences in, 13–14.
- African Methodist Episcopal Church, 54,
133–34
- African National Congress (ANC):
antisegregation activities of, 138;
banned in South Africa, 24; communist
members of, 203; electoral defeat of,
251; participants at meetings of, 134–35;
resurgence of, 32; SASO’s difference from,
28; unbanning of, 250; Youth League of,
148
- African Opinion* (magazine), 125 (n. 14)
- African Orthodox Church, 12, 13
- African Studies Review* (journal), 149 (n. 3)
- African Universal Church and Commercial
League, 12–13
- African World* (newspaper), 138
- Age of Revolution. *See* Revolutionary era
- Algeria: Cleaver in, 220–21; as model, 224;
revolution in, 23, 24
- Ali, Muhammad, 26, 219
- Ali, Noble Drew, 14
- Allen, Richard, 54, 55, 57, 69 (n. 13), 150
(n. 33)
- American Federation of Labor, 166
- American Negroes: Garveyism spread
by, 134–38; as models for black South
Africans, 148–49; South African
community of, 135–36, 150 (n. 20); South
African government’s suspicions of, 149
(n. 8); use of term, 11, 130; Wellington
as, 141–42, 143–44, 146. *See also* African
Americans
- American Negro Labor Congress (1925), 161

- Amis des Noirs, 63, 64
 ANC. *See* African National Congress
 Ancient Order of Foresters (AOF), 112, 125 (n. 24)
 Ancient Shepherds, Loyal Order of, 111, 112
 Anderson, Benedict, 233
 Angola: Black Panther support for, 228; Marxism-Leninism in, 203; resistance suppressed in, 24
 Anónimo Consejo (Anonymous Advice), 245
 Anthony B (Keith Blair), 212
 Anti-Cussing Club for Boys, 111
 Antigua: Black Power movement of, 200
 Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement (ACLM), 200, 213 (n. 19)
 AOF. *See* Ancient Order of Foresters
 Apartheid: hip hop and, 249–52; organizations opposed to, 148, 203. *See also* South Africa
 Aponte, José Antonio, 84
 Asante, Molefi, 36 (n. 10)
 Ashe, Arthur, 149 (n. 8)
 Association of Democratic Jurists of Korea, 222
Atlantic Voice (periodical), 107–8
 Australia: Black Panther support for aborigines of, 228; Black Power movement in, 27
 Awoonor-Renner, Bankole, 172

 Baden-Powell, Robert, 113–14, 121, 128 (n. 76)
 Bahamas: rebellion in (1787), 61
 Bailie, A. A., 188
 Bambaataa, Afrika, 253, 258 (n. 56)
 Banton, Buju, 212
 Baptist churches, 54, 58, 96
 Baraka, Amiri (Le Roi Jones), 234
 Barbados: Christian mission in, 113; planter hegemony critiqued in, 117; riots in (1937), 127 (n. 61)
Barbados Herald (newspaper), 117
 Barnett, L. E., 117–18
 Basutoland. *See* Lesotho
 Battersby, Jane, 253
 Beal, Frances, 25
 Beauvais, Louis-Jacques, 63
 Belgium: civilizing mission of, 23. *See also* Congo, Democratic Republic of
 Benin, hip hop in, 249
 Benton, Thomas Hart, 86
 Bernal, Martin, 36 (n. 10)
 Besse, Christophe, 63
 Besse, Martial, 63
 Best, Lloyd, 198–99
 Bestes, Peter, 52
 Bible: in Garveyite meetings, 12–13, 137–38, 150 (n. 33); militant self-liberation based in, 53, 56–57, 60, 96–97; Rogers's version of, 140; as tool of oppression, 56
 Big Richard (Afro-Brazilian rapper), 238–39
 Biko, Steve, 28, 32
Birth of a Nation (film), 98
 Bishop, Maurice, 205–6, 207
 Black Atlantic: concept of, 48; currents of resistance in, 82–85; evangelical network across, 56–60; Haitian Revolution's implications for, 72–73; hip hop's significance in, 234–35; seafaring tradition in, 49–51; use of term, 90
 Black August Collective, 244
 Black Belt thesis, 162–63
 Black Bolshevism: Comintern leadership and, 17–18; emergence of, 15–16; rise of fascism and, 19–20; women in, 20–21
 Black Carolina Corps, 61–62
 Black Consciousness Movement, 28, 30–31, 148, 252
 Black Cross and Navigation Company, 140
 Black Cross Nurses, 12, 111
 Black Guides and Pioneers, 54
 Black Ice, 43–44 (n. 141)
 Black internationalism: Cold War–era setbacks to, 215–17; Comintern's commitment to, 155–56, 158–61; common language of, 25–28; cultural nationalists and, 33–34; divisions in, 14–16, 43 (n. 125); foundational core of, 5–6, 36 (n. 2), 84–85, 97; Gandhianism and, 21–22, 40 (n. 72), 180–81; historiographical lacunae in, 1–2, 7, 36 (n. 3); reclaiming narrative of, 1–4; renewed mobilization of, 8, 33–35; revolutionary and revivalist traditions of, 73, 91–97; rise of fascism and, 19–20; waves of, 22–23; West Indian–centered,

- 109–10. *See also* Hip hop culture; Interwar period; Pan-Africanism; Revolutionary era; Sixties era; World War I
- Black Man* (newspaper), 136
- Black Noise (hip hop crew), 252–54
- Black Panther, The* (newspaper), 217, 221–22, 229 (n. 16)
- Black Panther Party for Self-Defense: black internationalism renewed in, 216–17; context of, 215–16; creation of, 25, 218; intercommunalism theory and, 26, 222–24, 229; international connections of, 25–26, 220–22, 224, 225, 227–28; legacy of, 228–29; misogyny and patriarchy of, 25; political repression of, 29, 224–27; program of, 217, 218–20; rappers' referencing of, 244
- Black Power: definitions of, 25, 199, 208–9; demise of, 30–32; emergence of, 25; internationalization of, 26–30; repression of, 32–33. *See also* Caribbean Black Power
- Black Radical Congress (BRC), 34
- Black Soul movement, 236
- Black Star Line (steamship corporation), 134–35, 137, 140, 143
- Blyden, Edward Wilmot, 11
- Bois Caiman ceremony, 91, 97, 102 (n. 67)
- Bolivar, Simon, 80
- Bolshevism. *See* Communism; Marxism-Leninism
- Bonaparte, Napoleon, 76, 78, 80
- Booth, Catherine, 113
- Booth, William, 113
- Boys' Brigades, 111, 114–15
- Boy Scouts, 109. *See also* Scouting movement
- Branch, Taylor, 191
- Brazil: Black Power movement in, 27–28; Candelaria murders in, 237–38; hip hop in, 35, 235–41, 255; prison uprising in, 240
- BRC. *See* Black Radical Congress
- Briggs, Cyril V., 108, 157, 164, 167
- Brinton, Crane, 79
- British Communist Party, 160–61, 166, 167–68
- British Guiana. *See* Guyana
- British Honduras. *See* Honduras
- British Labour Party, 166
- British West Indian migrants: approach to, 109–10; on Chinese migrants, 128 (n. 78); civic activism of, 110–15, 123; racial uplift ideas of, 118–22; racial vocabulary of, 122–24; in South Africa, 135–37, 150 (n. 20); transnational connections among, 107–9, 118, 135–38; xenophobia and legislation against, 115–19, 123. *See also* American Negroes
- British West Indian sailors, 109, 135–38
- British West Indies Regiment (BWIR), 109, 114–15
- Brooks, Tillie M., 112
- Browder, Earl, 175 (n. 77)
- Brown, Dennis, 211
- Brown, Elaine, 25
- Brown, Jacqueline Nassy, 238
- Brown, James, 236
- Brown, Mono, 238
- Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), 215
- Brutents, Karen N., 204
- Buchana, Hugh, 117–18
- Buckle, Desmond, 172
- Bukharin, Nikolai, 163
- Burkina Faso (earlier, Upper Volta), Black Power movement in, 29
- Burnham, Forbes, 213 (n. 19)
- Burrell, Ben, 99
- Bustamante, Alexander, 117
- Butelezi, Wellington. *See* Wellington, Butler Hansford
- Butler, Judith, 240
- BWIR. *See* British West Indies Regiment
- Byrd, Alexander X., 69 (n. 10)
- Cabral, Amílcar: Black Panthers influenced by, 221–22; declining influence of, 204; international connections of, 26; on postcolonial state, 24, 31; state repression of, 32
- Campbell, Grace, 20–21
- Canada: black nationalist groups in, 30; as refuge, 103 (n. 87)
- Cape Argus* (newspaper), 150 (n. 20)
- Cape Indian Council, 138
- “Capítulo 4 Versículo 3” (hip hop song), 237
- Carey, Lott, 54
- Caribbean Black Power: approach to, 197; ascendancy of, 29–30, 198–201;

