

BLACK INTERNATIONALISM AND AFRICAN AND CARIBBEAN
INTELLECTUALS IN LONDON, 1919-1950

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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During the three decades between the end of World War I and 1950, African and West Indian scholars, professionals, university students, artists, and political activists in London forged new conceptions of community, reshaped public debates about the nature and goals of British colonialism, and prepared the way for a revolutionary and self-consciously modern African culture. Black intellectuals formed organizations that became homes away from home and centers of cultural mixture and intellectual debate, and launched publications that served as new means of voicing social commentary and political dissent. These black associations developed within an atmosphere characterized by a variety of internationalisms, including pan-ethnic movements, feminism, communism, and the socialist internationalism ascendant within the British Left after World War I. The intellectual and political context of London and the types of sociability that these groups fostered gave rise to a range of black internationalist activity and new regional imaginaries in the form of a West Indian Federation and a United West Africa that shaped the goals of anticolonialism before 1950. This dissertation examines the black organizations and other social spaces that brought people of African descent together in London to illustrate how the city functioned, at once, as imperial metropolis and global city, as the administrative center of the British Empire and the nexus of black resistance to racism and imperialism.

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Introduction

The presence of people of African descent in London typically is associated with the postwar period, linked indelibly to migration since the 1950s in the public narratives of the rise of multi-ethnic Britain. Yet, the early twentieth century also witnessed a sustained, if much more limited, influx of Africans and West Indians into the imperial metropole. During the years between 1919 and 1950—a period in which the Colonial Office’s approach shifted from a policy of indirect rule to colonial development—African and West Indian university students, professionals, artists, and activists in London established a number of organizations and publications that facilitated dialogue with the imperial state and the circulation of ideas and news around the Atlantic and throughout the British empire. Black associations became homes away from home, centers of cultural and intellectual exchange, and new means of voicing social commentary and political dissent. Through them, black intellectuals influenced the political imagination of British colonial officials, politicians, and others interested in Africa and the colonies, contributing to the major fluctuations in colonial policy during the final decades of imperial rule. Many of these individuals returned to Africa and the Caribbean in the years after World War II to become leaders of incipient anticolonial movements and prominent postcolonial politicians. The experiences of Caribbean and African intellectuals like Eric Williams, Jomo Kenyatta, and Kwame Nkrumah at the heart of the empire were often decisive in their intellectual and political development, making them a significant part of the prehistory of decolonization.¹

¹ See Ivar Oxaal, *Black Intellectuals Come to Power: The Rise of Creole Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1968), p. 66.

In addition to developments in the colonies, both the racial discrimination and relative freedom that Africans and West Indians discovered in London informed their changing political commitments and personal identifications. The city attracted students, artists, activists, petitioners, and migrants from the colonies and brought them into contact with one another, African Americans, others from throughout the empire, and Britons from across the socio-economic spectrum. While some traveled to Britain to draw publicity to colonial issues or agitate for reform, many more, provoked by British ignorance and racism, engaged in political activities for the first time in the metropole. In 1936, Eric Walrond observed, “it is indeed a paradox that London, the capital of the largest Negro Empire in the world—the cradle of English liberty, justice and fair-play—the city to which Frederick Douglas fled as a fugitive from slavery—should be so extremely inexpert in the matter of interracial relations....”² This “paradox” shaped the lives of black sojourners in London, who were interpellated as representatives of the larger collectivities of colony and race. In the early 1960s, a Nigerian university student wrote, “Down the ages, it as been the traveller who has helped to disseminate knowledge and who served as the unofficial ambassador of his own country.” When these “messenger[s] of peace” are themselves students who share a “common experience of bitterness and disappointment,” “the problem becomes more threatening, as impressions of scholastic days are erased only with difficulty, and most of the students of today are the leaders of tomorrow....”³ The capital of the far-flung British Empire, London became the frontline in the black struggle against British imperialism during the interwar years, and many West Indian and African intellectuals embraced black internationalism for the first time within the cosmopolitan space of the imperial metropole.

² Eric Walrond, “The Negro in London,” *Black Man* 1, 12 (March 1936), p. 10.

³ Henri Tajfel, ed., *Disappointed Guests: Essays by African, Asian, and West Indian Students* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 2.

This dissertation explores the relation between the development of black internationalism and the exigencies and possibilities of metropolitan location by examining the whole social and intellectual lives of West Indians and Africans in London, not just their explicitly political activities. Black students gained their political education in the small apartments, cafés, and black organizations where they spent most their time as much as the universities of the metropole. The circulation of material forms and practices and a variety of social settings like the West African Student Union's hostel became the quotidian basis of new collective identifications. These specific social spaces enabled cultural exchange and engendered new political imaginaries that contributed to a range of black internationalist activity.

African and Caribbean intellectuals often mobilized the very terms of the colonial regime—concepts such as “Commonwealth,” “partnership,” “self-government,” and “development”—to articulate a variety of extra-national identifications, press for political reforms, and make material claims on the imperial government. In the end, of course, black intellectuals and activists were unable to move British politicians and colonial officials enough to create a truly equitable relationship within the framework of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and, by the 1950s, the continued existence of empire, in whatever guise, became abhorrent to increasing numbers of colonial subjects and sympathetic groups in the metropole alike. Most of the former ultimately chose to heed Kwame Nkrumah's call to “seek ye first the political kingdom” of the colonial state and embraced, if any, a vision of pan-Africanism that entailed little more than cooperation between independent nation-states. Nonetheless, the anticolonial nationalisms of the 1950s and 1960s and the particular form of postcolonial states which they helped produce were not the results of an inevitable development, but rather triumphed at the expense of a number of

extra-national or international possibilities that circulated in the years prior to decolonization, from various conceptions of global black unity to socialist and communist versions of internationalism to empire. The political imagination of black intellectuals in London extended beyond (and challenged) the model of the nation-state in the decades before the dissolution of the major European empires led to the emergence of new independent states around the world.⁴

This thesis also considers the areas of convergence and dissonance between black intellectuals' conceptions of pan-African or pan-“coloured” unity and their changing views on the British Empire. As the lives of the Africans and West Indians under consideration here demonstrate, it is a mistake to presume the existence of two discrete or opposed spheres of political and intellectual culture—the one colonial, the other metropolitan—in the British Empire. Rather, as Jonathon Glassman suggests, new ways of thinking of racial and ethnic difference and community “emerged from circuits of discourse in which diverse intellectuals spoke to one another—elite, popular, European and African....”⁵ Until the late twentieth century, Britain, like France, was, as Frederick Cooper puts it, “not a nation-state, but an empire-state”—“both the way the leaders of empire-states thought about their polity and the forms in which political contestation took place reflect ‘thinking like an empire.’”

⁴ This project is informed by and builds on recent scholarship associated with the new imperial history. See especially Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (University of California Press, 2005), “Networks, Moral Discourse, and History,” in *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power*, Thomas M. Callaghy et al., eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 23-46, and “Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History,” *American Historical Review* v. 99, n. 5 (December 1994), pp. 1516-1545; Frank Trentmann, Philippa Levine, and Kevin Grant, eds., *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c.1860-1950* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Duke University Press, 2005); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) and “Suffragism and Internationalism: The Enfranchisement of British and Indian Women under an Imperial State,” in *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation, and Race*, Ian Christopher et al., eds. (Routledge, 2000).

⁵ Jonathon Glassman, “Slower Than a Massacre: The Multiple Sources of Racial Thought in Colonial Africa,” *American Historical Review* 109, 3 (June 2004), p. 734.

Colonial empires required the consolidation and reproduction of both incorporative and differentiating institutions, practices, and discourses, which produced highly unequal power relations, but also struggles over the boundaries of inclusion within the imperial polity. Up to the 1950s, black intellectuals maneuvered and articulated their demands from *within* the institutional and conceptual framework of empire as often as they sought to think and act *outside* of its structures. Many exploited the ambiguities and periodic shifts in the language of imperial governance to press the state and British public for reforms and more equitable relations. As Cooper suggests, we should “recognize the instability and contested nature of colonizing ideologies,” as well as how colonial subjects “sought to reinterpret, appropriate, deflect, and resist the political ideas they gleaned from colonial rulers, their own experiences, and their connections across colonial boundaries.”⁶ In late imperial Britain, black internationalism emerged as one strand of anticolonial discourse that, nevertheless, drew upon the larger administrative and imaginative context of the empire-state in complex ways. Black intellectuals in London during the first half of the twentieth century articulated a variety of more or less deterritorialized forms of affiliation, including black internationalism and regional identities like West African or West Indian, which drew upon extant discourses of extra-national community like liberal and socialist variants of internationalism, Christian humanism, feminism, communism, and empire.

Black Intellectuals and Black Internationalism in London

Asked near the end of his life to contribute a short piece on “black intellectuals in Britain,” the Trinidadian writer and activist C. L. R. James began characteristically by problematizing the terms of his assignment. “The very title to which one has to write turns

⁶ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, p. 153-154, 32.

out to be problematical, as everything concerned with race.” Among other things, both terms ostensibly register membership in communities of discourse and address. Yet, as James noted, not only does what constitutes an “intellectual” vary over time, but so too do understandings of who might be said to be a “*black* intellectual.” Problems of locality and belonging complicate the issue further. For example, James suggested, “I doubt if there are many black men who have made the impact on England that Paul Robeson has made. He lived in England for many years and was one of the best-known and best-loved black men who ever was looked upon by British people as one of the blacks who had made it.” Nevertheless, during the final years of his life, Robeson “could not have been thought of as anything else but an American citizen.” Undeterred, James continued, “Once the complexity of definition has been established we can go ahead cheerfully, knowing that many who are in ought to be out and quite a few who are out ought to be in.”⁷ This project, too, is an analysis of the role of the black intellectual in Britain. Following James, it insists that the figure of the black intellectual must be pursued in its historical specificity, with an eye to its permutations over time.

Within the historiography on the intellectual production of “Africa” as an object of attachment and knowledge, pan-Africanism is seen usually to be based on shared lines of descent, cultural sources, and histories of struggle or, conversely, a fictive and hopelessly problematic notion of cultural or biological community, itself a derivative of European understandings of race. Kwame Anthony Appiah, for example, maintains, “the idea of an African race, is an unavoidable element in [Pan-Africanist] discourse, and ... these racist notions are ground in bad biological—and worse ethical—ideas, inherited from the

⁷ C. L. R. James, “Black Intellectuals in Britain,” *Colour, Culture and Consciousness*, ed. by Bhikhu Parekh (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), p. 154.

increasingly racialized thought of nineteenth-century Europe and America.”⁸ Both positions, however, miss the creative dynamism of black internationalism.

In his classic essay on pan-Africanism, George Shepperson suggested that we be more attentive to the influence of a larger field of internationalisms on pan-Africanist thinking, especially the rise of pan-nationalisms (from Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism to Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asiatic movements), federalism (as exemplified by the United States), and “the appearance of multi-national states often out of European colonialism” like the British Commonwealth of Nations and the French Union.⁹ Political movements with internationalist aims such as feminism and communism, as well as institutions as diverse as the World Trade Union Congress, International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, and the League of Nations, which were at once the products and sources of new imaginings of community and cooperation, also informed the thinking of black intellectuals around the Atlantic. Invocations of a transnational black public in both deterritorialized and regional forms, such as aspirations for a West Indian Federation and a “United States of West Africa” or a “West African Soviet Union,” emerged from this complex background.

Location emerges here as a significant factor because of the conversations, alliances, and boundary crossings which only London made possible. “Only in England,” C. L. R. James recalled, “did I learn to break through the inherited constraints of my environment....”¹⁰ In nearly every case, black intellectuals in London not only came to see themselves as just that—as, in some meaningful way, *black intellectuals*—during their time in

⁸ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. x. See also V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Gaurav Desai, *Subject to Colonialism: African Self-Fashioning and the Colonial Library* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

⁹ Significantly, Shepperson singles out DuBois's experiences as a graduate student in Germany as a crucial example. Shepperson, “Pan-Africanism and ‘Pan-Africanism,’” p. 349, 353.

¹⁰ C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993, originally published 1963), p. 80.

the city; they also resituated Africa and the Caribbean at the forefront of a global movement towards internationalism in their scholarship, art, and political activities. The arrival of the black intellectual in interwar London occurred alongside and was inseparable from black internationalist thought. As Winston James suggests, “The story of the black experience in twentieth-century Britain ... is one ... of Jamaicans, Barbadians, and other Caribbeans along with Ghanaians, Nigerians, and other continental Africans—meeting one another generally for the first time and doing so on British soil. It is the story of tensions as well as self-identifications and solidarities formed among these groups ... ; of Guyanese and Kenyans not only becoming Caribbeans and Africans, respectively, but also their embracing more expansive and inclusive identifications as ‘Negro’ and ‘black.’” Although West Indian and African intellectuals inhabited and formed associations in other British cities like Liverpool, Manchester, and Edinburgh, London, above all, became the locus of black internationalist activity. The city “was not only a site of residence ... ; it was also ... the planet’s primary crossroads at which black people came to a greater sense of group consciousness.”¹¹ The setting of late imperial London and the larger context of empire represented the generative common ground for African and West Indian intellectuals’ imaginings of a global black community.

Recently, scholars like Edwards, Tina Campt, and Jacqueline Nassy Brown have returned to the “tensions” to which James referred as the “unavoidable dynamics of difference” in black internationalism. In Edwards’ reading of Shepperson, he “rereads the

¹¹ Winston James, “The Black Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain,” *Black Experience and the Empire*, Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 348. For related arguments, see also Ross Posnock, *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 45; Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), p. 90; and Oxaal, *Black Intellectuals Come to Power*, p. 66.

term [pan-Africanism] precisely to make room for ideological difference and disjuncture in considering black cultural politics in an international sphere.” He “is attempting to push here toward a revised or expanded notion of black international work that would be able to account for such unavoidable dynamics of difference, rather than either assuming a universally applicable definition of ‘Pan-African’ or presupposing an exceptionalist version of New World ‘Pan-African’ activity.” Thus, Edwards argues, “on an theoretical level, this intervention focuses especially on relations of difference and disjuncture in the varied interactions of black internationalist discourses....” “It is exactly such a haunting gap or discrepancy,” he suggests, “that allows the African diaspora to ‘step’ and ‘move’ in various articulations. Articulation is always a strange and ambivalent gesture, because finally, in the body, it is *only* difference—the separation between bones or members—that allows movement.”¹²

In a similar vein, Brown criticizes Paul Gilroy’s *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) and *Black Atlantic* (1993) for failing “to explore how power differentials extant *across* Black communities might mediate power relations *within* them.” “The inverse,” Brown contends, “also merits interrogation: how do power relations within the diasporic space of particular Black communities shape participation in the transnational space of diaspora?” In an attempt to move beyond “the scope of purity-as-problem and hybridity-as-solution” dichotomy and the implicit gendering of the local/national/specific as feminine and the global/transnational/hybrid as masculine in the work of Gilroy, Brown defines diaspora “as a *counter/part* relation built on cultural and historical equivalences.” “To posit *equivalences*,” she maintains, “is to put meaningful differences (such as distinct colonial histories) on the same analytical plane at the start, in order to then expose the ways they come to bear in social

¹² Brent Hayes Edwards, “The Uses of *Diaspora*,” *Social Text* 66, v. 19, n. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 50-51, 53, 66.

practice” and “index shifting relations of antagonism and affinity.”¹³ Indeed, black internationalist work often exposed the differences as well as the similarities between the circumstances and political ideals of individuals. As Edwards argues, the “cultures of black internationalism” not only enabled “new and unforeseen alliances and interventions on a global stage—they are also characterized by unavoidable misapprehensions and misreadings, persistent blindnesses and solipsisms, self-defeating and abortive collaborations, a failure to translate even a basic grammar of blackness.”¹⁴

This thesis examines the place of black internationalism in the writings, political activities, and everyday lives of African and West Indian men and women in London between 1919 and 1950. It is the story of how these black students, scholars, professionals, and activists came to embrace black internationalism and a global vision of community during this period. Yet, black internationalism remained a movement towards a constantly receding horizon. Taken together, the various attempts by black intellectuals in London to realize its utopian dream of liberation through racial community were an inchoate and often troubled by short-circuits, moments of incomprehension, and sharp differences of opinion.

¹³ Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 42. See also Tina Campt *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Michelle M. Wright, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), esp. Ch. 5, “The Urban Diaspora: Black Subjectivities in Berlin, London, and Paris.”

¹⁴ Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, p. 5.

Chapter One

Afro-Metropolis: Black Political and Cultural Associations in London, 1919-1935

The early twentieth century witnessed a significant, if still relatively small, influx of Africans and West Indians into Britain, especially the capital, London. For many Caribbean and African intellectuals, their sojourns in the metropole proved to a prodigious experience, which transformed their politics and self-conception. Often, black students, artists, and professionals arrived as self-conscious “British intellectuals,” as C. L. R. James put it, but came to see themselves as representatives of a global black community and their efforts in the imperial metropole as having significance beyond their educational pursuits and individual goals.¹⁵ University students and professionals in the metropole enjoyed a unique position in the struggle for colonial reform and presented themselves as the educated vanguard and the “natural leaders” of Africa and the “race” as a whole—both imaginative constructs that their presence in London and interactions with one another, in turn, helped to consolidate. Black internationalism first captured the imagination of many West Indians and Africans during their time in London, where they formed new black organizations like the Union of Students of African Descent, African Progress Union, Gold Coast Students Union, Nigerian Progress Union, West African Students Union, and the League of Coloured Peoples during early decades of the twentieth century. These black cultural and political associations, in particular the West African Students Union (WASU) and the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP), provided an experiential foundation for extra-national, pan-African unity. During the interwar period, as Britain consolidated and expanded its colonization

¹⁵ C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993, originally published 1963), p. 18.

efforts in West Africa—and amidst the on-going disposition of the local population at the hands of white settlers and the colonial state in British East Africa—London became the center of black resistance to British imperialism. Organizations like the WASU and LCP were, at once, essential to and the most visible by-products of the making of black internationalists.

The black population in interwar Britain consisted largely of two groups: students and workers. African rulers and the mission-educated African elite, especially in towns like Freetown, Lagos, and Accra along the coast of West Africa, commonly sent their children abroad to attend British schools and universities, as did prominent West Indian families. As the British Empire mobilized for the First World War, the war effort brought significantly more West Indians and Africans to the metropole as both laborers and military personnel. After the war, some stayed in Britain, despite increasing obstacles to their doing so, due to widespread unemployment in the British West Indies, especially Jamaica, while many African seamen found themselves stranded in British port cities and unable to find work due to new legislation all but barring them from the shipping industry. At the same time, there was a significant rise in the number of Caribbean and West African university students in Edinburgh, Oxford, Cambridge, and especially London during the interwar years, the vast majority of whom were men. This last group came predominately from the expanding ranks of European-educated, urban middle class in Britain's colonies in the Caribbean and West Africa. Nevertheless, the censuses of 1911, 1921, and 1931 indicate that total number of Africans and West Indians in Britain remained less than 14,000 before the 1930s, although

these figures included Caribbean-born whites and excluded the British-born black population.¹⁶

Given the lack of universities in the West Indies and Africa, a sojourn abroad in Britain or, in some cases, the United States represented the only option for those seeking professional degrees. Yet, since scholarships remained scarce, the opportunity to pursue higher education depended upon the student's ability to marshal financial support. The average age of students from Gold Coast during the last decade of the nineteenth century was 31, suggesting that many had to work for years to accumulate the requisite funds.¹⁷ This trend continued in the early part of the twentieth century. By the early decades of the twentieth century, the government's *laissez-faire* approach to colonial education and the plight of student sojourners in Britain became a target of black intelligentsia and a source of concern for British officials in the Colonial Office and the colonies. As Bill Schwarz suggests, the black presence in London assumed "both a reality and a powerful symbolic register."¹⁸ During the 1920s and 1930s, Africans and West Indians at the heart of the British Empire, colonial officials, and a number of philanthropic, religious, and other groups in Britain focused increasingly on the metropole as an important (and potentially problematic) site of imperial relations.

Even before the First World War, African students and intellectuals in Britain and West African elites in places like Accra and Lagos recognized the need for a hostel run by and for black students in London. During the early twentieth century, the issue of education emerged as a major point of contention between the colonial government and the growing

¹⁶ The 1921 census also included people from mandated territories under British control. See Michael Banton, *The Coloured Quarter: Negro Immigrants in an English City* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), p. 67.

¹⁷ Ray Jenkins, "Gold Coasters Overseas, 1880-1919: With Specific Reference to Their Activities in Britain," *Immigrants and Minorities* v. 4, n. 3 (1985), p. 22.

¹⁸ Bill Schwarz, "Black Metropolis/White England," in *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, ed. by Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 177.

numbers of educated Africans in urban areas along the West African coast, and the plight of student sojourners was at the heart of these disputes. In mid-June 1914, a two-part article appeared in the Sierra Leonean George Alfred Williams's *Lagos Standard* (1894-1920) in response to a speech given by Frederick Lugard, then Governor of Nigeria, on the subject of "the education of West African natives."¹⁹ "We agree with Sir Frederick Lugard that the 'position of Lagos in the future and the part it will play in the progress of Nigeria will depend more on the character and influence of its educated citizens than on any mere material development of its harbours and its ware-houses,'" but "We go even further ... and say that the success or failure of the whole of the country of Nigeria depends on the character and influence of educated natives in the country."²⁰ The actions—or, more accurately, inaction—of the colonial government in Nigeria with regard to education left little doubt that Lugard wished Africans to "reconcile themselves to the position ... of hewers of wood and drawers of water." To counter the stultifying effects of Lugardian indirect rule in the colonies, the author maintained, "It is important that West African students in British Universities should not be under the leading strings of Government. A freer atmosphere ... is necessary for a healthy and vigorous development of African students." The author linked the intellectual development of both Nigeria and the race as whole to the inculcation of a "manly" independence during African students' sojourn in Britain. "It is necessary for our advancement as a race that our young men studying for professions in the United Kingdom should be proficient not only in their professions but

¹⁹ Launched in 1894, the *Lagos Standard* was, by this time, one of the two most established daily newspapers in Lagos along with the *Record*. While the *Record* had a pro-government slant, the *Standard* was markedly more critical and the mouthpiece of the Nigerian cultural renaissance in the early twentieth, and, as a consequence, attracted more African advertisers. Fred I. A. Omu, "The Newspaper Press in Southern Nigeria, 1800-1900," *Studies in Southern Nigerian History: A Festschrift for Joseph Christopher Okwudili Anene 1918-68*, ed. and intro. by Boniface I. Obichere (London: Routledge, 1982), p. 112-113.

²⁰ "Sir Frederick Lugard and the Education of West African Natives," *Lagos Standard* (June 10, 1914).

imbibe also some of that spirit of independence, freedom, liberty, fair-play and justice so characteristic of the Britisher in his own home.” The piece linked autonomy from government control and assertive masculinity, a measure of “backbone” and “courage,” to the future prospects of both Africa and a global racial community. “Our professional men fall very naturally into the rank of our leaders and it will be a bad day for our progress when our doctors and lawyers and engineers through the cramping influence of Government hostels in the United Kingdom come back to us with all manly spirit knocked out of them and become mere weaklings with no backbone or courage to stand for the rights of their people.”²¹ These same concerns would inform the agendas and activities of the organizations that Caribbean and West African intellectuals formed in London after World War I.

In the years before the war, some liberal philanthropic groups in London also became interested in the plight of colonial students in the metropole. In 1912, the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society and the African Society collaborated to produce a list of Africans currently in Britain and held a conference on the subject at the Westminster Palace Hotel in April 1913, which was attended by roughly 40 Africans as well as a few sympathetic Members of Parliament. Attendees included predominately professionals and law students from the Gold Coast, and the conference passed a resolution petitioning the Colonial Office for financial support to open an African students’ club. The Egyptian proprietor of the *African Times and Orient Review*, Dusé Mohamed Ali, whose office at 158 Fleet Street served as an important meeting place for black intellectuals in London, also participated in the historic event, which, with the exception of the 1900 Pan-African Conference, represented the first official gathering of Africans in London.²² In June 1914,

²¹ *Ibid.* (June 17, 1914).

²² On Dusé Mohamed Ali, see Ian Duffield, “Dusé Mohamed Ali, Afro-Asian solidarity and Pan-Africanism in early twentieth-century London,” and Folarin Shyllon, “The Black presence and experience in Britain: An

there was a second attempt to organize on behalf of African students in Britain, another list of names was produced, and a reception took place at the House of Commons to which a few Africans were invited. In both instances, however, the Colonial Office and colonial governments in Africa rejected the idea of government support for a students' club.

The outbreak of war overshadowed these concerns for a time, but the final years of the conflict witnessed the creation of several new black organizations in London—the Union of Students of African Descent, Gold Coast Students Union, and the African Progress Union. Many of the same concerns that were expressed at the 1913 conference motivated these groups. Originally named the African Students' Union of Great Britain and Ireland before the introduction of West Indians to its membership led the group to change its name, the Union of Students of African Descent (USAD) consisted solely of students and professionals from the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone at its founding in 1916.²³ Avowedly apolitical, the USAD, as the *African Times and Orient Express* reported, sought to bring “together all Africans in statu pupillaris resident in England” and was “founded for the purpose of dealing with African history and sociology” and devoted to “keeping African students in London in a condition of active intellectuality” and “inciting investigation through its debates and lectures by members and others....”²⁴ The organization remained

analytical overview,” in *Essays on the History of Blacks in Britain*, ed. by Jagdish S. Gundara and Ian Duffield (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992).

²³ The Sierra Leonean E. S. Beoku Betts served as its first chairman, while K. A. Keisrah, T. Mensah-Annan, and C. Awoonor Renner from the Gold Coast filled the positions of secretary, assistant secretary, and financial secretary respectively. Philip Garigue refers to the organization as the Association of Students of African Descent, and David Killingray claims that the USAD grew out of another short-lived organization, the West African and West Indian Christian Union. Killingray, “‘To do something for the race’: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples,” in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. by Bill Schwarz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 61. For accounts of the USAD, see *African Times and Orient Express* (February 1917), p. 36, (August 1917), p. 36, and (December 1917), p. 113; Garigue, “The West African Students' Union,” *Africa* v. 23 (January 1953), p. 53; James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley, 1958), p. 203; and Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe and Africa*, trans. by Ann Keep (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 295-297.

²⁴ *African Times and Orient Express* (February 1917), p. 36 and (December 1917), p. 113.

small during its early years, but its membership jumped from only 25 West Indian and African members in 1921 to 120 by 1924. The USAD sent four delegates to the Third Pan-African Congress in London during 1923 and invited W. E. B. DuBois to visit the group, indicating the group's desire to form alliances with black intellectuals around the Atlantic.

By the mid-1920s, the USAD had become markedly more outspoken, decrying, in particular, racial discrimination and the conditions in which African students lived in the metropole. In late 1925, a letter to the editor appearing in the London-based publication *West Africa* drew attention to a speech by Mr. W. Addison delivered to the USAD on “the urgent necessity of establishing in London a hostel for students from West Africa.” Addison deployed a specific conception of respectability in his argument for the necessity and potential benefits of a hostel in London. After “personally inspecting” several establishments in an attempt to secure suitable lodgings for a new arrival from West Africa, he claimed that they were all “houses of ill-repute.” In light of this experience, Addison maintained “that accommodation should be set up somewhere in London, and set up immediately where young students from the Coast could get decent food, descent housing, and descent advice.” He insisted that the hostel should be “owned by Africans and ‘run’ by Africans who are broad-minded enough to understand that youth wants freedom within the bounds of decency.” Thus, Addison added, “there should be one large room attached for lectures or social purposes,” and “the hostel should be managed by a matron or warden.” In closing, the letter noted that “practically every speaker who took part in the subsequent debate endorsed Mr. Addison’s proposal” and suggested that “the setting up of a hostel in London *by West Africans for West Africans on a commercial basis* is one of the first things that should be done in

the New Year.”²⁵ For African students in London and educated elites in West Africa, independence from British control was a necessary condition for an African hostel to serve its moral and pedagogical purpose and not simply a practical function.

At the end of World War I, the black British politician John R. Archer established the African Progress Union (APU), which became another early vehicle for black internationalism in London. Due in part to his ties to London-based radicals, he was elected the fourteenth mayor of Battersea in 1913, making him the first black mayor in Britain, and remained a fixture in local politics in the area during the years that followed. Archer drifted further to left in the years that followed, becoming a dedicated pan-Africanist, a member of the United Irish League (a show of allegiance to his mother’s side of the family), and a major supporter of Shapurji Saklatvala, the first Communist MP in the House of Commons. Archer acted as the APU’s president from its founding in 1918 until 1921, when John Alcindor, a West Indian doctor in London, succeeded him. Both Archer and Alcindor had participated in the 1900 Pan-African Conference in London, organized by the Trinidadian barrister Henry Sylvester Williams, and the APU played an active role in both the Paris Pan-African Congress in 1919 and the London sessions of the 1921 Pan-African Congress. Other members included the journalist Robert Broadhurst from the Gold Coast, T. J. Jackson of the *Lagos Weekly Standard*, E. F. Fredericks from British Guiana, and Max Thompson, who served as chairman of the APU. After the internal shake-up that installed Alcindor as the group’s new president, Dusé Mohamed Ali assumed a more prominent position within the organization, increasingly guiding its major policy positions and goals. Circumstantial evidence suggests that he may have been involved with the USAD as well.²⁶

²⁵ “A London Hostel for West African Students,” *West Africa* (December 19, 1925), p. 1701.

²⁶ On the APU, see J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, p. 297; and Shyllon, “The Black presence and

Foreshadowing the aims of subsequent groups like the West African Students Union, the Constitution of the APU included the following goals:

2. To establish in London, England, a place as 'Home from home,' where the members of the Association may meet for social recreation and intellectual improvement; where movements may be promoted for the common welfare, and where members may receive and entertain their friends under the regulations of the Board of Management.
3. To spread by means of Papers to be read and Addresses to be given from time to time, and by means of a magazine or other publications, a knowledge of the history and achievements of Africans and Afro-Peoples past and present; and to promote the general advancement of African Peoples.²⁷

As an organization devoted to “voicing African sentiments, protecting and furthering African interests in all the four corners of the globe,” *The African Telegraph* observed that the APU “has undoubtedly supplied a long-felt want in the City of London, the heart of the British Empire.” The conviction “that only Africans or descendants of African blood can rightly and truly interpret the feelings, aspirations and idiosyncrasies of their kith and kin wherever they may be incorporated as a body politic” guided the group’s work. Employing an English colloquialism for belonging, “kith and kin,” the APU articulated a vision of racial community that transcended the soil-based, territorial divisions of imperial Britain. These arguments, which would be repeated by numerous pressure groups in Britain over the next three decades, allowed the organization to remain aloof from well-meaning allies in Britain who sought to not only assist but also influence and speak for colonials. Indeed, *The African Telegraph* asserted, “it is the African Progress Union alone which not only incorporates all these manifold activities of the sister organizations, but also breathes the thoughts of the African peoples, lives their lives, and finally hopes to lead the van in the highway of

experience in Britain,” p. 213; also Jeffrey Green, “West Indian Doctors in London: John Alcindor (1873-1924); James Jackson Brown (1882-1953),” *Journal of Caribbean History* 20, 1 (1985-1986), pp. 49-70; and “John Alcindor (1873-1924: A Migrant’s Biography,” *Immigrants and Minorities* 6, 2 (July 1987), pp. 174-189.

²⁷ “African Progress Union,” *The African Telegraph* (December 1918), p. 89.

progressive expansion.” “[T]he best guarantee for its unique position,” the piece continued, “is the fact that the members of the Union constitute the progressive units of the African race, who are in close and direct touch with and are working unanimously with the teeming millions of the great continent.” Like the USAD, the members of the APU presented themselves as the “natural leaders” of a future Africa and possessors of a privileged insight into African societies and culture, the only ones who could “solve the problem of the African sphinx.”

Although its location in the imperial metropole shaped to a large degree the perspective and goals of the APU, recent developments in West Africa also influenced the organization, and the group established informal ties to the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), the first political association to claim to represent all four of Britain’s West African colonies. The NCBWA grew out of a conference held in Accra in March 1920 at which delegates from the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Gambia called for constitutional reforms, greater commercial development, and the creation of a West African university. Plans for the conference developed alongside the peace talks at Versailles, which West African elites followed with keen interest. The philosophy of Woodrow Wilson, in particular, informed the NCBWA’s demands, and the resolutions passed at the Accra conference asserted “the right of the people to self determination.” Yet, the NCBWA also affirmed its loyalty to the British Empire and declared that the Congress’s “policy is to maintain strictly and inviolate the connection of the British West African Dependencies with the British Empire, and to maintain unreservedly all and every right of free citizenship of the Empire and the fundamental principle that taxation goes with effective representation.” The NCBWA ratified a new constitution at a second meeting that took place in Freetown in early 1923. It cited “the promotion of the common interests of the

British West African Dependencies politically, economically, educationally, socially ... and to promote and effect unity of purpose and of action among them,” as a principal aim. Under the leadership of J. Ephraim Casely Hayford and Kobina Sekyi from the Gold Coast and the Sierra Leonean Dr. H. C. Bankole-Bright, the NCBWA linked the development of closer ties between the four British West African colonies to the larger goal pan-African solidarity, inviting people of African descent from outside of the continent to participate in an unofficial capacity. As Cooper explains, the organization’s “political focus was not Nigeria, the Gold Coast, or Sierra Leone, but the cosmopolitan space that connected all of them.”²⁸

Individual members of the APU maintained contact with the NCBWA while it was still in its formative stage in 1918 and 1919 and continued to support its activities in the early 1920s. Robert Broadhurst, the secretary of the APU, acted as an unofficial liaison between the groups. He appealed to the NCBWA to assist in the creation of an affiliated West African branch of the Union and encouraged the Congress’s leaders to approach the Colonial Office through the governors of the four West African colonies and send a delegation to London. Once they arrived in London, the APU introduced the NCBWA’s representatives to delegates from South African Native Congress, the forerunner to the African National Congress, which included prominent black South African intellectuals like Sol Plaatje and Josiah Gumede. By 1924, support for the NCBWA in West Africa had begun to wane significantly, but it helped to legitimate the work of the APU, and its dream of a United West Africa provided the inspiration for the creation of the West African Students Union.

²⁸ The NCBWA also referenced approvingly the Black Star shipping line of Marcus Garvey’s UNIA. “Resolutions of the National Congress of British West Africa” and “Constitution of the National Congress of British West Africa,” in *Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa*, ed. by J. Ayo Langley (London: Rex Collings, 1979); see also Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945*; Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 25.

The British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley in 1924 became the occasion for a renewed attempt at organizing West Africans in London. In the months leading up to and during the Wembley Exhibition, Ladipo Solanke, a Yoruba law student from Nigeria and member of the USAD, gained renown amongst the community of African students and professionals in Britain, educated elites in West Africa, and British colonial officials for a series of letters published in the London-based publication *West Africa* criticizing the racist and often eroticized representations of West Africans in the British press. In “An Outrage,” Solanke decried an article in the *Evening News* of March 5, 1924, under the heading of “Cannibalism.” The latter quoted a footnote from a recent report (“Empire Making in Nigeria”) by Sir Hugh Clifford, the Governor of Nigeria, which claimed that “in parts of the Ibo country human meat was sold openly in the markets in quite recent times,” and concluded by stating:

It was only in 1900 that the British Imperial Government bought out the Royal Niger Company, a trading association of gentlemen-adventurers of London ... Since then cannibalism, slave-trading, obscure black-magic rites of almost incredible barbarity – all the cruelty and terror and the vice that uncounted centuries of barbarism had bred among the densely packed populations of huge native towns hidden in the almost impenetrable ‘bush’ have been lifted from the lives of these millions of human beings.

Solanke suggested that both the article and the Governor’s remarks were “calculated not only grossly to mislead the British public, but to do serious harm to those of us from Nigeria who are now in London for educational purposes.” “Such an implication,” he continued, “is an outrage as it places those of us from Nigeria in the eyes of the British public as cannibals. In the fairness to us, therefore, I ask you [the Editor of the *Evening News*] in the name of the hundreds of students from West Africa now in London to give equal prominence to the facts of the case.” Solanke’s criticisms linked the racism of the average Briton to official complicity in propagating an image of a savage precolonial Africa redeemed through British

rule. Criticizing the British obsession with cannibalism, he noted in Nigeria “we also have newspapers, but we do not write in them of the days of barbarity which England emerged from as being the recent history of England to prejudice our people against the British who come to our country.” As Solanke realized, the white Britons who black students and professionals living in London passed on the street and with whom they interacted in their everyday lives often perceived little difference between them and the West Africans on public exhibition at Wembley.²⁹ Solanke also criticized the timing of the Governor’s remarks, arguing that they betrayed the espoused intention of the upcoming exhibition at Wembley. “Such an article,” he insisted, “... is deeply to be deplored, as it comes before the opening of the British Empire Exhibitions to which Nigeria has contributed many thousands of pounds, and which no doubt will be visited by many Nigerians who may be looked upon as cannibals by the British public.”

For the same reasons, West Africans in London carefully scrutinized the version of Africa on display in the West Africa “village” at Wembley and portrayals of it in the British press. To many like Solanke, the danger was precisely that the average Briton believed that they experienced the real Africa at Wembley. When an article entitled “When West Africa Woos” appeared in the *Sunday Express* on May 4, 1924, it seemed to confirm their fears that the exhibition would simply reaffirm, rather than challenge, British stereotypes about African behavior and culture. In describing his trip to the West African pavilion, the author opined on the nature of amorous relations between Africans. “One of the features of Wembley,” the piece began, “is a West African village ruled by a native princess. Below she tells the story of love as it is made in Akropong.” The first half of the article took the form of an interview between the author and Princess Akesnah Baah, facilitated by the translation of an

²⁹ “An Outrage,” *West Africa*, March 22, 1924, p. 247.

“interpreter – a coloured sergeant in the blue and red uniform of his calling.” A discussion with the interlocutor himself occupied the remainder of the piece, aside from a brief description of a final encounter between the journalist, Princess Akesnah, and her husband. Sexual innuendo pervaded the text.³⁰ At Solanke’s urging the USAD immediately passed a resolution condemning “When West Africa Woos” and sent copies to the Colonial Secretary, J. H. Thomas, West African newspapers and the London-based publication *West Africa*, the Prince of Wales (the President of the Wembley exhibition), the four West African governors, and Lord Beaverbrook (the proprietor of the *Sunday Express*). The USAD articulated its criticisms in the terms of British liberalism. It cited the significant financial investment that the West African colonies contributed to the imperial spectacle at Wembley and decried printed representations of West Africans that “hold up to public ridicule citizens of countries whose money has been voted in large sums for the purpose of the exhibition.” The group asserted the right of the “West African workers” at Wembley to a private sphere secluded from public scrutiny and urged the Colonial Office to “impress on the Exhibition authorities the necessity either for keeping intact the proper privacy of West African workers

³⁰ It was precisely in the former aspect that the author recognized the difference between Britons and Africans as being most ambiguous. Though the princess and in particular her attire —“down-trodden, men’s boots,” “a section of carpet and part of a curtain”—signified African backwardness, Sergeant William Offel’s “more communicative” replies to the author’s inquiries led the latter to ask, “isn’t love devastatingly the same everywhere?” The latent ambivalence in this, no doubt sarcastic, rhetorical question played on the desire and paranoia associated with interracial sexual relations in imperial Britain. The slippage between alternate meanings of the word “amatory,” which can mean both relating to and expressing sexual love, in the author’s characterization of his exchange with the princess as an “amatory cross-examination” was productive here insofar as it played on the themes of desire and difference circulating throughout the piece. In the text’s closing vignette, Princess Akesnah reappeared, but this time her husband, “the prince,” accompanied her. “They looked at us,” the author stated, “and then whispered together. Apparently the princess was explaining my presence with some difficulty.” “Then,” he continued, “the prince walked slowly over to the sergeant and spoke to him. ‘He asks ... whether you wish to know more.’ I looked at the princess, coyly hiding her blushes with the fringe of her beloved carpet. No I did not.” The author again hints at sexual desire across racial and cultural divisions, only to reject the possibility in his abrupt penultimate statement. Of course, in this instance, the situation involves a British male journalist and the “Princess” from the Gold Coast, but it was the reverse—sexual relations between black men and British women—that remained a source of concern for both the British public and the Colonial Office. The latter, in particular, confused African students’ sexuality with the broader threat they believed sojourners might present to colonial authority as well as the means with which they sought to police both. Charles Graves, “When West Africa Woos,” *Sunday Express* (May 4, 1924), p. 7.

concerned, or for seeing that those permitted to see them in their village in the walled city are capable of the decencies of ordinary conduct.”³¹ To counter such malicious and defamatory characterizations of Africans, Solanke also delivered a series of lectures “on Egba people and their customs” at the Student Movement House at 32 Russell Square, which paralleled the Wembley Exhibition.

As the outrage of Solanke and other African students highlighted, they rarely had the luxury of separating cultural and social practices from their political activities in the metropole. Thus, social activities, domestic spaces, cultural practices, and personal relationships often became intertwined with political struggles and public disputes in print as well as a litany of competing performances and representations of blackness. African intellectuals like Solanke felt compelled to challenge representations of West Africa like those presented at Wembley and in the British press and were positioned uniquely to do so, even as they produced their own understandings of difference in their writings, activism, and quotidian practices. Solanke would later claim that the inspiration for his organizing work came from a dream.

I had a ... dream one night during which Almighty God graciously revealed to me ... my future national duties in life: that until Africans at home and abroad, including all persons of African descent, organise and develop the spirit of the principles of self-help, unity and cooperation among themselves, and fight to remove the colour bar, they would have to continue to suffer the results of colour prejudice.³²

According to Solanke, his disgust over the newspaper coverage of the West Africans at the Wembley Exhibition, which he saw as emblematic of the hubris characterizing Britons’

³¹ “Manners Makyth Empire,” *West Africa*, May 10, 1924, p. 1; “When West Africa Protests,” *West Africa*, May 17, 1924, p. 484.

³² Quoted in Philip Garigue, “The West African Students’ Union: A Study in Culture Contact,” *Africa* 23, no. 1 (January 1953), p. 56.

attitude towards blacks in general, led directly to the creation of the Nigerian Progress Union and soon thereafter the West African Students Union.³³

Solanke's protests in *West Africa* against racist depictions of Africans and the "colour bar" in Britain secured him a position at the forefront of black activism in London just two years after his arrival and precipitated gestures of solidarity. The Jamaican Amy Ashwood Garvey, co-founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and the first wife of Marcus Garvey, wrote to Solanke to express her support for his activities, and the two soon realized that their visions for reform in British West Africa had much in common. In particular, they shared a belief in the essential role of education, for women and men, as a prerequisite to political advancement and self-government in Africa. As a result, Ashwood Garvey, Solanke, and thirteen other Nigerian students launched the Nigerian Progress Union (NPU) in London in July 1924, the first Nigerian organization in Britain and a sign of the growing presence of Nigerian students. Ashwood Garvey and Solanke created the NPU, in large part, for the purpose of opening and maintaining a hostel in London not only to provide an essential service but also to serve as a site of knowledge production and an

³³ Indeed, the representation of Africans in Britain continued to be a major concern for groups like the WASU long after the Wembley Exhibition, which presented both its journal and everyday life within the Union's hostel as countervailing depictions of Africanness. For instance, *Wàsù* reproduced from the *Manchester Guardian* a question put forward by Shapurji Saklatvala, the Communist M.P. for Battersea, in the House of Commons "concerning the erection of an alleged African village at the North-East Coast Exhibition of Industry to be held in Newcastle." Saklatvala inquired "whether the Secretary to the Overseas Trade Department had received any protests from the African Students' Union in London," who viewed the display as being "calculated to bring the Negro population into contempt or ridicule." When the Secretary, Mr. Hacking, defended the plan in spite of the WASU's protests, Saklatvala shot back, "Is an exhibition of this kind helpful to British industry in any way? Does the Minister realise that though not repugnant to British visitors such an exhibition is very repugnant to the educated section of Africans, and does he realise that you are only making an exhibition of the wretched way in which citizens are living." The Union opposed the inclusion of a "native village" at the Newcastle exhibition for essentially the same reasons that Solanke criticized the Wembley Exhibition, stating that the members "strongly object as educated Africans to making a show of native life in such a way as to draw attention to the more backward side of African life," because "they think ... this is likely 'to arouse feelings of racial prejudice leading to antagonism between the black and white races.'" Furthermore, the WASU asserted, "the sufferings undergone by some natives from Africa at the Wembley Exhibition make it desirable to avoid a repetition of a similar scene." See *Wàsù* v. 2, n. 1 (January 1933), pp. 19-20.

illustration of the potential of African self-help.³⁴ Yet, as with the APU, these proposals never came to fruition under the short-lived NPU, but they prefigured the function of the hostel managed by its successor, the West African Students Union, from the 1930s.

West Africa in London

On August 7, 1925, one year after the creation of the NPU, a small group of law students from West Africa, including Solanke, established the West African Students Union (WASU). Though ostensibly an association of West African university students, the WASU adopted an expansive view of its purpose that extended well beyond the immediate concerns of African students in London. Until the 1930s, West Africans, who tended to outnumber West Indians in the few black pressure groups, represented the primary catalysts behind black internationalist activity in London. The founding members of the WASU included representatives of each of the four British colonies in West Africa, all of whom were men. Like many of the Union's subsequent activities, this reflected the influence of the NCBWA. While in London during the mid-1920s, the president and chairman of the NCBWA, Casely Hayford and Dr. Bankole-Bright, respectively, encouraged students and professionals in Britain to consolidate existing organizations like the NPU and Gold Coast Students Union into a single organization dedicated to promoting West African unity as a type of parallel organization to the faltering NCBWA. These discussions led ultimately to the creation of the

³⁴ See, for instance, Ashwood Garvey's interview in the Jamaican newspaper, *The Daily Gleaner*, in which she says, "I have started an Association in London, known as the Nigerian Progress Union, and is intended for the well-being of Nigerian students in England and the Continent ... We intend to build a hostel in London." Another interesting point in connection with this interview deserves mention. Ashwood Garvey fails to mention Solanke's role in the creation of the NPU, despite stating that "I am not working single handed" and mentioning the names of both British colonial administrators and several Nigerian elites in this regard. Unfortunately, at this point, I am unable to explain this omission. "Mrs. Marcus Garvey in Jamaica," *The Daily Gleaner* (September 25, 1924), p. 7.

WASU in 1925. Bankole-Bright was among the group's co-founders, and Caseley Hayford became its first "patron."³⁵

Under Solanke's leadership as its secretary general, the WASU served as a port of call for Africans in London and the most important pressure group devoted to African issues over the next three decades. In the years that followed, many prominent Nigerian intellectuals like Julius Ojo-Cole, H. O. Davies, Louis Mbanefo, Kola Balogun, F. A. Ogunshye, and Okoi Arikpo passed through the WASU.³⁶ Africans in London experienced firsthand the damaging impact that racial caricatures in the British press could have on their daily interactions with Britons and the potential for reform in Britain's West African colonies. Thus, two of the eight original "aims and objects" of the WASU were "to act as a centre for research on all subjects appertaining to Africa and its developments" and "to present to the world a true picture of African life and philosophy, thereby making a definitely African contribution towards the progress of civilisation."³⁷ The WASU created a space for alternately criticizing and appropriating the discourses and practices of British imperialism, while projecting an image of the educated African as at once the embodiment of British civilization and African cultural specificity.

From the start, the Union used its position in London to decry the abuses of colonial rule and publicize those struggling against them in the colonies at a time when government repression made it increasingly difficult to do so outside of the metropole. In 1927, the WASU published a speech given to its members by Dr. Bankole-Bright, then a member of the Legislative Council in Sierra Leone, in the form of a pamphlet entitled "The Maladministration of British Justice in the Courts of Sierra Leone (The Assessors'

³⁵ Olusanya, *The West African Students' Union and the Politics of Decolonisation*, p. 4-10.

³⁶ Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, p. 96.

³⁷ *West Africa* (August 15, 1925), p. 1002.

Ordinance).” The inside cover of the publication featured a photograph of the speaker in profile, dressed in a fashionable double-breasted suit with a cigar dangling from his mouth. In his remarks, Bankole-Bright identified a Sierra Leonean legal tradition dating from the precolonial period and continuing under British rule up to the late nineteenth century. “The criminal procedure in this country [Britain] was rigidly and rightly observed in Sierra Leone in that a prisoner must be [judged] by his peers.” However, the recent passage of the Assessor’s Ordinance, he argued, “by which a Judge has the right to over-ride the decision of the Assessors,” betrayed this central tenet of British justice.³⁸ Bankole-Bright and the WASU viewed the Assessor’s Ordinance and similar legislation as instruments directed primarily at the African intelligentsia. “Is it the Assessor’s Ordinance which is an invidious instrument and is more often than not set in motion against educated Africans? That Law is an instrument of invidious distinction. It is a Law which has been made an instrument of revenge, persecution and spite.”³⁹ In an inversion of British imperialist discourse, a central aspect of which was liberation from bondage and savagery, Bankole-Bright drew attention to the increasing prevalence of discrimination and autocracy in the colonies.

Yet, Bankole-Bright’s remarks became a source of anxiety for the Governor of Sierra Leone and the Colonial Office largely because of where he made them and how they were circulated subsequently—in other words, because they came in a speech given to the WASU in London which was published by the Union and covered in the London-based journals *West Africa* and *Truth*. The pamphlet particularly outraged Sir Gilbert Purcell, the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone, whose actions had been cited specifically by Bankole-Bright. Purcell called upon the Secretary of State for the Colonies to silence Solanke and the Union, who,

³⁸ Dr. H. C. Bankole-Bright, “The Maladministration of British Justice in the Courts of Sierra Leone (The Assessors’ Ordinance)” [hereafter, “Assessor’s Ordinance”], p. 3-5, in CO 267/622/5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

he maintained, were engaged in a slanderous campaign against him. “In view of the part Mr. Ladipo Solanke ... has played in this matter and more especially ... the Foreword he has attached to this pamphlet in which ... he speaks of ‘a class of educated criminals wrongfully and spitefully convicted,’” Purcell wondered “whether this particular matter should not be laid before the Law Officers of the Crown with a view to this man being prosecuted for libel.” This course of action, he suggested, “would go a long way to terminate this campaign of lies and misrepresentation which has been launched with such activity and ingenuity.”⁴⁰

Officials in the Colonial Office remained divided between those who thought Purcell should assume a posture of “dignified silence” in the face of the charges and others who argued that accusations were too dangerous to refrain from challenging them. One official who held the latter view argued, “The whole tendency of the pamphlet appears to me to be too poisonous for mere silent contempt,” because it had been circulated widely in West Africa and mentioned in articles in *West Africa* and *Truth*.⁴¹ In the years after this incident, agents of the imperial state increasingly, if only begrudgingly, engaged in a dialogue, however uneven and paternalistic, with the WASU, especially Solanke. This was implicitly a capitulation to the members’ view of themselves as representatives, even leaders, of those back home in the colonies. It also illustrated British officials’ awareness of the heightened costs of anticolonial protest in the metropole.

Indeed, Bankole-Bright urged Africans residing or studying in Britain to participate actively in organizations like the WASU. He entreated them to “Cry aloud in this Metropolis” and foster ties with sympathetic Britons, while maintaining an appearance of gentlemanly repose. “Make as many friends as you can and when you have proved

⁴⁰ Letter from G. K. I. Purcell, Chief Justice of Sierra Leone, to Byrne, Governor of Sierra Leone, dated 19 November 1927, p. 3, in CO 267/622/5.

⁴¹ Internal CO correspondence, dated 17 December 1927, in CO 267/622/5.

yourselves gentlemen you would be able to enlist sympathy when serious problems arise ... Instead of allowing yourselves to be found in questionable quarters make the homes of respectable people your habitat whereby you could do some propaganda work in your leisure hours.” Like the NCBWA, he demanded the full rights of imperial citizenship, not a severing of ties with Britain. He told the Union, “your safety lies in the British nation, but whilst I hope and pray that West Africa will ever remain an integral part of the British Empire we must persist and insist on having the rights of true citizenship.”⁴² Bankole-Bright mobilized the universalizing ideals of citizenship and juridical liberalism to argue for inclusion within the British Empire on more equitable terms in a manner characteristic of the WASU during the interwar years.

Although the Union’s co-founder consisted exclusively of men, West African women came to fill vital roles in the organization, at times pushing it in new and more critical directions. Often proscribed from its political and ostensibly masculine pursuits, female members of the WASU formed the group’s “social committee” and organized, among other events, the regular dances and musical performances held at the hostel. However, the breadth of women’s activities within the Union complicates the apparent neatness of these divisions, and several contributed to its journal, *Wàsù (Preach)*. Gender and particularly the treatment of women in African societies figured heavily in the discussions over and defenses of “traditional” African practices and cultures within the Union, in print as well as public lectures and debates. The centrality of the woman question to British imperial discourse lent them a certain wiggle room, albeit one based on the assertion of gender difference, within the male-dominated organization.

An early issue of *Wàsù* from 1928 included a piece entitled “Great Britain and the

⁴² “Assessor’s Ordinance,” p. 24, in CO 267/622/5.

Negro Race: A Moral Responsibility” and signed simply “Ade,”⁴³ which was characteristic of both the Union’s tendency to criticize British imperialism in gendered terms and its stance on the position of women in West Africa. “Europe and America,” the author argued, “built up their prosperity and developed their civilization at the expense of Africa and European nations assumed the guardianship of the African peoples. For good or for evil Great Britain has in her custody to-day a large part of Africa.” “Paradoxical as it may seem,” Ade continued, “Great Britain—the apostle of liberty and international champion of the cause of humanity—suffers within its own empire capitalism and misguided imperialism, the modern form of slavery, to sap the virility of her wards.” Ade deftly employed the familial analogy for the British Empire, which, as he alluded, borrowed from the evangelical abolitionist tradition in England, positing a relation between the maternal, if perhaps inadequately so, figure of the colonial power and its male subjects or “wards.” The problem with British imperialism was, in short, its negative effects on African masculine virility, and the goals of reform and the project of a nascent Africa lay in fostering or rebuilding African manhood.

Here, Ade erased African women from the colonial situation, but later he devoted considerable attention to gender roles within African societies. “The sphere of the woman is the home. The sphere of the man is outside. The man hunts, does heavy farming, wages war, and talks *palaver* (the word is Portuguese), provides himself and family a home. The woman cultivates rice or vegetables for pin money, makes pottery, cooks, attends to household work, and looks after the children. African women are not downtrodden. Native custom gives them a high place.” To support these claims, he cited Mary Kingsley’s anthropological work on West Africa. “African woman ... is highly important and superior to her sisters in the civilized countries, even at places where quasi full concessions have been made through

⁴³ The piece was most likely written by A. Ade Ademola, who was a member of the WASU at the time.

the efforts of suffrage movements ... A woman can be chief, captain in time of war, diplomat, a councilor, or jurist. The late Mary Kingsley, a great English traveller and writer, has given to West Africa a true account which gives credit to our perfect social system.”⁴⁴

Responding to imperialist caricatures of the debased African woman, members of the WASU often represented and valorized African cultures through representations of the gendered social practices. Yet, although Ade sought to favorably compare the status of women in traditional African societies with that of their “sisters in the civilized countries,” his elaboration of gender difference, like that articulated within the Union overall, represented African gender norms in terms consistent with the Victorian doctrine of separate spheres for the sexes.

Public ruminations on gender and imperialism left the door open for women within the WASU to enter the dialogue, if only in a highly circumscribed manner. Ms. Efwia Kato’s article, “What We Women Can Do,” in the March 1934 issue of *Wāsi* offers an excellent example of how women used a gendered forum (occasions in which they were invited to speak *as* women) to convey arguments for more opportunities for women in the British West African colonies as well as an expansion of women’s role in the cultural and intellectual project of black internationalism. Though Kato devotes the bulk of her piece to women’s roles as wives and mothers, she concluded by asking, “Are there not other spheres in which woman can [wield] her influence?” She continued:

[The intelligent woman] need not believe in hocus-pocus which passes muster as religion before undertaking the task of enlightening her less favoured sisters ... If she is a woman of means, she might become the Mary Kingsley of Africa to interpret the motherland to the world ... Or is she interested in politics? In that case, she may become our Emmeline Pankhurst, the leading spirit of the Suffragette movement in Africa.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Wāsi* n. 6 and 7 (August 1928), p. 17, 20.

⁴⁵ *Wāsi* v. 3, n. 1 (March 1934), p. 13-4.

Kato's demand that West African women assert their influence in "other spheres" simultaneously employed and exceeded the terms of contemporary debates, particularly those regarding the "problem of women" in a renascent Africa. Kato's reference to the "task of enlightening her less favoured sisters" contains overtones of racial uplift ideology. This is an argument to which educated, middle-class Africans alone had recourse, but what is perhaps most interesting about Kato's use of this distinctly class inflected discourse is how she disassociated it from any religious content. In challenging the strong association of respectability and civilization with Christian conversion (and without simply valorizing African "tradition"), Kato asserted the necessity of women's incursions into the male-dominated spheres of politics and scholarship.

In contrast to Ade, Kato introduced the work of Mary Kingsley to legitimate West African women's inclusion in the task of representing Africa to the world.⁴⁶ Though somewhat at odds with her reference to Kingsley, who opposed women's suffrage, Kato used the example of Emmeline Pankhurst and the suffragist movement in Britain to challenge the mutual investment in male-privilege of elite African men and the colonial state, which effectively excluded women from the practice of British rule and politics in British West Africa. Yet, in citing Emmeline Pankhurst, she linked her remarks to a particular strain of English feminism. Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst represented the liberal feminist tradition—associated not only with the movement for the vote but also the National

⁴⁶ Kingsley's cultural relativism injected a limited reformist spirit into Colonial Office thinking on West Africa, but it also helped to provide an intellectual basis for Lugardian "indirect rule" and mapped a racial taxonomy onto an historicist teleology. She compared the indigenous societies of West Africa to Europe in the thirteenth century. See Paul Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), esp. Ch. 2, "Mary Kingsley and the emergence of cultural relativism"; also Cheryl McEwan, "Encounters with West African Women: Textual Representations of Difference by White Women Abroad," *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*, Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, eds. (New York: Guilford Press, 1994), pp. 73-101, and Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 150.

Vigilance Association's campaigns against sexual vice and "foreign entertainments"—and were outspokenly patriotic and pro-Empire during World War I.⁴⁷ If, for instance, Kato had noted the activism of Sylvia Pankhurst, an anti-imperialist socialist who was critical of Emmeline's position on the war, the connotations would have been dramatically different. Kato's intervention within the pages of *Wàsù* enacted a feminist *and* black internationalism that resisted asserting the primacy of either. At the same time, however, she expressed allegiance to empire and socially (and sexually) conservative ideals.

If Kato's "What Women Can Do" was exceptional within *Wàsù*, women, nonetheless, played a vital role within the Union, particularly in expanding its social and cultural programs. The founding members of the WASU included representatives of all four British West African colonies but were all men. By the mid-1930s, however, West African women, including many of the first African women to earn professional degrees in Britain, assumed a prominent position in the Union. Stella Thomas was active in the WASU in the early 1930s and a founding member of the LCP. In 1933, Thomas became the first African woman to be called to the bar in Britain. *Wàsù* lauded her as an epitome of a renascent West Africa.⁴⁸ "We are pleased to avail ourselves of the privilege to publish here the first female Ogboni Agba, in the person of Miss Stella Jane Thomas, a law student of the Middle Temple, who recently passed her final Bar examination. Miss Thomas is to be the first lady barrister-at-law in the whole of West Africa. In the spirit and letter of the W.A.S.U. doctrine

⁴⁷ See Nicolletta F. Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (London, 2002); Jacqueline de Vries, "Gendering Patriotism: Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst and World War One," in Sybil Oldfield, ed., *The Working-Day World: Women's Lives and Culture(s) in Britain, 1914-1915* (London, 1994), pp. 75-89; and Susan K. Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, NJ, 1993).

⁴⁸ Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie, and Suzanne Scafe, *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (London: Virago, 1985), p. 135; *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* no. 24 (September 1941), p. 135.

of unity and co-operation, Miss Thomas hails from Nigeria, Gold Coast and Sierra Leone.”⁴⁹

She was among a small group of West African students who attended an address by Margery Perham at the Royal Society of Arts on March 24, 1934, and the only African woman who participated in the subsequent discussion. In her remarks, which were published subsequently in the Society’s journal alongside those of other participants like Lord Lugard, the Africanist William Macmillan, the anthropologist C. K. Meek, and former colonial officials like McGregor Ross, Thomas criticized Lugardian indirect rule for “making puppets of African chiefs” and argued, “there must be real co-operation and real understanding.” “At present,” she continued, “the British were dictating to them, and the Africans had to do what they were told.” Moreover, she rejected the suggestion that deploying more British anthropologists to West Africa would improve relations between colonial subjects and the government. Instead, she maintained, West Africans “wanted sound education, to be able to understand and the express themselves as they would like to.” Then, “they would be in a position, when they were given self-government, to look after their own institutions and to judge for themselves the merits of those institutions.”⁵⁰ Soon after this event, Thomas left London for the Gold Coast, where she became the first African woman lawyer. The Nigerian Kofoworola Aina Moore (later Lady Ademola) was also active in the WASU during the mid-1930s. In 1935, she became the first African woman to graduate from Oxford University. Against the urging of lawyer father that she follow in his footsteps, Moore ultimately decided to pursue teaching based on her conviction that, as she explained in her

⁴⁹ Up to this point, the journal translated the phrase “Ogboni Agba” as “men of exceptional value,” under which heading it regularly listed the recent achievements of West Africans in Britain. Thereafter, the translation was changed to “persons of exceptional ability.” *Wāsh* v. 2, n. 2 (April – June 1933), p. 5; see also *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* no. 25 (October 1941), p. 10; “West African Lady Barrister Called to the Bar,” *Nigerian Daily Telegraph* (11 May 1933), p. 1; “Stella Thomas and African Progress,” *West African Pilot* (24 September 1943); and “100 Years of the Legal Profession in Nigeria. Stella J. Marke (née Thomas),” *Daily Times* (2 March 1986).

⁵⁰ Reprinted in Margery Perham, *Colonial Sequence, 1930-1949* (London: Methuen, 1967) p. 109-110.

autobiography, education was essential “to the development of ... the ‘sense of the modern world in all its intricacies,’ with which we are by natural force of circumstances to come into contact.”⁵¹

Women supplied important organizational labor for the Union, at times filling the posts of librarian or treasurer, but their small numbers and the patriarchal posture of the WASU combined to substantially delimit their influence in the group. Yet, women were instrumental in spreading the organization’s message beyond London and mobilizing support for its activities in West Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States. The work and travels of Beatrice Vigo, the wife of the vice president of the WASU branch in Zaria, Nigeria, Arthur Vigo, were exceptional in this regard. Vigo acted as the WASU’s representative in the United States during the early 1930s before traveling through the British West Indies and London on your way back to Nigeria. As *Wàsù* noted, she “created in America a large number of subscribers for our ‘W.A.S.U.’ Magazine as well as supporters for our W.A.S.U. organisation” and “promised to do all she could to fan into flame the fire of enthusiasm in our people in Africa ... for the purpose of securing and increasing their moral and financial support of the hostel.” Under the pretext of serving the WASU, Vigo pursued her own feminist agenda, situating her own “plan for the promotion of the status” of women in West Africa within the larger spectrum of the Union’s activities.⁵² Likewise, after completing their courses of study, Esther Ibidun Doherty, who served on the WASU’s executive committee and as its librarian, Mrs. Theodora Obafunmilayo Manuwa, Ayo George, Jumoke Cole, Folasade Agbebi, and Kofoworola Moore returned to West Africa

⁵¹ Moore was the first African woman to write her autobiography. See Kofoworola Aina Moore (now Lady Ademola), “The Story of Kofoworola Aina Moore, of the Yoruba Tribe, Nigeria,” *Ten Africans*, Margery Perham, ed., (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971, originally 1963), p. 323-343; also Denzer, “Yoruba Women,” p. 21, 26.

⁵² “The W.A.S.U. at Work,” *Wàsù* v. 4, n. 1 (July 1935), p. 9.

with “high ambitions” for expanding the membership of local branches of the Union and organizing women both within and beyond the framework of the organization.⁵³

Through their labors and particularly their fund-raising activities, women sojourners not only shifted the tenor and direction of WASU’s initiatives, but also sustained the organization through its recurring financial difficulties. From the summer of 1935, women in the WASU organized and hosted regular socials and dances at its hostel. “Over fifty, irrespective of class, colour or creed, attended” the first of these. “The programme,” *Wàsù* reported, “was rich and extensive, comprising European and African dances and solos rendered by several West-end artistes.”⁵⁴ The women who organized the event included Victoria Omolara Bucknor, Irene Howe, Mrs. G. Nigretti, Remi Ademola, and Olu Obisanya, Solanke’s future wife who also served as matron of the WASU hostel and ran its restaurant.⁵⁵ The social’s popularity led the WASU women to form a permanent socials committee, which held Saturday-night dances on a weekly basis. A diverse mix of “merry-makers” mingled and danced to gramophone records, but the socials often involved dance and music performances by members and professional artists as well. Besides entertainment, the WASU offered a buffet of “tasty refreshments and other delicacies” prepared by Howe. The Union’s socials and dances, which became “the most popular of all our present W.A.S.U. activities in London,” drew a diverse crowd and, the Union claimed, “afforded one of the best means of getting ... in contact with the members of other nationalities in

⁵³ See *Wàsù* v. 4, n. 2 (August 1935), p. 29; v. 4, n. 4 (October 1935), p. 60; v. 6, n. 2 (Coronation Number, 1937), p. 27.

⁵⁴ The artists and musicians present included “Arthur G. E. Barrett, Esq., L.R.A.M. (piano, organ, violin, etc. teacher), Señor Freederka (a famous Spanish dancer), Mr. Halford (pianist), and Mr. G. Biney (entertainer).” Originally, the Union had intended to end the event at 11 p.m., “but owing to its exceptional success the time was extended to 1 a.m. at the request of all present.” “The W.A.S.U. at Work and at Play,” *Wàsù* v. 4, n. 2 (August 1935), p. 31

⁵⁵ When Bucknor returned to Nigeria in late 1935, the WASU held a farewell party to honor her contributions to the group and “commissioned” her “to do all she could in co-operating with the local W.A.S.U. Branch in Lagos, especially in the task of strengthening the Ladies’ Section.” See “News and Notes,” *Wàsù* v. 4, n. 5 (November 1935), p. 76.

London.” The Social Committee’s success, Ladipo Solanke asserted, “clearly adds evidence that no real progress may be expected in any organisation or group without the women taking their proper share in its movement.”⁵⁶

This small group of women—augmented by new arrivals from West Africa in the mid-1930s like Tinuade Adefolu, Adenrele Ademola, daughter of Alaiyeluwa Ademola II, the Alake of the Egbas, and Titilola Folarin, daughter of the prominent barrister Adebesein Folarin—used the WASU socials to carve out a semi-autonomous space for themselves within organization and created “an appreciating source of income to the Union’s revenue.”⁵⁷ Ademola and Folarin also served as the Union’s Treasurer in 1935 and 1937, respectively. The regular WASU socials and dances became the most consistent and widely known of the Union’s activities and helped create an experiential basis for black internationalist solidarity and interracial cooperation.

The WASU women did not limit their activities to organizing the Union’s socials; rather, many embraced the role of crusading cultural workers with distinct but complementary interests within the WASU’s larger mission. In 1935, Folarin, a Yoruba from Nigeria, described a new attitude to fashion among her “WASU lady colleagues” and the logic behind it. Folarin and her peers undertook “systematic refinement to modernise our present style to induce our educated girls and others to have more love and respect for their own native dress culture.” “I therefore hope,” Folarin explained, “that our girls in West Africa will now begin to realise that the time has come when we should not only respect but

⁵⁶ For example, those who attended the Union’s social on September 14, 1935 included several prominent West Indians like the famous cricketer Learie Constantine, his wife Norma Constantine, and H. O. Beresford Wooding, a barrister and the first new West Indian member of the WASU since 1926. *Wāsh* v. 4, n. 4 (October 1935), p. 66-67.

⁵⁷ “W.A.S.U. at Work and at Play,” *Ibid.*, p. 73-74; see also *West Africa* (March 6, 1937), p. 253, and Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), p. 86, fn 56.

also improve our own culture, whether it be in the line of dress or otherwise.” Folarin called for a conscious modernization of their “native dress,” but she also noted that the presence of West African women on the streets of the West End wearing these clothes made a dramatic impact, provoking attempts at imitation.

I remember one particular occasion when I and my other W.A.S.U. lady colleagues put on our native costumes and went as far as Piccadilly Circus. Many of our English friends who saw us expressed their pleasure and satisfaction at the show; but what struck me most was this, that about a week after whilst passing through Regent Street in the West End of London, we discovered in some of the show windows a certain number of ladies’ hats, almost exactly in the same style and shape of how we tied up our ‘Gele’ on the day we passed through that district a week before.⁵⁸

Folarin’s suggestive anecdote painted London as an eminently imperial space in which colonial women not only engaged in deliberate self-fashion but also influenced metropolitan culture in a variety of ways.

West African women like Betty Vanderpuye (Gold Coast), Ena Maxwell (Sierra Leone), Tom Agbebi (Nigeria), Ebun Moore (Nigeria), and Mrs. Solanke continued to direct the activities of the Union’s social committee in the late 1930s, but their actions were increasingly under the oversight of male members. Moreover, women remained excluded from the top positions on the WASU’s executive committee until the war years, and then most found themselves isolated, their opinions marginalized or simply ignored. At best, most West African men reaffirmed the necessity of a hierarchical division of the sexes and posited women as the yardstick of, if not a fetter on, race consciousness and African development. For example, amidst the above references to the women’s diverse activities in the Union, *Wāṣū* featured an article on “Education of Women and Employment in Africa” by Anthony Abiodun. “It appears,” Abiodun began, “that in our ancient customary law, division of

⁵⁸ Titilola Folarin, “Our Native Dress,” *Wāṣū* v. 5, Christmas Number (1936), p. 56.

labour was at the root principle of the African idea of what the employment of men and women should be in the community. The African appears to have laid down as the first axiom of his philosophy on this question that women are fundamentally different from, if not inferior to, men in matters physical, emotional and intellectual.” Thus, he suggested, “the women’s share in the output of the aggregate labour in the community must be regulated as regards quantity and quality, in conformity with these differences.” For Abiodun, the division of labor between the sexes was not only the “first axiom” of African culture; it also represented the key to economic harmony and the development of Africa’s productive capacity. “The education of the women of any community,” he argued, “should be that which will ultimately equip those women with such resources as should enable them to fulfill their respective obligations to the members of their community.” To maximize the utility of women, their education had to reflect and institutionalize gender difference. “The first main item in the programme of the education of African women,” Abiodun suggested, “should be general, literary attainment. No restriction of any sort should be placed, nor any line of demarcation drawn between the quantity and quality of education given to both sexes in this branch of study.” “When one considers next the question of illiteracy in Nigeria as evidenced by official statistics,” he continued, “the suggestion, that at present a large number of Nigerian girls sent to this country should be trained as qualified teachers to return to take up teaching profession, is far more advantageous to the general and sound progress of the indigenous community in Nigeria than to train them as lawyers, clerks, doctors and such like.” Likewise, “the sparseness in the population of every country in African” required “that education of the women ... should be mainly devoted towards making them fit and capable future mothers of a future virile people” and “aim at enabling them to acquire and build up strong and happy homes directly for their families and indirectly for the community as a

whole.”

Whereas West African men, Abiodun argued, necessarily pursued advanced degrees to prepare themselves to assume their natural position at the forefront of the incipient African renaissance, he maintained that women’s education should be limited largely to vocational and industrial training to maintain the “social and economic order of things.” “When one remembers ... that the various indigenous peoples of Africa, particularly West Africa, are still mainly agricultural, and that in ancient times the African customary law enjoined upon the women to take a great part in the agricultural work of the community,” he wrote, “it should not be unreasonable to suggest that a good deal of the education of the women should be of agricultural in nature to enable them to resume their place in the correct social and economic order of things in their community.” This approach to the education of African women had several important merits for Abiodun. Since “Africa is already rich in raw agricultural products,” vocational schools would enable women to convert “a good deal of these raw materials into real wealth for the community.” Moreover, by limiting women to “lighter forms of factory and farm work” and creating schools that would produce “competent clerks, secretaries, seamstresses, housekeepers and typists,” women could be engaged productively to the betterment of the community as a whole “without coming into clash with our men.” “In view of the fact that these trades do not require deep intellectual exertion,” Abiodun averred, “posts in these trades should always be reserved in the first place for our women.” Finally, if development proceeded on this basis, African women would “not actually become ‘detribalised’ in so far as their ancient customary position in this question is concerned.”⁵⁹ Abiodun’s arguments placed many women who

⁵⁹ Anthony Abiodun, “Education of Women and Employment in Africa,” *Wàṣù* v. 5, Christmas Number (1936), p. 57-59.

were active in the WASU beyond the pale of African culture and “customary” practices, rendering them “detrified” and in abeyance with regard to African development. Though some of the most strident voices in the group, the activities of West African women in the metropole were often in tension with views espoused by their male counterparts like Abiodun, whose perspective was more symptomatic of the Union’s public posture.

Dr. Harold A. Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples

In the years following World War I, racism, if anything, became more pronounced in both Britain and the colonies. Though still a small and predominantly male minority, there were more West Indians and Africans in the metropole than ever before, particularly in London. At the same time, the numbers of university students from the Caribbean and Africa grew steadily, and while the majority returned home after earning their degrees, some remained in Britain to build lives and careers in the professions. If they became doctors or lawyers, as most did, discrimination in their fields often forced them into private practice. During the late 1920s, reports of people of African descent being denied service at hotels, restaurants, and clubs in Britain increased, drawing attention to the *de facto* (if not *de jure*) “colour bar” operating not only in the colonies but also the metropole. In 1929, a report in *The Times* regarding an incident in which London’s Savoy Grill refused to serve the African American entertainer Paul Robeson caused a minor scandal, but for most black sojourners and residents in interwar Britain this type of story was all too familiar.⁶⁰ In 1931, the New Mansion Hotel in Lancaster Gate refused accommodations to O. A. Alakija, an Oxford graduate from Nigeria and later president of the WASU, despite a preexisting contact

⁶⁰ Martin B. Duberman, *Paul Robeson: A Biography* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), p. 123-124.

guaranteeing him a room for a period of ten months.⁶¹ The Joint Council to Promote Understanding between White and Coloured People in Great Britain found in 1933 that “London hotels are quite prepared to receive coloured visitors from the East as guests either to sleep or take meals but ... in the present state of public opinion ... did not feel able to receive persons of Negroid race.”⁶² Thus, a harsh reality greeted new arrivals from the Caribbean and Africa, which was exacerbated by the enormous disconnect between their idealized vision of the “mother country” as the home of fair play, meritocracy, and gentlemanliness—the land of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron—and the ignorance and racism which characterized most Britons’ attitude towards them, from the highest echelons of government to the neighborhood pub.

In the early 1930s, the interracial League of Coloured Peoples (LCP) joined the WASU as another organization devoted to colonial issues and the concerns of people of African descent in Britain. The Jamaican physician Dr. Harold Arundel Moody, who came to England from the island in 1904 and presided over the LCP for nearly fifteen years from its founding in 1931, emerged from the start as its leading voice and controlling patriarch, even running the group from his home and medical office for most of its existence. Like many West Indians and Africans, his brushes with racism in Britain radically transformed both his self-conception and his understanding of the relation between racial identity and Britishness. Moody’s intellectual and political trajectory illustrates the psychological and political transformation that often accompanied Africans and West Indians’ passage across the

⁶¹ A. Ade Ademola, “Colour Bar Noterity in Britain,” *Negro Anthology*, ed. by Nancy Cunard (London, 1934), p. 556-557; see also Cunard, “Colour Bar,” and “Race Prejudice in England” (reprinted from *The Negro Worker*, March 1932) in *ibid.*, p. 551-555.

⁶² Indeed, in late 1940s, Kenneth Little reported that roughly 40% of a random sample of private families, guest houses, and lodging house proprietors “showed a definite objection ... to accepting coloured students in their homes and houses.” Moreover, he suggested that the evidence indicated “some slightly greater aversion to persons of Negroid stock than any other.” The Joint Council was founded in 1931 like the LCP, and Dr. Moody participated in it as well. Winifred Holtby Papers, 4/21, “Joint Council Annual Report,” May 1, 1933, p. 3-4. Kenneth Little, *Negroes in Britain* (London, 1947), p. 278-279.

physical distance separating colony from metropole. By the 1930s, he came to identify with both others of African descent and a colorblind conception of imperial citizenship. Though often disparaged by racist British officials and more radical black activists alike in his own time and largely overlooked in the historiography on pan-Africanism, he made a significant contribution to development of black internationalism in London, especially through the activities of the LCP.⁶³ Moreover, as David Killingray points out, Moody likely addressed more white Britons than any of his contemporaries.⁶⁴

Moody later admitted that his perception of Africa and his African ancestors reflected the racism prevalent in Jamaican society when he left for the metropole at the age of twenty-two. After years of exposure to racial prejudice in Britain, however, he became convinced of its injustice and the responsibility of those like himself to fight the color bar wherever it appeared. As he explained:

I had been educated away from my heritage and towards the country which I had learnt to call 'home'. My desire then was to have as little as possible to do with my own people and upon Africans I looked down as a species too low in the rank of human development for me in any way to associate with. I was black indeed but I was not African, nor was I in any way related to Africa. To what family of man I belonged I really did not know. At heart I really believed I was English.⁶⁵

Moody does not appear to have joined any of the few existing black associations while in medical school during the war or following his graduation in 1919, but he addressed the USAD at a function in London during December 1927.⁶⁶ The speech, a reference to which

⁶³ The two main exceptions to this tendency are Roderick J. Macdonald, "Dr. Harold Arundel Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-1947: A Retrospective View," *Race* XIV, 3 (1973): p. 291-307 and David Killingray, "'To do something for the race': Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples," in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, p. 51-70; see also St. Clair Drake, "Value system, social structure and race relations in the British Isles," unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Chicago, 1954.

⁶⁴ Killingray, "'To do something for the race,'" p. 60.

⁶⁵ Moody, "The story of my life" (unpublished manuscript, early 1940s), quoted in Killingray, "'To Do Something for the Race,'" p. 54.

⁶⁶ Moody did, however, speak at a USAD function in London in December 1927. Killingray, "'To do something for the race,'" p. 60-61.

appeared in *West Africa*, focused on the problems to which he would devote the remainder of his life—racial prejudice and self-determination for the West Indies and Africa.⁶⁷

Although Moody began to identify much more strongly with people of African descent around the world after his arrival in Britain, he continued to emphasize the necessity of interracial cooperation throughout his life. His religiosity, first developed in his youth in Jamaica, continued to guide him throughout his life and formed the basis of the Christian humanism that underlay his reformist politics. Though his mother had little formal education herself, Moody recalled how she stressed the importance of education and instilled in him a strong sense of duty. He settled in London, in part, to help his younger brothers through King's College: Ludlow Moody, whose first wife Vera was Norman Manley's sister, returned to Jamaica and became the government bacteriologist, while Ronald Moody worked briefly as a dentist before becoming a professional sculptor.⁶⁸ Moody converted to Congregationalism in his school days and remained active in the church throughout his life, giving sermons nearly every Sunday and serving as chairman of the London Missionary Society in 1943. The nonconformist tradition's emphasis on redemption for all through Christ dovetailed with his message of inclusiveness, peace, and interracial cooperation in a colorblind society. Throughout his life, Moody's universalistic humanism underlay his condemnation of all manifestations of racial discrimination and violence. Christian universalism became the basis for his commitment to pacifism and the means through which he reconciled his allegiance to the (reformed) British Empire with his commitment to black internationalism.

⁶⁷ *West Africa* (December 17, 1927).

⁶⁸ Ronald Moody held exhibitions in Paris, coverage of which appeared in the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, and was later involved with Caribbean Arts Movement. Killingray, "'To do something for the race,'" p. 68, fn 7.

Moody's medical training also informed his political and ethical convictions. Not only did he use his scientific knowledge to counter popular ideas about racial inferiority, he often employed medical terms in his writings, speeches, and sermons, describing racism, for example, as the "infection in the blood stream" that threatened the future stability of the British Empire.⁶⁹ Moody's professional standing as a medical doctor also contributed to his self-identification as an intellectual and exemplary representative of his race. In C. L. R. James' "autosociography," *Beyond a Boundary*, he describes the allure as well as the allusiveness of educational opportunities in Britain for aspiring male students in the West Indies.

Every year the two schools competed for three island scholarships worth 600 [pounds] each. With one of these a boy could study law or medicine and return to the island with a profession and therefore independence. There were at that time few other roads to independence for a black man who started without means. The higher posts in the Government, in engineering and other scientific professions were monopolized by white people, and, as practically all big business was also in their hands, the coloured people were, as a rule, limited to lower posts. Thus law and medicine were the only ways out.⁷⁰

Like many of his contemporaries from the West Indies and Africa in London, Moody carried himself as a black professional in London. As officials in the Colonial Office recognized, the respect and authority that accrued from his standing as a medical practitioner and an upstanding Christian lent considerable weight to his arguments and appeals.

In 1931, amid mounting examples of the color bar, Moody along with several other black professionals, the former member of the Legislative Council in Kenya R. S. Nehra, a group of British intellectuals and feminists, and the Friends Society moved to create an

⁶⁹ As Killingray notes, while "speaking in Wolverhampton in October 1929 he declared that Africa was the cradle of humanity and that 'examined scientifically, anatomically, or physiologically, there is nothing in the organic make-up of coloured people that implies inferiority.'" Quoted in Killingray, "To do something for the race," p. 58.

⁷⁰ James, *Beyond a Boundary*, p. 22.

organization expressly devoted to easing racial tensions and fighting the racism pervading British society. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the United States became a model for Moody's vision for the new organization due largely to the presence of the Harvard-educated, African-American historian from Howard University Dr. Charles Wesley, who was in London on a Guggenheim fellowship. A series of Y.M.C.A.-sponsored functions at which both Wesley and Moody spoke in early 1931 provided an opportunity to organize support for the proposed League of Coloured Peoples and elucidate its goals. From the start, Moody had an expansive understanding of the League's purpose. Describing his responsibilities as president, Moody outlined his ambitious plans for the new organization. He stated that the position would require him to "make representations to government authorities, hospital managements, medical faculties, commercial concerns, factory proprietors, hotel and boarding house keepers and a host of others, not only in his own name and on the basis of his own status and reputation, but in the name of all the coloured peoples in Britain."⁷¹

In June 1931, Moody presided over a meeting at Memorial Hall in London attended by colonial students, well-wishers like Paul Robeson, representatives of British missionary organizations, and sympathetic politicians like Ellen Wilkinson MP that officially launched the League. As Roderick Macdonald states, the LCP represented "the first conscious and deliberate attempt to form a multiracial organization, led by blacks, although with a membership that for its first ten years included a large proportion of whites."⁷² Yet, the League also claimed to be the only organization in London devoted giving a voice to all

⁷¹ David A. Vaughan, *Negro Victory* (London, Independent Press, 1950), p. 55. This is the only existing biography of Harold Moody, which was written shortly after his death by his longtime friend and minister at the Camberwell Green Congregational Church in London.

⁷² Roderick J. Macdonald, "Introduction to *The Keys*," (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Ltd., 1976), p. 7; Killingray, "To do something for the race," p. 62.

people of African descent. Through its various activities and, from 1933, particularly its published organ, *The Keys*, the LCP elaborated a vision of black unity that simultaneously traversed the territorial boundaries of the British Empire and claimed the rights of imperial citizenship for blacks in the metropole and the colonies.

If the League focused largely on Britain's colonies in Africa and the Caribbean and the concerns of middle-class black professionals and students in Britain, like the WASU, it championed black internationalism. But, even more than the Union, the LCP aspired to be a vehicle for both transnational black unity and interracial harmony and cooperation. The inaugural editorial in *The Keys* declared:

Our task lies in stating the cause of our brothers and sisters within the British Empire. We cannot afford however to ignore the claims of the peoples of colour who owe allegiance to a flag other than our own. All along the line there is the same tale ... Recent happenings in England, Kenya and the U.S.A. show which way the wind is blowing. It is time for us to realize that we have reached a critical period in the history of our race. Never was there a greater need for unity within our ranks. Never was there a greater need for vision and leadership.

Although undoubtedly cautious, liberal, and reformist in approach, the tone of *The Keys* remained consistently critical and assertive, as the editorial's closing riff on the journal's title demonstrates. "Our plea in closing, [*sic*] is for equality of opportunity. We are knocking at the door and will not be denied. 'The Keys' will, we trust, be an open sesame to better racial understanding and goodwill. The name is symbolic of what the League is striving for – the opening of doors and avenues now closed to Coloured Peoples."⁷³ The double meaning of the journal's title, which was a reference to Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey's use of the keys of a piano as a metaphor for interracial harmony as well as the symbolic "key" that would open of the door barring black advancement around the world, exemplified the multiple identifications

⁷³ *The Keys* Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1933), p. 1-2.

that characterized the League's internationalist philosophy. Similarly, his remarks at the Wilberforce Centenary in Hull were characteristically appropriate for the occasion, but also witty and biting critical at points. Moody beseeched his audience, "Please do not lose sight of the fact that Wilberforce's work was made essential, not on account of the sins of my own people, but mainly or entirely because of the sins, selfishness and short-sightedness of your own people—sins from which, as a race, you have not, even yet, altogether delivered yourselves." He drew attention to how the gathering served to displace the violence of slavery and imperialism with an image of beneficent British rule. "I would ... most respectfully remind you that the Englishman is so proud of himself and of his achievements and has such a consciousness of race superiority that he will do and does do everything in his power to establish this fact—the one fact on which the whole of his existence seems to depend." As a consequence, Moody charged, "the principle he adopted in the education of my people ... was the principle of suppressing all that was noble and good in my race and expressing what a great race was his...." "Why," he added wryly, "you even delivered us from slavery and gave 20 million of your hard-earned money to prove the sincerity of your motive, all the while cleverly suggesting to yourselves and to us that it was not you who enslaved us and that the money came to us and not to our enslavers. You used your authority to suppress facts. I do not say that this was maliciously done. You simply could not help yourself."⁷⁴ In his writings, sermons, and speeches as a representative of the League, Moody developed a damning critique of racism and cultural imperialism in the British Empire, which, he suggested, served, above all, to buttressed a particular construction of Englishness.

⁷⁴ "The Wilberforce Centenary Celebrations, Hull. July 23rd-29th," *The Keys* v. 1, n. 2 (October 1933), p. 22-23, 34-35.

The LCP's activities in the early 1930s centered on issues as diverse as the Sedition Ordinances in colonies, children of interracial couples in Britain, and the Scottsboro Boys' case in the United States. The League played a role in the larger campaign amongst black intellectuals in London and members of the British Left to free the defendants in the Scottsboro case. The League Against Imperialism (LAI), Negro Workers' Association, and International Labour Defence collaborated in forming the Scottsboro Defence Committee. Cobina Kessie, a member of the WASU from the Gold Coast, and Jomo Kenyatta were among the committee's vice presidents and secretaries, respectively. Mrs. Carmel Haden Guest, the wife of Labour MP Leslie Haden Guest, Professor Hymie Levy, and Eleanor Rathbone and Naomi Mitchison served as chairperson, president, and vice presidents, respectively. As financial secretary, Reginald Bridgeman of the LAI managed to balance ties with black intellectuals and liberal British groups like the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), despite being viewed by the Colonial Office as well as many British liberals and socialists as a dangerous communist.⁷⁵ Despite Moody's personal misgivings about the pernicious effects of communist influence on black students and intellectuals in London, the LCP's involvement with the Scottsboro Defence Committee demonstrated the group's willingness to form strategic alliances with other black organizations and individuals from across the British Left.

Yet, the group's response to the Scottsboro Boys case in the United States was also indicative of the humanist ethics or what St. Clair Drake termed "Humanitarianism, Pan-African style" espoused by Moody and the LCP. The third issue of *The Keys* reprinted a "resolution" drafted by the League and forwarded to the U. S. consul. Conveying the

⁷⁵ Under Bridgeman, the London headquarters of the LAI became an important nexus of interaction between black intellectuals and British communists. See Bush, p. 238.

members' "unanimous protest against the recrudescence of the Lynching of Negroes in the United States of America," it urged the U. S. government to take "every possible step to put down this unjust and barborous [*sic*] practice," adding that the LCP "views this practice with great apprehension as a definite means of producing race friction not only in America but throughout the world." The resolution linked the U.S. government's complicity in the lynching of African Americans with its illegitimate prosecution of the so-called Scottsboro Boys, nine young African Americans who were charged with the rape of a white girl in Scottsboro, Alabama in 1932. "The League records its deep regret at the continued persecution of the Scottsboro Boys as evidenced by the recondemnation of two of the boys and the mental torture inflicted upon them." The resolution closed by calling on "the United States Government to put an end to this incident which has stirred the emotions of the whole world white and black alike."⁷⁶ The LCP's protest situated the practice of lynching in the U. S. within the larger context of a global color bar and identified it as a threat to peace and stability around the world.

Despite being outnumbered and overshadowed by West Indian and African men within the group, women were active in the League from the start. At times, particularly in its earlier years, the LCP provided greater opportunities for women's involvement than the WASU.⁷⁷ During the mid-1930s, the League's executive committee included Dorothy Clarke (Bermuda), Amy Barbour James (British Guiana), Sylvia Lowe (Jamaica), and Viola Thompson (West Africa), and others like Stella Thomas (Nigeria), Dulcina Armstrong (British Guiana) and Dr. Hyacinth Lightbourne (Jamaica) participated in the group's

⁷⁶ Staunchly anti-communist himself, Moody's influence is apparent in the text inasmuch as it avoided any mention of the Communist Party's involvement in the Scottsboro boys' legal defense. *The Keys* Vol. 1, No. 3 (January 1934), p. 42.

⁷⁷ See LaRay Denzer, "The Influence of Pan-Africanism in the Career of Constance A. Cummings-John," pp. 137-160.

activities. Although these women provided essential labor to the organization, their roles were limited consistently to those perceived to be appropriate to their gender within the male-dominated and socially conservative League.

Women also helped launch the League's publication, *The Keys*, and contributed regularly to its contents. The Jamaican writer Una Marson served as assistant secretary in the League from 1931 to 1935 and editor of the journal during its early years. Frustrated in her search for employment during a lonely first year in Britain, Marson decided to serve as the LCP's unpaid secretary in autumn 1933, becoming the first in series of Caribbean women whose uncompensated labor maintained the organization throughout its existence. As the League's secretary, Marson handled its correspondence, facilitated communication between it and other black organizations in Britain, provided information and assistance to students, artists, and other visitors of African descent, and organized a variety of social events, which allowed her to establish important connections that she would utilize throughout her career. In addition to these responsibilities, Marson served as the editor of *The Keys*, which, the LCP claimed, had a worldwide circulation of over two thousand in 1934. *The Keys* quickly established itself as the most comprehensive, consistent, and professional black internationalist publication in Britain. Marson was unusually well-suited for the position due to her experience with *The Cosmopolitan* and other publishing ventures in Jamaica, but the job exposed her to a wider variety of copy and required that she be familiar with such diverse topics as the Scottsboro Boys case in the United States, the plight of black seamen in northern England and Wales, and the expropriation of Kikuyu lands by white settlers in colonial Kenya. This experience contributed greatly to her developing black internationalism.

Due in large part to the labors of Marson and a small group of West Indian women, the LCP's journal, *The Keys*, became a unique *literary* space for black authors in Britain during

its early years. In addition to publishing original works, the journal attempted to initiate a trans-Atlantic dialogue around literature by introducing African-American writers like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Countee Cullen to its readers.⁷⁸ Caribbean women in the League disproportionately appropriated literary forms to establish a space of enunciation for themselves. Like the WASU, gender politics framed women's activities in League and their engagement with its journal's readers, both enabling and constraining their forays into literature and the arts. While male members and officers often contributed editorials and essays on history, economics, or political issues, women's public involvement in these groups appears to have been overwhelmingly social and artistic. Marson was instrumental in running *The Keys* as its first editor, but her contributions to its contents were limited largely to poetry. By embracing the cultural project associated with black internationalism, however, women established a position from which to counter British racism, contribute to the creation of a new black public sphere in London and public debates regarding colonial reform, and link black internationalism to a feminist agenda.

Ella Wheeler Willcox and Sylvia Lowe from Jamaica and Margaret R. Seon from Bermuda contributed poems to *The Keys* between 1933 and 1935. A utopian but historicist "vision" of future racial unity, Seon's "Vision" concludes:

I am more glad to be of Negro blood
 Than to claim kindred with the mighty kings
 That lived in the days of yore; for the dark Race
 Is but within its Springtime. What will then
 Its Summer and its fertile Autumn be!
 We must press on and hasten to that day
 When promise is fulfilled, when we might bring
 Our offering to the world—a noble nation
 Built on the rocks of Unity and Truth.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ See, for example, Eric Walrond, "Book Reviews," *The Keys* v. 2, n. 3 (January-March 1935), p. 61; H. W. Springer, "The Shroud of Colour: An Appreciation of Countee Cullen," *The Keys* v. 3, n. 4 (April-June 1936), p. 46-47, 62.

⁷⁹ Margaret Seon, "Vision," *The Keys* v. 1, n. 4 (April-June 1934), p. 82.

“Vision” invokes a trans-Atlantic racial “nation” whose “promise” is to represent its distinctiveness—and, thus, make a unique contribution—to the world, a project in which the poem itself participates. Similarly, Sylvia Lowe’s “The Stamp of Freedom (Written by the great-grand-daughter of a West Indian slave, on meeting an African girl)” looked forward to the dawning of a new unity amongst the scattered members of the “grand and ancient race.”

O daughter of a grand and ancient race,
 I see you proud and stately; and as free
 As the wild wind that sweeps across your home.
 You know no fetters, know no slavery;
 Untamed, unbroken spirit, as a fawn
 You come, swift from the waking Afric dawn.

[...]

Long have we wandered far beyond your shores,
 With other men had concourse; but your arts
 Move kindred feelings in us, and we have
 Your lovely children folded to our hearts.
 You call us back. Within us something stirred.
 And called, when we your rhythmic music heard.

Within us longings irresistible
 Will not be silenced, and we would return
 Unto your knees; we who have travelled far,
 Come, Mother Africa. Our spirits burn
 With your clear flame. And with reverence meet,
 We who have roamed draw near and kiss your feet.⁸⁰

As these examples illustrate, gestures of identity and affinity in various articulations of black internationalism were always expressions of difference as well. Lowe identified two histories of blackness—one an ancient history of the achievements of those of the continent and freedom, the other a history of dispersal and slavery—coalescing in the symbolic return of people of African descent in the diaspora. Black internationalism becomes a story of redemption, but, notably, one in which the relationship between diasporic blacks and

⁸⁰ Sylvia Lowe, “The Stamp of Freedom,” *The Keys* v. 3, n. 1 (July-September 1935), p. 7.

Africans is figured in terms of interactions between black women. Yet, it was only through the recognition of her differences from the African woman before her that the West Indian woman in the poem discovered the desire for racial unity, as these “longings irresistible” were themselves the product of different histories.

Women writers in the LCP also engaged directly with metropolitan culture, appropriating the authority associated with the lettered artist to challenge dominant stereotypes of blackness and elaborate complex understandings of difference within unity.⁸¹ At times, they did so by directly parodying the formalistic qualities of or well-known male figures in the English literary canon as in Marson’s ironic references to Shakespeare, William Blake’s “Little Black Boy,” and Rudyard Kipling’s imperialist apologia “The White Man’s Burden” (1899) in “Education,” “Little Brown Girl,” and “Black Burden,” respectively. In “Education,” she borrowed English stylistic procedures to advance a critique of British imperialism in verse. As an epigraph to the poem, Marson quoted a statement by William G. Ballinger at a recent Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom Conference illustrating racial bias in state funding for education in South Africa. The sardonic verse announced, “The abuse of learning is when it is given / To subject races ... And, since the quarrel / Will bear no colour for the thing they are, / Fashion it thus; that what they are, when learned / Would run to these and these extremities: / And therefore, think them as the serpents’ eggs / Which, hatch’d, would as their kind grow mischievous; / And keep them ignorant.”⁸² “Education” not only exposed the hypocrisy at the heart of the imperialist civilizing mission, but also pointed to the danger that educated colonial subjects—and particularly their presence in Britain—posed to the reproduction of racial hierarchies

⁸¹ See Ella Wheeler Willcox, “Jamaica,” *The Keys* v. 2, n. 4 (April-June 1935), p. 73.

⁸² *The Keys* vol. 2, no. 3 (January-March 1935), p. 53.

underlying British rule. Marson's piece riffs upon these anxieties by performing the displacement of British imperial authority in her appropriation of the formalistic qualities of Shakespearean verse, a rhetorical move to which she calls attention in her closing nod to this cornerstone of English national culture—"With apologies to Shakespeare." The writings of Caribbean women like Marson and Lowe cannot be read as entirely outside of metropolitan culture. Rather, they addressed the inherent contradictions of British imperialism by donning its characteristic forms and discourses, transforming their meaning in the process.

The Keys continued an uninterrupted run until the beginning of World War II, but its literary significance diminished greatly after its first two or three years. Soon after Marson resigned from her post as editor in March 1935, the LCP lost several of the most active women in the organization like Stella Thomas, Sylvia Lowe, and Dorothy Clarke who left London for the Gold Coast, Jamaica, and Bermuda respectively.⁸³ Collectively, these women were responsible for the bulk of the LCP's artistic and cultural activities. As a result, literature never again enjoyed such a prominent position within *The Keys* following their departure.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, black women's participation in the League opened new opportunities to many of them and had a transformative effect on their aspirations and politics. In early 1935, Marson issued a stirring call for racial unity in an editorial in *The Keys*. "It seems to me," she asserted, "that a whole world lies before us to conquer—a world that would oppress and use us for their enrichment, a world that has freed the Negro but still

⁸³ See "Homeward Bound," *The Keys* v. 3, n. 3 (January-March 1936), p. 38; W. Arthur Lewis, "The Editor's Report," *The Keys* v. v. 3, n. 4 (April-June 1936), p. 58.

⁸⁴ Marson attempted to resuscitate this aspect of the League's activities in late 1938. In a letter to John Fletcher, the English and socially conservative chairman of its executive committee, she argued, "It ought to be a valuable centre for Africans and West Indians." She suggested that she be employed as social secretary for Aggrey House. "I do not propose to live on premises and would work from 2:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m." She explained, "My work would be to organise meetings, study groups, parties, dinners etc. I would particularly like a Negro dramatic club." Revealingly, Marson balanced arguments meant to demonstrate her utility with the necessity that activities at Aggrey House continued to appear respectable and apolitical. Regardless, Marson's proposal never came to fruition. See letter from Una Marson to John Fletcher, Una Marson Papers, Box 1944B, National Library of Jamaica; quoted in Jarrett-Macauley, p. 145.

looks upon his land as spoil and himself as chattel.” Rather than deploying a universal “black” experience, she identified greed and discrepancies in the degree of racial discrimination and segregation as significant obstacles to fostering intra-racial cooperation. “Negroes in some parts of the British Empire do not suffer from segregation.... Negroes in West Africa do not realise what conditions are like in East Africa. West Indians know next to nothing about conditions in Africa.” Yet, she viewed racial convergence as part of an inexorable trend, the spirit of internationalism sweeping the globe. “The whole world is coming closer together ... and the Negro world must come together.” For Marson, racial unity superseded the boundaries of and allegiance to colony, nation, and empire. Though “nationality makes it more difficult for American Negroes to join Negroes in the British Empire, ... we must unite to contribute our quota to the markets of the world as a race.” “Communism won’t help us,” she continued. “We don’t want to fight, we are pacifists—but we know what we want and if every educated Negro will feel the burden of his brother ... then things will be done. Then, and only then will the Negro race be a race contributing richly to the world.”⁸⁵ Although Marson would become more critical of British imperialism during the late 1930s, as this editorial demonstrates, key elements of her racial consciousness and vision of black internationalism, including her pacifism and rejection of communism, were in place before she left the LCP.

The early histories of the WASU and LCP suggest that the standard rubric for placing black pressure groups in Britain along the political spectrum (from radical/revolutionary to liberal/reformist) is inadequate to capture the complexity of African and Caribbean women’s experiences.⁸⁶ Women in “humanitarian reformist” groups like the

⁸⁵ “Editorial,” *The Keys* v. 2, n. 3 (January-March 1935), p. 45-46.

⁸⁶ For characteristic examples of defining interwar black organizations in this manner, see Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, Ch. 17 “Conservative and Radical Pan-Africanism in England (1934-9): Harold Moody

WASU and LCP turned the organizations into a rare entrée to not only activism and black internationalist politics but also social life in the metropole. This, however, came at a cost. The LCP provided invaluable experience to female members, who were a consistent presence on its executive committee, but the socially conservative principles of its founder and patriarch, Dr. Harold Moody, shaped its agenda as well as relations within the group.

Aggrey House and the “Only African hostel in London”

The prevailing atmosphere of widespread racism and discrimination in Britain was a crucial factor leading to the creation of the LCP and WASU, and both groups embraced the idea of establishing a hostel for students of African descent in London as its most pernicious effects. However, the WASU's focused to a far greater extent on who would control the hostel and emphasized the need to maintain its autonomy from direct government intervention. Although the composition of the Union's membership resembled more closely Solanke's vision of a “United States of West Africa,” like its predecessor, the NPU, the creation an autonomous social space to counter the “colour bar” in the market for lodgings and provide a respite from the racism that colonials experienced in the streets of the metropole represented one of the main goals of the WASU from the beginning. In fact, the first aim on the list ratified at the WASU's founding was “to provide and maintain a hostel for students of African descent.”

The Union also sought to launch its own serial publication. The latter proved to be more readily achievable than opening a hostel, and the group issued the first number of

and George Padmore,” pp. 340-356; also St. Clair Drake, “Value Systems, Social Structure and Race Relations in the British Isles,” diss., University of Chicago, 1954.

Wāṣù (Preach) in the spring of 1926.⁸⁷ Launching *Wāṣù* and establishing connections within the Colonial Office and to philanthropic and political groups in Britain dominated the WASU's agenda during its early months and took the bulk of its limited resources. By 1927, however, the Union's campaign for the creation of an African hostel in London had begun in earnest. In "An Appeal – Need for a Central Home in London for African Students," Solanke traced the development of the idea from 1914. "It would seem that the difficulties which have hitherto prevented the materialisation of this object could easily have been got over had we, from the start, tackled the problem from the 'self-help' standpoint." "There should be no doubt," he added, "that we still have with us our beloved 'African Trustees' who are always ready to saddle themselves with the benevolent task of doing everything for the Africans, but the time has come when it should be realised that the Victorian good old days are gone, never to return...." Solanke quoted an "old African saying 'Eleru ni ko bere ki eniti o ma ba gbe e de ori ki o to bere'—he who is directly affected should take the initiative in a project designed particularly for his own benefit." He described the WASU's vision for an "African home' in London, the management of which should be chiefly in the hands of the Africans themselves" and stressed the hostel's potential for fostering African unity, citing the example of the Indian hostel's influence on "the heterogeneous tribes of India to-day." "Perhaps not the least reason for the existence of such an institution in this country," he suggested, "is the need of promoting African nationhood."⁸⁸ In 1928, the WASU briefly occupied a house donated to them for a year by Marcus Garvey.⁸⁹ To acquire a more permanent home, Solanke set out for West Africa the following year on a fund-raising tour.

⁸⁷ Not only did this list appear in *Wāṣù (Preach)* once it was up and running, but *West Africa*, which circulated amongst educated elites in the West Africa and commercial interests in Britain, also published it on August 15, 1925.

⁸⁸ *Wāṣù* 6/7 (August 1928), pp. 32-33.

⁸⁹ Philip Garigue, "The West African Students' Union: A Study in Cultural Contact," *Africa* v. 23, n. 1 (January 1953), p. 58.

During his travels, he also established a number of satellite branches of the WASU in places like Kano and Abeokuta in Nigeria, the latter of which headed by the educator Rev. I. O. Ransome-Kuti and his wife Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti.⁹⁰

While keeping a close watch on Solanke's activities during his fund-raising trip to West Africa through colonial administrators in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast, the Colonial Office seized the opportunity to expand its influence over student sojourners through a seemingly benevolent gesture. As early as 1927, Solanke had proposed a "co-operative" venture to establish a hostel for African students that would be funded in part by the colonial governments of West Africa. The Colonial Office, at first, seemed receptive but soon rejected the idea as a needless expense. From the mid-1920s, however, some colonial officials and others concerned with the welfare of African students in Britain had discussed the need for a hostel to shield the growing numbers of students from the perils and temptations of life in London, specifically the racist attitudes of most Britons, contact with communist and other radical leftist groups in Britain, and sexual liaisons with British women. In the end, rather than attempting to work with Solanke and the WASU, Major Hanns Vischer, secretary-general of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures and a former Director of Education in Northern Nigeria, organized a committee including Dr. Moody, the president of the newly formed LCP, to develop plans for the creation of small social club and hostel for black students in London.

Upon his return to London, Solanke perceived this move as a deliberate attempt to exclude the WASU and openly opposed the committee's plans. Undeterred by they viewed as the duplicity of the Colonial Office, the Union moved into a house at 62 Camden Road

⁹⁰ Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 125-9.

on January 1, 1933.⁹¹ Dubbed “WASU House” or the “African Hostel,” it served as the center of the group’s social and political activities as well as a temporary home to African students and numerous other visitors. Due to a longevity that none of the aforementioned groups enjoyed, the WASU quickly became known as a first stop for people of African descent arriving in London; to name only a few, Jomo Kenyatta, Frank Dube from Natal and his African-American wife, Kwame Nkrumah, and Joseph Appiah all found their first accommodations in the metropole with Solanke and the Union. Visitors to the hostel, who were by no means limited to students, also “stressed its importance as a market-place of ideas.”⁹² By staying at the WASU hostel, even for a short period of time, new arrivals from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States entered the subculture of black sojourners and migrants in London. T. Ras Makonnen (born George T. N. Griffith), who was originally from British Guiana and an active black internationalist and restaurateur in Britain during 1930s and 1940s, recalled that the African hostel “provided much more of a social outlet, for WASU House was a homely place where you could always get your groundnut chop, and there would always be dances on Saturday night.”⁹³ If Makonnen emphasized its role as a site of social interactions, Nnamdi Azikwe, who studied in the United States and passed through London on his way back to West Africa to run the *West African Pilot*, noted its significance as a clearinghouse of ideas and information from around the world. “The WASU Hostel at 62 Camden Road, NW1, was the headquarters of most West African students in London, where we congregated and devoured West African newspapers. I also had the pleasure of giving a

⁹¹ The WASU hostel opened to students on March 9, 1933. See *Wàsù* 2, 2 (April-June 1933), p. 13.

⁹² Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe and Africa*, trans. by Ann Keep (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1974), p. 301.

⁹³ Ras Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, as recorded and edited by Kenneth King (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 127.

series of talks to the students there.”⁹⁴ Moreover, the Union also provided rare opportunities to meet and engage in a dialogue with officials in the Colonial Office, Members of Parliament, and colonial experts. Many future political leaders in West Africa first met the British politicians and colonial administrators who would one day hand over the infrastructure of the colonial state through their activities in the WASU.

With Moody’s full endorsement, however, the committee moved forward with the plan and, using funds provided by the colonial governments in West Africa and the Caribbean, philanthropic and religious organizations in Britain, and several commercial firms with significant interests in the colonies, opened “Aggrey House” in early 1935, which was named in honor of Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, the recently deceased educator and Assistant Vice Principal of Achimota College from the Gold Coast. The controversy over Aggrey House caused a rift between the Union and LCP, whose membership had overlapped considerably. The disagreement also produced an internal split within the WASU between members from Nigeria and the Gold Coast, which resulted in the majority of latter leaving the organization for the LCP. Though significant, competition for scarce resources was only one cause of the tensions between the WASU and LCP. Solanke and the WASU denounced the Colonial Office’s actions as an attempt to establish a form of “indirect rule” over African students in London, explicitly linking the government’s connection with Aggrey House to the form of colonial administration in British West Africa that was developed first in Nigeria by Sir Frederick Lugard. The Union’s argument tied its resistance to the Aggrey House scheme to a broader critique of British imperialism. Indeed, they maintained that the two were related fundamentally.

⁹⁴ Nnamdi Azikwe, *My Odyssey: An Autobiography* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 197.

The WASU published and distributed a pamphlet written by Solanke in March 1934, entitled “The Truth about Aggrey House: Government Plan for Control of African Students.” “The British Government which has absolute control over the lives of these peoples in their native lands,” he declared, “has deemed it fit to seek a plan whereby it might exercise the same control over those studying in England.” Solanke connected the WASU’s struggle to maintain an autonomous black organization and hostel to nascent anticolonial movements in Africa and claimed that the hostel dispute heightened West Africans’ awareness of the injustice of British imperialism in general. The government, he wrote, “had not reckoned with the reaction to the sufferings and oppression meted out to the people in the past and out of which the students were seeking to extricate them. It was just natural that the indignity to which West African students were subjected in this country would serve to remind West Africans at home of their oppression.”⁹⁵ Solanke’s remarks implied that the metropolitan Britain and the colonies were part of a single—and consistently discriminatory—imperial formation. In “The Year End Open Letter to the Educated Youths in West Africa” from January 1935, he included Aggrey House in a list of the injustices of British imperialism, connecting policies in the four West African colonies to the attempt to police the activities of African students in London. “The Criminal Code of Nigeria, the system of Indirect Rule (from British imperialist point of view), the Sedition Bill on the Gold Coast, the Criminal Code in Gambia, and last but not least the Aggrey House versus African hostel issue in London,” he maintained, “are all mere elementary lessons in British Imperialism in West Africa.”⁹⁶ Solanke and the WASU identified indirect rule and the establishment of Aggrey House as related instruments in the repertoire of empire. As the

⁹⁵ “The Truth About Aggrey House: An Exposure of the Government Plan for the Control of African Students in Great Britain,” (London: West African Student Union, March 1934).

⁹⁶ Quoted in Adi, p. 63.

campaign against Aggrey House progressed, an editorial in *Wāsu* urged the Union's members to unite around the issue.

At present only a few have the foresight to see the possibilities latent in WASU and the Hostel. It is not enough for us to fight in the colonies for freedom. It is of the utmost importance that in the heart of the Empire we own and man a Hostel which will fight our cause *on the spot* and give the lie to traducers of the race whenever they say that we have not the capacity to manage our own affairs. It is for this reason that the white man of the imperialist school is doing his utmost to ruin the movement.⁹⁷

Like the introduction of new sedition laws targeting the distribution of printed materials in the colonies, the WASU viewed Aggrey House as another to challenge to their fight for self-government. The Colonial Office, the Union charged, sought to undermine their attempt to establish a hostel under the management and control of Africans because the latter provided tangible evidence contradicting the oft-repeated accusation that they were incapable of managing their own affairs.

For Solanke and the WASU, the decision to name the new government-sponsored hostel after the late Dr. James E. Kwegyir Aggrey represented an attempt to mask the workings of government coercion in a manner analogous to the uses of so-called “native rules” under the indirect rule system in West Africa. An extraordinary and much-admired figure, the members of the WASU identified strongly with the trajectory of Aggrey's life. He traveled abroad to attain a university education in the United States and went on to become the most prominent scholar in the Gold Coast. Aggrey was an assistant vice principal of Achimota College, one of the three small colleges which most of the West African students in the Union had attended prior to coming to Britain, and he represented the sole African on the two Phelps-Stokes Education Commissions to West Africa during the early twentieth century. Many believed that his death at a relatively young age resulted from exhaustion and

⁹⁷ *Wāsu* v. 4, n. 3 (September 1935), p. 35.

overwork due to his tireless efforts on behalf of his fellow Africans. Yet, racial discrimination stunted Aggrey's career, as evidenced by his inability to advance above the rank of vice principal at Achimota. In other words, he remained an underling to the British principal of the college.⁹⁸ Thus, the memory of Dr. Aggrey, who passed away only in 1927, carried unique symbolic force, provoking a mixture of pride and frustration. The appropriation of Aggrey's name for a hostel under government control, as the WASU was only too aware, reframed the eminent African's life at the same time as it served to perpetuate the Colonial Office's vision of African students in London, what they should and should not do while in the metropole, and their role in the future of West Africa. Thus, in "The Truth About Aggrey House," Solanke noted in disgust that the British government "has not hesitated to couple with the infamous scheme the name of Dr. Aggrey whom Africans hold in great esteem."⁹⁹

The WASU repeatedly challenged the notion that Aggrey House reflected the will of African students in London. Nevertheless, the Union's limited resources compelled it to seek recognition and financial support for their own initiative from those behind the Aggrey House scheme. *Wāsh*'s reportage on the opening of WASU House at 62 Camden Road in 1933 illustrates the difficulty and contradictory nature of this position. In a short piece lauding the efforts of Solanke and "a very industrious typical African lady" in preparing the house for the hostel's official opening, the editor noted that it made a favorable impression on "several eminent persons like Major Hanns Vischer, M.A., of the Colonial Office, who ... having inspected the Hostel round, congratulated all the members of the W.A.S.U. on their great achievement," and that Dr. Harold Moody of the LCP had "burst into a hearty

⁹⁸ See draft of Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole, "Aggrey of Africa," *Venture*, Papers of Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole, SOAS Archives (PP MS 35), File 149 (Fabian Colonial Bureau).

⁹⁹ "The Truth About Aggrey House: An Exposure of the Government Plan for the Control of African Students in Great Britain."

congratulation for W.A.S.U. for this great monument” during his visit. Yet, the same issue contained a rejoinder to a recent article in *West Africa* on the dispute over Aggrey House. The piece asserted “that the ‘African Hostel’ standing at 62, Camden Road, ... under the auspices of the West African Students’ Union, is the *only* ‘African Hostel’ of that name in London,” and that “there is at yet no League, Association, or organisation of any kind in London that possesses, owns, establishes, or runs any African hostel other than the W.A.S.U.” The journal insisted that “the article in ‘*West Africa*’ ... under the caption ‘The League of Coloured peoples’ relative to the above matter is wholly misleading, false and having no foundation whatever.”¹⁰⁰

The Union’s persistence led Hanns Vischer, for one, to appeal for a more subtle form of Colonial Office intervention with regard to the WASU house, which consisted principally of providing assistance with fund-raising. Chronic financial difficulties ultimately forced the WASU to accept his offer along with the limited interference that it entailed. In addition to donations from an array of European corporations with business interests in Africa, patrons like Paul Robeson, and *West Africa*, the group came to depend upon at least some degree of government support. However, the WASU members viewed the small sum that they received annually from the Nigerian colonial government as simply another manifestation of African self-help, since the funds, like all of the Nigerian state’s financial resources, derived from taxation of the local populace. In the years that followed, they also pleaded for additional funds from the other West African governments—Sierra Leone, Gambia, and the Gold Coast—on the same basis, but received only intermittent payments for their efforts.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, by the mid-1930s, a majority in the Colonial Office had

¹⁰⁰ *Wāsi* 2, 2 (April-June 1933), pp. 11, 13.

¹⁰¹ See *Wāsi* (May 1940), p. 7; also, CO 554/109/4 (1937-1938).

come to the conclusion that humoring the WASU and supplying minimal funds for the maintenance of its hostel represented the most prudent course of action insofar as it gave the government some leverage over the group and helped channel members' energies into more moderate outlets.

Despite Solanke's success in securing limited financial support from the colonial government of Nigeria, the house at 62 Camden Road proved too expensive to serve as a long-term home for the Union. With the funds that they raised from donations and especially the financial assistance of the Welfare of Africans in Europe War Fund, the WASU moved into 1 South Villas, Camden Square on June 1, 1938, which the members named "Africa House."^{*}The new hostel had twelve beds, a café, and several recreational rooms for hosting public lectures, debates, and other social events like receptions for visiting African dignitaries, dinners, and frequent dances. African House also contained a small library with a wide range of newspapers and books related to West Africa. The WASU's Annual Report for 1938 thanked the editors of a number of newspapers in West Africa and Britain—the *West African Pilot*, *Gold Coast Independent*, *Nigerian Eastern Mail*, *African Morning Post*, *West Africa*, *West African Review*, *Sierra Leone Daily Guardian*, *Gambia Echo*, *Yoruba News*, *Akede Eko*, and *Nigerian Daily Times*—for publicizing the Union's activities and donating copies of their publications to the hostel's library.¹⁰² Joseph Roach's characterization of London's coffeehouses in the eighteenth century as "socially liminal space[s]" and "forum[s] for the transmission and refinement of public culture through performance" is equally

^{*} The ownership of the house, however, remained in dispute for years as it appears that the property was purchased for the WASU's use but not principally with the latter's funds. Nevertheless, soon after moving into their new home, Solanke and the Union claimed that they "owned" the house outright – an interesting contention that the Colonial Office found unintelligible and emblematic of African irrationality. CO 859/43/7: ("Education: Supervision of Colonial Students, West African Students Union, 1941), Public Record Office, Kew, United Kingdom; *Wàsù* v. 6, n. 1 (January 1937), p. 5.

¹⁰² *Wàsù* (May 1940), p. 10.

appropriate for the WASU hostel. Like the former, it “functioned in the role of a behavioral vortex, a combination of built environment and performative habit that facilitated not simply the reproduction but also, according to circumstance and opportunity, the displacement of cultural transmission.”¹⁰³

According to the WASU’s constitution, the hostel’s facilities were open only to members, guests, and “approved friends of the Union,” but anyone of African descent, not just African students, could stay at the hostel.¹⁰⁴ In addition to new arrivals from West Africa or elsewhere—as in the case of Kwame Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe, the future presidents of Ghana and Nigeria respectively, who traveled to London after attending universities in the United States—overnight or short-term visitors included African Americans, West Indians, and African political and commercial elites like the Alake of Abeokuta. From the 1930s, the WASU hostel served as an important site for the exchange of critical ideas about developments within the Empire and around the world as well as a rare spot where colonial intellectuals could receive visitors and engage colonial experts, members of the Colonial Office, and other representatives of the British state in a dialogue on the nature of imperial rule. Moreover, like the Union’s published organ, it became an exemplary site for the representation of a distinctive Africanness, which was at odds with the dominant portrayals of Africans in imperial Britain.

The WASU aimed to foster “inter-racial understanding,” “present to the world a true picture of African life and philosophy,” and “promote the spirit of self-help” to counter stereotypes of racial inferiority and Africans’ backwardness. In the eyes of the Union’s members, Africa House and *Wàsù* (*Preach*) demonstrated the latent potential of the growing

¹⁰³ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 86.

¹⁰⁴ *Wàsù* (May 1940), p. 21.

ranks of educated Africans. In an important sense, the day-to-day maintenance of the hostel, as a quotidian display of autonomy, represented the WASU's most consistent argument for the self-government and colonial reform. "For the past six years," WASU's 1938 Annual Report asserted, "the Union has employed its hostel as the chief and most effective means to promote good feelings and better understanding between Africans and other races of mankind."¹⁰⁵

Though ostensibly a counter to the color bar in London, Africa House took on a symbolic significance that transcended its pragmatic function. Indeed, members and sympathetic observers in Britain and West Africa often conflated the two in their descriptions of the hostel's purpose. In a speech delivered in Freetown marking the seventh anniversary of the WASU which was reproduced in *Wàsù*, the English Bishop of Sierra Leone, Dr. George Wright, recalled his first bewildering impressions of the bustling metropolis. "Thirty-eight years ago, I stood in a road in London *alone, a stranger*, knowing no one and knowing not whither to go.... I was a lad of 20, and had just left my home in the country, nearly 200 miles away, to begin work in London[,] ... at once the place of greatest virtue and of greatest weakness. Paradise can be found there; but, and sadly I say it, SO CAN SODOM AND GOMORRAH." In relating his own experience of moving from provincial England to the capital, Wright obscured the role of British racism in shaping the lives of London's black residents. Yet, his characterization of the WASU's mission dovetailed with the image of the Union that members advanced and provided an endorsement for their activities from an undeniably respectable voice. "Your boy or girl needs therefore in London ... to be guarded against evil and the evil one's messengers. And it is, I understand, that for them and to effect this splendid thing that the WEST AFRICAN STUDENTS' UNION ...

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

exists.” Like the Union’s members, Wright saw the African hostel as one of the principal means by which the group would have a positive influence on the future of Africa. The WASU, he maintained, would serve as a buffer against temptation and immorality, producing educated, Christian Africans who “scorn to leave unpaid bills behind them, to leave women in trouble, or waste talents, time, money entrusted to them—things so easy to do in a strange land among strange people.” In its particulars, this vision of the WASU as a beacon of rectitude and respectability amid the immoral forces beleaguering sojourners in London did not vary significantly from that of its founders like Solanke. What is more, the appeal of Wright’s address for the Union also can be located in his suggestion that the group might help to lay the foundation for an “African Nation” and the “BUDDING AFRICAN EMPIRE.”¹⁰⁶

The WASU deployed private and social activities in Africa House as part of their struggle against British racism and imperialism. Despite the hostel’s function as a private space to shelter students’ from the racial discrimination that they faced in public, the Union regularly opened itself up to public scrutiny in the pages of *Wàsù*, highlighting its status as a performative space. An element of *publicness* and transparency characterized social activities and everyday life in the hostel in a way that contradicted liberal conceptions of the private sphere. Yet, representations of the hostel in the Union’s journal adhered closely to dominant British ideals regarding the proper ordering of domestic life, particularly in terms of prescribed gender roles and sexual behavior, while also emphasizing the unique contributions of African culture. *Wàsù* often contained group photographs of members and various important “friends” in which the students appeared in fashionable, European-style suits or fine dresses, literally creating a picture of respectability. It also featured photographs

¹⁰⁶ “Wasu Oration,” *Wàsù* n., 9 (December 1932), pp. 11-14.

of both the exterior and interior of Africa House, including its largest bedroom, the “Nigeria Room,” and the community “lounge.”¹⁰⁷

Although a largely homosocial milieu, life in the hostel reflected a patriarchal organization of the home and British notions of respectability, complete with a married couple as “warden” and “matron” (usually Ladipo and ’Olu Solanke) at its head. The WASU Constitution delineated rules and responsibilities for boarders, which assured *Wàsù*’s readers that life in the hostel adhered to a certain decorum. On “The Office of the Matron,” it stated that “there shall be a Matron who shall be directly responsible to the Warden. She shall, among other things, assist the Warden to supervise the work of the cook, the steward, the char-woman, and the maid of the Hostel. She shall assist in exercising a beneficial influence over the lady members of the organisation.” The Constitution also dealt with safeguards against sexual improprieties in hostel, prohibiting “non-residents” from entering the “residential quarters of the hostel without permission of the Warden” and “opposite sexes other than a husband and his wife” from either entering or remaining “together in any of the BEDROOMS.” Moreover, “admission to girl students as residents,” it continued, “is subject to the Warden’s wife or a Matron being also resident at the Hostel, at the same time.”¹⁰⁸ The image of respectability presented in the journal corresponded to financial transparency, as *Wàsù* regularly opened the hostel’s financial records to public scrutiny by publishing aggregate lists of expenditures and income, due in part to British officials’ insistence on oversight as a safeguard against financial misconduct.

The dispute over Aggrey House strained relations between the WASU and LCP in the mid-1930s, and, on a personal level, there was considerable acrimony between Solanke

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5, 10, 15.

¹⁰⁸ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, p. 21, 23.

and Moody throughout their lives. Nevertheless, the two groups shared a similar set of goals and conception of their purpose, and they often found themselves allied on the major issues of the day, leading gradually to a rapprochement between them. Opposition to government censorship in Britain's colonies in the Caribbean and Africa became one such rallying point. Instituted first in Nigeria in 1929 by Governor Thomson, the so-called "Sedition Ordinances" banned a variety of "suspect" publications distributed by "agitators" in most British colonies in Africa and the Caribbean by the late 1930s. Under pressure from the Governor, the Colonial Office extended the scope of the Nigerian Sedition Ordinances in 1932 to include periodicals like the *Negro Worker*, which regularly featured contributions by George Padmore and other representatives of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. With the full backing of the conservative Secretary of State for the Colonies Philip Cunliffe-Lister (Lord Swinton), Governor Shenton Thomas instituted a new Gold Coast Criminal Code Amendment Ordinance No. 21 On March 31, 1934, which mimicked the Nigerian Sedition Ordinance. The action shocked many because the Gold Coast had been heralded in Britain as the model colony of British West Africa, and the legislation appeared to many to question the loyalty of colony's populace. From the vantage point of black intellectuals in London, these moves seemed collectively to be part of a single movement directed against the colonial intelligentsia.

Like the Scottsboro Boys' campaign, government interference with and outright suppression of periodical culture in the colonies galvanized black intellectuals in London and opposition segments of the British Left. The imposition of Sedition Ordinances in Nigeria and the Gold Coast sparked protest from the WASU and LCP as well as British organizations like the newly created National Council of Civil Liberties (NCCL). The NCCL perceived the actions as "symptomatic" of an "increasing repressive tendency" not only in

the colonies, but also in Britain in form of the Incitement to Disaffection Act of 1934, which made it a criminal offence “to seduce any members of His Majesty's forces from his duty or his allegiance.”¹⁰⁹

Unlike their British allies, the WASU and LCP used the issue of censorship in the colonies to raise fundamental questions about the legitimacy of imperial rule. When the Gold Coast and Ashanti delegation came to London to present the King and Parliament with a petition outlining their grievances, both groups held receptions for the delegates and wrote letters to the Colonial Office and members of Parliament on their behalf.¹¹⁰ In an article on “the nature of Seditious Offences” in *The Keys*, the Nigerian Louis Nwachukwu Mbanefo noted that the delegation received “an impertinent rebuff from the then Secretary of State for the colonies, Sir Cunliffe-Lister,” despite the “agitation and outcry against the sedition Bills within this country and in the Gold Coast.” Like the NCCL and Fabian Society, Mbanefo linked the new legislation in the colonies to the changing conception of sedition in Britain, going so far as to compare recalcitrant publishers and critics of the colonial government in West Africa to Thomas Paine and William Cobbett. Yet, whereas the former viewed these developments as a rather natural extension of British legislation to the colonies, Mbanefo traced the deployment of an increasingly expansive conception of “sedition” in the empire. “What has come to be called sedition,” he maintained, “is in fact a class of offences against internal order which are not accompanied by and which do not lead to open violence.”¹¹¹ For most on the British Left, the Sedition Ordinances were themselves the problem or, at most, indicative of a troubling tendency, as observable at home as in the

¹⁰⁹ See “NCCL Annual Report and Balance Sheet” (1934), National Council of Civil Liberties Papers, p. 24; also Bush, p. 114-118.

¹¹⁰ See letters from the WASU and other organizations in internal Colonial Office correspondence, CO 96 714/21639 (1934).

¹¹¹ Louis Mbanefo, “Seditious Offences,” *The Keys* v. 3, n. 4 (April-June 1936), p. 49-50, 59.

colonies. By contrast, black intellectuals in the WASU and LCP viewed the legislation as symptoms of a larger problem, the undemocratic foundations of the colonial state. The legal scholar Dr. J. B. Danquah, who was the secretary of the delegation, editor of the *Times of West Africa*, and a former president of the WASU, went further in his criticism of the legislation, likening the growing government repression in Britain's colonies to the international onslaught on democratic institutions and ideals in the 1930s. In "The Gold Coast and Ashanti Delegation: A Gesture and a Lesson," he wrote, "There used to be a tradition in the Colonial Office that the British Colonies were nurseries of democracy, growing from the autocracy of one man, the Governor, ... to a gradually enlarged democracy in which representatives of the people will share in the Government...."

However much this rhetoric deviated from the reality of colonial, Danquah suggested this vision of the empire had been discarded in response to "the growing realisation, as Rudolph Kircher puts it, that 'Democracy is the natural consequence of education.'" "First the Statute of Westminster, which in 1930 killed the second British Empire and substituted for it a ghostly entity called the British Commonwealth of Nations," he claimed, "... led to a greater tightening of Imperial control over the Colonies, born of a dread that if care is not taken the red and white yolk of Empire would slip from their hands leaving in their place a mere shell." Danquah charged that a stubborn resistance to the spread of democracy, not a progressive development towards it, characterized British rule in Africa and the Caribbean.

The Colonies are dangerously, perilously becoming self-conscious. What is more, in some Colonies, they are becoming race-conscious as well. All through education and the economic drive ... Apparently, henceforth democratic development in the Colonies is not to expand forward; it is to contract backwards ... for now it is clear every Governor in a Crown Colony

cannot stand one step below the greatest autocrats of the world. What a Governor thinks must be law, shall be law.¹¹²

For Danquah, instead of setting the British Empire on the path towards closer association between self-governing polities as the government claimed, the British Commonwealth served as a cover for imperial Britain to cling more fiercely to its control over increasingly frustrated colonial populations, to retard rather than advance the cause of democracy.

Although the Gold Coast delegation failed to prevent the implementation of sedition legislation and had a negligible impact on colonial policy, its visit to London demonstrated how the presence of black organizations in the metropole changed the practice and magnified the effect of colonial protest. It was now more costly in public relations terms to ignore such expressions of colonial discontent. Moreover, as with Danquah's insistence that the colonial governor "cannot stand one step below the greatest autocrats of the world," black intellectuals increasingly viewed developments in the British Empire through the lens of the political turmoil and international tensions of the 1930s, connecting the issue of colonial freedom to the major diplomatic and humanitarian crises of the day.

Intellectual Sources of Interwar Black Internationalism

Participation in groups like the West African Students Union and League of Coloured Peoples led many West Indian and African intellectuals to embrace new forms of black political subjectivity, including largely deterritorialized conceptions of community and identity. Black pressure groups in London developed in an enunciative context that both enabled and constrained in ways significantly different than in the colonies. To some extent, the black internationalism of the WASU and the LCP derived from the unique visions, new

¹¹² Dr. J. B. Danquah, "The Gold Coast and Ashanti Delegation: A Gesture and a Lesson," *The Keys* v. 2, n. 2 (October-December 1934), pp. 23-26.

opportunities, and obstinate difficulties that only came into view at the epicenter of the far-flung British Empire.

Led by Ladipo Solanke, the WASU did not simply affirm or defend a preexisting collective identity and racial consciousness. Rather, they articulated and embodied a particular conception of *Africanness* and a philosophical commitment to black internationalism, and sought actively to produce the constituency for this political imaginary. In many cases, their vision of international racial community took shape during their years in Britain. African students came to see themselves *as such*, as African and not solely or even principally Nigerian, Gold Coaster, Yoruba, or Igbo within the context their engagement with ideas and concepts circulating in the metropole and their everyday interactions with both white Britons and people of color from around the world.

The WASU constructed its vision of African “self-help” and “unity” from a number of different sources, including the regional nationalism of the National Congress of British West Africa, the legal tradition of British liberalism, European notions of racial descent, and interwar internationalism. On September 27, 1926, the WASU held a reception for Casely Hayford, President of the NCBWA, at Pinnoli’s Restaurant in London. In his opening remarks, the president of the Union, J. B. Danquah, explained, “the principal plank in its platform is to create a healthy national sentiment throughout the whole of West Africa and in every department of her life, and, in order that that objective might be better attained, a quarterly magazine called *Wasu* was founded by the Union in the early part of this year.”¹¹³

However, a more expansive, deterritorialized conception of “African nationality” undergirded the WASU’s vision of a United West Africa. Casely Hayford argued that a unified West Africa represented a significant step towards “African international union and

¹¹³ “The Union ‘At Home.’ The Future of WASU,” *Wasu* n. 2 (December 1926), p. 49.

sentiment,” the on-going process by which “Africans ... scattered all over the world” would “in time acquire experience of African nationality.” If he insisted “Our object is nationhood,” Casely Hayford also appealed to his fellow West Africans “to stretch out a hand to our brethren over the Atlantic who have brotherly yearnings for us, as we have for them,” and maintained that the “time has come that Africans from north, south, east and west of the Globe, should join together, not for struggle, but in the way of saying to other men ‘We, too, are men; we, too, have found our place in the world.’”¹¹⁴ Casely Hayford urged them to repudiate the imposed territorial boundaries that fragmented West Africa under British rule: “If anyone assumes that he has heritage in British West African lands, it is time that we respectfully, yet emphatically, tried to eradicate the idea.” Although, he explained, “We are prepared to work with [the British] ... to advance their prosperity in proportion as they advance ours,” “we deprecate ... one-sidedness.” “No self-respecting man,” Casely Hayford maintained, “would willingly concede the lion’s share to him with whom he co-operates.” Similarly, in the inaugural issue of *Wāsi*, the Sierra Leonean H. J. L. Boston argued that like the NCBWA the members of the Union “are able to view things from a common perspective so that when they return home they will further on the progress of the Colonies on common lines ... they have realized that they have many things in common and that it is only by working together that they can advance their common interests.” The West African, he suggested, increasingly “centres his interests, not only on the Colony from which he hails, but also on that part of the continent designated West Africa; *to him West Africa has a meaning*; to him West Africa has a future.” With the

¹¹⁴ “Nationalism as a West African Ideal. Casely Hayford’s Address to the Union on November 5th, 1926,” *Wāsi* n. 2 (December 1926), pp. 23-34.

constructive influence of groups like the WASU, he asked, “Would it be surprising then if in 1976 there is in West Africa a federation of the four colonies?”

Yet, the West African intellectuals in the Union also recognized the prevailing differences militating against African unity. Boston viewed federalism as a vehicle to manage the tension between unity and difference in relations amongst the inhabitants of British West Africa. “A compromise of two somewhat inconsistent feelings, the desire for national unity and the determination to maintain the independence of each man’s separate state,” a federalist system best suited circumstances in West Africa, where “the desire for union” coexisted with “the desire, equally strong, of non-interference on the part of each colony in its purely domestic concerns.” Boston cited racial ties and geographical proximity as forces binding West Africans together, but he also identified a long history of influence and concert that would provide the cultural and existential basis for a future United West Africa. If commonalities in terms of race and locality were “obvious,” like others in WASU, Boston marshaled evidence suggesting a deep history of contact and well-established cultural ties between the peoples of West Africa to counter the tendency towards taxonomic differentiation and categorization in both the administration of the British Empire and early-twentieth-century anthropology. “As with the Aryan race,” he argued, “there are linguistic affinities which indicate a common origin of the Aryan nations, so also the similarity of root words in the different West African languages points to a common origin of the West African races. Further and better researches into African antiquities will establish more plainly the close connection of the peoples of West Africa.” Boston presented language and

culture, more generally, as a repository of both interlinked histories and “variations” due to “time and circumstances.”¹¹⁵

Like Boston, Robert B. Cole claimed that an experiential “West African sense” had developed in conjunction with a growing realization of the necessity of “self-help.” “The National Congress of British West Africa,” he maintained, “is less a political organisation than an expression of this common spirit among the West African peoples.” Cole attached particular significance to the history of cultural mixture and diffusion in West Africa. “Indeed,” he argued, “a truly West African language has evolved. This, Sarro, is actually the language of the Colony of Sierra Leone, and grew in a community which comprised representatives from practically all the important tribes along the coast.” Though an amalgam of a multiplicity of European and African languages, “It is, however, a distinct entity with a definite grammar and phonetics distinctly Africa,” and “is helping to unite the various West African peoples in a freemasonry of common concepts.” Moreover, Cole cited an expanding counterpublic constituted through the circulation of texts as the “most heartening sign” of a “sense of a flow of energy” in twentieth-century West Africa.¹¹⁶ “The amateur essays at poetry, art, the drama, and literature, fostered by an appreciative community and an enlightened press, the spread of the daily press and the appearance of the Sunday paper, ... the greater interest in world affairs, especially those affecting Negroes elsewhere ... [and] criticism of reports, conferences, and theories that affect the country in any way” were all “indications which render the present phase of West African civilisation both interesting and promising.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ H. J. L. Boston, “Fifty Years Hence,” *Wāṣū* n. 1 (March 1926), p. 15-19.

¹¹⁶ See Michael Warner, “Public and Counterpublics,” *Public Culture* v. 14, n. 1 (2002), p. 49-90.

¹¹⁷ Robert B. Cole, “West Africa in Evolution,” *Wāṣū* v. 2, n. 2 (April-June 1933), p. 30-34.

While urging unity between people of African descent around the world, the WASU elaborated a vision of West African unity in which cultural traditions and practices formed the performative basis of “a national character which is the corner-stone of nationhood.”¹¹⁸ Ladipo Solanke’s short history of West Africa, *United West Africa (or Africa) at the Bar of the Family of Nations* (1927) and Joseph William de Graft Johnson’s *Towards Nationhood in West Africa* (1928) circulated amongst WASU members in London and West Africa and became key texts outlining the essential contours of the group’s black internationalism. As Coleman suggests in his study of the development of anticolonial nationalism in Nigeria, “Solanke and WASU influenced a critical segment of a whole generation, from which many of Nigeria’s most militant post-World War II leaders emerged.”¹¹⁹ In the preface to *Towards Nationhood in West Africa*, de Graft Johnson, a member of the Union of Students of African Descent and WASU who hailed from the Gold Coast, declared, “The hope and desire of Africa is the same throughout the length and breadth of the continent. It is concentrated in the great yearning for freedom, for emancipation from the yoke of the centuries. The youth of Africa everywhere, is assailed by the alluring thoughts of a free Africa ... stepping into her rightful place as a unit in the powerful army of the human family.” Groups like the USAD and WASU in London “are correlating lines of thought and action” and “have laid siege to the citadel of England’s nobleness of mind and soul” in “hopes ... that the future will see the African better understood ... given his due right of recognition in the Comity of Nations.”¹²⁰

Like de Graft Johnson, Solanke sought to interject the “Negro into European consciousness.” In *United West Africa*, he argued for the existence of a common, ancient cultural tradition of West Africa, a “separate sort of civilization [which] Africa had since

¹¹⁸ “Towards West African Nationhood,” *Wàsù* n. 1, v. 6-7 (August 1928), p. 1.

¹¹⁹ James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), p. 207.

¹²⁰ Quoted in Adi, *West African in Britain*, p. 38.

given to the Family of Nations.”¹²¹ Solanke referenced sympathetic forerunners like Edward Wilmot Blyden and Samuel Johnson as well as exemplars of racist colonial historiography such as Percy Amaury Talbot’s work on the Niger Delta region of Southern Nigeria and that of Richard Edward Dennett on the Yoruba to demonstrate, as Zachernuk puts it, that “not only do West Africans have a history, it is history they made.”¹²² *United West Africa* attempted “to prove that all the various peoples inhabiting Abyssinia, the Sudan, Egypt, North Africa, and all along the Mediterranean shores have from the earliest times been so closely connected with the inhabitants of West Africa that it could be asserted that they have a common origin.” On the basis of this history, he averred, “The more we are together the happier we shall be.”

Solanke concluded *United West Africa* with a call for more “research work” on African customs, laws, institutions, and literature and a declaration of the importance of the WASU and its published organ to the “complete Restoration, Regeneration, and second Rise of West Africa” and. “It is through *Wasu* [that] we have to educate the various races of the world that congregate in this country and elsewhere in matters relating to the welfare of our race.” Solanke also stressed the need for an African hostel in London as “a training ground for practical unity and effective co-operation” and an expression of “West African individuality.” “The time has come,” he argued, “when West African nationality must find a permanent foothold in Great Britain. West African individuality must be asserted in this country...”¹²³

¹²¹ Ladipo Solanke, *United West Africa, or Africa at the Bar of the Family of Nations* (London: African Publication Society, 1969, originally 1927).

¹²² Philip S. Zachernuk, “Of Origins and Colonial Order: Southern Nigerian Historians and the ‘Hamitic Hypothesis’ c. 1870-1970,” p. 44-5. See especially E. W. Blyden, *West Africa before Europe*, intro. by J. E. Casely Hayford (London, 1905).

¹²³ Ladipo Solanke, *United West Africa (or Africa) at the Bar of the Family of Nations* (London, 1927), p. 63-64.

Influenced by a West African intellectual tradition dating from Dr. James Africanus Beale Horton, Bishop James Johnson, and Blyden in the mid-nineteenth century, Solanke turned repeatedly to history to legitimate his vision of a future “United States of West Africa,” producing in the process writings that were at once political propaganda and meticulously researched scholarship. Solanke wrote and lectured regularly on West African history, culture, and customs, based in part on research for his M.A. thesis on Yoruba marriage practices.¹²⁴ He wrote “Unity and Co-operation” for the fifth number of *Wàsù*. As in *United West Africa*, Solanke drew upon a wide array of sources—from ancient texts such as Herodotus, Strabo, Pliny, and Ptolemy to recent works on Africa like Leo Frobenius’ *The Voice of Africa* (1923), Joseph Thompson’s *Mungo Park* (1898), Martin S. Kisch’s *Letters and Sketches from Northern Nigeria* (1910), and Samuel Johnson’s *The History of the Yorubas from the earliest times to the beginning of the British Protectorate* (edited by Obadiah Johnson, 1921)—to argue “that the bond of unity among all the various tribes in West Africa has been honoured by time and rendered sacred by events of antiquity.” As he explained, his intention was to contextualize the advice given recently to the members of WASU by Ademiluyi, the Oni of Ife or “Ife Vatican” in Nigeria: “My children, unity is strength. If you unite and co-operate, you will do many mighty things both for your country and for your race.” Solanke maintained that the Oni’s remarks were directed “ultimately towards realising the genuine blood relationship which existed among the peoples of West Africa and urging them to revive the ancient principle of unity and co-operation as the only key to material and sound progress.” A Yoruba himself, Solanke accorded them pride of place in his analysis and mobilized Frobenius’s notion of a unique “Atlantic Civilisation” emanating from Ife to

¹²⁴ See Solanke, *Yoruba Problems and How to Solve Them* (Ibadan, 1931), *Lectures Delivered at the Abeokuta Centenary Celebrations* (Lagos, 1931), and *A Special Lecture – addressed to Mr. A. K. Ajisafe* (Lagos, 1931).

support his claims. This conception of Yorùbá-ness was first articulated by mission-educated returnees (African-Brazilians, Afro-Caribbeans, black Americans, and Saros/Krios from the Sierra Leone colony) to towns along the West African coast from Freetown to Lagos and endorsed by British colonial officials and missionaries in the late nineteenth century.¹²⁵ Thus, a Yoruba-centric focus and the on-going dialogue between people of African descent in the diaspora and the West African intelligentsia informed Solanke's view of West African history. "It appears," he observed, "that the ancient Negro kingdoms [from Egypt, Abyssinia, and eastern Sudan to Nigeria] were founded by one or other of the Yoruba tribes" and "that common descent or at least the existence of close relation, from the earliest times, between the Yorubas and the various tribes inhabiting the northern provinces of Nigeria is sufficiently established." Furthermore, "moving to the southern provinces, we find the Yorubas among the most prominent tribes. The Ibos and Efiks or the Calabars seem to have been much related to each other and to the Benins." Solanke traced a history of contact and mutual influence throughout West Africa which included but extended well beyond the boundaries of the four British colonies, noting that "a large part [of the people] of Dahomey ... [and] Togoland are also Yorubas."

Solanke deployed a sweeping argument for a deep history of mixture and exchange between the major kingdoms and ethnic groups of western Africa to legitimate his commitment to West African unity in the present and future. In "Unity and Co-operation," he linked the two central assumptions underlying his political convictions—the idea of a "separate sort of civilisation African had since given to the Family of Nations" and a history

¹²⁵ On the Afro-Latin and other diasporic roots of the concept of Yorubaland, see J. Lorand Matory, "The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yoruba Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* v. 41, n. 1 (January 1991), pp. 72-103. On the Krios or Creoles of Sierra Leone, see esp. Akintola J. G. Wyse, "The Sierra Leone Krios: A Reappraisal from the Perspective of the African Diaspora," in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, ed. by Joseph Harris (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1993), pp. 339-368.

of intra-African mixture which should not be obscured by ethnic differences and minor cultural variations. For Solanke, the trade in African slaves across the Atlantic represented a tragic departure from this norm, whose consequences, including British imperialism, nonetheless created the conditions of possibility for West African unity in the present. “The period of the Slave Traffic ...,” he explained, “occupied almost 500 years ... during which all the ancient institutions in West Africa were disorganized.” Yet, “at the abolition of Slave Trade the ancient traditional unity of the West Africa tribes seems to have again begun to re-assert itself slowly and surely.” Solanke interpreted the settlement of liberated Africans up and down the coast of West Africa as both a cause and the clearest indication of this development. Citing the examples of Sierra Leone and Gambia, he noted, “these liberated Africans were originally drawn from various countries in West Africa and on their return they were resettled all along the coast in a manner irrespective of the particular countries or town whence they had been originally taken.” Thus, Solanke maintained, “This last event in the Slave Trade history of West Africa seems to have supplied one of the strongest means of effecting unity and co-operation among all West Africans.”¹²⁶

Solanke advanced similar arguments in a short review of *Hebrewisms of West Africa* (1930) by the Catholic Priest and ethnographer, Joseph John Williams. As he explained, “The primary object of the author is ... to prove or at least suggest that every West African Native Culture (i.e., the totality of manners, laws and customs of every West African tribe) had been at one time or another, more or less influenced by Jewish culture” However, in Solanke’s reading, the text had other, perhaps more significant, merits “as a reliable research work on the antiquity of the Negro peoples of Africa, particularly West Africa.” In particular, “the book evidently offers better and stronger authority on one of the questions,

¹²⁶ Ladipo Solanke, “Unity and Co-operation,” *Wàsù* n. 5 (September 1927), pp. 18-21.

namely, that all the various aboriginal tribes of Africa, particularly West Africa, are so closely related that it is not far-fetched to predicate that they have all come from the same stock.” Solanke concluded from Williams’ work “that the degree of ethnic mixture in Negro Africa ... must have gone up so high that it must have by now become almost impossible for anyone (expert anthropologists inclusive) to decipher ... who is and who is not an unmixed Negro in Africa.” Indeed, he added, “It would even seem that the question of who is a Negro is becoming a matter of confusion in anthropological circles.”¹²⁷ In “The Solidarity of the African Race,” Prince A. Ade Ademola echoed these arguments and cited many of the same sources, including Morel, Talbot, Thompson, Frobenius, Williams, and Hugh Clapperton’s writings on his early-nineteenth-century expeditions in Africa. Ademola maintained “that the Songhois, the Hausas and the Yorubas were originally of the same origin,” and, more generally, that “the West African tribes have from time immemorial been closely related one with the other.” Yet, Ademola devoted more energy than Solanke to establishing an analogous connection between West Africa and people of Africa descent in the Caribbean and North America. Quoting Williams’ *Hebrenisms of West Africa* and W. J. Gardner’s *History of Jamaica*, he pointed to the demographics of the slave trade and extant traces of Ashanti and Yoruba cultural practices and folklore in Jamaica and the United States, respectively, to support this contention.¹²⁸

Through the writings of Solanke, J. W. de Graft Johnson, and the journal’s early editors Melville C. Marke, J. B. Danquah, Julius Ojo-Cole, and Cobina Kessie, *Wàsù* articulated a regional, if not circum-Atlantic, perspective on West African history, a comprehensive view of the continent’s place in world history, which became the

¹²⁷ “A Short Review by Ladipo Solanke (a native of West Africa),” *Wàsù* v. 2, n. 1 (January 1933), pp. 40-41.

¹²⁸ A. Ade Ademola, “The Solidarity of the African Race,” *Wàsù* v. 4, n. 2 (August 1935), p. 29-31; also reprinted in Cunard, ed., *Negro Anthology*, p. 609-612.

philosophical basis of the organization's black internationalism. In 1928, an editorial in *Wàsù*, written most likely by J. W. de Graft Johnson, announced: "Youths of Africa are awakening to their importance and responsibility in the world's politics. Conscious of the richness of their soil and of their racial genius, they are organising themselves into groups for the purpose of studying their ancestral cultures, for it is their conviction that [the] African mind can be revealed only by the African. The W.A.S.U. is one of such African youth organisations."¹²⁹ "A Short History of W.A.S.U. and Its Organ 'Wasu,'" declared in 1933 that the "magazine has done much towards raising the status and prestige of the Union. To cut the matter short, '*Wasu*' has since become the real spirit and life of the Union to the extent that if it ever ceases to issue it seems the Union must necessarily become dead." The journal, the Union claimed, circulated widely throughout Britain's four West African colonies, the United States, and the West Indies, was "well-known in East and South Africa, especially in Kenya and Uganda." Moreover, *Wàsù* helped increase the measure of "friendship, respect, prestige, and co-operation" that the group received from "eminent individuals" in Britain by providing illustrative proof of the abilities and potential of educated Africans.¹³⁰ Thus, the WASU viewed the journal, like its hostel, as not only an expression of African cooperation and self-help, but also an invaluable means to engage with others of African descent around the world, potential allies in the metropole, and the discourses undergirding Britain imperialism.

An over-determined signifier, the journal's title captured the group's political goals and understanding of West Africa's past. Besides being an acronym for the West African Students Union, "Wasu" conveyed succinctly a number of aspects of the Union's position

¹²⁹ "Editorial," *Wàsù* n. 6-7 (August 1928), p. 1.

¹³⁰ "A Short History of W.A.S.U. and Its Organ 'Wasu,'" *Wàsù (Preach): The Journal of the West African Students' Union of Great Britain*, Vol. II, No. 1 (January 1933), p. 3.

and goals. An editorial from 1928 explained that, “in its race-conscious travel,” the journal’s title referred to “a word in Yoruba language called ‘Wasu,’ meaning ‘to preach,’” and, more specifically, to the imperative “TO PREACH about not only the Union’s doctrine of ‘Self-help, Unity and Co-operation,’ but also to preach and interpret AFRICA rightly to all races of mankind.” Yet, the term “Wasu” could also be found in a number of other West African languages—“in a Gold Coast language ... meaning ‘Self-help,’” “in the Efik language ... ‘to wipe off one’s disgrace or reproach,’” and “in the Ibo language ... ‘to speak first in one’s own interest.” Each of these connotations captured other aspects of “the philosophy of the term ‘Wasu.’” “The philosophy intended to teach here is to impress upon the minds of all members of W.A.S.U. the absolute necessity for acquiring and developing healthy national aspirations.” Thus, a final connotation of “Wasu” expressed the group’s understanding of the journal’s relation to this goal. “When the letters of the term ‘Wasu’ is [*si*] read half backwards and half forward, the formation of the term ‘USWA’ is brought upon the scene, which materially adds to the philosophy and then the Star of West African Nationhood begins ... to brighten from the East, upon the establishment of the ‘United States of West Africa.’”¹³¹ In 1943, Solanke restated the Union’s position in a letter to Dr. Wellesley Cole. “Owing to WASU’s fundamental policy of unity and cooperation between all the four West African Dependencies,” he wrote, “we are precluded from taking part in anything that may tend to fostering either disunity or differences of opinion between the peoples of the 4 Colonies.”¹³²

The WASU insisted that the great promise of internationalism—more humane and equitable terms within the British Empire and in international relations, more

¹³¹ “Editorial,” *ibid.*, p. 1-2.

¹³² Letter from Ladipo Solanke to Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole (November 26, 1943), Papers of Dr. Wellesley Cole, SOAS Archives, PP MS 35, File 157 (WASU).

generally—depended upon the affirmation of a distinctive Africanness. Yet, Solanke and the other West African intellectuals in the Union identified cultural mixture as the hallmark of African history. For them, Africans and, indeed, black populations around the world were not only linked by their history; they were predisposed to internationalism by the very nature of their historical experience.

Though informed by the work of anthropologists like Frobenius, Boas, and Malinowski, Solanke's interpretation of African history and culture also bore signs of the influence of African-American intellectuals like Alain Locke, his contention that "*the people who live in terms of the greatest synthesis of civilisations are going to be in the end the most efficient.*" Employing the Boasian notion of cultural diffusion in the elaboration of his own ideas, Locke insisted upon an analytical approach that highlighted the "reciprocal cultural interchange and influence, of Negro on white, and white on Negro" and situated "the so-called race question in a universal context of culture contacts and conflicts."¹³³ As early as 1916, Locke argued that when "modern man talks about race" he is really talking about ethnicity. What is more, ethnic groups, he suggested, might be termed more accurately "ethnic fictions," as such groupings are "the products of countless interminglings ... the result of infinite crossings."¹³⁴

In 1928, Locke visited the WASU, and *Wàsù* subsequently published his address to the Union's members. Echoing Locke's remarks, the opening editorial to the issue stated,

¹³³ "Editorial," *Wàsù* n. 8 (January 1929), pp. 2-3; Alain Locke, "Who and What is 'Negro'?", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, ed. by Leonard Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989, originally 1942), p. 219, 225. On Locke and Boas, see esp. Brad Evans, "Where Was Boas During the Harlem Renaissance?: Diffusion, Race, and the Culture Paradigm in the History of Anthropology," *Central Sites, Peripheral Visions: Cultural and Institutional Crossings in the History of Anthropology*, ed. by Richard Handler (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), p. 69-98; also Alain Locke and Bernhard J. Stern, eds., *When Peoples Meet: A Study in Race and Culture Contacts* (New York: Hinds, Hayden & Eldredge, 1942, revised edition 1946).

¹³⁴ See also Alain Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, ed. by Jeffrey Stewart (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1992), p. 11. See also Ross Posnock, *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 10-17.

“Throughout her history Africa seemed to have been nature’s experimental ground for the fusion of various cultures and civilisations ... Thus to-day Africa is the richest continent in racial types and harbours in its tolerant climate the greatest conglomeration of men of all shades of colour, custom and cultures.” This long history of ethnic and cultural blending was Africa’s unique “spiritual heritage” and Africans’ primary contribution to human civilization, the quality which both defined and secured their place in the “family of nations.”

All these ancient civilisations which have diffused themselves into the life-blood of African towns, cities or isolated villages for several centuries prior to contact with modern Western civilisation, together with the minor cultures which have been fashioned by individual tribes out of the exigencies of their peculiar environment—these are what we are referring to when we speak of the African’s spiritual heritage. That is what we mean when we speak of the African’s contribution to the future of civilisation or the forces which history has been storing up in the soil of Africa wherewith her sons can forge out a great civilisation.

Thus, the WASU maintained, “having at his disposal the greatest possible variety of cultures—both the African indigenous and the European and American—it stands to reason that the greatest synthesis is within [the African’s] reach, and the only way of realising that synthesis, we believe, is by adopting the W.A.S.U. habit of thought.” This “habit of thought” was, at once, culturally conservative and inclusive; the “W.A.S.U. spirit,” distinctively African and internationalist. “The African should discover and adopt his native outlook on all matters so long as that outlook does not clash with principles of human conduct,” and “our acquaintance with non-African societies and institutions must not induce us to destroy our native institutions, but rather give us hints as to methods whereby we may strengthen these institutions by *resort to indigenous materials*.” “It is through that attitude,” the Union claimed, “that a truly African civilisation can arise, that is *by adopting the African view-point synthesised from the ancient cultures of Africa*.”¹³⁵

¹³⁵ “Editorial,” *Wāṣū* n. 8 (January 1929), pp. 2-3.

In his remarks to the WASU, Locke acknowledged the gulf in understanding and experience separating African Americans from those on the African continent. Yet, he also noted that a new regard for Africa, including a greater appreciation of the former's complicity in reproducing stereotypes of African backwardness, and a strong desire to connect with and learn *from* African intellectuals had grown out of the New Negro movement in the United States. "I am convinced," Locke told the members of the Union, "that it is to our mutual advantage to work toward a spiritual re-union and mutual understanding between the now separated branches of the Negro peoples ... What we call the 'New Negro' mind is reaching out in intelligent ways towards Africa."

For Locke, racism and nationalism were two sides of the same coin—the one depended upon the other for its coherence. He viewed "internationalism" as the defining feature of the postwar "new world," which would supplant the "selfish nationalism" and "racialism" of the "old order." It was here that Locke found philosophical common ground with his audience. "In this time of revolution," he argued, "our racial thinking must rise to a higher plane; and just as there is no room in progressive thought to-day for narrow and selfish nationalism, so there is also no proper place for narrow and selfish racialism. Our thought and plans, warrantably focused upon the improvement and welfare of the Negro peoples, must nevertheless be consistent with the progressive and constructive trends of the new world order and of the internationalism upon which it is based." Internationalism complemented "the making of a new Africa" and their attempt "to bridge the broken span between [American Negroes] and the Motherland." "And if we turn toward one another in the spirit of this new internationalism," Locke averred, "there will be nothing in our plans or actions that would be inconsistent with the most progressive and constructive trends of the

world to-day.” Far from representing a retrograde turn to ethnic separatism or chauvinism, the move towards pan-African unity epitomized the “new internationalism” of the age.

A black internationalism based on intellectual dialogue and cooperation represented a necessary counter to the primary obstacles to racial unity and global integration, more generally, the ideological effects of racialism and nationalism. Locke admitted that in the past African Americans had seen “Africa through a glass darkly, at second remove, sentimentally through the eyes of Christian missionaryism” and “the limitations and bias of the Euro-American outlook.” To overcome the peculiarities of their historical experience and “adopted and acquired civilisation,” those in the diaspora, he added, need “your help and co-operation.” “In our day,” Locke maintained, “the old isolation must be brought to an end by an intelligent exchange of ideas. This will be the more constructive the more we let go the idea that we can think better for each other than we can think for ourselves.” He highlighted two significant differences “between the old and the new school of thought” regarding Africa. “The new view considers Africa primarily from its own point of view and does not seek to impose an alien point of view ... Our principal ambition is to second any efforts made by the intelligent leadership of Africa in the direction of self-development and self-help.” He continued, “we realise also that any effective contacts between us must be mutual and upon the basis of a *co-operative exchange* in which we have as much to learn and to gain as you.” Yet, reciprocal exchange would not dissolve the differences between African Americans and Africans. Rather, Locke conceded, “Our situation differs in many respects from yours, but that very difference is educational in broadening your social outlook.” Again, his approach to the difficulties troubling relations between “the now separated branches of the Negro peoples” accorded with a more general feature of the modern world. “People will be most efficient who live in terms of the greatest possible synthesis of

civilisations,” he argued, “and we welcome this difficult task which our peculiar heritage and history imposes upon us.”

Locke and the Union’s members also shared a certain vision of the intellectual minority’s relationship to “the masses of our respective peoples.” Both Locke and the WASU stressed the necessary link between knowledge production and political mobilization and accorded the intellectual a central role in the latter. Locke endorsed of the Union’s activities on the basis that, as its members often claimed, the “younger educated classes” represented the vanguard of a nascent Africa. He told his audience, “I see in you and in this occasion the greatest promise of an eventual helpful relation and co-operation, not so much between the masses of our respective peoples, as between those who are or are to be the directing minority of leadership on either side.” “You represent on your side, the very element of which I speak.”¹³⁶

Despite the differences in the composition of its membership and, at times, its acrimonious relations with the WASU, the West Indian-dominated League of Coloured Peoples also championed black unity as an extension of the internationalist ethos of the times. In his remarks at a Wilberforce centenary celebration in Port Maria, Jamaica, which appeared in *The Keys*, Clare McFarlane described the Caribbean as the site of unprecedented cultural exchange and synthesis. “By the very circumstance of being cut off from our natural or racial origins,” he explained, “we, in these West Indies, are favourably placed for leading the way in the acquirement of an international consciousness ... the outlook which will regard the world as a single place and all men as brothers.” This “is the peculiar task allotted to these islands the distinctive contribution to world affairs which it is their privilege to

¹³⁶ Alain Locke, “Afro-Americans and West Africans: A New Understanding,” in *ibid.*, pp. 18-24.

make.”¹³⁷ McFarlane’s outline of Caribbean history dovetailed with Solanke’s view of West Africa’s past and Locke’s assertion that black cultures around the Atlantic were the products of the greatest mixture of civilizations in modern history.

While distinguishing their position as “Africans of African birth,” like the LCP, the WASU called upon people of African descent around the Atlantic to support the Union as an expression of unity and a new cooperative spirit. “We wish all our readers, particularly American and West Indian negroes, to help to maintain the journal by subscribing and advertising to it and to remember that once the Negro race was one and that it should be one for it is one.”¹³⁸ Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, the WASU’s conception of “nationalism” and the cultural project associated with it assumed an explicitly extra-national form, articulating regional, continental, and deterritorialized registers of belonging. Black internationalism represented an essential part of the evolution of West African nationhood, and the latter, a precondition for the full flowering of the former.

The most salient identifications of most black intellectuals in interwar London coalesced around pan-Caribbean, pan-Yoruba, pan-West African, and pan-African notions of community, not the prevailing territorial divisions under imperial rule. The activities of the WASU focused, as Coleman states, on “the awakening of a racial, not a territorial, consciousness.” If Nigerians like Solanke often outnumbered their fellow West Africans in the Union, “in no instance were native-born Nigerians encouraged ... to think of Nigeria as an individual national entity or to feel that they were Nigerians.” “‘Race,’ ‘African,’ and ‘nationality’ were interchangeable, almost synonymous, terms.”¹³⁹ In 1933, *Wasu* reproduced “A Short Exhortation to W.A.S.U. and its Branches” by Rev. S. O. Odutola, vice president

¹³⁷ “The Wilberforce Centenary Celebrations, Hull. July 23rd-29th,” *The Keys* v. 1, n. 2 (October 1933), p. 34-35.

¹³⁸ “Editorial,” *Wasu* 2, 2 (April-June 1933), p. 1.

¹³⁹ Coleman, *Nigeria*, p. 210.

of the WASU fraternity of Kano, Nigeria. Odutola's speech was, as Olusanya observes, "nothing but a call to political action." He argued that the "driving forces" of the "Tie of Consanguinity" and "Common Fellowship in suffering" alone "should be potent enough to persuade us to unite," comparing the major ethnic groups of West Africa to the Jewish people. "Among the Yoruba (or Aku) people, Oduduwa occupies exactly the same position as Abraham holds among the Israelites. I may even go further to suggest that ... the Yorubas, Benins, the Ibos (at least the Onitshas), a large part of the Dahomians and Sierra Leoneans (especially the Creole element), like the Children of Israel, possess equal claim to the use of the tribal phrase, 'Oduduwa is our Father.'" In Odutola's estimation, the role of British imperialism in fostering West African unity was significant but ultimately insufficient, in itself, to bind them together. "Unity, in the true sense of it, did not exist among us before the advent of British rule ... that is to say, unity is being forced upon us *from without* ... a unity which allows the Imperial Government to carry on the machinery of its work." By contrast, "The sort of unity that can help us as a race, nay, as a nation, must be that which springs *from within*; that is to say, 'The Will to Unity.'" Odutola stressed the importance of organizations like the WASU, which would "accelerate" and guide this process, and noted in conclusion, "The European Great War of 1914 has let loose the spirit of Nationalism and it behoves us to conserve our energy in tune with the policy of the W.A.S.U., remembering that our ultimate aim and object in view being West African National Independence...."¹⁴⁰

For the West African intellectuals in the Union, however, this goal did not rule out some form of association with Britain in the future. Before the Second World War, most in the WASU continued to believe that a self-governing West Africa should remain part of a reformed Commonwealth.

¹⁴⁰ "A Short Exhortation," *Wàsù* v. 2, n. 1 (January 1933), pp. 26-27.

Though shaped by different circumstances in Jamaica and less confrontational in his tactics, the founder and president of the LCP, Dr. Harold Moody, expressed views similar to those of Solanke and the WASU. In one of his many speeches to church-related bodies in Britain, Moody exclaimed, “I am proud of my British citizenship, but I am still more proud of my colour, and I do not want to feel that my colour is going to rob me of any of the privileges to which I am entitled as a British citizen.”¹⁴¹ Moody maintained that these sentiments were not mutually exclusive. Indeed, he devoted himself to the creation of a “colour-blind empire.” Thus, like the WASU, he demanded the promotion Africans “to positions of authority and trust” and “federation, self-government, a university, and economic development” in the West Indies. Moody maintained his faith in the transformative potential of democracy, meritocracy, and racial equality to the end of his life. If he regularly criticized the injustices of British imperialism, he also believed that the British Empire could be reformed into an entity defined by mutually beneficial association. However, this position increasingly attracted criticism from younger Caribbean and African intellectuals by the end of the 1930s.¹⁴²

For Moody, cooperation across differences, whether political or racial, represented the best means of advancing the interests of people of African descent around the globe. Conversely, black unity and self-help, if not autonomy, was a prerequisite to fostering greater interracial understanding. Many of the events organized by the LCP were essentially “British-African assemblies,” and representatives of these groups participated in countless others sponsored by the Independent Labour Party (ILP), Union for Democratic Control, Royal Society of the Arts, National Council for Civil Liberties, Anti-Slavery and Aborigines

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Killingray, p. 63.

¹⁴² Killingray, p. 65, 66-67.

Protection Society, Fabian Society, and League Against Imperialism. The LCP held summer schools and conferences on topics like “The Negro in the World Today” (1934), and roughly forty percent of League members were white in 1936. An impressive array of intellectuals from the Britain and the colonies presented papers at the League’s third annual conference in 1936, most notably H. O. Davies, C. L. R. James (“Economic Organisation in the Tropics”), the African-American economic historian George Brown (“The Clash of Cultures”), Leonard Barnes (“Building a New Society”), Norman Leys, William Macmillan, and C. F. Strickland, a recognized expert on cooperative societies.¹⁴³ Likewise, the speakers at the LCP’s conference the following year included West Indian and African intellectuals and activists like W. Arthur Lewis, Louis Mbanefo, and Chris Jones of the Colonial Seamen’s Association as well as established politicians, colonial administrators, missionaries, and Africanists such as George Lansbury, Reginald Sorensen, William Gallacher, Donald Cameron, Cullen Young, Bertha Slosberg, and Macmillan.¹⁴⁴ At the instigation of James Desmond Buckle, the Gold Coast Students’ Association (GCSA), Negro Welfare Association (NWA), Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), and London Federation of Peace Councils held a public meeting on the “Colonies and Peace” in late 1938, and West Africans and West Indians representing the NWA, GCSA, LCP, and the Coloured Film Artistes Association participated in a conference on “African Peoples, Democracy and World Peace” in July 1939.¹⁴⁵

To some black intellectuals, however, his insistence on establishing ties with and attempts to placate British allies and colonial officials limited the LCP’s effectiveness as a

¹⁴³ “The Third Annual Conference,” *The Keys* v. 3, n. 4 (April-June 1936), p. 48.

¹⁴⁴ See *The Keys* v. 5, n. 1-2 (July-September, October-December 1937).