- community-based appeal of, 212 (n. 17); decline of, 201–3; eclipsed by Marxism-Leninism, 203–7; ideological questions about, 207–10; implications of, 210–12. *See also* Black Power
- Carlos, John, 29
- Carmichael, Stokely (Kwame Ture), 25, 26, 27, 208
- Carretta, Vincent, 69 (n. 10)
- Castro, Fidel, 208, 218
- Catholicism, 95
- Central American Express* (periodical), 107–8, 114
- Césaire, Aimé, 99, 209–10
- Chicago Defender* (newspaper), 122
- Chile: hip hop in, 234
- China, People's Republic of: Black Panther delegation to, 227–28
- Chorillo Dominoe Team, 111
- Christianity: African religious syncretism with, 92–93; civilizing mission of, 11; critique of, 91–92; in Haiti, 95; Islam compared with, 14; Kristagraha theory and, 190–91; missions of, 107, 133–34; nonviolence based in, 181. *See also* Bible; Evangelical Protestantism; Salvation Army
- Christophe, Henri, 63, 83–84
- Churchill, Winston, 194 (n. 3)
- Civil rights movement: Caribbean Black Power's origins in, 198; Cold War context of, 215–16; Gandhianism and, 181–84, 189–94; global context of, 21–22; integrationist vs. nationalist tradition in, 43 (n. 125); nonviolence in, 24–25
- Clavin, Matthew, 97
- Cleaver, Eldridge: declining influence of, 204; flight from U.S., 220, 225; international connections of, 26, 221–22, 226; Newton's differences with, 226–27
- Cleaver, Kathleen, 25, 26
- Coard, Bernard, 205–6
- Cohen, Victor, 125 (n. 14)
- COINTELPRO, 32, 225–27
- Coker, Daniel, 54
- Cold War: area studies and compartmentalization in, 2–3; black international setbacks in, 215–17; black liberation challenges in, 22; narratives influenced by, 88–89; political repression in, 40 (n. 74), 225–27. *See also* Communist International
- Colón Boys' Institute, 114–15
- Colonialism: broad-based league against, 161–62; “civilized” attributes defined in, 132–34; communist view of, 16, 19, 156; crisis in Caribbean, 75; demise of, 79–81; denunciation of, 6, 23; Gandhi on, 186; post-World War I expansion of, 8; race relations traced to, 26; termination of, 7, 22; transformation of vs. accommodation to, 15
- Colvin, Claudette, 192
- Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity of Korea, 222
- Committee of Negro Workers. *See* International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers
- Common (musician), 244
- Commonwealth Immigrants Bill (Britain, 1962), 26
- Communism: as antiracist in interwar period, 127 (n. 62); Gandhianism juxtaposed to, 179–80; Pan-African narrative cleansed of, 88–89. *See also* Marxism-Leninism
- Communist International (Comintern): anticolonial, antiracist agenda of, 16–19, 161–62; approach to, 155–56; Caribbean interests of, 166–67, 171–72; development of, 156–57; divisions in, 17, 20; history of, 173 (n. 1); invasion of Ethiopia and, 168, 169–71; Native Republic and Black Belt theses of, 162–65; Negro commissions of, 18, 159; Negro Welfare Association linked to, 167–68; pan-African policy of, 155, 158–61, 164–65, 172; proletarian revolution ideals of, 19–20; Scottsboro case and, 168–69, 170; summary of, 171–73. *See also* Black Bolshevism; International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers
- Congo, Democratic Republic of (earlier, Belgian Congo): Black Power movement in, 29; independence and confrontation in, 23

- Congressional Black Caucus, 148
 Congress of Industrial Organizations, 191
 Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), 190
 Consciencia Urbana (Urban
 Consciousness), 238
 Cooper, Esther, 21
 CORE. *See* Congress of Racial Equality
 Costa Rica: antiblack legislation of, 116;
 British West Indian immigrants in, 107–8,
 111–12; Christian mission in, 113; racial
 uplift ideals in, 119; UNIA chapters in, 110,
 124–25 (n. 13)
 Cote d'Ivoire: hip hop in, 249
 Council on African Affairs, 148
Crisis, The (journal), 181–83
 Critchlow, Hubert, 166, 171
 Crummell, Alexander, 11
 Cruse, Harold, 43 (n. 125)
 Cuba: Black Panther delegation to, 228;
 Black Panther support from, 221, 226;
 British West Indian immigrants in, 108;
 economic difficulties of, 242, 256–57
 (n. 32); folkloric past of, 244–45; Haitians
 deported by, 117; hip hop in, 35, 241–48,
 255; Marxism-Leninism in, 167, 203–4;
 Negro Question in, 167; praise for, 31;
 revolution in, 203, 211, 241, 245; state
 recognition of rap in, 247–48; UNIA
 chapters in, 110; xenophobia in, 115–16
 Cuffe, Paul, 50, 52, 54
 Cugoano, Quobna Ottobah, 50, 51, 57, 59–60,
 102–3 (n. 73)
 Cullen, Countee, 99
 Curtis, Helen, 181
 Daaga, Makandal (Geddes Granger), 212
 (n. 10)
Daily Gleaner (newspaper), 107–8
 Danish Socialist Party, 225
 Darrow, Clarence, 122
 Davis, Angela, 25, 220
 Davis, Henrietta Vinton, 12
 Dawson, Michael C., 257 (n. 39)
 Dead Prez (musician), 244
 De Beers Consolidated Mines, 139
 Debray, Régis, 204
 Declaration of Independence (U.S.), 6, 17,
 37 (n. 26)
 Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples
 of the World (UNIA), 137, 138
 Declaration of the Rights of Man and
 Citizen (France), 17, 65, 74
 Delany, Marcus, 164
 Demane, Harry, 59
Depeche Africaine, La (newspaper), 122
 Dessalines, Jean-Jacques, 77–78, 81, 84
 “Diamonds from Sierra Leone” (hip hop
 song), 249
 Diraath, James Charles, 139
 Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement, 29
 Domingo, Wilfred, 157
 Dominican Republic (Santo Domingo):
 antiblack legislation of, 116–17; British
 West Indian immigrants in, 108; Haitian
 slave revolt supported by, 74–75
 Douglas, Emory, 220–21
 Drake, St. Clair, 37 (n. 12)
 Dresher, Seymour, 81
 Dubois, Laurent, 65
 Du Bois, W. E. B.: on black folk, 37 (n. 12);
 editorship of, 181; on Gandhi, 182, 183,
 184, 190; Padmore on, 89; praise for,
 47–48, 90; providential and modernist
 ideals of, 134; UNIA opposed by, 15; U.S.
 persecution of, 216. *See also* Pan-African
 Congresses (1919–45)
 Dudziak, Mary, 217
 Dugommier, Jacques Coquille, 65–66
 Dunmore, Lord (John Murray), 52–54, 61,
 64, 67, 68
 Dupuy, Alex, 207–9, 210
 Durant, Richard, 62
 Dutty, Boukman, 91–92
 Dyer, Leonidas, 181
 Edwards, Brent Hayes, 235
 Egbuna, Obi, 27
 Elks, Independent Benevolent Order of,
 109, 111
 Ellison, Ralph, 171
 Emancipation Proclamation (U.S., 1863), 97
 Engels, Friedrich, 156
 Enlightenment, 82, 92
 Equiano, Olaudah: identity of, 50–51, 56;
 precursor to, 49; writings of, 57, 59–60,
 102–3 (n. 73)

- Ethiopia: Black Power movement in, 29;
Italian invasion of, 14, 20, 39–40 (n. 57),
146–47, 168, 169–71; Ras Makonnen and,
31, 42–43 (n. 121); worldwide support for,
170–71. *See also* Selassie, Haile
- Ethiopian Defense Committee, 170
- Ethiopianism: African unity based in, 56;
Haiti and, 67, 94; House of Athlyi version
of, 139–41; as militant self-liberation
theology, 53, 60; Providential Design
linked to, 137
- Ethiopian Regiment (Virginia), 52–53, 61,
64, 67, 68
- Evangelical Protestantism: African network
in, 56–60; black Freemasonry linked
to, 55; in black international revivalist
tradition, 91–97; black sailors and, 49–51;
British West Indian connections of, 109;
emancipatory language of, 5–6, 7; militant
self-liberation theology in, 53, 56–57, 60,
96–97; pan-Africanism traced to, 48–52,
93; Rebecca's revival in context of, 37
(n. 21), 49
- Fanon, Frantz, 24, 28, 182, 204, 218
- Farmer, James, 190, 191, 192
- Farrakhan, Louis, 33
- Fascism, 19–20, 170
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 29,
32, 225–27
- Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), 189–91,
216
- Fields, Barbara J., 122
- First International Conference of Negro
Workers (1930), 165–66
- FOR. *See* Fellowship of Reconciliation
- Ford, James, 163, 165, 170
- Forte, Sherwin, 219
- Forum movement, 200
- France: Algerian revolt against, 23, 24; black
veterans in, 63–64; colonialism of, 17,
19–20, 75, 76–77; colonial losses of, 80;
Communist Party in, 20, 160–61, 209–10;
genocidal solution of, 77; hip hop in, 35;
hostility of toward Haitian Revolution,
82; national interests of, 74; U.S. alliance
of, 63. *See also* French Revolution
- Fraser, Nancy, 257 (n. 39)
- Frazier, E. Franklin, 181–83, 193
- Frederick Douglass* (ship), 134–35
- Free African Society (Philadelphia), 69
(n. 13)
- Freeman, Sambo, 52
- Freemasonry, 54–55
- Frelinghuysen, Theodous, 58
- French Communist Party, 20, 160–61, 209–10
- French Revolution: Caribbean influenced
by, 62–67, 73–74, 85; end of, 76; equality
for free people of color in, 17; veterans of,
61–62; world-historical impact of, 79
- Fugitive Slave Act (U.S., 1850), 103 (n. 87)
- Fulbright, J. William, 219
- Gairy, Eric, 200–203, 205, 211
- Gandhi, Mohandas: British West Indians'
interest in, 121; hostility toward, 194 (n. 3);
King compared with, 191–94; mythology
of, 182, 183; passive resistance philosophy
of, 179–80, 186; return of to India, 188–89;
South African sojourn of, 184–88
- Garvey, Amy Ashwood, 12
- Garvey, Amy Jacques, 12, 108
- Garvey, Marcus: background of, 10, 108; on
Bolshevism, 159; on female ideal, 12; as
hero and chief apostle, 14, 122, 135, 136, 137,
139–40, 148; ideological forebears of, 52;
imprisonment of, 138; on Kofey, 13; labor
organizing of, 117; pan-Africanism of, 47,
51; providential and modernist ideals of,
134; rightward shift of, 15; slogan of, 10–11;
on steamship line, 134; on Wellington, 146.
See also Garveyism; Garveyism in South
Africa; Universal Negro Improvement
Association and African Communities
League
- Garveyism: ideological opposition to, 14–15;
mass constituency of, 11–12; religious
component of, 12–13, 137–38; scholarship
on, 38 (n. 41); syncretic spiritualism
inspired by, 13–14; transnational connec-
tions of, 130–38; use of term, 130; white
hostility to, 10–11; women's role in, 11–12.
See also Garvey, Marcus; *Negro World*;
Universal Negro Improvement Associa-
tion and African Communities League
- Gary Convention (1972), 34