¹⁴⁵ Hakim Adi, “Forgotten Comrade? Desmond Buckle: An African Communist in Britain,” *Science & Society* v. 70, n. 1 (January 2006), p. 30-31; also Adi, “Pan-Africanism and West African Nationalism in Britain,” *African Studies Review* v. 43, n. 1, p. 77.

means of expressing the concerns of Africans and West Indians. In his autobiography, the Jamaican writer Claude McKay, who also spent years in London between the wars, commented on the limits of the tolerance and understanding of his British “friends.” “[As] a ‘suppressed minority’ you are not just a person: you are a problem and every crusading crank imagines he knows how to solve your problem [but] you are not supposed to criticise your [white] friends or you will be called mean and ungrateful.”¹⁴⁶ In remaining committed to engaging with British politicians, journalists, and officials while challenging racist caricatures wherever they surfaced (from Whitehall to the popular press), Moody was able to gain the ear of policymakers in the heart of the empire and establish the LCP on firmer footing than other black organizations in interwar Britain. Nevertheless, Moody’s commitment to balancing these demands led some to question the benefits of his advocacy work by the late 1930s.

Individuals like Paul Robeson and C. L. R. James participated in the League’s activities in its early years but eventually drifted away from the organization. James gave a speech on the “West Indian” at an early LCP conference in London and contributed articles on cricket and “West Indian Self-Government” to *The Keys*. “West Indian Self-Government” was based on the manuscript for *The Life of Captain Caprini* that he brought with him to England and published in an abridged form in 1933 with the help of Leonard and Virginia Woolf as *The Case for West-Indian Self Government*.¹⁴⁷ Yet, both Robeson and James became increasingly skeptical about the LCP’s accomplishments by the middle part of the decade as the former gravitated to the Communist Party and the latter, to Trotskyist circles in London. James’ later misgivings with regard to the LCP and his political differences with Moody

¹⁴⁶ Claude McKay, *A Long Way From Home: An Autobiography*, intro. by St. Clair Drake (New York, 1970), p. 68-70.

¹⁴⁷ See *The Keys* v. 1, n. 1 (July 1933), p. 5 and v. 1, n. 4 (April-June 1934), p. 72, 84.

notwithstanding, the inclusion of his writings in the early issues of the League's journal underscores its importance as a rare space for aspiring black authors to publish in the metropole. Indeed, James later acknowledged Moody's publicist skills and the significance of his political labors. "There was some propaganda, there was agitation. Moody would be able to speak now and then to a member of Parliament, he would get a letter in the papers, and anything in those days mattered because there were too few black people around, and here was somebody who wasn't an insignificant person, who was a well-established medical practitioner."¹⁴⁸ What is more, Robeson's interactions with League members contributed to his increasingly radical stance in the 1930s. In his report on a meeting of the LCP in 1933, Reginald Bridgeman of the LAI noted that Robeson "startled many of those who heard him by denying that there was any discrimination against coloured persons in Britain. Any prejudice, he said, that may exist is due to the presence of Americans in this country."¹⁴⁹ Robeson began to see racism as an international problem rooted in the economic foundations of global integration during his time in Britain and travels across Europe, more generally. Although Robeson gravitated towards the Communist left in subsequent years, placing him somewhat at odds with most in the League, whatever differences emerged between the group, Robeson's early exchanges with individuals in the LCP and WASU played no small role in his political awakening.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Macdonald, p. 9.

¹⁴⁹ Bridgeman to Arnold Ward (September 15, 1933), PRO KV/2/1829.

¹⁵⁰ For example, Robeson was criticized at a LCP meeting for joining the Communist-supported Unity Theatre, and "it was agreed that steps should be taken to persuade him not to identify himself so closely with the Communist Party." Special Branch Report (October 26, 1937), *ibid.* On Robeson and the Unity Theatre, see Colin Chambers, *The Story of the Unity Theatre* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

Conclusion

During the interwar period, West African and West Indian intellectuals in London created a number of new organizations like the Union of Students of African Descent, African Progress Union, West African Student Union, and the League of Coloured Peoples, which were devoted to the liberation of people of African descent and combating the global color bar. A growing interest in black unity on both sides of the Atlantic and the emergence of anticolonial movements in the colonies came to inform the political sensibilities of Africans and West Indians in London, who increasingly viewed themselves as representatives of the growing intelligentsia in the colonies, a nascent Africa, and a global black community. Many who arrived as “British intellectuals” became black internationalists and opponents of imperialism in interwar London. From their position at the heart of the British Empire, they, in turn, played a central role in linking protests and disseminating news and black internationalist thought around the Atlantic and throughout Britain’s colonies in Africa and the Caribbean.

In spite of the differences in the composition of their membership and their ideological perspectives, the black pressure groups that emerged during the interwar period shared a common set of political and intellectual concerns—above all, discrimination, depictions of Africans and people of African descent, the place of Africa in world history, and fostering unity within and between large and diverse colonial populations. There was often a considerable degree of continuity in their views on how best to address these problems as well. The desire for a social center and hostel in London, a “home away from home” and “a link in the heart of the Empire between the African at home and the African abroad,” became the impetus for the creation of a series of new black organizations. Black intellectuals in London attempted to counter British fantasies of the “African” through a

range of activities and, in the case of the WASU, the establishment of an autonomous African hostel, envisioned as a training ground for West African unity and an expression of the desire for self-government. The WASU and LCP provided an institutional basis for a sustained engagement with the imperial state, even as their members unceasingly attacked the practice of British imperialism. Exposing the mechanisms of imperial control and racism wherever they appeared, they helped circumvent the power of the colonial governments on the ground and limit their ability to employ “divide and rule” tactics by providing a link between black intellectuals from around the Atlantic, sympathetic groups in Britain, and burgeoning colonial reform movements throughout the empire.

Chapter Two

Black Internationalism, Empire, and Sovereignty in the Metropole

In his autobiography, T. Ras Makonnen claimed that the struggle for African liberation was formed in the crucible of the imperial metropole amidst the politically charged climate of the late 1930s. “When you look at the results of those Africans who had been in England,” he wrote, “you wouldn’t be far wrong in saying that England had been the executioner of its own empire.” In the first place, “she had allowed these blacks to feel the contrast between freedom in the metropolis and slavery in the colonies.” Moreover, in Britain, “Africans were not only compelled to think out the position of their own people, but were forced by the pressures of the times into making alliances across boundaries that would have been unthinkable back home.”¹⁵¹ Although, he observes, “Together, they helped to constitute that generation of Black intellectuals that ... understood that the project of anti-imperialism had to be centered in the metropole,” Cedric Robinson criticizes, perhaps justifiably, these remarks and similar ones by George Padmore regarding the relative freedom that the metropole offered to black intellectuals from the colonies. Yet, his suggestion that they displayed a “near-reckless admiration” for England to the point of “self-delusion” is misleading.¹⁵²

African and Caribbean intellectuals, university students, and activists in London maintained a number of organizations and publications that facilitated dialogue with the colonial state and the circulation of ideas and news around the Atlantic in the 1930s. The political activities of black intellectuals in Britain expanded considerably during this period, particularly after the invasion of Abyssinia by Mussolini’s Italy. This chapter focuses on the

¹⁵¹ Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, p. 155.

¹⁵² For Robinson, only C. L. R. James escaped this “delusion of liberalism.” Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Press, 1983), p. 262-265.

lineaments of this new black counterpublic, its primary lines of convergence, and the networks of circulation through which it emerged in London. Not only did black intellectuals' growing impatience with British rule and the lack of colonial reform contribute to new alliances around race, but the context of empire and the changing rationales for it during the late 1930s informed their political goals and conceptions of what black sovereignty might entail in an increasingly interdependent world. Their interactions at the heart of the British Empire encouraged them to think and act as representatives of an extra-national racial community transcending a multiplicity of "decided differences." Alliances between groups and individuals were formed, renegotiated, and abandoned as each passing crisis or issue presented new opportunities and difficulties. However, the accretion of these often fleeting moments of cooperation along with the quotidian encounters gave rise to a black internationalist political imaginary with which many identified deeply. African and Caribbean intellectuals' appropriation of metropolitan culture and ideas were neither ancillary to this process nor illustrative of a colonized consciousness, as some like Robinson suggest, but rather constituent elements of a transformative political vision. They employed various conceptions of internationalism and the shifting terms of the colonial governance to make material demands upon the state but and articulate a variety of extra-national identifications. What is more, when compared to the colonies, London and Europe, more broadly, gave Africans and West Indians a privileged vantage of developments on the international scene, particularly the growing menace of fascism, and often became the site of their radicalization.

The late 1930s witnessed a dramatic upsurge in black political organizing in London due to events in Africa and the Caribbean and the injection of new personalities like the Trinidadians C. L. R. James and George Padmore (born Malcolm Nurse). For many black intellectuals, it was a period in world history pregnant with possibility as well as new dangers. Unlike the United States, Eslanda Goode Robeson wrote, in Britain “there is news of Africa everywhere: in the press, in the schools, in the films, in conversation. English people are actively interested in Africa economically and politically.” “[E]verywhere you go,” she continued, “someone’s uncle, brother, or cousin is working, teaching, administering, or ‘serving’ in Africa. Women go out to Africa with the ir men, or go out to visit them. There are courses on Africa in every good university in England ... Everywhere there is information about Africa.”¹⁵³ “Looking back on this period,” Ras Makonnen (born Thomas Griffiths) from British Guiana recalled, “you certainly couldn’t say we were living the sort of life that one heard the eighteenth century revolutionaries lived—morbid fellows who were distracted and had never a gay moment as they thought how they might destroy society. We were operating in the midst of a radicalism unmatched in Europe, but it was a gay period, a period of purposefulness.” The pace of change seemed to be quickening, which contributed to black intellectuals’ belief that their actions in the metropole could have far-reaching consequences. “You had the feeling,” Makonnen added, “that the truth was being told once and for all. Britain was really in a ferment—seething, in fact, like an African pot. And people wanted to know if the things which we spoke about were really true. So the opportunity which that historic period provided us was rather valuable in the cause to which we were committed.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Eslanda Goode Robeson, *African Journey* (New York: John Day, 1945), p. 13.

¹⁵⁴ Ras Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, ed. by Kenneth King (Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 147.

The Italian invasion of Abyssinia in the late 1930s, in particular, engendered an outpouring of public support for the beleaguered African state from black intellectuals and many sympathetic Britons like Sylvia Pankhurst. The manner in which the world's attention fixed on the only independent African struck many observers. As Evelyn Waugh, who was a press correspondent in Addis Ababa during the crisis, put it, "Abyssinia was news."¹⁵⁵ Under Menelik II (1889-1909), Abyssinia had rebuffed Italian encroachments during the European "scramble" for African territory in the late nineteenth century. When Mussolini amassed his forces along Ethiopia's border and launched a renewed attempt to conquer the country, Britain failed to firmly oppose the Italian invasion. Instead, the British government supported a patchwork of self-serving sanctions under the aegis of League of Nations before ultimately recognizing Mussolini's standing as "Emperor of Abyssinia" in November 1938.

The war in Ethiopia provoked a public outcry from black intellectuals around the Atlantic and reaffirmed the conviction shared by many that the quest for global peace and stability could not be separated from the struggle for racial justice.¹⁵⁶ For many African and West Indian intellectuals in London, Ethiopia, an ancient empire with a recent history of successful resistance to European invasion, represented a potent symbol of African defiance in the face of imperialism and of a renascent Africa.¹⁵⁷ Traveling through Britain in 1935 en route to the United State where he would attend Lincoln University, Kwame Nkrumah remembered feeling "as if the whole of London had suddenly declared war on me personally" when he encountered a newspaper placard which read "MUSSOLINI

¹⁵⁵ Evelyn Waugh, *Waugh in Abyssinia* (London: Longmans Green, 1936), p. 21-23.

¹⁵⁶ The conflict sparked similar expressions of support for Abyssinia on the coast of West Africa. For example, prominent members of the Lagosian elite held a mass meeting to protest Italian aggression against Ethiopia in 1935 and formed the Abyssinia Association. See James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 209.

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, George Padmore, "Ethiopia Today: The Making of a Modern State," *Negro Anthology*, ed. by Nancy Cunard (London, 1934), p. 612-618.

INVADES ETHIOPIA.”¹⁵⁸ The Africanist scholar William M. Macmillan observed that the violation of Abyssinia’s sovereignty sparked a “tremendous awakening” amongst people of African descent around the globe.¹⁵⁹

In London, the fate of Abyssinia and the plight of its forlorn emperor, Haile Selassie, became the occasion for the creation of new black organizations in the mid-1930s, contributed to the politicization of existing groups like the League of Coloured Peoples and West African Students Union, and provided an issue around which moderate and more black intellectuals could unite and a basis for future cooperation.¹⁶⁰ Many Africans and West Indians in London believed that the major powers’ opportunistic approach to the Abyssinian crisis demonstrated that the position of the sovereign African state within the global “family of nations” was analogous to that of colonial subjects in the British Empire. The black nation-state would retain, at best, an illusory independence and its future would remain in doubt so long as the reputed racial inferiority of non-Europeans could be used to legitimate the violation of another nation’s sovereignty or the color bar. In short, the plight of Haile Selassie before the League of Nations mirrored the struggles of millions of people of African descent around the world; his fight was the their fight.¹⁶¹ In probably his first contribution to the Independent Labour Party’s weekly newspaper, the *New Leader*, C. L. R. James called the

¹⁵⁸ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919-1945* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 257.

¹⁶⁰ On the impact of the Abyssinian crisis on the pan-Africanist movement, see Robert G. Weisbord, “British West Indian Reaction to the Italian-Ethiopian War: An Episode in Pan-Africanism,” *Caribbean Studies* v. 10, n. 1 (April 1970) and “Black America and the Italian-Ethiopian Crisis: An Episode in Pan-Negroism,” *The Historian* v. 34, n. 2 (February 1972); also James S. Coleman, *Nigeria, Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), p. 209-210. On its influence on the LCP, see Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe and Africa*, trans. by Ann Keep (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1974), p. 346; also Roderick J. Macdonald, “Introduction to *The Keys*,” *The Keys: The Official Organ of the League of Coloured Peoples* (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1976), p. 13-14.

¹⁶¹ As Padmore’s biographer, Hooker, notes, “It was neither Ethiopian nor communist policy ... to identify the conflict as a racial one.” James R. Hooker, *Black Revolutionary: George Padmore’s Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 42.

British government's claim that it was defending the independence of Abyssinia "a brazen lie." "'Gallant little Belgium' was bad enough," he wrote, "but 'the independence of Ethiopia' is worse. It is the greatest swindle in all the living history of imperialism. The British Government, having mobilised world opinion and many of its own workers behind it, has put a stranglehold on Ethiopia, as tight as anything Italian Imperialism even intended." "First, James added, "the Imperialists called the exploited areas colonies; next, protectorates; then, mandates. Now it is 'helping a sister nation.'"¹⁶² In the late 1930s, African and Caribbean intellectuals regularly drew connections between instantiations of racism and colonial exploitation at both the inter-imperial and intra-imperial level, and sought to link opposition to them. In this way, many believed, the struggle for black freedom would assume a properly internationalist form to match the twin evils of inter-imperialism and the global color bar.

Within the WASU, women took the lead in protesting Mussolini's blatant disregard for the African nation's sovereignty and the complacency of both the British government and the League of Nations in responding to it, forming an Ethiopia Defence Fund soon after the invasion. In announcing the new initiative, the Union's journal acknowledged that the "W.A.S.U. ladies" had become vital to sustaining it and the group's other activities.

If anyone wishes to know how in these hard times *WASU* is still forging ahead, our answer is that it is mostly due to the activities of our women members. Their motto seems to be (excuse the Mussolinian ring): With the men, without the men or against the men, *WASU* must be maintained. Our Socials Committee and the W.A.S.U. Ethiopia Defence Fund are entirely composed of our women. In each case they presented the Executive Committee with a *fait accompli*. While the men were discussing, the women had acted.¹⁶³

¹⁶² C. L. R. James, "Is This Worth a War? The League's Scheme to Rob Abyssinia of Its Independence," *New Leader* (October 4, 1935), reprinted in *At the Rendezvous of Victory* (London: Allison & Busby, 1984), p. 13, 15.

¹⁶³ *Wàsù* v. 4, n. 5 (November 1935), p. 70.

Like the WASU, the LCP denounced the invasion and followed diplomatic relations between Britain and Italy and the discussions on Ethiopia at the League of Nations with increasing skepticism in the pages of *The Keys* between 1934 and 1937.¹⁶⁴ In the summer of 1935, Claude Cummings, an “African correspondent” in Wales, exhorted, “There are millions of our race in America, in the West Indies, in Africa and elsewhere. Shall we sit down with self-complacency while Italy carries on the destruction of the only independent state in Africa? I say, No!” Cummings suggested “that an urgent appeal be sent forthwith ... for all the manhood of our race who are fit to rally round Abyssinia so that the Italians may be given a sound drubbing.” Noting the contributions of black troops in the Great War, he continued, “I am sure there are millions of our people who will only be to glad to lay down their lives for the defence of our Fatherland.... Every man was born to be free ..., but we shall never be free until we unite among ourselves.”¹⁶⁵

At a general meeting on September 4, 1935, the LCP passed a resolution expressing “its utmost cooperation with the Emperor of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian People in the deep shadow of War which now hangs over their beloved country,” and forwarded the document to “the Ethiopian Legation, the British and Italian Governments, the League of Nations Union and all European Governments now operating in Africa.” The resolution charged “that this attitude of a European country towards an African people is expressive of a deeply seated conviction in the minds of most European peoples that African peoples were

¹⁶⁴ In the mid-1930s, W. Arthur Lewis, a young St. Lucian economist and at the time a Ph.D. student at the London School of Economics, injected a new acumen into the contents of *The Keys* as the journal’s editor between June 1935 and October 1936.¹⁶⁴ Charles Collet, who also served as the League’s general secretary, succeeded Lewis as the editor of *The Keys* for a period of eighteen months. With the start of the journal’s sixth volume in 1938, the Barbadian Peter Blackman took on the editing responsibilities.¹⁶⁴ Blackman, who was the president of the Negro Welfare Association (NWA) that operated from the office of the British Communist Party’s Colonial Bureau, helped push *The Keys* in a more critical direction for a period in the late 1940s.

¹⁶⁵ Claude Cummings, “Italy and Abyssinia,” *The Keys* v. 3, n. 1 (July-September 1935), p. 6-7. See also “Current Comment” in *ibid.*, p. 2; E. N. McKenzie, “What is the Ethiopian’s Sin?,” *The Keys* v. 2, n. 2 (October-December 1934), p. 39; Reginald Reynolds, “Italy Returns to Abyssinia,” *The Keys* v. 2, n. 4 (April-June 1935), p. 70, 84-85.

ordained to be their serfs,” and called upon “the European countries which now wield authority in Africa and ... the League of Nations ... to consider a plan for the future of Africa which ... should be nothing less than the ultimate and complete freedom of Africa from any external domination whatsoever.” In mid-1936, an editorial in *The Keys* denounced French and British complicity in the violation of Abyssinia’s sovereignty. “The world’s coloured population has looked on at this shameless rape of a coloured Empire,” adding, “the long memory of black Africa never forgets and never forgives an injury or injustice.”¹⁶⁶ The journal also published “Abyssinia and the Imperialists” by C. L. R. James, a piece that was markedly more outspoken than the journal’s usual content. “Africans and people of African descent, especially those who have been poisoned by British Imperialist education, needed a lesson. They have got it.” Linking the Italian invasion of Ethiopia to the economic motivations underlying European imperialism in general, he maintained, “*There is no longer any independence of Abyssinia worth a scrap of paper as far as the Imperialists are concerned.*” “[B]lessed with the holy water of the League [of Nations],” James continued, “European imperialism was determined to get Abyssinia, and it has got it.”¹⁶⁷

As the situation worsened in Ethiopia, Haile Selassie fled the capital Addis Ababa for London in 1936, where representatives of the major black groups greeted the arrival of the exiled emperor and his family with a “royal welcome.” The daughter of Chris Braithwaite (alias “Jones”), a London dockworker and the president of the Colonial Seamen’s Union in Britain, presented him with a bouquet of flowers.¹⁶⁸ The crisis in Ethiopia and the political theater unfolding at the League of Nations in Geneva seemed more immediate to many black intellectuals from London, especially after the beleaguered Emperor’s arrival in Britain.

¹⁶⁶ “The Rape of a Black Empire,” *The Keys* v. 4, n. 1 (June-September 1936), p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ C. L. R. James, “Abyssinia and the Imperialists,” *The Keys* v. 3, n. 3 (January-March 1936), p. 32, 39-40; “Resoluton Re Abyssinia,” *ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁶⁸ Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, p. 222.

For those one met him in person, the experience of meeting Selassie made a significant impression, provoking feelings of sympathy and pride. Hezekiah Oladipo Olagunju Davies, a Nigerian student who had helped form the Lagos Youth Movement, became active in the West African Students Union soon after he arrived in the metropole in 1934. In anticipation of Selassie's first press conference in London, Davies secured accreditation as a correspondent for the *Nigerian Daily Times*. Despite the "large crowd of journalists" gathered to interview the emperor, "because I was the only African among the lot, I was ushered in first before him." When Davies asked "whether Ethiopia was or had ever been an Italian colony," he found himself "being educated in an academic way." Selassie "sat upright" and replied, "The Ethiopian empire has always been a sovereign state, and has been so for eight thousand years; no power on earth can convert Ethiopia into a colonial possession."

Previously, Davies had assumed that "Ethiopia was an African country which had come within the operation of the Berlin Conference," but, as he explained, "There and then I remembered that I was facing the King of Kings, Lion of Judah, the Negus." Although King George VI "welcomed" Emperor Selassie's upon his arrival in Britain and invited him to a dinner party at Buckingham Palace, Davies recalled that it soon became "obvious that the British Government wanted him to leave" and, as a "compromise," "was sent to stay in Bath," where he remained until late 1937.¹⁶⁹ Like many Africans in the metropole, Davies noticed the British government's growing discomfort with Selassie's presence, which deepened his apprehension about the former's willingness to pursue a policy of colonial appeasement to lure Mussolini away from an alliance with Hitler.

Of all the black intellectuals in London during late 1930s, the Jamaican poet, playwright, and journalist, Una Marson, had the closest view of Selassie's travails, witnessing

¹⁶⁹ Hezekiah Oladipo Olagunju Davies, *Memoirs* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Evans Brothers, 1989), p. 70-72.

firsthand his final pleas before the League of Nations. Marson left the city once again to take a position at the League in Geneva in August 1935. In an interview with Marson for the *Daily Gleaner* one year later, the author described her as “the Jamaican girl who made history for her country and race, in being the first coloured girl to be one of the collaborators at the League of Nations in Geneva.”¹⁷⁰ Marson’s position in the League’s information section gave her a privileged perspective on the diplomatic tensions of the day, and the mounting Abyssinia crisis quickly consumed the bulk of her attention. She approached the head of the Abyssinian deputation, Tekle Hawariat, to offer her assistance, and he sent her to Dr. Charles Martin, the country’s minister to Britain. On October 2, 1935, the day before Italian troops invaded Ethiopia, she returned to London to take up her new post.¹⁷¹ Though the legation could pay Marson little to nothing for her long hours of work, she eagerly threw herself into the job. When the exiled Emperor arrived at London’s Waterloo Station on June 3, 1936, Marson was among the representatives of black organizations and sympathetic British groups assembled to greet him, although she did not meet him until days later at the legation’s London headquarters. When Selassie traveled to Geneva to appeal for a mandate recognizing his country’s sovereignty, Marson chose to accompany him as his personal secretary.

Marson’s unique perspective on the Ethiopian crisis caused an irrevocable shift in her judgment of European imperialism and the efficacy of the League to combat racism and militarism around the globe. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, it became apparent to Marson that Britain had no intention of defending the embattled African country from the designs of Mussolini’s Italy. Exhausted from overwork and her travels, she returned to Jamaica in late

¹⁷⁰ “Jamaican Girl Who Was Personal Secretary to Haile Selassie,” *Daily Gleaner* (September 25, 1936), p. 17.

¹⁷¹ See “Racial Prejudice in London Not Improving Says Miss Marson,” *Daily Gleaner* (September 28, 1936), p. 5.

September, where she told the *Daily Gleaner* in an interview the day of her arrival that “the position of Ethiopia is very heart-breaking and the tribulations of the Ethiopians have cracked me up.” Marson lauded the Emperor’s “indomitable will ... to fight to the last,” but confessed, “for myself, I regret to say that I am not hopeful about his fight.”¹⁷² The British response to the Abyssinian crisis exacerbated her bitterness over the discrepancies between British imperial rhetoric and practice. Far from expressing confidence in the progressive influence of colonial rule, Marson stressed the importance of black intellectuals’ activities in the metropole and scanned the imperial horizon for examples to support her contention. “The Colonial office,” she asserted, “is not going to lift a finger to work out a clear and definite Colonial policy until it has to do so. The New Constitution was not given to India as a love gift. It had to be done. Britain said she refused to be intimidated; but there can be no doubt that but for agitation in India it would not have been forthcoming.” Marson suggested that the activities of Africans and West Indians in London might have a similar effect, arguing “that people in the Colonies and Dominions who gather in London to discuss matters of importance to their countries are doing great work.”¹⁷³

Marson’s identification with Ethiopia and particularly the members of the London delegation reaffirmed her commitment to black unity and informed her perspective on the major political developments of the late 1930s. She penned the moving “To Joe and Ben (Brutally murdered in April 1937 at Addis Ababba [*sic*] by the Italians)” in response to news of the executions of the sons of the Ethiopian minister Dr. Martin, Joseph and Benjamin Martin, who left Britain to help the embattled country’s under-equipped forces resist advancing Italian troops. The brothers had fought under Ras Imru in a series of successful

¹⁷² “Jamaican Girl Who Was Personal Secretary to Haile Selassie.”

¹⁷³ Una Marson, “A Call to Downing Street,” *Public Opinion* (September 11, 1937), p. 5.

battles before ultimately being taken captive along with Imru. “They sent you forth / From ‘England’s pleasant land’, / Home of your fond adoption, / Of early boyhood’s years— / They sent you forth / To the battle’s front / To fight for a country / Yours, and yet not yours / By unfamiliarity.”¹⁷⁴ Marson’s relationship with the young men’s elderly father rendered events in Abyssinia more immediate and personal. Yet, the sacrifice made by the pair also resonated with her growing attachment to Africa and people of African descent around the world, her own commitment “to fight for a country/yours, and yet not yours.” Like many of her contemporaries, Marson urged people of African descent in the Americas to embrace the cultural and historical bonds that linked them to Africa, but she also recognized that each expression of black internationalism invoked a relation of, at once, semblance and “unfamiliarity.”

In early 1935, C. L. R. James convened an ad hoc committee of black activists and intellectuals in London, including Amy Ashwood Garvey, Jomo Kenyatta, W. Arthur Lewis, and Ras Makonnen, to disseminate information and otherwise aid the beleaguered African nation. He named the group the International African Friends of Ethiopia (IAFE) and later described its purpose as an attempt to contribute “by all means in their power in the maintenance of the territorial integrity and political independence of Abyssinia.”¹⁷⁵ In a letter published by the Independent Labour Party’s *The New Leader* on June 3, 1936, James wrote, “I offered myself through the Abyssinian Embassy here to take service under the Emperor, military or otherwise.” “My hope,” he explained, “was to get into the army. It would have given me an opportunity to make contact not only with the masses of the Abyssinians and other Africans, but in the ranks with them I would have had the best possible opportunity of

¹⁷⁴ Marson, *The Moth and the Star*, p. 81.

¹⁷⁵ See “The Black Scholar Interview: C. L. R. James,” *The Black Scholar* v. 2, n. 1 (September 1970), p. 35-43.

putting across the International Socialist case.” What is more, James believed that this experience would be invaluable to the larger struggle for African liberation to come. “I did not intend to spend the rest of my life in Abyssinia, but,” he recalled, “... I thought, and still think, that two or three years there, given the fact that I am a Negro and am especially interested in the African revolution, was [*sic*] well worth the attempt.” “Unfortunately,” James continued, “Dr. Martin, the Minister [of the Abyssinia Legation in London], told me that he thought my work with the International Friends of Ethiopia would better serve the struggle against Italy.”¹⁷⁶

When the Soviet Union contravened League of Nations sanctions by providing war materials to Italy, George Padmore split from the Communist Party and made the perilous passage from Moscow through Nazi Germany to London, where he was reunited with James, his childhood friend, in 1935. In March 1937, the Sierra Leonean Isaac Theophilus Akunna Wallace-Johnson arrived in London from Accra in March 1937 to appeal his conviction for sedition before the Privy Council, he joined with members of the IAFE to form the International African Service Bureau (IASB) and assumed the responsibilities of general secretary. Wallace-Johnson allegedly viewed the organization as a platform in London to publicize the economic problems and growing government repression in Britain’s West African colonies, and advance the agenda of the West African Youth League, which he founded in Accra in 1935.¹⁷⁷ During 1937 and early 1938, the IASB published the *African*

¹⁷⁶ Reprinted in C. L. R. James, “Black Intellectuals in Britain,” *Colour, Culture and Consciousness: Immigrant Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. by Bhikhu Parekh (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), p. 159-160.

¹⁷⁷ There are several different versions of the founding of the IASB. The most common, epitomized by the account of Padmore’s biographer and James’ later writings, emphasizes the role of Padmore. However, Spitzer and Denzer offer an important corrective in highlighting the contribution of the lesser-known Wallace-Johnson, who, they suggest, “did more to introduce Marxist ideas and mass-oriented politics to West Africa than any other person in the years between the two world wars.” Though replete with misinformation, the Colonial Office files indicate that its members also viewed Wallace-Johnson as the primary force behind the creation of the IASB. On Wallace-Johnson, see Leo Spitzer and LaRay Denzer, “I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson and the West African Youth League,” Part I and II, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* v. 6, n. 3 and 4

Sentinel: A Journal Devoted the Interest of Africans and Peoples of African Descent, All Over the World as well as a shorter, mimeographed news bulletin entitled *Africa and the World*, both of which were edited by Wallace-Johnson. Padmore, James, Jomo Kenyatta, J. E. O. Addison, Nancy Cunard, and others contributed pieces to the *African Sentinel* covering the activities of the IASB in London, developments throughout Africa and the Caribbean, and debates in the House of Commons on colonial issues.

Chaired by Padmore, the IASB's executive committee included several West African intellectuals, such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, J. J. Ocuaye, F. A. Bruce, and Garan Kouyaté from the French Sudan, as well as West Indians like James, Makonnen, Chris Braithewaite, and Ashwood Garvey, who served as co-vice chairperson along with Kenyatta.¹⁷⁸ The Bureau supplied sympathetic MPs with information from the colonies, and members addressed a variety of British organizations, including branches of trade unions, the Labour Party, and the League of Nations Union. On Sundays, representatives of the IASB harangued crowds of curious Britons at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park on subjects like Ethiopia and the disturbances in the West Indies. James later claimed somewhat misleadingly, "It was the only organisation in the world at that time that was talking about and writing about the emancipation of Africa."¹⁷⁹ After James and Wallace-Johnson departed for the United States and Sierra Leone, respectively, in 1938, the tireless Padmore became the center of gravity for pan-Africanist activity for the next two decades. James later recalled, "The basis of that work

(1973), p. 413-452, 565-601. On Padmore and the IASB, see James R. Hooker, *Black Revolutionary: George Padmore's Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 49-51; James, "Notes on the Life of George Padmore," *The C. L. R. James Reader*, ed. by Anna Grimshaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 292. For the Colonial Office's view of the IASB, see CO 323/1610/2.

¹⁷⁸ Colonial Office records state that Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté (Sudan), Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria), H. O. Cendrecourt (British Guiana), J. J. Ocuaye (West Africa), Louis Mbanfo (West Africa) Elsie Duncan (West Africa), F. A. Bruce (West Africa), K. Sallie Tamba (West Africa), O. Mandoh (West Africa), Gilbert Coka (South Africa), Aida Bastian (Ethiopia), and E. Domanya (West Africa) were also members of the IASB's executive committee. See CO 323/1610/2.

¹⁷⁹ C. L. R. James, "George Padmore: Black Marxist Revolutionary," *At the Rendezvous of Victory* (London: Allison and Busby, 1984), p. 256.

[in the IASB] and the development of the ideas was Padmore's encyclopedic knowledge of Africa, of African politics and African personalities, his tireless correspondence with Africans in all parts of the continent, the unceasing stream of Africans who made the Bureau and its chairman their political headquarters when in London." Revolutionaries and bourgeois nationalists," he added, "all came."¹⁸⁰

Despite their significant political and philosophical differences, Davies, James, Padmore, Lewis, Blackman, and Dr. Moody found a basis for cooperation amidst the Abyssinia crisis in a set of core principles that emphasized unity between Africans and people of African descent in the diaspora and self-determination for colonial peoples.¹⁸¹ In March 1937, the LCP joined with other black organizations in London in organizing a rally in support of Abyssinia "which filled one of the main halls of the Memorial Hall." Its annual report for 1937 noted, "The League has followed and interested itself in all the various manifestations in favour of this unhappy country, the last part of Africa to have maintained its independence..."¹⁸² In the mid-1950s, Padmore reflected on the role of the Abyssinian crisis in fostering a black internationalist sensibility and dashing what little faith black intellectuals had in the League of Nations' ability to defend the rights of non-European peoples. "The brutal rape of Ethiopia combined with the cynical attitude of the Great Powers convinced Africans and people of African descent everywhere that black men had no rights which white men felt bound to respect if they stood in the way of their imperial

¹⁸⁰ C. L. R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (London: Allison and Busby, 1977), p. 65.

¹⁸¹ As discussed in Chapter One, Moody, the founder and president of the LCP, was anti-communist and espoused a type of liberal Christian humanism. Lewis was a Fabian Socialist, whereas Padmore, James, Blackman, and Wallace Johnson were more interested in Marxism. Padmore had been a major force in the Communist International and editor of the *Negro Worker* before his expulsion from the Party, but James rejected Leninism/Stalinism and became a leading Trotskyist in London and then the United States. While Padmore became a pariah within communist circles in the years that followed, Blackman and the Negro Welfare Association continued to enjoy the Party's support.

¹⁸² League of Coloured Peoples, "Abyssinia," *Seventh Annual Report* (1937-1938), p. 12.

interests.... With the realization of their utter defencelessness against the new aggression for Europeans in Africa, the blacks felt it necessary to look to themselves.”¹⁸³

Black intellectuals in the metropole also worked in conjunction with groups in Britain like the Abyssinian Association and Sylvia Pankhurst’s Workers’ Social Federation. Soon after his arrival in London in 1919, the Jamaican-born Harlem Renaissance poet Claude McKay met Pankhurst and joined her organization, the Workers’ Socialist Federation (WSF). McKay also worked for the WSF’s journal, the *Workers’ Dreadnought*, which became the most consistently anti-racist organ on the British Left under Pankhurst’s leadership as editor.¹⁸⁴ By the mid-1930s, Pankhurst had been interested in the issue of colonial freedom for quite some time, but the major European powers’ impassive response to Italian aggression against Ethiopia underscored its salience for her. In 1936, she launched the staunchly anti-imperialist *New Times and Ethiopian News*. As late as 1941, she wrote to the Labour MP Arthur Creech Jones decrying the “influences working to get control of the raw materials of the country, to dispossess the people and turn them into cheap labour for European interests” and requested that he send “a list of Labour Members who are specially interested in African questions, to whom I might just send any cutting or special information on Ethiopia....”¹⁸⁵ Yet, if black intellectuals and activists continued to work closely with individuals like Pankhurst in Britain, more and more, they stressed that the struggle for colonial reform and African liberation was largely theirs to wage, insisting that interracial cooperation, though invaluable strategically, had to reflect this imperative.

¹⁸³ George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* (New York: Doubleday, 1971, originally published 1956), p. 123-124.

¹⁸⁴ This was particularly true during the “race riots” in Britain in June 1919. On McKay and Pankhurst, see Winston James, “A race outcast from an outcast class: Claude McKay’s experience and analysis of Britain,” in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. by Bill Schwarz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 75-76.

¹⁸⁵ Letter from E. Sylvia Pankhurst to Arthur Creech Jones, dated August 28, 1941, Creech Jones Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford University, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 332, File 3.

The Italo-Ethiopian War cast a long shadow over events of the late 1930s, informing how black intellectuals in London viewed everything from the Popular Front to the draconian pass laws instituted by the Smuts regime in South Africa. As Coleman observes, “the ease with which [the major European powers] accommodated themselves to Italy’s conquest, served to strengthen the conviction that white men were by instinct and interest united against black men.”¹⁸⁶ The diplomatic response to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia provoked concern over the British government’s willingness to concede territory in Africa to Germany in an attempt to appease Hitler’s imperial ambitions and avoid a military conflict in Europe. During the late 1930s, rumors that Nigeria, southern portions of the Gold Coast, or Cameroon, a German colony before World War I which was administered by Britain under the League of Nations mandate, would be turned over to the Nazi Germany sparked a series of scares. The LCP fiercely opposed the idea and solicited the views of authorities on colonial issues like Margery Perham, which were reprinted them in *The Keys*.¹⁸⁷ In an editorial, Blackman rejected the notion of appeasement, whether in Africa or Central Europe. “African and other inhabitants of the British Empire,” he maintained, “can only give their support to a policy which secures peace, neither at the expense of the weaker peoples, nor by the complete abolition of every vestige of freedom ... in the world.”¹⁸⁸ In second half of 1937, the IASB addressed numerous “meetings at Labour Party and Trade Union branches, Co-operative Societies, League of Nations [Union] and Peace Sections. The subject in greatest demand was the question of the colonies in relation to the ‘Have’ and ‘Have Not’

¹⁸⁶ Coleman, *Nigeria*, p. 209-210.

¹⁸⁷ On this issue, Perham and the LCP were largely in agreement. Perham wrote, “Many of us would like nothing better than to see England make a gesture of self-sacrifice that might help to save the peace of the world ... But what would Africans ... say to their being made an instrument of world-appeasement?” Moreover, she continued, “when all shortcomings are admitted, will it be a step forward ... to hand peoples over to Germany and Italy?” Margery Perham, “Colonies and European Peace,” *The Keys* v. 3, n. 4 (April-June 1936), p. 60.

¹⁸⁸ “Africans and the Struggle for Peace,” *The Keys* v. 6, n. 2 (October-December 1938), p. 3.

struggle over Africa.”¹⁸⁹ James addressed the issue in the *International African Opinion*. “Imperialism,” he asserted, “whatever its high pretensions to philanthropy, cannot be anything else but Fascist in its actual operation. It is founded on the lust for power and the greed for gain, and finds its excuse in theories about the superiority of one race over another....” “The history of proposals for the transference of the Protectorates,” he continued, “is an illustration of this; it shows how the real meaning of the British Empire was gradually unveiled.” “Empire and democracy,” James argued, “are not compatible; in the end one must give way to the other. If the people of Britain stand for freedom against imperialism, they will not ... be satisfied to let a single day pass on which the subject peoples of the Colonies do not take a step towards democratic equality and full liberty; knowing that the liberty of all the world is the only safeguard of their own.” Thus, “When their own Government prepares deliberately to hand over nearly a million of their fellow-subjects to a State which has declared its resolution to keep them and their race in permanent subjection,” he added, “the English people must surely feel that the attack on liberty is coming nearer to home.”¹⁹⁰ For black intellectuals in London, appeasement began in Ethiopia, long before the surrender of Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938. Its roots, James suggested, could be traced to the deep affinity between imperialism and fascism.

In the years between 1935 and 1940, a rash of labor disturbances and demonstrations erupted in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanganyika, the Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia, and the British West Indies. The Italo-Ethiopian conflict informed how black intellectuals in Britain viewed the government response to these events, as black pressure groups continued to report on the situation in Abyssinia amidst them. In an article in the

¹⁸⁹ “International African Service Bureau,” *African Sentinel* v. 1, n. 4 (March/April 1938), p. 14.

¹⁹⁰ “The Transfer of the Protectorates,” *International African Opinion* v. 1, n. 1 (July 1938), p. 3-5, 13.

London-based *Tribune*, entitled “Three Million Strikers Against British Rule,” Padmore discussed the cocoa producers’ boycott against the buyers syndicate or “pool” of British trading firms like United West Africa, a subsidiary of the Unilever corporation, which fixed price levels on an annual basis. He noted, in particular, how the general populace rallied in support of the cocoa farmers—transport and dock workers refused to handle foreign goods, a boycott of British commodities was announced, and in some areas people blocked the transport of soldiers to affected areas. Together with a series of recent strikes amongst miners in the Gold Coast, these expressions of discontent and community solidarity, Padmore argued, provided further evidence that the British Empire must adapt or die. “The Africans, having exhausted all legitimate and peaceful methods of seeking redress and goaded into desperation, have resorted to direct action.”¹⁹¹

The expressions of political and economic discontent in the British West Indies, which erupted first in British Honduras (Belize), once again brought the disparate black organizations in London together in a working alliance. Beginning in 1936, the IASB, LCP, and NWA allied to pressure the Colonial Office for measures to ameliorate the dire conditions in the West Indies. Throughout 1937 and 1938, *The Keys* featured a series of articles on the recent strikes. Linking the oil field strikes in Trinidad during June 1937 to “similar disturbances in Tobago, Barbados, Jamaica, St. Vincent, Antigua, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, Grenada, British Guiana, and in the island of Mauritius ... in the Indian Ocean,” H. W. Springer from Barbados wrote, “we are glad to see that the recent strikes ... have drawn attention forcibly to the depressing labour conditions, and have created an atmosphere in

¹⁹¹ During this time, the Colonial Office investigated possible ties between the IASB and the cocoa farmers, but concluded, while there was “no doubt that they will support and encourage strikes in West Africa,” it was unlikely the latter would “go much beyond expressions of sympathy and possibly protest meeting.” George Padmore, “Three Million Strikers Against British Rule,” *The Tribune* (December 23, 1937). On growing cooperation among wealthy cocoa farmers, see also “Industry,” *Wàsù* v. 3, n. 1 (March 1934), p. 37; “Wallace Johnson and the International African Service Bureau,” CO 323/1610/2.

which reforms long overdue seem likely at last to be undertaken.” “These wide spread disturbances,” he argued, “are a genuine reaction to oppressive living and labour conditions.... To put the blame on ‘agitators’ is to shrink criminally and perilously from the real situation.” Rather than demanding independence, Springer cited the islands status as “crown colonies” to make materials claims upon the British state. “Since these crown colonies are ruled directly from the Colonial Office,” he maintained, “the responsibility rests with the Government at home, and indirectly with every British voter.” Springer criticized the willful ignorance of the British state and general public with regard to conditions in the colonies and noted in dismay that “on the very day” that the strikes in Trinidad began the *Evening Standard* “published a four column article entitled ‘Islands of the Blest,’ in which the Indies were referred to as ‘bathed in easy going peace.’”¹⁹² The journal also published an address to the League by Grantley H. Adams, a member of the House of Assembly in Barbados, which systematically examined the causes of the disturbances in each case. Like Springer, Adams insisted that recent developments in the West Indies were a consequence of “genuine grievances which called for a remedy.” “In islands where there were no Minimum Wage Acts, no Trade Unions, no Unemployment Insurance, No Old Age Pensions, where housing and sanitary conditions were primitive, and ... vast numbers of the people had no voice in their own government,” he argued, “the position was like that of England before the Reform Acts.”¹⁹³ What is more, he scoffed at the notion an impending “COLOUR OR

¹⁹² H. W. Springer, “Labour Unrest in the Colonies,” *The Keys* v. 5, n. 2 (October-December 1937), p. 45; see also R. O. Thomas, “Revolt in the West Indies,” *The Keys* v. 3, n. 3 (January-March 1936), p. 37-38.

¹⁹³ “Labour Disturbances in the West Indies. Report of Speech by Mr. G. H. Adams, M.C.P., of Barbados,” *The Keys* v. 5, n. 3 (January-March 1938), p. 64-66.

RACE WAR.” To the contrary, Adams maintained, “The loyalty of the people to Britain was proverbial; indeed, judged by English standards it was excessive.”¹⁹⁴

In response to the strikes in Trinidad during 1937, the Secretary of State for the Colonies W. Ormsby Gore appointed a commission of inquiry chaired by Sir Murchison Fletcher to investigate the causes of the disturbances. After the commission released its report, W. Arthur Lewis excoriated its findings in *The Keys*. Lewis blamed the recent unrest on the government’s “policy of ‘provoke and shoot’” and the oil companies, who were “prospering exceedingly” and “taxed too lightly,” but refused to raise wages despite a concurrent rise in the cost of living. “Having ... set itself up to champion the oil interests even at the cost of inaccuracy,” he argued, “the Commission could not but produce a report in the main useless to the cause of social progress in Trinidad.” Thus, Lewis concluded, “One cannot feel that the Commissioners earned the very high fees which they were paid. It is essentially an employers’ report, which, as the *Times* informed us on the day after its publication, brought great relief to the oil interests. But to those whose interest is social justice it brought only disappointment.”¹⁹⁵

The LCP and IASB reacted swiftly when a series of strikes that culminated in violent clashes with police and military troops resulted in numerous casualties in Jamaica during the summer of 1938. In June, Moody and the League held a meeting at Memorial Hall that included Lewis, Blackman, Ronald Kidd of the National Council for Civil Liberties, and Reginald Bridgeman, who was at the time a Labour Party candidate for the House of Commons, among the program of speakers. The LCP passed a resolution asking for more far-reaching reforms than the group had proposed in the past. Besides expressing “horror at

¹⁹⁴ League of Coloured Peoples, “Disturbances in the West Indies: Special Meeting,” *Seventh Annual Report* (1937-1938), p. 11.

¹⁹⁵ W. Arthur Lewis, “Notes on the Trinidad Report,” *The Keys* v. 5, n. 4 (April-June 1938), p. 80-82.

the bloodshed in Jamaica,” the resolution requested that the British state “immediately take active steps to improve the economic condition of the population,” “give universal free education up to University standard,” and “establish a University of the West Indies.” “To ensure that these measures are not thwarted by local vested interests,” it called on the government “to grant the people of Jamaica and of all the British West Indian islands the same constitutional rights and the same civil liberties as are enjoyed by the people of Britain, including universal adult suffrage,” and to remove “the property qualification for members of the Legislature.” The resolution also demanded the “Federation of the West Indies with complete self-government.”¹⁹⁶

During the second half of 1937 alone, the IASB held demonstrations in Trafalgar Square, Hyde Park, and Memorial Hall, passed resolutions protesting the treatment of strike leaders in the West Indies, and utilized its connections with members of Parliament such as Arthur Creech Jones, D. N. Pritt, Mary Downes, and Rev. Reginald Sorensen to raise more than 25 questions in the House of Commons on subjects like “repressive legislation,” the confiscation of “progressive literature,” wealthy planters boycott of cocoa sales to monopolistic European import-export firms in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, and working conditions for African miners in the Gold Coast.¹⁹⁷ The Colonial Office estimated that roughly 200 people attended an IASB rally at Trafalgar Square in connection with the strikes in Trinidad and Barbados and recorded that James, Wallace-Johnson, Reginald Bridgeman,

¹⁹⁶ In the weeks before this meeting, Moody participated in a deputation to the Colonial Office that also included Dorothy Woodman of the Union of Democratic Control, Bridgeman, Kidd, and Ben Bradley of the League Against Imperialism and wrote three letters to the editor which were published by *The Times*. “Activities of the League,” *The Keys* v. 6, n. 1 (July-September 1938), p. 9-10; *The Times* (May 26 and 30, June 9, 1938).

¹⁹⁷ Sylvia Pankhurst, Nancy Cunard, Dorothy Woodman, Mary Downes, Rev. Daniel Escarte, Pastor K. A. Chunchie, Geraldine Young, Victor Gollancz, F. A. Ridley, Peter Rhode, Max Yergan, and MPs such as Ellen Wilkinson, George Daggan, Morgan Jones, Noel Baker, and E. L. Mallalieu were also “patrons” of the IASB. See CO 323/1610/2.

and the Barbadians Chris Braithewaite and Arnold Ward of the NWA were among the speakers, while Ras Makonnen, Nancy Cunard, and Surat Ali were also in attendance.¹⁹⁸

In early 1938, the *African Sentinel* published a critical response to the Trinidad Commission's report by Wallace Johnson. "Has any lesson been learnt by these incidents? Is the Secretary of State for the colonies prepared to accept the West Indian affair as a sort of warning against future occurrences of a similar nature in any other section of the Colonial Empire?" "Since it is obviously the policy of the Colonial Office to await until a crisis takes place before any action is taken in connection with the difficulties of the Colonial peoples," he observed, "it may well be worth while to point out that labour unrest is not confined to the West Indies alone." As the first step toward remedying the situation in the colonies, Wallace Johnson suggested that the British Labour Party should consider the idea "of a special commission to investigate labour conditions throughout the Colonial Empire instead of leaving matters to be handled through the bureaucratic machinery of the Colonial Office."¹⁹⁹ As these remarks suggest, black pressure groups like the IASB and LCP challenged the reputed particularity of the black laborer and sought to establish a universal category of "worker" and general standards of development to ameliorate conditions in the colonies. In 1938, James contributed "British Barbarism in Jamaica" to *Fight*, the journal of the Revolutionary Socialist League. In particular, he targeted a recent letter by Leonard Lyle, the president of Tate and Lyle Ltd., to *The Times* in which he asserted "that the West Indian labourer does not even remotely resemble the English labourer." James began, "Tate & Lyle, as everyone who buys sugar should know, make a fortune every year by selling to the British workers sugar grown by Jamaican workers. They must keep those two divided at all costs.

¹⁹⁸ "Wallace Johnson and the International African Service Bureau," CO 323/1610/2.

¹⁹⁹ Wallace Johnson, "The Trinidad Commission's Report: A Criticism," *African Sentinel* v. 1, n. 4 (March/April 1938), p. 11.

Hence with that solemn shamelessness so characteristic of British capitalism, Mr Lyle discovers that the West Indies labourer does not remotely resemble the English labourer.”²⁰⁰

In mid-1938, the IASB launched the *International African Opinion* to replace the *African Sentinel*, and James assumed the role of editor for the new monthly publication. Its declared motto was “EDUCATE—CO-OPERATE—EMANCIPATE, Neutral in nothing affecting the African Peoples.” In the inaugural issue of the journal, Padmore argued that the recent clashes between workers and the police in Jamaica were the culmination of “a deep-seated unrest of long duration.” Although the Colonial Office “stated that the disturbances were entirely local in character,” he insisted, “events have given lie to this statement.” Padmore pointed out that “while Britain was celebrating Empire Day and the Duke of Kent was assuring the nation that the Empire is to-day united as never before, a general strike covered Kingston.” “After over three hundred years of ‘democratic’ British rule, this is the situation in Jamaica to-day.” He urged British trade unionists and the Labour Party to support the workers of Jamaica “in their desperate fight to obtain ... fundamental democratic rights” like “parliamentary representation, freedom of speech and Press,” and the right to form trade union.²⁰¹

During the summer of 1938, the British Parliament appointed a Royal Commission headed by Lord Moyne to inquire into the disturbances in the West Indies as a whole. Roderick Macdonald suggests that “this development was at least partially attributable to those pressures brought to bear by the League and by the IASB, reinforced by their broad range of contacts in British political, religious and humanitarian circles.”²⁰² However, both

²⁰⁰ C. L. R. James, “British Barbarism in Jamaica: Support the Negro Workers’ Struggle!” *The Future in the Present* (London: Allison and Busby, 1977), p. 86.

²⁰¹ George Padmore, “Labour Unrest in Jamaica,” *International African Opinion* v. 1, n. 1 (July 1938), p. 6-7, 13.

²⁰² Macdonald, “Introduction to *The Keys*,” p. 15.

the LCP and IASB criticized the guidelines and composition of the Moyne Commission.²⁰³

In an editorial in *The Keys*, Peter Blackman noted, “One very serious and significant omission from the terms of reference is the absence of any provision for enquiry into the political aspect of the life of these territories.” “Only when economic improvement goes hand in hand with political freedom,” he argued, “will the West Indies be freed from the stultification of all progress by those who at present controlling the political machinery prevent even the most elementary change in the lot of the W. Indian people.”²⁰⁴

The IASB, LCP, and NWA presented the Moyne Commission with a joint memorandum on “economic, political and social conditions in the West Indies,” which included a number of recommendations for reforms. As a consequence, the commissioners agreed subsequently to hear testimony from Dr. Moody, Blackman, and two Jamaican women, Amy Bailey and Una Marson, before leaving for the Caribbean. “To assert that the West Indian colonies have not sufficient men of talent to manage their own affairs,” the memorandum claimed, “is absurd.” The groups called for “the establishment of democratic government fully representative of the people of these territories,” as “an essential prerequisite to the abolition of the inhuman conditions now prevailing, and a first step on the road towards that goal which is Federation and Dominion status.” The memorandum also invoked the example of emancipation, linking the Italian invasion of Abyssinia to the recent disturbances in the British West Indies. “In 1833 there was reason to apprehend a universal Negro rebellion for freedom, and emancipation was granted from above to prevent the cataclysm of emancipation from below.... Similarly today, when the rape of Ethiopia has

²⁰³ See *International African Opinion* v. 1, n. 2 (August 1938), p. 1-2.

²⁰⁴ Peter Blackman, “Editorial. Royal Commission to the West Indies,” *The Keys* v. 6, n. 2 (October-December 1938), p. 1-2

given a great stimulus to growing Negro consciousness, it is not a question of rebellions if, but rebellions unless, democratic government is granted.”²⁰⁵

In London, the Abyssinia crisis became the lens through which black intellectuals viewed the British Empire on the eve of the Second World War. At its annual general meeting in 1938, the LCP called “the attention of His Majesty’s Government and Parliament to the great movement of solidarity which the Italian attack upon Abyssinia has brought about among the African and African-descended peoples in reaction against European violence, conquest and domination.”²⁰⁶ Similarly, an editorial in the *African Sentinel* argued that despite “the earnest desire to link up with each other in order to solve their economic and social problems continues to agitate the minds of Africans and peoples of African descent throughout the world,” the Italian invasion of Ethiopia revealed “the impregnable barrier” to pan-African unity, “the effect of the penetration of foreign influence into Africa.” Although “the hearts of millions of Africans and peoples of African descent all over the world were yearning to render assistance ... the influence of foreign power in Africa, actually forbade such assistance being rendered to Abyssinia at a time ... when the very European nations had failed ... to stand by their collective obligation to a weaker State.” As a result, “Ethiopia was sacrificed to the rapery of a so-called civilised ‘Christian’ European nation, through the influence of the European penetration of Western civilisation into Africa, ... while the children of Africa stood by and wept.”²⁰⁷ During the late 1930s, articles on the

²⁰⁵ “Memorandum on the Economic, Political and Social Conditions in the West Indies and British Guiana Presented by the International African Service Bureau, The League of Coloured Peoples and the Negro Welfare Association,” West India Royal Commission, September 9, 1938, and “West India Commission, Ninth Session,” September 29, 1938, Public Record Office, CO 950/30.

²⁰⁶ “Resolutions Passed by the Annual General Meeting,” *The Keys* v. 5, n. 4 (April-June 1938), p. 85-86.

²⁰⁷ Whereas the Jamaican writer Una Marson highlighted the separation of families and Italian atrocities against women and children in Ethiopia, the African and Caribbean men who dominated black organizations like the LCP and IASB often represented the conflict in terms of sexual assault, which advanced a conception of pan-Africanism as the defense of black manhood against the emasculating effects of European imperialism. “Africa and the World! An Appeal,” *African Sentinel* v. 1, n. 4 (March/April 1938), p. 10.

“rape” of Abyssinia regularly appeared alongside pieces on the disturbances in the West Indies and West Africa or the possible return of mandate territories like Togoland to Germany in the LCP’s *The Keys* and the IASB’s *African Sentinel* and *International African Opinion*. Collectively, these three issues provoked a range of black internationalist activity in London and convinced many black intellectuals that the remedy for the abuses of “trusteeship” lay in democratic self-government, economic development, and federation in West Africa and the West Indies.

Internationalism and the Coming of War

During the 1930s, various conceptions of internationalism gained traction once again across the left end of the political spectrum. Unlike the immediate post-World War I period, however, growing fears over another, even more cataclysmic war helped spark the resurgence of internationalist thinking. Besides some notion of a world in which the interests of all humanity were intertwined, these new internationalisms shared a preoccupation with imperialism and, more specifically, the threat to international peace and stability posed by imperial rivalries. While some explicitly opposed internationalism to empire, others advocated the internationalization of imperialism or inter-imperialism to ease competition between the major powers. The dual themes of imperialism and internationalism defined the field of political discourse in which black intellectuals operated in London during the 1930s as much as nationalism and imperialism or nationalism and internationalism.

Black intellectuals appropriated the language of internationalism to articulate a vision of black unity beyond a strictly biological conception of racial community in the late 1930s. Many Africans and West Indians in London believed that cooperation between people of African descent was essential to not only their own welfare and the future of the Caribbean

and Africa, but also global peace and stability. As the Nigerian Nnamdi Azikiwe wrote in the preface to *Renascent Africa*, published in 1937, “To-day, the continent of Africa is the focal point of European territorial ambitions. France, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain have colonial possessions in Africa. They are among the ‘have’ nations. There are other States which have no colonial possessions in Africa. They are among the ‘have not’ nations. A clash between the two groups is inevitable.” For Azikiwe, a “Renascent Africa,” caught in the middle of “these conflicting ambitions of Europe for territorial expansion,” represented a precondition for the avoidance of war and lasting peace. “That the twentieth-century African is bound to be renascent; that this Renascent African must be reckoned with as a concrescent factor in the peace of the world,” he explained, “is the theme of this book.”²⁰⁸ The ideas of black intellectuals like Azikiwe were informed by and circulated alongside a number of different visions of internationalism during the 1930s, many of which recognized the problem of empire presented the greatest challenge to international stability.

Beginning with the disturbances in the Caribbean and Africa during the late 1930s, the protests of black intellectuals in the metropole helped to prompt a reconsideration of colonial policy and, more specifically, the “particularity of the African” in the Colonial Office and the Left opposition in Parliament. The decade after 1935 was a turning point in Britons’ understanding of their empire: as Cooper puts it, “the idea of ‘tribal’ Africa was losing its usefulness, and officials were casting about for conceptual tools to regain this sense of control.”²⁰⁹ Increasingly, the idea of an egalitarian Commonwealth defined by consensual partnership and a new emphasis on development and welfare replaced the rhetoric of “trusteeship.” African and West Indian intellectuals’ attempts to link agitation for reform

²⁰⁸ Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Renascent Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1968, originally 1937), p. 7.

²⁰⁹ Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labour Question in French and British Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 18.

across colonies encouraged a growing tendency to consider “African issues” collectively and not solely in terms of individual “tribal” or colonial units served to consolidate Africa and the related notion of the “tropical empire” as objects of knowledge consisting of homologous or, at least, broadly comparable populations. After the Italo-Abyssinian conflict and the disturbances in the West Indies during the late 1930s, there was a move towards conceptualizing problems in Africa and the African diaspora as interrelated.²¹⁰ Black intellectuals in London contributed to this turn by educating colonial officials and segments of the British Left, and used it to foreground their concerns and amplify their voices.

In “Our Task in Africa,” a serialized editorial that appeared in the London *Times* during the spring of 1936, Margery Perham identified three questions that threatened to confound Britain’s imperial relationship to Africa in the years to come. The first concerned the role of the expanding African intelligentsia. Was it possible to address their demands for integration and the full benefits of imperial citizenship within the framework of the indirect rule system, which, Perham noted, was designed to manage the “backward masses”? How could the imperial state balance the economic interests of British corporations and, in East and South Africa, white settlers with the need to create a stable, reproducible pool of African labor from the ranks of those “detribalized through industrialization”? Finally, what stance should Britain take in response to the imperial designs of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany? Would the interests of the British Empire be better served by thwarting the colonial aspirations of the fascist powers or by granting concessions to Italy and Germany in Africa? If Britain wanted to defend its colonial possessions and the economic advantages they accorded, on what basis could it justify doing so? For Perham, any transfer of African territory to Germany “would be the first steps towards an internationalization of imperialism

²¹⁰ For a similar argument, see Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, p. 254.

which might one day deprive imperialism of its present attractions.”²¹¹ These issues—the position of the educated colonial elite, the “labor question,” and the resurgence of imperial competition—attracted increasing attention on the eve of the Second World War and, ultimately, engendered a major reformulation of the justifications for and espoused goals of colonial governance in the late 1930s and 1940s.²¹² As Bush explains, “the imperial agenda shifted from indirect rule and Lugardian trusteeship to greater self-rule. However, this was directed towards ensuring a continued British imperial presence in tropical Africa rather than independence.”²¹³ Perham’s remarks also illustrate the centrality of imperialism to public discussions of international diplomacy in the late 1930s. Many observers linked the relative prospects of war and peace in an increasingly interdependent world to the ability to manage the resurgence of imperial rivalries and chauvinistic nationalisms. At the same time, as Perham understood, no matter how the major imperial powers like Britain and France, the “haves,” chose to address the demands of the upstart “have-nots,” it would raise difficult questions about the legitimacy of imperialism in general and potentially necessitate an internal restructuring of the British Empire.

This set of related issues formed the horizon against which African and Caribbean intellectuals in London wrote in the years leading up to World War II. They devoted considerable energy to addressing them all, although, as might be expected, they often focused more on the rights of the intelligentsia in the colonies. While these discussions had little impact on the Colonial Office and even less on the colonial governments in Africa and the Caribbean before the 1940s, West Indian and African intellectuals drew greater attention

²¹¹ Margery Perham, “Our Task in Africa,” *Times* (February 10, 11, and 12, 1936, reprinted in *Colonial Sequence, 1930-1949* (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 151.

²¹² Of course, these concerns provoked varying degrees of concern in different parts of colonial Africa. On the “labor question,” see esp. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labour Question in French and British Africa*.

²¹³ Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: African and Britain, 1919-1945* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 262-263; see also R. D. Pearce, *The Turning Point: British Colonial Policy, 1938-1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1982).

to colonial issues and helped shift the terms of public debate in the metropole. Within groups on the Left, in particular, black sojourners and migrants from the colonies increasingly managed to interject their perspectives into discussions of Britain's "tropical empire" from the mid-1930s.

Amid the mounting political and diplomatic of the late 1930s, black intellectuals in London and many of their white interlocutors wrote of a contemporary crisis of Western culture and the need for a transformation of international relations. Many Africans and West Indians in London identified with a black internationalist political imaginary based, not on a biologically predetermined unity, but rather long history of cultural mixture, which was the hallmark of black subjects' disjunctive inclusion in the making of the modern world. The product of unparalleled cultural metamorphosis, they argued that Africa alone could extract the potential for a transformative future from the "tragedy of Western Civilization."

Although black intellectuals often articulated their immediate political aims in terms of discrete, regional units like a West Indian Federation or a United West Africa, these never exhausted their political identifications, which, like the global reach of imperialism and the colour bar, extended beyond them.²¹⁴ Moreover, their plans for federal states in the Caribbean and Africa were fundamentally internationalist proposals, constructs designed to negotiate difference within a larger unity, and envisioned as building blocks of a reconstituted British Commonwealth of Nations and an increasingly interdependent world, more generally. Like Antillean and African intellectuals in Paris, "with periodicals and organizations, they constituted an alternative black public sphere through which to confront

²¹⁴ Coleman, *Nigeria*, p. 210.

the persistent contradictions of the imperial order,” and envision “an alternative transnational political federation.”²¹⁵

In a letter published in the *West African Review*, an “Enquiring African” asserted, “The Africa of tomorrow ... is going to be the first truly cosmopolitan continent in the history of mankind.... If ... we are going to live together in this future land ... is it not right that we should work in co-operation not marred by the whinings of race-apologists on the one side or any over-bearingly patronizing attitude on the other?”²¹⁶ Black pressure groups in London like the WASU shared this conception of the history and future of Africa with incipient anticolonial movements in West Africa such as the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) to which the Union had direct ties through H. O. Davies and Nnamdi Azikiwe. Writing in Azikiwe’s newspaper *The Comet* in 1939, S. L. Akintola, a leading intellectual in the NYM, claimed that the youth of West Africa were creating “a civilization which gives precedence to cosmopolitanism and not to patriotism[,] to humanity and not to nationalism[,] to reason and not to passion[,] to peace and not war, to idealism and not to materialism[,] a civilization which recognizes the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man”—an observation not disconnected from the drift of European politics.²¹⁷ Zachernuk argues that unlike the previous generation of Nigerian intellectuals who were influenced by Edward W. Blyden’s emphasis on racial purity, the “new ideas for ... development” espoused by those in Britain during the 1930s “eschewed the idea of racial peculiarity, proposing instead modern global standards.” Increasingly, “Indirect rule was rejected in favor of development along British Commonwealth lines, in articles that cited such sympathetic critics such as Charles Buxton and Perham.” At the same time, “Their political demands leaped ahead of the NCBWA

²¹⁵ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, p. 22-23.

²¹⁶ *West African Review* 6 (November 1935), p. 35.

²¹⁷ S. L. Akintola, “The Tragedy of Western Civilization,” *The Comet* (September 13, 1939).

agenda, denying the need for gradual trusteeship on the road to self-government.” Davies articulated the sentiments of many of his contemporaries when he “declared that the ‘British Empire deserves nothing but extinction as complete as that of the Dodo,’” while arguing that Nigeria could “live and flourish” within in the Commonwealth.²¹⁸

As Davies’ life demonstrates, the intellectual roots of black internationalism were intertwined with the larger spectrum of internationalist thought in Britain. Elucidating the basic contours of the former demands repeated detours into the history of the latter. In the late 1930s and 1940s, Harold Laski, who held the prestigious Chair of Government at the London School of Economics from 1926 until his death in 1950, helped pushed the Labour Party towards socialist internationalism.²¹⁹ In *A Grammar of Politics* (1925), he argued for a “new political philosophy” and the creation of a democratic international government to meet the exigencies of a “new world” in which “the unity of interdependence” rendered state sovereignty a dangerous illusion. Although never a revolutionary, Laski became progressively more critical of the League of Nations and moved towards the left in his politics during the 1930s. Increasingly active in the Fabian Society and Labour Party, he helped to establish the Socialist League in 1932 and the Left Book Club in 1936. Laski later served as the Labour Party’s chairman (1945-1946) and remained on the party’s National

²¹⁸ H. O. Davies, “Our Secretary’s Bag,” *Daily Service* (October 13, 1938), Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, p. 112.

²¹⁹ If Laski’s views were rather idiosyncratic, his concern for the related themes of internationalism and imperialism was not. Internationalist ideas became a driving force behind the establishment of the discipline of international relations in interwar Britain. What is more, the threat that imperialism posed to international stability preoccupied many of the major figures in the development of the field from John A. Hobson, Alfred Zimmern, and Leonard Woolf to Laski. Indeed, “the dual themes of imperialism and internationalism,” as Long and Schmidt argue, “oriented much of interwar discussions of international relations.” In their writings, the two concepts were “intimately connected and . . . central to international politics.” On internationalism, imperialism, and the development of international relations, see David Long and Brian C. Schmidt, eds., *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005) and Casper Sylvest, “Continuity and Change in British Liberal Internationalism, c. 1900-1930,” *Review of International Studies* 31 (2005), pp. 263-283. The key texts illustrating this trend include: J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (1902), Leonard Woolf, *Empire and World Commerce* (1919), and Alfred Zimmern, *Nationality and Government* (1918). As the authors suggest, the work of W. E. B. DuBois provides another significant example. Long and Schmidt, “Introduction,” *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations*, p. 1-2, 10.

Executive from 1937 until near the end of his life. His commitment to socialism can be linked directly to his views on international relations. The “technical pivot upon which our power to end aggression turns,” Laski argued in 1939, “is the abolition of sovereignty.” Socialism by itself would not eliminate the nation-state, but Laski maintained that a lasting international peace required a redistribution of economic power.²²⁰

Laski’s socialist internationalism informed Davies’ vision for Africa’s future and, through him, the political aspirations of the WASU. Black intellectuals in the metropole read Laski’s *A Grammar of Politics* with great interest during the interwar period, and *Wāṣū* “recommended” the book to its readers in 1934.²²¹ In an address to the WASU in 1935, entitled “The Royal Road to Independence,” Davies, then Laski’s student at the LSE, examined the appeal of the new “world religion” of nationalism and self-determination to colonized peoples. Quoting the German philosopher Fichte, Davies observed, “a subjected people falls very easy to the lure of nationalism” because of “the glaring effects and iniquities of the system under which we live,” “conditions which, to lovers of freedom, are intolerable.” Yet, Davies suggested that nationalism was increasingly an “anachronism.” “Man has reached that stage of development where he must realise that bonds of blood, of language and tradition are mere accidents which can be put aside in favour of a larger unit—the world-state—or it must perish.” “While nationalism is desirable for a people like ourselves, whose manhood is lost in subjection,” he insisted, “it is not our goal,” and “it

²²⁰ Quoted in Peter Lamb, “Harold Laski (1893-1950): Political Theorist of a World in Crisis,” *Review of International Relations* 25 (1999), p. 330, 332-333. See also Harold Laski, *A Grammar of Politics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1925), “The Economic Foundations of Peace,” in Leonard Woolf, ed., *The Intelligent Man’s Way to Prevent War* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933), and *The Danger of Being a Gentleman and Other Essays* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939).

²²¹ *Wāṣū* v. 3, n. 1 (March 1934), p. 37; see also the reference to Laski’s book in John Fletcher’s review of the abridged version of Henry W. Nevinson’s autobiography. John Fletcher, “*Fire of Life* by H. W. Nevinson,” *The Keys* v. 3, n. 4 (April-June 1936), p. 67-68.

should never be an end in itself.”²²² Similarly, in 1937, *Wàsù* declared, “our nationalism is with a difference. It is not of the Mussolini-Hitler-Franco or the ‘Ethiopian’ type which may be termed rabid nationalism.’ Ours is based on justice ... We do not believe in the parrot-cry, ‘Africa for the Africans,’ but rather Africans for Africa—a great difference.” When colonial dissent did assume the form of a “narrow nationalism” or anti-white sentiment, the Union suggested that it was in response to racism and government repression. “It is when the opportunity is denied us to show what we could do for Africa that our ambition finds outlet in narrow nationalism. As Lord Hailey pointed out, it is up to our rulers to meet us ‘in the right spirit’ and guide our legitimate aspirations ‘into fruitful and constructive channels.’”²²³

Davies, who was acting secretary general of the WASU at the time, elaborated on these ideas in a speech reprinted by *Wàsù* at the end of the Second World War. He traced the commodification of human labor in the capitalist mode of production, modern nationalism, and the “machievellian attitude ... to weaker nations” exemplified by the history of imperialism and Nazi Germany to the trans-Atlantic trade in African slaves. “The whole structure of Hitler’s race theory,” Davies asserted, “is a direct result of the slave-trade,” and “the capitalist conception of labour as a factor of production at par with capital and land was an extension of slave-labour mentality.” Moreover, he argued that the diplomatic practices undergirding the trade “introduced into international relations the insincerity and uncertainty which has since poisoned it.” “The African peoples were nations and the relation between them and the European states was international relation ... To-day, mistrust and suspicion among nations is an unfortunate factor which conspires against enduring peace. It had its

²²² H. O. Davies, “The Royal Road to Independence,” *Wàsù* v. 5, n. 2 & 3 (June-July 1936), p. 38-40.

²²³ “Nationalism in Africa,” *Wàsù* v. 6, n. 2 (Coronation Number, 1937), p. 22; see also Malcolm Hailey, “Nationalism in Africa,” *Journal of the African Society* 36 (April 1937), p. 146.

origin in the slave trade.” Like Laski, Davies maintained that international relations had to be transformed to safeguard social democracy and, conversely, that a lasting international peace required a concomitant revolution in the social and economic ordering of society. Yet, he revised Laski’s socialist internationalism by situating racism and Europe’s encounter with Africa, from the slave trade through “three centuries” of “the catastrophe of Imperialism,” as key factors in the development of nationalism, capitalism, and a predatory spirit in international relations.

Davies drew attention to this history to impress upon his audience the gravity of the moment and pose a fundamental question. “We are now at the stage when ... a revolution is imminent” “We are all agreed ... that the first and immediate objective is to overthrow the yoke that enslaves us,” but, he asked, “What is our objective?” If it is merely “to substitute our own oppression and exploitation for that of the foreigner,” he argued, “then Capitalism, nationalism, and atheism are all compatible with that ideal and may lead us to it.” Citing the examples of Germany and Argentina, Davies warned, “African Capitalism may be as bad as any other Capitalism,” and “Nationalism may create a situation and a type of independence that can be a burden to us and result in greater oppression of our people.” Instead, he suggested, “Maybe our objective is to raise the masses of our people to a higher life and service[,] ... an economic life from which all exploiters, white or black, will be absent ... [and] an independence completely rid of oppressors, be they white or black.” For Davies, how to attain this utopian dream was “the task which the revolutionary nature of our circumstances set for us.”²²⁴

During the late 1930s and especially World War II, the notion of an egalitarian British Commonwealth of Nations, what Wendy Webster terms a “people’s empire,”

²²⁴ H. O. Davies, “Looking Ahead,” *Wāsh* v. 12, n. 2 (March 1946), p. 13-15

increasingly supplanted the “language of empire.” Leonard Barnes, a socialist and staunch advocate of colonial reform, wrote insightfully of the new uses of the “Commonwealth” in *Empire or Democracy* (1939).

What those seem to mean, then, who talk of trusteeship is this. We have abandoned the eighteenth century conception of a colony, and propose to conduct our relations with colonial peoples with a view to their social progress rather than to our material gain ... ‘We claim, in a word, that our imperial economics are welfare economics, involving the development of peoples rather than of territories, and estimating costs and utilities, not as saleable goods and services or mere monetary values, but as experiences, injurious and beneficial respectively to the ordered social growth of our wards.’

It was in this sense that many talked about the British Empire “as constituting ... a single Commonwealth.” As Barnes observed, this represented a significant department from earlier uses of the idea of the British Commonwealth, which “was originally invented” to distinguish “those ... whom ... had emerged from the twilight of colonial dependence into the full noon of sovereign nationhood” from the “coloured dependencies.” A new imagining of the British Empire as a “family” consisting “of majors and minors certainly, of trustees and wards if you like, but not, on your life, of parasites and hosts” increasingly supplanted the more robust racial chauvinism of the old rhetoric of imperialism. Barnes cited John Coatman’s contention “that from end to end of the British Empire there is no essential difference anywhere between any of its parts, and therefore in a real sense the whole Empire is one Commonwealth.” As early as 1905, Coatman, the Chair of Imperial Economic Relations at the University of London, suggested “that the political theory which is based on the sovereign nation-state as the natural and inevitable political unit must be thought out again ... and rewritten,” and contended that “the British Commonwealth is a microcosm ... of the world community of the future.” According to Coatman and other advocates of “Greater Britain” like Leo Amery, “The process through which the loyalties of individuals

and states within the empire were expanded to encompass the national loyalties of each nation as well as a wider loyalty to the empire as a whole could be replicated in ways that would promote world harmony.” Similarly, in a Foreign Office memorandum from 1918, the liberal internationalist Alfred Zimmern advocated an international organization that would “ultimately resemble less a centrally organized bureaucracy and more a loosely associated version of the existing British Commonwealth.” In 1939, Barnes noted in dismay, “Surprisingly large numbers of people in Britain still accept some such picture as representing the facts. The help which masked words like ‘Commonwealth’ and ‘trusteeship’ lend to this mass self-deception is powerful....” Contrary to popular belief, he maintained that indirect rule was not the “road to the democratic control of Africa by Africans, but a substitute for it.”²²⁵

The source of Barnes’ trepidation lay in the growing tendency to conflate internationalism and inter-imperialism and embrace the Commonwealth as a potential model for a world community of “equal partners.” The resurgence of internationalist thinking and the new, more expansive deployments of the Commonwealth were linked inextricably and doomed, Barnes suggested, by the same intractable contradiction. Whereas the notion of the Commonwealth wrapped the self-serving, hierarchical relations of empire in an illusory façade of partnership, internationalism promised collective peace and cooperative development, but stumbled precisely on the related issues of racism and imperialism, the greatest obstacles to the realization of these aims. So long as it stopped short of demanding democratic self-government for all colonial peoples, the internationalism espoused by groups

²²⁵ Zimmern taught at Oxford from the late 1890s to 1910, where Arnold J. Toynbee was his student, and then the London School of Economics before returning to Oxford in 1933 as the Montague Chair of International Relations. Barnes, *Empire or Democracy?*, p. 191-193, 275; John Coatman, *Magna Britannia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1905), p. 18-19, 72, 89; Jeanne Morefield, “A Liberal in a Muddle’: Alfred Zimmern on Nationality, Internationality, and Commonwealth,” in Long and Schmidt, eds., p. 109. See also Mark Lee, “The Story of Greater Britain: What Lessons does it Teach?” *National Identities*, v. 6, n. 2 (2004), p. 132-133.

across the British Left amounted to little more than a coordinated internationalization of imperial rule through an expansion of the League of Nations mandate system. For example, the statement on colonial policy adopted by the Labour Party in 1933 “declared that the more advanced colonies should be assisted to self-government, and that the mandate system should be accepted for all colonies inhabited mainly by peoples of primitive culture.” The statement distinguished “between colonies inhabited by peoples of European culture, such as the West Indies, those inhabited by peoples of oriental culture, ... and those inhabited by peoples of primitive culture, such as certain African and Pacific territories.” In much the same vein, in 1936, the National Peace Council of Britain released “a statement on peace and colonial policy, which declared that ‘all countries (including protectorates) having peoples of primitive culture not at present capable of self-government should be brought within a strengthened mandate system, firstly in order to accelerate the training of native populations in self-government, and secondly to ensure that training should not be such as to obstruct a general advance towards world prosperity and world peace.’” The British League of Nations Union championed a resolution at the Congress of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies in 1938 advocating “the transfer where practicable of non-self-governing colonial territories held by various colonial powers to the mandate system subject to two fundamental principles[:] 1. Any change must be on such terms as will safeguard the existing interests of the populations concerned, and must be subject to the free consent of these populations. 2. It must secure equal opportunities for trade and commerce of all Members of the League.”²²⁶

²²⁶ Barnes was a London-born, Oxford graduate, who like his father entered the Colonial Office, but soon left for South Africa, where he worked as a journalist. He returned to Britain in 1932 and became close with the prominent anticolonial critic Norman Leys. Leonard Barnes, *Empire or Democracy?* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939), p. 26-28.

For Barnes, the proposals of both liberal and socialist internationalists contained a “dangerous confusion.” “Internationalisation and interimperialism,” he argued, “are in practice one and the same thing, so long as the driving-force behind the operation of either remains governments of the political complexion of those in power in Europe to-day ... any form of international control of colonies will simply be designed to secure and perpetuate precisely that European mastery of African labour and land and natural resources.” The continuation of colonial rule, in any guise, foreclosed the possibility of international cooperation and the transformation of the British Empire into a true Commonwealth. The only solution was democracy and colonial freedom. Otherwise, both visions of partnership would fail or, worse, engender more insidious forms of conflict and exploitation, despite the intentions of their advocates. According to Barnes, Britons faced a choice between two mutually exclusive options, to pursue empire or democracy. Although few in Britain shared Barnes’ views at the time, black intellectuals in London eagerly read and debated his writings, and his books had a significant influence on the generation of Africanists who were trained in the 1930s and 1940s.²²⁷

Inspired by the same developments in Africa and the Caribbean, the influential work of the Africanist William M. Macmillan and Lord Malcolm Hailey in the late 1930s encouraged West Indian and African intellectuals’ tendency to think in terms of the similarities between their circumstances. A self-described “lib-lab,” Macmillan lived most of his life from the age of six in South Africa, where he gravitated toward the radical fringe of liberal politics during the late 1920s and 1930s. Macmillan traveled regularly to London and established ties with British colonial reformers like Norman Leys and Barnes. During a trip

²²⁷ Barnes, *Empire or Democracy?*, p. 253-262; Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, p. 258-259, 338. See also Barnes, *Skeleton of the Empire*, *Fact* n. 3 (June 1937).

to the West Indies in 1934, he suggested that the “groundswell of discontent” in Jamaica should be taken as a dire warning for Africa. Although “I was trying to find a model colony,” he wrote to Leys, “I’m sadly dashed and much more unrepentantly socialist.”²²⁸ In 1936, Macmillan published *Warning from the West Indies: A Tract for Africa and the Empire*, which examined the economic and social causes of the recent disturbances in the Caribbean in detail. As the title indicates, he explicitly linked the problems in the British West Indies to the future prospects of Britain’s African colonies. “My visit [to the West Indies] early this year,” he explained in the preface, “was undertaken ... not to write traveller’s impressions but to get new light on the study of the African colonies ... West Indians naturally resent any suggestion that the Islands are on the same footing as the primitive parts of Africa; but they will I trust forgive my attempt to use their mature experience for the guidance of Africa....”

Macmillan’s criticisms targeted some of the central tenets of British imperialism, fiscal self-sufficiency, the reputed peculiarity of the black laborer, and the contention that each colony represented a unique case and, thus, should be governed by a discrete government apparatus with little central administration between the heterogeneous units of the empire. He noted that “no British Crown Colony of other than European population—certainly none of African stock—has ‘grown up’ to attain responsible government. The backward colonies have been protected—from internal disorder as well as outside interference—but in all their history they have been left to their own unaided resources.” “The tutelage supposed to be necessary to safeguard the interests of the weak,” he charged, “has signally failed to develop the potentialities of either land or people.”

²²⁸ Letter from W. Macmillan to N. Leys, dated January 21, 1935, Winifred Holtby Papers, Hull City Libraries, 4/9; quoted in Bush, p. 255.

Macmillan cited European racism as the chief obstacle to improvements in the colonies. “But for this red herring of ‘colour,’” he argued, “the problems of all these colonies would be seen to be profoundly similar.” For Macmillan, postulates regarding the inherent “backwardness” of non-Europeans simply confused the issue: “Whatever the shade of the peoples’ skins health services are needed, and more and better education, which can only be paid for by more efficient production, by organizing markets and applying the teaching of the new agriculture.” Like black intellectuals such as James, Padmore, and Wallace Johnson, Macmillan dismissed the “red herring of ‘colour,’” and called for universal standards of development and welfare. “Priding ourselves on the variety of practice allowed and followed in different parts of the Empire,” he maintained, “we avoid one dangerous extreme of over-centralization, only to fall into the opposite folly of wasting the lessons of experience, often repeating the same blunders.” As a consequence, “neighbouring Colonies” in Africa act “in ignorance of one another’s, let alone of distant West Indian experience,” and “the accidents of historical development keep Africa and the West Indies far apart, even administratively.” Macmillan chastised Britons for “the besetting national sin” of taking “credit for the benevolence of our intentions,” and suggested that his “book will serve its purpose if ... it can at all shake this complacency and rouse at once a livelier sense of our responsibility to do better in the New Africa.”²²⁹

Likening what many decried as “detrribalization” in colonial Africa to “the rise of the middle class—the beginning of Modern History” in Europe, Macmillan struck a powerful blow against the rationale behind indirect rule in Africa.²³⁰ In *Africa Emergent* (1938),

²²⁹ William Miller Macmillan, *Warning from the West Indies: A Tract for Africa and the Empire* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), p. 7, 13-15, 17-20, 202.