- Gaye, Marvin, 236
- Geggus, David, 64–65, 71 (n. 55), 81
- Geiss, Imanuel, 89–90
- George, David, 49, 57, 58
- Germany: fascism in, 19–20
- Ghana: hip hop in, 249; independence of, 22; transition in, 23
- Ghazu, James, 150 (n. 22)
- Gifford, Andrew, 58
- Gilroy, Paul, 50, 90, 235
- Ginwala, Frene, 195 (n. 20)
- Gittens, Rupert, 172
- Gobineau, Joseph Arthur Comte de, 85
- Gold Coast: Ethiopian support from, 170
- Goodridge, Joseph, 110
- Good Samaritans (group), 111
- Gordon, Jennifer Roth, 237
- Gramsci, Antonio, 204, 211
- Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (GUOOF), 109, 111, 112
- Granger, Geddes (Makandal Daaga), 212 (n. 10)
- Grant, Colin, 38 (n. 41)
- Great Awakening. *See* Evangelical Protestantism
- Great Britain: antislavery movement in, 58–59; black loyalist regiments of, 52–54, 61, 64; Black Power movement in, 26–27; Christianization of slaves and, 5–6; colonialism of, 17, 19–20, 75, 121; colonial losses of, 80; Communist Party in, 160–61, 166, 167–68; Ethiopian support from, 171; hostility of toward Haitian Revolution, 82; identification as Afro-Britons in, 56; industrial revolution of, 79; in Kenya, 23–24; Marxism-Leninism in, 204; Negro Welfare Association in, 167–68; role of in South Africa, 131; Salvation Army in, 109, 113; scouting movement in, 113–14; slavery abolished by, 96, 103 (n. 87)
- Great Migration: use of term, 9. *See also* Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League; World War I
- Greaves, Earl, 110
- Grenada: Black Power movement of, 200, 201, 202; black veterans in, 62, 63; Marxism-Leninism in, 204–7; revolution in (1979–83), 31, 197, 205–6; uprising in (1795–96), 82
- Griffith, George (Ras Makonnen), 31, 42–43 (n. 121)
- Gronniosaw, James Albert Ukawsaw, 50, 56–59, 102–3 (n. 73)
- Gruel, Gabriel, 65
- Guadeloupe: rebellion in (1793), 65–66; uprising in (1802), 82
- Guatemala: British West Indian immigrants in, 108
- Guerrilla *fooco*: ideological questions and, 207–10; implementation of, 204–7
- Guevara, Che, 204, 221
- Guinea-Bissau: Black Panther support for liberation in, 228; Black Power movement in, 29; resistance suppressed in, 24
- Gulwa, Paul, 147
- Gumbs, James, 136
- Gumede, Josiah, 161, 162
- GUOOF. *See* Grand United Order of Odd Fellows
- Guyana (earlier, British Guiana): Black Power movement in, 30, 31; Christian mission in, 113; Comintern's interest in, 166, 171–72; Marxism in, 213 (n. 19); population of, 209; self-rule terminated in, 40 (n. 74)
- Habermas, Jürgen, 257 (n. 39)
- Haiti: celebration of, 95–96; stakeholders in, 78–79; U.S. invasion and occupation of, 73, 88, 98–100, 122
- Haitian Revolution (1791): abolitionists on, 94; antiracist agenda of, 16–17; black international narrative and, 87–90; black self-emancipation in, 7; currents of black resistance linked to, 82–85; as emblem of revolutionary tradition, 91, 94, 96; French influence on, 73–74, 85; Garveyism compared with, 10; genocidal solution to, 77; hostility toward, 81–82; as iconic event, 66–67, 72–73; legacy of, 97–100; number killed in, 81; origins of, 68; outline of, 73–79; white negation of, 85–87; world-historical impact of, 79–81. *See also* Saint Domingue; Toussaint Louverture

- Haitians: massacred, 117
- Hall, Prince, 52, 54–55, 57, 60, 94
- Hall, Stuart, 240
- Hamidia Islamic Society, 187
- Hamilton, Charles V., 26
- Hamitic Hypothesis, 140
- Hammad, Suheir, 234
- Hammon, Briton, 50
- Hammon, Jupiter, 56–57
- Hampton, Fred, 32
- Hanchard, Michael, 236
- Harlem (New York): ashram in, 190–91;
British West Indian immigrants in, 108
- Haupt, Adam, 252
- Haynes, Lemuel, 70 (n. 42)
- Haywood, Harry, 163, 164–65
- Headley, Jim, 172
- Heal the Hood project, 254
- Hector, Tim, 200
- Henry, Patrick, 67
- Henry, Ronald, 211
- Henry, Vivian, 166, 171
- Hermanos de Causa (Brothers of Cause),
245–47
- Herndon, Angelo, 170
- Hewitt, Raymond “Masai,” 220–21
- Hill, Robert A., 151 (n. 48)
- Hilliard, David, 220–21, 222, 229
- Hip hop culture: African networks of, 257
(n. 41); approach to, 233–35; in Brazil,
35, 235–41, 255; in Cuba, 35, 241–48, 255;
international black consciousness in,
34–35, 233, 237–40; reflections on, 254–55;
rise and transformation of, 232–33; in
South Africa, 248–54, 255
- Hip Hop en Movimiento* (magazine), 239–40
- Hobsbawm, Eric, 79
- Ho Chi Minh, 221
- Hofmeyr, Jan, 131
- Holbrook, Felix, 52
- Holly, James Theodore, 95
- Holstein, Casper, 39 (n. 48)
- Holy Piby* (Rogers), 140
- Honduras (earlier, British Honduras):
antiblack legislation of, 116; British West
Indian immigrants in, 108; Christian
mission in, 113; uprisings in, 83, 114
- Hoover, J. Edgar, 29, 227
- House of Athlyi (Kimberley, South Africa),
138–41
- Houston Mutiny (1917), 182
- Howell, Leonard, 151 (n. 48)
- Hudson, Hosea, 164, 171
- Hughes, Langston, 171
- Huiswoud, Hermina, 21
- Huiswoud, Otto, 158–59, 160, 167
- ICU. *See* Industrial and Commercial
Workers Union of Africa
- Independent Benevolent Order of Elks, 109,
111
- Independent United Order of Mechanics,
111, 112
- India: African America compared with,
190–91; freedom struggles in, 179–80;
Gandhianism as understood in, 183–84;
migrant laborers of, in Natal, South
Africa, 184–86; nationalist movement of,
188–89
- Indian National Congress, 189
- Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
of Africa (ICU), 136, 138, 150 (n. 23), 166
- Intercommunal News Service, 224
- International Committee to Defend Eldridge
Cleaver, 220
- International Conference on Tasks of
Journalists of the Whole World in their
Fight Against U.S. Imperialist Aggression,
221
- International Labor Defense, 169
- International Monetary Fund, 207
- International Trade Union Committee of
Negro Workers (ITUCNW): Caribbean
interests of, 166–67, 171–72; description
of, 165–66; establishment of, 18, 171; Negro
Welfare Association linked to, 167–68; rise
of fascism and, 19–20
- Interracial Committee, 191
- Isicamtho* (vernacular), 249–50, 257 (n. 44)
- Islam: black nationalist type of, 13–14;
Hamidia Society and, 187; in South Africa,
257–58 (n. 48). *See also* Nation of Islam
- Italy: Ethiopia invaded by, 14, 20, 39–40
(n. 57), 146–47, 168, 169–71
- ITUCNW. *See* International Trade Union
Committee of Negro Workers

- Jackson, George, 32
 Jackson, Mary, 181
 Jackson, William, 137
 Jagan, Cheddi, 213 (n. 19)
 Jamaica: Black Power movement in, 29–30, 197, 198, 200, 201–2; bloody 1980 election in, 206, 213 (n. 27); British West Indian–owned newspaper in, 107; Christian mission in, 113; Christmas Rising/Baptist War in (1831), 96; counter-symbolic order in, 214 (n. 36); labor organizing in, 117–18; Marxism-Leninism in, 202–3, 206–7; Native Baptist movement in, 58; peaceful multiracial coexistence ideology of, 198; population of, 209; Rastafari's appeal in, 14, 211–12; Tacky's Revolt in, 82, 83; UNIA chapters in, 110; war against maroons in (1795–96), 82. *See also* Rastafarian movement
 Jamaica Workers and Tradesmen Union, 117–18
 James, C. L. R.: background of, 108; declining influence of, 204; on Haitian Revolution, 81, 87, 88, 90; on political assemblies, 200; on Rodney, 31
 James, Winston, 108
 Jansen, Emile, 252–53, 254
 Japan: hip hop in, 233
 Jea, John, 49, 50, 58, 102–3 (n. 73)
 Jefferson, Thomas, 84, 86, 98
 Jewel. *See* Joint Endeavour for Welfare, Education and Liberation
 Johnson, Charles, 189
 Johnson, Emmanuel, 136
 Johnson, Lyndon B., 219
 Joie, Chester, 52
 Joint Endeavour for Welfare, Education and Liberation (Jewel), 200–201
 Jones, Absalom, 55, 57, 69 (n. 13), 150 (n. 33)
 Jones, Chris, 168
 Jones, Claudia, 21
 Jones, David Ivon, 160
 Jones, Le Roi (Amiri Baraka), 234

 Kadalie, Clements, 136
 Kaffir: use of term, 185, 252, 258 (n. 54)
 Karenga, Maulana, 25, 33
 Kelley, Robin D. G., 164, 191, 215, 228
 Kenner, Martin, 228
 Kenya: armed resistance suppressed in, 23–24; Black Power movement in, 29; Ethiopian support from, 170; hip hop in, 249
 Kenyatta, Jomo, 165, 168, 171, 172
 Kerr-Ritchie, J. R., 103 (n. 87)
 Kikuyu Central Association, 170
 Kim Il Sung, 221
 King, A. James, 136
 King, Boston, 57
 King, Cleveland Antonio, 167
 King, Martin Luther, Jr., 28, 191–92, 216, 219
 Kitt, Eartha, 149 (n. 8)
 Kofey, Laura, 12–13
 Kouyaté, Tiemoko, 20
 Kristagraha theory, 190–91
 KRS-One (group), 33
 Kunene, Lwandle, 154 (n. 98)
Kwaito artists, 249–50
 Kweli, Talib, 244

 “Lágrimas Negras” (hip hop song), 246–47
 La Guma, James, 161, 162, 163
 Land and Freedom Army (Mau Mau), 23–24
 Lawrence, Jacob, 45
 Lawson, James, 192, 216
 League Against Imperialism and for National Independence, 161–62, 167–68, 171
 Lebanon Foresters, 111, 112
 Lee, Spike, 238–39
 Lefela, Josiel, 135
 Lenin, Vladimir I., 18, 156, 158, 159, 180, 204.
 See also Marxism-Leninism
 Lesotho (earlier, Basutoland): Garveyism in, 139; hopes in, 135
 Lewis, John, 216
 Lewis, Rupert, 212 (n. 17)
 Liele, George, 49, 57, 58
 Lincoln, Abraham, 97
 Linebaugh, Peter, 83, 85
 Lipsitz, George, 254
 Louisiana: Pointe Coupee Conspiracy in, 67; Saint Domingue slaves in, 84
 Louisiana Purchase (1803), 80, 86
 Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds, 111, 112
 Lumumba, Patrice, 23, 221
 Lynchings, 181

- Machel, Samora, 32
- Makandal poison conspiracy (1757), 82
- Makonnen, Ras (George Griffith), 31, 42–43 (n. 121)
- Mandela, Nelson, 145, 150 (n. 23), 250.
See also African National Congress
- Manifesto of the Communist International to the Proletariat of the Entire World* (Comintern), 156
- Manifesto on Africa in the Post-War World* (1945), 172
- Manley, Michael, 201, 202, 206, 207
- Manley, Norman, 201
- Manning, Patrick, 149 (n. 3)
- Mao Zedong, 218, 227–28
- MAP. See Movement for Assemblies of the People
- March on Washington (1963), 216
- Margate, David, 49, 58
- Marley, Bob, 211
- Marrant, John: biblical ideas of, 54, 55; circle of, 58–59; precursor to, 49; writings of, 50, 57, 102–3 (n. 73)
- Marryshow, T. A., 126 (n. 34)
- Martinique: slave rebellion in (1789), 64–65
- Marx, Karl, 156
- Marxism-Leninism: Black Panthers' embrace of, 221–22, 226; Black Power eclipsed by, 31, 200, 201–3; Gandhianism juxtaposed to, 179–80; hopes in, 157; ideological questions about, 207–10; implications of, 210–12; political structure and tactics of, 203–7, 212 (n. 17)
- Masogha, Joseph, 138–39, 141
- Matamoros, Miguel, 246
- Matshoba, Gilbert, 135
- Matthews, Connie, 220, 225
- Mau Mau (Land and Freedom Army), 23–24
- Mbeki, Thabo, 148
- McAdoo, Orpheus, 132
- McGuire, George Alexander, 12
- McKay, Claude, 108, 157, 158, 159
- McKinley, Arthur, 138
- Mechanics, Independent United Order of, 111, 112
- Melish, Joanne Pope, 69 (n. 13)
- Mestizaje (racial and cultural mixing), 115, 121
- Methodist churches: British West Indian connections of, 107; founding of West African, 54; South African mission of, 133–34; youth activities linked to, 109, 114–15
- Mexico: Black Power movement in, 28–29; revolution in (1911), 182; Spanish overthrown in, 80
- Mgijima, Enoch, 135
- Million Man and Woman marches, 33–34
- Mitchell, John, 226
- Mitchell, Tony, 234
- Mondlane, Eduardo, 26, 32
- Montalvo, Eligio Sardiñas “Kid Chocolate,” 122
- Moore, Audley “Queen Mother,” xviii (ill.), 21, 31, 33–34
- Moore, Barrington, 79
- Moore, Rhoda A., 112
- Moore, Richard B., 108, 161
- Moorish Science Temple of America, 13, 14
- Moravians, 49
- Mosaic Templars of America, 111
- Mos Def (musician), 244
- Motor Corp, 12
- Movement for Assemblies of the People (MAP), 200–201
- Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement), 27–28, 236, 237–38
- Mozambique: Black Panther support for liberation in, 228; resistance suppressed in, 24
- Mullings, Leith, 255
- Munroe, Trevor, 207
- NAACP. See National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- Naidoo, Sarojina, 138
- Natal Indian Congress, 185
- Natal Native Congress, 194–95 (n. 18)
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 166, 169, 170, 181, 192, 223. See also *Crisis*, *The National Black Consciousness Day* (Brazil), 28
- National Committee against Racial Discrimination, 26