²³⁰ Here, the contrast with the other major voice on African affairs, Margery Perham, with whom he clashed over precisely this issue at a meeting of the Royal Society of Arts on “Some Problems of Indirect Rule” in 1934 which included several African students, must have made Macmillan’s work all the more appealing to

Macmillan extended his critique of the indirect rule system and anticipated the end of European imperialism on the continent and the emergence of a democratic Africa.²³¹ As a consequence, many black intellectuals in London read his work approvingly, if not without criticism. In 1936, W. Arthur Lewis reviewed *Warning from the West Indies* in *The Keys*. Although, Lewis wrote, “I have no hesitation in saying that the first hundred and sixty [pages] contain the most penetrating description of West Indian conditions since Sewell published his *Ordeal of Free Labour* in 1860,” on the whole, “it is a very unequal book.” While he applauded Macmillan’s attention to the poverty which “reflects itself in every aspect of life” in the British West Indies, he disagreed with the latter regarding how best to ameliorate these conditions and the form that development should take. Macmillan “would do this by intensive cultivation” of agricultural goods for export and “the formation of large capitalist companies able to afford machinery and trained agricultural staffs.” Yet, Lewis insisted that, “by intensifying ‘overproduction,’ this would further reduce prices; and that by displacing labour it would reduce wages, do not trouble the professor.” “For reasons which are difficult to disentangle,” he added, Macmillan “belittles the policy of extending peasant cultivation in the West Indies.” Lewis maintained that “the lesson of the colonies other than Jamaica is ... that without instruction, credit and cooperation, a peasantry cannot prosper.” When “the state sets out to provide and encourage these things,” he argued, “it reaps, in the prosperity and stability of the community, a reward such as no other agricultural policy can give.”²³²

Macmillan was among the speakers at the LCP’s annual conference in June 1937. *The Keys* noted, in particular, his views on the “weaknesses” of indirect rule. “It provided

black intellectuals. The confrontation between Perham and Macmillan is reprinted in Perham, *Colonial Sequence, 1930-1949* (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 91-118.

²³¹ W. M. Macmillan, *Africa Emergent: A Survey of Social, Political and Economic Trends in British Africa* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938); see also *Democratise the Empire: A Policy of Colonial Reform* (London: Kegan Paul, 1941).

²³² W. Arthur Lewis, “A Forgotten Corner of the Empire,” *The Keys* v. 3, n. 4 (April-June 1936), p. 66-67.

inadequate links,” Macmillan argued, “between the Native Ruler and the Central Administration, also between the Native Ruler and those Native elements who cannot ... possibly be brought into any tribe.” The League adopted resolutions at the Conference that dovetailed with Macmillan’s criticisms of indirect rule: “With regard to the question of indirect rule the Conference declares that inasmuch as it contains certain flagrant imperfections ... the system must not be considered in any way permanent but must be subject to such modification ... with a view to ... broadening the basis of democratic rule.”²³³

Due to his gradualist approach to self-government and emphasis on the need for more empirical research on conditions in the colonies, Macmillan’s ideas also found favor in Fabian and Labour Party circles. Moreover, Kirk-Greene suggests that “many Africanists might still today place Macmillan’s two books [*Warning from the West Indies* and *Africa Emergent*] in the category of defining intellectual contributions to their emergent profession.” In 1932, he joined the African Society (after 1935, the Royal African Society) and the “African Circle,” a discussion group organized by its secretary and former colonial administrator R. P. Nicholson. Two years later, Macmillan contributed an essay on “The Importance of the Educated African” to the *Journal of the African Society*, which appeared alongside “How Shall We Educate the African?” by the Nigerian journalist Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe.²³⁴

²³³ *The Keys* v. 5, n. 1 (July-September 1937), p. 14, 23.

²³⁴ *Africa*, the journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, also reviewed Macmillan’s work, and anthropologists like Malinowski clearly read his books. See, for example, Bronislaw Malinowski, “The Present State of Studies in Culture Contact,” *Africa* v., 12, n. 1 (January 1939), p. 37. Anthony Kirk-Greene, “The Emergence of an Africanist Community in the UK,” in Douglas Rimmer and Anthony Kirk-Greene, eds., *The British Intellectual Engagement with Africa in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 23; Ben N. Azikiwe, “How Shall We Educate the African?,” *Journal of the African Society* v. 33, n. 131 (April 1934).

The conservative Malcolm Hailey borrowed heavily from Macmillan in his comprehensive *African Surveys*, the first of which appeared in 1938. Hailey's text immediately superseded the extant standards, Lugard's *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (1926) and the American Raymond Leslie Buell's *Native Problem in Africa* (1928), as the primary point of reference on colonial Africa.²³⁵ Like Macmillan, he noted, "The disturbances which occurred in some of the West Indian colonies, arising out of conditions in which native labour is employed, gave occasion for some public discussion regarding the adequacy of the organization of the Colonial Office for the direction of colonial policy in modern conditions."²³⁶ Though hardly a radical, Hailey maintained that recent events in the West Indies and the growth of anticolonial movements across British colonial Africa exposed the erroneous "assumptions of trusteeship," which "failed to place on the colonial power any direct obligation to assist in the material or social development of the indigenous population." "The principles of indirect rule," he argued, "if not incompatible with the ideal of self-government by representative institutions, are at all events so far alien to it as to suggest that native institutions must be ... modified if they are to fit into any scheme involving an elected parliament."²³⁷

Hailey's work from the late 1930s and 1940s provoked a mixed response amongst black intellectuals in London. They praised *An African Survey* for its scope and its attention to the problems of indirect rule, and many cited it as an authoritative source. Yet, most remained suspicious of the motives of moderate reformers like Hailey and Perham. In 1945,

²³⁵ Hailey's debt to Macmillan, however, was not acknowledged in his work. In a letter to Kirk-Greene, John Fage described Smuts' 1929 Rhodes Memorial Lecture and Macmillan's books as "the seminal originating documents – they certainly seem so from my personal experience...." Anthony Kirk-Greene, "The Emergence of an Africanist Community in the UK," in Douglas Rimmer and Anthony Kirk-Greene, eds., *The British Intellectual Engagement with African in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 23, 38.

²³⁶ Lord Hailey, *An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edition 1945, originally 1938) p. xxv, 1639-1641.

²³⁷ Hailey, *An African Survey* (1956), p. 202

the Ghanaian Ako Adjei reviewed Hailey's *The Future of Colonial Peoples* and Leonard Barnes' *Soviet Light on the Colonies* in *Wàsù*. Africans, Adjei argued, could not afford to "underestimate the importance of these two booklets." "Besides Lord Lugard," he wrote, "Lord Hailey is perhaps the most outstanding colonial theorist that Britain has produced in the present age." When "Hailey declares ... 'that the interest of the dependencies ... would be best served by making an experiment in the system of regional councils and commissions,'" Adjei suggested, he can be "taken to represent the prevailing attitude in Britain towards her colonial empire." While Barnes agreed with Hailey that there was "a need for a much more radical programme of advance' in colonial territories," the former rejected this type of scheme as a thinly veiled cover for the introduction of an inter-imperialist system and advocated instead "the application of Soviet methods in the interest of more efficient colonial administration." Adjei noted that "both Hailey and Barnes wrote in defence of the British cause," but, as Barnes himself put it, he did so "in an unorthodox fashion ... by showing that a forward-looking school of thought exists among us, keenly aware of past shortcomings and eager for reconstruction at a higher level of human association." As Adjei pointed out, the question of "where the colonial peoples themselves fit" into Barnes' vision of a "higher level of human association" was one in which Africans took great interest. He criticized the "Conservative philosopher" Hailey for being concerned solely with "the preservation of imperialism at whatever cost" and ignoring the "aspirations of the colonial peoples and their ability to plan for their own future." For Adjei, the contrast with Barnes on this point was "quite significant." Unlike Hailey, Barnes envisioned "African 'Soviets' in which Africans will play an immense part in the determination of their destiny."²³⁸

²³⁸ Ako Adjei, "Book Reviews," *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 32-33.

Criticisms like the above notwithstanding, Hailey's work lent a degree of legitimacy to the arguments of black intellectuals in the late 1930s. Although, as Pearce observes, Hailey "had no wish for a uniform pan-African policy towards the British territories" and only in 1947 with the new local government policy did the Colonial Office begin to move in this direction, due to its broad influence, *An African Survey* did "much to encourage a pan-African approach to the administration of the continent." As early as the late 1930s, Hailey popularized the notion of imperial "partnership" and, in covering the whole of sub-Saharan Africa (but *only* Africa south of the Sahara), he laid the foundation for a "new mapping of the continent" as the object of development and welfare. In this sense, as Pearce suggests, Hailey "effectively destroyed indirect rule as a system."²³⁹ The work Hailey, Macmillan, and others helped disseminate a new political imaginary and template for colonial Africa, which colonial officials and black intellectuals alike adopted in the late 1930s and 1940s.

These years also witnessed the publication of a series of books by African and West Indian intellectuals in the metropole. Their appearance in print was due in large measure to the latter's ties to writers, publishers, and politicians on the Left. In 1934, the Kenyan Parmenas Githendu Mockerie published *An African Speaks for his People* on Virginia and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press. Padmore's *How Britain Rules Africa* and *Africa and World Peace* were released in 1936 and 1937, respectively. Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* and C. L. R. James' *The Black Jacobins* both appeared in 1938. That same year, *Fact*, a socialist monthly edited by Raymond Postgate, which featured a different monograph in each issue, published *A History of Negro Revolt* by James.²⁴⁰ "This *History of Negro Revolt*," James later recalled, "could be seen on all bookshops and railway stalls the month that it was

²³⁹ R. D. Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy, 1938-1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1982), p. 155-156; Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, p. 263-264.

²⁴⁰ C. L. R. James, *A History of Negro Revolt*, *Fact* (September 1938). James later republished it in an expanded form as *A History of Pan-African Revolt*.

published.”²⁴¹ W. Arthur Lewis published *Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers’ Movement* in 1939 as part of the Fabian Research Series and *Economic Problems To-Day*, an introduction to the international economy for the uninitiated reader, in 1940.²⁴² These texts were, at once, works of politically engaged scholarship and explicitly anticolonial and anti-racist interventions. They circulated amongst not only Africans and West Indians in London and the intelligentsia in the colonies, but also individuals on the British Left. The journals of the WASU, LCP, and IASB reviewed them favorably and, in many instances, offered copies for sale to readers. Some like Horrabin subscribed to the *Wàsù*, *The Keys*, and *International African Opinion*, and the latter was sold at the meetings of various leftist groups in Britain and featured occasional contributions by British socialists like James Maxton of the ILP.²⁴³ By 1948, the catalogue of publications that the League offered for purchase included works by Kenyatta, Padmore, Moody, Williams, Horrabin, Raymond Michelet, Kenneth Little, and the multi-volume “Library of the Late Marcus Garvey.”²⁴⁴

A young, aspiring author when he arrived in Britain, C. L. R. James published no fewer than five book-length works by the time he left for the United States six years later. A cursory overview of this publication history reveals the significance of black intellectuals’ contacts with left-leaning intellectuals in the metropole. In 1933, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, who were integral members of the Bloomsbury Group, Fabian Society, and Labour Party, published James’ *The Case for West-Indian Self Government*, an abridged version of *The*

²⁴¹ C. L. R. James, “Black Intellectuals in Britain,” *Colour, Culture and Consciousness: Immigrant Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. by Bhikhu Parekh (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), p. 160.

²⁴² W. Arthur Lewis, *Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers’ Movement*, preface by Arthur Creech Jones (London: New Beacon Books, 1977, originally Fabian Society, Research Series n. 44, 1939).

²⁴³ See, for example, James Maxton, “Three Cheers for Uriah Butler,” *African Sentinel* v. 1, n. 4 (March/April 1938), p. 9.

²⁴⁴ See back cover of *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 17, n. 100 (January-march 1948).

Life of Captain Caprini, which he had written in Trinidad prior to coming to Britain.²⁴⁵ In the mid-1930s, however, the IASB's most consistent allies on the British Left—socialists like Dinah Stock, A. Fenner Brockway, Reginald Reynolds, and his novelist wife, Ethel Mannin—came from Maxton's Independent Labour Party, not the Labour Party, the Fabian Society, or the Communist Party. Padmore contributed regularly to the ILP's publications, the *New Leader*, *Left*, and *Controversy*, and the ILP and the Workers' Educational Association often engaged Kenyatta and other members of the IASB as speakers. Established in 1928, Victor Gollancz's imprint, the Left Book Club, dominated the market in socialist publications during the 1930s, releasing works that were consistently pro-Stalin and pro-Popular Front, exemplified by Beatrice and Sidney Webb's *Soviet Communism*. In general, the members of the ILP were neither and "at best ambivalent" toward the Soviet Union, so Brockway approached Fredric Warburg with an offer to bring writers associated with the Party like James, Padmore, Kenyatta, George Orwell, Reginald Reynolds, Ethel Mannin, and Jennie Lee (Aneurin's Bevan wife) to his fledgling publishing house.

James was one of the first authors whom Brockway introduced to Warburg. His novel, *Minty Alley*, became the first of his books to be released on the imprint, although its sales were disappointing. Padmore's *Africa and World Peace*, which appeared around the same time, was similarly "a flop." However, James published, as Warburg put it, "two important works" with the press soon thereafter. He recalled that James' *World Revolution*, released in 1937, "became a kind of Bible of Trotskyism" and "sold immediately well." The work offered a resounding critique of the reigning idealism concerning Stalin's Russia, which James considered "a betrayal of the revolution," and established its author as a leading intellectual in the "Marxist Group" within the ILP. James predicted that "the workers of the

²⁴⁵ C. L. R. James, *Case for West Indian Self-Government* (London: Hogarth Press, 1933).

Soviet Union would revolt against Stalin when the evitable capitalist war developed,” and “that the U.S.S.R. could not survive without a new and revolutionary international.” The following year Warburg published *The Black Jacobins*, which he later described as “an excellent book.” In addition to James’ own writings, Warburg released his translation of Boris Souvarine’s massive biography *Stalin* from 1937. As the “best book available on Stalin’s life and policy up to 1936,” Warburg recalled, “by the time the book appeared, within a month of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the public was agog to read it.”

Warburg also published Kenyatta’s ethnography of the Gikuyu in Kenya, *Facing Mount Kenya*. Even before its completion, he believed that “it would be an original and indeed unique contribution to African Studies.” “No African before Kenyatta,” he explained, “had had the ability or the specialized anthropological training to turn out a work in any way comparable with his.” After the book’s publication, Warburg “was immensely proud of it.” To his chagrin, however, sales of the book were initially modest, consisting of only 517 copies. However, *Facing Mount Kenya* enjoyed much greater success when Warburg reprinted the book amidst the British suppression of the Land and Freedom Army in Kenya, the so-called “Mau Mau” rebellion, selling some 8000 additional copies.²⁴⁶

If Warburg distinguished himself from other radical publishers in Britain by consistently publishing texts by black intellectuals, their access to the imprint remained dependent on both Warburg’s estimation of the sales potential of the sales potential of their books and his personal judgment of their contents. Although the Oxford-educated, Trinidadian historian Eric Williams tried repeatedly to publish his Ph.D. thesis, “The Economic Aspects of the Abolition of the West Indies Slave Trade and Slavery,” “No one

²⁴⁶ Frederic Warburg, *An Occupation for Gentlemen* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1959), p. 185, 206, 211, 213-215, 251-254, 270. For a useful discussion of James’ and the IASB’s relation to the divisions within the British left before WWII, see also Oxaal, *Black Intellectuals Come to Power*, p. 69-72.

would buy.” Even Warburg, who Williams deemed “Britain’s most revolutionary publisher,” refused to publish the text due to its un-British implications. According to Williams, Warburg asked, “Mr. Williams, are you trying to tell me that the slave trade and slavery were abolished for economic and not for humanitarian reasons? I would never publish such a book, for it would be contrary to the British tradition.”²⁴⁷ As a result, William’s central argument, which raised Warburg’s ire and later became the backbone of his seminal study of the links between the Atlantic slave trade and the industrial revolution in England, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), first appeared in print when *The Keys* published an excerpt from his thesis in 1939.²⁴⁸

Despite their political differences and divergent agendas, black intellectuals writing in the metropole and advocates of colonial reform on the British Left shared a concern for an “emergent” Africa and a political atmosphere marked by the resurgence of inter-imperial conflict and mounting resistance within the British Empire. Both Macmillan and James, for example, produced studies of the Caribbean, whose espoused goal consisted of unearthing “lessons” that could be applied to colonial Africa, if to markedly different ends. Scholars have noted the Marxist-Hegelian and even Shakespearean qualities of *The Black Jacobins*, but the book was a work of its times, written, as James famously put it in the original preface, “with something of the fever and fret” of the moment.²⁴⁹ Although he first conceived of the project while still in Trinidad, the events of the mid-1930s and his sojourn in London had a significant influence on the final product. In the late 1930s, the International African Service Bureau brought together black intellectuals like James, Kenyatta, Makonnen, Louis Mbanefo,

²⁴⁷ Williams, *Inward Hunger*, p. 52-53.

²⁴⁸ Eric Williams, “The Abolition of the Slave System in Britain,” *The Keys* v. 7, n. 1 (July-September 1939), p. 11-13.

²⁴⁹ At the same time, James’ influence within segments of the British Left remains under-appreciated. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1963, originally 1938), p. xi.

and, following their split with the Communist Party, Arnold Ward and Chris Braithewaite in informal evening “classes” at Padmore’s flat, where they hashed out “the political course which the African struggle would follow.” Others like the Ugandan Prince Hosea Akiiki Nyabongo, Eric Williams, and W. Arthur Lewis frequently participated in these tête-à-têtes when they could escape the confines of Oxford and the LSE, respectively. Reflecting on the circumstances surrounding the production of *The Black Jacobins* in a later work, *Nkrumah Then and Now*, James wrote, “Historical in form, it drew its contemporaneity, as all such books must, from the living struggles around us, and particularly from the daily activity that centered around Padmore and the African Bureau. It represented in a specific form the general ideas that we held at the time....”²⁵⁰

Published on the centenary of the end of the “apprenticeship” period that effectively deferred emancipation in the British West Indies, James’ book returned to the only successful slave revolt in the Caribbean in hopes of hastening African liberation. “By the time I settled down to write,” he explained, “I had reached the conclusion that the center of the Black revolution was Africa, not the Caribbean. If you read *The Black Jacobins* carefully you will see that time and time again it is Africa to which I am referring, and the political purpose of the book had little to do with the Caribbean.” “That is why that book was written and that is how it got its reputation,” James recalled. “Nkrumah and others who read it were very much concerned because that placed the revolutionary struggle squarely in the hands of Africans.”²⁵¹ The Haitian Revolution, James argued, provided an important historical lesson for present and future anticolonial struggles, and it appears that this was precisely how most West Indian and West African intellectuals read *The Black Jacobins* in

²⁵⁰ Robert A. Hill, “In England, 1932-1938,” Special Issue on “C. L. R. James: His Life and Work,” *Urgent Tasks* v. 12 (Summer 1981), p. 26.

²⁵¹ Alan J. Mackenzie and C. L. R. James, “Radical Pan-Africanism in the 1930s: A Discussion with C. L. R. James,” *Radical History Review* 24 (Fall 1980), p. 69-70.

precisely this light. The author of *The Keys*'s review of the text opined, "This period in West Indian history provides many invaluable lessons in de-imperialisation, and illustrates some of the arguments in favour of such a step." "The clearest warnings," the review continued, "are the lessons in revolution, for to the end we are faced with many of the symptoms that exist today and the writer strikes many parallels in today's imperial world, leaving the reader to draw the moral."²⁵²

In an interview towards the end of his life, James rejected the suggestion by the British socialist Reginald Reynolds that he had turned his back on the problems of his "own people ... to follow the barren cult of Trotskyism." *The Black Jacobins*, he retorted, "was not conceived within narrow confines, and neither was the next book I wrote, *The History of Negro Revolt*"; neither was "limited to a Trotskyist position." The former, James recalled, "created quite a stir" when it appeared in Britain in 1938. The author of "a very critical review in *The New Statesman* ... was very hostile to my claim that what I was doing was in anticipation of the upheaval that was sooner or later going to take place. But that book made political people aware of the problem." In other quarters, however, the work provoked a more positive response. Besides receiving praise from black publications like *The Keys*, Dorothy Pizer, Padmore's partner, reviewed the book favorably in the ILP's journal, *Controversy*.²⁵³

James insisted that the "people of the Caribbean were a *modern* people," and, like Davies and Williams, he placed African slavery in the Caribbean at the center of modern world history and the development of capitalism, in the process producing, as Stuart Hall

²⁵² K. A., "Black Jacobins by C. L. R. James," *The Keys* v. 6, n. 2 (October-December 1938), p. 12-13.

²⁵³ See Flora Grierson, *New Statesman and Nation* (October 8, 1938), p. 536; Dorothy Pizer, *Controversy* 28 (January 1939).

puts it, a “history of modernity itself.”²⁵⁴ In the final chapter of *The Black Jacobins*, he highlighted the historical parallels between the Haitian Revolution and what he believed to be an imminent African revolution. As he explained in the preface to the second edition of *The Black Jacobins* published in 1963, “I have retained the concluding pages which envisage and were intended to stimulate the coming emancipation of Africa. They are a part of the history of our time. In 1938 only the writer and a handful of close associates thought, wrote and spoke as if the African events of the last quarter of a century were imminent.”²⁵⁵ Indeed, he maintained, “The blacks of Africa are more advanced, nearer ready than the slaves of San Domingo.”

Those black Haitian labourers and the Mulattoes have given us an example to study ... [T]he millions of blacks in Africa and the few of them who are educated are as much pariahs in that vast prison as the blacks and Mulattoes of San Domingo in the eighteenth century. The imperialists envisage an eternity of African exploitation: the African is backward, ignorant.... They dream dreams.²⁵⁶

Like the revolutionaries in late-eighteenth-century France, most Britons’ self-assured air of racial superiority and faith in the sanctity of British rule remained unshaken. As the onset of another appeared increasingly unavoidable in the late 1930s, James and those around him in the IASB perceived the dawning of a new historical epoch that would usher in African freedom, just as political and military crisis in Europe had created the conditions that thrust the slaves of Saint Domingue onto the stage of world history in such dramatic fashion. Thus, James predicted, “Let the blacks but hear from Europe the slogans of Revolution, and the *Internationale*, in the same concrete manner that the slaves of San Domingo heard Liberty and Equality and the *Marseillaise*.... They will hear.” The “theoretical basis” of *The Black Jacobins*,

²⁵⁴ Stuart Hall interviewed by Bill Schwarz, “Break Bread with History: C. L. R. James and *The Black Jacobins*,” *History Workshop Journal* 46 (Autumn 1998), p. 22-24.

²⁵⁵ James, “Preface to Vintage Edition,” *The Black Jacobins*.

²⁵⁶ James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 375-376.

James wrote, “is that in a period of world-wide revolutionary change, such as that of 1789-1815 and our period which began with 1917, the revolutionary crisis lifts backward peoples over centuries and projects them into the very forefront of the advanced movement of the day.” The publication of *The Black Jacobins*, Hill observes, “was probably the most important factor in the evolution of the strategic perspective” of the IASB, which on the eve of the Second World War “became the premise that *armed struggle* would be the form of the African revolution.”²⁵⁷

Both the *Black Jacobins* and James’s subsequent work, *A History of Negro Revolt*, represented attempts to identify precedents and cull historical lessons for the coming armed struggle in Africa, reflecting the influence of a political climate characterized by the growing use of violence to achieve change. Perhaps even more than the *Black Jacobins*, *A History of Negro Revolt* displayed the influence of the group of intellectuals around the IASB. As a global history of black resistance, the short book was a groundbreaking in its breadth and scope. As James noted, “Such a book had never been done before.”²⁵⁸ The text both reflected the political imaginary of James’ circle in the mid-1930s and drew upon their collective knowledge. Not surprisingly, James began his study with Saint Domingue, restating the central premises of the *Black Jacobins*. Here again, he stressed that the revolution in France had provided the historical opening in the form of both a weakened metropolitan power and a set of ideals for the slaves of Saint Domingue. “The only successful Negro revolt, the only successful slave revolt in history,” he asserted, “had its in the French Revolution, and without the French Revolution its success would have been impossible.” Yet, for James, as Robin Kelley explains, “while a burning desire for liberty, articulated in the

²⁵⁷ Hill, “In England, 1932-1938,” p. 25-27.

²⁵⁸ C. L. R. James, *The Future in the Present* (London: Allison & Busby, 1977), p. 70.

aims of the French Revolution, drove the slave, production relations on the plantation organized him.” “Working together in gangs of hundreds on the huge sugar-factories which covered the North Plain,” James argued, the slaves “were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at that time, and the rising was, therefore, a thoroughly prepared and organized mass movement.” Although Eric Williams later acknowledged that the chapter on the “The Owners” in the *Black Jacobins* prefigured key elements of his own argument on the interrelation of the Atlantic slave trade, abolition, and the birth of capitalism in *Capitalism and Slavery*, James foreshadowed the latter most explicitly in *A History of Negro Revolt*. “Slavery,” he wrote, “made cotton king; cotton became the very life food of British industries, it built up New England factories ... What we are really witnessing [with abolition] ... is not that sudden change in the conscience of mankind so beloved of romantic and reactionary historians, but the climax of a gradual transformation of world economy.”²⁵⁹

However, unlike the *Black Jacobins*, in which the implications for colonial Africa, though clear to many of James’ contemporaries, remained largely implicit, *A History of Negro Revolt* linked the past struggles of enslaved Africans and their descendents in the Americas to colonial Africa in a single frame of analysis. The chapter on “Revolts in Africa” represented an early attempt at producing a synthetic overview of anticolonial resistance in Africa since the late nineteenth century. Whereas the early chapters of the book built on James’ own extensive research for the *Black Jacobins*, such an ambitious undertaking would have been beyond his reach without the collaboration with African intellectuals which the IASB made possible. For example, in his brief discussion of the 1929 Igbo Women’s War in southeastern Nigeria, James admitted frankly to relying upon his acquaintances from Nigeria

²⁵⁹ C. L. R. James, *A History of Pan-African Revolt*, intro. by Robin D. G. Kelley (Chicago: Kerr, 1995), p. 14, 36, 38-39, 59.

for information regarding “the actual happenings in Aba [which] have been suppressed in all official reports.”²⁶⁰

By lingering on the significance of James’s work in the late 1930s, I do not mean to suggest that his view of the coming African struggle was representative of that of the majority of Africans and West Indians in London; quite the opposite was true. Incongruent expectations often distinguished black intellectuals from even the most outspoken critics of empire in Britain, but sharp differences of opinion also divided black associations, and internal disputes were common within organizations devoted to colonial issues. Although the IASB maintained close ties to the Independent Labour Party, on key issues like the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, black intellectuals clashed with the Party’s leadership, who adopted a policy of non-intervention in response to what they viewed as “an Imperialist quarrel between Britain and Italy.”²⁶¹ The ILP “held that the liquidation of British imperialism was essential to peace,” but unlike most black intellectuals, prominent members of the inner executive did not view the defense of Haile Selassie’s government as fitting with this mission. Two of the ILP’s three Members of Parliament, George Buchanan and John McGovern, opposed direct action by European workers on the grounds that the Abyssinian cause was nationalist, not socialist, and suggested that Haile Selassie was as much a dictator as Mussolini. The third, James Maxton, asserted “that ‘working-class sanctions’ ... would help to create a psychology of war against Italy.” Whereas both the Labour and Communist Parties in Britain were calling for governmental action of some form, the ILP rejected the idea in the belief that such measures “would lead to war.” At the ILP’s annual conference, C. L. R. James moved for a resolution disassociating the Party’s rank-and-file from the stance of

²⁶⁰ James, “Revolts in Africa,” *The Future in the Present*, p. 75.

²⁶¹ Quoted in Daniel Waley, *British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War* (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1975), p. 26.

the executive. “In a typically torrential speech,” Fenner Brockway remembered, “He appealed as a black worker for help for the black population of Abyssinia.”²⁶² The issue split the ILP’s membership due in part to James’ impassioned plea. Similarly, at a National Peace Council Conference in 1935, which included the anthropologist Lucy Mair, Barnes, Macmillan, Reginald Bridgeman, Roden Buxton, John Harris of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, and Lord Lothian representing the pro-imperial Round Table group, Arnold Wald “accused liberal delegates of being preoccupied with peace in Europe and showing little real concern for the problems of Africa and the threat to Ethiopia.”²⁶³

Like their ties to socialists and communists in Britain, the IASB’s relations with other black organizations in the metropole were usually tenuous, if not openly strained.²⁶⁴ Although Padmore remained close to the West Indian physician Dr. Belfield Clarke of the LCP and Mbanefo who remained active in the both latter and WASU, according to James, the pair attended the meetings of the League “chiefly with the idea of asking inconvenient questions.” Moreover, philosophical and political differences between the black intellectuals within various organizations were nearly as common as those between them, and, at times, the tensions within and between black pressure groups surfaced in print. Though Kenyatta was active in the IASB from the start, unlike James and Padmore, he and Peter Koinange had little interest in Marxism and remained singularly concerned with the reclamation of Gikuyu lands from white settlers in Kenya. Although he appears to have been at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in 1929, the African-American sociologist St. Clair Drake recalled that Dorothy Pizer once told him “that any visits Kenyatta made to Moscow certainly had no effect on his ideology, nor did any ‘education’ that she and

²⁶² Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left: Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison and Parliament* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1942), p. 325-326.

²⁶³ Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, p. 258.

²⁶⁴ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary*, p. 39-41.

Padmore tried to give him. ‘He was always an unreconstructed Gikuyu tribalist,’ she said bitterly.” Although James praised Kenyatta’s *Facing Mount Kenya* for its “scrupulously scientific approach,” he questioned the work’s political implications. Kenyatta, he wrote, “is ideologically rooted in the social and religious ideals of the civilisation which is being so ruthlessly destroyed by the united front of settler, official and missionary. Politically, I believe that there are the seeds here of an immense confusion.”²⁶⁵ Even the black Marxists in the IASB were divided in their appraisal of the Communist Party. Wallace-Johnson maintained congenial relations with the CPGB through Reginald Bridgeman of the League Against Imperialism, but James, Padmore, and Braithewaite attended communist meetings solely “to criticize their policy.”²⁶⁶

Differences of perspective and experience between West Indians and Africans, more broadly, remained a significant stumbling block. However, so long as they did not coalesce into entrenched, rival camps, these internal divisions and differences of opinion as well as the debates that they provoked were constitutive of a sense of a wider black public or community of discourse. In the fall of 1936, *The Keys* publicized a recent debate held at the WASU’s hostel at which “the advantages of greater cooperation between African and West Indians—a subject as vital as it is longstanding—were discussed.” Although “West Indians came in for the usual trouncing for their vanity, their ignorance of the cultures of their forefathers, their desire to be imitation Europeans, and their blindness to the advantages of

²⁶⁵ C. L. R. James, “The Voice of Africa,” *International African Opinion* v. 1, n. 2 (August 1938), p. 3; Drake, “Mbiyu Koinange and the Pan-African Movement,” p. 175-177; Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 118-121. On the University of the Toilers of the East, see Irina Filatova, “Indoctrination or Scholarship? Education of Africans at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in the Soviet Union, 1923-1937,” *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* v. 35, n. 1 (1999), pp. 41-66.

²⁶⁶ Wallace-Johnson later claimed to have split with the Communist Party in 1938, although Spitzer and Denzer note that there is no evidence to corroborate this date. Nevertheless, it is clear that he remained in contact with Bridgeman well after the latter had severed all ties with James and Padmore. Spitzer and Denzer, “I. T. A. Wallace Johnson and the West African Youth League,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6, 3 (1973), p. 451-452; Mackenzie and James, “Radical Pan-Africanism in the 1930s,” p. 72-73.

mutual understanding,” the journal reported that the “debate was lively,” and “itself showed signs that these charges are beginning to lose their original validity.” “It is, in our view,” the piece continued, “impossible to exaggerate the necessity for West Indians to make an effort to break through the anti-African propaganda with which their educational system is saturated, and to try to re-establish contact with the civilisations in which they have their roots.”²⁶⁷ In his review of *Facing Mount Kenya*, James invited Kenyatta to engage in an exchange of ideas not only because they shared the goal of African liberation, but also because of their political differences. “What is the remedy? All friends of the African know the first necessity. They must have their land back. But for what? ... How does he see the future of free Kenya? He must let us know, so that all of us, Africans and friends of Africans, can thrash the problem out.”²⁶⁸ James addressed Kenyatta and a counterpublic of “Africans and friends of Africans” constituted in part through the circulation of texts like *A History of Negro Revolt* and *Facing Mount Kenya* and serial publications such as *The Keys* and *International African Opinion*.²⁶⁹ Despite their philosophical and political differences, both the IASB and LCP sought to create the constituency for their internationalist aspirations by acting as something like a junction box at the heart of the British Empire between the different branches of a global black community. For example, in “Africa Speaks Out: Colonials Reply to Hitler’s Demand for Colonies,” the *African Sentinel* compiled a series of letters of protest and resolutions on the subject from Cameroon, Basutoland in South Africa,

²⁶⁷ “Racial Solidarity,” *The Keys* v. 4, n. 2 (October-December 1936), p. 16.

²⁶⁸ C. L. R. James, “The Voice of Africa,” *International African Opinion* v. 1, n. 2 (August 1938), p. 3.

²⁶⁹ The term “counterpublic” is borrowed from the work of Michael Warner. As Warner explains, “Public discourse ... is poetic. By this I mean ... that all discourse or performance addressed to a public must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate, projecting for that world a concrete and livable shape, and attempting to realize that world through address.” Although, in this sense, “Counterpublics are publics, too,” “a counterpublic maintains ... awareness of its subordinate status. The cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public, but a dominant one. And the conflict extends not just to ideas or policy questions, but to the speech genres and modes of address that constitute the public and to the hierarchy among media.” Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” *Public Culture* v. 14, n. 1 (2002), p. 81, 86.

Trinidad, *L'Union Des Travailleurs Negres* in Paris, the Federation of French Colonial Workers (*Rassemblement Colonial*), and the Colonial Seamen's Association in London.²⁷⁰

Conclusion

Like Barnes and Macmillan in the 1930s, James believed that imperialism and capitalism would give way to an internationalist social revolution and that Africa would be a key staging ground for this transformation. Yet, unlike their interlocutors on the British Left, this conviction led James and West African intellectuals like Davies to far-reaching conclusions about how the nature of Europe's engagement with Africa shaped not only the latter but the international relations. For them, the black subject in Africa and the Caribbean was eminently modern and, by virtue of her/his history, profoundly cosmopolitan. In their hands, the African and West Indian became the modern subject *par excellence*.

Black intellectuals in London believed that the cause of internationalism was the special inheritance, even the responsibility, which history had bequeathed to black cultures around the Atlantic. The Nigerian Nnamdi Azikiwe wrote in the preface to *Renascent Africa* in 1937, "To-day, the continent of Africa is the focal point of European territorial ambitions. France, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain have colonial possessions in Africa. They are among the 'have' nations. There are other States which have no colonial possessions in Africa. They are among the 'have not' nations. A clash between the two groups is inevitable." A cultural, material, and political renaissance in Africa, caught in the middle of "these conflicting ambitions of Europe for territorial expansion," was the key to avoiding another world conflict and securing international stability. Azikiwe maintained "that

²⁷⁰ "Africa Speaks Out: Colonials Reply to Hitler's Demand for Colonies," *African Sentinel* v. 1, n. 4 (March/April 1938), p. 5.

the twentieth-century African is bound to be renascent; that this Renascent African must be reckoned with as a conrescent factor in the peace of the world.”²⁷¹ As tensions mounted on the international front in the late 1930s, West Indians and Africans of varying political stripes in London came together around a vision of black internationalism defined in opposition to racism and virulent nationalism. Although most remained committed to furthering cooperation and mutual understanding across racial divisions, on the eve of the Second World War, even staunchest advocate of this view, the LCP, began planning for a World Conference of Africans and people of African descent to be held in 1940, reflecting an emphasis on African self-help that would become increasingly prevalent over the next decade.²⁷²

²⁷¹ Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Renascent Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1968, originally 1937), p. 7.

²⁷² Harold Moody, “President’s Message,” *The Keys* v. 5, n. 4 (April-June 1938), p. 79.

Chapter Three

In Search of Pan-Africanist Women: Black Internationalism and Feminism

While in Britain doing research for his Ph.D. thesis in 1948, the African-American sociologist St. Clair Drake recorded a revealing discussion with the Trinidadian George Padmore. On this occasion, their dinner conversation turned to the subject of a West African artist in London who wanted to marry a white woman who would “understand him.” Drake noted that Padmore “was quite sympathetic to his point of view.” Drake then asked if “colored women over here object to Negro [men] who marry white [women],” to which Padmore replied, “There are no colored women over here to marry.” Drake continued, “I mentioned the rarity of colored girls in [the] U.S. who are leftist and movement oriented. He said, ‘Yes. Just imagine we married one of those Fisk girls I knew. After I read that section of your book on the Negro upper class I was trying to think of myself married to one of those women—going to sorority dances, playing bridge – ha!’”²⁷³ Here, we get a glimpse of the fundamental role of difference within the gestures of identity and inclusion more commonly associated with black internationalism. Drake and Padmore, central figures in the intellectual elaboration of pan-Africanism and the notion of an African diaspora, found common ground in what they perceived as commensurate experiences vis-à-vis black women and a shared conception of the black intellectual as a heterosexual man.

Padmore’s erasure of African and Caribbean women in the metropole as well as both men’s

²⁷³ Such remarks were common amongst prominent black men of letters on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, in a letter to Richard Wright, a young Ralph Ellison declared that women were unable “to stray ... far from biological reality—even when they cloak themselves with intellectual sleep’s clothing,” and questioned their political commitments. “In many instances,” he wrote, “they don’t give a dam[n] about revolution at all; only to throw off their girdles and let their behinds expand.” St. Clair Drake Papers, Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture, New York Public Library, File 5, Box 61, dated March 2, 1948; Ellison quoted in Randy Boyagoda, “Bright Lights, Big Speeches: Ralph Ellison and the Perils of Publicity,” *Harper’s Magazine* v. 314, n. 1884 (May 2007), p. 95.

attribution of political backwardness to African-American women reveal how gender difference served to buttress a particular vision of black revolutionary masculinity and pan-Africanism.

Extant histories of pan-Africanism tend to uncritically reproduce declarations of this type. Most cite the predominance of men within the community of colonials in Britain and all but ignore the activities of African and West Indian women. In some cases, scholars combine both tropes employed by Padmore and Drake above—the association of black women with political backwardness and the notion that there were, relatively speaking, no black women intellectuals in London. In the most thoroughgoing study of West African students in Britain between 1900 and 1960, Hakim Adi devotes less than two pages to the subject of “West African women in Britain” and concludes by stating that as late as 1957 the *West African Student*, the journal of the West African Students Union, “could still complain about the ‘apathy of the West African woman,’ and expressed the view that ‘our society has not been able to produce women of our mothers’ calibre’.”²⁷⁴ Adi misses an opportunity to raise important questions about the ways in which the voices and interests of women were marginalized in groups like the WASU; instead, he repeats the standard complaint.

Although their numbers remained relatively small until after World War II, West African and Caribbean women played significant, if circumscribed, roles in every major black internationalist organizations in London. What is more, by continuing to ignore other visions of black internationalism, scholars not only perpetuate the relative invisibility of women but also obscure the gender and sexual politics within pan-Africanist circles as well. In fact, black women in London seized allusive opportunities to retort to the accusations of

²⁷⁴ Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), p. 177.

their male peers. One letter published in the inaugural issue of *Checkers*, the first glossy magazine in Britain to appeal directly to a black audience, reproached black men for their predilection for white women, employing the language of black unity. “As a coloured girl who goes dancing quite a lot, I think it is about time some of the coloured men started dancing with girls of their own race. They seem to prefer white girls however, and if I want to dance I have to wait until a white man asks me. Surely this is just another example of how the coloured people fail to support each other here in Great Britain.”²⁷⁵ Many women either publicly or privately lamented African and Caribbean men’s notions of proper gender norms and attitudes toward themselves, often in terms that appealed to racial consciousness.

Through an analysis of both the public and quotidian expressions of black internationalism by West African and Caribbean women, this chapter shows how their activities in the metropole belie the assertions of male contemporaries regarding their supposed political apathy. Although the Jamaicans Una Marson and Amy Ashwood Garvey are the most well known and, indeed, figure in what follows, it challenges the notion that they were, as historian Barbara Bush put it, “the only black female activists of any prominence” in Britain before the 1960s.²⁷⁶ My intention is not to simply restore black women’s intellectual work to the history of pan-Africanism or highlight their simultaneous involvement and marginalization within black pressure groups in London. While this chapter aims to do both, it also examines the lives of black internationalist women in London to demonstrate how their invisibility is constitutive of a particular myth upon which scholars have constructed the story of anglophone pan-Africanism, following the men who

²⁷⁵ *Checkers* v. 1, n. 1 (July 1948), p. 24.

²⁷⁶ Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: African and Britain, 1919-1945* (London, 1999), p. 219.

dominated the movement.²⁷⁷ This narrative can be caricatured as follows: the experiences of black students and intellectuals in the imperial metropole politicized them in new ways due, in part, to their exposure to paternalist racism and communist internationalists or other groups on the British Left; this led to the emergence of a new black political milieu and an increasingly radical pan-Africanism, which included groups spanning a continuum from bourgeois reformist to communist and culminated in the 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress and, ultimately, anticolonial nationalist movements. My point is not so much that this construction is wrong per se as that it posits a narrowly masculinist understanding of black internationalism that allows no room for considering, for example, attempts at articulating a feminist and black internationalist perspective. This chapter represents an attempt to re-envision the intellectual genealogy of black internationalism in a manner that does not reproduce—or, more accurately reenact—an overwhelmingly masculinist dialogue, exemplified by that between Padmore and Drake, which reduces African and West Indian women to the raw material or terrain of racial unity and consigns them to the background of the history of pan-Africanism.

West African and Caribbean Women at the Heart of the Empire

The number of women in London from British colonies in the Caribbean and West Africa remained small until the late 1940s. No aggregate figures are available for women from the colonies studying in Britain, but in 1933 a proposal to establish living accommodations at College Hall for West Indian women students attending the University of London reported a total of no less than 7 and as many as 17 during the decade between

²⁷⁷ See, for example, Tony Martin, *Pan-African Connection; From Slavery to Garvey and Beyond* (Dover, Massachusetts: The Majority Press, 1983).

1923 and 1933.²⁷⁸ As late as 1951, the government census found that 63 percent of the 4,216 West Indians and 81 percent of the 2,183 West Africans in Britain were men.²⁷⁹ Although wealthy families along the coast of West Africa had sent their daughters to study in Britain since the late nineteenth century, their numbers remained extremely small during the first decades of the twentieth century. The enrollment of women in West African schools climbed steadily during the interwar years, but higher education continued to be beyond the financial means of most and the preserve of the privileged few. The relative dearth of women sojourners reflected the similarly skewed figures for men and women entering schools in British West Africa; the ratio of women to men at the primary level hovered around one to four or five during the 1930s, but while the ratio remained much worse for the secondary schools, it improved from one to seventeen in 1930 to one to eight in 1937. As LaRay Denzer observes, these inequalities in access to educational opportunity resulted from the convergence of patriarchal values in Britain and West Africa.²⁸⁰

The rare women who went to Britain in the 1920s to pursue postsecondary education usually came from wealthy families in commercial centers like Lagos and Freetown. Some like the Nigerians Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa (née Blaize) and Oyinkan Morenike Abayomi (née Ajasa), the daughter of the first Nigerian awarded a peerage by the British crown, went on to become prominent figures in anticolonial politics during final decades of British rule. Charlotte Obasa created the Lagos Women's League, one of the first women's pressure groups in Nigeria, and in 1944, Oyinkan Abayomi established the more

²⁷⁸ CO 318/412/3: College Hall, London – Facilities for West Indian Women Students (1933). I have not found any figures for West African women before the late 1940s, as I discuss below.

²⁷⁹ Banton, *The Coloured Quarter*, p. 67.

²⁸⁰ LaRay Denzer, "Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* v. 27, n. 1 (1994), pp. 19-21; see also Philip S. Zackernuk, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), p. 83, and Kristin Mann, *Marrying Well: Marriage, Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

militant Nigerian Women's Party. Abayomi also founded a new magazine called the *Nigerian Pioneer*, while Obasa became a major proponent of the Yoruba cultural renaissance amongst the colonial elite in Lagos during the early twentieth century.

Moreover, this generation of women was instrumental in creating new opportunities for West African women beyond the primary school level. After earning her degree in Britain during the 1920s, Abayomi launched the British West African Educated Girls' Club (later the Ladies Progressive Club) in 1927, which resulted in the creation of Queen's College during the same year, "the first—and until the 1950s the only—secondary school for girls." Under her guidance, the Women's Party called on the colonial government to provide more scholarships for women to study abroad in Britain and agitated for more African women in the colonial service. Adelaide Smith, who was of Fanti, Mandingo, Maroon, and English heritage, spent her youth in Britain with her Sierra Leonean father. Seven years after the death of her father, she married the renowned Fanti lawyer and pan-Africanist, Joseph E. Casely Hayford, in 1903, and the couple left soon thereafter for the Gold Coast. Smith Casely Hayford returned to England with her daughter, Gladys, twice over the subsequent decade before leaving her husband to move back to Freetown in 1914. During the mid-1920s, she served briefly as the president of the Freetown branch of the Garveyite UNIA, took two fund-raising trips to the United States, and participated in the 1927 Pan-African Congress in New York. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Smith Casely Hayford fought for equal educational opportunities for both sexes and women's suffrage, the latter won in Freetown in 1930, and established a technical school for girls, which lasted until 1940 despite chronic financial problems.²⁸¹

²⁸¹ See Folarin Coker, *A Lady: A Biography of Lady Oyinkan Abayomi* (Ibadan, Nigeria : Evans Brothers, 1987), G. O. Olusanya, "Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa" and Cheryl Johnson-Odim, "Lady Oyinkan Abayomi," *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*, Bolanle Awe, ed. (Lagos: Sankore Publishers, 1992); also Catherine Coquery-

Although colonial women played an integral role in the development of black pressure groups like the LCP and WASU during the interwar period, their experiences in London often diverged markedly from those of their male peers, who by the late 1930s had not only two options for temporary lodgings in Aggrey House and the WASU's Africa House but also an established, if informal, network of black professionals and sympathetic Britons, which eased their transition to life in the metropole. Most colonial women had to rely upon personal or familial connections to secure housing and other necessities. Many like Remi Ademola, Bisi Alakija, and Aduke Alikija had brothers who were also studying in Britain or fathers who had in the past. Unlike her brother, Stephen Thomas, however, Stella could not stay at the LCP's "Aggrey House" or the WASU hostel, so she lived at the YWCA during her time in London. Likewise, when she arrived in London in 1935 for training to become a teacher, the Sierra Leonean Constance Horton (later Cummings-John) had no choice but to stay there while her college was closed for a holiday break.²⁸² "First," she remembered, "there was trouble over our rooms. Though we had booked a double room because it was cheaper, they gave each of us a single room, making us pay far more than we had anticipated." Horton recalled how the attitude of the English women boarders exacerbated an already difficult adjustment to life in the hostel. "Some of them were very nice, of course, but others would not even speak to us because of our colour ... Stella

Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, trans. by Beth Gillian Raps (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 152-153, Cheryl Jeffries Johnson, "Nigerian Women and British Colonialism: The Yoruba Example with Selected Biographies," Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1978, and Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, p. 104. On Adelaide Casely Hayford, see Adelaide M. Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist: Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford, 1868-1960* (London: Frank Cass, 1986) and Barbara Bair, "Pan-Africanism in Process: Adelaide Casely Hayford, Garveyism, and the Cultural Roots of Nationalism," *Imagining Home: Class, Culture and Nationalism in the African Diaspora*, Sidney J. Lemelle and Robin D. G. Kelley, eds. (London: Verso, 1994), p. 121-144.

²⁸² Although initially women were to be excluded totally from access to Aggrey House, criticism of this decision from the largely English Aggrey House Committee as well as West Indian and African members led to the amendment of the rule. Thereafter, the housekeeper's room was altered to serve as a ladies' room, and women members were permitted in "the coffee room, lounge and library." See Minute by Hanns Vischer in internal Colonial Office correspondence, Public Record Office, Kew, CO 323/1342/11 (January 25, 1935), p. 4-5.

Thomas, who had just qualified as a barrister-at-law, was the only other African there, but I managed to get along.²⁸³

Due to rampant discrimination, black women also had difficulty finding employment in Britain, even positions for which they were over-qualified. In an unpublished piece on the “Problems of Coloured People in Britain,” Marson noted, “The young coloured woman has to face many problems ... In London, most avenues of work except that of entertaining in the dance or Music halls, are closed to coloured people ... I myself have experienced difficulty in finding work when I urgently needed it.” “Once I tried to register for work as a stenographer,” she continued. “One agent told me she didn’t register black women because they would have to work in offices with white women. Another agent ... told me that though my references were excellent firms did not want to employ a black stenographer.”²⁸⁴

An aspiring poet and playwright who had aspirations exceeding the limitations placed on a dark-skinned, middle class woman in Jamaican society, Marson arrived in Britain on July 9, 1932, ostensibly as a representative of the Kingston Stenographers Association. Her early experiences of London came as a profound shock. Though she would eventually move in metropolitan literary, feminist, and black student circles, Marson remained ambivalent about the coldness of the city and its populace and prone to bouts of depression throughout her years in Britain.

Britons’ racism and ignorance with regard to the colonies stunned new arrivals. In a speech on “The Colour Bar in England” at the 1934 British Commonwealth League Conference, Marson told the audience that “coloured people meet with a ‘subtle prejudice’”

²⁸³ Constance Agatha Cummings-John, *Memoirs of a Krio Leader*, ed. with introduction and annotation by LaRay Denzer (Ibadan, Nigeria: Humanities Research Centre, 1995), p. 17-18.

²⁸⁴ Una Marson, “Problems of Coloured People in Britain,” (n.d.), Una Marson Papers, Box 1944C, National Library of Jamaica, Kingston, p. 1; quoted in Alison Donnell, “Una Marson: Feminism, Anti-colonialism, and a Forgotten Fight for Freedom,” *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. by Bill Schwarz (Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 120-121.

in Britain. “[I]n America,” she maintained, “they tell you frankly where you are not wanted by means of big signs, and they don’t they try to hide their feelings. But in England, though the people will never say what they feel about us, you come up against incidents which hurt so much that you cannot talk about them.”²⁸⁵ Marson highlighted both the superficial differences and functional similarity of *de facto* and *de jure* discrimination in the United States and Britain. She suggested that the concealed and hence unacknowledged nature of racism in Britain rendered it all the more insidious and painful. She referenced overt racial oppression in the United States not only to direct attention to its silent, “subtle” manifestations in Britain, but to articulate a different type of silence, to give public expression to the psychological pain felt by blacks in Britain as a consequence of racist “incidents” as well. In “Nigger,” a particularly biting verse published in the first issue of *The Keys*, Marson articulated the pain and anger provoked by everyday encounters with racism on the streets of metropole in a scenario that foreshadowed the classic passage from Franz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*.

They called me ‘Nigger,’
Those little white urchins,
They laughed and shouted
As I passed along the street,
They flung it at me:
‘Nigger! Nigger! Nigger!’
What makes me keep my fingers
From choking the words from their throats?²⁸⁶

Similarly, The final two stanzas of Sylvia Lowe’s “Disillusionment (After seeing the Trooping of the Colour)” express the hurt engendered by the gulf between colonials’ everyday experiences in London and British ideals of equality, justice, and freedom.

Away in all our several British lands

²⁸⁵ *The Keys* v. 2, n. 1 (July-September 1934), p. 17.

²⁸⁶ Una Marson, “Nigger,” *The Keys* v. 1, n. 1 (July 1933), p. 8-9.

We know no difference in the quality
 Of our allegiance tempered by our race,
 Here we have learnt the difference, here we see
 That we are barred by colour in this land
 To which we gave so great a loyalty.
 The crass injustices of earth abound
 No less in England of the just and free!

Oh that she still would give us cause to love,
 Sadly we turn from all the pomp and state,
 True loyalty dies hard, and sadness leaves.
 (We do not let ourselves descend to hate)
 We go a disillusioned British host,
 Back to the lands from which we came of late,
 For ever broken by our welcome here,
 And all the bitter insults that we meet.²⁸⁷

Under these circumstances, African and West Indian women often suffered from chronic loneliness in London. Unlike Horton and Thomas, Marson was fortunate enough to be able to live initially in Dr. Harold Moody's home outside of London, which also introduced her to the LCP. Nevertheless, she slipped into a deep depression during her first years in Britain until she was able to secure her own flat in London and enter into more varied social relations with regulars on the English literary scene and others from the African diaspora. Sylvia Lowe, who was also boarding with the Moodys at the time, told Marson's biographer of finding her crying late one night and observed how "very emotional she was with frustration."²⁸⁸ While back in Jamaica in 1936, Marson told *The Daily Gleaner*, "In London I have been very hurt by some slights caused by the ignorance of people. They point at you and stare at you and it is very embarrassing ... In London everyone seems far off. You see groups of people and no one you know. It is very lonely."²⁸⁹ For colonial women, isolation within male-dominated black organizations exacerbated the effects of British

²⁸⁷ Sylvia Lowe, "Disillusionment," *The Keys* v. 1, n. 2 (October 1933), p. 28.

²⁸⁸ Delia Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson, 1905-1965* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 51.

²⁸⁹ "Racial Prejudice in London Not Improving Say Miss Marson," *The Daily Gleaner* (September 28, 1936), p. 5.

racism. Indeed, although Marson regularly acted as the LCP's representative in a variety of forums and handled the majority of its day-to-day business, making her influence within the League during the mid-1930s second only to that Dr. Harold Moody, she remained on the margins socially and ideologically. As Jarrett-Macauley explains, citing the Sierra Leonean Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole, "Una gained a reputation of being 'a true loner who didn't exactly seek company,' and some League members countered by refusing to take notice of her." Wellesley Cole described Marson as "extremely charming, but not one of us."²⁹⁰

Moreover, compared to their male counterparts, West Indian and African women attracted little attention from the government and, thus, received much less assistance from the Colonial Office. In a peculiar convergence of values, the Colonial Office, the colonial governors, and the male leadership of the LCP and WASU assumed a position of willful ignorance towards colonial women's difficulties (and even their presence) in Britain. For example, the proposal for the creation of facilities for West Indian women students at the University of London's College Hall fell largely upon deaf ears. Officials in the Colonial Office tried to distinguish the proposal from on-going discussions over plans to create Aggrey House and, in the process, conflated different visions of the latter as a hostel or temporary residence for men and an institution for all blacks in Britain. Major Hanns Vischer asserted that the College Hall plan did "not affect the Aggrey House proposals as these do not concern women but men." In a similar vein, W. Bigg noted, "the Aggrey House memo made clear that the hostel accommodation there would be for males only," and later, "Aggrey House is both a hostel (for males) and social centre (for males and females) for all coloured people." Bigg insisted, "the two schemes are quite unrelated and we must be careful not to suggest that they are in any way rival organisations with competing claims for

²⁹⁰ Jarrett-Macauley, p. 53.

support, whether moral or material.”²⁹¹ While in agreement over the desirability of monitoring and policing Caribbean women students’ activities, some in the Colonial Office like Bigg and Vischer saw in the scheme a potential threat to what they believed was the more important Aggrey House initiative, while the governors in the British West Indies viewed it as an unnecessary expense. There does not appear to have been any response, in the form of support or otherwise, from the few extant black organizations in Britain at the time. It was not until mid-1940s that all parties would begin to acknowledge the unique circumstances and challenges facing colonial women in the metropole, a shift which was largely a consequence of the activities of the latter.

According to Constance Horton, what guidance or assistance was offered usually represented little more than a thinly veiled attempt to scrutinize colonial women’s social lives and changing attitudes.

Those first few days, I absorbed many shocks in the beautiful place that they called London. From the way people behaved when they came back to Freetown, as if they had come straight from heaven to hell, we always had imagined it to be a sort of paradise, so it was not surprising ... that I found things were not nearly so wonderful. The Colonial Office tried to help ease our entry into English life by providing a counselor, then Miss E. S. Fegan, for female coloured students. She used to invite us to teas where she tried to fish out our ideas and opinions about colonial treatment in Africa.²⁹²

However, apathy could change into contempt when officials believed that colonial students had drifted from the proper path. Horton remembered a striking example of such an encounter with Hanns Vischer, an academician by training, veteran of the colonial service in Northern Nigeria, and the man considered by both his peers and many colonials in Britain to be the most sympathetic member of the Colonial Office with regard to the latter’s plight.

Though, as she explained, “Both Keigman and Major Vischer encouraged me in my

²⁹¹ From internal Colonial Office correspondence, dated April 12, 1933 and March 9 and 12, 1934, CO 318/412/3.

²⁹² Cummings-John, *Memoirs of a Krio Leader*, p. 18.

[academic] efforts,” a marked difference of opinion emerged between the two when H. S. Keigman arranged for Horton to travel to the United States to study the applicability of the Jeanes system of vocational education to West Africa. “At first,” she recalled, “I was not very keen. At the time, America to me was so far removed. Besides, I had made many friends among my fellow West African students, so I was not enthusiastic to cut away and go to this far-away country called America.” Despite her initial reservations and financial limitations, she decided to go through with the plan, but it was the hostility with which Vischer greeted news of the trip that both stunned Horton and piqued her curiosity. When Horton solicited a recommendation from Vischer to obtain her ticket and visa, “he inquired, ‘Constance, why do you want to go to America? Don’t go. The Negroes there are bad people. They will influence you.’” When she tried a second time, “he became very angry and refused ... , declaring: ‘I don’t know you. I cannot recommend you. Go away, Constance. Do you want to go and be a Wallace-Johnson or an Azikiwe in Africa? Do you want to go and be the Governor of Sierra Leone?’ He went on and on. The way he carried on amazed me.”

Horton’s exposure to the American variant of racism had a more radicalizing effect on her thinking than Vischer, Keigwin, or she had imagined. Prior to this, Horton was only vaguely familiar with the activities of the individuals who Vischer accused her of aspiring to emulate; after she returned, however, she became increasingly impatient with not only the pace of colonial reform but also the complacency and prejudices of many of her West African peers in Britain, including members of the LCP and the WASU. As a result, she placed growing importance on racial unity in the face of all forms of discrimination around the globe, joined the International African Service Bureau led by George Padmore and I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, and, for the first time, began to attend the latter’s fiery speeches in

Hyde Park against the abuses of British imperialism. If Vischer's hostility informed Horton's politics and drew her closer to the other pan-Africanists in mid-1930s London, it also provoked, like a slap on the cheek, a disillusioning awareness of how differently representatives of the colonial state and Britons in general perceived them. "Initially," she admitted, "I was not even keen on going to America, but after Major Vischer's attack on me, I began to think that there must be something in this America, and I might as well go and see exactly what was happening there." Vischer's fury strengthened her resolve to go ahead with her plans, but it also hurt her on personal level. "At that moment, however, I was greatly shocked, for here was the person to whom I used to report that I had passed such and such examination and who kindly replied 'Constance, I am proud of you. Come have tea with us.' Now he claimed that he did not know me."²⁹³ Colonial intellectuals in Britain were divided in their appraisal of Vischer. For some, particularly those who benefited from his fundraising efforts like Dr. Moody and Solanke of the WASU, he was their strongest advocate within the Colonial Office and provided a rare means to engage the state in a dialogue. Others, as Ras Makonnen noted, viewed him as a particularly dangerous imperialist agent inasmuch as he ameliorated sojourners' problems in the metropole just enough (and only enough) to redirect their anger from more radical pursuits. Horton's relationship with Vischer, however, reveals how his understanding of respectability, in which gendered, racialized, and colonized subjection cannot be disentangled, shaped his perceptions of Africans in Britain and, by extension, the ways in which the colonial state intervened in their lives.

In 1937, Constance Horton married Ethnan Cummings-John, a barrister who was

²⁹³ Cummings-John, *Memoirs of a Krio Leader*, p. 20-22. Cummings-John recalled that "one book which especially affected my understanding of what was going on in Africa was *How Britain Rules Africa* by George Padmore."

also on the LCP's executive committee and warden of Aggrey House. Following her wedding ceremony in North London, she recalled in her autobiography, "Major Vischer invited us to his house for a celebration dinner. He slapped me on the back, and told me, 'Constance, I am so proud of you. It's the best thing you could have done, marrying a man like Ethnan. Now you must go home and be quiet. Ethnan is a lawyer and will look after you.'" Vischer's advice expressed succinctly the Colonial Office's ideal outcome of a colonial woman's student sojourn in Britain. Cummings-John did return to Freetown soon thereafter, but contrary to Vischer's advice, she quickly established a local branch of the League in February 1938, its first in West Africa. Removed from the oversight and control of Dr. Moody, she tried to take the branch in more radical directions. The LCP's Annual Report for 1939-1940 emphasized the significance of her work in the colony, claiming that it was due principally to her efforts "that the Sierra Leone Ordinances were made the subject of a recent deputation to the Secretary of State."²⁹⁴ However, the elitist stance of many members frustrated her hopes of turning the group into a catalyst of political mobilization among the masses in Sierra Leone. As a result, Cummings-John redirected her efforts, throwing her support behind Wallace-Johnson's new West African Youth League.²⁹⁵ Not only was she part of the group's executive committee as its vice president, but in 1938, she became the first African woman elected to the Freetown municipal council and held the seat until 1942 and again between 1952 and 1966. Amidst a dire political situation in Sierra Leone, Cummings-John traveled to New York in 1946, where her brother, Asadata Dafora (né Austin Horton) had become a dancer of some renown. Here again, while working as a teacher and in local hospitals to support her family, she threw herself to black

²⁹⁴ League of Coloured Peoples, "Ninth Annual Report for the Year 1939-1940".

²⁹⁵ See letter from Constance Cummings-John dated July 28, 1938 in "Correspondence," *The Keys* v. 6, n. 2 (October-December 1938), p. 6-7.

internationalist activities, serving of the executive committee of the Council on African Affairs, which brought her into contact with Eslanda Goode and Paul Robeson as well as other African-American women like Charlotta Bass.²⁹⁶ Constance Cummings-John's experiences in both the imperial metropole and the United States contributed to the formation of a simultaneously Krio, Sierra Leonean, West African, black, and female political subjectivity. For the remainder of her life, her political commitments would modulate creatively between global struggles against racial and gender-based discrimination, the intra-empire movement for reform and ultimately independence, and more immediate local concerns. As she said in reference to Vischer's comments at her wedding, "all I could do at the time was laugh and agree with him, but I had no intention of remaining 'quiet.' Politics was now in my blood. Marriage to me did not mean keeping out of political affairs."²⁹⁷

Una Marson's Black Feminist Internationalism and the Gender of Pan-Africanism

I am black,
And so I must be
More clever than white folk,
More wise than white folk,
More discreet than white folk,
More courageous than white folk.

I am black,
And I have got to travel
Even farther than white folk,
For time moves on—

I must not laugh too much,
They say black folk can only laugh;
I must not weep too much,
They say black folk weep always;
I must not pray too much,
They say black folk can only pray.

²⁹⁶ On Eslanda Robeson and Charlotta Bass, see Jacki Castledine, "... Without Battle Ships, Atom Bombs, and Lynch Ropes," Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 2007.

²⁹⁷ Cummings-John, *Memoirs of a Krio Leader*, p. 38.

I am black,
 What a burden lies
 Upon my heart—
 For I would see
 All my race
 Holding hands
 In the world circle.

Black girl—what a burden—
 But your shoulders
 Are broad.
 Black girl—what a burden—
 But your courage is strong—
 Black girl, your burden
 Will fall from your shoulders,
 For there is love
 In your soul
 And a song
 In your heart.²⁹⁸

Unlike Caribbean and West African women who traveled to Britain as university students and returned home after completing their programs of study, Una Marson and Amy Ashwood Garvey, both originally from Jamaica, traversed the Atlantic multiple times during the 1930s and 1940s. More than most of their contemporaries, movement across the Atlantic and between the different cultural and intellectual contexts of Europe and the Caribbean shaped the lives and writings of Marson and Ashwood Garvey. Their activities on both sides of the Atlantic were, at once, integral to the development of black internationalism and a critical intervention into the gender politics enveloping it.

Amy Ashwood Garvey represented a truly singular figure in terms of the sheer breadth of her activities. Indeed, besides Kwame Nkrumah and W. E. B. DuBois, she was the only other black intellectual to play as significant role in the Council on African Affairs'

²⁹⁸ Una Marson, "Black Burden," *The Moth and the Star*, intro. by Philip M. Sherlock (Kingston: published by the author, 1937), p. 93; also *Towards the Stars*, foreword by L. A. G. Strong (University of London Press, 1945), p. 40-41.

conference on Africa in New York on April 14, 1944 and the 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester.²⁹⁹ Earlier in the century, she co-founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) with Marcus Garvey, whom she had met in Jamaica when she was 17 years old. Garvey moved to the United States in 1916, and, by early 1919, Ashwood had joined him in New York, where they developed the UNIA into an African-American organization of unprecedented size with an explicitly pan-Africanist message. Later that same year, the couple married in a much-publicized service in Harlem. Only months later, however, they separated, each citing the infidelity of the other as the cause. Ashwood Garvey also felt stifled by Garvey's autocratic style and socially conservative views on women.

After moving to London in 1924, as discussed in Chapter One, she helped create the Nigerian Progress Union with a group of Nigerian men. Ashwood Garvey's sojourn proved to be short lived, but she returned to London by the end of the decade with the intention of opening a club and expanding the theatrical ventures that she had begun in New York with the Trinidadian calypsonian and vaudevillian Sam Manning. The result was the Florence Mills Social Club in Soho, which became a regularly haunt of African and Caribbean students, artists, and intellectuals in the late 1930s. It also served as a primary center of the defense of Abyssinia movement and the unofficial headquarters of the International African Service Bureau (IASB), led by Padmore, I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, C. L. R. James, Jomo Kenyatta, and Ashwood Garvey as vice president. Caribbean musicians like Rudolph

²⁹⁹ In her remarks at the conference, Ashwood Garvey stated: "My thoughts go back ... to 25 years ago and the difficulty of getting people in the United States to think of the word Africa. And when we gather here to endorse the program of this Council, I feel honored and privileged. I feel that the time has changed, conditions have changed largely in the world today, and people are thinking more humanely. Because of that, we find that we have to broaden our vision and broaden our policy to include other groups of people who have been suffering as we have suffered, and I see no ill in finding white allies. But the Negro himself must take the initiative and though we may gather our allies everywhere, we ourselves must feel the prime responsibility for striking the blow in the interests of our posterity and ourselves." (p. 30) See pamphlet "For a New Africa" of CAA conference proceedings in Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers (MSS Brit. Emp. s. 365), Rhodes House, Oxford University, Box 77.

Dunbar, Sam Manning, and, for a short time, the Trinidadian pianist Lionel Belasco also performed regularly at the club. At night, the club cleared the tables occupied by diners during the day to make room for dancers at these performances. Sadly, little evidence of the Florence Mills remains today, which, in a way, only adds to its semi-mythic status; some rumors suggest that not only was the IASB founded there, but also that James hashed out portions of his classic *Black Jacobins* while holed up in the café.

Although somewhat less renowned than Una Marson, Ashwood Garvey has been identified similarly as a lone female voice in the development of pan-Africanism, defined solely in terms her ties to men, and marginalized even in explicit references to her work. For example, Alison Donnell notes Simon Gikandi's failure to include Ashwood Garvey in a list of "key players in ... Pan-Africanism" in an article that begins by invoking the atmosphere of her restaurant and nightclub.³⁰⁰ "Gikandi does not even make it clear which Mrs. Amy Garvey he is discussing here, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Garvey's first wife, or Amy Jacques Garvey, his second." Donnell continues, "there are no footnotes to the story about Mrs. Garvey, her politics, or even her restaurant. She is just the backdrop, her restaurant the venue for the real story that is to be told, the story of meetings of men and men's minds."³⁰¹ In the most detailed extant treatment of Ashwood Garvey, Tony Martin suggests, "There was something of the loner in her, though she was usually surrounded by acquaintances. Her itinerant life weaves like a thread connecting an amazing array of major personalities and events in the history of the African world of the twentieth century." In tracing Ashwood Garvey's peripatetic activities, Martin acknowledges her significance only insofar as it serves to consolidate a masculinist narrative of black radicalism. Whereas in Gikandi's account she

³⁰⁰ See Simon Gikandi, "Pan-Africanism and Cosmopolitanism: The Case of Jomo Kenyatta," *English Studies in Africa* v. 43, n. 1 (2000), p. 3.

³⁰¹ Alison Donnell, "Una Marson: Feminism, Anti-colonialism and a Forgotten Fight for Freedom," in Bill Schwarz, ed., *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 129.

appears as the backdrop to the work of African and West Indian men like Kenyatta, James, and Padmore, Martin characterizes Ashwood Garvey as a “thread” between the overwhelmingly male architects of pan-Africanism.

From Marcus Garvey to Sam Manning the calypsonian, to C. L. R. James and George Padmore, to Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, to President [William V. S.] Tubman [of Liberia] and Prime Minister Errol Barrow [of Barbados], to Adam Clayton Powell and Paul Robeson, from the Barbados Women’s Alliance to a female secret society in West Africa, from the Notting Hill riots to Black Power in Harlem, from the first meetings of the UNIA in Jamaica in 1914 to the Fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945, Amy’s life was, in many ways, Pan-Africanism made manifest.³⁰²

Indeed, Martin’s approach to her extraordinary life can be summed by the title of his piece, “Amy Ashwood Garvey: Wife No. 1.”

As an editor, writer, radio personality, and activist in London for the majority of the period between 1932 and 1945, Una Marson represented a critical, if often troubled, voice at the heart of the British Empire.³⁰³ Recent attempts to rehabilitate Marson as a “woman worthy” often valorize her as either a hidden “subaltern” voice, while others have been quick to criticize her on the basis of her imputed elitist or “colonized” pretensions. Both characterizations obscure the complexity of Marson’s genius and the contradictory ways that she articulated affinity and difference. If it is encouraging that the hitherto neglected contributions of women like Marson and Ashwood Garvey have received greater attention, it remains troubling that their presence within the historiography assumes, by and large, the form of biographies or shorter biographical sketches. Although they were undoubtedly

³⁰² Tony Martin, “Amy Ashwood Garvey: Wife No. 1,” *Jamaica Journal* 30 (August-October 1987), p. 36.

³⁰³ On Marson, see, in particular, Honor Ford-Smith, “The Value of an Angry Woman: The Importance of Una Marson” (manuscript, Kingston, Jamaica, 1992) and “Unruly Virtues of the Spectacular: Performing Engendered Nationalisms in the UNIA in Jamaica,” *Interventions* v. 6, n. 1; Delia Jarrett-Macauley, “Exemplary Women,” in *Reconstructing Womanhood, Reconstructing Feminism: Writings on Black Women*, ed. by Jarrett-Macauley (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 36-57, and *The Life of Una Marson*, Alison Donnell, “Una Marson: Feminism, Anti-colonialism and a Forgotten Fight for Freedom,” in Bill Schwarz, ed., *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester University Press, 2003); and Belinda Edmondson, *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women’s Writing in Caribbean Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 74-77.

exceptional individuals, scholars have figured Marson and Ashwood Garvey in a manner that exaggerates their isolation and renders them, by way of contrast, emblems of a larger truth of black internationalist activity. They become the exceptions that consolidate a masculinist narrative of pan-Africanism, forming a ghostly backdrop to the radicalism of their peers. They appear as transient women in the male-dominated world of black internationalism, who, like ships passing in the night, left few signs of lasting influence. This section examines the writings and activism of Una Marson in more detail, outlining the contours of her contributions to feminism and black internationalism in Britain and Jamaica.

Marson brought useful skills, professional experience, and wide ambitions with her to the metropole. During the late 1920s, she acted as copy editor for and regularly contributed both reportage and short fiction to the *Cosmopolitan*, published in Kingston. In her editorials, Marson consistently advocated the expansion of educational and employment opportunities, women's self-help groups, and women's suffrage.³⁰⁴ Her work from the years before she first traveled to Britain demonstrated a familiarity with the activities of English feminists and a commitment to an international women's movement, but rarely touched upon issues related to race, cultural identity, and the so-called "colour bar." By the late 1930s, however, her literary and non-fiction writings increasingly featured these themes alongside, not in place of, feminist concerns.

Soon after her arrival in Britain in 1932, Marson, a young aspiring writer, began to cultivate an image of a modern, bohemian woman for herself. As her biographer notes, quoting J. P. Green, "Black middle-class women who were born in Britain like Amy Barbour James, a friend of Una's who lived in Acton, 'were not expected to fully participate in

³⁰⁴ See Una Marson, "The Age of Woman," v. 1, n. 11 (March 1929), p. 65; "Jamaica's Victory," v. 2, n. 2 (June 1929), pp. 66-67; and "The Women's Service," v. 2, n. 3 (July 1929), p. 81 in *Cosmopolitan* (Kingston, Jamaica).

political matters but to be artistic and civilised, ideal wives for professional men.” Marson, by contrast, “didn’t fit anywhere.” She developed what many Jamaican peers saw as an uncomely fascination with and enthusiasm for Africa and African culture. Sylvia Lowe recalled, “She liked to look African. She put her hair as they did ... natural not plaited, and combed out.” Marson also began to wear vibrant colors, often cruising the fashionable shops of London’s West End to find dresses with distinctive patterns and bold accessories. Lowe saw a connection between Marson’s personal style and the shift that life in London engendered in her political views. “She also had a good African flair and was more interested in them [Africans] than in our own affairs ... she was a bit ahead of most people but we didn’t think of that in those days.”³⁰⁵ From the start, then, Marson’s gradual turn to black internationalism in the metropole remained tied to her experiments at the boundaries of respectable, middle-class femininity.³⁰⁶

The centers of black student life in London, such as the WASU house and Memorial Hall where the LCP held its meetings, became regular haunts, but the League also proved to be an important conduit to other intellectual circles, such as the Bloomsbury set, European feminist groups, and the circuit of black artists and musicians moving through the city. Marson’s relationship to each milieu was as dynamic as it was fleeting. Marson’s intellectual

³⁰⁵ Delia Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson, 1905-1965* (Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 48.

³⁰⁶ Indeed, her personal style did not escape comment nearly fifty years later when her biographer interviewed Christine Moody, the daughter of Dr. Harold Moody. In response to a photograph of Marson with her combed out and wearing a striped, multicolored dress, Moody commented, “she was not interested in clothes and hair as you can see.” In a letter to *Checkers Magazine* in 1948, one reader expressed a similar view of the trend amongst black women like Marson to wear bold colors, suggesting the difference in opinion stemmed potentially from a combination of ideological, generational, regional, and gender differences. “I have read with interest of your new magazine, and presume that you will include in the contents, a page for women readers. As this is supposed to be a Negro magazine I hope you will do your best to instill dress sense into the average coloured girl.” “I am coloured myself,” the reader continued, “and pride myself upon dressing smartly yet with no show of flamboyance. It makes me see red when I see others of my race arrayed in hideous colour contrasts and utterly no idea of cut or line. Please try to point out to your women readers that flashy and exaggerated styles are not for us.” See Jarrett-Macauley, p. 49, and “Letters to the Editor,” *Checkers Magazine* v. 1, n. 1 (July 1948), p. 4.

and political positions shifted as a result of these interactions, as well as her travels in Europe and between London and Jamaica. Each experience of crossing left an indelible mark on her writings. Marson continually cast her net widely and, in the process, often wore herself thin.

As a young author in Jamaica, Marson longed to insert herself into the London literary set, which she idealized as the antithesis of the provincialism of the island's small literary scene, and looked forward to the opportunity to meet prominent English feminists. In June 1934, Marson introduced herself to the novelist Winifred Holtby when both spoke as part of the "Bars to Careers" panel at a British Commonwealth League conference. After this initial meeting, the two met repeatedly and maintained contact until Holtby's death in September 1935. Holtby's close friend, Vera Brittain, recalled, "One afternoon an incongruous quartette gathered in her study for tea: Eric Walrond, a negro poet from New York; Una Masen [*sic*], a Jamaican dramatist who was writing *The Autobiography of a Brown Girl* for Victor Gollancz; Winifred's cousin, Daisy Pickering; and the vivacious cosmopolitan writer, Madame Odette Keun." Holtby, who often entertained colonial intellectuals and bohemian artists, wrote to Brittain, "Would you say that party would mix? ... What time do you think the last departed? 9:45! Was I tired? But it was interesting. Discussed the colour question, miscegenation, birth control and race prejudice inside out."³⁰⁷ From their first meeting, Marson challenged Holtby to think beyond the well-meaning paternalism of organizations like the British Commonwealth League. When the former decried the workings of the "colour bar" in South Africa, Marson pointed to specific instances of racial discrimination against qualified black women in Britain. Following Holtby's death, Marson paid tribute to her in a poem by the same name. "O valiant woman, author, speaker, friend, / With sympathies as wide as they were true; / Thy heart was like a fount where all might

³⁰⁷ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Friendship: The Story of Winifred Holtby* (New York: Macmillan, 1940) p. 355-356.

bend / To drink, and find their faith in life anew....”³⁰⁸ She also spoke frequently at public meetings and conferences held by English feminist organizations, most notably, the Women’s International League conference, “Africa: Peace and Freedom,” in November 1934 and developed ties with the Women’s Peace Crusade, Women’s International Alliance, Women’s Freedom League, and British Commonwealth League. From the mid-1930s, pan-Africanism and feminism, which she envisioned as an international alliance of and for women, formed two related aspects of Marson’s internationalism. The appeal of both lay in their potential to articulate visions of a transformative future and mobilize action on an international scale.³⁰⁹ In private conversations as well as public speeches, she connected seemingly disparate forms of exploitation in a manner that transcended the limits imposed by extant feminist and black pressure groups.

Like many black intellectuals in Britain, the mid-1930s marked a turning point in Marson’s political and artistic development due particularly to Fascist Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia and labor unrest in British colonies in Africa and the Caribbean. Her experiences in London during this period, especially her activities in the LCP and as personal secretary to the exiled Emperor Haile Selassie, made these global developments resonate with her in a personal way. Although Marson often deviated from its confines, the Caribbean and African student set in London remained the center of her personal and intellectual life. Her ties to this circle introduced her to visiting dignitaries from the Caribbean and Africa, who had a significant influence on her developing black internationalism. Sir Nana Ofori Atta Omanhene of Akyem Abuakwa (near Accra in the Gold Coast Colony) and the exiled

³⁰⁸ Una Marson, “Winifred Holtby,” *The Moth and the Star* (Kingston, 1937), p. 79; also *Towards the Stars*, foreword by L. A. G. Strong (University of London Press, 1945), p. 46-47.

³⁰⁹ As Jarrett-Macauley explains, “the pan-African movement provided a sphere through which Una could envisage a better world. Feminism was another; through its ideas, organisations and activities Una saw a way of influencing emancipatory movements in Europe ... and in the Caribbean islands and to a lesser extent in Africa.” See Jarrett-Macauley, p. 74.

Emperor of Abyssinia, Haile Selassie, were the most significant in this regard. In July 1934, Ofori Atta arrived in London as head of the Gold Coast delegation. Marson assumed responsibility for officially welcoming the African dignitary on behalf of the LCP, and the pair enjoyed one another's company throughout the summer. Jarrett-Macauley suggests that they had a brief love affair. "Their long private conversations were cross-fertilisations: [as Marson recalled] 'he was gleaning Western ideas and I was probing the mind of an African Paramount Chief.'"³¹⁰ Marson's relationship with Ofori Atta had a transformative effect on her thinking, and the disregard with which the government greeted the Gold Coast delegation provoked a critical reappraisal of the practice of British imperialism within her writings.

The encounter with Ofori Atta informed Marson's growing interest in African culture and black internationalism. Set in London during the winter of 1934, Marson's play *London Calling* portrays a fictionalized Ofori Atta (Prince Alota Bayo) as a kind and sympathetic figure who repeatedly offers encouragement to Rita, the play's protagonist from the fictional Caribbean island of Novoka, extols her beauty, and refers to her as his African "Princess." *London Calling* also registers Marson's acute loneliness after Ofori Atta's departure and her ambivalence towards life in London—a city whose inhabitants assumed

³¹⁰ The most suggestive evidence to support this comes from a letter sent to Ofori Atta. The signature on the correspondence is illegible, but the circumstances and tone indicate that Marson was the author. The letter reads as follows: "My Dear Nana, I was terribly disappointed to realise that after I telephoned you this morning that I would not see you until Sunday evening at the earliest. Why are you so cruel? Never mind [*sic*], there is nothing to be said or done about it. I am ever so jealous. I keep wondering who is talking to you and if they are give [*sic*] you jokes and if you laugh as heartily as you do when I am with you. I keep wondering where you are, how you are and if you miss me at all ... And will you write to me to cheer me up since I shall not see you until Sunday evening. Please do not blame me for this. It is no desire of mine, but I must respect the wishes of a King who is accustomed to be obeyed ... You will be out this evening so you will not miss me. I shall go to a meeting on African drama. I would much rather be with you. My holiday has been cancelled and my friends are very distressed but they are here always; in a few weeks I shall be losing my royal quest. My heart is very sad because I miss seeing you so much Your loyal little friend." Quoted in Jarrett-Macauley, p. 69-70.

the characteristics of its chilly weather or, as the character Alton puts it, “a city of walking iceboxes.” Marson’s everyday experiences of racism in Britain exacerbated her emotional distress. As Rita confesses to Alton, “I know we must suffer these things and that it will be another generation before we really find our feet, but oh, sometimes it comes over me, I can’t stand it; it hurts so, here, deep down in my heart, in my soul, worse than a physical pain.”³¹¹

The spring of 1935 saw Marson’s spirits rise with the change in season due to an exciting new opportunity. In April, the Women’s Social Service Club of Jamaica invited her to represent the group at the 12th Annual Congress of the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship (IAWSEC). 280 delegates representing 30 countries attended the international feminist conference in Istanbul. Although participants hailed from around the globe, the chair of the Congress, the English feminist Margery Corbett Ashby, noted that Marson, who participated in the session on “East and West in Co-operation,” was the “first delegate from Jamaica and the first woman of African race – Negro.”³¹² As a result of her encounter with Marson, Corbett Ashby became a member of and “liberal subscriber to the work of the League of Coloured Peoples.”³¹³ In her remarks to the Congress, Marson identified British imperialism and the legacy of slavery in the Caribbean as the two main factors shaping Jamaica’s history and the concerns of Jamaican women. Yet, she claimed to “talk on behalf of all the Negroes of the world not only Jamaicans.” “Although I don’t know much about Africa,” she explained, “I consider it a part of my being because my forefathers

³¹¹ Una Marson, *London Calling* (unpublished manuscript), Jamaican National Archives, Kingston, Act 1, p. 5, 11, and 14.

³¹² Margery Corbett Ashby Papers (7MCA), The Women’s Library, London; “Report of the Twelfth Congress of the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship,” Istanbul, April 18-24, 1935, p. 15, in Records of the International Alliance of Women (2IAW/1/C/07), The Women’s Library, London; see also photograph of Marson delivering her speech in *La République (Edition Française du “Cumhuriyet”)* (April 20, 1935), p. 1.

³¹³ A. A. Thompson, “Secretary’s Notes,” *League of Coloured Peoples*, n. 20 (May 1941), p. 47.

came from there.” Marson also discussed the plight of “American Negroes,” lauding the recent work of the NAACP and condemning the “barbarism” of “the act of lynching.” “Even in London,” she maintained, “one sometimes sees discrimination against black people, even those who are British subjects. Negroes are suffering under enormous difficulties in most countries in the world.” Marson situated the struggles of blacks in Britain within the context of an international racial community and a global history of its members suffering.³¹⁴ The trip affected Marson deeply, reaffirming her belief that people around the globe must “work together to preserve peace in the world,” and garnered her public attention among feminists in Britain and Jamaica.³¹⁵ Marson later paid tribute to the International Alliance of Women in “To the I.A.W.S.E.C.” She presented the expression of unity across ethnic and national divisions at the IAWSEC Congress as a template for projecting “womanhood” into the male-dominated world of international relations: “For lands can only reach the greater good / When noble thoughts inspire sweet womanhood.”