- National Front for the Liberation of Angola, 203
- National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), 199–201, 212 (n. 10)
- National Negro Congress (1930), 170
- National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, 203
- National Urban League, 170, 191
- Nation of Islam, 13, 14, 25
- Native Americans, 6, 37 (n. 26), 81
- Native Baptist movement, 58
- Natives Land Act (South Africa, 1913), 131
- Natives (Urban Areas) Act (South Africa, 1923), 131–32
- Ncwana, Samuel Bennett, 136, 146
- Negritude, 99
- Negro Factories Corporation, 140
- Negro Welfare Association, 167–68, 171, 172
- Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association, 170, 172
- Negro Worker* (periodical): black liberation focus in, 166, 171; Caribbean articles in, 166–67, 172; editorship of, 19, 165–66; rise of fascism and, 20
- Negro World* (periodical): antiracism and anti-imperialism of, 122; British West Indian connections of, 107–8; circulation of, 10, 109, 139; contributors to, 39 (n. 48); demise of, 19; perspectives in, 12; promotion of, 137, 139; translations of, 138; on Wellington, 146
- Negu Gorriak (rock group), 234
- New Jewel Movement (NJM): failures of, 202, 203, 205–6, 211; Leninist tactics of, 204–5, 207; rise of, 200–201
- Newton, Huey P.: arrest, trial, and imprisonment of, 29, 218, 220, 222; China visit of, 227–28; Cleaver's differences with, 226–27; intercommunalism theory of, 26, 222–24, 229; on nationalism, 25–26
- New World movement, 198–99, 212 (n. 15)
- New World Quarterly* (journal), 212 (n. 7)
- New York: Caribbean organizations in, 112; hip hop in, 232, 253, 258 (n. 56). *See also* Harlem
- Nguyen Thi Dinh, 223
- Nicaragua: British West Indian immigrants in, 108; liberation movement in, 211
- Nixon, Richard, 228
- NJAC. *See* National Joint Action Committee
- NJM. *See* New Jewel Movement
- “Nkosi’ Sikeleli Afrika” (song), 144
- Nkrumah, Kwame, 22, 23, 89
- North Korea: Black Panther delegation to, 228; Black Panther support from, 221, 222, 226; as model, 224
- NUFF (guerrilla group), 201
- NWA (group), 33
- Odd Fellows, 109, 111, 112
- Odum, Howard, 189
- Oilfield Workers Trade Union, 199
- Organization of African Unity, 31
- Organization of Afro-American Unity, 24
- Outlet* (newspaper), 200
- Padmore, George: background of, 108; break with Comintern, 20, 175 (n. 77), 213 (n. 22); Comintern connections of, 172; declining influence of, 204; on Garveyism, 19; on Haitian Revolution, 87–90; at International Conference of Negro Workers, 165–66
- Paisanos, Los (rap duo), 243–44, 255
- Palestine: hip hop in, 234
- Palmares, Republic of: creation of, 28
- Pan-African Conference (1900), 37 (n. 13)
- Pan-African Congresses (1919–45): Comintern compared with, 159, 165; communist attendees of, 15–16; ideals of, 47–48; new international order evidenced in, 22; organizers of, 89; UNIA opposed by, 14–15
- Pan-African Congress (1974), 31
- Pan-African Congress (1994), 34
- Pan African Cultural Festival, 220–21
- Pan-Africanism: black literary tradition as source of, 48, 55–60; Cold War–narrative on, 88–89; Comintern’s engagement with, 155, 158–61, 164–65, 172; as communal defense, 120–21; definitions of, 47–48; evangelical Protestantism as source of, 48–52, 93; Haitian Revolution ignored in, 89–90; ideological foundations of, 48, 67–68; internationalization of, 16–17, 26–28; Italian invasion of Ethiopia and,

- 169–71; of Negro Welfare Association, 168; revolutionary type of, 93; as state affair, 31; U.S. Revolution as source of, 47–48, 52–56, 60–62; women linked by, 25
- Pan-Africanist Congress, 24
- Panama and Panama Canal Zone: antiblack legislation of, 116; British West Indian immigrants in, 107–8, 111; Christian mission in, 113; racial uplift ideals in, 118–19; UNIA chapters in, 110, 124–25 (n. 13); youth activities in, 109, 114–15
- Panama Star and Herald* (periodical), 107–8, 114–15
- Panama Tribune* (newspaper): British West Indian connections of, 107–8; racial uplift ideals of, 118–19, 120–21; racism critiqued in, 122
- Pan-American Conference (1826), 86
- Panteras Negras, Las (The Black Panthers) (musical group), 234
- Pardue, Derek, 237
- Parks, Rosa, 191, 192
- Payne, Charles, 127 (n. 61)
- People's National Congress (PNC), 213 (n. 19)
- People's National Party (PNP), 201, 202, 206–7, 213 (n. 29)
- People's Progressive Party (PPP), 213 (n. 19)
- Perotin-Dumon, Anne, 65
- Perry, Marc D., 35
- Peste, Disiz le, 35
- Peters, Thomas, 53–54
- Petit Impartial, Le* (newspaper), 122
- Petersburgh, Fitz Ballentine, 151 (n. 48)
- Pitch Black Afro (musician), 250
- Pittsburgh Courier* (newspaper), 122
- Plan of San Diego (1916), 182
- PNC. *See* People's National Congress
- PNP. *See* People's National Party
- POC. *See* Prophets of Da City
- Pointe Coupee Conspiracy (1795), 67
- Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, 203
- Portugal: Black Power movement in, 27
- PPP. *See* People's Progressive Party
- Price-Mars, Jean, 99
- Profintern. *See* Red International of Labor Unions
- Progress Publishers, 204
- Prophets of Da City (POC), 251–52, 253–54
- Prosser, Gabriel, 67, 68, 86
- Protten, Rebecca, 37 (n. 21), 49
- Public Enemy (group), 33, 234, 238–39
- Putnam, Lara, 9–10
- Racionais MC's (Rational MC's), 236–37, 238
- Radical History Review* (journal), 149 (n. 3)
- Randolph, A. Philip, 170, 189, 190
- Rap. *See* Hip hop culture
- Rap Brasil* (magazine), 239–40
- Rap Rima* (magazine), 240
- Rastafarian movement: Caribbean Black Power's origins in, 198; as counter-symbolic order, 214 (n. 36); founding texts of, 140, 151 (n. 48); messiah of, 14; revisioning of, 211–12; in South Africa, 148; spread of, 109. *See also* Selassie, Haile
- Reagan, Ronald, 205–6
- Rediker, Marcus, 83, 85, 102–3 (n. 73)
- Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern), 161, 162, 165
- Reed, John, 158
- Revolutionary Action Movement, 216
- Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention (1970), 224
- Rigaud, André, 63, 83
- Roberto, Holden, 203
- Roberts, Rita, 70 (n. 42)
- Robeson, Paul, 172, 216
- Robinson, Cedric, 197
- Rock, Pete, 43–44 (n. 141)
- Rodney, Walter: assassination of, 30, 32, 213 (n. 19); banned from Jamaica, 29–30, 197; on Black Power, 199; declining influence of, 204; Dupuy's evaluation of, 207–9; ideals of, 31, 208–9, 210
- Rogers, Richard Athlyi, 139–41, 151 (n. 48)
- Rudder, David, 72, 100
- Russian Revolutions (1905 and 1917), 155, 156–57, 186, 204. *See also* Soviet Union
- Rustin, Bayard, 189–90, 192
- Saint Domingue: black veterans in, 61, 63, 71 (n. 51); economic role of, 80; liberty tree symbol in, 66; mulattos of, 73–75;