Reflecting on the personal significance of the period, Marson called the spring and summer of 1935 “the most exciting time in my life” during an interview with Nancy Cunard for the *Associated Negro Press* in 1941. In just three years, she had established herself as the leading black feminist voice in London. After her return to Jamaica in late September 1936, Marson threw herself into developing the cultural life of the island. She injected a new dynamism, critical edge, and appreciation of Afro-Caribbean vernacular culture into the relatively small literary scene through groups like the Kingston Dramatic Club and the

³¹⁴ Jarrett-Macauley reconstructed the majority of her remarks from excerpts published subsequently in the Turkish newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*, and the *Daily Gleaner*. Quoted in Jarrett-Macauley, p. 91-92.

³¹⁵ After the Congress, she was invited to the city of Ankara in Anatolia along with a small group of delegates, where Kemal Atatürk greeted them with a lavish reception in his palace. Before returning to London, she also accepted an invitation of a fellow delegate and sculptor to visit her villa in Capri, Italy. The island’s beauty and its familiar flora—the purple bougainvillea, plumbago, and oleander so strongly associated with the Caribbean—led her to exclaim that “it was like a homecoming.” *ibid.*

Readers and Writers Club. Isobel Seaton recalled her initial impressions after meeting Marson through these activities: “You couldn’t meet Una without realising that she was individual: alive, interested in everyone and a happy person. You felt you knew her a very long time. I went to the club three or four times and could see that Una was the prime mover in it. She felt intensely about everything and had a very good sense of humour.”³¹⁶ In the years that followed, Marson looked to the poetry of the Indian nationalist Rabindranath Tagore, in particular, as a model for forging a distinct Jamaican culture and a precedent for the Readers and Writers Club in Kingston.³¹⁷

In addition to these initiatives, Marson worked as a journalist for the *Jamaican Standard*, a new daily newspaper, and helped establish a weekly publication affiliated with Norman Manley’s People’s National Movement, *Public Opinion*, which featured her most politically outspoken writings to date. The latter was envisioned as a type of new *Cosmopolitan*, the defunct journal in which she had been a leading light before moving to London. “As both catalyst for change and recorder of it,” Jarrett-Macauley explains, “*Public Opinion* would over the next twenty years remain at the centre of Jamaican political life, taking up radical and left-wing positions on domestic and overseas issues.” Although the paper’s board of executives would come to include prominent Jamaican women like Amy Bailey, Gloria Escoffery (editor of the literature page), and Edna Manley (editor), Marson was initially its sole woman writer. She regularly used the forum to expose gendered exclusions and spark public debate among Jamaican feminists.³¹⁸ In “Feminism,” Marson refuted accusations of Jamaican women’s intellectual backwardness and drew attention to

³¹⁶ Quoted in Jarrett-Macauley, p. 119.

³¹⁷ Indeed, Marson argued that Jamaica would ultimately be known “not so much by its ‘sugar and rum,’ as by the products of its great minds. Gandhi, Pandit Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore are better known than the financial magnates and the gold-laden maharajahs of India.” See “Readers and Writers Club,” *Public Opinion* (July 31, 1937), p. 10.

³¹⁸ See esp. “Should Our Women Enter Politics?” *Public Opinion* (February 20, 1937), p. 10.

the capricious nature of standards of feminine respectability. "I have heard many complaints from men about the backwardness of our women," she explained. "Now that smartness is a fetish, mental sluggishness and lazy dull conversation are more outstanding ... Men in the past have never been over partial to intellectual women, but today mental development is essential." Marson rejected the association of intellectualism and feminism with frigidity in women. "The very word conjures up in their minds chatty meetings of frustrated spinsters who are sublimating their normal instincts," but she argued, "the idea of feminism is not to make a woman more conscious of her sex but to develop that within her which will make for a live, active mental and physical personality."³¹⁹

The labor disturbances in the Caribbean and the reaction of colonial government provoked sharp criticism from Marson in print during what became the most prolific period of her literary career. Amid the labor unrest that visited the island in 1938, she condemned the injustice of colonial officials' violent response and highlighted how exploitative trade relations with metropolitan Britain exacerbated the dire economic straits of Jamaica's poor in her contributions to the *Public Opinion* and the *Jamaican Standard*.³²⁰ Similarly, in her poem, "At the Prison Gates, Jamaica, 1937," Marson employed a mock reportage style to represent the plight of Jamaican strikers in verse.

And so through all the night and day
 I see weary and hungry
 Crowds marching—every day
 More hungry—every day more sad;
 And I hear a great stir of voices
 Among those who rule the land
 In politics and those who rule in gold.

³¹⁹ The article was a response to a recent piece in the *Daily Gleaner* by Beryl DeLeon. Marson began, "Beryl DeLeon ... asserts that Jamaican women do not make good feminists. I don't think the women ought to stand for this sort of thing. Are there no feminists amongst us who can rise up and flay the male of the species?" Una Marson, "Feminism," *Public Opinion* (May 1, 1937), p. 10.

³²⁰ See "Traitors All!," *Public Opinion* (September 18, 1937), p. 5; "Shot Tell Woman," *Jamaican Standard* (May 4, 1938), p. 1.

But the tramp of the weary feet still sound,
On they march—must they march on forever?³²¹

Marson perceived the debased position of women in the Caribbean, unequal relations between colony and “mother country,” and mis-education as inherently linked causes of the poverty and cultural stagnation in Jamaica.

Marson drew attention to the long history of violence, domination, and creolization in the Caribbean and insisted that embracing the “definite traces” of African heritage in Jamaican society was a prerequisite to the flowering of a true national culture *and* the development of the race. To her annoyance, she observed as late as 1951 that “many Jamaicans would like to rewrite the social history of Jamaica to prove that they have no Negro blood in their veins.”³²² “Though so many people like to think otherwise,” she reminded her fellow Jamaicans in 1937, “95% of Jamaica’s population bear definite traces of African origin.”³²³ In “Racial Feelings?,” she argued, “Some of the finest and bravest men that ever lived came out of Africa, and the coloured people of America are the most progressive in the world because they have now accepted themselves.” “If by some miracle all the people of Jamaica including those with one drop of coloured blood could be made to realise that they are a racial entity and all their first loyalties lie within the race,” she contended, “then in the next twenty years Jamaica would make more progress than she has done in the past hundred years [since emancipation, and] ... we would witness the birth of a new Jamaica.” “All attempts to do anything will fail,” Marson maintained, “so long as genteel and hypocritical colour barriers among coloured people are maintained.” Alluding to the First World War and the growing menace of Fascism in Europe, she rejected the association

³²¹ Una Marson, “At the Prison Gates, Jamaica, 1937,” in *Towards the Stars*, foreword by L. A. G. Strong (University of London Press, 1945), p. 58-60.

³²² Una Marson, “I can tell you what is wrong with Jamaica says Una Marson,” *Daily Gleaner* (February 17, 1951), p. 9.

³²³ Marson, “But My Own,” *Public Opinion* (June 19, 1937), p. 3, 15.

of blackness with barbarity. “Let us not be ashamed to be a link in the chain of dark-skinned peoples. History has shown us, and is showing us today that there is as much barbarity among white races as among the black races.”³²⁴

Marson appropriated a familial metaphor for empire, so common at the time as to certainly be familiar to her readers, in a way that linked Jamaican-ness to a sense of belonging to an extra-national racial community. Rather than British imperial rule fulfilling the ideal of parental guidance, culminating in independence, Marson depicted it as a disjunctive surrogacy that encouraged to mimicry and engendered an inauthentic cultural “morass,” the consequence of an education system that instilled “an inferiority complex” in the colony’s youths. “Jamaica is barren ... Anything that does not bear the hall mark of the British is looked upon with suspicion. And so the British ask in vain, what is your costume like, what language do you speak, what peculiar dances have you? Tell me about your customs. Tell me about you literature and art.” As Marson knew from personal experience, the measure of literary worth in Jamaica, the degree to which it displayed the formalistic qualities of English literature, became a source of derision in the “mother country.” Britons expected colonial spaces and, by extension, the colonial artist to offer the “picturesque” and “peculiar native touches,” but found only a shabby imitation of modernity in the Caribbean. At a BCL conference in London in May 1935, she lamented, “The child using books which upheld the glory of Empire grew to manhood or womanhood knowing nothing and caring less, for the land of his forefathers, Africa, and the race to which he belonged. Duty to one’s own country and people should be taught before duty to an Empire that took little interest in these children.” “The aim colonial education,” she continued, “should be to produce

³²⁴ Una Marson, “Racial Feelings?,” *Public Opinion* (July 17, 1937), p. 3.

useful citizens of their own countries and not merely flag-waving Britishers.”³²⁵

Marson maintained that Jamaicans had to unabashedly accept their place within a global black community in order to realize their unique cultural identity. If Jamaicans were not “to remain strangers in [their] own land,” intellectuals had to return to and work with their African cultural inheritance. Only then would Jamaicans be able to point to their distinctive contribution to the world.³²⁶ “Educated Jamaicans,” she charged, “spend their whole lives thinking they are not coloured, and it is an insult to call them ‘Negro’ because one or two generations back they had some white ancestor of the male sex. Now we can never be free from inhibitions, complexes, indecision and lack of confidence until we accept ourselves for what we are.” “We may boast of the white blood in us,” Marson continued, “but to the white people it is an affront. While we worship at the shrine of colour the intelligent whites despise us for lack of loyalty to our own.”

Written near the same time, Marson’s play *London Calling* staged the problem of Caribbean identity and culture within the context of the black student set in London. The play situates Caribbean intellectuals, the main protagonists, between two poles of influence, represented in their interactions with Britons and an African, Prince Alota Bayo. In *London Calling*, however, she represented the imperial metropole as a depictive site and highlighted the relation between race and masquerade, difference and desire, in the highly stratified interactions between colonials and British “friends.” Sydney, one of the Caribbean students in the play, confesses, “One never knows when those kindnesses are sincere or merely patronising.”³²⁷ Marson wrote *London Calling* at a time when her views on Jamaican culture

³²⁵ Speech to the British Commonwealth League conference (May 1935). BCL Papers, Fawcett Women’s Library, London.

³²⁶ Marson, “But My Own,” p. 3, 15.

³²⁷ The play’s plot develops around a series of competing racial performances—English, African, and “Novokan.” In what is only the most obvious example, the Novokans, Alton and the siblings Rita and Sydney,

were changing dramatically, due in large part to her “discovery” of Africa while abroad.

When she arrived in London, as Jarrett-Macauley observes, “her culture, as far as she had been aware, was English.” By the time she returned to Jamaica in 1937, however, she had come to regret her earlier naiveté.

Marson also looked more than ever before to the example of African-American writers and began a correspondence with James Weldon Johnson that spanned a period of roughly two years. Amidst the anxious atmosphere in Jamaica during 1937 and 1938, she experienced her greatest literary triumphs to date with the production of two new plays, the aforementioned *London Calling* and *Pocomania*, and the publication of a new collection of poetry, *The Moth and the Star*, which the author and critics alike viewed as a marked improvement on her previous collections, *Tropic Reveries* and *Heights and Depths*. She sought Johnson’s reactions to *The Moth and the Star* and assistance in getting her work published in the United States, though she was unsuccessful in the latter venture. “I like *The Moth and the Star* better than *Heights and Depths*,” she admitted to him. “I should love to have your opinion ... Sometimes I am not sure that I am a true poet in feeling and execution, feeling, well yes – but I have not written a line since I published *The Moth and the Star*. The impulse ... comes on like a madness and I write furiously for a couple months, usually in the Spring, then I go to sleep again!” At turns playful, self-deprecating, and, as she admitted, “garrulous,”

accept an invitation to perform a “native sketch” for the “International Society” to shake off the doldrums engendered by poverty and winter in the metropolis. At first reluctant, saying “I am not anxious to dress up in a native costume ... and make a fool of myself before these people,” Alton and Sydney’s assurances that Prince Alota would show them “how they dress in his country” persuade Rita to participate in the “pranks.” When the Novakans inform Alota of the scheme, he laments, “it is very sad that you have no language and no dress and no customs—very sad—but I will help you.” Sydney dismisses Rita’s concerns that their hosts might see through the farce, stating “I never get a crowd that knew the difference between Nevada and Timbucktoo – as for Novoka, it would take them too long to find it on the map.” The response to the group’s spectacle confirms the validity of Sydney’s view, precipitating an invitation to Lady Burton’s home in Kent where they are encouraged to once again don their costumes. Marson, *London Calling*, Act I, p. 11, 13. For an example of the social interactions parodied by Marson here, see “Social at Lady Proctor’s,” *The Keys* v. 2, n. 1 (July-September 1934), p. 7.

Marson's correspondence with Johnson reveals the depth of her appreciation for the "giant of our race" as well as the value she placed on intellectual dialogue and cooperation between people of African descent around the Atlantic.³²⁸

Marson outlined aspects of her views on politics and artistic practice to Johnson. "It is now a case of 'Jamaica Aroused,'" she told him. "But we do have many hard lessons to learn and a long way to go ... Our most pressing need is that labour should be organised, especially with regard to wages." Marson's reference to "Jamaica Aroused" was a clear allusion to Joseph E. Casely-Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (1911), which is often cited as an early pan-Africanist novel, and, thus, situated Johnson and herself within a transatlantic tradition of literary black internationalism.³²⁹ Marson described the current upheavals in colonial Jamaica in terms of a global struggle against racism that inspired her hopes for the future. "I think of our struggles in America—of Africa—the coming country—of the West Indies in her birth struggles—and I say, to borrow from Wordsworth—'Bliss is it / In this dawn to be alive / And to be young is very heaven!'"³³⁰ Like the black intellectuals that Marson met in London, she perceived African-American writers and organizations like the Negro Writers Club as both models and potential allies.³³¹

³²⁸ Letter from Una Marson to James Weldon Johnson, dated January 27, 1938, JWJ Papers.

³²⁹ See Kwadwo Osei-Nyame, "Pan-Africanist Ideology and the African Historical Novel of Self-Discovery: The Examples of Kobina Sekyi and J. E. Casely-Hayford," *Journal of Cultural Studies* v. 12, n. 2 (1999), pp. 137-153.

³³⁰ Letter from Una Marson to James Weldon Johnson, dated January 27, 1938, JWJ Papers.

³³¹ For example, Marson wrote, "It is very excellent to have a League of American Negro Writers and I am sure that later on when our Readers and Writers Club is well established we can help each other ... You will find with the book some cuttings about 'Pocomania.' Poetry is my first love, but play writing is a very close second ... [O]n my return home last year I wrote 'London Calling' & staged it here, successfully, and then I wrote 'Pocomania' which has been the biggest success of all. After 'London Calling' I formed a Dramatic Club." Johnson expressed interest in and appreciation for both Marson's writings and organizational activities. For instance, he wrote, "I should like very much to learn something about the Kingston Dramatic Club, and of what you are doing and what you plan to do. Are you hoping to develop native drama? That is what I judged to be your plan from the wording of your letter-head. That ought to be a very interesting undertaking. And I hope you are going to get tangible results." Calling *The Moth and the Star* a "beautiful book" in another letter, he explained, "I have glanced at several of the poems and I like them very much." See *ibid* and letter from Johnson to Marson, dated April 29, and May 17, 1938.

Throughout *The Moth and the Star*, Marson's pieces oscillate formalistically and thematically, often juxtaposing strikingly different compositions and seemingly disparate subjects which collectively enact a black feminist poetics. The organization of the text foregrounds discrepancy, between voice, tone, and topic, at the same time as it links the pieces, forming a legible, if processural and inchoate, positionality for the author. A section of fourteen "poems written in England" that touch upon a number of facets of Marson's experiences in the metropole begins the collection. Several poems address explicitly the workings of the "colour bar" in London, most notably "May Days," "Quashie Comes to London," and "Little Brown Girl," the latter of which was a reference to William Blake's "Little Black Boy."³³² In the penultimate section, "Poems of Life," two adjacent examples of Marson's experiments with dialect verse, "The Stone Breakers" and "My Philosophy (As expounded by a Market Woman)," attempted to give voice to the lives of working-class women in Jamaica. These pieces challenged the power disparities underlying colonial society and suggested that Caribbean vernacular culture and sensibilities—located, here, in the relations and spaces of Afro-Jamaican women—should be mined for more humane possibilities for the future. In addition to these dialect pieces, the collection included a number of blues poems, such as "Canefield Blues," "Lonesome Blues," "Brown Baby Blues," and "Kinky Hair Blues," which gesture beyond the literary tradition of the anglophone Caribbean. Marson addressed the stigmatization of the black female body in "Kinky Hair Blues."

I hate dat ironed hair
And dat bleaching skin.

³³² "Quashie Comes to London" appropriates Thomas Carlyle's denigrating term for black men in Jamaica in his defense of Governor Eyre's bloody suppression of the Morant Bay uprising, "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question." In Marson's poem, it was the Afro-Jamaican man, representative of Jamaican folk traditions and tastes, who crosses the Atlantic to conquer (and survey disapprovingly) the imperial metropolis, a subject position signified by the use of dialect.

Hate dat ironed hair
 And dat bleaching skin.
 But I'll be alone
 If I don't fall in.³³³

“Kinky Hair Blues” implicates the exigencies of winning a man in the reproduction of a denigrated image of black women’s bodies. The poem evidences Marson’s interest in the stylistic innovations of Harlem Renaissance authors like Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay. Yet, she wrote “Kinky Hair Blues” in the form of a classic blues tune, suggesting the importance she accorded to black musical cultures. Given that “Bessie Smith ... was Una’s darling,” the poem can be read as a black internationalist gesture that was grounded explicitly in the gendered experience of racialization.³³⁴ Marson’s blues poems as well as her dialect poems like “My Philosophy,” “Black Is Fancy” (75-76) and “Mango Time Again” (86) represented novel attempts at cross-class identification through black feminist internationalism.³³⁵

Marson’s third play, *Pocomania*, also designated working-class women a central position within black vernacular culture in the Caribbean through the relationship between the leader of the Pocomaniacs, Sister Kate, and the middle-class protagonist, Stella. The play bore signs of the circumstances in which she produced it, foreshadowing the labor unrest that gripped the island in May and June 1938. Unlike *London Calling*, the play was set in Jamaica, integrated popular spirituals, calypsos, and orature in an innovative fashion, and used a folk performance tradition—“Pocomania,” an ecstatic religious movement combining

³³³ Una Marson, *The Moth and the Star* (Kingston, 1937), p. 91; see also “Canefield Blues,” “Lonesome Blues,” and “Brown Baby Blues,” p. 94, 96-97.

³³⁴ Jarrett-Macauley, p. 123.

³³⁵ The recordings of classic blues singers like Bessie Smith, as Angela Davis argues, represented a rare public expression of working-class, African-American women’s concerns. Like Marson, “the blues women openly challenged the gender politics implicit in dominant representations of marriage and heterosexual love relationships.” Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude ‘Ma’ Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York, 1998), p. 41.

Christianity and West African-derived spiritualism—as an expression of a uniquely Afro-Caribbean culture.³³⁶ *Pocomania* offered a critical picture of middle-class society in Jamaica, but ultimately reaffirmed class hierarchy. Sister Kate simultaneously challenged the hypocrisy of “respectable” Jamaicans, drew attention to the sacrifices required of Jamaican women who aspire to middle-class respectability, and naturalized social distance. The final resolution of the multiple disturbances within *Pocomania*, in the social fabric and inside Stella, involved substituting union with David, who returned transformed by years of studying abroad in England by the play’s conclusion, for Stella’s attraction to Pocomania, suggesting that the “spirit,” “vitality,” and “little madness” of Caribbean folk traditions had to be subdued and disciplined to serve the nation just as heterosexual marriage reined in unruly desires.³³⁷

Nevertheless, *Pocomania* was seminal in its invocation of a cross-class alliance between Jamaican women and its nuanced treatment of vernacular cultural forms in the Caribbean as the product of creolization and the historical ties linking Africa and people of African descent around the Atlantic. “Our Pocomaniacs,” she wrote to James Weldon Johnson, “must be something like the ‘Shakers’ used to be in your Southern states or perhaps like the ‘Holy Rollers’ in Nassau. I think the word means ‘a little madness.’”³³⁸ In an interview with the West African journalist Victor Delumo for a BBC Africa broadcast in

³³⁶ Belinda Edmondson notes the uncanny correspondence between the play’s opening scene and Claude McKay’s *Banana Bottom*. “In a retelling of Bita Plant, Stella, the black middle-class heroine, falls under the spell of the Pocomania revivalists, whose drums have mesmerized her since she was a child. (In *Banana Bottom*, Bita is momentarily held spellbound by revivalist drumming until Jubban removes her from the scene.)” Like McKay, Marson represented the relation between the urban, educated elite and rural popular culture in terms of gender and class difference. Sister Kate, the leader of the revivalists, is “a kind of mother-figure for the motherless Stella,” and, in another parallel to *Banana Bottom*, David, Stella’s companion since childhood and, the play implies, future husband ultimately “saves” her from the unruly crowd at Sister Kate’s wake. Belinda Edmondson, *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women’s Writing in Caribbean Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 75-76.

³³⁷ In marked contrast to many of Marson’s other writings, Stella seems unsure whether the “something” that Pocomania represents is, in fact, her own. See esp. Marson, *The Moth and the Star*, p. 76; Marson, *Pocomania*, Act 3, Scene 2, p. 34.

³³⁸ Marson to Johnson, dated January 27, 1938, JWW Papers.

1945, Marson suggested that pocomania “is the nearest thing to Africa that we have in the West Indies.” “Our African ancestry,” she asserted, “is with us still.”³³⁹ In a different BBC broadcast, entitled “Simple Facts: Jamaica,” Marson stated that “in spite of the medley of people and the strong British influence the heart of Africa still beats loud and insistent in this isle of the west.” “The frenzied shouts in mystic dances of Africa,” she added, “live in the Pocomania religious cult. That cult is a deep emotional expression, simple and primitive in form but neither savage nor cruel.”³⁴⁰ In fact, the play’s use of variations on African spiritual traditions in the Americas initiated a transatlantic dialogue, as a performance group staged *Pocomania* in Lagos during May 1940.³⁴¹

Marson returned to London in mid-1938 to report on and testify before the Moyne Commission investigating the recent disturbances in the British West Indies and to raise funds for a new charitable organization, the Jamaica Save the Children Association or “Jamsave.”³⁴² In September 1938, she spoke at a LCP conference, whose purpose was to “protest against conditions existing in the West Indies and Jamaica in particular as revealed

³³⁹ Marson interviewed by Victor Delumo, BBC scripts, recorded March 2, 1945.

³⁴⁰ Marson, “Simple Facts – Jamaica,” BBC scripts recorded August 1939.

³⁴¹ Though reaction to the play in Jamaica was initially mixed, *Pocomania* introduced stylistic innovations and opened new thematic possibilities for subsequent Caribbean authors. Clifton Neita maintained, “Una was the first person to examine in a helpful way these religious sects which we have in Jamaica and to find some reasons why people, especially the lower classes, believe in them. Roger Mais, my best friend, came afterwards and did much the same things in his books. No doubt Una influenced him.” Neita’s observation suggests that *Pocomania* was an important antecedent to Mais’s similar experiments with form and content in his early novels, *The Hills Were Joyful Together* and *Brother Man*. Moreover, Jarrett-Macauley states, “it is tempting to speculate that Salkey’s first novel, *A Quality of Violence* (1959), which depicted the villagers of St Thomas-in-the-East turning to pocomania during the drought of 1900 ... was born of Una’s play.” Quoted in Jarrett-Macauley, p. 136, 183.

³⁴² The expectations of Marson with regard to the former, particularly fund-raising, soon led to suspicion and tensions between her and colleagues in the organization back in Jamaica. As a result, when Amy Bailey arrived in London just two weeks after her, Marson perceived it as a gesture of mistrust and snubbed her. Bailey told Marson’s biographer, “I hardly saw anything of Una, it was Peter Blackman, the Barbadian, who introduced me to lots of people, communists – Paul Robeson and Sir Stafford Cripps who later spoke at the Ward Theatre to launch the PNP [Peoples National Party]. Blackman told Moody about me and suggested I talk to the Royal Commission, so Moody organised a meeting.” In the end, Marson’s disposition to Bailey lightened, and she met her at the train station before her return to Jamaica. However, Bailey, who, like Marson, was an outspoken feminist, poet, and writer for *Public Opinion*, was critical Marson and questioned her allegiance to Jamaica because she lived abroad for years. “Una Marson? She went away to raise money and never came back. I stayed,” Bailey asserted. See Jarrett-Macauley, p. 143, and Edmondson, p. 186.

by the recent labor shortages.” Marson painted a tragic picture of the plight of Jamaican workers based on her own observations in Jamaica. She attributed the recent unrest “to the inconceivable poverty of the people, who must continue to agitate for a remedy to their deplorable condition.”³⁴³

The onset of World War II brought not only danger and hardship, but also new opportunities and purpose for Marson. She watched as the dislocation of war scattered the community of black students and intellectuals in London, who, in many cases, evacuated to the north or returned home. In an unpublished piece entitled “Wartime in Britain,” Marson noted that “the Negro colony in London had diminished.”³⁴⁴ Concomitantly, however, thousands of colonial troops circulated through the metropole as the British Empire mobilized for war, including many from the British West Indies. After the United States’ entry into the conflict, even larger numbers of African-American “G.I.s” arrived in Britain. For those like Marson who remained in London throughout the war, the sight of people of African descent doing their part in the “People’s War” provoked a sense of racial pride. In her poem “The Convoy,” Marson juxtaposes the black subject’s quotidian feelings of isolation and alienation on the streets of the imperial metropolis, “the great white busy mart,” with an experience of mutual recognition with a passing convoy of black troops.

There I stood, moved, yet unmoving,
Weeping with no sign of tears,
Greeting all these unknown soldiers
I had known a thousand years.

For they were my blood brothers,
Brown like me, as warm of heart,
And their souls were glad to greet me
In the great white busy mart.

³⁴³ “B.W.I. Affairs Topic of Talks at League Meeting in England,” *Daily Gleaner* (October 1, 1938), p. 10.

³⁴⁴ Una Marson, “Wartime in Britain” (n.d.), Una Marson Papers, Box 1944, National Library of Jamaica; quoted in Jarrett-Macauley, p. 145.

Our gay hearts grown sad and wiser
 Stirred to life a second then,
 A thousand words unsaid, were spoken—
 And we each took heart again.

Oh my brothers, in the conflict
 Of our own bewildered life,
 How much strength we bring each other,
 What fine courage for the strife.³⁴⁵

Of course, in the most literal sense, the war was the “strife” and source of the sadness referenced in the poem, but her assertion of the “strength we bring each other” through these unspoken gestures of identity also suggested resilience in the broader struggle against racism around the world.

Marson’s job during the war placed her in a unique position in relation to Caribbean and African men and women who came to Britain. With the government under pressure to maintain loyalty and support in the colonies, the relative dearth of radio broadcasts to the West Indies and Africa by the BBC, which was now under the administration of the Ministry of Information, increasingly became a source of concern. Under these circumstances, Marson and Rudolph Dunbar, a musician and journalist from British Guiana, were able to push for more varied, if consistently patriotic, programs for the West Indies.³⁴⁶ In March 1941, Marson, a rare candidate who was acceptable to both government and audience, became the full-time program assistant for the BBC’s *Calling the West Indies*, which later evolved into the mainstay *Caribbean Voices*. Though conceived largely as a vehicle for Caribbean troops in Britain to reconnect with home, the ad hoc nature of the West Indian Service broadcasts allowed Marson to venture beyond these parameters at times. Her tiny office at Bedford College, the temporary headquarters of the Empire Talks Department,

³⁴⁵ Una Marson, “The Convoy,” *League of Coloured Peoples News Letter* v. XII, n. 67 (April 1945), p. 8.

³⁴⁶ For examples of Marson’s early West Indian broadcasts, see esp. “West Indians in the War” (April 26, 1940) and “West Indies at War” (July 31, 1940); for a more autobiographical broadcast by Marson for the Home Service, see “Talking It Over” (July 11, 1940), BBC written archives, Caversham.

became a common port of call for West Indians in London before a German bomb destroyed it.³⁴⁷

Marson's programs for the BBC attest to her continued commitment to pan-African unity and internationalist feminism.³⁴⁸ In her broadcasts on the Women's Institute movement in Britain, she elaborated a feminist position that sought to transcend the boundaries of race without erasing difference. She told listeners, "I am convinced that the future progress of the West Indies is largely in the hands of women; though women can contribute a good deal to their country's welfare individually, it is through solid organisation that they can be most useful." "I know that you are working in your own way and it must be in your own way," she added, "but I am sure you will be interested to hear something of what the British women are doing."³⁴⁹

The African-American trade unionist Maida Springer was among the many black artists, professionals, and soldiers that she interviewed for the BBC. Yvette Richards suggests that Springer's encounter with Marson and George Padmore in London during 1945 "marked the beginning of her contact with the pan-African leadership" and "passion for African labor development," inspiring her to become one of the "principal lobbyists for AFL-CIO activism in Africa."³⁵⁰ The evening discussions in the salon-like atmosphere of Marson's flat at 14 The Mansions, Mill Lane, in West Hampstead made the greatest impression on Springer. Caribbean and African men, mainly soldiers, gathered there to eat West Indian cuisine prepared by Marson, who tried to keep "the Kingston spirit alive in

³⁴⁷ See "Una Marson on Visit Home," *Daily Gleaner* (August, 18, 1945), p. 15.

³⁴⁸ See Glyne Griffith, "'This is London calling the West Indies': the BBC's *Caribbean Voices*," in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. by Bill Schwarz (Manchester, 2003), pp. 196-208.

³⁴⁹ *The Women's Institute*, broadcast West Indian Service (May 6, 1943), p. 5.

³⁵⁰ Yvette Richards, "Race, Gender, and Anticommunism in the International Labor Movement: The Pan-African Connections of Maida Springer," *Journal of Women's History* 11, 2 (1999), p. 35.

London.”³⁵¹ Springer recalled:

They had no illusions about what they were doing and for the most part—because I think Una was very selective about the people she invited—these were men who had a vision of the future, and they were looking forward to the day when they were going to have a country, not a colonial dependency. So it was very good talk at night. Very explosive talk! (laughs) Had they been heard, they would all have been court-martialed.³⁵²

Yet, Marson’s interactions with her “chicks,” as she called them, were often more casual and less serious than Springer’s experience suggests. As Jarrett-Macauley notes, “Una was fond of hosting rowdy parties, dinner parties and song-singing sessions with the West Indian servicemen.”³⁵³ Through a range of social practices, from singing popular calypsos together to contemplating the future of Britain’s colonies after the war, Africans, African Americans, and especially West Indians constructed and performed a black internationalist political subjectivity at these impromptu happenings in Marson’s apartment. Thomas Wright, one of West Indian servicemen with whom she became close, remembered her kindness as well as her acumen. “Una spent enormous amounts of time and a good deal of her own slender resources in helping West Indians, and especially Jamaicans, when they got into some sort of jam, which was often.” Although Marson “gave a rather delightful impression of absent-mindedness mixed with a great kindliness,” “if anyone took this benevolent vagueness as a chance to put one over on her ... they were certain to receive a rude shock.” Wright recalled, “all of us had a deep affection of her.”³⁵⁴ Besides entertaining friends at her apartment, Marson regularly joined them on jaunts to nightclubs in the West End, where they listened and danced to performances of African-American jazz and Afro-Caribbean music. As in her days with the LCP, Marson was surrounded predominately by men. Clifton Neita, a longtime

³⁵¹ Jarrett-Macauley, p. 147.

³⁵² Springer-Kemp interview with Richards; quoted in Richards, “Race, Gender, and Anticommunism in the International Labor Movement,” p. 44-45.

³⁵³ Jarrett-Macauley, p. 147.

³⁵⁴ Quoted in Jarrett-Macauley, p. 148.

friend of Marson, told her biographer, “She preferred people of intellect and did not care for the show of things ... She was always amongst men. And men liked her.” Yet, these men were rarely interested in the outspoken and independent Marson beyond friendship, and, like many politically active Jamaican women of her generation, she never married and had relatively few romantic liaisons.

In 1941, however, Dudley Thompson and Marson met and fell in love. Born in Panama but reared in Jamaica, Thompson came to London as a member of the Royal Air Force and served in Europe as a Flight Lieutenant in the Bomber Command. He worked briefly as the headmaster of a school in rural Jamaica before the war and had aspirations of studying law in Britain, which he realized when he won a Rhodes Scholarship in 1946.³⁵⁵ In short, Thompson represented the perfect man for Marson, according to both societal norms and, in sharp contrast to her restless and peripatetic lifestyle, the ideal elaborated in her writings. Although his commission in the Royal Air Force took Thompson away from London for a time, the two “got to know each other very well” during the two years that followed.³⁵⁶ Thompson became a regular at the evening soirées in Marson’s flat. In an interview with Jarrett-Macauley, Thompson remembered, “We all came there to entertain her, take her out, dine and wine ... [It] was more than a club house, less than a family house. She shared her home; she welcomed us all....” In private Marson cultivated an image of “‘a woman of refinement’ ..., reading her own or Countee Cullen’s poetry” to Thompson.³⁵⁷ Yet, in the only reference to Marson in his autobiography, Thompson merely noted in passing that, “for a short time while the Emperor [Haile Selassie] was in exile in London, the

³⁵⁵ Thompson entered Merton College at Oxford University and ultimately qualified as Barrister-at-Law at Gray’s Inn in London.

³⁵⁶ Interview with Dudley Thompson (March 1990), quoted in Jarrett-Macauley, p. 162; on Thompson, see also *League of Coloured Peoples News Letter* n. 34 (September 1941), p. 135.

³⁵⁷ Thompson, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 162.

Jamaican writer, Una Marson was his secretary.”³⁵⁸ Thompson’s casting of Marson as a minor figure defined by her relation to a great African man corresponds to the position to which Caribbean and African women in general have been relegated in the history of black internationalism.³⁵⁹ It is not so much that the contributions of women like Marson are absent but, rather, that the containment and marginalization of these figures creates the conditions of possibility for the received intellectual genealogy of pan-Africanism. Nothing illustrates this point better than Thompson’s explanation for why his relationship with Marson failed. “At that stage of the war,” he told Jarrett-Macauley, “I was preoccupied with the Pan-Africanist movement and I got deeper into its activities. My circle has included Kenyatta, Padmore, Nkrumah ... I grew away from the literary group.”³⁶⁰ Here, Marson becomes a cipher for the very limits of pan-Africanist activity, which is defined in opposition to her status as “literary” artist.

In fact, during her five years with the BBC, some West Indian men in London vociferously attacked Marson position and the work that she produced. In March 1942, the BBC’s African Service Director, John Grenfall Williams, identified Aggrey House as the source of the harshest criticisms of Marson.

Aggrey House, it seems, seethes with gossip and backbiting ... It seems clear that Miss Marson’s appointment to the BBC, far from creating universal

³⁵⁸ Dudley Thompson (with Margaret Cezair Thompson), *From Kingston to Kenya: The Making of a Pan-Africanist Lawyer*, foreword by Rex Nettleford (Dover, Massachusetts: The Majority Press, 1993), p. 41.

³⁵⁹ Indeed, the tendency of prominent Caribbean and African men in their autobiographies to construct their individual perspective and experience as the emergence of community by explicitly linking their personal development to the larger pan-Africanist movement and/or postcolonial nation-building serves to reinforce this disavowal. See, most notably, Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: International Publishers, 1957); Ras Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, recorded and edited by Kenneth King (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); Joseph Appiah, *Joe Appiah: The Autobiography of an African Patriot*, foreword by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Praeger, 1990); Peter Abrahams, *The Coyaba Chronicles: Reflections on the Black Experience in the Twentieth Century* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000); Eric Williams, *Inward Hunger: The Education of a Prime Minister* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969); Nnamdi Azikiwe, *My Odyssey: An Autobiography* (New York: Praeger, 1970); and W. E. B. DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (1940), reprinted in *DuBois: Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1986), p. 549-801.

³⁶⁰ Quoted in Jarrett-Macauley, p. 163.

feelings of pleasure at the success of a fellow West Indian, had a most unpleasant effect in some West Indian quarters, and the resultant envy, constantly chewed over, developed a hard core of people who not only criticised Marson, but were prepared to go to the length of doing something about it. Any choice of speakers in West Indian programmes, any rejection of a speaker, any reported remark of Miss Marson's, in fact almost any step Miss Marson took was and still is concern of everyone in this particular group.

Williams claimed that these individuals were “out too get Miss Marson and anyone who protected her ... at all costs” and, to this end, “collected ammunition” in the form of the “foulest” allegations.³⁶¹ Despite his oblique phrasing, Williams made it clear that the campaign against Marson focused on her personal life as much as the execution of her professional duties at the BBC. Caribbean men's criticisms of Marson's representativeness or political backwardness took the form of a slanderous attack on her sexuality.

Exhausted and suffering from depression again, Marson returned to Jamaica in 1945.³⁶² She lived in Jamaica for the rest of her life, where she continued to devote herself the cultural development of the island, especially the cultivation of a distinctive literary tradition. An indomitable personality, Marson was the only individual to have a major impact on the development of the League of Coloured Peoples and the wider pan-Africanist movement in London, the BBC's *Caribbean Voices* program, and the post-*Windrush* generation of Caribbean writers in Britain.³⁶³

³⁶¹ John Grenfall Williams, “Service to the West Indies: Lady Davson's Criticisms,” internal memorandum, dated March 11, 1942, E2/584, BBC written archives, Caversham; see also Jarrett-Macauley, p. 152-153.

³⁶² Before she left London, however, Marson realized another goal that had preoccupied her for nearly a decade when the University of London Press published *Towards the Stars*, which contained a number of pieces from her previous collections, especially *The Moth and the Star*. The English poet and short story writer, Stella Mead, helped Marson select the poems to be included and get the book accepted for publication by the University of London Press, which had handled several of Mead's books. Una Marson, *Towards the Stars*, foreword by L. A. G. Strong (University of London Press, 1945).

³⁶³ Although Marson's poetry had been published in several collections of Caribbean poetry, until recently, the manner in which they include her work tended to reproduce rather than challenge this tendency. For example, Langston Hughes' international *Poetry of the Negro*, which appeared at the end of the 1940s, contains two short pieces by Marson, “Nightfall” and “Hunted,” and Arthur J. Seymour's *Kyk-over-al*, an anthology of West Indian poetry published in 1951, includes a love poem, “Conspiracy,” and an early sonnet by Marson, “The

Two West African Women in 1940s Britain: Dr. Irene Cole-Ighodaro and Folayegbe M. Akintunde-Ighodalo

Not long ago, in a conversation with some Gold Coast women students in England, I made the remark that when I returned to the Gold Coast, I was going to see to it that women out there resumed their proper place. This, of course, invited sharp and violent protests and cries of: 'What a waste, after all your education!'³⁶⁴

Many women like Stella Thomas and Constance Cummings-John returned to West Africa after completing courses of study in Britain. Others like Una Marson and Amy Ashwood Garvey repeatedly traversed the Atlantic during the 1930s and 1940s, spending long periods of time in London, traveling across Europe, and returning at intervals to their native Jamaica. At the same time, a new generation of female students from the Caribbean and West Africa joined the ranks of those colonial women already in Britain, creating new possibilities for women's organizing and new visions of black feminist internationalism. By the late 1940s, however, more narrowly-defined ethnic or nationalist pursuits began to supplant the more expansive black internationalism of the 1930s and 1940s in the community of colonial intellectuals in Britain and the colonies, a trend which many women bemoaned but ultimately found themselves unable to wholly counter or resist.

Unprecedented numbers of female colonial students from West Africa and the Caribbean arrived in Britain during the 1940s, despite the persistence of large gender discrepancies in colonial scholarships and the total student population. In 1942, the WASU Annual Report for 1941 noted the growing presence of women within the Union. "The

Impossible." As Jarrett-Macauley points out, both anthologies fail to provide "a fair glimpse" of the range and complexity of her poetry. See Letter from Vivian Virtue to Langston Hughes, dated June 20, 1949, Box # 162, Folder # 2994 Langston Hughes Papers (JWJ MSS 26), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; also Jarrett-Macauley, p. 184.

³⁶⁴ A. A. Y. Kyerematen, "West Africa in Transition," *Africana* (Journal of the West African Society) v. 1, n. 2 (April 1949), p. 3-4.

Matron (Mrs. 'Olu Solanke) and her regular army of charming girl student members, contributed their quiet and formidable quotas towards the excellent achievements of their male 'Merchants of Light'—their co-partners in the toil for the development of their country." Mrs. Solanke's "regular army" consisted of a number of women students: Olive Johnson, S.R.N., S.C.M.; Adenrele Ademola, S.R.N.; Mrs. Kofoworola Abeni "Ivy" Pratt (Prince of Wales Hospital); Dorothea McEwen (Queen Elizabeth Hospital); Dolly Morgan (Walton Hospital); Barbara Nicols (Royal Hospital); Aduke Alakija (Glasgow University); Bisi Alakija (Ladies' College); A. Alakija; Bisi Alakija; Lande Moore; Ebun Moore; A. Curtis; and Mrs. L. Alli Balogun and Ola Balogun (Middle Temple).³⁶⁵ During the Second World War, Aduke Alakija became the Union's first female vice president.³⁶⁶ West African women also contributed to new organizations that emerged after the war, such as Kwame Nkrumah's West African National Secretariat (WANS) in which Mrs. O. Alakija Renner, the wife of vice chairman Bankole Awooner-Renner, served as joint-treasurer.³⁶⁷

In the late 1940s, St. Clair Drake estimated that "perhaps less than a thousand British-born colored women were in living in London, as well as a few hundred African and West Indian women and girl students."³⁶⁸ *Wàsù* listed a total of 747 West African students in Britain in 1947.³⁶⁹ *West Africa* noted the presence of "two or three women delegates" at a three-day conference in London during 1946, which was organized by the WASU and the West African National Secretariat, and reported that in April 1947 there had been only about 150 women students from West Africa.³⁷⁰ Mrs. Olive Coulson (née Robinson), the Colonial Office liaison for women students from West Africa, had a total of 262 under her charge in

³⁶⁵ *Wàsù* v. 9, n. 1 (May 1942), p. 1.

³⁶⁶ *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 8.

³⁶⁷ See WANS letterhead, CO 964/24 ("Gold Coast Commission of Enquiry Exhibits, Vol. 1").

³⁶⁸ St. Clair Drake Papers, Schomburg Center, MG 309, Box 61.

³⁶⁹ *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 3 (Summer 1947), p. 12.

³⁷⁰ "West Africans in Britain: Resolutions at a London Gathering," *West Africa* (September 14, 1946), p. 845.

1948. By the end of the decade, the Colonial Office calculated the total number of West African women students in Britain to be 644, more than half of whom were from Nigeria.

The statistics for the four British West African colonies were as follows:

Nigeria	356	55%
Gold Coast	133	21%
Sierra Leone	142	22%
Gambia	13	2%

As *West Africa* noted, the majority were still private students in 1950, but the ratio varied dramatically between colonies: “Nigeria has over 250 private students in Britain but only about 30 on scholarships, whereas more than one-third of the Gold Coast estimated 120 students are on scholarships. Sierra Leone boasts roughly 120 private students and six scholarships. The Gambia is represented by 11 private students and two scholarships.”³⁷¹ In 1945, the Victoria League, in conjunction with the Colonial Office, opened the first hostel in London for women students and visitors from the colonies, the Colonial Girls’ Club at 18 Collingham Gardens. The house included residential accommodations for up to 23 lodgers. The Club’s layout, the League of Coloured Peoples reported, “makes for great comfort, and restrictions are moderate.”³⁷²

Whereas many West African women students entered the teaching profession during the early decades of the century, increasing numbers studied nursing in the late 1930s and 1940s. The daughter of an elite family in Lagos, Kofoworola Pratt entered the United Missionary College in Ibadan to train as a teacher after her father scorned her suggestion that she pursue nursing. She taught at the CMS Girls’ School from 1936 to 1940, when she married Dr. E. S. O. Pratt. With the greater freedom from her father’s wishes and financial

³⁷¹ J. L. Keith to T. V. Scrivenor, Secretariat, Nigeria, dated 25 August 1950, CO 537/5212: “Welfare of Colonial Students - Liaison Officer for Women Students, West Africa (1949-1950).”

³⁷² “Colonial Centre For Women,” *League of Coloured Peoples News Letter*, v. 12, n. 68 (May 1945), p. 108; see also “Official Opening of the Victoria League Girls’ Club,” *League of Coloured Peoples News Letter*, v. 13, n. 73 (October 1945), p. 7.

stability that marriage provided her, Pratt traveled to Britain in 1946 to follow her original dream of becoming a nurse. An active member of the WASU during her sojourn abroad, she qualified as a state registered nurse in 1950 and worked in a hospital in London before returning home in 1954. Less than a decade later, Pratt became the first Nigerian matron of the University College Hospital in Ibadan.³⁷³ As their numbers expanded overall, some women pursued other courses of study, including medicine, child welfare, tailoring, photography, and sculpture. By the end of World War II, Stella Thomas's sister, Irene Modupeola Thomas, was in Britain studying medicine.³⁷⁴ In the early 1950s, *West Africa* featured a photograph of Miss M. Noonoo from Lagos, who was a student at the London School of Economics.³⁷⁵ There were even more women entering that historic bastion of the male colonial intelligentsia, the legal profession. "It is no novelty to learn of West African men law students," *West Africa* stated, "but it is a surprise to know that there are now six West African girls studying law in Britain."³⁷⁶ This growth in the number of female sojourners resulted in greater involvement by women within the WASU and WANS as well as the emergence of several new women's organizations like the West African Women's Association (WAWA) and the Nigerian Women's League (NWL) in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Irene Cole, a Krio from Sierra Leone, and Folayegbe M. Akintunde-Ighodalo, a Yoruba from Nigeria, were among the West African women who moved to the metropole in the 1940s. These two women allow us to trace the development of women's black

³⁷³ See Justus A. Akinsanya, *An African "Florence Nightingale": A Biography of Chief (Dr.) Mrs. Kofoworola Abeni Pratt* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Vantage Publishers, 1987); LaRay Denzer, "Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* v. 27, n. 1 (1994), p. 27.

³⁷⁴ See LaRay Denzer, *Folayegbe M. Akintunde-Ighodalo: A Public Life* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Sam Bookman, 2001) p. 214.

³⁷⁵ "Mrs. Doherty Departs," *West Africa* (October 10, 1953), p. 957.

³⁷⁶ "'Mallarama' from the North," *West Africa* (March 11, 1950), p. 197.

internationalism over the decade. Cole, Akintunde-Ighodalo, and some of their female peers gave women a stronger voice in the WASU than ever before, leading the organization during the war years to call for not only full self-government for the colonies but also universal adult suffrage and greater educational and employment opportunities for women in Africa. The WASU also condemned instances of discrimination and other injustices against specific African women in Britain, forcing the Colonial Office to break its silence on the subject. Yet, the male leadership of the Union, perceiving women as a conservative influence, continued to thwart their ambitions and marginalize feminist concerns within the group's activities. This was more, not less, true of the Union at the end of the 1940s when it was increasingly dominated by a younger group of radicals from the Gold Coast led by Joseph Appiah and, for a brief time, associated with Francis (Kwame) Nkrumah. This suggests the need for a reassessment of the history of the WASU, particularly during its later years when, most scholars maintain, it finally shed its colonized mentality and assumed a more radical posture.³⁷⁷ Women's participation in the WASU notwithstanding, it is not surprising that Cole and Akintunde-Ighodalo also helped to establish separate women's groups.

A medical student and the sister of Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole, the first African surgeon in Britain, Irene Cole became active in the WASU soon after her arrival in Britain and served as a "Councillor" for the LCP in 1945-1946. Her personal correspondence with her brother reveals that she read widely and had strong political convictions, especially concerning the need for expanding women's educational opportunities in British West Africa.³⁷⁸ Cole published pieces in *Wāṣū* and a few West African papers, and, like her brother

³⁷⁷ See Gabriel Olakunle Olusanya, *The West African Students' Union and the Politics of Decolonisation, 1925-1958* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Daystar, 1982); Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*.

³⁷⁸ See, for instance, letters from Irene Cole to Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole, dated May 13, 1945 and November 6 and 18, 1948, in the Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole Papers [hereafter, RWC Papers], SOAS Archives (PP MS 35), File #7.

and other male colonial intellectuals in Britain, she made a recording that was broadcast by the BBC in West Africa in 1947. Sheila Stradling, the director of the BBC's "Calling West Africa" program, contributed a piece on the West African men and women whom she had met "again and again" in London to the inaugural issue of *Africana*, the journal of the West African Society. In what was most likely a reference to Cole, she recalled, "There is the little lady from Nigeria, who turned up for her first interview with a tennis racquet under her arm, giving me the impression that sooner or later West Africa will be represented at Wimbledon."³⁷⁹ At a watershed moment in the history of the WASU and the development of black internationalism and anticolonialism in the British Empire, Cole contributed a paper to the "WASU Conference on West African Problems" on August 29-30, 1942. This inauspicious but historic gathering in London foreshadowed the demands of many colonial intellectuals after the war. The members passed resolutions demanding, among other things, "INTERNAL SELF-GOVERNMENT NOW." The Union voted to reaffirm their resolution from April 4, 1942. "[I]n the interests of Freedom, Justice, and true Democracy, and in view of the lessons of Malaya and Burma, as well as the obvious need of giving the peoples of the Empire something to fight for," it stated, "the West African students' Union in Great Britain strongly urges the British Government to grant to the British West African Colonies and Protectorates Internal Self-Government Now, with a definite guarantee of Complete Self-Government within five years after the war." "We are convinced," the resolution asserted, "that only a realistic approach and a generous gesture on the part of the Imperial Government Now can save the Empire from collapse."³⁸⁰ The conference represented a shift in the Union's attitude toward colonial reform and the legitimacy of the

³⁷⁹ See letter from Irene Cole to Dr. Wellesley Coles, dated November 16, 1947, in *ibid.*; "Summons to the Fourteenth Annual General Meeting," *League of Coloured Peoples News Letter* n. 65 (February 1945); and Sheila Stradling, "Friends Across the Microphone," *Africana* v., 1, n. 1 (December 1948), p. 11.

³⁸⁰ *Wāsu* v. 10, n. 1 (May 1943), p. 2, 8.

British Empire as a whole. It also marked a growing split between an older, more cautious segment of the membership who supported Ladipo Solanke, the hostel's warden and the WASU's Nigerian co-founder, and an increasingly outspoken and more anti-British group of younger members such as R. W. Beoku-Betts and, by the end of the war, Joseph Appiah, who were, by and large, Gold Coasters with stronger ties to pan-Africanists like George Padmore.

Irene Cole's speech at the conference was the only one by a woman to be published in *Wàsù*. Cole discussed "Home, Education and Schools, Business and Trade, Social Services ... Religion, Public Health and Medical Services." However, by beginning with the home, she immediately raised the question of women's role "at a critical stage" in Africa's development. "In African history, even in very ancient times, women have always enjoyed a unique and privileged position." Cole argued that centuries of contact with outsiders, often coercive, had unsettled the established roles and, thus, rights of African women. "In the old Africa and in societies which are almost exclusively African, the position of every woman in the home—wife, mother, grandmother, sister and daughter—was well defined. People might say their sphere was limited; that point is debatable; but the important thing is that their position and obligations were definite." In contrast, Cole pointed to the weakening or dissolution of familial ties and traditional institutions for the socialization of young Africans as a result of colonial rule. "This is a problem of the first magnitude," she maintained, "because if this vague or negative idea of a woman's position becomes a real fact it will mean the passing away of one of the finest specimens of womanhood in the world, and the death of our nation, because the family is the basic foundation of any society." Like much nationalist ideology, Cole linked the preservation and future of Sierra Leone (and West Africa as a whole) to home and family, but she did so to draw attention to the double-bind

of women in colonial Africa. Cole recognized the vital roles women occupied historically in African societies without simply calling for a return to “traditional” or precolonial African womanhood. Acknowledging the enormity of the changes unleashed across the African continent, she advocated a “scientifically minded” approach to both Africans’ pressing needs and what Africa had to offer—and had already given to—the world. Invested in a developmentalist vision of reform, Cole nonetheless defended aspects of African traditions in the arts and medicine. “Ladies and gentlemen,” she concluded, “from my talk you can see that what we want is more of everything—more foresight, more co-operation, more vision, more courage, more faith ... At the moment, many Sons of Africa are shedding their blood in this modern ideological war. Would it be too much to hope that after it their deeds of valour and sacrifice will be remembered and recorded in tangible forms like hospitals, schools and even free education?”³⁸¹

The war years and the decade of the 1940s as a whole were, at once, an exciting period rich with expectations for the future and one of repeated setbacks and mounting frustration for black intellectuals in Britain and the colonies. Although African women in the metropole undoubtedly shared the sense of hope and anticipation of their male peers, they often found that their attempts to link black internationalism with a feminist political consciousness ran up against opposition from not only colonial authorities but many who were ostensibly among the most radical of black activists in Britain as well. Many women like Irene Cole remained active in the WASU, LCP, or other black internationalist groups like the International African Service Bureau, but also engaged in a variety of other political or cultural activities outside of them. Thus, while Cole formed the Newcastle-based Society for the Cultural Advancement of Africa with her brother Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole in 1943, she

³⁸¹ Irene Cole, “Social Problems in West Africa,” in *ibid.*, p. 24-25.

also recognized the need for autonomous women's study groups as well as a support network, outside of the auspices of the Colonial Office, to help facilitate women's entry into metropolitan universities and then assist them in navigating the exigencies of life in Britain. In 1946, she played an integral role in the creation of the West African Women's Association (WAWA) in 1946, the first organization of its kind in Britain.³⁸² During these years, the energetic Cole continued her medical studies and managed her brother's private practice, caring for his patients for much of 1945 and 1946 during his extended trip to Sierra Leone.

Despite finding her professional ambitions thwarted by gender or racial discrimination, Cole settled on Gynecology as her field of specialization, believing that it would enable her to do the most good for West African women.³⁸³ This choice took her to Brighton in early 1947 to complete her training. In a letter to her brother a year later, she joked, "I think I was forgetting the choicest bit of news. Do you know who's coming into the room, next door to me? None other than the Old War Horse's favourite daughter – Mary Churchill ... Never in all Churchill's wildest flight of imagination would he ever dream that his daughter would be next door to one of those Savages from darkest Africa who the Empire is trying to civilize [with] not much result" Around this time, she brought her long engagement to Samuel Osarogie Ighodaro, who was also a student in Britain, to a close when the couple finally married.³⁸⁴ The demands of her career combined with her distance from the center of action in London and the couple's desire to enter public service back in West Africa effectively ended Cole's political activities in Britain. However, she endeavored

³⁸² For example, on January 29, 1946, Irene Cole wrote to her brother, "We have a West African Women's Association Study group at the Club on Saturday night"; see also letters dated July 22, 1945 and July 8, 1947, in RWC Papers, File #7.

³⁸³ Cole expressed a desire to study several fields of surgery (including surgery on men, which was not an option available to her) as well as her frustration at her female superiors' intolerance to her questions and "arguing" in her correspondence with her brother from the late 1940s. See, for example, letters from Irene Cole to Dr. Wellesley Cole, dated April 24 and June 8, 1947, in *ibid.*

³⁸⁴ Letter from Irene Cole to Dr. Wellesley Cole dated February 11, 1948; see letter from Samuel Ighodaro to Dr. Wellesley Cole, dated December 18, 1946, in *ibid.*

to stay informed about the latest developments in the colonies and major African cultural events in the metropole.³⁸⁵ Once she returned to West Africa, Cole-Ighodaro applied both the professional expertise and organizing experience that she gained in Britain throughout her long public career. Cole lived in Ibadan, Nigeria during the 1950s, where she worked for the Minister of Health, the YWCA, and as a private practitioner; gave Red Cross lectures; and helped establish several women's organizations like the National Council of Women's Societies and the Nigerian Association of University Women.

Folayegbe M. Akintunde-Ighodalo spent the years between 1948 and 1955 in London before returning to Ibadan. She not only attended the University of London, but also remained active in a number of black internationalist, women's, and socialist organizations during her time in the metropole, an experience that propelled her into a career of public service in Nigeria. In particular, she insinuated herself into the activities of the WASU, becoming active in the Union soon after her arrival and eventually being elected its second female vice president.³⁸⁶ Like Cole, she participated in these groups while co-founding a new women's organization, the Nigerian Women's League, with others like Olu Olaniyan (née Dare).

Akintunde-Ighodalo also had to balance her scholastic work and activism with the demands of a growing family. On December 5, 1950, she married another Nigerian student, Jerry Ighodalo, whom she had known before coming to London. As her biographer LaRay

³⁸⁵ For example, on July 13, 1948, she wrote to her brother: "Yesterday, we went to the B.I.F. It was most interesting. The Jewellery section interested me most. It was striking that all the Royal Jewellery shown came from Africa. When I saw the Wokie [sp.?] River (Sierra Leone) diamond—supposed to be the biggest diamond in the world, I was annoyed. I hope when we get our independence, some of our wealth will be returned. We succeeded last week in getting hold of the West African Review for April, containing your article. But people have been borrowing it so much that we have not been able to read it yet." In *ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Contrary to LaRay Denzer's assertion that Akintunde-Ighodalo represented the first woman to hold this office, Miss Aduke Alakija, who after attending Glasgow University graduated with a degree in Social Science from the London School of Economics, was in actuality the first female vice president of the WASU. See *WASU Magazine* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 8; LaRay Denzer, *Folayegbe M. Akintunde-Ighodalo: A Public Life* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Sam Bookman, 2001).

Denzer explains, she “decided against wearing a white European wedding gown in favour of traditional Yoruba attire, which was purchased in Nigeria and brought to England for the occasion.”³⁸⁷ By melding Yoruba clothing and practices with a ceremony initiating a monogamous marriage in a Christian church, she transcended one of the primary means by which the state sorted colonial subjects in Africa and expressed a measure of the complexity of her existence. The makings of the wedding—from her attire to the guests—exemplified the intra-imperial networks that belied the colonial state’s attempt to maintain clear boundaries between colony and metropole and among colonies at the same time as it asserted ethnic and cultural specificity.³⁸⁸

When Akintunde-Ighodalo arrived in London, an internal struggle gripped the WASU. At the end of the 1940s, a group led by Joseph Appiah, who was the Union’s president from 1949 to 1954, dominated the Union’s executive. According to Denzer, she was at first relatively ignorant of the differences between camps in the organization and admitted to being embarrassed by her lack of familiarity with recent events in the colonies and the major political issues of the day. To remedy this, she joined several London libraries and read pamphlets and African newspapers that were sent to the WASU or the library at the Colonial Office. “The writings of George Padmore on colonialism and Pan-African newspapers particularly interested her.” Already somewhat familiar with Padmore’s ideas from his work in Nnamdi Azikiwe’s *West African Pilot*, her activities in connection with the Union gave her the opportunity to meet him as well as other pan-Africanists and visiting African dignitaries. When the Nigerian delegation came to London to participate in talks on the colony’s new constitution, she met its two female members, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and

³⁸⁷ Denzer, *Folayegbe M. Akintunde-Ighodalo*, p. 78-79.

³⁸⁸ See photo in *ibid.*

Mrs. Comfort Tanimowo Ogunlesi (née Okusanya), an encounter that marked the beginning of a close friendship between her and Ogunlesi.³⁸⁹ By the early 1950s, Akintunde-Ighodalo had become the most prominent female member in the male-dominated WASU, and in 1953 the Union elected her to be its new vice president, making her only the second woman to hold the position.

Yet, her presence on the group's executive did not always ensure her right to participate in its decisions. "Unquestionably chauvinistic," Denzer claims, "the radical members of the executive tried to neutralize her influence." Assuming that Akintunde-Ighodalo's responsibilities as a young mother would prohibit her attending meetings late into the night, as she explained, "they would call a meeting of the executive. For the first three hours they would discuss non-issues and people would become so bored that they would leave the meeting. Then by midnight, when many members had left, they would at last deliberate on major issues. They made decisions and the minutes would carry the decision." Determined to overcome the leadership's attempts to minimize her influence, Akintunde-Ighodalo made arrangements with her husband to allow her to stay at the meetings until the executive finally tabled the major issues on the agenda, eventually forcing them to conduct the meetings at a more practical hour.³⁹⁰

Though she refused to relinquish her role in the Union, given the resistance of the other members of the executive to her active involvement, she helped to form the Nigerian

³⁸⁹ Ogunlesi, Wuraola Esan, and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti were the only Yoruba women to participate in the discussions leading to constitutional reform in Nigeria and ultimately independence. On Ekpo, see "The Lady Advisor from the East," *West Africa* (August 22, 1953), p. 773. On Ogunlesi, see "The Lady Advisor from the West," *West Africa* (August 15, 1953), p. 751. On women in Nigerian politics during the period, see esp. LaRay Denzer, "Yoruba Women" and "Gender and Decolonization: A Study of Three Women Leaders in West African Public Life," *People and Empire in African History*, J. D. Y. Peel and J. F. Ade Ajayi, eds. (London: Longman, 1992); also Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) and Cheryl Johnson, "Class and Gender: A Consideration of Yoruba Women during the Colonial Period," *Women and Class in Africa*, Claire Robertson and Iris Berger, eds. (London: Africana Publishing Co., 1986).

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80-82.

Women's League of Great Britain and Ireland (NWL) in September 1953. The NWL elected Akintunde-Ighodalo as its first president. The new organization, however, was not intended to merely counter male-dominance in the existing groups; a series of tragic stories about West African women in London, which focused attention on the relative lack of services available to them and the ease with which they could be lost in the bustling metropolis, led directly to its creation.³⁹¹ Members intended the new NWL to be a vehicle for countering the isolation and the difficulties in securing housing and employment that characterized black women's lives in the metropole.

In addition to her work with Nigerian and black internationalist groups, Akintunde-Ighodalo attended conventions and conferences of all the major British political parties, but she developed closest ties with the Labour Party, particularly its women's wing. Mary Elizabeth Sutherland represented one of the most important influences on her during the early 1950s. The Scottish Sutherland, who was also from a rural background, recognized, as Denzer puts it, something of "a kindred spirit in her colonial friend" and assumed the role of mentor to Akintunde-Ighodalo. "Miss Sutherland," Denzer explains, "often invited her young Nigerian friend to her home, encouraging her to participate in Labour Party activities, including political campaigning and writing for its publication, *Labour Women*." On at least one occasion, Akintunde-Ighodalo addressed the annual conference of its women's wing. She also gained practical training in organizing when she attended the Labour Party's International Women's School at the Beatrice Webb School in July 1953. This experience had a significant impact on her personally, as she expressed in a letter to Sutherland in 1953. "I came away from the school with a renewed hope in the salvation of the world," she recalled. "Here for a week, I had been among people with the right vision and the will to

³⁹¹ See *ibid.*, p. 89.

bring into reality the socialist ideal of the brotherhood of man regardless of race, creed or colour. My experience at the school has filled me with a new courage in the power women can wield in a society.” She continued, “It has shown me that it is possible to have one of my life’s ambitions fulfilled, that is, to help, when I get back to my country, the women to find their place and status in our rapidly changing society.” Yet, Akintunde-Ighodalo also noted, “the thing that impressed me most was how a gathering of women of all walks of life could combine serious work and play so successfully.”³⁹² Like the women that she observed at the International Women’s School, Akintunde-Ighodalo and other women intellectuals from the colonies combined serious politics with pleasure in both women’s organizations and in their capacities with groups like the LCP and WASU.

The NWL began its activities with a New Year’s dance at Hampstead Town Hall in north London, which attracted a diverse crowd. Though, like the dance, open to sympathetic Britons, the NWL’s leadership emphasized the need to meet “in a typically Nigerian atmosphere” and “discuss our problems among our ‘kith and kin.’” Appropriating British familial rhetoric to defend their autonomy, the members of the NWL used their own experiences in the metropole to legitimate the group’s activities – “how grateful would we have been for some little hints given by another girl from our own country.” Yet, the organization’s goals hardly stopped there. Like their male contemporaries in the WASU and, by 1950, other groups like the West African Society, the NWL claimed the authority to translate or represent Nigerian womanhood to the world (and to Britons in particular). “Above all we were fortunate to be given a small opportunity of interpreting Nigerian women to the British and the many other nationals who by the very position of London congregate there.”

³⁹² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 84-86.

Notwithstanding the immense difficulties many women faced, this again suggests the unique opportunities that metropolitan location provided colonial women. Women intellectuals from West Africa, as much as their male counterparts, perceived themselves as part of an educated, political vanguard that would launch a social revolution in African society, a continental renaissance. *West Africa* reprinted part of a statement issued by the NWL at its New Year's dance which reiterates this view: "We believe that the women of Nigeria are capable of following in the courageous footsteps of the many brave women of other lands who have in the past fought against prejudice and overcome overwhelming obstacles in achieving great victories in the field of human endeavour ... Ours is the cause of Nigerian womanhood."³⁹³ The author of the League's statement situated its pursuits within an international feminist tradition but, in her vague reference to "other lands," avoids explicitly linking the latter to an Eurocentric historicism, a type of "first in Europe, then elsewhere" sketch of feminist movements.

Later that year, *West Africa* published a letter to the editor by Akintunde-Ighodalo, writing as president of the NWL, in favor of "votes for women" in Nigeria. When women in Eastern Nigeria were given the vote in the upcoming elections for the Nigerian House of Representatives, she offered "Congratulations to those who are responsible for this real act of partnership." "The argument," she continued, "has often been advanced by many of our men that if Nigerian women want the vote they must fight for it just as the suffragettes did in Britain." In response to this suggestion, Akintunde-Ighodalo advanced a critique of historicist thinking. "An important point overlooked by the holders of such a view is that the course of development in Nigeria differs tremendously from that in Britain. For instance, Nigeria is, unlike Britain, not content to take hundreds of years to evolve a democratic

³⁹³ *West Africa* (January 2, 1954), 1246.

system of self-government.” In her defense of women’s right to the vote, Akintunde-Ighodalo adroitly reframed self-government, democracy, and universal suffrage as an alternative to a mimicking British history. As she put it, “there seems a lot to be said for Nigeria aiming at contributing something to the course of world development instead of being a mere copyist.”³⁹⁴

In a manner characteristic of many women who tried to combine feminism and black internationalism, Akintunde-Ighodalo began by talking of “partnership” between Nigerian men and women. In 1948, burdened with schoolwork and family responsibilities, Dr. Irene Cole-Ighodaro confided to her brother how her relationship with her husband affected her own thinking. “This Child Health Course has made very clear to me one important fact that I had never appreciated before – that the education of women is bound up [with] that of men for it to be successful.”³⁹⁵ Yet, such experiences of personal and political partnership were rare for African and Caribbean women in the metropole. In fact, Cole wrote to her brother a few years earlier, “Ola Dure is staying [with] me ... She’s just been telling me that [illegible] Cole and Dolly Morgan are now married. I am delighted at the news because I always feel that when our men intermarry with European women, it is a great struggle not to lose them. I am sorry for Joey ... but my joy at the gain to the nation far surpasses my sympathy. I am sorry if this sounds unintelligent, but it is true.”³⁹⁶

In the end, whatever they did in their personal lives, many West African and Caribbean women found it more satisfying to abstain from associating themselves too closely with any one black organization and, instead, worked alternately with groups like the LCP, WASU, and IASB as well as socialist and international women’s groups. The same

³⁹⁴ Folayegbe Akintunde-Ighodalo, “Votes for Women” (June 19, 1954), p. 564.

³⁹⁵ Letter from Dr. Irene Cole-Ighodaro to Dr. R. W. Cole, dated September 25, 1948, in RWC Papers, File #7.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, dated July 15, 1945.

male peers who criticized women for supposed backwardness often excluded them from major debates and worked to restrict their participation in political activities. By the early 1950s, this combined with the lack of assistance for the growing numbers of female students from the colonies led to the creation of the first black women's organization in Britain. At a time when the course of events in Britain and the colonies increasingly channeled internationalist aspirations into more narrow and pragmatic goals, women like Akintunde-Ighodalo bemoaned the trend towards abandoning broad-based groups in favor of ethnic or national associations.³⁹⁷ Moreover, many women intellectuals utilized the skills, experience, and connections that they acquired in these groups throughout their lives, either in London or back in the colonies. In fact, the networks that they formed as a consequence of sojourns in the metropole helped create allies later in life even though they had not known each other or crossed paths in Britain.³⁹⁸

Conclusion

Very much has been written and spoken of the Negro, but for some reason very little has been said about the black woman. She has been shunted into the social background to be a child-bearer. This has been principally her lot.³⁹⁹

West African and Caribbean women were at once central to and marginalized within the most significant black internationalist groups in London during the first half of the twentieth century. Pan-Africanism, as much as the racialized European nationalisms with

³⁹⁷ This was particularly true of her fellow Nigerians who formed the Igbo Union, Egbe Omo Oduduwa, and the Yoruba Federal Union between 1944 and 1948; by the early 1950s, there were colony/nation-defined student unions for each of the four British colonies in West Africa.

³⁹⁸ For example, in 1964, Dr. Cole-Ighodaro, Akintunde-Ighodalo, and Dr. Irene Thomas (Stella Thomas's sister) were among the founders of the Nigerian Association of University Women, an organization of largely "close friends or colleagues"; the former two, at least, did not know each other in Britain, as Akintunde-Ighodalo arrived around the same time that Cole-Ighodaro left for Nigeria. See Denzer, *Folayegbe M. Akintunde-Ighodalo: A Public Life*, p. 209-215.

³⁹⁹ Amy Ashwood Garvey, Speech Given to the Manchester Pan-African Congress, October 19, 1945, in George Padmore, ed. *History of the Pan-African Congress*, p. 52.

which it shared contradictory ties and the anticolonial nationalisms that followed in the 1950s and 1960s, involved and, indeed, depended upon the mobilization of difference in a multiplicity of forms, including gendered exclusions. Yet, movement between colony and metropole offered unique, if limited, opportunities to West Indian and West African women. The endeavors of these women demand that we expand the notion of “black internationalism” to include the feminist internationalism of black women in the imperial metropole, but they also illustrate the limits of the pan-Africanist movement. Amy Ashwood Garvey drew attention to precisely these limitations in her remarks to the 1945 Pan-Africanist Congress in Manchester quoted above.

This chapter is only an initial, incomplete exploration of the intellectual overlap between black internationalism and women of color feminism. It responds, in part, to recent calls by some scholars to consider what has been treated hitherto as a non-existent subject—the influence of black women on racial politics and anticolonialism in the imperial metropole.⁴⁰⁰ In his discussion of Francophone Antillean women’s engagement with African American feminists in Paris, Brent Edwards advances a similar critique to the one offered here. Like the Nardal sisters in Paris, when we consider the lives and writings of black women in London, “the possibility ... opens that in a transnational cultural context, feminism, as one strategic unraveling of that weave, may precede and lead to black internationalist consciousness.” Considered alongside black women like Cummings-John, Marson, and Akintunde-Ighodalo, this forgotten history of black internationalism suggests that any attempt to trace a trans-Atlantic intellectual history of the later must begin with a set of social spaces established and maintained by black feminists.

⁴⁰⁰ See esp. Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Princeton University Press, 2005); Marika Sherwood, “Amy Ashwood Garvey,” in Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787*, (Routledge, 2003), p. 69-75; and Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*.

In a suggestive passage, Edwards wonders whether the erasure of Antillean feminists from the history of Francophone black internationalism was, in fact, “constitutive in the elaboration of a *Négritude* aesthetic, and moreover whether it might indeed be concomitant with the forgetting of a more avowedly anticolonial black politics.”⁴⁰¹ Similarly, the pan-Africanist movement in London produced and remained wedded, in theory and praxis, to a specific elaboration of black heterosexual masculinity, the figure of the “race man”, which depended upon the displacement of African and Caribbean women as its condition of possibility. What is more, this elision has provided the conditions of possibility for the dominant narrative of anticolonialism and pan-Africanism, which has proven as persistent as it is problematic within histories of black intellectuals in Britain.

⁴⁰¹ Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, p. 152, 121-2; see also discussion of the salons of Jessie Fauset and Paulette Nardal in New York and Paris, respectively, p. 134, 152-5.

Chapter Four

African and West Indian Men and Sexuality

London presented unique challenges and opportunities to the relatively few who traveled there from the colonies before 1950. Both the racial discrimination and the relative freedom that Africans and West Indians found in the metropole informed their changing political commitments and personal behavior. Financial and other logistical problems often hounded black students and intellectuals during their time in Britain. For many black men, the assistance and companionship of white women attenuated the effects of widespread racism on the lives of newcomers and helped them navigate the difficulties of their first days in Britain. At the same time, relations with white women became a symbol of the challenges and perils of the metropole for men from the colonies. Lacy Hammerton's serial, "Dark Interlude," which appeared in *Checkers Magazine* in 1948, bespoke of the potential dangers of consorting with a certain class of women in the London. The story's plot centered on an encounter between Larry Jordan, an embittered and financially-strapped Jamaican, and a mysterious English woman, and its title and style evoked the hard-boiled detective fiction of Peter Cheyney, which was immensely popular in Britain during and immediately after the Second World War. Similarly, in typical tongue-in-cheek fashion, Lord Kitchener's popular calypso from the early 1950s, "Piccadilly Folk," cautioned against the sexual enticements of the metropole, warning new arrivals to be wary of being taken "for a ride" by savvy sex workers in the Piccadilly area.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰² Although short-lived, *Checkers* was the only glossy magazine to oriented towards a black readership in late 1940s London. Lacy Hammerton, "Dark Interlude," *Checkers Magazine* v. 1, n. 1; "Piccadilly Folk" has been reissued on *London Is the Place for Me 4: African Dreams and the Piccadilly High Life* (Honest Jon's Records, 2006).

The comparatively small number of black British, Caribbean, and African women made relations between black men and white women likely, and variety of social spaces in London provided the opportunity for sojourners and migrants from Africa and the Caribbean to meet and interact with white Britons. These ranged from church or religious organizations, universities, and student or political groups to nightclubs, bars, and clandestine social clubs. Sexual relationships between black men and white women were far more common in the metropole than in the colonies, and most male intellectuals, students, and activists from Africa and the Caribbean formed close ties with white women during their time in London. Indeed, some African and West Indian men viewed their sojourns abroad as, in part, a sexual rite of passage. Interracial relationships varied drastically, from ephemeral liaisons to lasting partnerships, but these women often provided vital assistance in maintaining their tenuous existence. Friendships and political alliances frequently developed into sexual relationships and, in some cases, marriages between men from the colonies and British women. These relationships blurred the division between personal lives and political struggles, even as many sojourners insisted that the former should be subordinated to the demands of the latter.

Interracial sex remained a constant point of concern for the Colonial Office and the British public in general and could have dangerous consequences for the parties involved. To many Britons, it continued to represent, as Bill Schwarz puts it, “the most resonant frontier of all” between colonized and colonizer. In early 1945, a didactic editorial in *Ōsù* discussed “*our* responsibilities” as West African students in London. “An ambassador of goodwill, [the student] is ... the real living link between the two peoples ... His views are given weight; and sometimes form the subject of the most serious consideration on both sides of the Atlantic, even by the cynics.” In the imperial metropole, “His behaviour and particular idiosyncracies;

his gait, whether slovenly or smart; his manner of speech, whether natural or affected with a superimposed complex; even his reaction to the fair sex; all are meticulously scrutinised by those around him, and frequently form the stock-in-trade of the common people. Africans being usually considered *en masse*, and seldom as individuals, his failings in these respects reflect discreditably on the peoples of West Africa.”⁴⁰³ For black intellectuals who both claimed to and were seen to represent large colonial populations or even the “race” in the eyes of most Britons, a heightened awareness of the visibility and representativeness clouded not only the political activities but also their personal lives.

In a brief passage from his “autosociography,” *Beyond a Boundary*, C. L. R. James poses the question: “What Do Men Live By?” The short prolegomenon not only introduces his discussion of cricket, Victorianism, and the English cricketer W. G. Grace, but it also marks his own arrival in the metropole and discusses the intellectual transformation engendered by his time in Britain between 1933 and 1938. “Fiction-writing,” James recalled, “drained out of me and was replaced by politics. I became a Marxist, a Trotskyist. I published large books and small articles on these and kindred subjects. I wrote and spoke. Like many others, I expected war, and during or after the war social revolution.” “These pursuits,” he wrote, “I shared with collaborators, rivals, enemies and our public. We covered the ground thoroughly. In my private mind, however, I was increasingly aware of large areas of human existence that my history and my politics did not seem to cover. What did men live by? What did they want?” “All my half-forgotten past in Trinidad, and now my probing into what men live by,” James explained, “had sensitized me to see cricket with fresh eyes as soon as I had begun to think for myself about it.”⁴⁰⁴ While in London during the mid-1930s, James began

⁴⁰³ “Our Responsibilities,” *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 3-5.

⁴⁰⁴ C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, originally 1963), p. 151, 154.

to realize that “men” do not live solely through or according to ideas and political ideologies. Rather, whatever a “culture” (the term James employs) may be said to entail, it is embodied first and foremost, enacted, reproduced, and challenged through the operations of the body.

In what follows, I revisit James’ probing question, if not in the manner which he intended. This chapter examines the correspondence between West Indian and African men’s epic dreams of anticolonial struggle and liberation, on the one hand, and their quotidian bodily and sexual practices, on the other. They articulated different visions of black masculinity, in large part, through their attempts to conceptualize and manage the relationship between these spheres of existence. In the context of the imperial metropole, the proper management of one’s social and sexual life became a constituent aspect of not only masculinity but also anticolonial politics.

The “Negro Pimp” and the Myth of the Homosexual Clique: Discourses of Black Male Sexuality in Late Imperial Britain

In the late 1940s, the African-American sociologist St. Clair Drake recorded a joke or, more accurately, a humorous anecdote that circulated amongst educated Caribbean and African men in London. “A case came to the attention of the League of Coloured Peoples in which an African stowaway had been arrested for pandering. The magistrate denounced him vigorously and inquired, ‘Why do you come here and exploit our women?’” The defendant replied “with sullen belligerence, ‘You’ve been exploiting ours for over 300 years!’” Incensed, the magistrate issued a harsh sentence and had the African man jailed. At this point, the League of Coloured Peoples intervened and approached the magistrate. “The League lawyer pointed out that the sentence was not in accord with strict British justice and indicated that really he had been sentenced for both the crime and contempt of court. The

judge was contrite and admitted that such sentences would alienate people in the colonies.” The magistrate agreed to reduce the sentence if the defendant would appear again before the court and “purge himself of contempt,” but when the League lawyer reported this to the African “stowaway,” he remained defiant. “You go back and tell that judge,” he insisted, “that it’s worth spending an extra three months in jail just to let him know what was on my mind, and to speak up for my people. An’ you tell him, too, that besides it’s winter and its nice and warm in here. And by the way be sure to tell him that my women are working hard and they’ll save my money for me and give it to me when I get out.” “The story,” Drake noted, “when told in colored intellectual circles always brought a laugh.”⁴⁰⁵

This apocryphal tale draws attention in a quite exceptional manner to the vexed relationship between race, masculinity, and sexuality in the imperial metropole. Drake offered the joke as evidence of black intellectuals’ “very ambivalent attitude toward the Negro pimp.” “On one hand,” he explained, “there was the feeling that such activities were hurting race relations in Britain and occasionally the ‘riff-raff from Africa’ was bitterly assailed by West Indian intellectuals. On the other hand there was also a tendency to retail jokes about the brazenness of some of the operators, and the tone of the jokes and the effect on the hearers indicated that the intellectuals were getting vicarious pleasure from accounts of these episodes.” “The ‘riff-raff,’” he averred, “were seen as giving the British a dose of their own medicine.”⁴⁰⁶

As Sigmund Freud recognized, the joke “represents a rebellion against” authority on a number of fronts, “a liberation from the oppression it imposes.” It “will allow us to turn to good account those ridiculous features in our enemy that the presence of opposing obstacles

⁴⁰⁵ St. Clair Drake Papers, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library, MG 309, Box 61, File 10.

⁴⁰⁶ Drake Papers, *ibid.*

would not let us utter aloud or consciously ... [and] *get around restrictions and open up sources of pleasure that have become inaccessible.*” Jokes are all the more likely to assume this function, Freud argued, when the internal obstacle of repression is coupled with external strictures and subjugation. Yet, this type of joke often depends upon the inherent ambivalence of identification with a larger community, sentiments which are perhaps more strained in the context of a deterritorialized conception of community. “A situation particularly favourable to the tendentious joke,” Freud noted, “is set up when the intended criticism of protest is directed against one’s self, or, put more circumspectly, against a person in whom that self has a share, a collective person, that is, one’s own people.” Thus, the African pimp served as a suitable subject of the joke only inasmuch as the narrator and audience felt that they shared a certain history, background, quality, or predicament with him. “The share the raconteur’s own person has in what is being criticized creates the subjective conditions for the joke-work.” The joke’s raconteur and audience must have an analogous position vis-à-vis the obstacles which the joke-work circumvents; in short, “every joke demands its own audience.” The joke, which Freud described as a “double-dealing rogue,” cuts two ways, articulating, at once, disparity and similitude, “self-criticism” and a rebellion against British racism.⁴⁰⁷ After all, an unspeakable question lurked within the apocryphal tale of the African pimp and the laughter induced by its multiple iterations: Wasn’t there at least a kernel of truth in what he said to the magistrate? An historical memory of injustice undergirded the moral tale of an example not to be followed. However damnable, the defendant’s recalcitrance could be seen as descending from old struggles and the correlative of contemporary ones. These two characteristics of the joke-work—its capacity to “turn-the-

⁴⁰⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (London: Penguin, 2002, originally 1905), p. 98, 100, 106-109, 145, 148.

tables” in the face of insurmountable obstacles and negotiate the dissonance internal to the social formation—were crucial aspects of the story’s allure for West Indian and African men in Britain.

The efficacy of the joke derived in part from its connection to real individuals and scenarios in the imperial metropole and resonated with sojourners’ personal circumstances because of the threat of punitive consequences for their sexual behavior, a possibility which collapsed the difference between themselves and the African pimp. In the fall of 1948, the British tabloid *News of the World* featured an article (“TWINS CASE: COLOURED STUDENT TO PAY”) covering a suit filed by Patrick Heather against a Nigerian student “for the seduction of his daughter, Norah, who gave birth to twin boys said to have died later.” The pair met at a dance, and the student, Heather’s attorney charged, seduced her “by representing himself as a lonely African student without friends in an alien country.” In his closing remarks, the attorney asserted, “Far be it from me to advocate racialism, but no one can blind himself to the fact that there is in us all an innate feeling of race and colour, and whatever way we look at it it is a slur on a white girl and a blow at the racial pride of a white man that a white girl should be seduced by a person of another colour.” Although the presiding judge expressed his regret that “what might be an appeal to racial prejudices had been introduced,” he implicitly endorsed this view in assessing damages of 700 pounds. While in this case “the locale was Dublin,” as Drake noted, “the counterpart could occur, and had occurred in London.” Many Britons believed “such occasional accidents” to be “the sole cause of hostility” toward colonial students. For example, an English professor with whom Drake discussed his research “maintained stoutly that there was no ‘race problem’ in England ‘... except for those African students who are always getting the landlady’s daughters with babies and making nuisances out of themselves that way.’” Within this

context, the joke offered a commentary on the use of interracial sex to posit colonial men as the source of the race relations “problem” in Britain.

Fines and confinement were only one of the punitive measures directed at African and West Indians in Britain; they could also be “compelled” to return to colonies.⁴⁰⁸ Moreover, accusations of sexual deviance in sojourners’ intimate lives could have significant implications for black organizations’ relations with the colonial governments, Colonial Office, and British philanthropic groups. The scrutiny surrounding the WASU’s hostel and the ultimate demise of Aggrey House illustrate this point. Although the Union prohibited unmarried women (including West African women) from staying overnight at Africa House, it was placed under surveillance after accusations surfaced that it served as a haven for interracial liaisons. The popularity of the WASU’s fortnightly dances and other social functions with British women heightened the concern of officials in the Colonial Office. In August 1937, O. G. R. Wilson relayed the concerns of another official regarding the WASU in the Office’s internal correspondence.

Mr. Mathias says that he has, for some time, suspected that W.A.S.U. is being conducted in a very unsatisfactory way from various points of view, and that his suspicions have, to some extent, been confirmed by what he has recently been told by Mr. [Ivor G.] Cummings, the coloured Secretary [of Trustees] of Aggrey House. What Mr. Cummings told him was that two Africans, who had been residing at Aggrey House, recently absented themselves one night, and when they turned up again next day, explained their absence by saying that the previous night they had met two girls, and that as they could not take them to Aggrey House, they had spent the night with them at W.A.S.U.

The accusation caused Mathias and other officials, who were already reluctant to engage with the Union, to suggest a reconsideration of the Colonial Office’s position on the hostel. Mathias “felt very disinclined to have anything to do with the supervision of the financial

⁴⁰⁸ For an example that provoked the ire of the students in the West African Students Union, see “The Case of Mr. E. S. Ajayi,” *Wāsi* v. 2, n. 1 (January 1933), p. 22-23.

affairs of W.A.S.U. as had been suggested, while it rested under this sort of suspicion.” Moreover, “he thought that it might be very unfortunate if the Government of Nigeria or any other West African Government gave support and recognition to W.A.S.U. if there was any risk of it being involved in such a scandal as might result from a police raid, which he seemed to think was not improbable.⁴⁰⁹” A black Briton himself, Cummings’ initial attack on the WASU may have been due in the strained relationship between the latter and Aggrey House throughout the 1930s, which stemmed largely to their mutual dependence upon the limited financial support of the colonial governments in West Africa. Cummings’ aspersions against the WASU indexed the political differences between his own accommodationist stance and the more outspoken and confrontational position of the Union’s membership. The rumor precipitated a call to Scotland Yard, who dispatched officers to watch Africa House for a period of several days.

An official in the Colonial Office reported the preliminary findings of the police inquiry on August 25, 1937.

Inspector Smith called today and told me that so far nothing suspicious had been observed about W.A.S.U. African girls had been seen occasionally visiting the Hostel during the daytime, but none was seen at night or in the early morning either entering or leaving. No white women had been reported in connection with the Hostel. Inspector Smith said that if white women had been seen there the neighbors would certainly have complained to the police.⁴¹⁰

Nevertheless, the London Metropolitan Police maintained “continuous observation” on the hostel from 10:00 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. between August 26 and 28, 1937. According to the official report, on the evening of August 26, a total of twelve “white women” entered the hostel accompanied by “black men during these hours, all of whom then exited the premises

⁴⁰⁹ CO 554/109/4: (1937-8), Public Record Office, Kew, United Kingdom.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

by midnight. Only 3 British women visited the hostel during these hours the following night, and again, they left with their hosts by 11:45 p.m. On the third evening, the police saw fourteen “white women,” four “white men,” and four “black women” enter and later leave the hostel with WASU members or residents of the hostel “before midnight.” “At 12 night on each date,” the inspector’s report stated, “all lights on the premises were extinguished and I did not see anyone enter or leave the hostel.” On the evenings of August 29 and 30, he “kept casual observation but did not see any white women enter, or leave.”

The police inspector also noted the popularity of the WASU’s regular dances, which took place “in a room on the first floor to the music from a radiogram.” “I was informed by a Borough Council employee,” he continued, “that anyone could gain access to the dancing on payment of 6d on the door.”⁴¹¹ Although far from the picture of unrestrained debauchery, the preponderance of “white women” amongst visitors to the hostel at night fueled the angst of colonial officials concerning the presence of West African students in the metropole. Some months later in the spring of 1938, a minute by Mr. Jones of the Colonial Office noted, “Inspector Smith (C. I. D.) called this afternoon, to say that the W.A.S.U. premises, though unlicensed, were being used occasionally (mostly on Saturday nights) for the purposes of music and dancing, with a charge for non-residents.” “The existing position,” Jones continued, “was that a Divisional Report to that effect had reached the C. I. D., and that the latter were intending to report the matter to the London County Council, who might decide to administer a more or less formal caution or take other action.”⁴¹² Ultimately, these reports had little immediate effect on the Union as they do not appear to have resulted in any disciplinary action being taken against the WASU, but if accusations of

⁴¹¹ Metropolitan Police Report, Somers Town Station, N. Division (September 5, 1937), CO 554/109/4, Public Record Office, Kew, United Kingdom.

⁴¹² CO 554/114/4: (1938), Public Record Office, Kew, United Kingdom.

this nature had been substantiated in the suspicious eyes of officials in the Colonial Office, the WASU could have been faced with the threat of extinction. Yet, the recurrence within Colonial Office correspondence of such mundane and seemingly apolitical activities as the social events at the WASU hostel blurred the distinction between colonial students' potentially subversive activities and anxiety over their sexual behavior, especially their relations with British women.⁴¹³ Accusations of sexual impropriety fed into and reaffirmed a preexisting and complementary discourse regarding the disreputable nature of Africa House and, by extension, inadvisability of self-government in Africa. Thus, officials cited the relative unseemliness of the hostel as a further indication of the African students' inability to manage their own affairs. One member of the Colonial Office commented, "I paid a visit to the hostel about a month ago. It was in a disgustingly dirty condition ... I am aware that they have little money at their disposal but they might make an effort to make the place look respectable." Another official underlined these last words and added "even if it isn't!" in the margin.⁴¹⁴ In light of this, it is hardly surprising to find that students' personal lives and social activities were not only the target of surveillance by colonial authorities, but also served as a means to express independence from and resistance to the latter in a manner which transcended the divide between the public and private spheres. The WASU's mission entailed the projection of African respectability and competence as the foundation of sovereignty, a task in which the Union's explicitly political activities formed only one part.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹³ For instance, one official wrote in response to Jones's minute, "It is most comforting to me to note that the authorities are Keeping an Eye on Wasu." *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ On his duties as vice president of the WASU, Nkrumah wrote, "There was never a dull moment." "Sometimes," he explained, "there would disputes with landladies whom, because of their scarcity value, we had to cherish; occasionally someone would end in trouble with a girl picked up in Piccadilly or the Tottenham Court Road." Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: International Publishers, 1957), p. 52.

A short time thereafter, Aggrey House became embroiled in a sex scandal of its own, which culminated in the withholding of financial support for the social club and hostel and, finally, its closure on May 3, 1940. To the chagrin of Cummings and the Aggrey House Board of Trustees, which was led by Mr. Fletcher and consisted of prominent Britons, Aggrey House had become a locus of operations for a small cadre of Africans and West Indians, led by Peter Blackman, Buckle, and Worrell, with communist ties. These individuals assumed a prominent position on the Aggrey House Committee, a situation which former supporters of the initiative like Dr. Harold Moody of the League of Coloured Peoples and Hanns Vischer decried.⁴¹⁶

Amidst the Aggrey House controversy, the Colonial Office issued a statement to the Ministry of Information that outlined its view of the events leading up to the rift. "Certain members of the House Committee are not students but men of between 30 and 40 who are very politically minded, and have given discussions at the Club a very communistic tone. The point on which the conflict has come to a head is, however, not in the field of politics, although the trustees are very worried about that." "One of the students," the statement alleged, "introduced a prostitute [originally 'woman'] into the Club House and was requested to resign his membership." Subsequently, the individual in question appealed to have his membership reinstated. The Aggrey House Committee endorsed the request, but the trustees refused to allow it, considering "the matter to be serious and symptomatic of the generally unhelpful attitude of the House Committee." "No doubt," the letter continued, "the members of the House Committee ... will probably emphasize the political rather than the moral issue." To counter this tactic, the Colonial Office urged, "it should be made clear to

⁴¹⁶ See especially letter from Vischer, International Institute of African Languages & Cultures, to Keith, dated 17 April 17, 1940; "Minute of Interview with Dr. Moody" by J. L. Keith, Colonial Office, dated April 30, 1940; and "Memorandum by Harold A. Moody," dated May 3, 1940, in which Moody suggested that control be ceded to LCP as he had originally wanted.

the public that the trustees have had to close the club temporarily owing to the attitude taken by the House Committee over the application of a student to be readmitted to membership ... after he had been expelled for alleged immoral conduct on the Club's premises."⁴¹⁷

Anticipating the circulation of "incorrect versions" of the dispute beyond the metropole, the Colonial Office also sent letters detailing their account to the governors of the Britain's colonies in West Africa and the Caribbean that contributed funds towards the maintenance of Aggrey House. "Certain members of the House Committee of Aggrey House ... have in the opinion of the Trustees introduced an undesirable political and social tone into the Club House. The Trustees have not felt able to take any action on these grounds, but recently the House Committee, who are all Africans or men of African descent, came into open conflict with the Trustees in connection with the expulsion of a student member on the grounds that he introduced a prostitute into the Club House."⁴¹⁸

In early May, the *Evening Standard* reported the dispute under the headline "'Moral Issue' Closes Club" and quoted the club's secretary as saying "The House Committee had decided to readmit a member, a student from the West Indies, who had been expelled for bringing a certain woman into the club."⁴¹⁹ The communist *Daily Worker*, however, noted, "members of the club say there are other and deeper reasons," "that the readmittance of an expelled member was only an excuse for closing the club, and that the real purpose is to make way for an organisation which will be semi-official and will regulate the selection of students who come to Britain, also keeping a lose watch on them in this country."⁴²⁰ While it seems clear that the Board of Trustees used the alleged incident with a prostitute to mask

⁴¹⁷ Letter from the Colonial Office to Mr. Hodson, Ministry of Information, dated May 14, 1940, CO 859/21/1 (1940).

⁴¹⁸ Letter from Lloyd, Colonial Office, dated May 23, 1940, *ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ "'Moral Issue' Closes Club, Coloured Students' Only Social Centre," *Evening Standard* (May 4, 1940).

⁴²⁰ "Students' Club Closed by Trustees," *Daily Worker* (May 6, 1940).

and legitimate a move which was largely politically motivated, they were able to do so because of the slippage between the attributed deviant sexuality and “subversive” tendencies of colonial men, as in the intentionally vague reference to the “undesirable political and social tone” purportedly introduced by the members in question. In point of consequence, if not fact, Blackman and other “undesirable members” were equated with the West Indian student accused of bringing a sex worker into Aggrey House.⁴²¹ In a minute from late July 1940, J. L. Keith of the Colonial Office reported that the Trustees, facing the threat of legal actions against them, had decided to return the members’ subscriptions and intended to reopen Aggrey House only upon the condition of “excluding those who have caused the recent trouble.” In keeping with the government’s desire to avoid the perception that it was manipulating the situation from behind the scenes, Keith cautioned against any direct involvement on the part of the Colonial Office and suggested, “the most we can say is that we are in full sympathy with the action proposed.”⁴²² Due in part to this dispute, by the mid-1940s, a system of official government hostels in London replaced Aggrey House, once the model for the strategy of indirect rule vis-à-vis colonial students in the metropole. In this case, insinuations of sexual immorality had significant institutional repercussions.

While attempts to monitor and police colonial sojourners routinely blurred the division between their private lives and political activities, sexuality—sexual behavior and notions of sexual opprobrium and perversion—became one way in which middle-class African and West Indian intellectuals articulated differences between black men in London. An air of self-consciousness due to both an awareness of their hypervisibility and a sense of being representative of larger ethnic and racial communities inflected sojourners’ interactions

⁴²¹ The expelled West Indian student was Mr. Wilkins.

⁴²² Minute by J. L. Keith, dated July 25, 1940, CO 859/21/1.

and behavior in London, as they tried to locate themselves within a multiplicity of competing characterizations of difference.

The tale of the African pimp reaffirmed black intellectuals' status as the legitimate representatives of the race insofar as it distinguished them from the figure of the black pimp or, more precisely, real contemporaries in London like Ras Prince Monolulu. In February 1948, Drake met Monolulu while working alone in the office of the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP). He was an infamous character in League circles. Even before this encounter, the organization's general secretary, the Trinidadian Dr. M. E. Joseph-Mitchell, had expressed to Drake "how embarrassed he was at one of the [LCP's] dances when the Prince had been present 'acting like a clown.'" Famous for frequenting "race tracks dressed in a fantastic costume with a feathered head dress and colorful robes" as well as haranguing against racism and generally entertaining crowds on Sunday afternoons at Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, Monolulu, Mitchell told Drake, "claims to be an Ethiopian, although everybody knows that darky was born in the West Indies. And that costume of his is more like the Red Indians than any Ethiopian's." Monolulu, who was known in the racing set as "I gotta horse," used the exotic costume to enhance his prestige as a race horse tipster, to the dismay of many like Mitchell. One of the most famous black men in London, as Appiah put it, "Prince Monolulu was truly the darling of all Britain and the friend of the great." Gallaher Tobacco's set of trading cards depicting 48 racing scenes and another series entitled "In Town To-night," both issued in 1938, contained cards for "Rass Prince Monolulu" featuring images of the famous "Abyssinian" tipster in his crown of red, white, and blue feathers. Monolulu was also renowned and, at times, fined for his jokes at Speakers' Corner. "He knew the rules of the Corner relating to dirty jokes," Appiah explained, "and yet, occasionally, when his funds were low, he would invite arrest by telling an unadorned dirty

joke.” As a matter of course, Monolulu would receive a minor fine, but “all his friends, great and small, would send in their contributions which, in the end, always exceeded the fine by one hundred pounds at the minimum.” The press unknowingly acted as his accomplice in this profitable scheme by reporting his arrest.⁴²³

In Britain, Drake observed, “the fact that the men are colonials and the women members of the ‘imperial race’ makes every such alliance a potential symbol of ‘table turning,’” and Monolulu seemed to be one individual who subscribed to this view. “There is some tendency for lower-class Negroes,” Drake explained, “to justify both pimping and mistreatment of white women on the grounds that colored men are only ‘paying the white man back.’” Drake cited an incident between Monolulu and a new arrival from Kenya as one instance in which “this symbolism” was “made explicit publicly.”⁴²⁴ When a “middle-aged white woman who worked at a hostel for African students” took him to Speaker’s Corner in Hyde Park, he stopped to hear Monolulu, who “suddenly said to the young man, ‘You an African?’ When he answered ‘Yes’, the Ras said, very loudly, ‘You in Englishman’s country now. He’s been exploiting you back home. You exploit him now. Exploit him, I say! Exploit his women! Hear me? Exploit his women!’” Having only been in the city for about a week, “the African student became frightened and hastily left the park leaving the woman there.”

During their initial meeting on that spring afternoon in the LCP’s office, Monolulu regaled the African-American sociologist with his views on race relations in London. “After a forty-five minute conversation with the Prince,” Drake concluded, “it was quite understandable why middle-class Negroes considered him something of an embarrassment.”

⁴²³ The staunchly conservative Lord Derby even mentored him in the equestrian arts. “All Britain was touched,” Appiah recalled, “when British Television showed the prince, for a change, dressed in tails and top hat, majestically marching” in Derby’s funeral procession in 1948. Appiah, *Joe Appiah: The Autobiography of an African Patriot*, p. 153.

⁴²⁴ The student was most likely Peter Koinage with whom Drake developed a friendship.

He described Monolulu as “a raconteur of very smutty jokes told with words of Anglo-Saxon brevity and bluntness.” Yet, if respectable, middle-class intellectuals like Mitchell viewed Monolulu as a source of embarrassment, the latter was also keen to distinguish himself from them. “His ribald interpretation of race relations was essentially a theory that his generation of colored men living in London had existed by virtue of their alliances with white women and their orthodox sexual virtuosity.” By contrast, “The present generation which he professed not to understand, existed with equal ease by alliances with both men and women and by their proficiency at various forms of unorthodox sexual behavior.” Before he left, Monolulu “reiterated his invitation to visit him in Soho and really learn something about race relations in Britain.”⁴²⁵ What Drake and Mitchell perceived as effects of class difference, Monolulu interpreted as a generational shift. Yet, each of them read sexual behavior as a primary expression of the differences between black men in London and employed it to represent those differences. Moreover, Monolulu distinguished between black men in London by recourse of two reoccurring constructions of deviant black male sexuality.

Public discussions about the growing presence of colonial men in late imperial Britain collapsed a range of situations and relationships involving, to a greater or lesser extent, dependence upon British women into the figure of the “Negro pimp.” Yet, the sexual behavior of black men was neither limited to nor discussed solely in connection with interracial, heterosexual sex, and variations in sexuality became a cipher for different political positions or ways of occupying the metropole. Stories and accusations of “unorthodox sexual behavior” amongst West Indians and Africans coalesced in the myth of a homosexual clique within the Colonial Office and British government, which was often cited to explain

⁴²⁵ Drake Papers, *ibid.*

the success of one colonial student or group instead of another. The figure of the black pimp and the myth of the homosexual clique defined the racial geography of desire in which black intellectuals wrote and conducted their everyday lives in London. If, in the context of highly incommensurate relations of power, these discursive constructs were not solely their creations, neither were they wholly imposed upon them. Rather, Caribbean and African men appropriated and mobilized these figures to express political differences, competing understandings of black masculinity, and divergent visions of revolutionary politics and anticolonialism.

The existence of various forms of white patronage—and the fact that both individuals and black pressure groups often depended upon them—gave rise to charges of “perversion” and homosexuality. A “very prominent West Indian male, who spent much of his time in race relations activity,” showed Drake a letter from a white man and commented, “I usually destroy this man’s letters. He’s one of these white men who gets a lot of pleasure out of this business (i.e. race relations activity).” The letter explained that the Englishman had recently married again, “but not as I would have wished—to a colored woman.” He also offered to let a room in his home to “colored persons interested in a holiday spot for reading and writing,” preferably “a colored married couple, but would take two girls.” The letter’s recipient told Drake, “What he’d like is to go to bed thinking that some colored people were having sexual intercourse in his house. He likes to think he’s mated them up. He’s an old man, too.” The same West Indian man “went on to name a number of prominent Englishmen in the fields of public affairs and letters whom he claimed ‘like colored women’” and “one very prominent individual” who made a habit of visiting “Soho and the East End where there are pretty half caste women so he could pinch them on the behind and get a sensation out of it.”

Frequently, intellectuals from the colonies also complained, “some white men preferred colored men as lovers.” Drake described an encounter with a “young Indian” who had recently arrived in London. To his surprise, the Indian man asked him, “‘Are all the Englishmen like the ones I’ve met since I’ve been here?’” and proceeded “to recite some rather lurid details of attempted seduction by writers, artists, and publisher’s agents. He seemed to be thoroughly puzzled and shocked.” The rumored existence of a homosexuality clique within the upper echelons of the imperial state, which was circulated by blacks and whites involved in race relations activity, condensed tales of this nature into a single explanatory framework. “Certain important public officials,” Drake noted, “were constantly accused of ‘having their colored boys’, and one was belabored continuously on the charge of giving his highest favors to likely young African students.” These suspicions were usually raised in connection with colonial students who had ties to influential Britons, including Members of Parliament, colonial officials, philanthropists, and trustees of the WASU hostel or Aggrey House. Drake remarked that he “was quite surprised upon his first meeting with a rather prominent British church woman to have her exclaim bitterly, ‘We convert these boys out in Africa and try to teach them how to be Christian gentlemen and then they come over here and find that the best way to get what they want is to climb into some government official’s bed!’”

The empirical accuracy of the myth of the homosexual clique is impossible to ascertain. Drake knew of “one case in which a prominent white artist made a regular visit to the apartment of a middle-aged African student once every two weeks for tea remaining with him until the next morning.” Although same-sex relationships undoubtedly developed between black and white men in Britain, as it circulated amongst black intellectuals, the concept of a homosexuality clique was notional, and its staying power derived largely from

its capacity to account for innumerable slights and discriminatory practices. The myth highlighted the dissonance between the British rhetoric of fair play and sojourners' personal experiences, and served as an outlet for their frustration. As Drake explained, "There were repeated charges that a homosexual clique existed in certain government offices and that no colored man could get ahead unless he were inducted into it." "The facts of the matter," he continued, "are not important for sociological analysis upon one level, for this 'myth of the homosexual clique' whether there was one or not served to explain a series of events about which the gossipers could not secure complete factual knowledge, and also acted as vehicle for discharging some rather deep seated hostilities toward the government agency in question."⁴²⁶

Colonial officials, missionaries, and Britons engaged in race relations work, however, wielded accusations of perversion to quite different ends. In their hands, sexual impropriety and immorality signaled a more general shift in their relationship to colonial subjects and the threshold of disciplinary apparatuses as the latter moved between colony and metropole. After leaving Kahuhia in 1925, Handley Hooper became Africa Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, placing him "at the heart of the missionary network in London" where he maintained "a busy correspondence with his old colleagues in Kenya." In September 1929, Hooper relayed his impressions of Kenyatta after a recent visit with him to Gideon Mugo of Kikuyu Central Association. He described Kenyatta as having an inflated sense of self-importance and claimed "he spent money clothes for himself and for a young prostitute who lived with him." Kenyatta, Hooper suggested, had forgotten how "unimportant" he was as a "mission boy" and how "infinitesimal" the concerns of the Kikuyu within the British Empire. Significantly, Hooper wrote during Kenyatta's trip to Moscow, and he

⁴²⁶ Drake Papers, Box 61, File 10.

linked the latter's perverse behavior to his new political contacts. "It's a tragic story: he began fairly well, but his recent behaviour, if known, would discredit him with any British Government, and damn the Association he was supposed to represent."⁴²⁷

Drake noted the recurrence of articles in East African newspapers "expressing concern over the morals of native students studying in Britain and alluding to the 'unhealthy association with white women which takes place there.'" Indeed, amid the growing unrest in Kenya in 1952, a mutual acquaintance forwarded a letter to Padmore from Edna Grace Kenyatta, Jomo's English wife whom he had left behind in Britain. "Some 'friend,'" she explained, "had let on [to reporters from the *Daily Express*] that Kenyatta had a white wife so they want to make a big feature of the man, now so anti-European, who enjoyed the best of England for 16 yrs. & even took to himself a white wife & had a son. They hadn't lost any time & found out ... a lot I thought nobody knew at all!" The reporters approached her for more information and even photographs, telling her that if she refused they "would hide around the house" and take photos of her family whenever they left its confines. "I couldn't allow that for auntie's sake," Edna lamented. "She is old & broken with grief & knows nothing about Jomo. So yesterday Peter & I were taken for a country ride and photographed by a gate – now Jomo has to be confronted with the evidence ... you can't imagine what a hell it has been." She continued, "I don't want more publicity, thank you," but "they have warned me that other papers may get to hear the news!"⁴²⁸ Public attention focused on Kenyatta's personal life in Britain—his wife and nine-year-old son, Peter Magana Kenyatta, in particular—at a moment of imperial crisis in Kenya. Deployed as evidence that Kenyatta had indeed enjoyed "the best of England," his relationship with

⁴²⁷ Quoted in Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta* (London: Unwin Ltd., 1972), p. 118-119.

⁴²⁸ Letter from Edna Grace Kenyatta, dated September 5, 1952, PRO, KV 2/1788 (1948-1953).

Edna exposed the hypocrisy of his criticisms of British imperialism and his political demands for Kenya.

The profound ambivalence that provided the conditions of possibility for the joke manifested itself in black intellectuals' politics and influenced their sexual behavior and personal relationships in the metropole. Britons and black sojourners alike conceived of movement between the colonies and the metropole in explicitly sexual terms. The presence of black men in London was inseparable from (the threat of or opportunity for) sexual relations with white women, and at times interracial sex became the cause of public disputes between colonial sojourners and representatives of the state. Sexuality and locality emerge here as contingent and fundamentally intertwined modalities of experience.

Masculinity and the Sexual Ethics of Black Liberation

In his autobiography, the Ghanaian Joseph Appiah, who was a major force in the West African Students Union in the mid-1940s, acknowledged the litany of ways that British women aided colonial sojourners and burgeoning anticolonial movements in London. "To the women of Britain, in particular, we owe a special debt of gratitude for their clerical help, their comforting words of hope in times of frustration and despair and, above all, their love and human affection so freely given, often in the face of opposition from families, friends and workmates." "This recognition was manifestly demonstrated," Appiah recalled, "when in 1945 the West African Students' Union ... unanimously resolved: 'That at independence of each of our countries of West Africa, two monuments in gold be raised to the eternal honor and memory of (a) the white women of Europe, for making our stay in Europe possible and (b) the Almighty Mosquito, for saving our lands from the settlement of colonial

usurpers’!”⁴²⁹ T. Ras Makonnen also noted the vital role of British women in sustaining the activities of the Pan-African Federation and its journal *Pan-Africa*. “Our contacts with white girls were invaluable in all this literary and promotional activity. Many of them were partial to our cause, and when I took a manuscript round to them for cutting stencils, they were quite prepared to steal the stencils and other materials from their offices.” “We didn’t have to seek them out either,” he continued. “They would hear us addressing meetings at Trafalgar Square or in some of the London halls, and they’d come round and ask if there was anything to be done.”⁴³⁰ Likewise, a small group of white women worked closely with Kwame Nkrumah’s West African National Secretariat, managing its daily affairs. “Even if we had difficulty in warming our bodies round a fire,” Nkrumah remembered, “our hearts were constantly warmed by the ever ready offer of help by several English girls.” “These girls—most of them of good class families—used to come and type for hours on end in the evenings and they never asked a single penny for their work.”

Many black intellectuals and activists considered women on the left in Britain to be decidedly more radical than their male counterparts, who often attenuated or abandoned their critical stance in moments of crisis like Mussolini’s invasion of Abyssinia or the aftermath of the Gold Coast shootings in 1948.⁴³¹ The South African novelist Peter Abrahams wrote of George Padmore, “Looking back, he always got on better with the women of the Communist Party than with the men ... If they had been as honest, as hardworking, as committed as the women communists, things would be different.”

⁴²⁹ Appiah, p. 154-155.

⁴³⁰ Ras Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, ed. by Kenneth King (Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 146.

⁴³¹ For example, one of James’ earliest acquaintances in London was a woman whom he described as “extremely interesting, and the only person I have ever met who, if we are looking down a book or newspaper together, has to wait at the end of the page for me, and not by three or four lines, but sometimes by ten.” The two attended lectures together, read aloud Chekov plays, and “talked till six o’clock in the morning.” James, “The Bloomsbury Atmosphere,” *Letters from London*, p. 20-21; “Bloomsbury Again,” *ibid.*, p. 42-43.

Padmore, he continued, “had a higher regard and healthier respect for the women of the ‘movement’ than any other Marxist, black or white, I have met.”⁴³² Women like Nancy Cunard, Sylvia Pankhurst, Dinah Stock, and many others contributed not only their labor, but also essential financial and organizational assistance to London-based black pressure groups. Stock was the secretary of the British Centre Against Imperialism, editor of the *Socialist Review*, and a lecturer for the Workers Educational Association (WEA). After Jomo Kenyatta met Stock at a rally in May 1937, he soon moved into a room in her flat at 15 Cranleigh Buildings near Euston Station, the same building where Padmore lived in late 1930s, and the two remained close friends and collaborators over the years that followed. Stock assisted Kenyatta with the completion of his ethnography of the Gikuyu, *Facing Mount Kenya*, and helped him get speaking jobs with the WEA, Independent Labour Party, and Rotary Club. After World War II, Stock directed the activities of the Pan-African Federation in London from her flat in Hampstead and served as managing editor of its journal, *Pan-Africa*. As Kenyatta’s biographer explains, Stock “accepted absolutely his position and made no attempt ... to see that he conformed to the white liberal’s concept of ordered, constitutional development.”⁴³³ Isabel and W. McGregor Ross introduced Kenyatta to the “Hampstead set” and organizations like the Union of Democratic Control. Staunchly independent in her views, Isabel was an ardent feminist and committed activist. Kenyatta, Murray-Brown suggests, “enjoyed the company of such white women, perhaps more than he did that of their husbands, and he had a great attraction for them.”⁴³⁴ Some women viewed these activities as an extension of their commitment to feminism and/or socialism.

⁴³² Abrahams, *The Coyaba Chronicles*, p. 42.

⁴³³ Stock’s biographer suggests that in some ways “Murray-Brown’s rather over-emphasises Dinah’s political weight ... But she certainly gave an intellectual sharpening to Kenyatta’s mind after they met and improved his effective command of English.” *Taking What Comes: A Biography of A. G. Stock (Dinah)*, ed. by Surjit Hans (Chandigarh: Panjab University Press, 1999), p. 83; Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 199-200.

⁴³⁴ Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 156.

Reflecting on the contributions of Cunard and Stock, Makonnen wrote, “We recognized naturally that the dedication of some of these girls to our cause was an expression of equal rights for women. One way of rejecting the oppression of men was to associate with blacks. To walk with a Negro into a posh club like the Atheneum was to make this point. But many of them were viciously attacked for this.”⁴³⁵

Often, these political alliances became close personal relationships or vice versa. Drake noted numerous “cases of students in London, both Africans and West Indians, who sustained relationships with a number of white women on varied levels.” If their motivations and intentions varied, most African and West Indian men acknowledged openly the utility of their ties to British women. Drake’s informants, “Cyril” and his “‘intellectual’ friends,” “commented upon several occasions ... about that ‘dumb Englishwomen that Cyril met in an air-raid shelter during the war.’” “Although they, themselves, were either married to, or currently living with white consorts,” when Drake asked his friends about Cyril’s marriage to an English woman, “they implied that the only reason he had married her was to have someone to work and support him so he could have the leisure to write.” “On the surface,” Drake wrote, “the couple seemed well-adjusted, and the woman while not college-trained certainly was not ‘dumb,’” but, “in private, the husband told the observer that he was not happy with her, felt that she was domineering and said, ‘Professor, frankly, I’d have preferred to marry a colored woman.’” Drake concluded, “The relation was not objectively an exploitative one, for when he had income from his writing it went into the family funds. Whether he viewed it subjectively as exploitative could only be determined by a deeper type of interviewing than was used.” Were men like Cyril exploiting British women or were the latter, in fact, dominating the former? There were also individuals like “Milton,” who was

⁴³⁵ Makonnen, p. 146-147.

one of “Cyril’s most intimate associates” and, like him, a writer and “married to a white woman.” To Drake, they appeared “to be an unusually happy and well-adjusted couple, and no aspersions were ever cast upon her ability or intelligence,” but even such seemingly “happy” and “respectable” marriages did not escape comment. Occasionally, “Other male members of the clique, as well as colored males not in it,” made “friendly ‘cracks’ such as the following: ‘Where would old Milton be if he didn’t have that English woman working everyday so he can eat,’ or ‘Milton’s lucky to have Audrey, isn’t he. She has a good job and knows how to take care of money.’” “Friendly” chiding of this nature expressed a deeper anxiety regarding how best to negotiate the relation between black masculinity and interracial sex, visions of black autonomy and potentially dependent ties to white women, within the context of empire.

Many sojourners engaged in ephemeral liaisons with working-class women while also maintaining a more steady relationship with a middle-class woman. One African that Drake met “was almost idealized by a number of middleclass women in church circles and liberal circles, who invited him to their homes for tea, arranged speaking engagements where he could pick up a little change, and tendered him financial assistance when he needed it.” However, he “made it a rule never to ‘form any romantic attachments or to seduce any girls in these circles.’” “Since he had his own small apartment,” Drake explained, “he was able to frequently entertain somewhat semi-bohemian/female college students, and occasional girl from the left-wing orbit. These tête-à-têtes at tea or supper not infrequently resulted in sexual relations, although his boasting increased the number of conquests greatly.” The individual also claimed to have “had an affair or two with char women at various apartments where he lived, and just to see what it was like visited British prostitutes once or twice.” Because he “had a wife at home, he did not appear in public with any steady girl friend for

this might have been reported back to Africa and caused trouble, while his philandering would be taken for granted.” Drake added, “In his circle were one or two other students with a similar pattern of behavior.”

While some maintained a façade of propriety in their public activities, a few sought to avoid this quandary altogether by abstaining completely from interracial sex. One individual “boasted” to Drake “that he had never had an alliance with a white woman during his seven years in Britain” in which he “had had a varied career in the academic world and in public service.” For Drake’s informant, this decision was a direct consequence of what he perceived to be his responsibilities as a member of the intellectual vanguard of the race. “At the moment,” Drake stated, “he was very active in one of the colored associations. He was sure that an affair with a white woman would weaken his leadership.” Drake claimed to have “personal knowledge of the fact that he was scrupulously careful not to become involved sexually or emotionally with white women connected with the organization.” In this individual’s view, a rigorous division of public and private life had to be mapped onto cross-gender, interracial relations, to do otherwise would jeopardize his position as a leader amongst his peers and expose white women allies to aspersions against their character.⁴³⁶ Similarly, Ladipo Solanke of the West African Students Union viewed the inculcation of proper sexual mores and a particular conception of masculinity as an integral part of the WASU’s struggle against racist stereotypes of blacks in Britain. Thus, Solanke, whose wife was also Nigerian, criticized the sexual practices of some West African students as

⁴³⁶ Moreover, Drake continued, “A fourth girl had once been enamoured of him, but as he phrased it ‘I salvaged her and put her on the right track and she is now teaching at _____. I told her that she had to live in Britain and there was no sense in complicating her life.’ The observer’s informal, non-direct interviews with the young woman indicated that she still felt a great attraction toward him.” Drake Papers, Box 61, File 10.

tantamount to polyandry and, thus, a betrayal of their cultural identity, but others such as Jomo Kenyatta remained unapologetic about having multiple sexual partners in Europe.⁴³⁷

Like Solanke, Kenyatta believed that African men were predisposed by their culture to practice polygamy, but this conviction led him to quite different conclusions. His biographer claims that “Kenyatta had a disarming openness about these relationships. He was an African; the monogamy of the West was an interesting anthropological phenomenon, no more.” Like most of his peers, he had few close friends among British men, who “found it hard to feel real affection for such a person,” but “had a special appeal” with white women. Arthur Ruffell Barlow, who had known Kenyatta for nearly twenty years through the Church of Scotland mission in Kenya, noted with surprise the remarkable transformation that he had undergone in London. Many of the photographs adorning his room in Victoria were of Kenyatta’s female acquaintances whom he referred to as “interpreters and guides.” Surveying these women, Barlow described them as “middle-aged, serious looking, plain and intellectuals.” Indeed, it appears that Kenyatta’s relationships with white women contributed to the gradually souring of his relations with Solanke and the WASU, who initially offered their assistance upon his arrival in London in the 1920s.⁴³⁸

Appiah recalled how he and other West African friends helped Nkrumah find permanent accommodations and generally adjust to life in London. After they secured suitable accommodations for Nkrumah, his friends set about undoing the effects of years in the Jim Crow South on Nkrumah’s psyche and behavior. They “decided that he needed a white girlfriend, and this for good reasons.” Appiah explained:

We had noticed that during dances and other social activities at the hostel—our real home from home—Nkrumah was reluctant or too shy to

⁴³⁷ Adi, p. 27.

⁴³⁸ Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 114-115, 129, 216.

talk to white girls or to dance with them or even to get too close to them. In our home at Primrose Gardens the old gang were always receiving white girlfriends and, as was usual, cuddling them while Nkrumah looked on embarrassedly. Besides, as a full-grown normal male he required female touch after daily exertion of mind and body. Greater still was the need to break his dread of white women that the United States had instilled in him.

The friends soon found a convenient choice—"Diana P. ... a young, slim, intelligent and lively blonde," "the daughter of a Russian émigré and herself a revolutionary Marxist, born in England," who "met our need" and "with Marxist candor told me that she was in love with Kwame." The young woman "was always a helper during demonstrations and other activities connected with the colonial struggle," making her the perfect candidate. "This alliance," he added, "did the trick, and soon Kwame could be seen dancing and chatting with white girls at our socials; more than that, he looked more relaxed than ever before. So close had the affinity become that when we left London for Manchester to attend the [Pan-Africanist] conference, our Russian lady came with us."⁴³⁹ Questions as to the veracity of Appiah's account notwithstanding,⁴⁴⁰ it suggests that some male sojourners believed relationships with white women provided assistants in the "colonial struggle" and served as an anecdote to the psychological consequences of white racism.

Nonetheless, if "alliances" with white women could be pleasurable and useful in a variety of ways, some black intellectuals feared that over-reliance upon them transformed black revolutionaries into impotent, effeminate dependents. In the minds of many black men, their relationships with women in Britain were in tension with their political commitments and an attachment to a feminized and subjected homeland, a connection which was represented as heterosexual union. In Abrahams' pan-Africanist novel, *A Wreath*

⁴³⁹ Appiah, p. 164.

⁴⁴⁰ On this question, see the Sierra Leonean Ernest Marke's characterization of Nkrumah, quoted in Marika Sherwood, "Kwame Nkrumah: The London Years, 1945-47" *Africans in Britain*, ed. by David Killingray (London: Frank Cass, 1994), p. 181-182

for *Udomo*, set partially in late-1940s London, when asked by his English girlfriend, Lois Barlow, “What is [Africa] like?” Michael Udomo replied, “She is a little like a heart. You’ve seen the shape of her. It’s like a heart, the heart of all of us who are black. Without her we are nothing; while she is not free we are not men. That is why we must free her, or die.”⁴⁴¹ Udomo’s articulation of his relation to Africa served to consolidate a conception of politics and liberation as a masculine endeavors.⁴⁴² However, it raised difficult questions regarding the status and legitimacy of his relationship with Lois. If Africa was his heart, what was Lois—his sexual partner, assistant in his anticolonial propagandizing, and source of housing and sustenance—to him, and what did Udomo’s relationship with Lois make him? What is the relationship between his commitment to Africa and his liaison with Lois, and under what conditions or beyond what limits did the latter compromise the former and, by extension, his manhood? At what point did colonial men’s utilization of their ties to white women, whether for political, economic, or sexual purposes, cross over into exploitation or decadence?

Drake noted that “American-trained intellectuals living in Britain had imported a rather cynical expression, high class pimping or pimping for the race,” to describe the tendency of black intellectuals and activists to development close “alliances” with white women. “The reference,” he explained, “is to the fact that some of the race leaders and ‘agitators’ are married to white women, or have lived successively with one or more white women. This derogatory characterization implies that there is no real affection on the part of the male, but rather a calculated attempt to secure a white female companion who will support them or ‘the cause.’” In a footnote, Drake remarked, “There is no question about

⁴⁴¹ Peter Abrahams, *A Wreath for Udomo* (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), p. 56-57.

⁴⁴² Indeed, earlier in the novel, when Lois exclaimed in exasperation, “You men and your patriotism!” [Udomo] smiled. There was a hint of superiority to it. ‘You don’t understand ...’ he muttered. ‘Of course not. How could I? I’m the primitive backward woman.’” *Ibid*, p. 15.

certain isolated cases which came to the observer's attention, of individuals who were taking money from middle-aged white people [and] women, having sexual relations with them, and laughing at them when among groups of Negro males." However, "Most cases were far too complex in the motivations on both sides to characterize them by any term or formula."⁴⁴³ It was precisely this messiness that lent the question of "pimping for the race" its immediacy and staying power in late imperial Britain.

West Indian and African intellectuals were sensitive to the possibility and occurrence of their peers exploiting ties with British women or forming them for what they perceived as less than admirable reasons. The financial and racial inequalities that undergirded even the most well-intentioned, mutually beneficial, or loving relationships between black men and white women exacerbated these anxieties and rendered the elaboration of black masculinity and sovereignty a problematic enterprise. The figure of the black pimp emerged as a powerful symbol of this ambivalence and a foil through and against which many male intellectuals articulated their views on interracial cooperation and gave meaning to their everyday lives. In the chapter of his memoirs on "The London Days," Abrahams described the proprietor of Bah's Club. "At night it became a hot little club crammed with pretty girls and more black men than I had seen in London up to then. Drinks flowed freely and the men and women fraternised. My experience at sea told me that these pretty young English women were what we now call 'sex workers.'" Bah "was a tall, thin, elegantly black-suited West African who drove up to his club in one of those sleek and swanky cars ... A chauffeur, white, opened the door and first one beautiful blonde, then tall black Bah with two gold teeth ... and then another beautiful young woman with striking red hair followed him out of the car. The two women flanked him into the bar." Abrahams

⁴⁴³ Drake Papers, Box 61, File 10.

viewed Bah's illicit business dealings as reprehensible, an "expression of black racism," and used it to distinguish his own position. "Mr Bah had served time in a British prison. Now, he had a collection of beautiful young women he had set up at various 'good' addresses as 'sex workers' whom he managed ... And Mr Bah flourished, owned a stable of racing dogs, one or two racehorses and several fancy cars. This was successful black enterprise with a vengeance. And I did not like it." On one occasion, he recalled:

Mr Bah tried to recruit me into his 'business' with the promise of big money and any 'beautiful gal' I wanted ... When I turned him down, Bah had snapped: 'What wrong with you? You John Bull nigger?' 'No.' 'Then what?' I shrugged. 'This is not right.' 'They do it to us. They use our women. Been to Lagos?' 'Yes.' 'Accra?' 'Yes.' 'Freetown?' 'Yes.' 'Cape Town?' 'Yes. You been there?' 'Me been everywhere. Cape Town, Cairo, everywhere. They do it with our women, so I do it with their women. Only I treat them good. Join me?' 'No.' 'Damn John Bull nigger!'

Abrahams' anecdote about Bah, which resembles in its specifics the joke discussed above, contained within it a rejection of what he perceived as the substitution of one form of exploitation for another. "I was not sorry," he wrote, "when months later Mr Bah was convicted, given a heavy sentence and then deported back to West Africa ... I have come across other expressions of black racism, but not in Mr Bah's extreme exploitative form." "There is no virtue," Abrahams argued, "no goodness in hurting, abusing, degrading someone white because you have been abused, degraded and hurt by someone white."⁴⁴⁴ If, as Abrahams suggested, Bah represented the "extreme," his actions existed on a spectrum of, depending on one's perspective, potentially parasitic behavior. Black intellectuals like Abrahams engaged in a complex calculation of exploitation with regard to their relations with British women, which formed a fundamental component of their larger political vision.

⁴⁴⁴ Abrahams, *The Coyaba Chronicles*, p. 31-34.

Like Abrahams, Makonnen was particularly scornful of clubs of a “much more dubious business.” His concern stemmed largely from the manner in which these establishments blurred the line between black political activism and sexual commerce. “I felt this sort of thing was so damnable to the Negro image; we had a duty to people on the Left ... to show that there was more to us than dancing the Black Bottom along with a bunch of whores.” These clubs so “inflamed” Makonnen that he “determined to provide only the very best” when he entered the restaurant business himself. “I wanted no part with this image of the Negro club with its bunch of women packing the place from morning to night. I thought too much was at stake. If we were really ambassadors of our people, we should be able to portray our manhood without any regrets.”⁴⁴⁵ Like many of his contemporaries, Makonnen conflated ambassadorship with the projection of respectable black masculinity and a particular sexual ethics.

Makonnen claimed “that a number of blacks and Indians were determined to associate with white women” because they “felt it was a revolutionary act to get their own back on Europe by seducing white women.” “I had to speak about this in Hyde Park once,” he recalled, “and attack these apparently intelligent students who felt that by getting a bastard child they could solve the problem of imperialism.” Drake also observed that “Among West Indians particularly, it was not [at] all uncommon for a student to, as it was sometimes phrased, ‘take home him certificate and English wife as evidence that he had completed his education.’” Although C. L. R. James suggested that the relative friendliness of West Indian men compared to the boorishness of the “English native” accounted for their popularity with women in Britain, he conceded, “there is something to be said from the English point of view, which resents the comparative lack of prejudice of the normal

⁴⁴⁵ Makonnen, p. 131-132.

London girl.” “Coloured men,” James wrote, “are supposed to be loose in their general character and their association with English girls is supposed to bode no good for the girl. You only have to live in this country for a fortnight to know exactly how ... hypocritical such a statement is.” “Nevertheless,” he continued, “there is something in it.” James represented the new opportunities that life in the bustling metropole presented to colonials in terms of sexual possibility and temptation. “Now take a boy of eighteen, a coloured boy living in the colonies, where the social question is what we know it is” and “Drop him in London.... He is at a critical age, the age when he is apt to believe that sex and a woman are one and the same thing—an age which many may never outgrow ... It is not surprising that some of the boys get spoilt. They do get spoilt. There is no doubt about it.” As a consequence, “young John Bull sits in corners of trams and buses or at the theatre and eats his heart out when he sees one of his womankind making much of one of the lesser breeds without the law.”⁴⁴⁶ Sexual promiscuity, argued Makonnen and James, represented a form of complicity with imperialism, not resistance.

The relations of some members with white women dismayed the co-founder and general secretary of the WASU and warden of its hostel, Ladipo Solanke. For Solanke, the responsibilities of West African students as informal ambassadors extended to their sexual practices. Citing his diary from the period, Hakim Adi notes that he “disliked the corrupting influence of life in London, and ... the ‘characteristic features’ of some of his Nigerian friends.” Solanke complained that, though they were “polygamous by nature,” they often practiced “polyandry among the white girls.” He interpreted these “characteristic features” of some of his peers as evidence that they were no longer concerned with preserving their own cultural traditions and institutions, linking the “corrupting influence” of the

⁴⁴⁶ James, “The Women,” *Letter from London*, p. 102-106.

metropole—specifically, interracial sexual relations and the inversion of polygynous marital practices—to apathy towards Yoruba culture in general. Solanke maintained that African students should live a “high moral life” free from such vices to counter racist stereotypes of black men in Britain and prepare themselves to become leaders of the African masses.⁴⁴⁷

At the same time, Africans and West Indians did not always perceive progressive thinking and benevolent intentions behind white women’s interest in colonial affairs, and many recognized that individuals were drawn to “African issues” by a mix of contradictory desires and ideals. Regardless of the intentions of the individuals involved, the likelihood that their relationship would be viewed as, to some degree, sexually motivated was great. The question of motives—potentially dubious ones—haunted interracial personal relationships and political alliances. During the 1930s and 1940s, the West African Students Union attracted “a clientele of girls and women who had a sentimental interest in Africans and who became regular attendants at WASU functions.” “Not all such friendly relations,” Drake noted, “had sexual or romantic overtones, but it was inevitable that courting pairs would emerge from these contacts.” Consequently, “Superficial observers of both races are apt to make cynical statements of the following sort: ‘Those women just hang around WASU and the Caribbean Club to find themselves a colored man,’ or ‘Race relations work is just a cover-up. They’re all after something else,’ or ‘That whole crowd is rotten!’”⁴⁴⁸

For Makonnen, what Abrahams termed “black racism” “was close to another damnable activity you could see at work amongst blacks in Paris and London,” which he termed “social sex imperialism.” He linked the sexual exploitation of white women by black men from the colonies to the fetishization of black male bodies. “In addition to straight

⁴⁴⁷ Adi, p. 27.

⁴⁴⁸ Drake Papers, Box 61, File 10.

political imperialism,” Makonnen asserted, “there was this other form which had been operating since slavery, and had been suggesting through the newspaper and novels that this Negro was a curious human being with strange capacities.” Makonnen suggested that many Britons’ interest in colonial issues derived from and remained limited to “this fascination with black sex,” adding, “I’ve been put in this situation myself.” Under these circumstances, he claimed, “consorting with blacks was a form of sex imperialism,” which enabled, even encouraged, the “shady business” discussed above. “Unfortunately, too many of the Negroes saw the immediate rewards in the system and capitalized on it, walking about the West End with a big cigar and owning a little specialized salon.” Makonnen linked black men’s exploitation of white women, on the one hand, and white Britons’ manipulation of colonial sojourners to indulge racist sexual fantasies, on the other, as related expressions of perverse sexuality and illicit exchange. Far from being mutually exclusive opposites, the two forms of exploitation, pandering and “sex imperialism,” seemed impossible to disassociate or distinguish entirely. “All this,” Makonnen recalled, “made many of us very careful in associating with white women; otherwise you could have terrible things said of them and of yourself.” Padmore “went almost to the other extreme, and was very cagey about women. You could never say that George was around with the girls.”⁴⁴⁹

In his autobiography and *A Wreath for Udomo*, Abrahams called attention to the Padmore’s instrumentalist perspective on his peers’ liaisons with women in Britain. In his view, such relationships had to be subordinated to and serve their political project. Indeed, Abrahams claimed that Padmore often coupled new arrivals like himself with white women whom he saw as “good comrades” to keep them on the proper path. “When I first met Padmore in 1940 I was still Dorothy’s tenant and he knew her, having met her at various

⁴⁴⁹ Makonnen, p. 146-147.

meetings. Even before our marriage he approved of her as a 'good comrade.'" "I now realise on looking back," Abrahams wrote, "he had always wanted me to be more than just Dorothy's tenant. It was a form of control, and it worked for the best part of eight years."⁴⁵⁰ For Padmore, a relationship with a woman like Dorothy provided a partner in propagandist and political activities, a source of financial support and domestic labor, and prevented Abrahams from diverting his energies in search of other sources of female companionship and physical satisfaction. According to Abrahams, this evidenced Padmore's dictatorial tendencies, a holdover from his days with the Communist Party that never completely left him. "It was the 'Comintern man,'" he recalled, "who was contemptuous when Jomo had too much to drink. Or when Kwame was late for a meeting because of some woman. Or when I was too caught up in writing fiction to complete an assigned job."⁴⁵¹

Whereas James suggested at the end of his life that "the great movement for African Emancipation, particularly in that great continent, was started, nursed, developed by George Padmore," Abrahams characterized him as beholden to rigid Party discipline, abstract political and economic theories, and an overbearing English woman, all of which left him woefully disconnected from conditions in the colonies and even the reality of his own situation.⁴⁵² In *A Wreath for Udomo*, Abrahams fictionalized Padmore as Thomas Lanwood, a tragic figure of impotent black masculinity. In this figuration, Padmore's personal failings and compromised manhood resulted from his prolonged exposure to and dependence upon a white woman. Padmore became the contradictory synthesis of the ideal of black revolutionary masculinity espoused by him and others like Nkrumah and its antithesis, the paradigmatic expression of gender and sexual inversion.

⁴⁵⁰ Abrahams, *The Coyaba Chronicles*, p. 42.

⁴⁵¹ Abrahams, *The Coyaba Chronicles*, p. 39.

⁴⁵² Alan J. Mackenzie and C. L. R. James, "Radical Pan-Africanism in the 1930s: A Discussion with C. L. R. James," *Radical History Review* 24 (Fall 1980), p. 72.

Upon his arrival in London, the novel's protagonist Michael Udomo, who bore many similarities to Nkrumah, viewed Lanwood as the greatest patriot "Panafrica" had produced to date. Yet, the attitude of the more seasoned revolutionaries in the group complicated this image of Lanwood from the start. David Mhendi, the architect of a failed uprising in his native "Pluralia," watched Lanwood address the new arrival at a distance while he talked with Lois, the English woman who introduced Udomo to Lanwood. As he recounted news of his wife's murder for defending their land from the encroachments of white settlers in Pluralia, Mhendi told her, "Tom's the luckiest ... For him it's an impersonal game of chess. He doesn't really care about people. He hates imperialism impersonally and wants African power impersonally."⁴⁵³ Mhendi distinguished Lanwood from himself and his African compatriots on the basis of their more immediate connection to Africa, to which the death of his wife attested.

In the novel, this distinction emerged most clearly in the depiction of Lanwood's relationship with Mary Feld, who was modeled on Padmore's partner for the majority of his adult life, Dorothy Pizer. Although Padmore's biographer calls Abrahams' characterization of him "a cruel travesty," he remarks approvingly that "his version of Dorothy Pizer seems to square with others' observations."⁴⁵⁴ When Udomo met Feld during his first visit to the couple's flat, he noted the un-feminine qualities of her body. "She was tall, as tall as himself and terribly thin. But she looked strong; big nose and sticking-out chin; heavily-lidded eyes; an old-looking face set on a long, graceful, young girl's body; only, the body was flat-chested enough to be that of a young boy."⁴⁵⁵ Feld's boyish appearance corresponded to her imperious personality and effeminizing influence on men. A dispute erupted within their

⁴⁵³ Peter Abrahams, *A Wreath for Udomo* (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), p. 20-21, 28.

⁴⁵⁴ James R. Hooker, *Black Revolutionary: George Padmore's Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 48.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

pan-Africanist group when Lanwood singled out Mhendi's drinking in warning Udomo to avoid needless distractions. "Don't get caught up in these things, Mike.' Lanwood's manner was fatherly. 'We have work to do. That's what we're here for. Not for parties. Mhendi forgets that sometimes.'" At that moment, the disparity between Lanwood's fine clothing and his own shabby, worn suit attracted Mhendi's attention, and he exclaimed, "It's easy for you to sit in London and be godlike." Mhendi then "snapped, 'He's good at sneering at other people. Well, has he tried to lead a movement? Not in London where he's safe, but in Africa? Movements are led by more than godlike speeches and pontifical books from the safety of London. Go out to Africa! Fight there! And then come and lecture me about self-discipline.'" Cautioned to "stay out this" by Paul Mabi⁴⁵⁶, a sculptor and painter from Panafrica, Feld replied, "Why should I? Or is the fight for freedom the preserve of men only? Many women have died in the struggle without whining or self-pity.'" When Lanwood tried to dismiss the disagreement as a needless distraction, an exasperated Feld said, "You make me sick, Tom,' ... and flounced out." Following the incident, Lanwood rebuked his friends, stating "You take her too seriously," and "All women are emotional.'" The new arrival Udomo asked about Feld after the couple left the room, and Mhendi "laughed bitterly" and directed him to the dedication in Lanwood's most recent book, *The End of Empire*, which read: "For my dear friend and comrade, Mary Feld, without whose sustained and sustaining support neither this nor any of my other works could have been completed." After reading the inscription, Udomo thought, "But she has no respect for him."

⁴⁵⁶ Paul Mabi was based most likely on the Nigerian artist Benedict Chukwukadibia Enwonwu, who attended Goldsmith College, London in 1944, Ruskin College, Oxford from 1944 to 1946, and Slade School of Fine Arts at the University of London from 1946 to 1948. In the years that followed, Enwonwu entered the graduate program in ethnography and anthropology at the University of London and was elected to the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, the Royal Academy of Art, and the Royal Society of British Artists. See "Contested Vision: Ben Enwonwu's Portrait of Queen Elizabeth II," *Ijele* 1, 2 (2000).

As he attempted to focus on an unfinished piece of writing during the ensuing evening, Lanwood struggled with pangs of self-doubt. “There’s no time for sentimentality,” he reassured himself. “A man must do what he must. And to do it he must keep alive. And to keep alive he must have food and a home and leisure. That was most important and she’d supplied that....”⁴⁵⁷ Although he only addressed his relationships with women in London in the most general terms in his autobiography, *Ghana*, Nkrumah articulated a similarly pragmatic view of them.

Unfortunately, the fact that I enjoy women’s company has led to a great deal of misunderstanding from those who look at my life from the outside. I have never wanted to become too entangled with a woman because I know that I would never be able to devote enough attention to her, that sooner or later whether she was married to me or not, she would begin to wander away from me. I was afraid too, that if I allowed a woman to play too important a part in my life I would gradually lose sight of my goal. Few people have been able to understand this attitude of mine and I have been described by various people as a Don Juan, an impotent man and even a eunuch! Those who know me, however, probably regard me as a very normal man with probably more than average self-discipline.⁴⁵⁸

Nkrumah acknowledged the potential for his relations with women to be read as evidence of perversion, in the form of accusations that he was either over- or under-sexed. In defense of his behavior, he mobilized an argument common to many would-be liberators of Africa. Devotion to the struggle against imperialism presupposed a certain bracketing of one’s emotions, if not desires, and foreclosed the possibility of maintaining a long-term relationship with any one woman. Nkrumah implicitly constructed the political field as a masculine terrain and reproduced a conception of anticolonialism as a commitment between African men and a feminized Africa. Unlike Nkrumah’s self-presentation, Abrahams depicted Lanwood’s dedication to his work and the sacrifices it demanded as a convenient

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45-48.

⁴⁵⁸ Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 42.

rationale for his unnatural and ultimately loveless partnership with Feld that undermined, rather than proved, his commitment to African liberation.

What is more, *A Wreath for Udomo* correlated the disruption of proper gender relations resulting from Lanwood's dependence on Feld with his compromised masculinity and her deviant sexuality. When Udomo and fellow sojourner Dr. Richard Adebhoy reunited in their native Panafrica later in the novel, the former explained how he had been forced to stay with Lanwood after his split with Lois. Udomo asked, "You know about them? 'The woman?'" Adebhoy immediately grasped the deeper significance of the question and identified the source of the problem. "Yes, I know," he replied. "It's wrong for a woman to despise a man in that way. 'He's dependent upon her.'" Udomo continued, "You know she even tried...." Adebhoy laughed, without humour. "She tried with all us, home-boy! All except Mabi. They hated each other for the start."⁴⁵⁹ Selina, the leader of the market women of Panafrica and chief representative of the African masses and traditional "tribalism" in the novel, reaffirmed this appraisal of Lanwood. When Mhendi arrived along with Lanwood in Panafrica, where Udomo was leading the burgeoning independence movement, she informed him that she had arranged for an African woman to spend the night with him, "someone to make your sleep more restful." "You are of us," Selina added, "so there is no need to explain." When Mhendi inquired if she had done the same for Lanwood, she replied, "That one is white for all his black skin. He would not understand ... As you say he stayed too long." Then Selina asked, "Did he have a white woman over there, all these years?" After Mhendi affirmed, "We all did," she clarified, "That is not what I mean. You and Udomo and Adebhoy had them to sleep with, but always your hearts were in Africa. How long did he have his woman?" "Twenty years, sister ... But he left her to come home."

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

“Too late, I fear. But we will see.”⁴⁶⁰ Selina, like the novel as a whole, conflated the movement of black male subjects between Britain and a fictional, largely deterritorialized “Panafrica” with sexual relations with European and African women. In her view, the degree of sojourners’ Europeanization and deracination corresponded to the length and nature of their exposure to white women. In the end, Selina’s suspicions were confirmed as Lanwood’s didactic style alienated him from local elites in Panafrica until, disillusioned, he returned to London a physically and emotionally broken man. The revolutionary dream culminated in tragedy for Lanwood, exposing the insuperable gap between him and the object of his desire, Africa. Dependent upon a white woman who loathed him, errors of sexual regimen, exemplified by his relationship with Feld, transformed a life dedicated to African liberation into a farce.

Abrahams’ novel is notable for its frank representation of the idealized notion of revolutionary pan-Africanism as an ethical “act of will” and the ambivalence that constantly threatened to undo it in African and Caribbean men’s everyday lives in the metropole. Like many of his contemporaries, Abrahams articulated this anxiety as the struggle to shore up an embattled black masculinity and located its effects most acutely within interracial heterosexual relationships between men from the colonies and women of the “imperial race.” If, for some, the untenable situation of black men in the metropole excused their cavalier treatment of British women, the novel’s characterization of Lanwood staged the potential costs of dependence on white women in terms of masculinity. Between Lanwood and the protagonist, Udomo, black revolutionary manhood turned into perversion.

Conclusion

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 193-194.

African and Caribbean men's visions of and commitment to black internationalism and anticolonial politics were tied inextricably to their conceptions of black masculinity and its relation to sexuality. In the imperial metropole, the presence of black sojourners from the colonies came to be linked indelibly to both sexual possibility and danger. As a consequence, the proper regulation and management of interracial sex assumed particular significance for many black intellectuals and activists, an essential component of black revolutionary manhood in action. Some African and West Indian men equated sexual liberation or the exploitation of British women with anticolonial resistance and liberation from British imperial rule, or embraced the former in lieu of a fuller realization of the latter. However, many others decried this behavior as ethically irresponsible and unfair to white women who were genuinely sympathetic. Instead, they identified interracial sex as a potential threat to black masculinity and, by extension, liberation from imperial rule. Yet, even for these self-conscious representatives of the race, this remained a dicey business since most maintained, enjoyed, and benefited from relationships with white women and men in the metropole. What is more, in suturing the prospects of black sovereignty to masculinity, pan-Africanist men fashioned themselves as the agents of African liberation and forged an understanding of political resistance as principally the struggle for manly independence, truncating the possibility of articulating a pan-Africanist stance which was not inherently masculinist in its orientation and goals.

Chapter Five

Black Intellectuals and the Emergence of Colonial Studies in Britain

Colonial Africa assumed greater prominence in metropolitan imaginings of the British Empire during the late 1930s and 1940s. The increased attention to Africa took both popular and intellectual forms—from the Empire Exhibition at Wembley, the Korda brothers' imperialist films like *Sanders of the River*, and the novels of Evelyn Waugh and Joyce Cary to Hailey's *An African Survey*, the flowering of social anthropology's close relationship with colonial administration, and quasi-academic institutions like the International Institute of African Languages and Culture and the Fabian Colonial Bureau which were devoted to collecting and circulating colonial knowledge. Many of those who contributed to this new intellectual mapping of Africa, the handmaiden of the new imperative towards welfare and development, worked within the social sciences, particularly anthropology, and as part of a broader program for the rationalization of colonial administration.⁴⁶¹ From the late 1930s, African and West Indian intellectuals in Britain began entering the social sciences with growing frequency, where they produced innovative, politically motivated scholarship that alternately appropriated and critiqued the work of an emerging community of Africanists in Britain. As colonial Africa became increasingly central to public ruminations on the British Empire, they contributed to the proliferation of representations of Africa and the colonies. Black intellectuals wrote from within and against colonial historiography in a variety of scholarly disciplines, most notably anthropology and history. They mobilized regional,

⁴⁶¹ Rimmer and Kirk-Greene, eds., *The British Intellectual Engagement with African in the Twentieth Century*. On the centrality of Africa to the development of social anthropology in Britain, see esp. Jack Goody, *The Expansive Moment: Anthropology in Britain and Africa, 1918-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Sally Falk Moore, *Anthropology and Africa: Changing Perspectives on a Changing Scene* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994); on political science, David Long and Brian C. Schmidt, *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.

international, inter-cultural frameworks of analysis developed in these fields and attempted to position themselves within this expanding body of colonial “experts,” basing their claims to knowledge on both a mastery of scientific methods and personal experience or firsthand observation. This chapter situates the intellectual production of Africans and West Indians in the metropole within the concomitant professionalization of the social sciences and restructuring of the British Empire, tracing black intellectuals’ connections to colonial experts and the institutional sites in which they thought and produced knowledge in the imperial metropole.

In the late 1930s and 1940s, more West Indian and African students gravitated towards field concerned with the history, economics, and social organization of colonial societies in addition the established bastions of the colonial intelligentsia, legal and medical studies. Elite families in the colonies commonly sent their sons and, in some instances, daughters to study in metropolitan universities since the nineteenth century, and the number of West Indian and African students, many of whom would go on to become influential politicians and intellectuals, grew consistently during the early twentieth century. Dr. Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, was an Oxford-trained historian of the British Empire. The first postcolonial leaders of Nigeria and Kenya, Dr. Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe and Jomo Kenyatta, were trained anthropologists, as was Kofi Busia, Kwame Nkrumah’s successor in Ghana.⁴⁶² African anthropologists held other important posts within these newly independent states, such as “the leading expert on Asante royal regalia,” Dr. Alex Atta Yaw Kyerematen, who became the Director of the Ghana National Culture Centre.⁴⁶³ Still others like Nkrumah and Peter Mbiyu Koinage, a high-ranking official

⁴⁶² Azikiwe became the first Governor-General of Nigeria in 1960 and the country’s first President in 1963 under the new federal system.

⁴⁶³ Malcolm McLeod, “Letters to *Africa*,” *Africa* v. 44, n. 3 (July 1974), p. 300.

in the Kenya African Union, began but never completed advanced-degree programs in the field. Thus, many within the generation of black leaders who oversaw the transition to independence in Africa and the Caribbean studied and wrote within academic disciplines linked to the development of colonial studies in Britain. Of course, individuals in the legal and medical professions also formed a significant portion of both the membership of black pressure groups in London and this cohort of postcolonial leaders. In Jamaica and Barbados, for example, the lawyers Norman Manley and Grantley Adams became the islands' first Premiers, the latter serving as the only Prime Minister of the short-lived West Indian Federation, and the physician Dr. Hastings Banda, the first President and, ultimately, dictator of Malawi. Yet, while the pull of medical and legal studies on the colonial intelligentsia represents something of a truism in the historiography, the growing presence of West Indians and Africans in the social sciences and humanities in the 1930s and 1940s remains understudied. The political activism and journalistic work of Kenyatta and Azikiwe has received significant attention, but these individuals' scholarly pursuits and their relation to the former have been considered much less often.

West Indian and African intellectuals like Williams, Azikiwe, and Kenyatta drew upon the work of an emerging cadre of colonial experts both within and outside of Britain's universities to support their own claims. An increase in knowledge production on colonial Africa, in particular, accompanied the institutionalization of colonial studies in Britain, and the leading figures in the fields of anthropology and imperial history had a significant impact on the policy shifts of the subsequent decade. At times, however, black students and intellectuals questioned the credentials of these "experts," and railed against the racist attitudes of their supposed allies and the institutionalized barriers to their professional advancement in Britain.

Moreover, the university served, at once, as a conduit for discussion between metropolitan intellectuals and colonial students, and an important site of social interactions and intellectual exchange between black students from around the Atlantic. The African-American economic historian George Brown, the Nigerian H. O. Davies, and the St. Lucian W. Arthur Lewis, who pioneered the field of development economics, met while attending the London School of Economics in the mid-1930s. Brown served as publicity secretary in the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP) before departing for Liberia in late 1935 to “conduct an economic survey.” Lewis and Davies met at the university, and the two developed a close friendship. In 1935, Davies served as president of both the West African Students Union (WASU) and the Cosmopolitan Club, “the most important multi-racial platform” at the LSE, and Lewis remained active in the LCP during this period. Their friendship helped to reinvigorate the ties between the WASU and LCP in the late 1930s, despite the quiescent rivalry between the organizations’ foremost personalities, Ladipo Solanke and Dr. Harold Moody.⁴⁶⁴

The Voice of Africa

The intellectual and political crosscurrents linking Africans and West Indians in London to colonial reformers and the British Left grew stronger in the late 1930s. As Zachernuk explains, “West Africans were, as always, attracted to Britons interested in African affairs, in part because of the latter’s critical approach to some imperial policies but also simply because their interest contrasted sharply with the general British apathy toward Africa.” Moreover, intellectuals from the colonies were attracted to “the notion of belonging

⁴⁶⁴ Davies, *Memoirs*, p. 67-68, 76-78.

to an expert community which might better guide colonial policy....”⁴⁶⁵ Black organizations often composed joint memoranda on the foremost colonial issues of the day, which were submitted to various commissions of inquiry, the Colonial Office, and, in some instances, the League of Nations. Both the LCP and WASU also maintained regular correspondence with the Colonial Office, to the chagrin of many in the latter, and used their contacts with MPs in the Labour Party, ILP, and CPGB to compel the Secretary of State for the Colonies to answer questions in the House of Commons on the major colonial issues of the day. Exploiting their proximity to the seat of governmental and cultural power in the empire as well as the pressure of events, black intellectuals attempted to intervene in public as well as academic debates on the future of the colonies.

If African and West Indian intellectuals’ welcomed opportunities to engage with Britons interested in colonial affairs, many also began to question the objectivity of those who played the role of colonial expert in Britain. Adeniyi Williams, a Nigerian studying civil engineering, wrote to Margery Perham to welcome “her assistance in developing Africa,” but insisted, “that it be ‘on grounds of honour.’” Such appeals to “honor” were common because, as Zachernuk observes, “Africans’ putative partners often exhibited attitudes of superiority or condescension that were resented as strongly as were attempts to control student hostels.” “Even the student agitator,” a Nigerian student wrote in the Liverpool-based *West African Review*, “craves for nothing more than reciprocity of good feeling ... we prefer co-operation rather than patronage.”⁴⁶⁶ In the 1930s, the African and West Indian members of the LCP and WASU became increasingly impatient with moderate reformers

⁴⁶⁵ Philip S. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), p. 97-101.

⁴⁶⁶ Anon., “This Business of Trusteeship,” *West African Review* 7 (August 1936), p. 13; Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, p. 98. On the paternalism of John Harris and the Anti-Slavery Society, for example, see Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, p. 37-43.

like Perham. In her influential book, *Native Administration in Nigeria* (1937), Perham rejected the notion of integrating educated Africans into the “scaffold” of colonial administration and suggested instead that an effort should be made “to find or create opportunities for them within the Native Administrations.”⁴⁶⁷ When disagreements arose, they often led to heated debates, which exposed not only the political and philosophical differences between black intellectuals and their white interlocutors but also divergent understandings of expertise. H. O. Davies recounted an example of one such incident when Perham spoke before the WASU. Perham’s visit drew a large crowd of African and Caribbean students and intellectuals. Although “the address was duly delivered to a solemn and interested audience,” Davies recalled being forced to cut off the ensuing discussion as Perham “was bombarded with critical questions, and tirades on some of her past press publications.” “The whole affair,” he wrote, “seemed like a declaration of war against the most wanted critic of West Africans.”⁴⁶⁸

Similarly, in 1941, W. Arthur Lewis, at the time a twenty-six-year-old junior faculty member at the London School of Economics, contributed a damning review of Perham’s *Africans and British Rule* to the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*. In 1938, while still completing his PhD. under the liberal economist Arnold Plant and Hugh Dalton, who later served as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lewis received a post at the LSE, where he became the first black faculty member and went on to design the curriculum in colonial economics.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁷ Margery Perham, *Native Administration in Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 361.

⁴⁶⁸ H. O. Davies, *Memoirs* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Evans Brothers, 1989), p. 85.

⁴⁶⁹ Although personally embittered by the colour bar blocking him and other non-Europeans from entering the colonial service, Lewis served as an advisor to the Colonial Office during the 1940s, producing a series of astute, meticulously researched memoranda on issues related to colonial development. When was given a professorship at Manchester University in 1948, he became the first person of African descent to hold a named chair at a British university before leaving to serve briefly as the chief economic advisor to Nkrumah in a newly

“To Miss Perham,” the young economist wrote in his review of *Africans and British Rule*, “it is from his own savagery that the African needs protection; white exploitation is to be seen merely as the inevitable if unfortunate accompaniment of the effort to civilize him.”

Although Lewis had solicited Perham’s support for the LCP and its journal in the past, he was uncharacteristically severe in his assessment of the text. “Not merely smug and self satisfied,” the book “reeks of that self-conceit which typifies the colonial Englishman and which is doing more than anything else to poison the relations between the races.” “From the prosperous seclusion of Oxford,” he continued, “it is easy to ride the high horse of cultural superiority, to belittle the wrongs of a people and magnify their faults.... Africans fortunately are accustomed to being insulted. They will merely hope that Miss Perham will have learned a little manners before she settles down to write her next apology for imperialism.”

The subsequent issue of the *Newsletter* featured a defense of *Africans and British Rule* by the British anthropologist Margaret M. Green, a specialist on the Igbo of southern Nigeria and a friend of Perham. “Mr. Lewis,” Green claimed, “writes ... as though [the book] were a time bomb dropped by an enemy rather than a constructive piece of work by one of the most sincere and able of the champions of African advancement.” In conclusion, she noted, “One would gladly have kept silent about the whole review. But the question at issue is too important. The cause of African advancement demands and deserves responsible treatment and a review of this kind does Africans a grave disservice.” Lewis, however, remained defiant in his reply to Green. “I did not expect my review to please Miss Perham’s

independent Ghana.⁴⁶⁹ Lewis later became the first black principal of the University College of the West Indies, the first vice-chancellor of the University of the West Indies, and, in 1979, he won the Nobel Prize for his seminal influence on the field of development economics, especially his essay, “Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour” (1954), making him the first economist of African descent to receive the honor. See “Britain’s First Negro Professor,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 17, n. 99 (January-March 1948), p. 14. On Lewis, see Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, especially Chapter Six.

friends,” he began, “any more than the book itself pleased me.” “The burden of my criticism of the book,” Lewis explained, “was that it ignores [the exploitation of Africans in British territory], and is therefore almost useless to the African cause because it does not suggest to Africans how they might meet the exploitation, or consider the radical revision of British colonial policy and reconstruction of the British Colonial service which are necessary if British rule ... is to cease to be a cloak for this exploitation.”⁴⁷⁰

Lewis’ review and ensuing exchange with Green appeared at a moment when the influence of experts like Perham was growing and the “tropical empire” had begun to garner greater attention within Britain’s major educational institutions such as Oxford, Cambridge, and the London School of Economics (LSE). These developments were linked to the rationalization of the colonial service and the professionalization of anthropology, which oriented itself toward the needs of a restructuring British Empire as the discipline took shape in the 1930s and 1940s. Beginning in the 1930s, advocates of colonial reform and the Colonial Office drew increasingly on the methodological tools of or spoke from within the social sciences.⁴⁷¹ Led by Ralph Furse, the director of recruitment and training for the colonial service from 1919 to 1948, the Colonial Office began to take a more systematic approach to colonial administration during the interwar period, creating a unified colonial service for the whole of the British Empire in 1930 and instituting Tropical African Service courses at Oxford, Cambridge, and, after Furse’s reforms during World War II, the LSE. Reginald Coupland, who succeeded H. E. Egerton as only the second Beit Professor of Colonial History in 1920, played a significant role in shaping the new curriculum at Oxford,

⁴⁷⁰ The same issue that contained Lewis’ review of Perham’s book also included reviews of Norman Leys’s *The Colour Bar in East Africa* and Joyce Cary’s *The Case for African Freedom*. *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 24 (September 1941), p. 128-129, and n. 25 (October 1941), p. 7-10.

⁴⁷¹ For example, Raymond Leslie Buell produced seminal works in the development of international relations and African studies—*International Relations* (1925) and *Native Problem in Africa* (1928).

which included his own courses on colonial history. Perham taught part of the latter in 1927-1929 and 1933-1934 as well as her own course on “Native Administration.” The same year, she was elevated to the position of Research Lecturer in Colonial Administration, one of five new research lectureships at Oxford founded by the Rockefeller Foundation in the United States. In 1937 and 1938, Perham and Coupland organized the annual summer program for colonial officers on leave. From the late 1930s, Perham and the anthropologist Lucy Mair at the LSE pioneered the idea of a new discipline devoted to the “art and science” of colonial administration, an ill-defined program designed to meld the Lugardian ideal of the colonial officer with the methodological precision of the social scientist.⁴⁷² Within this context, intellectuals from the colonies like Lewis found new, albeit limited, opportunities to intervene in scholarly discourse and influence colonial policy.

Though as late as 1946 fifty percent of African university students still entered law or medicine, the other half pursued training in education, science, and “other studies.” The introduction of new scholarships as part of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act filipped the entry of colonial students into metropolitan universities during the last two years of the war, including two hundred new African students. Many of these scholarships were allocated for training in the social sciences.⁴⁷³ In 1947, *Wàsù* published the following “Table of West African Student Interests in Britain and Ireland” based on statistics from the Welfare Department of the Colonial Office:⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² See Véronique Dimier, “Three Universities and the British Elite: A Science of Colonial Administration in the UK,” *Public Administration* v. 84, n. 2 (2006), p. 337-366; David Killingray, “Colonial Studies,” in Rimmer and Kirk-Greens, eds., *The British Intellectual Engagement with Africa*, p.42-43.

⁴⁷³ The vast majority, some one hundred and seventy students, were Nigerians, Sierra Leoneans, or Gold Coastians, while the remainder came from the Gambia, East Africa, or Northern Rhodesia. The new scholarships were funded by public and private sources, including money provided under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act and contributions from some colonial governments, the British Council, and United Africa Company. J. L. Keith, “African Students in Great Britain,” *African Affairs* v. 45 (1946), p. 65-66. See also *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 34.

⁴⁷⁴ *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 3 (Summer 1947), p. 12.

Accountancy – 17
Agriculture – 5
Architecture – 4
Art – 4
Bakery – 8
Book Production – 4
Building Trade – 5
Commerce – 13
Dentistry – 20
Domestic Science – 10
Economics – 15
Education – 50
Engineering – 40
Law – 150
Liberal Arts – 71
Linguistics – 15
Medicine – 140
Music – 8
Nursing – 50
Optics – 5
Pharmacy – 6
Printing – 6
Public Administration – 4
Railway Training – 6
Science – 27
Social Science – 9
Tailoring – 5
Theology – 3
Miscellaneous – 25

African and Caribbean students entered and contributed to a changing intellectual setting in Britain's top universities. The growth of colonial studies, evidenced in the creation of new lectureships, readerships, and professorships at each of these institutions, held out the promise that colonial problems might receive the sustained intellectual treatment that many viewed as a prerequisite to substantive reforms. What is more, the new emphasis on relevance and expertise in both policymaking and academic colonial studies, which was linked to the shifting conception of colonial authority, provided black intellectuals with a set of theoretical tools and a new basis for their political demands and claims to represent colonized populations in the Caribbean and Africa. Amongst African intellectuals, anthropology, in particular, emerged as a popular field of study in the 1930s and 1940s.

During the interwar period, many social anthropologists in Britain, working in a discipline still in search of a professional identity, "began to look to Africa as the laboratory for their field research." As the first Chair of Anthropology at the LSE from 1927 to 1938, Bronislaw Malinowski had an unparalleled impact on the development of social anthropology in Britain through not only his seminars and scholarship, but also his influence within the International Institute of African Languages and Culture (later known as the International African Institute), created in 1926. The Institute and its journal *Africa*, which first appeared in 1928, represented a significant step towards "converting those seriously interested in Africa into an intellectual community," and, due in large part to Malinowski's efforts, it became an indispensable vehicle for the consolidation and professionalization of the discipline of anthropology in Britain.⁴⁷⁵ The Institute established a grant program funded by the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Foundation, Carnegie Foundation, and, after the Second World War, the Colonial Social Science Research Council, which funded much of the new

⁴⁷⁵ Kirk-Greene, "The Emergence of an Africanist Community in the UK," p. 17-18.

anthropological work on Africa produced over the following two decades. By the end of the war, the creation of new sources of financial support related to the greater emphasis on colonial development had a major impact on the development of social anthropology in Britain. As Goody notes, by 1945, there were already underway a number of “surveys of potential research programmes ... being conducted under the auspices of the Colonial Social Science Research Council by Firth in West Africa, Schapera in East Africa, Leach in Borneo, surveys which laid the loose framework for the research of many post-war students from Britain and America.”⁴⁷⁶ In 1945, the British Council awarded the Ghanaian historian and economist J. C. de Graft Johnson, who was then a student at Edinburgh University, a scholarship to continue the research for his Ph.D. thesis.⁴⁷⁷

Jomo Kenyatta attended Malinowski’s seminars on culture change at the LSE in 1936, as did the African Americans Alison Davis and Eslanda Goode Robeson in the mid-1930s. With Malinowski’s assistance, Kenyatta and Nathaniel Fadipe received grants from the Institute to support their research on the Gikuyu and Yoruba, respectively, and Malinowski contributed the introduction to Kenyatta’s *Facing Mount Kenya*. In 1937, the Institute’s journal, *Africa*, published the latter’s essay, “Kikuyu Religion, Ancestor-Worship, and Sacrificial Practices.”⁴⁷⁸ Kenyatta also worked intermittently as a translator for Malinowski, Ida Ward at the SOAS, and the Institute, where he befriended the African American linguist Lorenzo Turner and Paul Robeson.⁴⁷⁹ After receiving a Masters degree at

⁴⁷⁶ Goody, *The Expansive Moment*, p. 73.

⁴⁷⁷ J. C. de Graft Johnson became a distinguished academic, publishing his *African Glory: The Story of Vanished Negro Civilizations* in 1954 and *An Introduction to the African Economy* in 1959, and later Ghana’s ambassador to the EC. See *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 12, n. 72 (September 1945), p. 113.

⁴⁷⁸ Jomo Kenyatta, “Kikuyu Religion, Ancestor-Worship, and Sacrificial Practices,” *Africa* v. 10, n. 3 (1937), pp. 308-328. See also Kenyatta, “War and Peace in Old Kenya,” *African Heritage*, ed. by Jacob Drachler (New York: Crowell-Collier 1963), p. 85-90 (reprinted from *My People of the Kikuyu*).

⁴⁷⁹ Turner studied Africanisms in the Gullah dialect of Georgia. See St. Clair Drake, “Mbiyu Koinage and the Pan-African Movement,” in *Pan-African Biography*, ed. by Robert A. Hill (Los Angeles: African Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, 1987), p. 175. While the influence of Malinowski was paramount,

Harvard University in the United States, Prince Hosea Akiiki Nyabongo from Uganda earned a Ph.D. in anthropology at Oxford University.⁴⁸⁰ Nyabongo's *The Story of an African Chief*, which appeared in the United States in 1935, was reprinted in Britain the following year under the title *Africa Speaks Back*, and, in 1937, he published *The "Bisoro" Stories*. Alex A. Y. Kyerematen and Kofi Abrefa Busia also attended Oxford, and both went on to make "significant contributions to the ethnography of Ghana." Busia studied under the South African anthropologist Meyer Fortes during the late 1940s and published his Ph.D. thesis, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti*, in 1951. He subsequently became the first Ghanaian professor at Oxford, where he held the chair in sociology.⁴⁸¹ When Nkrumah arrived in London in 1945, he registered as a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at the LSE but withdrew after only one term.⁴⁸² In a period when the Colonial Office placed a greater premium on expertise, African anthropologists like Kyerematen, Busia, and Kenyatta worked within the discipline whose fortunes were tied uniquely to colonial Africa. As Desai argues, "the relationship between the development of an academic discourse and the use of

Kenyatta also thanked Raymond Firth in the book's preface "for his careful reading of the manuscript and his technical advice on anthropological points." Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, intro. by Bronislaw Malinowski (New York: Vintage Books, 1965, originally 1938), p. xvii.

⁴⁸⁰ See "African Prince awarded Ph.D. (Oxon)," League of Coloured Peoples' *New Notes* n. 8 (May 1940), p. 35.

⁴⁸¹ Nyabongo returned to the United States in the 1940s, where he was a professor at the University of Alabama and later North Carolina A & T University. Busia joined the faculty at the University of the Gold Coast from 1949 to 1954, becoming the first lecturer in African Studies and, then, the first African to hold an academic chair at the institution. In the late 1950s, he became Nkrumah's chief political rival as the leader of the Ghana Congress Party, which soon merged with the other opposition parties to form the United Party. In 1959, he fled the country out of fear for his safety and became Professor of Sociology and Culture at the University of Leiden in the Hague, Netherlands. Busia was in England once again during the early 1960s, where he was a member of the faculty at St. Anthony's College, Oxford University between 1961 and 1966, but returned to Ghana after the 1966 military coup. He was appointed Chairman of the National Advisory Council by the military government (National Liberation Council) and, in 1967, the Centre for Civic Education. After his Progress Party's victory in the first elections following Nkrumah's fall from power, Busia became Prime Minister from 1969 until January 1972, when another military coup toppled his government. Kirk-Greene, "The Emergence of an Africanist Community in the UK," p. 19; Goody, *The Expansive Moment*, p. 9-10, 27, 84-85, 87, 205. See also K. A. Busia, "The African World-View," *African Heritage*, ed. by Jacob Drachler (London: (New York: Crowell-Collier 1963), p. 146-151.