- refugees from, 67. *See also* Haiti; Haitian Revolution
- Saint Lucia: Black Power movement of, 200; uprising in (1795–97), 82
- Saint Vincent: uprising in (1795–96), 82
- Salvation Army, 107, 109, 112–13
- San Francisco Moratorium Demonstration, 222
- Sansone, Livio, 241
- Santo Domingo. *See* Dominican Republic
- SASO. *See* South African Students' Organisation
- Satyagrahis, 187–88, 190, 195 (n. 28)
- Savimbi, Jonas, 203
- SCAP. *See* South African Communist Party
- Scott, Julius, 83, 84, 87, 90
- Scottsboro case, 168–69, 170
- Scouting movement, 109, 113–14, 115
- Seale, Bobby, 217–18, 222, 225
- Searchlight* (periodical), 107–8, 119–20, 128 (n. 78)
- Sechaba* (periodical), 222
- Second (Amsterdam) International, 170
- Seko, Mobutu Sese, 31
- Selassie, Haile (earlier, Ras Tafari), 14, 109, 118, 122, 198
- Semouse, Josiah, 132
- Senegal: Black Power movement in, 29; hip hop in, 233, 249
- Senghor, Lamine, 161
- Shakur, Afeni, 33
- Shakur, Assata, 244
- Shakur, Tupac Amaru, 1, 33, 177 (ill.)
- Sharp, Granville, 54, 59
- Sharpeville Massacre (1960), 24
- Shepperson, George, 47–48
- Shridharani, Krishnalal, 183–84, 190, 193
- Sierra Leone: black military veterans in, 62; founding of, 54; hip hop in, 249
- Sisulu, Walter, 145
- Sivanandan, Ambalaver, 27
- Sizzla (Miguel Orlando Collins), 212
- Skocpol, Theda, 79
- Slavery and slave trade: British abolition of, 96, 103 (n. 87); communist view of, 156; demise of legitimacy of, 80–81; end of, 63–67, 93–94; Evangelical Revival and, 5–6, 48–49; expansion of, 79, 86; French abolition of, 17, 62, 75; globalized struggle against, 59–60; Haitian demolition of, 7; in Providential Design, 134, 137; U.S. abolition of, 63, 97; U.S. patriots' support for, 6
- Small, E. F., 172
- Smith, Jay Holmes, 190–91
- Smith, Tommie, 29
- Smuts, Jan, 194 (n. 3), 195 (n. 35)
- SNCC. *See* Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee
- Sobel, Mechal, 69 (n. 13)
- Solaar, MC (Claude M'Barali), 35
- Solomon, Mark, 164
- Sons of Africa, 59
- South Africa: African Americans banned from, 149 (n. 8); African American visitors to, 132–34; American Negro (West Indian) community in, 135–37, 150 (n. 20); ANC resurgence in, 32; Black Consciousness movement in, 28, 30–31, 148, 252; Bolshevism in, 157; Comintern's Native Republic thesis on, 162–65; Ethiopian support from, 170–71; Gandhianism's emergence in, 187–88; Garveyism's legacy for, 148–49; hip hop in, 35, 248–54, 255; House of Athlyi religious organization in, 138–41; Marxism-Leninism in, 203; political culture of, 17, 130–31; racial codification of "coloureds" in, 257–58 (n. 48); segregation and oppression in, 24, 131–32, 139, 184–88; taxation in, 144; voting in, 136, 251
- South African Communist Party (SCAP), 157, 163, 203, 250
- South African Students' Organisation (SASO), 28
- Soviet Union: centralization of power in, 18–19; collapse of, 242; formation of, 155; Garvey on, 159; racial policy of, 15; revolutions fostered by, 204, 211; threats redefined by, 19–20. *See also* Communist International; Marxism-Leninism
- Soweto rebellion (1976), 30–31, 32
- Spain: colonial losses of, 80; hip hop in, 234; hostility of toward Haitian Revolution, 82; national interests of, 74–75
- Spooner, Kenneth, 135

- Stalin, Joseph, 16, 18–19, 204
- Star of Bethlehem Lodge, 111–12
- Stewart, James, 133
- Stoddard, Lothrop, 102 (n. 51)
- Stop the Draft week, 219
- Stuckey, Sterling, 69 (n. 13)
- Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), 25, 28, 219
- Students for a Democratic Society, 219
- Suite, Winston, 200
- Surinam: war against maroons in (1789–93), 82
- Sutherland, Bill, 40 (n. 72)
- Swan, Maureen, 185, 187
- Sweden: Black Panther Party in, 225, 226
- Sweet, Ossian, 122
- Sykes, Bobbi, 27
- Tacky's Revolt (1760), 82, 83
- Tafari, Ras (Haile Selassie), 14, 109, 118, 122, 198
- Talbert, Mary, 181
- Tanzania: Black Power movement in, 29; hip hop in, 249
- Tapia House movement, 199
- T.E.A.A.C.H. Project (The Educational Alternative Awakening Corrupted Heads), 254
- Templin, Ralph, 190–91
- Thaele, James, 138
- Third World Women's Alliance, 25
- Thompson, Louise, 21
- Thornton, John, 66
- Tobago: black military veterans in, 62; Black Power movement in, 197, 199, 201
- Tosh, Peter, 211
- "To Toussaint Louverture" (Wordsworth), 7, 38 (n. 31)
- Toussaint Louverture, 45 (ill.); alliances of, 75; on Dessalines, 78; double consciousness of, 90; as inspiration and model, 84, 97, 99; opposition to, 76–77; sonnet for, 38 (n. 31); vision of, 1
- TransAfrica (group), 148
- Transkei: hopes in, 135; official Garveyism in, 147–48; oppression in, 141–42, 144; Wellington's influence in, 142–47
- Transport and Industrial Workers Union, 199
- Transvaal Chinese Association, 194–95 (n. 18)
- Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions, 172
- Treaty of Versailles (1919), 9, 15
- Trinidad: black military veterans in, 62, 114; Black Power movement in, 30, 31, 197, 199–201; British West Indian-owned newspaper in, 107; Christian mission in, 113; Comintern's interest in, 166, 172; Ethiopian support from, 170
- Trois Riviere rebellion (1793), 65–66
- Trotsky, Leon, 159
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, 7, 66, 86–87, 102 (n. 51)
- "Truth Is" (song), 43–44 (n. 141)
- Ture, Kwame (Stokely Carmichael), 25, 26, 27, 208
- Turner, Henry McNeal, 133–34
- Turner, Nat, 96–97
- Tye, Colonel, 53
- Ubuntu, 33
- UCPA. *See* Universal Coloured People's Association
- Ulyanovsky, Rostislav, 204
- Umteteli wa Bantu* (newspaper), 150 (n. 19)
- UNIA. *See* Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League
- Unified Black Movement (Movimento Negro Unificado), 27–28, 236, 237–38
- Union of South Africa. *See* South Africa
- Union of Young Communists (Cuba), 247
- United Fruit Company, 115, 116, 126 (n. 35)
- United Movement for the Reconstruction of Black Identity, 199
- United Nations, 172, 221
- United States: Black Power movement in, 28–29; camp meetings in, 92; Comintern's Black Belt thesis on, 162, 164–65; Haitian refugees in, 67; Haiti invaded and occupied by, 73, 88, 98–100; hip hop in, 232, 236, 239–40, 243, 244; imperialism of, 122, 219–24; independence celebrations of, 95; Million Woman March critique of, 34; political power of, 17; political repression in, 29, 32, 116, 205–6, 207, 211,