⁴⁸² Nkrumah enrolled subsequently at Gray's Inn to become a barrister and as a Ph.D. student in philosophy at University College London, where he proposed to write his dissertation on the topic of "Knowledge and Logical Positivism," but never completed either program of study. Marika Sherwood, "Kwame Nkrumah: The London Years, 1945-47," p. 182.

that discourse to underwrite policy issues is always an ambivalent one.”⁴⁸³ While numerous scholars have noted the importance of colonial rule to the development of anthropology, this has obscured the ways in which intellectuals from the colonies found it enabling.

The new emphasis on the study of “culture contact” and “diffusion” in Malinowski’s work and Anglo-American anthropology, more generally, informed many African intellectuals’ understandings of race and cultural change and buttressed their attack on the colour bar.⁴⁸⁴ By the mid-1930s, as Zachernuk notes, “The idea of race as a biologically determined social group with a fixed place in a human hierarchy was being displaced by an idea of race as a historically determined social group at a certain level of development, superficially divided by environmental influences.”⁴⁸⁵ In their writings on West African history and the impact of European imperialism, both Solanke and Azikiwe challenged the notion of intractable racial differences. Citing Boas, Rev. A. G. Fraser of Achimota College in the Gold Coast, and others, Azikiwe claimed that “no reputable anthropologist to-day entertains the notion of a racial inferiority for government or other institutions of society,” while Solanke identified a consistent pattern cultural synthesis and movement toward “re-admixture” and “universal brotherhood” as the distinguishing feature of African history.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸³ Desai, *Subject to Colonialism*, p. 41.

⁴⁸⁴ For example, as Zachernuk notes, “Anthropologist Meyer Fortes concluded in 1945 that “the balance of scientific evidence and of practical experience proved the cultural insignificance of race.” As I discuss in Chapter Two, the ideas of Franz Boas, introduced to the WASU by Alain Locke, were also influential in this regard. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, p. 108; also Fortes, “Anthropologist’s Point of View,” *Fabian Colonial Essays*, ed. by Rita Hinden (London: Fabian Publications and Allen and Unwin, 1945), p. 219. For another example of black intellectuals use of the work of anthropologists in Britain, see “Social Problems and Research in British West Africa,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 16, n. 93 (July 1947), p. 141-142, which reprints excerpts from a recent article by Raymond Firth in the *Journal of the International African Institute*. In particular, the LCP cited approvingly Firth’s emphasis on the “asymmetrical relations between Europeans and educated Africans.”

⁴⁸⁵ Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, p. 109.

⁴⁸⁶ Ladipo Solanke, “Editorial,” *Wàsù* v. 4, n. 5 (November 1935), p. 69-72; Nnamdi Azikiwe, “Ethics of Colonial Imperialism,” *Journal of Negro History* 16 (1931), p. 308, and *Liberia in World Politics* (Westport, CT: Negro University Press, 1970, originally 1934), p. 217. For a list of other anthropologists whose work influenced Azikiwe’s thinking during this period, see Nnamdi Azikiwe, *My Odyssey: An Autobiography* (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 156.

Compared to the development of the discipline in France, fieldwork assumed a disproportionate significance in British anthropology as both a methodology and the epistemological basis of expertise. One reason for this difference, as Moore observes, was the British system of indirect rule, which “made knowledge of African political and legal institutions an important prerequisite of colonial administration.” From the start, then, the Institute of African Languages and Cultures epitomized the “complex intertwinings between the needs of colonial administration and the interests of anthropologists and other scholars of Africa.”⁴⁸⁷ Lord Lugard, the Institute’s first director, described the Institute as “a connecting link between science and life” in the inaugural issue of *Africa*. In a pair of programmatic essays that appeared in the journal in 1929 and 1930, Malinowski championed a conception of anthropology as a practical science and outlined a new research agenda that emphasized “relevance” and privileged “culture contact” within a rapidly changing colonial scene. He sought to demonstrate the necessity of anthropological knowledge to the administration of the British Empire. “Whether we adopt in our practical policy the principle of direct or indirect control,” Malinowski asserted, “it is clear that a full knowledge of indigenous culture ... is indispensable.” He opposed his vision of the “science” of practical anthropology and the work of the Institute to the extant “antiquarian” studies of African customs and institutions associated with the African Society, which was founded in 1901 in memory of Mary Kingsley.

In “Practical Anthropology,” Malinowski maintained, “A new branch of anthropology must sooner or later be started: the anthropology of the changing Native.” Gesturing towards the recent work of Franz Boas and others on cultural diffusion, he wrote, “Nowadays, when we are intensely interested, through some new anthropological theories,

⁴⁸⁷ Moore, *Anthropology and Africa*, p. 18-19, 21.

in problems of contact and diffusion, it seems incredible that hardly any exhaustive studies have been undertaken on the question of how European influence is being diffused into native communities.” According to Malinowski, an “anthropology of the changing savage” would “throw an extremely important light upon the theoretical problem of the contact of cultures, transmission of ideas and customs, in short, on the whole problem of diffusion,” and produce knowledge “of the highest importance to the practical man in the colonies.” In the midst of “one of the greatest crises in human history, namely ... the gradual expansion of one form of civilization over the whole world,” he argued, “it is really the anthropologist ... who ought to study the problem of the westernization of the world.” To his dismay, Malinowski observed, “so far, most contributions on that subject have been made by enthusiasts, while the specialist in his field work still tries to close his eyes to the surrounding reality and reconstructs laboriously a savage who does not exist any more....” For Malinowski, anthropologists relinquished any claim to relevance as long as their research continued to be oriented around a fiction of hermetically sealed cultural units. “If the Institute succeeds in creating this new branch of anthropology, the study of the diffusion of Western cultures among primitive peoples, and if this is undertaken with as much theoretical zeal and direct interest as the reconstructive study, then the Institute will do a great service to anthropology and to the practical man as well.”⁴⁸⁸

Similarly, in “The Rationalization of Anthropology and Administration,” which was in part a reply to the critical responses to “Practical Anthropology,” Malinowski insisted, “The anthropology of the future will be concerned with the study of the ‘changing’ native and of the ‘in-between’ or ‘barbarous’ races; it will be as interested in the Hindu as in the

⁴⁸⁸ Bronislaw Malinowski, “Practical Anthropology,” *Africa: Journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures* v.2, n. 1 (January 1929), p. 24, 26, 36-37.

Tasmanian, in the Chinese peasants as in the Australian aborigines, in the West Indian negro as in the Melanesian Trobriander, in the detribalized African of Harlem as in the Pygmy of Perak.” These cultural hybrids, the growing ranks of those “in-between” cultural formations, required the anthropologist to be more attentive to “the processes of culture and cultural assimilation.” Malinowski linked anthropology’s status as a science to the study of the “changing native,” implicitly challenging the epistemological categories of indirect rule in which the deracinated native figured as a dangerous excess. “Such anthropology,” he contended, “will be not only practically more important but it will become, at the same time, real science....”⁴⁸⁹

Malinowski’s eagerness to not only train African anthropologists but also obtain “first-hand information” from educated African informants legitimated the latter’s claims to insider knowledge. Although critical of both the motives and quality of anthropology produced by African practitioners, he insisted that neither the “man of science” nor the colonial officer could afford to ignore their work. “The African,” Malinowski wrote, “is becoming an anthropologist who turns our own weapons against us. He is studying European aims, pretenses, and all the real and imaginary acts of injustice.” While “Such an anthropology is no doubt mutilated and misguided, full of counter-prejudices, ... charged with bitter hostility, ... [and] often blind with intransigence and sweeping wholesale indictment,” “it cannot be ignored by the man of science; and it would be better if the practical man did not treat it as a joke or as an insignificant minor excrescence. For on the whole it contains a great deal of truth, and it foreshadows the formation of a public opinion, of a national and racial feeling which, sooner or later, will have to be taken into account by

⁴⁸⁹ Bronislaw Malinowski, “The Rationalization of Anthropology and Administration,” *Africa* v. 3, n. 4 (October 1930), p. 407.

the practical contact agents.” Furthermore, in a footnote, Malinowski argued, “The literature produced by the educated Africans ... constitutes a body of evidence on which scientific work by a White anthropologist must sooner or later be undertaken.”⁴⁹⁰ Malinowski’s remarks echoed the views of African intellectuals in London like Solanke, who, in *United West Africa*, called on British officials in the colonies to work with the African intelligentsia and “give up the idea (if any) of regarding every educated element as his enemy.”⁴⁹¹

Succeeding generations of anthropologists, including former students of Malinowski like Max Gluckman, have criticized him for his failure to adequately account for the dislocation engendered by colonialism within the functionalist method and his naiveté, if not disingenuousness, concerning the anthropologist’s capacity to influence colonial policy and the “practical man” on the ground in the colonies.⁴⁹² Yet, in light of more recent critiques of the discipline, Malinowski’s call for a “new branch of anthropology” that would focus on processes of cultural exchange and mixture appears more prescient than these accounts often suggest, and it was here that many African intellectuals found his work to be most useful. Many black intellectuals preferred Malinowski’s work to that of his contemporaries like Fortes and believed that London University and the London School of Economics

⁴⁹⁰ Given their context, Malinowski may have had Kenyatta’s essay, “Kikuyu Religion, Ancestor-Worship, and Sacrificial Practices,” in mind when he made these remarks. Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa*, ed. by Phyllis M. Kaberry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), p. 58-59.

⁴⁹¹ Solanke, *United West Africa (or Africa) at the Bar of the Family of Nations* (London, 1927), p. 50.

⁴⁹² For example, Gluckman argued, “A Government unmoved by the sufferings of thousands of people is not likely to be moved by the pretty chart of an anthropologist. Knowledge alone cannot make a moral policy; it can as easily serve an immoral one.” He also accused Malinowski of failing to appreciate the role of colonial conflict in social change. “This unawareness,” Gluckman wrote, “flows from Malinowski’s refusal to see conflict as a mode of integrating groups and to recognize that hostility between groups is a form of social balance.” Max Gluckman, “Malinowski’s ‘Functional’ Analysis of Social Change,” *Africa* (1947), p. 105, 111. For more recent critiques of Malinowski, see esp. Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (Atlantic Heights, NJ: Humanities Press, 1973); Jairus Banaji, “The Crisis of British Anthropology,” *New Left Review* 64 (1970), pp. 70-85; James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986; and James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) and *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

offered a more amicable and stimulating atmosphere than Oxbridge. The WASU's journal, for example, recommended Malinowski's seminar at the LSE to those interested in colonial studies and anthropology. In the 1930s, the faculty at the University of London and the LSE included an array of prominent scholars with international reputations: the aforementioned Laski in political science; in anthropology and sociology, Malinowski, Mair, Firth, and Charles Gabriel Seligman; in economics, Plant, Lionel Robbins, Friedrich Hayek, and John Coatman (Professor of Imperial Economic Relations); in colonial, world, and economic history, Arnold Toynbee, T. S. Ashton, and R. H. Tawney; and, by the end of the 1930s, specialists in African languages like Ida Ward, L. S. Ward, E. O. Ashton, and R. C. Abraham at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS). Yet, *Wàsù* did not endorse the LSE solely on the merits of the institution's curriculum or its distinguished scholars, although both were cited, but stressed its commitment to internationalism and emphasis of intellectual cooperation. "The School of Economics," *Wàsù* claimed, "is not the hot-bed of Bolshevism as represented by A. A. B. of the *Evening Standard* and other fanatic imperialists. On the other hand it stands for sympathy, humanitarianism and internationalism and understanding among the various member States of the British Empire." The editorial singled out Malinowski for praise, noting that the Union's members had been influenced by his ideas. "From our own personal experience the course under Prof. Malinowski is very well taught. Students under him are made to do field work (practical Anthropology) and so they get to know and understand the mentality of the people of the place concerned. The Professor very often interviews African students about problems in connection with his work, as a result he gets first-hand information."⁴⁹³

⁴⁹³ *Wàsù* v. 2, n. 2 (April-June 1933), pp. 1-2.

Many black intellectuals in London viewed Malinowski more favorably than other leading anthropologists like Lucy Mair, Fortes, and Schapera. In a review of *Native Policies in Africa*, W. Arthur Lewis noted, "Though Dr. Mair sets out dispassionately, and without the vehemence of Mr. Padmore's *How Britain Rules Africa*, one feels from time to time that it is only academic restraint which prevents her from describing the majority of the whites in these colonies [in East Africa] as a bunch of rascals." Nonetheless, her support of "Indirect Rule policy," Lewis argued, demonstrated that Mair, "like all good Lugardites, ... is suspicious of the educated African, who dares to have his own views as to how Africa should evolve." Currently, he continued, "There is only one place for the educated African ... and that is in the technical branches of the administration. Those who expect Africans to tolerate for generations a system in which every European, however ignorant or uncouth, is an aristocrat, and every African, however cultured, a subordinate, are dreaming a dangerous fantasy."⁴⁹⁴

The Oxford-trained Kyerematen believed that Malinowski's unique approach to "processes of culture change" represented his most significant contribution. Kyerematen evaluated the relative merits of "three schools of thought" with regard to this "comparatively new field of social research": the "historical school" of Mair and Monica Hunter, the "functional school" represented by Schapera and Fortes, and Malinowski's "three-column approach." Those associated with the "historical school" "assume that when two cultures contact, they do not result in a new homogeneous culture, but in a 'mixture of partially fused elements, whose separate parent stock can and must be traced in any attempt to understand the new situation.'" Like Malinowski, however, Kyerematen viewed this as an essentially "profitless" task, which yielded little incite into on-going processes of cultural exchange.

⁴⁹⁴ W. Arthur Lewis, "Europe's Impact on Africa," *The Keys* v. 4, n. 2 (October-December 1936), p. 23-25.

While Kyerematen saw the work of Fortes and Schapera as a useful corrective, he maintained that the “functional school” failed to adequately appreciate the role of conflict in cultural change. “The weakness of this view of culture contact,” he explained, “is that it evades the fundamental fact that it is concerned with two cultures, which, though they may integrate, are nevertheless, different, and may even conflict. The District Commissioner has an obligation to safeguard imperial interests, while the Chief has the rights of his subjects to conserve.” Only the “three-column approach of Malinowski,” Kyerematen averred, “recognised three aspects of the problem, namely, the impinging culture with its institutions, intentions, and interests; the reservoir of indigenous custom, belief and living conditions ... ; and lastly the result of the impact, the actual processes of contact and change, in which members of the two cultures co-operate, conflict or compromise.”

Kyerematen’s reading of Malinowski appears to be based in large part on the latter’s “Introductory Essay” to *Methods of Study of Culture Contact in Africa* (1938), a collection of recent essays on the subject by leading anthropologists which were reprinted from the journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, *Africa*, and *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa*, an edited collection published posthumously in 1945 which came out of his lectures and seminars on culture change between 1936 and 1938. Here, Malinowski devoted greater attention to conflict, racism, and the “selective” withholding of cultural influence under colonial conditions than in his earlier work. “To ignore the fact that there is a selective giving on the part of the Europeans,” he argued, “makes for a distortion of evidence, and ... a sin against science. Selective giving influences the process of change perhaps more than any other element in the situation.” Malinowski asserted that European racism, not the reputedly primitive mind of backward races, represented the greatest obstacle to cultural exchange and mixture.

The selective withholdings on the part of the Europeans is both significant and well determined[,] ... the withdrawal from culture contact of all those elements which make up the full benefits—economic, political, and legal—of the higher culture. If power, wealth, and social amenities were given, culture change would be a comparatively easy and smooth process. It is the absence of these factors—our selective giving—which makes cultural change such a complicated and difficult process.

Rejecting “the mechanical concept of the mixture of cultural elements,” Malinowski wrote, “We also see how unreal is the view of Black and White forming a well-integrated whole in a situation in which the color bar cuts right across the very determinism in the process of cultural give.” “The color bar,” he insisted, “wherever it enters into the phases and details of culture change, has to be put on the methodological map, not as a political indictment but as a theoretical appreciation of an important force—perhaps the most important of all.”⁴⁹⁵

Malinowski not only provided a powerful set of analytical tools and established methodological procedures, but also foregrounded the role of European racism and the power relations structuring the colonial situation as causal factors.

Following Malinowski, Kyerematen insisted that “human institutions are not static, but are subject to constant modification or even extirpation, with the impact of foreign ideas, and as the people themselves develop new ideas due to changing conditions of living. What happens when such institutions are in the melting pot is what anthropologists call ‘culture contact’ or ‘culture change.’” Equally important him, Malinowski “also stresses that, all things being equal, it is not to be assumed that one culture dominates all the phases of

⁴⁹⁵ In addition to the Boasian concept of “diffusion,” Malinowski also adopted Don Fernando Ortiz’s term “transculturation” as a synonym for “culture change” because it entailed “no implications of one standard dominating all the phases (of culture change), but a transition in which both sides are active, each contributing its quota, each merging into a new reality of civilization.” The bulk of the chapter from *Dynamics* quoted here appeared first in Malinowski’s “Introductory Essay” to *Methods*. The latter included essays by the anthropologists referenced (Mair, Hunter, Fortes, and Schapera) as well as Audrey Richards, Gunter Wagner, and A. T. and G. M. Culwick. *Methods of Study of Culture Contact in Africa* (London: International Institute of African Languages and Cultures Memorandum 15, 1938 reprinted from *Africa* v. 7-9); Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change*, ed. by Phyllis M. Kaberry (Oxford University Press, 1945), p. vii, 58-59. See also Bronislaw Malinowski, “The Present State of Studies in Culture Contact: Some Comments on an American Approach,” *Africa* v., 12, n. 1 (January 1939).

another culture. Rather, it is a process in which both cultures are active, and each contributes its quota to the new culture content that emerges. As Firth points out: 'It is not a question of just introducing development, enlightenment and progress to backward races.'⁴⁹⁶

Kyerematen also drew upon S. F. Nadel's experiments at combining psychology and anthropology or "culture psychology." Although "people may originally have lived in separate communities with their own distinctive cultures," he argued, "they constitute sections of a single small commonwealth, 'a social symbiosis' as Nadel puts it," after an extended period of contact.⁴⁹⁷ On this basis, Kyerematen maintained that West Africa "is unique as a cultural area for the study of culture contact and changes. For it has had contacts not only with modern European countries, dating from the fifteenth century, but also with the ancient civilizations of Carthage and Egypt...." If "the problems concerned with culture contact ... are acute anywhere in the world today," he argued, "it is in West Africa and some other parts of the continent." Yet, like Malinowski, Kyerematen was also careful to distinguish procedures of the scientist from those who set policy. "It is only a diagnosis and not a cure, for the anthropologist is an anatomist and not a doctor of society, although it is needless to add that his diagnosis helps in the formulation of policies which aim at healing social maladies."⁴⁹⁸

African anthropologists like Kyerematen and Kenyatta emphasized the objectivity of their ethnographic work, distancing it from political considerations, while also distinguishing themselves from "outside" observers by the way in which they combined insider knowledge *and* the careful examination of the empirical facts derived from it. "In the present work," Kenyatta wrote in *Facing Mount Kenya*, "I have tried my best to record facts as I know them,

⁴⁹⁶ A. A. Y. Kyerematen, "West Africa in Transition," *Africana* v. 1, n. 2, p. 3-4.

⁴⁹⁷ See S. F. Nadel, "Experiments on Culture Psychology," *Africa* v. 10, n. 4 (1937), pp. 421-435.

⁴⁹⁸ Kyerematen, "West Africa in Transition," p. 4

mainly through a lifetime of personal experience, and have kept under very considerable restraint the sense of political grievances which no progressive African can fail to experience. My chief object is not to enter into controversial discussion with those who have attempted, or are attempting, to describe the same things from outside observation, but to let the truth speak for itself.”⁴⁹⁹

Whereas colonial experts in the metropole welcomed the voices of the educated colonials as “native informants” for their analyses, many continued to believe that the latter were incapable of the dispassionate study undertaken by the professional social scientist and greeted African intellectuals’ attempts to draw conclusions based on the raw material of their own experience with open skepticism. The work of African intellectuals appeared intermittently within the *Journal of the Royal African Society* (later *African Affairs*), *Man* (Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland), and *Africa* (International Institute of African Languages and Culture) during the interwar period and with greater frequency after World War II. Yet, in most cases, their contributions were distinguished from the rest of the journals’ contents in various ways and limited largely to examples of African art and poetry or descriptive explorations of African social and culture practices.⁵⁰⁰ In addition to its quarterly monthly, the Institute originally hoped to produce two other serial publications, *African Studies* and *African Documents*. As Kirk-Greene explains, “The former would consist of scholarly and authoritative monographs by recognized experts,” while the latter would be dedicated to “the publication of ‘brochures or texts written or dictated by Africans preferably in their own language, translated into a European language.’” Although the Institute never realized this ambitious scheme, the inaugural issue of *Africa*, which included a

⁴⁹⁹ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, p. xvii-xviii.

⁵⁰⁰ Between 1902 and 1951, the *Journal of the Royal African Society* included fifty-two articles or works of art by Africans, but more than half of them appeared after World War II. See “Fifty Years of a British African Society,” *African Affairs* v. 50, n. 200 (July 1951), p. 194-195.

section of poems under the title “La Voix De L’Africain” (“The Voice of Africa”), provides an indication of what was envisioned for *African Documents*.⁵⁰¹ Indeed, as late as 1974, the anthropologist Malcolm MacLeod complained in a letter to *Africa* that Fraser’s recent book, *African Art and Leadership*, drew heavily upon the work of A. A. Y. Kyerematen without adequately acknowledging this debt. MacLeod wrote, “the great majority of the data on which this whole chapter [on Asante art] is built are taken, with the very minimum of alteration, from the Oxford doctoral dissertation of Dr. A. A. Y. Kyerematen.... So far almost nothing of this long and detailed work has appeared in print, and the fact that part of it has now appeared in print ... under Professor Fraser’s name makes it doubly important that it is used with due care and that readers should know its true source.”⁵⁰²

When these journals featured reviews of books by African authors, they routinely questioned the objectivity of the latter. For example, a review of Parmenas Gittendu Mockerie’s *An African Speaks for His People* in the *Journal of the Royal African Society* suggested that the “chief interest in his book lies in the picture it gives us of the thoughts of politically-minded East African natives.” While conceding that Mockerie “is surprisingly moderate ... , and is remarkably clever in putting his finger on the weak points in the administrative and other services in East Africa,” the reviewer asserted, “His very brief chapter on Kikuyu tribal institutions loses much of its value from being written in the style of communistic literature.”⁵⁰³ The author of the review of *Africa Answers Back* by Akiki K. Nyabongo in *Man*, the journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, criticized the blending of fact and fiction in the text, arguing that “the author has written a piece of fiction which defeats its own ends, because ... it is manifestly untrue.” In the future, the reviewer suggested, Nyabongo should

⁵⁰¹ Kirk-Greene, “The Emergence of an Africanist Community in the UK,” p. 17-18; *Africa* v. 1, n. 1 (January 1928), p. 132-133.

⁵⁰² Malcolm MacLeod, “Letters to *Africa*,” *Africa* v. 44, n. 3 (July 1974), p. 300.

⁵⁰³ L. S. B. L., *Journal of the Royal African Society* v. 34, n. 135 (April 1935), p. 218-219.

focus his energies on providing an accurate “picture” of “his own people.” “Mr. Akiki Nyabongo has been studying Anthropology at Oxford, and there is enough in his book to cause one to believe that he is capable of giving us a very useful account of his own people ... We know very little of the home life of native peoples, and Mr. Akiki Nyabongo shows himself to be a writer competent to give us a living picture of just this sort of thing.”⁵⁰⁴

Similarly, in his review of *Facing Mount Kenya in Africa*, A. R. Barlow, a former mission schoolteacher who had once taught Kenyatta, contended, “The facility with which Kenyatta, the ethnographer, merges into Kenyatta, the general secretary of the Kikuyu Central Association, makes it difficult to decide whether his book should be viewed primarily as a scientific study or as a vehicle for propaganda.”⁵⁰⁵ Among established anthropologists in Britain, it appears that only Malinowski praised the work for its analytical content. In his introduction to *Facing Mount Kenya*, he wrote that the book “is one of the first really competent and instructive contributions to African ethnography by a scholar of pure African parentage ... As a first-hand account of a representative African culture, as an invaluable document in the principles underlying culture contact and change; last, not least, as a personal statement of the new outlook of a progressive African, this book will rank as a pioneering achievement of outstanding merit.”⁵⁰⁶

Kenyatta expected his book to provoke criticism from certain quarters, as he stated unabashedly.

I know that there are many scientists and general readers who will be disinterestedly glad of the opportunity of hearing the Africans’ point of view, and to all such I am glad to be of service. At the same time, I am well aware that I could not do justice to the subject without offending those ‘professional friends of the African’ who are prepared to maintain their friendship for eternity as a sacred duty, provided only that the African will

⁵⁰⁴ E. B. H, *Man* v. 36 (December 1936), p. 214-215.

⁵⁰⁵ A. R. Barlow, *Africa* v. 12, n. 1 (January 1939), p. 114-116.

⁵⁰⁶ Bronislaw Malinowski, “Introduction,” *Facing Mount Kenya*, p. xiii.

continue to play the part of an ignorant savage so that they can monopolise the office of interpreting his mind and speaking for him. To such people, an African who writes a study of this kind is encroaching on their preserves. He is a rabbit turned poacher.⁵⁰⁷

Kenyatta anticipated resistance to the text because, he suggested, the work of the African intellectual, the “rabbit turned poacher,” represented inherently a threat to the power relations underlying imperial rule and, in particular, to those who claimed to interpret and speak for the native mind. The title of James’ review of *Facing Mount Kenya* in the *International African Opinion*, “The Voice of Africa,” underscored this quality of table-turning.

Appropriating the banner of the circumscribed space allotted to African perspectives in the journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, James implicitly challenged the normative claims to knowledge of colonial experts in Britain and ascribed special significance to the voice of the African intellectual. Similarly, in his review of *Ten Africans* edited by Margery Perham, which was entitled “Africa Speaks for Herself,” Louis Mbanefo suggested that, although the book contains “nothing ... which was not already known,” it represented a notable shift in the production of knowledge on colonial Africa. “For the first time,” he observed, “an exponent of British policies in Africa desists from wielding the pen herself, preferring to watch Africans writing about themselves.”

Nevertheless, Mbanefo argued, “we must remember that the problem of Africa is not that of personalities only. There are thousands of able Africans whose ambitions to serve their own country are purposely killed by official suspicion and denial of opportunity.” Thus, “African readers may hope that this method of giving the African a part will be extended to other fields than mere [auto]biography.”⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁷ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, p. xviii.

⁵⁰⁸ Louis Mbanefo, “Africa Speaks for Herself,” *The Keys* v. 4, n. 2 (October-December 1936), p. 25-26.

In contrast to the anthropologists, former colonial officials, and other “professional friends of the African” writing in *Africa, Man*, and the *Journal of the Africa Society*, the published organs of the WASU, LCP, and IASB celebrated the unique combination of insider knowledge and scholarly expertise in the work of black intellectuals. James wrote of *Facing Mount Kenya*, “Similar books have been written before? Yes; but by white men chiefly ... [and] even the best, like the Emil Torday, wrote from the outside.” Kenyatta, he noted, “is an anthropologist trained at London University, and even an unscientific reader can see the scrupulously scientific approach, the order, the method, the objectivity, in which he questioned.” James stressed not only Kenyatta’s training, but also his unique insight into the “social and religious ideals of the civilisation which is being so ruthlessly destroyed....” Although he disagreed with the political conclusions that Kenyatta derived from this insider knowledge, “Anthropologically,” James argued, “it is, in addition to Mr. Kenyatta’s knowledge and method, the main source of his strength. Here, indeed, Africa speaks.”⁵⁰⁹

The WASU viewed these intellectual endeavors as part of the grander project of West African unity, arguing, “the study of our African customs and institutions together with the adoption and reverent preservation of our African idiosyncrasies leads to the formation of a national character which is the corner-stone of nationhood.”⁵¹⁰ Financial difficulties, exacerbated by the effects of the Depression in West Africa, compelled the Union to cease publication of *Wàsù* between 1929 and 1932. When it reappeared at the end of 1932, the WASU reiterated its commitment to intellectual work on Africa. *Wàsù* traced the lineaments of a distinctive African intellectual tradition through “pen portraits” of writers and public

⁵⁰⁹ C. L. R. James, “The Voice of Africa,” *International African Opinion* v. 1, n. 2 (August 1938), p. 3.

⁵¹⁰ Although the author is unnamed, both the style and title of the piece, “Towards West African Nationhood,” which is the same as a larger text by J. W. de Graft Johnson’s published the same year, suggests that he may have penned this editorial as well. Moreover, de Graft Johnson was also a sub-editor of the journal at this time. *Wàsù* 1, 6-7 (August 1928), p. 1-2.

figures like Kobina Sekyi and Herbert Macauley, celebrated the professional and educational achievements of black students and intellectuals in Britain and West Africa, and provided a rare space for politically-engaged research on Africa.⁵¹¹ The opening editorial declared, “The aim of ‘*Wasu*’ is not only to foster nationalism, which is necessary for the preservation of her good institutions and a regard for African culture, but also to combat the false and exaggerated views given the world by strayed European travellers, anthropologists, missionaries, officials, and film produces....” As an association “composed of Africans of African birth,” *Wàsù* asserted, the members of the Union “have the natural right to interpret the psychology and philosophy of their own people and to act as ambassadors between black and other coloured races (especially the white race).” Thus, “Another of the chief objects of the Union is to encourage sound and scientific study of African history, laws, customs and institutions.” The WASU not only cited and directed readers’ attention towards recent anthropological work on Africa, but actively encouraged West Africans to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on British West Africa. *Wàsù* lauded the recent scholarly contributions of members: “‘Akan Laws and Customs,’ by Dr. J. B. Danquah; ‘United West Africa (or Africa) at the Bar of the Family of Nations,’ by Ladipo Solanke; ‘A Collection of Yoruba Thoughts,’ by Julius Ojo-Cole; [and] ‘West African Nationhood,’ by J. W. de Graft Johnson.”⁵¹² The journal served a dual function in this connection, publicizing these works and providing a forum for West African intellectuals to publish short pieces based on their research.

⁵¹¹ See Cobina Kessie, “Pen Portrait of Kobina Sekyi, Esq.,” *Wàsù* n. 9 (December 1932) and Olu Alakija, “A Short Pen Portrait of Herbert Macauley, Esq., C.E.,” *Wàsù* v. 2, n. 1 (January 1933), p. 10-11.

⁵¹² “A Short History of W.A.S.U. and its Organ ‘Wasu,’” *Wàsù* n. 9 (December 1932), pp. 1-3.

In 1945, Ako Adjei reviewed Egbert Udo Udoma's booklet, *The Lion and the Oil-Palm, with a Prize Essay: The Clash of Cultures in Wàsù*.⁵¹³ In the first part of the short text, "The Lion and the Oil-Palm," Udoma considered the writings of the anthropologist C. K. Meek, Donald Cameron, and others on indirect rule in West Africa, examining "the current theories of British colonial administration with the searching mind of a discerning critic." "His criticism of British colonial policy," Adjei wrote, "is frank and relentless but also without bitterness. He points out where theory has been inconsistent with actual practice; but he does so by respectfully inviting the living authorities to speak for themselves. This is the work and the attitude of a scholar." Eschewing the obfuscating rhetoric of such "authorities" and emphasizing instead Britain's dependence on palm oil, Udoma maintained, "Separation of West Africa from Britain is 'not only undesirable, it is unthinkable,'" from the standpoint of the latter as much as the former. Adjei described the second part of the booklet, "The Clash of Cultures," as a "sociological treatise" that "attempts to explain the nature and trend of social change in its world setting." The essay, Adjei opined, "is an excellent piece of scholarship." "African art," he explained, "is going through a period of transformation as a result of the influx of new ideas, principles, and standards." Although "Dr. Udoma regrets the trend ... and is even pessimistic of the future," Adjei maintained "that is the very essence of social change." "What is going on in Africa to-day," he argued, "is that a new civilisation is developing." "To anybody who wants to know what Africans themselves feel and think and say about their present status in international affairs, or about

⁵¹³ Egbert Udo Udoma had been a medical student at the Trinity College, Dublin, with the support of the Ibibio Union in Nigeria, but he ultimately became a prominent lawyer. In 1945, he became the editor of *Wàsù*. He later served as a member of the Nigerian House of Representatives and spent thirteen years as a justice on the Nigerian Supreme Court. The booklet included Udoma's presidential address to the University Philosophical Society in Dublin ("The Lion and the Oil-Palm") and his essay ("The Clash of Cultures"), which received an award in a university competition. E. Udo Udoma, *The Lion and the Oil-Palm, with a Prize Essay: The Clash of Cultures* (Dublin: University of Dublin Press, 1943). See also Kaye Whiteman, "An African Benchmark; Obituary: Sir Udo Udoma," *The Guardian* (February 26, 1998).

their traditional cultures,” Adjei added, “perhaps there is not a more concise work” than Udoma’s booklet.⁵¹⁴

London-based black publications mobilized the politically engaged intellectual as an ideal to which black students should aspire. The LCP singled out the work of individuals like James and W. Arthur Lewis as exemplary examples.⁵¹⁵ *The Keys*’ review of *The Black Jacobins* stated that James “had proved himself a scientist and an artist of supreme excellence.”⁵¹⁶ Similarly, the journal asserted that Lewis “has set a great standard before all African and West Indian students and in his work for the League he has shown that it is possible for a man of ability to serve his race as well as to achieve exploits in his examinations.” “The League,” the piece continued, “hopes that young Africans and West Indians coming to this country will discover the wisdom of applying themselves to the work of the League as they seek to achieve success in their own academic career. It is a duty that all of us owe to the future of our race.”⁵¹⁷ In an editorial on “*Our Responsibilities*,” *Wàsù* emphasized the special role of the West African student in Britain. “As soon as a West African student sets his foot on the soil of England, he ... must ... defend, without being bitter, the sanctity, integrity and honour of his native country and her ancient institutions against the onslaught of pseudo-scientists and self-appointed colonial experts, whose pens are being devoted towards driving a wedge between Great Britain and the peoples of West Africa.” WASU linked the work of these “self-appointed colonial experts” to the racist policies undergirding colonial rule and class mobility in British society. “The perpetuation of the colonial status—a system of *herrenvolke*, of superiors and inferiors—has become with such experts a lucrative source of

⁵¹⁴ Ako Adjei, “Book Reviews,” *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 33-34.

⁵¹⁵ See review of “‘Economic Problems of To-day,’ by W. Arthur Lewis,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 9 (June 1940), p. 42.

⁵¹⁶ K. A., “Black Jacobins by C. L. R. James,” *The Keys* v. 6, n. 2 (October-December 1938), p. 12-13.

⁵¹⁷ “Outstanding Student Success,” *The Keys* v. 5, n. 1 (July-September 1937), p. 6.

livelihood. To them also the possession of second-hand information on Africa is a passport to glory, and entitles them to move in that section of English society which is separated by economic parasitism from the common mass.” Thus, the piece continued, “A West African student abroad instinctively, therefore, assumes as a duty a dual capacity. As a merchant of light in search of the golden fleece, he becomes at once a student of his own special field of study and an interpreter of West African to Britain and America ... Under such circumstances, it is more of a miracle that Africans do achieve academic successes in British Universities and other Institutions.”⁵¹⁸

Black organizations in the metropole and the social circles that formed around them provided a rare space for West Indian and African intellectuals in an otherwise harsh setting for their views. Black intellectuals from the colonies faced considerable obstacles in their pursuit of the trappings of expertise—advanced degrees, scholarly publications, induction into professional societies, and university appointments—due to the prevailing culture of racism. Many recalled how the innumerable slights and insults that they experienced strengthened their resolve and motivated both their intellectual and political activities. The case of Nnamdi Azikiwe is instructive in this regard. In the early 1930s, he earned a Master’s degree in anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, where he wrote his thesis on “Mythology in Onitsha Society.” Azikiwe recalled, “I based it on the theory, popularised by Professor Malinowski and his school at the time, that myths and folk-tales have functional values in non-literate societies; I was able to prove it with illustrations from the experience of what obtained in Onitsha society.” As luck would have it, Bronislaw Malinowski, who was in the United States on a speaking tour, attended a presentation by Azikiwe on “The Origins of

⁵¹⁸ *Wasit* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 3-5.

the State.” Afterwards, Malinowski approached Azikiwe and invited him to join the Royal Anthropological Society.⁵¹⁹

In anticipation of his return to London in 1934 after completing his studies in the United States, Azikiwe applied for a fellowship from the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures to support his ethnographic work on the Igbo in Nigeria.⁵²⁰ The Nigerian education department and the Institute were eager to give an African intellectual an award, and Azikiwe enjoyed the endorsement of both Perham and Malinowski. Yet, as Zachernuk states, “Azikiwe’s character was as much an issue here as his intellect.”⁵²¹ The executive committee of the Institute initially granted him funding for one year of training in London, but members soon began to retreat from this decision. There were concerns that Azikiwe was too “political,” and some doubted the ability of an African to produce the same kinds of “objective” scholarship as a European. Ultimately, the Institute informed him that, although interested in his work, they lacked the financial resources to fund his project. Azikiwe’s fate exposed the power imbalance between African intellectuals and “experts” on Africa. In much the same way as “the general atmosphere in interwar Britain constantly offered—but could never really allow—sustained cooperation between colonial and metropolitan intellectuals,” Zachernuk suggests, this episode both “reveals the fleeting possibility of sympathetic cooperation between two communities keenly interested in understanding contemporary Africa” and typifies the pattern of missed opportunities for intellectual dialogue and collaboration. Such treatment not only hastened African

⁵¹⁹ Azikiwe, *My Odyssey*, p. 156, 187. See also P. –J. Ekeh, “Anthropology in Post-colonial Africa: The Nigerian Case,” *African Anthropologies: History, Critique and Practice*, Mwenda Ntarangwi, David Mills, and Mustafa Babiker, eds. (London: Zed Books, 2006), p. 207.

⁵²⁰ In London, Azikiwe stayed with his old friend and “kinsman,” Louis Mbanefo. Azikiwe, *My Odyssey*, p. 193.

⁵²¹ Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, p. 98.

intellectuals alienation from Britain, but “no doubt enhanced the attraction of racial unity” as well.⁵²²

Notwithstanding his extraordinary accomplishments, racism also marked the early career of W. Arthur Lewis. With little hope of advancement at the London School of Economics, where younger and, thus, not soon to retire faculty dominated the economics department, Lewis applied and was recommended unanimously by the selection committee for the prestigious Chaddock Chair of Economics at the University of Liverpool. Despite the whole-hearted support of the head of his department at the LSE, A. H. Carr-Saunders, who wrote in his letter recommendation that “few appointments which been made in my time at the School have been better justified,” the vice-chancellor at Liverpool, J. F. Mountford rejected the nominee, citing “other considerations than high academic standing.” As Tignor explains, “The vice-chancellor pointed out that the situation in Liverpool was quite different from that at the London School of Economics. Not only would Lewis have to deal with a less sophisticated and worldly-wise business community, but he would have to teach all the economics students enrolled in the university,” who did not have the option of attending other universities in the area. Nonetheless, Carr-Saunders continued to maintain that, “short of the existence of any colour prejudice such as nothing could get over, I should have thought that he [Lewis] would have done well in this sort of work at Liverpool.” In the end, he “concluded that the opposition to the appointment did not arise from the local business community ... but from within the university community itself.”⁵²³

Thus, while black intellectuals drew up the work of European scholars and even enjoyed the admiration of some, personal rivalries and professional frustrations often

⁵²² Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, p. 98-99.

⁵²³ Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 37-38.

contributed to their desire for scholarly recognition. The young Trinidadian scholar Eric Williams was a student at Oxford in the mid-1930s, earning his Ph.D. in colonial history in 1938 after completing his thesis, “The Economic Aspects of the Abolition of the West Indian Slave Trade and Slavery.” Williams’ innovative reading of the relationship between abolition and the growth of capitalism in the British Empire targeted not only the prevailing humanitarian thesis, but also the historian most responsible for its ascendance in the interwar period, Reginald Coupland.⁵²⁴

In 1920, Coupland was appointed Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford, becoming only the second historian to occupy the Chair, which Hugh Egerton had held since its inception in 1905. As his former student Frederick Madden notes, the choice of Coupland, who specialized in ancient history and the history of English “Greats,” was not an obvious one. Indeed, when he succeeded Lionel Curtis as lecturer in colonial history in 1913, “he had little more than an amateur’s interest” in the subject. Though a relative newcomer to the field in 1920, the electors, according to Madden, “sought to give stature to the new discipline of imperial history” by selecting a prominent historian rather than a specialist—“a first-class scholar was better than a third-rate expert....” The move, if measured in terms of the number of students who took their Finals in colonial or Commonwealth history, was a resounding success. An insignificant subfield on the margins of the discipline during the early decades of the twentieth century, during Coupland’s nearly thirty years in the Chair, imperial history became one of the most popular subjects at Oxford.⁵²⁵

Between 1935 and 1938, Williams studied in the shadow of Coupland and would come write explicitly against the renowned historian. “The subject I had selected,” he later

⁵²⁴ Madden claims that Coupland felt Williams’ attack in *Capitalism and Slavery* “bitterly.” See Frederick Madden, “The Commonwealth, Commonwealth History, and Oxford, 1905-1971,” *Oxford and the Idea Commonwealth*, ed. by Frederick Madden and D. K. Fieldhouse (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 13.

⁵²⁵ Madden, “The Commonwealth, Commonwealth History, and Oxford,” p. 11-14.

claimed, “was, of all the chapters in British colonial history, the least known. No work of any scholarly importance had been done in England.” Nevertheless, the “general British view,” Williams noted, “was that a band of humanitarians—The Saints, they had been nicknamed—had got together to abolish slavery, and had after many years succeeded in arousing the conscience of the British people against man’s greatest inhumanity to man. Britain had repented and given earnest of her contribution by voting twenty million pounds sterling to the slave-owners for the redemption of their slaves.” Employing terms like “conscience,” “repented,” and “redemption,” Williams highlighted the role of sentiment in this understanding of abolition, which he opposed to an objective view of the past and attributed, in particular, to Coupland. “Much has been made of this case [of the Negro James Somerset], by people constantly seeking for triumphs of humanitarianism,” he wrote. “Professor Coupland contends that behind the legal judgment lay the moral judgment and that the Somerset case marked the beginning of the end of slavery throughout the British Empire. This is merely poetic sentimentality translated into modern history.”⁵²⁶

For Williams, sentiment played a minimal role in abolition, far outweighed by economic and other considerations, but it had been essential to establishing the dominant humanitarian thesis. Writing in *The Keys*, he asserted, “The idea that the humanitarians, by the irresistible weight of their humanitarianism, would have abolished slavery is a pathological delusion. What turned the scale in favour of the Negroes was the attitude of the British industrialists.”⁵²⁷ Williams admitted that his study “deliberately subordinated the inhumanity of the slave system and the humanitarianism which destroyed that system,” and conceded the importance of the abolitionist movement, noting that “to ignore one of the greatest

⁵²⁶ Eric Williams, *Inward Hunger: The Education of a Prime Minister* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969), 49-50.

⁵²⁷ Eric Williams, “The Abolition of the Slave System in Britain,” *The Keys* v. 7, n. 1 (July-September 1939), p. 11-13.

propaganda movements of all time” would entail a “grave historical error.” Yet, if the “humanitarians were the spearhead of the onslaught which destroyed the West Indian system and freed the Negro,” their significance, he argued, “has been seriously misunderstood and grossly exaggerated by men who have sacrificed scholarship to sentimentality and, like the scholastics of old, placed faith before reason and evidence,” Coupland above all. Williams maintained that he “understands the history of the abolition movement as little as his hero,” Wilberforce, and proposed that the connections between agents of the East India Company and abolitionist movement “has not been fully appreciated.” Coupland, Williams wrote, “is clearly unhappy about the whole thing, as is seen in his concern with the ‘sincerity’ of both groups,” rather than this convergence of interests.⁵²⁸

Williams perceived a link between the blind faith in the tradition of British humanitarianism, British racism, and the abuses of imperialism. Williams’ failed bid for an All Souls Fellowship left him convinced that the “racial factor” was insurmountable at Oxford. “It was not that I felt that I had won the fellowship,” he recalled. “I knew I had not. But I knew that I could never win one.” Furthermore, “No ‘native,’ however detribalized, could fit socially into All Souls. What, for example, could I say, in the very midst of the Ethiopian War, shortly after the announcement of the infamous Hoare-Laval peace plan, in reply to a question as to whether advanced peoples have any right to assume tutelage over backward peoples?” “It was difficult,” Williams added, “to be polite to the author of one of the wretched textbooks I had used in Trinidad when he defended the Hoare-Laval peace plan.” These observations led Williams to suspect a “fundamentally political” dynamic at

⁵²⁸ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, intro. by Colin A. Palmer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1994, originally 1944), p. 45, 178, 188, 211, 253.

work within the “traditional view” of emancipation. The humanitarian thesis, he suggested, was not only the central trope of the historiography on abolitionism, but also a fiction upon which “Englishness” and the moral arguments for imperial expansion depended. For Williams, Coupland was not merely an idealist producing poor scholarship. Due to his institutional power and public prominence, his work helped to mask the true face of imperial power. “Propounded by Coupland from his professional chair and ... [with] all the authority of the British Government’s special representative on commissions of inquiry in India, Palestine and East Africa,” Williams argued, the “traditional view not only involved large conclusions from no evidence at all; it also proceeded to draw still larger conclusions for imperialism in the twentieth century from its unsupported large conclusions about imperialism in the nineteenth.” Indeed, in 1933, the same year that Coupland published *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, he produced a pamphlet entitled *The British Empire: An Outline Sketch of Its Growth and Character* for the British Broadcasting Corporation.⁵²⁹ Not only did he contribute to and have his books reviewed in journals like *Africa*, *African Affairs*, and *International Affairs*, he also served on a number of advisory or exploratory committees during the 1930s and 1940s. The various activities of an individual like Coupland exposed the linkages between the institutional sites of knowledge production in the metropole and the governance of empire. “In a lecture at Oxford,” Williams recalled, Coupland “stated that ‘The British will do justice to Africa because they are heirs and guardians of a great tradition.’ As it was clear to me that they had not and were not doing justice to the West Indians, as the Hoare-Laval peace plan seemed to me irreconcilable with justice to Ethiopia, it became imperative to analyse the great tradition.”⁵³⁰ Like many of his contemporaries, he believed

⁵²⁹ Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: T. Butterworth Ltd., 1933) and *The British Empire: An Outline Sketch of Its Growth and Character* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1933).

⁵³⁰ Williams, *Inward Hunger*, p. 45-46, 50.

that his intellectual intervention was indispensable in the struggle against the apologists of empire, both within and outside of the university, and produced assiduously researched and politically motivated scholarship.

Similarly, according to Drake, a rumor that L. S. B. Leakey was preparing a book on the Gikuyu “created resentment and spurred Kenyatta to write *Facing Mount Kenya* to checkmate him.” Leakey was the son of Canon Leakey, who had introduced the Anglican Church to Kenya at a time when forced labor practices and land alienation proceeded apace in Gikuyu areas. Raised in Kenya, L. S. B. Leakey, who later became a renowned anthropologist, claimed to speak Gikuyu better than English during his youth and, by 1937, to know “things about Gikuyu customs that no elders could tell young Gikuyus.” That same year, another Gikuyu intellectual, Peter Mbiyu Koinage, arrived from the United States to enroll at Saint John’s College, Cambridge. There, Koinage attended Raymond Firth’s lectures alongside Leakey. Koinage, Ras Makonnen, and especially Dinah Stock, who edited the manuscript, helped Kenyatta get his book published before Leakey produced one of his own. Although he acknowledged the influence of both Malinowski and Firth in the introduction to *Facing Mount Kenya*, Kenyatta noted wryly, “I owe thanks also to my enemies, for stimulating discouragement which has kept up my spirits to persist in the task. Long life and health to them to go on with the good work.”⁵³¹ When Drake met Koinage ten years later, he had returned from Kenya to London, where “in a halfhearted way” he was working toward a Ph.D. in anthropology under Audrey Richards at the London School of Economics. Although his commitment to the Kenya African Union prevented him from completing the degree, Drake recalled that Koinage wanted it “very, very much as part of the

⁵³¹ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, p. xvii.

game of one-upmanship on L. S. B. Leakey.” His failure to realize this aspiration “rankled him for the rest of his life.”⁵³²

Not unlike Koinage and Kenyatta’s “game of one-upmanship” with Leakey, the African-American Eslanda Goode Robeson recounted how her experience in the anthropology seminars of Firth and Malinowski at the LSE and Arthur Hocart and W. J. Perry at London University motivated her journey to Africa. Although she found them “very interesting and exciting and challenging,” she “soon became fed up with white students and teachers ‘interpreting’ the Negro mind and character to me. Especially when I felt, as I did very often, that their interpretation was wrong.” When she protested, Goode Robeson recalled,

It went something like this: ... ‘Ah, no my dear, you’re wrong. You see, you are European. You can’t possibly know how the primitive mind works until you study it, as we have done ... [T]he primitive mind cannot grasp the kind of ideas we can; they have schools, but their schools have only simple subjects, and crafts, it’s all very different; You see, we’ve been out there for years and years (some ten, some twenty, some thirty years); we’ve studied them, taught them, administered them, worked with them, and we know.[.]’

In short, to inhabit the “primitive mind” was at the same time to be unable to understand or interpret it. Goode Robeson’s frustration led her to the Africans whom she had met in the universities and organizations like the WASU. She remembered asking, “What is all this about primitive minds and abstruse subjects about only simple subjects and crafts in your schools?” In response, she was told, “Oh, *that* ... there’s nothing primitive about our minds in their universities, is there? And how can we cope with any but simple subjects and crafts in our schools, when that is all they will allow us to have?” After this, Goode Robeson

⁵³² Koinage, Drake writes, “mistrusted [Richards’s] motives and was dubious about his own ability to keep up in the classes on theory at the London School of Economics, because of the amount of time he had to spend on his political work....” St. Clair Drake, “Mbiyu Koinage and the Pan-African Movement,” in *Pan-African Biography*, ed. by Robert A. Hill (Los Angeles: African Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, 1987), p. 174-177. See Goody, *The Expansive Movement*, see esp. Ch. 4 and 5.

wrote, “I began to see light ... We know we aren’t essentially different from our fellow Negroes. We know also that others’ merely saying we are different does not make us so.” Still, unlike Kenyatta, she had “no answer to the constant ‘You have never been out there.’” As a result, Goode Robeson embarked on her own journey to Africa in 1936, where she and her son traveled to South Africa, Basutoland, Kenya, Uganda, and Egypt, and visited Zach Matthews, who she met in Malinowski’s seminar, and African friends from London like Nyabongo.⁵³³

The environs of the university in Britain, down to the level of the seminar, often reproduced the racial hierarchies of imperial rule. Yet, they also conferred a degree of recognition, prestige, and, hence, power to black intellectuals and legitimized their research agendas. Indeed, the Colonial Office initially denied Goode Robeson’s applications for visas. As she observed, “It seems if you are a Negro, you can’t make up your mind to go to Africa, and just go. Oh, no ... The white people in Africa do not want educated Negroes traveling around seeing how their brothers live; nor do they want those brothers seeing Negroes from other parts of the world, hearing how they live ... Something must be done to prevent this ‘contact.’” Goode Robeson’s use of the concept of “contact” drew attention to colonial officials’ deployment of recent anthropological work on culture contact in the exercise of imperial authority. The Colonial Office and the white settlers in Africa, she suggested, had developed a “simple” way to keep “all other Negroes out of Africa, except maybe a few who will come to preach the Gospel”—“just don’t grant them visas.” However, after Goode Robeson informed the Colonial Office that she “was going out to do my fieldwork for a degree in anthropology” and presented my credentials from the professors at school,” the

⁵³³ This trip yielded Goode Robeson’s unjustifiably neglected travelogue/ethnography, *African Journey*, which includes her own photographs. Eslanda Goode Robeson, *African Journey* (New York: John Day Co., 1945), p. 14-15.

Office “was helpful and gave me all the visas.”⁵³⁴ As Goode Robeson’s account suggests, in the 1930s, both black intellectuals and colonial officials looked increasingly to anthropology and the social sciences, more generally, to lend a measure of validity to their divergent aims.

Conclusion

The leaders of a revolution are usually those who have been able to profit by the cultural advantages of the system they are attacking, and the San Domingo revolution was no exception to this rule.⁵³⁵

As the political demands of West Indians and Africans in London expanded during the 1940s, the ideal of the expert whose perspective transcended narrow sectional interests assumed a central place in their visions of development, international cooperation, and liberation from colonial rule. At a Fabian conference in 1946 on Britain’s relationship to the colonies, W. Arthur Lewis noted “that in all societies, however democratic or undemocratic they may be, it tends to be just a few leaders of the people who transform society.” “Where,” he asked, “is the leadership to come from in the Colonies?” For Lewis, the answer was obvious. “The only people who can transform the colonies into anything worth while are the educated Natives, the intelligentsia.”⁵³⁶

Black intellectuals’ appeal to scientific procedures, objectively determined data, and universal standards of development was enabling in clear ways. In the “State, Science and Citizen” which appeared in *Africana* in early 1949, Dr. R. E. G. Armattoe, the Ghanaian director of the Lomeshie Research Centre for Anthropology and Human Biology in Londonderry, attempted to define the role of the scientist in relation to the state and society. “A scientist,” he wrote, “must, if he is to remain scientific, keep an open mind on all issues

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵³⁵ C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989, originally 1938), p. 19.

⁵³⁶ Quoted in *Domination or Co-operation?* (London: Fabian Publications and Victor Gollancz, 1946), p. 5-6.

and form his judgment only after a careful examination of all the available facts. It follows that he will be an unpopular individual among bigots or those who feel strongly about given issues. But if the scientist feels that the facts give a different interpretation to a given problem, then he must be willing to defend his position unto death.” In this manner, many like Armattoe opposed the objective stance of the African scholar to the irrational attitude of British “bigots” and exalted the production of knowledge.⁵³⁷ While some, no doubt, viewed their work in a more pragmatic light, many West Indians and Africans aspired to recuperate the progressive elements of European thought in a new cosmopolitan synthesis and believed themselves, as colonial subjects *and* intellectuals, distinctively well-suited to do so. Yet, if the intellectual and political battles between colonial experts, whose professional status was linked to the restructuring imperial state, and West Indians and Africans in London intensified during the 1940s, they were rarely epistemological in nature. Joseph Massad’s observation regarding Arab intellectuals’ struggles with European Orientalists in the twentieth century might apply equally to black intellectuals under consideration here. “The fight,” Massad suggests, was “never ... about the conceptual tools to be used in the archaeological and hermeneutical effort but rather about historical accuracy, the nature of the evidence to be examined, and the kinds of judgment that can, or should, be derived from it.”⁵³⁸

As Eric Williams observed in the wake of decolonization in West Africa and the Caribbean, “My university generation has taken over not only in the West Indies but also in many of the countries emerging from colonialism. Take the case of India. The only society whose meetings I attended regularly at Oxford was the Indian Majliss, the centre of colonial

⁵³⁷ See below for more on the West African Society and *Africana*. R. E. G. Armattoe, “Science, the State and the Citizen,” *Africana* v. 1, n. 2 (April 1949), p. 14-15.

⁵³⁸ Joseph A. Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 15.

nationalism in Oxford.... Through the Indian Majliss, I heard Pandit Nehru in a memorable speech way back in the thirties.” Likewise, he wrote, “Many West African friends in my university days are today in politics, some on the side of the Opposition, others holding high office in the new Ghana and the new Nigeria....” Williams argued that those in Trinidad who bemoaned the “intellectualism” of his party, the People’s National Movement, failed to appreciate this general characteristic of the transition to independence throughout the British Empire. “Our PNM Movement,” he argued, “is part of the world movement against colonialism. Those who oppose PNM’s intellectualism seem ignorant of the fact that the leaders of [anti-]colonialism the world over are the very colonials who formed part of the university generation of the thirties, who saw the rise of Hitler, the rape of Ethiopia, the trampling of Spanish democracy, and who heard the Oxford Union refuse to fight for King and Country.”⁵³⁹

Following a series of articles on education in the West Indies in the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, Williams outlined his proposal for a British West Indian University and its curriculum in the journal in 1947. The university, he argued, should be “open to all” and “serve as a potent weapon of economic readjustment and social and political change.” What is more, “The British West Indian University should consciously make it its mission to promote popular sentiment in favour of ... federation and a broader Pan-Caribbean outlook,” which, Williams maintained, represented the “most pressing necessity in the British West Indies.” He envisioned the university as “the centre of culture of the entire Caribbean,” whose primary goal was “a synthesis of the outstanding national trends that have contributed to form the distinctive unity which the Caribbean area shows every sign of

⁵³⁹ Quoted in Williams, *Inward Hunger*, p. 53-54.

becoming.”⁵⁴⁰ Nothing illustrated Williams’ dedication to education as the cornerstone of political culture and the role of the intellectual as an activist more than his intensive campaign of public education in Trinidad during the years leading up to independence, which centered on the “University” of Woodford Square in Port of Spain. The university, as Williams wrote in 1969:

has for the past twelve years a centre of free university education for the masses, of political analysis and training in self government, for parallels of which we must go back to the city state of ancient Athens. The lectures have been university dishes served with political sauce. They have given the people of Trinidad and Tobago a vision and a perspective ... by placing them in the context of the world struggle ... for human freedom and for colonial emancipation.

Woodford Square blurred the boundaries between education and politics. “Education is politics, as Aristotle recognized,” Williams asserted, “and so, appropriately, it was in the University of Woodford Square that the People’s National Movement was launched on January 24, 1956.” From the start, the PNM included the Federation of the West Indies as a major plank in its party platform.⁵⁴¹

George Lamming recalls that Williams’ lectures on Caribbean history and grand experiment in public education had an indelible impact on his generation of West Indian intellectuals.

He taught us to see the history of any part of the Caribbean as the history of all, and he thought the task of the historian, in our particular context, was to break down particularism and parochialism in each territory. Here his appeal for regional perspective was brilliantly demonstrated by his own example. He was an activist scholar, and he made no apology for the intention of commitment which informed his work as a historian and intellectual.

“The Woodford Square of Eric Williams,” Lamming suggests, “has had no precedent or successor in any part of the known English-speaking Caribbean.” Transforming “history”

⁵⁴⁰ Eric E. Williams, “The Proposed West Indian University,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 16, n. 90 (April 1947), p. 89-92.

⁵⁴¹ Williams, *Inward Hunger*, p. 133.

into freely circulating “gossip,” his lectures at Woodford Square “retained always the character of whisper which everyone was allowed to hear, a rumor which experience had established as truth.” Williams, Lamming suggests, “was an example, probably the first of its kind in our part of the world, of the teacher, in the noblest sense of teacher, turned politician, and of the politician, in the truly moral sense of politician, turned teacher.”⁵⁴²

If Williams was exceptional in this regard, many of his contemporaries shared a lasting commitment to education, which had been engendered in part by their experiences in the imperial metropole.⁵⁴³ The university became the cornerstone of development for black intellectuals in the years before and immediately after decolonization. As early as 1938, the League of Coloured Peoples passed a resolution calling for “Universal free education for the entire Colonial population.” The League dispatched the resolution to the Colonial Office but “received little encouragement” in response.⁵⁴⁴ Much of the activities of the West African Students Union during World War II focused on the defense and expansion of higher education in West Africa. In a memorandum submitted to the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa in 1944, Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole and the WASU maintained that the existing colleges, Fourah Bay, Achimota, and Yaba, should “be developed as first class University Colleges to train teachers, and give pure Arts and pure Science subjects.” However, these measures alone were insufficient. “What we want and what Africa needs,” the asserted, “is an orthodox type of Higher Education, a University on the style and caliber of Oxford and Cambridge, and not an experimental make-shift.” This university should provide instruction in “every department of study,” including the humanities,

⁵⁴² George Lamming, “The Legacy of Eric Williams,” *Callaloo* v. 20, n. 4 (1997), p. 731-733.

⁵⁴³ See, for example, the section of “Intellectuals and the Masses,” in Norman W. Manley’s address to the League of Coloured Peoples. *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 16, n. 88 (January 1947), p. 63-64.

⁵⁴⁴ “Letter from the President to the *Manchester Guardian*,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 65 (February 1945), p. 96-97.

“science—pure and applied,” “medicine, law, commerce, agriculture,” “Fine Arts—especially music, sculpture, Brasswork, Handicrafts,” “African History, Music, Folk Lore, and Anthropology.”⁵⁴⁵ Although the dream of a federated university as a constituent component of a United West Africa never came to fruition, in 1960, Nnamdi Azikiwe established Nigeria’s first autonomous university, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and, as Ezeh notes, “remained a keen promoter of the discipline” of anthropology in the country’s universities throughout his life.⁵⁴⁶

After serving briefly as Nkrumah’s chief economic advisor in Ghana, W. Arthur Lewis returned to the Caribbean where he became the principal and then vice-chancellor of the University College of the West Indies between 1959 and 1963. By the late 1950s, the college had assumed a central position in plans for the political federation of the British West Indies. Although Williams had been one of the staunchest critics of the college during these years, which, he believed, unjustifiably privileged Jamaica, as Tignor states, he “moderated his opposition to the university once he learned that [his old friend] Lewis would be the principal.”⁵⁴⁷ The differences between Lewis and Williams notwithstanding, the importance which both men attributed to education in fostering development and regional political ties revealed a deeper unity of perspective. The valorization of intellectual culture, education, and a European model of development linked the first generation of postcolonial political leaders in Africa and Caribbean and became one of the legacies that they brought

⁵⁴⁵ Letter from Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole to Ladipo Solanke (December 8, 1943), Papers of Dr. Wellesley Cole Papers, SOAS Archives, PP MS 35, File 157 (WASU). See also letter from Ladipo Solanke to Margery Perham (May 13, 1942) and WASU memorandum on Fourah Bay College, Margery Perham Papers (MSS Perham), Box 426 (Sierra Leone), File 2, Rhodes House, Oxford University.

⁵⁴⁶ Ezeh, “Anthropology in Post-colonial Africa: the Nigerian Case,” p. 207-208.

⁵⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Lewis’ tenure at the fledgling college was a tumultuous one, which was rocked by a series of crises. Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 219.

with them from the colonial period across the divide of decolonization, enhancing the allure of modernization theory for many of them in the years after independence.

Chapter Six

The Invention of Colonial Development and the British Empire at War

Through their writings, propagandizing efforts, political alliances, and personal interactions, African and Caribbean intellectuals in London helped modify the rationale behind colony policy in the 1940s—a period in which the Colonial Office assumed greater centralized control and its approach shifted from “indirect rule” and “trusteeship” to colonial development and “partnership.” A new consensus emerged between British left, colonial experts, and reformers in the Colonial Office during the late 1930s and early 1940s around the conviction that the British Empire had to be reformed in order for it to survive, and the exigencies of the war led the British Government to take the first steps toward a new colonial policy. “Before 1935,” Barbara Bush observes, “African problems were rarely included in the political agenda of the imperial parliament and criticisms of the principles and workings of colonial rule generally went unheeded. This situation changed during the late 1930s as the growth of resistance in the colonial hinterland, combined with developments in international imperialism, refocalised Africa at the crux of debates over imperial policy.” In the years immediately preceding and during World War II, Africa, in particular, “was brought into the heart of mainstream politics in the imperial parliament.”⁵⁴⁸

World War II, popularly known as the “people’s war” in Britain, engendered visions of a national community linked in a common struggle that transcended class and gender divisions. As Wendy Webster explains, “a corresponding ‘people’s empire showed a wartime empire that pulled together across differences of race and ethnicity. ‘Partnership’ was the

⁵⁴⁸ Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, p. 248.

slogan first coined in 1942 to encapsulate the relationship between Britain and empire.⁵⁴⁹

This shift reflected a growing awareness of discontent in the colonies, particularly among workers and the educated elite in urban areas, as well as pressure from the United States for international minimum standards for colonial governance.⁵⁵⁰ Resistance to the idea of fighting to defend the British Empire helped delay the United States' involvement in the conflict, and the anti-imperialist stance of the Roosevelt administration compelled the British government to justify the continued existence of the empire once the U.S. entered the war.

For many black intellectuals around the Atlantic, however, racial discrimination in the United States and the British Empire belied the Allies' attempts to present themselves as the defenders of freedom and civil liberties in the struggle against Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and Fascist Italy. The League of Coloured Peoples identified "the intensification of America's attack on British Colonial Policy, and the lively replies that followed from this country," as "two great repercussions" of the United States' entry into the conflict. "To the Americans cry of 'Home Rule for India, and respect for Indian leaders and citizens,' the Britisher has been able to reply: 'At least **our** Indians are alive, three-hundred and eighty million strong.' To America's 'cease exploitation in Africa[.],' Britain has replied, 'we do not tolerate lynchings or mob violence against any one of our subjects of Africa.'"⁵⁵¹ As a consequence of these fraught debates, in 1941, Britain and the United States formulated their war aims in the Atlantic Charter in terms that emphasized self-determination for occupied territories and the "Principle of the Declaration of Human Rights." While Roosevelt assumed that the ideals outlined in the Atlantic Charter were universally

⁵⁴⁹ Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 7.

⁵⁵⁰ See M. Havinden and D. Meredith, *Colonialism and Development: Britain and Its Tropical Colonies, 1850-1960* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁵⁵¹ League of Coloured Peoples, "Introduction," *Twelfth Annual Report* (1942-1943), p. 3. See also W. Arthur Lewis, "Racial Discrimination," *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 26 (November 1941), p. 34-35.

applicable, Churchill rejected the suggestion that its guarantees of self-determination and self-government were germane to Britain's colonial possessions.

Nevertheless, the Atlantic Charter and the mobilization of the Commonwealth or "people's empire" created a context in which African, Caribbean, and British critics of empire could press their claims with greater legitimacy. The LCP's *News Notes* reprinted an excerpt from a speech delivered by Churchill on November 28, 1939. "If Imperialism means the assertion of racial superiority, if it means the suppression of the political and economic liberties of other peoples, if it means the exploitation of the resources of other countries for the benefit of the Imperialist country," he claimed, "then I say that those are not the characteristics of this country...." "For many years now," Churchill continued, "it has been the generally accepted dogma, not confined to any party in this House, that the administration of a Colonial Empire is a trust which is to be conducted primarily in the interests of the peoples in the countries concerned." In the following issue of the League's *Newsletter*, Harold Moody addressed these assertions directly. "We do not for one moment doubt his sincerity of motive but we ask that these pious expressions should square with the facts. We tire of such statements as 'preparing a people to stand on their own' when they never seem to get any nearer to this objective in the eyes of those who make such depositions." What is more, he argued, "The British Commonwealth will be immensely strengthened if she now brings in as equal partners the peoples of India and the East, of Africa and the West Indies. Some of us believe that this is to be her destiny, to lay the foundations for a World Commonwealth and therefore for World Peace. Let her away with all selfish motives and fulfill her destiny."⁵⁵² The obvious contributions of the colonies to the war effort and the passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in 1940

⁵⁵² *News Notes* n. 4 (January 1940); *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, n. 5 (February 1940).

encouraged West Indian and African intellectuals' expectations of what would follow, setting the stage for intense struggle over the meaning and application of terms like Commonwealth, development, and citizenship in the late 1940s.

Black Intellectuals in London and World War II

You shall not pass. We will add bar to bar.
Go you and labour – wait on our behest.
Ours is the right to live, and play, and rest;
Ours is the Earth, the Sun and every Star!
Cease your complaining; sounds of sorrow mar
Our sense of comfort – spoil the merry jest;
Take from our fair enjoyment half the zest.
You cannot join us, being what you are.

Yet you may toil for us, and we will give
A pittance, eked with doles; so you may live
Not die; and we may save our honoured name,
And men shall give us praise, but never blame.
We wish you well. But though your souls be white,
 alas!
Your skins are dark, and therefore you shall never pass.⁵⁵³

Initially, the Second World War fragmented the community of black students, activists, and intellectuals in London, disrupting the publications and other activities of groups like the West African Students Union and LCP. Many university students from the colonies returned home or evacuated to other parts of England. C. L. R. James and I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson left Britain in anticipation of the war. Once the bombings in London started Jomo Kenyatta and Dinah Stock left their flat in Camden Town for Storrington, where he worked at a local greenhouse and addressed trade unions and WEA classes. In 1942, Kenyatta married Edna Clarke, and their son, Peter Magana, was born the following year. Others like Una Marson and George Padmore, however, remained in London

⁵⁵³ Una C. Newbery, "Colour Bar," *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 26 (November 1941), p. 41.

throughout the war, and despite material hardships and the dangers of wartime London, both the WASU and LCP recovered quickly and grew in size and influence by the end of the war. The war effort brought thousands of troops and workers from the colonies and, beginning in 1942, even larger numbers of African-American GIs to Britain.⁵⁵⁴ Moreover, during the final years of the war, the numbers of university students from the Caribbean and Africa swelled to unprecedented levels. The WASU's "Africa House" in Camden Town, Padmore's flat on Cranleigh Street, and Marson's office at the BBC and her flat in Hampstead became "ports-of-call" for many.⁵⁵⁵ New arrivals in the mid-1940s encountered others from Africa and the diaspora and a range of black internationalist activity. At the same time, they pushed the LCP and WASU in new and often more critical directions, a process that also engendered moments of sharp disagreement and internal divisions.

World War II did not, as some like C. L. R. James predicted, usher in revolution by weakening the major European powers and clearing the way for successful uprisings by metropolitan proletarians and colonial populations. Instead, most African and West Indian intellectuals in London and the colonies declared their support for the Allied forces and their loyalty to the British government, due in large measure to the openly racist policies of Nazi Germany and the monumental stakes of the conflict. James left Britain for a lecture tour in the United States in October 1938, but the IASB continued its activities in his absence under

⁵⁵⁴ See esp. Sonya Rose, *Which People's War?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵⁵⁵ Take, for example, the case of a group of Jamaican technicians, Leonard Wilkins, and Dudley Thompson of the R.A.F., who visited the LCP, WASU, and Marson at the BBC while in London. As the LCP's *Newsletter* explained, "We had the joy of welcoming to our headquarters some of the technicians now in Britain, who were paying a brief holiday in the Metropolis ... [and] were accompanied by Mr. Dudley Thompson who had recently arrived also from Jamaica and been accepted by the R.A.F. for training as a pilot, [and] Mr. Leonard Wilkins now studying Law in this country." "Earlier the same day they were received at Africa House, the headquarters of the West African Students Union ... where they met Mr. Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, who was paying a visit to the House, who told them ... that they were fighting to 'freedom from war and freedom from want for all peoples.' They had also met Miss Una Marson, now of the B.B.C., who had arranged for them to make a record for broadcast to the West Indies." "Jamaican Technicians in Britain," *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 24 (September 1941), p. 135; see also Thompson, *From Kingston to Kenya: The Making of a Pan-Africanist Lawyer*.

Padmore. When the anticipated conflict finally came, however, it forced the group to revise their previous assumptions. “The work of the Bureau continued all through the war,” James recalled, “and in 1945 there came a sharp break with the theory outlined above. The Bureau changed its position from the achievement of independence by armed rebellion to the achievement of independence by non-violent mass action.” The circumstances that had motivated him to write *The Black Jacobins* in the late 1930s had shifted by 1945. “To stake independence upon armed rebellion was therefore to have as a precondition the collapse or military paralysis of the metropolitan government. It was in other words to place the initiative for African struggle upon the European proletariat.” “But by the end of the war,” he explained, “the proletariat of Britain and France had not spoken. Imperialism still held sway at home. Only a radical alteration in theory could form a basis for action.”⁵⁵⁶

With the onset of war in 1939, however, the terms of debate shifted subtly, as colonial issues assumed greater weight for the British government and public at large, and so too did the terms in which black intellectuals’ articulated the imperial state. Soon after the outbreak of hostilities, the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, which replaced *The Keys* in 1939, reprinted recent observations made by Margery Perham in *The Spectator* regarding the impact of the war on Britain’ relationship to the colonies. “Suppression,” she wrote, “is becoming for the British an impracticable weapon.... This is mainly because we have lost faith in it ourselves. We have, especially in recent months, solemnly declared ... that not only the Commonwealth but also the Colonial Empire is based upon respect for freedom, and leads, however gradually, towards self-government for its peoples.” “With whatever qualifications,” she continued, “when applied to our heterogeneous possessions, such statements must mean something, and war is an occasion when we may be asked by subject

⁵⁵⁶ Hill, p. 26-27

peoples exactly what they do mean.” In response, Moody asserted, “We are not only asking this question, but we also say ‘Deeds not words.’”⁵⁵⁷ Similarly, the journalist and musician Rudolph Dunbar warned, “You will not gain the full confidence and co-operation of coloured men and women by telling them they would be worse off under fascist rule. You will only do that by convincing them that they will be better off in free association with you.”⁵⁵⁸

In 1939, the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* described the prevailing outlook in the colonies towards the war effort. “The general attitude of the Colonial Peoples is wholehearted support for Britain and France in the step they have taken. The Nazi Regime is regarded as the arch-enemy of Freedom, Equality, and Religion, and as such is a menace to all peoples wherever they may live.” Citing similar remarks from the West African press and the editor of *The People*, a trade unionist newspaper from Trinidad, Moody argued that colonials on both sides of the Atlantic were “roused to fury by the views Hitler has expressed on the place of the Negro,” and quoted approvingly from the *Gold Coast Independent*, the *Gold Coast Independent*, “usually a most severe critic of British colonial policy.” “This war,” the latter maintained, “is therefore as much the African’s war as the Pole’s, the Frenchman’s or the Englishman’s war,” and “Africans should be unsparing in the service they can render to win the war.” “British policy is full of faults,” Moody wrote, “but the Negro has under British rule some hope of attaining freedom if only he struggles hard enough for it; whereas under Nazi rule he would have no chance at all.”⁵⁵⁹ At the same time, however, he located the roots of Nazi racism in the Atlantic trade in African slaves and

⁵⁵⁷ “War and the Colonies,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 2 (November 1939).

⁵⁵⁸ Quoted in George Padmore and Nancy Cunard, “The White Man’s Duty: An Analysis of the Colonial Question in Light of the Atlantic Charter,” in Nancy Cunard, *Essays on Race and Empire*, ed. by Maureen Moynagh (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002, originally 1942), p. 130.

⁵⁵⁹ “Public Opinion in the Colonies,” *Ibid.*

European imperialism. “In these days of upheaval which cannot altogether be dissimilar to the upheaval which afflicted Africa in the days of slavery,” Moody urged, “let Africans and people of African descent fully understand that just as our catastrophe brought new life and prosperity to Europe, so must Europe’s turmoil bring to us new life and hope if we can only wisely place ourselves in the family of nations.” He continued, “We think we are right in assuming that the outlook of life which produced slavery and the slave trade has also produced this grave hour. The historical processes which we are witnessing to-day had their origins five hundred years ago. Africa was at the beginning. Can she now help to give history another twist which will produce something far more glorious in the next 500 years?”⁵⁶⁰

Whereas the exploitation of African labor played a decisive role in European hegemony and “prosperity,” for Moody and other black intellectuals in London, Europe’s relationship to Africa and colonial peoples in general offered, at once, the greatest challenge to and promise for a lasting peace and more egalitarian future.⁵⁶¹ The British Commonwealth, in particular, had a special part to play as both a model and building block of a new international order. Moody quoted approvingly the views expressed by Babatunde O. Alakja, the first African selected for training as a pilot in the His Majesty’s Air Force: “If we are to defeat [Hitler’s plans for Europe], we, too, must have a vision for the future rooted in our own tradition.” What is more, Alakja suggested, “In the diversity of its people the British Empire is already the prototype of an international order ... It has been harnessed to certain ideals which are, slowly and imperfectly, coming to fulfillment—the ideals of equal care for the needs of all, of equal opportunity for the capacities of all, of government by and

⁵⁶⁰ Harold Moody, “Europe’s Upheaval Compared with Africa’s of Slave Days,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 10 (July 1940), p.61.

⁵⁶¹ See, for example, Basil Matthews, “The Future of Race Relations,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 15 (December 1940), p. 61-62.

for the governed, of free collaboration between peoples....” “Such power,” he concluded, “is the symbol, not of oppression, but of hope.” Moody also cited prominent authorities like W. B. Mumford, the senior lecturer in comparative education and director of the Department of Colonial Studies at the University of London Institute of Education in the late 1930s, who advocated “(largely on the ground that this is the clearly-expressed will of almost all vocal African leadership) that Britain, Freed France, Belgium, etc., joining after war with America in a co-operative order of democracies, should bring on their subject peoples to self-government along the lines of democratisation already increasingly at work, especially in the British Commonwealth of Nations.” Thus, “Each people,” Mumford argued, “would ... move toward self-government, not under the tutelage of a European civil service—whose ideologies and efficiency they seem to distrust in advance—but as a free member of a British (or French or Belgian) commonwealth within the wider society of peoples to which those once imperial commonwealths will, after Nazism is destroyed, belong.” Like Moody, George Padmore maintained, “We demand full self-determination, not as an end in itself—for we are not narrow nationalists—but as the historic prerequisite for the free and voluntary co-operation between all nations and peoples and races.”⁵⁶²

Similarly, in an article from 1942 on the “Colour Bar,” the communist Desmond Buckle from the Gold Coast argued, “Absence of artificial social and racial barriers is one the sources of Soviet strength. Immense benefit would result to the war effort if all individuals both civil and military, were to learn that elementary fact.”⁵⁶³

⁵⁶² Padmore quoted in *League of Coloured Peoples* n. 20 (May 1941), p. 31; Moody, *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 15 (December 1940), p. 49-54. Clive Whitehead, *Colonial Educators: The British Indian and Colonial Education Service* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), p. 230. See also W. B. Mumford, “Native Schools in Central Africa,” *Journal of the Royal African Society* v. 26, n. 103 (April 1927), pp. 237-244; W. B. Mumford and C. E. Smith, “Racial Comparisons and Intelligence Testing,” *Journal of the Royal African Society* v. 37, n. 146 (January 1938), pp. 46-57.

⁵⁶³ Desmond Buckle, “Colour Bar,” *World News and Views* (November 21, 1942), p. 453-454.

During the first years of the war, Moody and Padmore once again came together to petition the government to lift the “colour bar” in the British military, despite their significant differences. Under different circumstances, one might expect that Moody, who was a committed pacifist, and the fervently anti-imperialist Padmore would have opposed colonials’ involvement in the war, though for different reasons. Yet, like most black intellectuals in the metropole, they fought for more opportunities for colonial subjects *within* the war effort, and Moody saw his own children, including his daughter Christine Moody, enter His Majesty’s forces. Some like Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole applied for enlistment at the start of the war but received no answer because of the regulation limiting the King’s commissions to individuals of “pure European descent.”⁵⁶⁴ Both the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* and *Wàsù* lauded the sacrifices of their members and other Africans and West Indians in the war abroad and as bomb shelter wardens and members of Stretcher Parties, First Aid units, and mobile canteens in London during the Blitz.⁵⁶⁵ In 1945, the former reported the death of the Sierra Leonean Peter Thomas in a plane crash. Thomas was the first West African to be commissioned in the Royal Air Force and, like his sister Stella Marke (née Thomas), had been active in the League during the mid-1930s.⁵⁶⁶

When the government lifted the bar on commissions to non-Europeans for the duration of the war on an “emergency” basis, Moody lauded the move as a “triumph” for the League, but criticized the government’s decision to bracket the measure as an exceptional case. Black intellectuals argued that reforms undertaken as a result of the necessities of wartime conditions should be extended after the war. For the promise of the

⁵⁶⁴ For other examples of individuals denied entry into the services, see “Colour Bar: Reactions,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 7 (April 1940).

⁵⁶⁵ See “Coloured People and the London ‘Blitz,’” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 15 (December 1940), p. 67.

⁵⁶⁶ “Secretary’s Notes,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 65 (February 1945), p. 102.

British Commonwealth to be realized, Moody argued, the colour bar “must be abolished at all costs.” The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* reported numerous examples of racial discrimination throughout the war “so that all may know just how much damage is done by this cruel, un-Christian and un-English practice,” and the LCP circulated a memorandum “on the whole subject of the Colour Bar in the Forces and in the Civil Administration” to every member of Parliament. “It is just like the British Government to give us things in piecemeal,” Moody wrote. “We are thankful for what has been done, but we are not satisfied. We do not want it only for the duration of the war. We want it for all time. If the principle is accepted now, surely it must be acceptable all the time.” “Our work in the main,” he continued, “is to establish the fact, in a practical manner, that in the British Commonwealth of Nations there cannot be and shall not be any colour, racial or religious bar. If this work is to be accomplished then the British Government must take the first step and remove from all its regulations anything which encourages such barriers.”⁵⁶⁷

Led by Moody and W. Arthur Lewis, the LCP also initiated a campaign against the bar on the appointment of non-Europeans in the colonial service. Since 1930, when the Colonial Office created a unified colonial service, the League had raised the issue of colonial subjects’ eligibility for administrative positions. As Tignor states, “the reform had a racial dimension” since “the 1930 regulations openly stated that applicants had to be of European parentage.” Lewis, who had been rebuffed in his own attempt to enter the colonial service, shifted the focus of the LCP’s activities from instances of discrimination in hotels, housing, and other private establishments to the institutionalized racism in the government. Whereas Colonial Office officials had been apologetic in response to cases of the former, they struggled to articulate a defense in the face of these new charges leveled directly against

⁵⁶⁷ *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, n. 2 (November 1939) and n. 7 (April 1940).

themselves. In a veritable deluge of correspondence and a string of meetings on the subject, the League pressed the Colonial Office to make “an unequivocal statement against discrimination in hiring and promoting persons of color in the unified colonial services,” a step which the later proved unwilling to take. Rather, the Colonial Office maintained that the dearth of non-Europeans in the colonial service resulted from either colonials’ insufficient qualifications or a lack of interest on their part and mobilized some of the most prominent officials and colonial experts to justify its policies. In an outrageous appropriation of pan-Africanist rhetoric, Lord Lugard, for one, maintained “that opening up the colonial services to every British subject, white and nonwhite, would violate the principle of Africa for the Africans.”⁵⁶⁸

Lewis and the LCP, however, remained unsatisfied and cited numerous examples (an advertisement in the *British Medical Journal*, a Colonial Office memorandum on “General Information regarding Colonial Appointments, and even the *Colonial Service Recruitment Manual*) which specifically stated the requirement that applicants be of European descent, arguing that such explicitly racist statements “are an unnecessary offense which would be more in place in a German document than in a British one.” Ultimately, the League claimed the right to publish its full correspondence with the Colonial Office. In his introduction to the latter in the *League of Coloured Newsletter*, Lewis noted, “Ever since its inception it [colonial employment] has to all practical purposes been reserved to white men to the exclusion of those born within the colonial empire itself.” “Until that determination is done away with and people are chosen on merit alone and posted on merit alone,” he asserted, “... the basic problem persists.” The episode garnered unprecedented publicity for the League, and the

⁵⁶⁸ Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 48-52; Letter from Lugard to Moody (September 1, 1941), PRO CO 850/193/2. See also G. Gater, “Note of [Secretary of State’s] Interview with Dr. Moody” (September 28, 1942), PRO CO 859/80/10: Colour Discrimination in the U.K. – League of Coloured Peoples Correspondence.

publication of its correspondence with the Colonial Office drew comment in a range of British newspapers like the *Manchester Guardian* and *West Africa*.⁵⁶⁹

Like Lewis and the LCP, the WASU highlighted the hypocrisy of the Colonial Office's stance, which, in practice, involved reserving the top positions for white officers while revealing overwhelmingly on Africans on the local level in the quotidian administration of the colonies. In a written address presented to the Colonial Secretary Oliver Stanley during his visit to Africa House in 1943, the Union demanded "That all our Native Administrations be converted into efficient democratic local Administrations," and called for the immediate introduction of internal self-government in West Africa "in which the executive is controlled by or is answerable to the majority of the elected African members of the legislature," noting that "the grant of such type of constitution shall surely give us a concrete thing to fight for in this war." "As concrete evidence that what we are now demanding is not too much," the WASU asserted, "you need only to remember that it is a fact that more than 90% of the volume of administrative work carried on at present in each of these four [West African] dependencies is being actually performed by the Africans themselves whilst the remaining less than 10% consists ... in merely watching and maintaining the imperial policy and interests." Thus, they argued, "We have already enough number of educated Africans capable and ready to be trained further, if the Government wish to, as experts in the art of modern Self-Government to fill all the posts on top. We beg, emphatically, to assert here, Sir, that we in West Africa are ripe for Self-Government."⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁹ For Lewis's introduction and the correspondence between the LCP and the Colonial Office, see *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 23 (August 1941), p. 97-118. Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 51-52.