- 215–16, 225–27; Prosser's Revolt in, 67; racial violence fears in, 181–82; response to Bolshevism in, 157; response to Haitian Revolution in, 86–87; Scottsboro case in, 168–69, 170; South Africa compared with, 132; symbols of, 66, 143, 144; Turner's revolt in, 96–97; Vesey's revolt in, 67, 68, 84
- U.S. Civil War, 97
- U.S. Communist Party: ABB linked to, 20–21; black self-determination idea in, 164; Caribbean interests of, 166–67; delegates of, 15, 158–59; Ethiopian support from, 170; labor congress organized by, 161; pan-Africanist literature of, 160; youth league of, 172
- U.S. Congress: antiapartheid efforts in, 148; antilynching legislation in, 181; Fulbright hearings in, 219
- U.S. Constitution (1787), 17
- U.S. Peace Corps, 29
- U.S. Revolution: black continental veterans of, 70 (n. 42); black loyalist regiments in, 52–54, 60–62; black self-emancipation in, 5, 6–7; Caribbean influenced by, 62–67; French forces in, 63–64; pan-Africanism traced to, 47–48, 52–56, 60–62; slave petitions in, 51–52; spread of evangelicalism after, 92–93; world-historical impact of, 79. *See also* Declaration of Independence; U.S. Constitution
- Universal Coloured People's Association (UCPA), 27
- Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA): ABB's break with, 21; British West Indian connections of, 107, 110–11; Caribbean Black Power's origins in, 198; Caribbean chapters of, 110–11, 113, 124–25 (n. 13); collapse of, 19; Comintern compared with, 159–60, 165; Comintern's opposition to, 19, 162, 166; convention of, 150 (n. 19); post-World War I reconstitution of, 10; religious character of, 12–13, 137–38; School of African Philosophy of, 147; scout troop linked to, 115; slogan of, 137, 150 (n. 30); South African leadership and branches of, 136–38, 142, 147–48, 150 (nn. 22, 28); steamship line of, 134–35, 137, 140, 143; transnational character of, 130–38; Wellington's story about, 142–43. *See also* Garvey, Marcus; Garveyism; *Negro World*
- Universal Races Congress (1911), 37 (n. 13)
- Universal Zulu Nation, 253, 258 (n. 56)
- University of California at Berkeley, 217–18
- University of Havana, 248
- University of the Toilers of the East, 160, 163, 172
- University of the West Indies, 198–99
- Urban League, 170, 191
- Van Tyne, Claude, 183
- Venezuela: antiblack legislation of, 116; British West Indian immigrants in, 108; Saint Domingue slaves in, 84; Spanish overthrown in, 80
- Vesey, Denmark, 67, 68, 84
- Vietnamese National Liberation Front, 223
- Vietnam War: Black Panthers on, 222, 226, 228; Tet Offensive in, 203, 219. *See also* Antiwar movement
- Villatte, Jean Baptiste, 63
- Virginia Jubilee Singers, 132, 133, 148
- Vodun (slave religion), 91, 95
- Von Eschen, Penny M., 217
- Walker, David, 95–96
- Wallace, Ernest, 142
- Wallace-Johnson, Isaac Theophilus Akunna, 105 (ill.); Comintern connections of, 172; Ethiopian support from, 170; at International Conference of Negro Workers, 165; in Negro Welfare Association, 168; at World Anti-Colonial Conference, 161, 162
- Ward, Arnold, 168, 172
- Washington, Booker T., 132, 134
- Watson, David, 114–15
- Weekes, George, 199
- Wellington, Butler Hansford (Wellington Elias Butelezi): as American Negro, 141–42, 143–44; decline and fall of, 146–48, 153–54 (n. 88); excommunication of, 152 (n. 57); name change of, 142, 152

- (n. 58); prophecies and institutions of, 142–46, 153 (n. 75)
- Wells-Barnett, Ida B., 181
- Wesley, John, 49, 50, 59
- West, Kanye, 249
- West African Methodist Church, 54
- West African Students' Union, 168
- Westerman, George, 119
- West Indian Democratic Club, 111
- West Indian* (newspaper), 126 (n. 34)
- West Indies War Cry* (newspaper), 113
- Wheatley, Phillis, 56–57, 102–3 (n. 73)
- White, Garth, 198–99, 202
- White, Maude, 21
- Whitefield, George, 50, 58
- Wickham, Clennell, 117
- Wilberforce, William, 59
- Wilkins, Roy, 149 (n. 8), 223
- Williams, Eric, 30, 108, 197, 200, 201
- Williams, Robert, 26, 192, 216, 218
- Wilson, Woodrow, 9
- Winsor, Ellen, 182, 183, 184
- Women: as Black Bolsheviks, 20–21; as Black Panthers, 25; ideal type of, 12, 21; racial uplift and, 119–21; in UNIA, 11–12
- Wordsworth, William, 7, 38 (n. 31)
- Workers Party of Jamaica (WPJ), 202–3, 206–7, 213 (n. 29)
- Working People's Alliance (WPA), 30, 213 (n. 19)
- World Anti-Colonial Conference (1927), 161–62
- World Federation of Trade Unions, 172
- World War I: British West Indies Regiment in, 114–15; overview of, 8–9; treaty to end, 9, 15; Wellington's story about, 142. *See also* Communist International
- World War II: alliances reevaluated in, 19–20; beginning of, 39–40 (n. 57); black and white antagonisms in, 189; new international order after, 22; rumors in, 147–48
- WPA. *See* Working People's Alliance
- WPJ. *See* Workers Party of Jamaica
- Wright, Ada, 169
- Wright, Richard, 90, 171, 204, 213 (n. 22)
- Wynter, Sylvia, 214 (n. 36)
- X, Malcolm: African visits of, 24; assassination of, 25; Black Panthers influenced by, 218; declining influence of, 204; Garveyism as influence on, 14; hip hop and, 234, 238–39, 244, 252; international connections of, 26; persistence of, 216; state repression of, 32
- Yarmouth* (ship), 134
- Yergan, Max, 149 (n. 8)
- Young, Joe, 199
- Young, Sidney, 118–19, 124
- Young Power, 199
- Youth League (ANC), 148
- Zimbabwe (earlier, Rhodesia): Black Power movement in, 29
- Zong case, 59
- Zulu Nation, 253, 258 (n. 56)
- Zumbi (black leader), 28