⁵⁷⁰ West African Students Union, "A Welcome Address Presented by WASU to the Rt. Hon. Col. Oliver Stanley M.P. The Secretary of State for the Colonies on the Occasion of His Visit to Africa House on the 9th April 1943," PRO CO 554/127/12: West African Students' Union (1943).

Both the LCP and WASU also began to devote greater attention to the concerns of African and West Indian women in London and the colonies during. In outlining its case to Stanley, the Union cited “two cases of the members of WASU who having duly and sufficiently qualified and applied for certain posts hitherto given to Europeans who are not even better qualified than they, were refused these appointments.” The first concerned Olive Johnson, “who applied for the post of a Nurse at Achimota College but was refused on grounds which ... have not yet cleared our minds from the doubt as to whether or not a discriminatory policy is still being pursued in this matter of Colonial appointments by the Colonial Office.”⁵⁷¹ Likewise, the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* observed that although “A great call has been sounded for women” to support the war effort, “One of our number, well qualified, made application and according to her story received a curt refusal.”⁵⁷² When the discrimination that black women faced in their search for employment had been addressed previously within these groups, it was due to the efforts of women members such as Una Marson. In singling out the cases of individual women as examples of the workings of the colour bar in general, the LCP and WASU compelled officials within the Colonial Office to enquire into the barriers to their advancement for the first time. The fact that these discussions took place at all within internal Colonial Office correspondence represented a significant departure from the status quo.

The LCP and WASU maintained that racial discrimination in the military and the colonial service was an epiphenomenon of a more general “colour bar” throughout the British Empire, arguing that if colonial troops could fight and die in the war, they should also enjoy the rights of citizenship regardless of racial or other differences. In the early years

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷² *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 3 (December 1939).

of the war, black writers and activists in London assumed a patriotic posture in public discussions over commissions for non-Europeans to launch a broader critique of the racism in the British Empire. For many like Moody, the existence of the colour bar represented the distinguishing characteristic of the “Empire” as opposed to an egalitarian “Commonwealth.” In his opening editorial in the *Newsletter* from July 1940, Moody noted the tendency to occlude mention of “India and the Colonies” in invocations of “An Empire in Arms” within *The Times* and other British newspapers. “There is a great danger in this kind of thinking and the loose use of the words ‘Empire’ and ‘Commonwealth,’” he argues, “and it is our purpose to try to avert in every way possible such casualties in the future. If the Empire is in arms, then we, in the Colonies, should be in arms also, serving both in the Motherland and at home.” “The effect of this,” Moody wrote, “must be that the sense of difference which now obtains in the mind of the average Englishman between Britain and her Colonies would tend to disappear, and in the settlement which must follow this struggle, we, in the Colonies, would come in for a greater share of the efforts towards reconstruction than would otherwise be the case.”⁵⁷³

Thus, while most Caribbean and African intellectuals’ expressed support for the British war effort, they did so in a manner that linked colonials’ participation in the latter to broader claims to the rights of citizenship in the British Commonwealth of Nations and framed the conflict as a global struggle against racism and chauvinistic nationalism. “Nothing has earned for the Nazi Government more world-wide horror, hatred and contempt,” Lewis observed, “than its persecution of the Jews and the new races it has conquered. Decent people in every country know that where one race sets out to exploit another there can be

⁵⁷³ Harold Moody, “Loose Use of Words ‘Empire’ and ‘Commonwealth,’” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 10 (July 1940), p.61.

no peace in society; freedom and equality for all, whatever their race, colour or creed, is an essential pillar of civilisation.” It was this conviction, he argued, “which gives special point to the League of Coloured People’s present campaign to banish the Colour Bar from the British Empire.” Although “British law contains few racial distinctions,” Lewis charged, “the unwritten colour bar is the rule throughout the Empire ... In Britain too, the same is true....” The LCP “is determined to continue till it can no longer be said of the British that the only difference between them and the Nazis is that they are less brutal but more dishonest.”⁵⁷⁴

Soon after the start of the war, the League sent a letter to the government on the subject of “war aims.” As Moody explained in the group’s *Newsletter*, “We believe that in it we have accurately interpreted the articulate and inarticulate wishes of our people both in the West Indies and Africa. We speak with authority also, because sometime long ago we received several cablegrams from all sections in Jamaica bidding us to act in their behalf and we have received similar instructions from West Africa.” “Without any desire whatsoever to hinder the successful progress of this unfortunate war,” he wrote, “we should inform the Government where we stand on certain vital matters and secure from them, if possible, a definition of their ‘War Aims’ so far as we are concerned. We must make it unmistakably [*sic*] clear that we will be satisfied with nothing less that [*sic*] self-government. Our demand is both to be trained and to train ourselves for this goal.” In short, Moody continued, “We seek freedom.”⁵⁷⁵ In the League’s annual report for 1941 and 1942, the General Secretary A. A. Thompson wrote, “The colonies are now quite certain about the form of government

⁵⁷⁴ W. Arthur Lewis, “Thoughts on the Colour Bar,” *League of Coloured Peoples* n. 6 (March 1940). See also Lewis, “Racial Discrimination,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 26 (November 1941), p. 34-35; “A Short Lecture on the Colour Bar, Delivered at Our Ninth Annual General Meeting by Dr. H. J. A. Dingwall” and “Britain’s Black Background,” *News Notes* n. 8 (May 1940), p. 24-30.

⁵⁷⁵ *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 3 (December 1939).

they want and about the form of Imperial Status the British Government ought to accord them.” He claimed that the views expressed by a recent delegation of West Indian journalists to London were indicative of the prevailing sentiment in the colonies. “All desired the British Commonwealth of nations to develop into a reality.”⁵⁷⁶ Black intellectuals mobilized the notion of the colour bar to highlight the discrepancy between the image of the “people’s empire” and the reality of British racism and expose the constitutive link between Britons’ investment in an image of empire as a humanitarian mission and their fantasies of white superiority.

In particular, the intensification of government repression in colonies, which was directed primarily toward the colonial intelligentsia and trade unions, appeared to many to belie the rhetoric of development and reform. On their own and in conjunction with British organizations, colonial sojourners publicized the detention of specific Africans and West Indians and petitioned the government for their release. The case of I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson provoked vociferous criticism in both Sierra Leone and Britain during the first year of the war. Due to Wallace-Johnson’s alleged ties to the Communist Party and his previous activities with the West African Youth League in the Gold Coast and the IASB in London, Governor Douglas Jardine of Sierra Leone was keen to dispense with him at the first opportunity. Upon his arrival in Freetown in 1938, customs agents seized two thousand copies of the *African Sentinel*. In defense of the action, Jardine wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, “It is most undesirable that such nonsense should be circulated among the population.”⁵⁷⁷ This move, however, backfired and garnered its target sufficient public notoriety to establish the West African Youth League in Sierra Leone. As a

⁵⁷⁶ League of Coloured Peoples, “Eleventh Annual Report (Year 1941-1942) as presented to the Eleventh Annual General Meeting,” (March 13, 1942), p. 11.

⁵⁷⁷ CO 267/665/32208/1938. The file also contains a copy of the seized issue.

consequence of the growing popularity the Youth League, which was manifested in its stunning electoral victories in Freetown, and a combination of incidents that the Sierra Leonean government believed to be linked to Wallace-Johnson—a strike by the Workers of the Sierra Leone Coaling Company and War Department Workers, the mutiny of African gunners led by Emmanuel Cole, and a series of articles in the Youth League’s newspaper, the *African Standard*—he became the “*bête noire*” of paranoid officials in the colony, who viewed him as a “most dangerous agitator and demagogue.” In an attempt to establish a legal basis to deport Wallace-Johnson from the colony or, at least, transfer him from Freetown to an isolated area in the Protectorate, the Colonial Office gave the Sierra Leone government permission to introduce a series of six bills (the Undesirable British Subjects Control Bill or, as it was commonly referred to, the Deportation Bill, the Sedition Bill, the Undesirable Publications Bill, the Incitement to Disaffection Bill, the Trade Union Bill, and the Trade Disputes Bill) which drastically curtailed civil liberties in the colony and sparked a storm of controversy in Britain and West Africa.⁵⁷⁸

In 1939, when Wallace-Johnson was charged with criminal libel for an article that appeared in the *African Standard* entitled “Who Killed Fonnies?” the acting governor, H. R. R. Blood, and the acting attorney general, Charles Abbott, moved swiftly to have him interned under the recently instituted Wartime Emergency Defence Regulations, which gave colonial authorities the right to take action as a “preventive” measure. Black intellectuals in London denounced Wallace-Johnson’s imprisonment as a miscarriage of justice, and Labour MPs like Wilfred Paling, Arthur Creech Jones, Stafford Cripps, and Reginald Sorensen, queried the Colonial Office regarding the evidence against him and pressured the Secretary of State

⁵⁷⁸ Memorandum by Charles Abbott, Acting Attorney General of Sierra Leone, dated February 5, 1939, CO 267/670/32210/2.1 (1939); for examples of protests against the new legislation, see CO 267/672/32254/1/1939.

Malcolm MacDonald to revise the new regulations. Before the issue came to a head, however, the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone convicted Wallace-Johnson on the charge of libeling the District Commissioner of Bonthe, John Henry de Burgh Shaw. Initially, he was held at the Internment Camp for Enemy Aliens before being moved to the Freetown jail. After four months, Wallace-Johnson was transferred to the Remand Prison and placed in solitary confinement for forty-five days. Due to his deteriorating health, he was relocated to the prison's hospital ward, where he remained for the next eleven months. After completing his sentence for libel, the Governor had Wallace-Johnson interned at Bonthe on Sherbro Island until late 1944.⁵⁷⁹

Though, perhaps, an extreme example of the lengths to which the colonial governments were willing to go to quell dissent, Wallace-Johnson's imprisonment was hardly an isolated case. Lauding the efforts of the Colonial Committee of the World Trade Union Congress in presenting "a united front on all matters affecting Colonial interests," the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* noted that at least three of its members had been detained for trade unionist activities. "35-year-old Ken Hill, from Jamaica, who opposed Bustamente at the last Jamaica elections, was interned in 1942. Mr. Wallace Johnson, of Sierra Leone, after serving a term of five years, was released a few weeks ago in order to attend the Conference at the request of Sir Walter Citrine. The British Guiana delegate, the Hon. H. W. Critchlow, now a member of the B. G. Legislative Council, has also been detained in the past—what an indictment of British Colonial policy." The LCP endorsed the views expressed by Wallace-Johnson at the Congress, including his call "for a 'Black Man's Charter,' [and] ... freedom of

⁵⁷⁹ Minutes by Williams, dated February 5, 1941, and C. A. Grossmith, dated February 12, 1941, CO 267/682/32303; also letter from I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson to Arthur Creech Jones, dated March 30, 1944, Arthur Creech Jones Papers (MSS Brit. Emp. s. 332), Rhodes House, Oxford University, Box 7, File 4. See also Spitzer and Denzer, "I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson and the West African Youth League, Part II: The Sierra Leone Period, 1938-1945," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6, 4 (1973), p. 566-567, 583-600.

assembly, speech and Press” in the colonies.⁵⁸⁰ When the Governor Of Jamaica ordered the immediate arrest of the African American W. A. Domingo upon his arrival on the island in 1941, the LCP decried the move as an act of inter-imperial racism.⁵⁸¹ In October 1944, Joseph B. Danquah, who had been the first editor of *Wàsù* in 1927, was arrested in the Gold Coast on suspicion of dissuading witnesses from testifying in a murder trial, but was acquitted two months later.

To the chagrin of African and Caribbean intellectuals in the metropole, racial discrimination persisted, and government repression in the colonies increased noticeably during the war.⁵⁸² Yet, there were also indications that the imperial *status quo* was giving way to more egalitarian possibilities—above all, the passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare in 1940 and the promulgation of the Atlantic Charter. In a letter published in *West Africa*, Ladipo Solanke described the WASU’s reaction to recent parliamentary debates on colonial policy. The Union’s members “watched with keener interest than ever the debate in the House of Commons (November 20) on Colonial affairs.” “While the speeches as a whole provided good evidence of Parliament’s increasing vigilance over the affairs of the Colonial Empire,” Solanke observed, “it is significant that the reply of the Colonial Office through the Under-Secretary is, to put it mildly, somewhat disappointing, in material respects.” Nevertheless, Solanke found cause for hope in the sentiments expressed in the Commons, especially those proffered by certain Labour Party MPs. “In almost all the speeches, a great urge had been made upon the Colonial Office (or Government) for

⁵⁸⁰ “Secretary’s Notes,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, n. 66 (March 1945), p. 127.

⁵⁸¹ See *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, n. 24 (September 1941), p. 137.

⁵⁸² See, for example, “Colour Discrimination in the U.K. – League of Coloured Peoples Correspondence,” PRO CO 859/80/10 (1940). Also, the League of Coloured Peoples’ *News Notes* (October and December 1939) on the Deportation, Undesirable Literature, and Sedition Ordinances in Sierra Leone and the Midwifery Bill in Jamaica; S. L. Polak, “Colour Prejudice in Britain,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 18 (March 1941), p. 133-134.

immediate measures for the grant of Constitutional changes in various Colonies with a view to increasing the political freedom of their peoples.” He praised, in particular, the remarks of Arthur Creech Jones, who suggested “that we should give increased representation to the Colonial peoples on all legislative, advisory bodies and other authorities” and open “the highest posts in the Colonial Service to Colonial peoples themselves” on the French model. “There ought to be some re-evaluation in what is clumsily called the whole system of indirect rule,” Creech Jones maintained. “It must be made more flexible and more democratic, in order that it shall meet the strains and changing needs of social and economic life,” particularly in the West Indies and West Africa. Solanke condemned the Colonial Office’s refusal to address these recommendations and the issue of constitutional changes in general, insisting that, “while we West Africans much appreciate the importance of economic and social progress in the development of any people, we regard Constitutional advancement as of more importance than any of the other matters.” He continued, “We want to have a real and effective voice in the shaping and control of our educational, social and economic policies; but this can never be feasible until the necessary changes have been made on democratic lines, in our present Constitution.” “In other words,” Solanke maintained, “our conviction is that Constitutional advance and economic progress must move forward together before a free Africa, the goal of our ambition can be achieved.”⁵⁸³

The exigencies of the war effort bolstered the contention of many spokespersons of “Britain’s conscience on Africa” like Creech Jones that the existing system of fiscally self-sufficient colonies required revision. Lord Hailey, for example, “urged the application to the Empire of the expanded role of the state which had developed in Britain ... during the

⁵⁸³ Ladipo Solanke, “The Commons Colonial Debate—W.A.S.U. Makes Important Statement,” *West Africa* (December 13, 1941), p. 1199.

1930s Depression.”⁵⁸⁴ The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* discussed a speech by Hailey on “Modern Colonial Aims” to a “business men’s luncheon arranged by the London Missionary Society” at the start of the war in which he “stated that self-government for the Colonial areas was to be achieved by deliberate planning and not by a long period of friction, delayed hopes and estrangement between the ruling race and subject people” and “stressed the need for greater financial assistance and for improvement in social services.” In response, the League noted, “We must pay attention to such an authority and at the same time question the wisdom of our Colonies, at this stage, in cutting down their allocations for social services and in sending large sums to help Britain carry on with the war.”⁵⁸⁵

Building on the work of Hailey and others, a new consensus emerged amongst colonial experts and within the Colonial Office, the Labour Party, and other groups on the British left around the belief that the pay-your-way model of colonial governance must be supplemented, for a time, with direct outlays by the exchequer for the development of economic and social infrastructure in Britain’s African and Caribbean colonies.

“Development” and “welfare,” the two key terms in the title of the historic Colonial Development and Welfare Act that became law in June 1940 captured the new rationale for the British Empire during the decade that followed. Increasingly, British authorities on the colonies argued that the progress of individual colonies and, by extension, the legitimacy of colonial rule should be judged not only by the steps taken toward democracy and self-government, but also the level of economic development and social welfare. The new developing mission combined a positivist faith in the scientific precision of quantifiable measures with an expanded role for experts.

⁵⁸⁴ Ronald Hyam, “Bureaucracy and ‘Trusteeship’ in the Colonial Empire,” *Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume IV: The Twentieth Century*, Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 275.

⁵⁸⁵ *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 3 (December 1939).

The impetus for colonial development derived in large part from the disturbances in the West Indies during the late 1930s, and the publication of the Moyne Commission's recommendations in early 1940 provided the occasion for the Secretary of State Malcolm MacDonald to introduce the new legislation. Although the Moyne Commission's report failed to offer a comprehensive plan for economic development in the region, it recommended the creation of a West Indian Welfare Fund with funds from the British Government to institute a series of programs directed ameliorating social conditions in the Caribbean. Such a fund, the Commission suggested, should be administered a Comptroller, who reported directly to the Secretary of State for the Colonies rather than the individual colonial governors, in conjunction with a team of experts. Even before the start of the war, MacDonald "regarded an untarnished colonial reputation as an essential part of Britain's defence policy," and emphasized the "propaganda value which such a programme of colonial development would have during wartime." MacDonald enjoyed the full support of the Colonial Office, which had been engaged in planning for an empire-wide program of development since July 1938 through a special departmental committee. The provisions of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 earmarked up to five million pounds annually for colonial development and welfare initiatives for a period of ten years and an additional five hundred thousand a year for colonial research. MacDonald maintained that these funds could be employed for "everything which ministers to the physical, mental, or moral development of the colonial peoples of whom we are the trustees." Nevertheless, the demands of the war, which exposed Britain's dependence upon its colonies as never before, made it impossible, as Secretary of State Lord Lloyd observed in the summer of 1940, "to make any substantial progress under the new policy," and little had been achieved in the Caribbean or elsewhere by 1945. "As early as 1942, Members of Parliament and

commentators such as *The Economist* were noting the small sum which the British Government had spent in the West Indian colonies since the much-publicized change in the policy on colonial development.” Indeed, In 1945, W. Arthur Lewis remarked, “after four years, the use of a microscope would hardly reveal any progress on the development side in the West Indies, though a few welfare projects had actually been started.”⁵⁸⁶

The new developing mission accorded a central role to research and expert knowledge, leading to the creation of new organizations and, within the Colonial Office, advisory committees devoted to gathering and producing knowledge on imperial problems. The Colonial Office expanded greatly its permanent staff and research initiatives in an attempt to coordinate colonial planning. For example, as Pearce observes, “the number of despatches and telegrams sent and received in a calendar year increased from about 7,000 each way in 1937 to about 40,000 in 1944,” while the Colonial Office staff “increased from 400 around 1938 to 1,168 in 1947, during which time eight specialist advisers were added and the number of specialist, as opposed to geographical, departments rose from five to well over twenty.”⁵⁸⁷ In some instances, this led to the creation of forums in which Africans and West Indians in London debated the future of the “tropical colonies” with Britons both within and outside of the government who shared an interest in the subject, although a highly circumscribed one. The creation of the West African Parliamentary Committee in 1942 was particularly significant in this regard. The Committee consisted of Labour MPs, Fabians like Dr. Rita Hinden and Ms. O. R. Crutchley, and West Africans, “who met once a week in Westminster Palace to discuss colonial problems generally, but especially the

⁵⁸⁶ Howard Johnson, “The British Caribbean from Demobilization to Constitutional Decolonization,” *Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. IV*, p. 610-615; Malcolm MacDonald, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), Fifth Series, 361, May 21, 1940, col. 47; D. J. Morgan, *The Official History of Colonial Development*, 5 vols. (Atlantic Highland, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1979), 1, p. 90; W. Arthur Lewis quoted in “A Meeting at the Fabian Colonial Bureau,” Charles W. Taussig Papers, Box 49, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY.

⁵⁸⁷ Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, p. 66.

question of freedom after the war.” “Its aims, as laid down at the inaugural meeting were: (a) To consider current West African problems; (b) To consider matters relating to the future of West Africa; (c) To make such representations as are possible; and (d) To secure contact between bodies and persons concerned with West African democratic progress.” *Wàsù* and *West Africa* published periodic reports on the group’s activities, which increased awareness of the Committee beyond the metropole and lent it a symbolic importance far greater than its practical function. Although Rev. Reginald Sorensen chaired the Committee, the WASU was well represented. Ladipo Solanke, R. W. Beoku-Betts, A. O. Thomas, R. K. Gardiner, and F. O. Blaize were members of the Committee from the start, the latter serving as its first secretary. Thus, the West African Parliamentary Committee became another arena in which black intellectuals could articulate their claims and seek recognition and potentially redress of their grievances. Solanke, for example, used the meetings to call for the Africanization of the colonial service, the “democratization of all West African Native Administrations,” the “introduction of compulsory education,” an end to the use of forced labor, and “a restatement by the British Government of the Atlantic Charter to include all British Dependencies.”

Beginning in 1943, Joseph Appiah, who had recently arrived in London from the Gold Coast, also participated in the group as a representative of the Union. “It was at the meetings of this Committee,” Appiah recalled, “that I came to know some of the great stalwarts of the ‘House’ through the years. Attlee, Bevan, Fenner Brockway, Rev. Sorensen, Lord Listowel, Richard Acland, Lord Stansgate, Mr. Morrison and Leslie Hale come readily to mind out of a host of men dedicated to the cause of freedom in those days when hope seemed forlorn.” The Committee not only provided a glimmer of hope during the dark days of the war, but it also formed a basis for mutual understanding and personal relationships,

even friendships, between leading Labour politicians and the West Africans in the Union. Appiah recounted one instance Attlee “brought ... a special and urgent message from the prime minister himself” to the WASU hostel. “A declaration of intent on the burning issue of freedom? An offer of the gift of a more commodious accommodation in London in return for our countrymen’s bravery in the merchant navy and in the jungles of Burma?,” the members speculated expectantly. In the end, of course, “It was neither of these,” but, instead, “a simple request for volunteers from our ranks to serve as lieutenants in the 82nd West Africa Division, then fighting the Japanese in Burma.” When the WASU members “asked whether there would be a written guarantee of freedom for our countries after the war,” Appiah continued, “poor Attlee replied that he did not have a mandate on that question except to say that if his party won the next election after the war, we could be sure of freedom for our people.”⁵⁸⁸ These experiences heightened the expectations of West African intellectuals and activists like Appiah for the postwar period, and, consequentially, when the Labour government of the late 1940s dashed these hopes, many experienced it as a personal betrayal.

The Fabian Colonial Bureau (FCB), founded in 1940, also strengthened black intellectuals ties to the Labour opposition. The Labour MP Arthur Creech Jones served as chairman of the Bureau, but the executive secretary Rita Hinden, a white South African economist, and the assistant secretary Marjorie Nicholson directed the poorly funded group’s activities and managed its quotidian affairs. Other Labour MPs like Haden Guest, who called for “A Charter for Freedom for Colonial Peoples” at the 1942 Party Conference, were active in the FCB. Although the Bureau considered colonial issues more broadly, its

⁵⁸⁸ Appiah, *Joe Appiah: The Autobiography of an African Patriot*, p. 149-150; “The West African Parliamentary Committee Report,” *Wāsu* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 21-22; “W.A.S.U. Suggestions to West African Parliamentary Committee,” *West Africa* (August 22, 1942) in CO 554/127/11 (West African Students’ Union, 1942).

goals were consistent with those of the West African Parliamentary Committee, and many of the same individuals participated in both. The FCB, Pearce suggests, “was essentially an ameliorationist organization,” which focused on the “*minutiae* of colonial affairs.” The FCB acted largely as a “clearing-house for information and research on Colonial Affairs” and an institutional link between the Labour Party, the Colonial Office, British colonial experts, and black intellectuals. The Bureau, Hinden wrote, “did not begin with any general declaration of policy. It did not set out to tackle ‘imperialism’ as a world force. Its work was, implicitly, to fight the abuse it knew of in the British Empire, to urge economic change, and to hasten the day when self-government, or—if desired—independence, could be achieved.”

The FCB embraced a gradualist and avowedly pragmatic approach to colonial problems, and, thus, limited its recommendations to reforms intended to address specific abuses. The group, Hinden explained, “had no illusions that any of its aims could be secured by a wave of the hand. To be effective one had to arm oneself with facts, to plunge into statistics and reports, to know exactly what was happening everywhere, to build up contacts with the struggling democratic movements in the Colonies, to research into problems and to fight every issue as it arose.” To this end, Hinden offered the St. Lucian economist W. Arthur Lewis and the Sierra Leonean Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole seats on the Bureau’s advisory committee and invited numerous other colonials in the metropole to take part in its various conferences. In spite of the FCB’s cautious approach, Hinden championed a number of reforms which dovetailed with those black pressure groups in London. In an address on the “Economic Development of the Colonies” at the WASU conference in August 1942, she argued, that development should proceed along “two main lines”—“the supply of capital and the diversification of economic activity” to stimulate the production of commodities and foodstuffs not only for the “external market” but also the “Home Market.” If, as many

Conservative Members of Parliament seemed to suggest, colonial development entailed merely “the opening up of the Colonies as just another British enterprise which would eventually bring in greater profits to British shareholders,” she maintained that “it cannot but involve a strong economic domination from the outside, which is bound to mean political domination as well.” To avoid this scenario, she explained, “it is vitally important for us not only to insist that capital should be made available, *but that it should be made available under the right political conditions*. Ultimately, of course, this involves the transference of a far greater measure of political responsibility to the colonial peoples.”⁵⁸⁹

The Bureau’s first study of conditions in the colonies, *Plan for Africa* by Hinden, appeared in 1941 and presented a detailed analysis of Northern Rhodesia and the Gold Coast. In his foreword to the volume, Creech Jones noted, “It is a odd contradiction in the British people that they affect a pride in colonial achievement and in the possession of a far-flung, long-established Empire but show little disposition to acquire genuine knowledge of its essential facts.” Yet, he also perceived a number of trends that suggested that “a gradual change in our approach to colonial matters” was underway such as the “growing ... body of reliable and authoritative literature on colonial problems” and, in particular, the passage of the Colonial Welfare and Development Act which “declared the bankruptcy of the old *laissez-faire* policy, and ... recognised the importance of continuous and comprehensive research.” In opening the work, Hinden articulated the “sense of failure” provoked by the outbreak of the war with regards to the Empire that inspired the creation of the FCB and asserted that the “future of these colonies—situated mainly in tropical Africa—is the core of Britain’s colonial problems to-day.” The following year, the FCB outlined its policies in a

⁵⁸⁹ Rita Hinden, “Some Reflections on the Economic Development of the Colonies,” *Wāsu* v. 10, n. 1 (May 1943), p. 10-11.

Charter for the Colonies, which recommended social and economic development, political reform, and, above all, a restructuring of the “enormous, slow-moving, creaking” system of colonial administration. In West Africa, the Charter called for the introduction of free, compulsory education within a decade after the war, nationalizing of the mines, expanded health services, and reforms to the Municipal and Legislative Councils, including elected African majorities on both and universal adult suffrage after twenty years. For East and Central Africa, the Bureau suggested similar reforms, but a slower pace of change, and an end to European settlement. As Pearce explains, “The Bureau wished to see responsible government self-government within a generation in West African and within two generations in Central and East Africa.” Yet, soon after the end of the war, Hinden described the group’s purpose as a “struggle for securing social justice,” a vaguely defined notion of which political reform and self-government were but one element.⁵⁹⁰ Thus, despite the sincerity of Hinden and other FCB members’ intentions, a growing discrepancy between their vision of colonial reform and the aspirations of African and Caribbean intellectuals emerged in the late 1940s, as the latter grew increasingly impatient with the pace of change. The increased attention given to colonial issues within the segments of the Labour Party, the creation of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, and the new dispensation in the Colonial Office were, in part, attempts to curb the mounting criticism of African and West Indian intellectuals. Despite their differences, the desire to redirect the latter into acceptable channels through a combination of dialogue and limited reforms linked individuals in each

⁵⁹⁰ Rita Hinden, *Socialists and Empire* (London: Fabian Society Pamphlet, 1946), p. 11, 18; Pearce, *The Turning Point*, p. 109-110; Arthur Creech Jones, “Foreword,” in Rita Hinden, *Plan for Africa* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1941), p. 11-13.

of the former groups and drew them into a closer association during the war years, a trend illustrated by colonial officials greater willingness to cooperate groups like the FCB.⁵⁹¹

The presence of black pressure groups in the metropole, especially their connections with organizations and politicians on the British Left, increased the political costs of government repression in the colonies and publicity drives like the LCP's campaign against the colour bar for the government.⁵⁹² Creech Jones maintained regular correspondence with individuals like Danquah, Wallace-Johnson, Kenyatta, and Nnamdi Azikiwe and viewed them as personal friends and reliable sources of information from the colonies, while Sorensen had long been a strong supporter of the WASU and served on the Board of Trustees for Africa House throughout the 1940s, acting as the primary intermediary in the dispute over control of the hostel.⁵⁹³ When the Governor of Kenya banned the Kikuyu Central, the Ukamba, and Teita Hills Associations and interned nineteen of their members during the war, Creech Jones attacked the move in a series of letters to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. "Some of these men are my friends," he wrote. "I have for years had much correspondence from them & with them ... To my mind, this is an outrage." "Our Kenya policy," he continued, "has been wicked enough without adding more indefensible acts to it. I beg you ... [to] do all you can to get these Africans back their liberty without more injustice being done to them." In response, the Secretary of State supported the Governor's contention that the measures were necessary for security reasons, but Creech Jones remained

⁵⁹¹ "A Charter for the Colonies" (June 1942), Arthur Creech Jones Papers (MSS Brit. Emp. s. 332), Rhodes House, Oxford University, File 15, Box 1; Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, p. 109-112.

⁵⁹² For an example of how news traveled between West Africa and London-based groups like the WASU and colonial officials' concern over these circuits of communication, see letter from O.A.G. of Nigeria to Secretary of State for the Colonies (July 7, 1942), telegram from Blaize of the WASU to Azikiwe (June 22, 1942), and telegram from Azikiwe in reply to Blaize (July 2, 1942), PRO CO 554/127/11: West African Students' Union (1942).

⁵⁹³ See letters from J. L. Ajayi, Jomo Kenyatta, I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, and Nnamdi Azikiwe to Creech Jones (November 7, 1935; August 25, 1941; March 30, 1944; November 5, 1945), Arthur Creech Jones Papers (MSS Brit. Emp. s. 332), Rhodes House, Oxford University, Box 7, File 1, 2, 4; also Reginald Sorensen Papers, House of Lords Record Office, London, SOR 168 (WASU, 1929-1951).

unmoved by this argument. "I am not satisfied with the position indicated," he wrote in reply, adding, "it seems to me that the dangerous situation has been made by this long detention of men who in all their dealings with me have revealed consistency and sincerity of purpose, high integrity & accuracy of statement and absolutely no disloyalty."⁵⁹⁴

Although these interventions had little immediate impact in the colonies, the Colonial Office began to revise its approach to the criticisms of black intellectuals in London, due in part to pressure from Creech Jones and others. Indeed, the energy that colonial officials exerted to debunk the claims of West Indians and Africans in the metropole indicated a growing sense amongst the former that the latter could be ignored no longer. Solanke maintained a regular correspondence with the Colonial Office, articulating the members' position and requesting answers to their concerns on a variety of issues. This tactic, as all sides recognized, represented an attempt to circumvent the authority of the local colonial governments and implied that the WASU represented the interests and views of educated opinion in West Africa.

Officials in the Colonial Office did little more than acknowledge receipt of the Union's correspondence before the Second World War, not wishing to encourage the notion that the WASU was anything more than student union and social club. Internally, they often derided the group's many political activities as evidence of the irrationality, intellectual immaturity, and economic irresponsibility of its members. In response to Solanke's suggestion that the Secretary of State for the Colonies attend the Union's reception for the Alake of Abeokuta in 1937, one official observed, "it is a pity that the W.A.S.U. who have no money to spare should embark on this sort of extravagance."⁵⁹⁵ What is more, the Colonial

⁵⁹⁴ Quoted in Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, p. 101.

⁵⁹⁵ Correspondence dated May 26, 1937, CO 554/109/4 (1937-1938).

Office appreciated the symbolic importance of such public spectacles, which were reproduced and circulated in *Wàsù*, and, thus, remained hesitant to sanction them with the presence of representatives of the state. When the WASU sent a second letter inviting “representatives” of the government to the Alake’s reception, in lieu of the Secretary’s attending, Sidebotham bemoaned the group’s impertinence. “This persistence on the part of W.A.S.U. is annoying.” “I get the impression from this letter,” he continued, “that W.A.S.U. want a senior official deputed to attend. That should ... in any event not be countenanced, and if it is thought essential for someone to go I suggest that someone quite junior be deputed (I suggest that in no circumstances should he make a speech even if requested to do so), but I should be inclined to reply regretting that other arrangements preclude the attendance of any officer connected with West African affairs.”⁵⁹⁶

By contrast, in 1940, the WASU hosted Lord Lloyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and George Hall, the Under Secretary, and Hall also accompanied the Deputy Prime Minister Clement Attlee to the Union in 1942. His successor as Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, Harold Macmillan, visited Africa House twice in the summer and autumn of 1942.⁵⁹⁷ In the early 1940s, the Governor Nigeria, Bernard Bourdillon, and the Governor of Sierra Leone, Douglas Jardine, the Governor of the Gold Coast, Alan Burns, and the former Governor of Nigeria, Donald Cameron, all attended functions at the WASU hostel. Burns was also familiar with the LCP, which held a reception for him at Aggrey House in the late 1930s while he was the Governor of British Honduras.⁵⁹⁸ The limited reforms that Bourdillon and Burns instituted during their tenures were in part a consequence of these encounters. On these occasions, the members of the Union addressed their

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁷ CO 554/127/11: West African Students’ Union (1942).

“distinguished guests” or presented them with memoranda outlining their concerns and recommendations, and the proceedings of these visits were “duly published in the press both in this country and in West Africa.” When Hall visited the WASU House in 1940, the Union praised the gesture. “We ... regard this occasion ... as a red letter day in the annals of this our Students’ Organisation as depicting ... a concrete and substantial move on the part of the Colonial Office to extend a real sympathetic co-operation to our Union.” In an address presented to Hall, the WASU appealed to the office of the Secretary of State for assistance in obtaining greater funds from the four West African governments to support the Union’s hostel and outlined an extensive program of colonial reforms, “representing the views ... of not only the members of the ... Union but also of our people in West Africa.” The WASU couched its claims in the language of the Commonwealth. “It is the desire of the people of West Africa to become, remain and form a definitely distinct and integral unit within the ambit of the British Empire, aiming at attaining a democratically full, free and unfettered, ‘DOMINION STATUS,’ which is racially equal to and constitutionally identical with that of any of the existing Dominions in the British Commonwealth of Free Nations.” To this end, they called for the repeal of all “ordinances restrictive of the rights and liberties of the subject” that did not correspond with existing laws in Britain and the introduction of adult suffrage, trade union rights, African majorities in the legislative councils, and African representation on the executive councils.⁵⁹⁹ The WASU also hosted parliamentary members of the Labour Party such as L. Haden Guest, Reginald Sorensen, and Arthur Creech Jones as well as colonial experts like William Macmillan, Margery Perham, Hanns Vischer, Rita Hinden, Reginald Bridgeman, and the anthropologist Margaret M. Green. “The value and

⁵⁹⁹ “An Address Presented by the West African Students’ Union to the Rt. Hon. Mr. George Hall M.P. the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies at WASU House on Tuesday 20th August, 1940,” CO 859/21/3.

importance of these special visits to W.A.S.U.,” *Wàsù* claimed, “cannot be over-estimated, for, in addition to the instructive addresses and valuable talks of these distinguished visitors, the inspiration derived as well as the high atmosphere enjoyed by the students by means of these contacts go a great way towards rising the prestige of the Union and the hostel.”⁶⁰⁰

Clement Attlee’s visit to the WASU House was particularly significant in this regard. Not only was Attlee the highest rank official to visit the Union to date, but the timing of visit, following on the heels of the announcement of the Atlantic Charter, created the possibility for an unprecedented dialogue between black intellectuals and the upper echelons of the British state. “When asked as to what West Africa was fighting for in the present war,” *Wàsù* reported, the Deputy Prime Minister “assured West Africans that the principles embodied in the Atlantic Charter, applied equally to all races of mankind, white, black or otherwise.” Attlee told the Union, “*You will not find in the declarations which have been made on behalf of the Government of this country on the war any suggestion that the freedom and social security for which we fight should be denied to any of the races of mankind.* We fight this war not just for ourselves alone, but for all peoples. I look for ever-increasing measure of self-government in Africa and for ever-rising standard of life for all the peoples of Africa.” “Out of this horror of war and destruction,” he continued, “we shall come to a world of peace, security and social justice, not for one people, nor for one continent but for all the peoples and the continents of the world.”

Attlee’s assurances were all the more remarkable given Churchill’s pronouncement before the House of Commons on September 9th that the terms of the Charter would apply to European territories alone, a move which incited expressions of consternation from black

⁶⁰⁰ *Wàsù* v.8, n. 1 (May 1941), p. 2; v. 9, n. 1 (May 1942), p. 2; and v. 10, n. 1 (May 1943), p. 44; see also League of Coloured Peoples, “Seventh Annual Report (1937-1938).”

intellectuals in the metropole. “The Atlantic Charter sets us a poser,” the LCP observed. “In this connection and in the matter of Abyssinia we have struggled to preserve the good name of Britain throughout the world. We go to press with Mr. Churchill’s challenge ringing in our ears. We are proud of what we did in 1941. In reviewing the failures we take Mr. Churchill’s precepts to heart.” Thus, in contradistinction to Churchill, many Africans and West Indians viewed Attlee and the Labour Party more favorably and as potential allies in their struggle. “In the light of the above sacred assurances (but not in the light of the unfortunate statement made later on the subject by Mr. Winston Churchill (the Prime Minister) ... ,” *Wāṣū* declared, “we, West Africans, are anxiously looking forward to the said measure of Constitutional development which Great Britain is going to give, not to Nigeria alone, nor to Gold Coast alone, nor to Sierra Leone or Gambia alone, but to THE WHOLE OF BRITISH WEST AFRICA.”⁶⁰¹ Likewise, Padmore noted, “When Mr. Attlee made the announcement ... about the Atlantic Charter, colonial peoples throughout the world became very excited. At last, they thought, freedom was to come their way.”⁶⁰² Attlee’s remarks to the WASU were publicized widely in both the British and West African press. The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* reprinted an article from the *Daily Herald* on the visit. “Coloured peoples, as well as whites, will share the benefits of the Churchill-Roosevelt Atlantic Charter. Mr. Attlee ... emphasised this yesterday when he spoke to West African students in London about the eight points he had broadcast the day before.”⁶⁰³ Emboldened by Attlee’s assertion, at the WASU Conference on West African Problems in late August 1942, the Union argued, “That in the interests of Freedom, Justice, and true Democracy, and in view

⁶⁰¹ League of Coloured Peoples, “Eleventh Annual Report (Year 1941-1942),” p. 2; “Distinguished Visitors,” *Wāṣū* v. 9, n. 1 (May 1942), p. 2; “The Atlantic Charter—It Means Dark Races Too (*Daily Herald*, August 16th),” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 24 (September 1941), p. 136. See also Solanke, “The Commons Colonial Debate,” *West Africa* (December 13, 1941), p. 1199.

⁶⁰² Padmore and Cunard, “The White Man’s Duty,” p. 137-138.

⁶⁰³ “The Atlantic Charter—It Means Dark Races Too,” p. 136.

of the lessons of Malaya and Burma, as well as the obvious need of giving the peoples of the Empire something to fight for, the West African Students' Union in Great Britain strongly urges the British Government to grant to the British West African Colonies and Protectorates Internal Self-Government Now, with a definite guarantee of Complete Self-Government within five years after the war.”⁶⁰⁴

Although the Colonial Office remained, at best, ambivalent towards the WASU and LCP, officials advised the Secretary of State, Under Secretaries, or other representatives of the government with growing frequency to visit these groups and strove increasingly to maintain at least the appearance of cooperation during World War II. “As you will know,” one Colonial Office official wrote in 1942, “we have never quite been able to make up our minds about Dr Moody—whether he is woolly but well-meaning or astute and mischievous. On the whole the Office view inclines to the less charitable alternative; but what is not doubtful is that Dr Moody cannot be trusted not to misrepresent and to make what capital he can out of any communication made to him.” While, he continued, “It is certainly undesirable that he should be treated as a person who has a mandate to negotiate direct with the S. of S. about matters which ought to be dealt with on the official plane,” “showing him some courtesy which will help to remove the inevitable inferiority complex” is desirable. Thus, he suggested that the Secretary of State, Harold Macmillan, invite Moody “to come round for an informal chat, just to make contact and talk about things in general” and, if willing, “go to one of the League of Coloured Peoples’ monthly receptions.”⁶⁰⁵

Moreover, in 1941, the Colonial Office reached out to one its most outspoken, if respected, critics in W. Arthur Lewis. When officials in the Colonial Office approached the

⁶⁰⁴ “WASU Conference on West African Problems (August 29 and 30, 1942),” *Wàsù* v. 10, n. 1 (May 1943), p. 7-8.

⁶⁰⁵ Internal Colonial Office correspondence from C. J. J. to Thornley (June 5, 1942), PRO CO 859/80/10: Colour Discrimination in the U.K. – League of Coloured Peoples Correspondence.

faculty at the London School of Economics for recommendations for advisors to aid in the war effort, the latter suggested Lewis, whom they viewed as a “rising star” in the field of what was termed colonial economies. The offer came from none other Lord Hailey and “at the very moment when Lewis was composing the issue of the [League’s] *Newsletter* that called attention to the racist stances at the Colonial Office.” As Tignor notes, Lewis’s decision to cooperate meshed with his political and intellectual convictions at the time. Like many of his peers from Africa and the Caribbean in London, “Lewis believed that the world was in a period of radical transformation” and that the “European imperial systems were certain to be reformed,” if not completely dismantled, following the war. While Lewis was willing to work for change within the administrative structure of empire, he insisted on being given the opportunity “to formulate new, long-range policies that he believed would promote the economic development of the British colonial world and transform the relations between developed and developing regions of the world.”⁶⁰⁶ The young economist’s first paper for the Colonial Office, “Some Aspects of the Flow of Capital in the British Colonies,” received the unanimous approval of his superiors, leading the latter to entrust him with the more controversial subject of mining policy in colonial Africa. Although the resulting Colonial Note No. 206 from 1946 represented a compromise document, it laid out key aspects of Lewis’s approach to colonial development. The final Colonial Office report endorsed state ownership of mines in principle but suggested that the immediate nationalization of existing mines was impractical due to the heavy financial burden that it would place on the British Exchequer. Rather, it proposed that the government own and operate any new mines while gradually buying out established mines with state funds. Nevertheless, this proposition struck

⁶⁰⁶ Lewis, “Mining in the British African Colonies,” Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers (MSS Brit. Emp. s. 365), Rhodes House, Oxford University, Box 48, File 2; Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 53-54. For another Lewis memorandum on mining policy, see Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers (MSS Brit. Emp. s. 365), Box 46, File 2.

at the heart of the imperial state's traditional *laissez-faire* approach to the colonies. Lewis maintained that "colonial states, with the sanction of the British government, had often given away what had never belonged to them (mineral and land rights); hence the metropolitan tax payers rather than colonial subjects should shoulder the expense." As many other black intellectuals would do in the years following the war, he called attention to the disproportionate influence that a few conglomerates and their executives enjoyed in colonial Africa. In his 1942 memorandum, "Mining in the British African Colonies," Lewis observed, "It is pretty clear ... that the shadow of half a dozen of these millionaires engulfs the entire continent."⁶⁰⁷

Due largely to the impression which he made on officials within the Colonial Office with these papers, Lewis was given a position with far greater responsibilities in 1943 as the secretary of the new economic advisory board, the Colonial Economic Advisory Committee (CEAC). "Even as Lewis was teaching his classes at the LSE and publishing a series of research articles in important journals," Tignor explains, "he was drafting the memorandums and reports for all of the subcommittees that he was sure would lead to dramatic economic transformations." Yet, from the start, the CEAC became mired in conflict with the Colonial Office, particularly its two senior economic experts Gerard Clauson and Sydney Caine. Like Lewis, Caine had been one of the top students at the LSE of the unabashed free marketeer, Lionel Robbins. After joining the Colonial Office, his ascendance had been rapid in the 1930s as Clauson's protégé. When Caine and Clauson circulated a draft of the statement of general principles that would guide the group's subsequent work, which was to be delivered by Secretary of State Stanley at its second meeting, Lewis denounced the document. Whereas, in Caine's view, the committee should confine "itself to answering the specific

⁶⁰⁷ Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 54-55.

questions that the Office chooses to ask,” Lewis maintained that the members’ expertise would be utilized better if it “set about making a systematic review” of colonial economies. Within two years, he claimed, the Secretary of State “will have before him a well thought-out body of principles which can be the basis of a series of reconstruction dispatches.”⁶⁰⁸ In the end, Stanley’s speech to the second meeting of the CEAC reflected many of Lewis’s criticisms. “In the future,” Stanley stated, “we have got to have developments by the government of colonies on a scale quite unknown in the past.” While stating that, “from time to time, the Secretary might need to refer specific questions to the committee for immediate and urgent advice,” he described the CEAC’s purpose in terms that echoed Lewis’s vision for the group, instructing the latter to concentrate “on questions of principles rather than questions of detail.” “In short,” Tignor explains, “Lewis had bested the colonial bureaucrats. The Colonial Economic Advisory Committee was to be a ‘think tank,’ invested with the duty of developing long-range plans laying out the general terms for promoting colonial economic development.”⁶⁰⁹

However, Lewis’s victory proved to be short-lived. A series of similar disputes between Lewis and Caine, in particular, soon followed this initial disagreement, which ultimately led the former to resign in 1944. As Tignor points out, Lewis’s views on “the limitations of the free market and the significance of the state in colonial development ran counter to the prevailing sentiments at the Colonial Office.” Moreover, his call for the immediate implementation of schemes oriented toward rapid economic development in

⁶⁰⁸ W. A. Lewis to Sydney Caine, dated November 22, 1943, PRO CO 852/510/30. On Caine, Clauson, and colonial development, see also Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 56-67, and J. M. Lee and Martin Petter, *The Colonial Office, War, and Development Policy: Organisation and the Planning of a Metropolitan Initiative, 1939-1945* (London, 1982).

⁶⁰⁹ Indeed, Tignor notes that Stanley even went “so far as to instruct the speech writers to use much of Lewis’s phraseology.” Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 59. For Stanley’s speech, see the minutes for the second meeting of the Colonial Economic Advisory Committee on December 9, 1943, PRO CO 990/2.

colonial Africa placed him in opposition to the chief economic experts inside the Colonial Office. Lewis, Tignor continues, “believed that Africa must be set on the high road to development as swiftly as possible lest it experience the economic stagnation and poverty that characterized the West Indies.”⁶¹⁰

On the whole, then, Lewis’s experience with the CEAC and his interactions with the Colonial Office during the Second World War proved to be disappointing. Yet, in terms of his development as theorist of colonial development, they were invaluable. Lewis’s time with the Colonial Office and CEAC gave him unique access to government sources on economic conditions throughout the British Empire and allowed him to hone his ideas on colonial development within an atmosphere that constantly forced him to defend them against the criticisms of leading economists in Britain. As Tignor observes, Lewis’s third report for the CEAC, entitled “Colonial Economic Development,” “elaborated themes that were becoming the core of his development philosophy.” “There are no ‘natural’ economic forces,” Lewis insisted, “that we can rely on to produce industrial development in Africa at the necessary rate. Both capital and entrepreneurship are absent; either the government must take an active part in planning development or there will be none.”⁶¹¹ Moreover, despite his frustration, Lewis would attempt to initiate change from within the Colonial Office again after the war by joining the CEAC’s successor, the Colonial Economic Development Council.

The Developing Mission in the Imperial Metropole

⁶¹⁰ Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 62-66.

⁶¹¹ Lewis, “Colonial Economic Development,” CEAC (44) 38, September 14, 1944, PRO CO 990/2; Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 62-63.

The new ethos of development and social welfare engendered a shift in not only the economic rationale of empire but also the Colonial Office's approach to colonial subjects in the metropole, creating both new opportunities for black intellectuals and new forms of control over their activities during the war years. As the Colonial Office assumed greater centralized control over the administration of the colonies, it also began to intervene more directly in the lives of West Indians and Africans in Britain, especially students. These measures, which were presented as attempts to ameliorate conditions for black students and couched in the language of development, reflected concern within the Colonial Office over the impact of racial discrimination in the metropole on public opinion in the colonies.⁶¹² Thus, beginning in the early 1940s, the developing mission in the colonies found its correlate and analogue in the British Council hostels for colonial students and the Colonial Office Advisory Committee on the Welfare of Colonial Peoples in the United Kingdom.

The responsibility of supervising colonial students in Britain fell ultimately to J. L. Keith, a former colonial administrator in Northern Rhodesia and head of the department, as a result of the reorganization and expansion of the Colonial Office's Welfare Department in 1941. Since 1901, the Secretary of State for the Colonies had delegated this task to one of the Crown Agents for the colonies, who was named Director of Colonial Scholars. The steady increase in the number of African students, Keith wrote in 1946, "made it more and more difficult for the Director to maintain personal touch with the students," and, thus, compelled the Secretary of State for the Colonies to undertake the administrative shake-up of 1941. Yet, if the move was in part a response to changing circumstances and rising demand, it also represented an attempt to direct the education and activities of sojourners from the colonies, a key component of a comprehensive approach to colonial development in Africa. Under

⁶¹² See esp. Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Keith, who was comparatively sympathetic to the plight of educated Africans and favored limited colonial reforms, the Welfare Department now assumed sweeping powers with regard to the management and oversight of colonial subjects and “British Protected Persons” who either resided in or wished to study in the metropole. The department stood at the center of a loosely articulated assemblage of administrative machinery that played a gatekeeping function, alternately enabling and stifling the academic progress of African students, and sought to manage nearly every aspect of their lives in Britain.

Keith identified “three main student problems” that the department sought to redress: “the admission of students to Universities and Colleges”; “the evolution of satisfactory financial arrangements for the students who are directly under its care”; and “the difficult question of accommodation [for] ... and the social welfare of the students.” Keith remained adamant that he had no formal powers “in the matter of securing admission to students” and, further, that “no extramural official, or indeed unofficial body,” could “insist on the acceptance of candidates.” Rather, he explained, “most universities use the Department as a clearing house through which they can obtain information about applicants, and ask for the Department’s recommendations in awarding priorities.” Ultimately, “priority” was “given to Government sponsored candidates who are to be trained for service in the Colonies.” Through his position as Director of Colonial Scholars, Keith played an integral role in not only the placement of students at British universities but also the administration of public and private scholarships from the British Council, the various colonial governments, the United African company, the Nuffield Trustees, and, of course, the Colonial Development and Welfare Act. “The recent Development and Welfare and Research scholarships given in the African Colonies,” Keith wrote, “are for training in the Social Sciences such as Probation, Labour Management, and the Welfare Services, for

Teacher Training to strengthen the Education Departments, for Linguistics at the School of African and Oriental Studies, for Engineering and Science, and for Arts and Economics,” as opposed to the traditional bastions of the colonial intelligentsia, law and medicine. Similarly, the awards from the Nuffield Trustees were earmarked specifically “for the training of junior officers for Government Service.” In 1940, the LCP’s *Newsletter* reprinted a short article on the new scholarships from Azikiwe’s *The Comet* in Nigeria, including a recent speech on the subject by Governor Bernard Bourdillon before the Legislative Council. “The main object of these scholarships,” Bourdillon explained, “is, of course, to facilitate the attainment by Nigerians of qualifications which will fit them for superior posts in the Government service, and in this connection ... since the 1st January 1939, two Africans have been appointed to Magistrates’ posts, four to post of Medical Officer, and one to post of Executive Engineer.”⁶¹³ The WASU also lauded the introduction of new scholarships, observing, “It is a pleasing sign of the times that more and more students from West Africa are being offered Scholarships ... to study social science and linguistics in England.” However, the Union criticized the selection process as a “glaring defect in an otherwise excellent scheme” and recommended “that future Scholarships should be awarded on the merit of competitive public examinations, conducted by [a] competent Board of Examiners, the majority of whose members should be Africans.” “If the Governments ... intend to lay a solid foundation for a happy and stable West Africa of the future,” they argued, “it is of the utmost importance that the right material must be used from the very start.”

The war years also saw the creation of a string of hostels for colonial students and workers under the direction of the Welfare Department, which, for a time, the Colonial

⁶¹³ “Nigerian Scholarships,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 9 (June 1940); “National Scholarships in West Africa,” *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 34.

Office considered expanding further to help house African-American servicemen.⁶¹⁴ Here again, direct intervention supplanted what Keith and others viewed as an outmoded strategy exemplified by Aggrey House. Nevertheless, Keith characterized the move as an extension of previous attempts to ameliorate conditions for student sojourners, not a departure from them, positing the system of new hostels as the natural successor to “the old Aggrey House, which before the war, under the guidance of Sir Hanns Vischer, did excellent work on behalf of African students.”⁶¹⁵ The Welfare Department assumed direct management of a new Colonial Centre in Collingham Gardens at Earls Court, which provided accommodations for 60 male students, while the socially and politically conservative Victoria League maintained a residence hall for colonial students at Nutford House and Colonial Girls’ Club at 18 Collingham Gardens, two doors down from the men’s hostel, on behalf of the Colonial Office.⁶¹⁶

The Welfare Department addressed real and pressing needs of students by providing or directing them to sources of financial support and housing. In this sense, its activities can be seen as a qualified triumph West Indian and African in London and the colonies, who had called for such measures since the First World War and as a validation of the work of independent black organizations like the WASU and LCP during the intervening decades.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁴ See internal Welfare Department correspondence regarding West Indies House (Liverpool), Colonial House (London), West Indies House (Newcastle-on-Tyne), Colonial House (Liverpool), Colonial House (North Shields), Aggrey House (London), Hull Sailor’s Home (Hull), Students’ International Club (Glasgow), West Indies House (Liverpool), West Indies House (Bolton), WASU’s Africa House (London), and housing for the Muslim seamen and workers in Cardiff and South Shields from September 12, 16, and 22 and October 10, 1942. PRO CO 876/17: Welfare of Colonial People in U.K. – Advisory Committee Memoranda (1942-1944); internal memorandum by Keith (September 21, 1942) regarding the potential expansion of the “Colonial Houses” to include black American troops, PRO CO 876/16: Welfare of Colonial People in the U.K. – Advisory Committee (1942-1943).

⁶¹⁵ J. L. Keith, “African Students in Great Britain,” *African Affairs* v. 45 (1946), p. 66-69.

⁶¹⁶ See “Colonial Centre For Women,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, v. 12, n. 68 (May 1945), p. 108; “Official Opening of the Victoria League Girls’ Club,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, v. 13, n. 73 (October 1945), p. 7.

⁶¹⁷ Indeed, Keith singled out the West African Students Union “as the most important of these African students’ organisations.” Keith, “African Students in Great Britain,” p. 70.

In his annual presidential address to the League in 1945, Moody emphasized the group's role in drawing attention to the difficulties that confronted black students in the metropole. "Let me here remind you that almost from our birth we saw the real need for such a centre." "It was our announcement of this fact," he noted, "that brought us into closer touch with the Colonial Office, through the late Sir Hanns Vischer and led to the establishment of Aggrey House, now replaced by Colonial Centre, Collingham Gardens; to the emergence of the Colonial Office Welfare Department and to the establishment of a chain of hostels and centres up and down the country."⁶¹⁸ Yet, at the same time, the creation of the Welfare Department and the new colonial hostels entailed a marked expansion of the Colonial Office's influence over students' courses of study, their usually tenuous financial situation, as well as where and under what conditions they lived, particularly within the context of the housing shortage in war-ravaged London.⁶¹⁹ This became apparent, for example, when the Colonial Office imposed restrictions on West African students traveling to Britain for a period during the middle of the war, a move which sparked considerable controversy amongst black intellectuals in both London and West Africa.⁶²⁰ It was in this context that the WASU continued its protracted dispute with Sir John Harris and the Trustees of the Welfare of Africans in Europe War Fund over ownership and, thus, control over Africa House. The Union refused to allow the only hostel in London under African management to be integrated into the system of government hostels as both the Trustees and the Colonial Office preferred by the war years. With officials in the Colonial Office unwilling to take

⁶¹⁸ "President's Address Delivered at the Fourteenth Annual General Meeting," *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 12, n. 67 (April 1945), p. 4; on Aggrey House, see also Chapter One.

⁶¹⁹ See, for example, "Notes for the Constitution of Colonial Centre" and "Notes for the Rules of Colonial Centre," PRO CO 876/17: Welfare of Colonial People in U.K. – Advisory Committee Memoranda (1942-1944).

⁶²⁰ See materials in PRO CO 876/19: Welfare of Colonial Students in U.K. – Cancellation of Arrangements for Sending Students Here (1942-1943), including press coverage from West Africa.

more forceful action, the standoff remained unresolved until after the war when the drive to establishment of a second, larger WASU hostel superseded the issue in importance.⁶²¹

Yet, like the Colonial Economic Advisory Committee, the new Welfare Department and its related advisory committee also sought to include respected black professionals and intellectuals. While the latter believed passionately in the importance of the work, more often than not, their experiences proved to be frustrating and disappointing. The Trinidadian cricketer Learie Constantine worked at the Ministry of Labour as a welfare officer for West Indian technicians in Merseyside factories. The Colonial Office created a public relations department in 1942 and heralded the appointment of the black Briton Ivor Cummings, who became the first person of African descent to obtain a position in the Office in 1941, as evidence of the absence of racial discrimination in Britain.⁶²² In its annual report issued in 1942, the LCP noted “that an increasing number of our people are now holding positions of trust in Britain. We think especially of Messrs. Ivor Cummings, Philip Cox, Learie Constantine, M. E. Joseph-Mitchell, G. Foster, G. A. Roberts, Rupert and others....”⁶²³

Cummings, Dr. Harold Moody and the Sierra Leonean surgeon Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole served on the Advisory Committee on the Welfare of Colonial Peoples in the United Kingdom, with former acting as its secretary.⁶²⁴ In his opening address at the first meeting of the committee, the Secretary of State for the Colonies explained the impetus for its creation, which, he claimed, marked “an important stage in the development of the welfare work which we are doing from the Colonial Office.” Stanley noted, “It is not very long that we ...

⁶²¹ On the dispute and the opening of new WASU hostel at Chelsea Embankment in 1949, see PRO CO 876/56 and CO 876/57; Papers of Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole, SOAS Archives, PP MS 35, File 157 (WASU); Reginald Sorensen Papers, House of Lords Record Office, SOR 168 (WASU);

⁶²² Adi, *West Africans in Britain*, p. 106.

⁶²³ League of Coloured Peoples, “Propaganda,” *Eleventh Annual Report* (1941-1942), p. 10.

⁶²⁴ “Jamaican Technicians in Britain,” *League of Coloured Peoples* n. 24 (September 1941), p. 135. See also “‘Colour’ and a New Committee,” *West Africa* (October 10, 1942).

took upon ourselves direct responsibility towards Colonial people who are living in this country.” While the “immediate occasion for the appointment of a Welfare Officer in the Colonial Office was the arrival of a number of workers from the Colonies” in connection with the war effort and “the need for us to keep closely in touch with the Government Departments who are directly concerned for their welfare,” he stressed that “we have very much wider aims than that. We want to ensure that every individual colonial in this country benefits fully from his or her stay here, whether they may be students, seamen, service men or others.”⁶²⁵

In an effort to legitimize the Colonial Office’s welfare initiatives and, in the case of Moody, to appease “one of our more persistent critics,” Keith appointed two respected black physicians who had spent the majority of their adult lives in the metropole to the advisory committee. Their “appropriateness” hinged upon their status as respectable, educated professionals who were untainted by the influence of communism and free of the reputed anti-white bias of many of their peers.⁶²⁶ Yet, in selecting Wellesley Cole and Moody, he left the door ajar for the WASU and LCP to interject their perspectives.⁶²⁷ Up till then the office of the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Colonial Office consistently rebuffed attempts by both groups to engage in a substantive dialogue on colonial policy. This line of argument never dead out entirely, but through their positions on the advisory committee, Wellesley Cole and Moody became conduits for the perspectives of a larger

⁶²⁵ “Secretary of State’s Address at the Opening of the First Meeting of the Committee,” PRO CO 876/17. See also Keith, “Notes for the Advisory Committee on the Present and Future Development of Welfare Work for Colonial People in the United Kingdom” (September 25, 1943) PRO CO 876/16.

⁶²⁶ Similar considerations guided the selection of wardens for the new colonial hostels. See internal Colonial Office correspondence on the formation of the Advisory Committee and the choice of Cummings, Wellesley Cole, and Moody, especially letter from Keith dated September 5, 1942. PRO CO 876/16: Welfare of Colonial People in the U.K. – Advisory Committee (1942-1943); internal memorandum on “Mr. Ejesa Osora,” who applied for the warden position at new Colonial Centre, dated January 1, 1943, PRO CO 876/17: Welfare of Colonial People in U.K. – Advisory Committee Memoranda (1942-1944).

⁶²⁷ See G. Gater, “Note of [the Secretary of State’s] Interview with Dr. Moody” (September 28, 1942), PRO CO 859/80/10: Colour Discrimination in the U.K. – League of Coloured Peoples Correspondence.

network of black intellectuals in London and, in some cases, the colonies to the Colonial Office.

While Wellesley Cole, Moody, and other black intellectuals in London like Ladipo Solanke lauded these overtures from the Colonial Office, they remained skeptical about the intentions behind them and continued to call for more far-reaching reforms and development schemes. In a letter to Ladipo Solanke, Wellesley Cole wrote, “As a responsible member of the African community in England, it is my settled policy to be co-operative and constructive, even in criticisms...”⁶²⁸ Publicly, Moody and Wellesley Cole welcomed the opportunity to engage the Colonial Office in a dialogue, but, in private, both remained skeptical about their chances of advancing substantive reform through the committee. When Wellesley Cole wrote to Moody to congratulate him on his appointment to the Advisory Committee in 1942, he noted, “Apart from the secretary, you and I seem to be the only coloured members. The work to be done is great and I suggest that we keep in touch between sessions and study some matters as we can usefully bring before the Committee.” While the Committee represented “a step in the right direction,” Wellesley Cole insisted that it was “but a beginning, and that the question of the Welfare of Colonial People in this country is a principle charge on the Colonial Office.” “In fact,” he wrote, “I think that a comprehensive policy on social and educational welfare should be envisaged for the whole of the Colonial Empire with a central office in London where policy can be controlled and to which the various Colonial organisations can look for guidance and training.” Moody agreed with this assessment of the committee. In reply, he told Wellesley Cole, “Yes, as you observe, we two will have to keep very close together in order to carry things through with

⁶²⁸ Letter from Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole to Ladipo Solanke, dated 28 September 28, 1943, Wellesley Cole Papers, SOAS Archives, PP MS 35, File 157 (West African Students Union).

such a strong committee weighted against us, but I certainly think we shall be able to do something positive. Whenever possible we must confer together, if not in person at any rate by letter.”⁶²⁹

Their participation on the committee drew Moody and Wellesley Cole, who previously had little contact with one another, into a closer working relationship. Although both recognized the difficulties before them, they hoped to use their positions on the advisory committee to co-opt the new impetus towards development for their ends. Thus, like the committee itself, Moody viewed the system of government-sponsored hostels as a mere palliative in lieu of more substantive moves toward intra-imperial cooperation and, ultimately, self-government within the framework of the Commonwealth. While, Moody told the LCP, “I am personally very grateful for all this activity and for the practical results therefrom,” which “have been very valuable and have done much to ease the situation created by the war,” he also expressed his hope these would be extended “with added improvements in the post-war era.” “And as a member of the Advisory Committee, set up by the present Secretary of State,” he continued, “I am able to state that we are planning accordingly.” Never a revolutionary, Moody shared the Colonial Office’s concern over communist influence on West Indian and African students in Britain. However, his emphasis on intellectual exchange and, above all, his proposal for a new black cultural centre, a kind of self-administrating black “Mecca” at the heart of the empire, which preoccupied him for the remainder of his life, revealed an expansive understanding of social welfare at odds with that of even the most reformist-minded administrators and politicians. “After more than forty years residence in this country, I know of no greater than the need to make the right

⁶²⁹ Letter from Wellesley Cole to Moody, dated September 25, 1942, and letter from Moody to Wellesley Cole, dated September 29, 1942, Wellesley Cole Papers, SOAS Archives, PP MS 35, File 151 (League of Coloured Peoples).

contacts while domiciled here. There is, at the present moment, no centre capable of meeting this need. In my opinion such a centre should be controlled and directed by us, but we would work in full and heart co-operation with any English group, who can see eye to eye with us in this.”⁶³⁰

Yet, if the appointment of black intellectuals like Lewis, Moody, and Wellesley Cole to welfare and development advisory committees suggested a greater willingness to include West Indians and Africans in policy discussions, the majority opinion within the Colonial Office resolutely opposed any action that might encourage the political activities of groups like the LCP and WASU. In response to the numerous appeals and memoranda from these organizations in the 1930s and 1940s, officials consistently refused to do more than acknowledge their receipt unless directly related to the conditions of black students in Britain. Within internal Colonial Office correspondence, they habitually justified this policy by arguing that the black pressure groups in London expressed the views of only a small minority of excitable students and rabble-rousing old men. If properly managed, most agreed that these organizations served a valuable purpose as relatively non-threatening outlets for the frustrations of West Indians and West Africans and, in the case of the WASU, as a student hostel, but their utility stopped there.⁶³¹ With Solanke in West Africa on a fund-raising trip, in early 1942, the WASU passed a resolution demanding the immediate introduction of self-government and forwarded the document to the Under Secretary of State, asking for a reply. In response, Keith suggested that the Colonial Office “should do more than send [the usual] base acknowledgement. Comment would lead to a difficult

⁶³⁰ Moody, “President’s Address,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 12, n. 67 (April 1945), p. 4. See also “Draft Minutes” n. 11 and 12 regarding the LCP’s proposed Cultural Centre and relations between the WASU and LCP as well as West Indians and West Africans more generally, PRO CO 876/18: Welfare of Colonial People in the U.K. – Advisory Committee Minutes (1942-1945).

⁶³¹ The ambivalent attitude, if not open contempt, of colonial officials towards the WASU and LCP’s journals can be traced in part back to this stance.

correspondence and we have always taken the line with W.A.S.U. that as a student body is should not be encouraged to discuss political matters with the C.O.”⁶³² Another official wrote in reaction to the welcome address delivered to the Secretary of State on a visit to the WASU in 1943, “It is curious how the small group of Africans frequenting this hostel in Camden Square have been persistently working for some few years now to get themselves recognised as the mouthpiece for informed and representative West African opinion.” During the same discussion, Norman Davidson commented that, while the Union’s “desire that ‘present educational policy in S. Nigeria be assimilated to that of the N. Provinces’ betrays an absence of realism,” “I do not, however, think that it would serve any purpose to elaborate on this theme,” as it would only serve to reinforce the WASU’s inflated sense of its importance.⁶³³ When H. O. Davies, then acting secretary general of the Union, requested that the Under Secretary receive a deputation from the WASU regarding the Nigerian General Strike in 1945, O. G. R. Williams reminded his colleagues that “we have always tried to make it our consistent policy to treat WASU purely as a students’ hostel and club and not as an organisation through which public opinion in West Africa is entitled to make itself known, nor as a body with which the Secretary of State would be prepared to discuss matters of general policy.” Although “our position in this respect has perhaps been somewhat weakened by the tendency of members of Parliament and sometimes even members of Government, to make speeches when visiting WASU in which matters of general policy have been dealt with,” he continued, “I think it would be most undesirable to enter into any discussion with WASU on the subject of the strike or of labour matters in general.”

⁶³² Minute by Keith (April 20, 1942), PRO CO 554/127/11: West African Students’ Union (1942).

⁶³³ CO 554/127/12: West African Students’ Union (1943).

Colonial officials in Britain and the colonies routinely attempted to distinguish the WASU and “the younger ‘intelligentsia’” in West Africa, more generally, from the “Native Administrations” and Africans “outside the big towns.” Following a conference of local chiefs from the northern provinces of Nigeria in 1942 at which they dismissed the WASU’s resolution demanding internal self-government, Williams remonstrated, “This is interesting as an illustration of the unreality of much talk about democratising the Empire,” to which Keith added, “this will certainly make wholesome reading for the W.A.S.U. pundits.” In response to resolutions passed at the WASU’s annual conference in 1942 on political, economic, educational, and land problems, Lawrence observed that those related to “political questions had as usual no connection with reality, consisting of such demands as that all heads of Government Departments should be Africans, that a Defence Council should be set up with Africans as defence ministers, that conscription of labour should be abolished and that adult franchise should be introduced into all the Colony areas of West Africa at once.” Yet, officials in the Colonial Office increasingly favored the introduction of measures designed to expand the productive capacities of the colonies. Thus, Lawrence opined that the resolutions “on economic matters,” which stressed “the importance of secondary industries, of the development of local food production, of the training of Africans in technical and commercial subjects, and of actively encouraging the co-operative movement,” “were very much sounder and are interesting in that they accord remarkably closer with the proposals since made by Lord Swinton in his memorandum on economic development.”

Unlike most African and West Indian intellectuals, the new developing mission stopped short of substantial political reforms in the minds of British colonial officials. In advance of a public announcement on colonial policy in late 1943, A. G. Grantham

suggested that “it should be stressed that economic and social development must be ahead of political advancement and that it will be many years before West Africa is ripe for self government. ... We are being dishonest if we don’t come flat out and say it, and we are laying up trouble for ourselves in the future.” While admitting that this type of declaration would be “attacked by Zik’s press and W.A.S.U.,” he insisted that they “in no way represent opinion in Nigeria.” “Responsible Africans and the peasant,” Grantham maintained, “cannot understand why we pay so much attention to them. ... By doing so we engender the feeling that we are afraid of them, and in our fear are prepared to sacrifice the people of the country as a whole to a very small but vocal minority who represent nothing but themselves, who are not in touch with the country at large and who are, in the main, only out for themselves.” Echoing the sentiments of many in the Colonial Office, he argued, “The sooner Zikism and W.A.S.U. are debunked the better for West Africa.”⁶³⁴

In fact, the Colonial Office had good reason to avoid becoming embroiled in such debates with the WASU, which noticeably heightened the group’s influence amongst West Africans in Britain and the colonies. The disagreement that broke out between the parties after the publication of the speeches delivered at the WASU conference in June 1942 provides an illustrative case. Dr. Wellesley Cole claimed that the circulation of the conference proceedings in West Africa had a salutary effect on the group’s image and popularity. “I do not know whether you have received any indication from West Africa of the affects of last year’s Conference Articles and Resolutions published in W.A.S.U.’s magazine and distributed in West Africa,” he wrote to Solanke, but “the prestige of W.A.S.U. at home is high, [and] we really ought to do something to capitalize it.” In reply,

⁶³⁴ Minute by Williams (July 9, 1945), PRO CO 554/143/7: WASU (1945-1947); Colonial Office correspondence regarding the Conference of Chiefs of the North Provinces of Nigeria, minute by H. B. Lawrence (June 28, 1943), and letter from A. G. Grantham to Sir Arthur Dawe (October 11, 1943), PRO CO 554/127/11: West African Students’ Union (1942).

Solanke stated, “I have not yet received any letter from West Africa myself but some boys have told me they got good news from home about the impression the magazine has started to create throughout West Africa.”

In a letter from the Colonial Office responding to criticisms leveled by Wellesley Cole in his address at the conference, Farmer wrote, “Our attention has been drawn by the Government of Sierra Leone to a number of inaccurate statements in the paper ... and I have been asked to draw your attention to them.” Although, he noted with feigned respect, “We quite appreciate ... that the publishers of the magazine would not wish to be regarded as responsible for all the views expressed by contributors to it,” “nevertheless, we feel that the publishers cannot disclaim responsibility for publishing articles which contain ... serious inaccuracies” and “have no doubt that, in the interests of the reputation of the magazine those responsible for it would wish to give equal publicity to the corrections now supplied....” The letter, which Solanke read to the Union’s members before forwarding it to Wellesley Cole for him to compose a response, outlined a series of allegations about the government’s education policy in West Africa that provoked the ire of governor of Sierra Leone. Solanke saw in the letter an indication of the growing sensitivity to criticism within not only the Foreign Office, which was concerned primarily with Britain’s image abroad, but also the Colonial Office and colonial governments in West Africa. “Certainly,” he wrote to Wellesley Cole, “the Government is feeling uneasy now including the Colonial Office. The enclosure which I received from Colonial Office last Saturday is a sure evidence of this uneasiness on the part of the Government both in West Africa and in this country.” Solanke continued, “We regard this action of the Colonial Office with the usual suspicion and as a sure sign of their uneasiness. However we want you to go through the alleged inaccuracies

and please try and answer them as fully as you can and send the comments to me to be embodied in our official reply to the Colonial Office.”⁶³⁵

In accordance with Solanke’s request, Wellesley Cole responded to the Governor’s criticisms point-by-point, while noting, however, “I need hardly say that my article was drafted with a full sense of responsibility, and that every care was taken to base my statements on facts, as only thus would it be possible to obtain results.” Although Wellesley Cole stood by his earlier assertions, he told Solanke that, “as a responsible member of the African community in England, it is my settled policy to be co-operative and constructive, even in criticisms and, as such, I do not propose to be analytical or carping in my reply to this memorandum.” Moreover, he suggested that the WASU “give every publicity to the remarks of the Sierra Leone Government, as nothing but good can come from a wide knowledge of what our Governments are doing for us in this vital matter of Education.”⁶³⁶ Upon receiving the WASU’s response to the alleged inaccuracies in Wellesley Cole’s speech, the Colonial Office forwarded it to the government of Sierra Leone and noted, “The absence of any note of apology in Solanke’s reply is I am afraid characteristic, and the attempts at explaining away some of the mis-statements are ludicrous. It seemed to us useless to pursue the matter further and we have merely acknowledged receipt of the letter.”⁶³⁷

In the end, the Union followed Wellesley Cole’s advice, publishing the whole of its correspondence with the Colonial Office to the dismay of officials in the latter. As in the

⁶³⁵ For the conference proceedings, see *WASU v. X*, n. 1 (May 1943). Letter from Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole to Ladipo Solanke (September 8, 1943), letter of protest from F. Farmer, Colonial Office, to Solanke (September 10, 1943), and letter from Solanke to Wellesley Cole (September 13, 1943), Wellesley Cole Papers, SOAS Archives, PP MS 35, File 157 (WASU). See also letter from R. O. Ramage, Colonial Secretary, Sierra Leone, to Williams regarding alleged inaccuracies in Wellesley Cole’s speech (August 25, 1943) and minute by Williams in response to Ramage’s letter, PRO CO 554/127/11: West African Students’ Union (1942).

⁶³⁶ Letter from Wellesley Cole to Solanke (September 28, 1943), Wellesley Cole Papers, SOAS Archives, PP MS 35, File 157 (WASU).

⁶³⁷ Letter to R. O. Ramage (October 22, 1943), PRO CO 554/127/11: West African Students’ Union (1942).

case of the LCP's campaign against the colour bar in the colonial service, the publication of this exchange added to the WASU's influence in Britain and West Africa during the early 1940s. As Solanke explained to Wellesley Cole, "your article on Education in our magazine has created [a] very strong & favourable impression not only at home but also among many in this country," citing a letter from the Institute of Education at the University of London as "surely an eye opener and perhaps the strongest evidence from high quarters."⁶³⁸

Both the WASU and LCP experienced a precipitous growth in new members from 1942, which reflected an upsurge in the number of colonial students coming to Britain as conditions stabilized in the metropole and their increased prominence. The Colonial Office reported that there were only four hundred colonial students in Britain before the war, but the figure had grown to over one thousand by 1945, with Africans, largely from Nigeria and the Gold Coast, accounting for some two-thirds of this total. By contrast, only sixty-five students hailed from East Africa. These new arrivals entered a wider array of British universities and not only the University of London, Edinburgh University, and the Oxbridge colleges, as was mostly the case in the past. In 1943, the League reported, "Our increase in membership during the year ... amounts to an increase of over one hundred per cent for the parent body alone," while "overseas membership to the parent body continues to increase" and "branches and affiliated organisations show a steady increase and growing strength." In addition, the LCP noted, "we found it necessary to double our issue" of the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, which "seems to attract greater attention and to inspire more appreciative

⁶³⁸ The episode raised the profile of Wellesley Cole as well, who was subsequently asked to prepare a memorandum for and, then, join the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa chaired by Ransome-Kuti. The former he did in conjunction with Solanke and other members of the WASU. Wellesley Cole also became a leading member of the Union in the years that followed. Letter from Solanke to Wellesley Cole (October 16, 1943); see also letter from Wellesley Cole to Solanke (November 22, 1943), letter from Solanke to Wellesley Cole (November 26, 1943), and letter from Wellesley Cole to Solanke (December 8, 1943) in Wellesley Cole Papers, File 157 (WASU).

comments from month to month.”⁶³⁹ In early 1946, the WASU announced that the “effective membership” of the Union had risen from thirty to over one hundred during the previous year, noting that the growth would have been more substantial were it not for “direct movement of new students from West Africa to their centres of studies away from London.”⁶⁴⁰

Bolstered by an upsurge in membership during the second half of the war, the WASU and LCP organized a number of conferences on colonial problems that further enhanced their public profile. Both groups strove increasingly to include African and West Indian perspectives even in discussions of regionally specific issues. When the League held a conference on the “Future of the West Indies” in 1942, Moody urged Wellesley Cole to participate. In accepting the invitation, the latter replied, “I feel naturally, that whatever concerns any section of the negro race necessarily affects the race as a whole, and I shall be glad if you would suggest a list of publications which bear on this subject.” Black intellectuals also created several new organizations in London, Manchester, and elsewhere British Isles in the mid-1940s, while extant groups like the LCP and WASU stepped up their efforts to launch new branches or establish ties with similar organizations in the United States and burgeoning anticolonial and youth movements in the colonies. The WASU established ties to the Nigerian Union of Students and the Sierra Leone Students Union in West Africa and issued a call for greater collaboration between the Union, the West African Parliamentary Committee, and the Nigerian Youth Movement.⁶⁴¹ In 1942, Wellesley Cole formed the Society for the Cultural Advancement of Africa in Newcastle. Soon thereafter became the West African Society, which briefly published *Africana* magazine in the late

⁶³⁹ League of Coloured Peoples,” Twelfth Annual Report” (1942-1943).

⁶⁴⁰ “Membership,” *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 2 (March 1946), p. 5.

⁶⁴¹ “Collaboration Needed” and Ako Adjei, “African Students in America,” *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 8, 14-17.

1940s. Though not an explicitly political organization, its primary aim, as Wellesley Coles explained, was to “bind the students here, African, West Indian, and American negro, into a self-conscious and race-conscious unit.” “While it is local in a sense,” he continued, “it also seeks to establish a permanent centre of contact here for those of us who go home” and “studies everything political that affects the negro race.”⁶⁴²

The emergence of the Pan-African Federation (PAF) during the war with Jomo Kenyatta as its president exemplified the growing cooperative spirit amongst West Indians and Africans in Britain. Although a relatively small organization, the Federation had offices in both Manchester and London, largely under the direction of Ras Makonnen and Padmore respectively, and maintained ties to existing organizations like the WASU and LCP, anticolonial groups in the Caribbean and Africa, and sympathetic Britons like Dinah Stock. The explicit goal of the PAF was to form a link between black pressure groups in the metropole and those with whom they shared a common struggle in the colonies, fostering greater understanding and facilitating the flow of information between them. As Makonnen explained in the organization’s journal, *Pan-Africa*, “Our readers, united in a common African consciousness, are widely scattered: their lives and problems are different and they know little of one another. Can we not introduce them?” “A few short, vivid sketchers,” he suggested, “which show a West Indian student how a Gold Coast farmer lives, or make a Buganda feel the meaning of industrial troubles in Johannesburg, would be as valuable as political discussions in creating a common understanding.”⁶⁴³

As a number of historians have shown, the Second World War and its immediate aftermath marked a watershed in anticolonial and pan-Africanist activity, and this was, if

⁶⁴² Letter from Harold Moody to Robert Wellesley Cole (May 19, 1942) and letter from Wellesley Cole to Moody (June 2, 1942), Wellesley Cole Papers, SOAS Archives, PP MS 35, File 151 (LCP).

⁶⁴³ “Editorial,” *Pan-Africa* v. 1, n. 7 (July 1947), p. 1.

anything, more true of black intellectuals in the metropole than their counterparts in Africa and the Caribbean. Yet, while the LCP and WASU had reestablished their publications on surer footing by the end of the war, despite nagging financial difficulties, both groups began to show signs of internal dissension along regional, ethnic, and political lines. Between 1940 and 1947, *Wàsù* appeared roughly on an annual basis due to wartime shortages and the continuation of rationing after the war, but the WASU launched the twelfth volume of the journal in early 1945 under the direction of a new editorial board led by E. Udo Udoma, which included significant innovations in its format.⁶⁴⁴ However, Solanke and his wife returned to West Africa on a fund-raising trip in 1944, and in their absence the organization soon began to splinter. In 1945, Igbo and Yoruba Unions, the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Yoruba nationalist organization formed by the law student Obafemi Awolowo, and the West Indian Students Union were created in London, all of which attracted members from the more established WASU and LCP. By the late 1940s, Solanke found it increasingly difficult to defend his position within the Union against the onslaught of a contingent of younger radicals led by Appiah and Ade Ademola, and he was forced ultimately to appeal to British members of the Board of Trustees for Africa House to retain his post as warden of the hostel.⁶⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the WASU remained a major center of black student life in London, if now one among several others, and opened a second, larger hostel at Chelsea Embankment by the end of the decade.

Conclusion

⁶⁴⁴ The editorial board consisted of E. Udo Udoma, C. A. Ekere, Ako Adjei, Kankam-Boadu, and G. Oddoye. "Pröem," *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 1.

⁶⁴⁵ See especially Solanke's anguished correspondence to Reginald Sorensen, House of Lords Record Office, Reginald Sorensen Papers, SOR 168 – File of Personal Papers related to WASU (1929-1951).

In 1944, the renowned cricketer Learie Constantine, who was a Welfare Officer and member of the LCP, sued and, ultimately, won a lawsuit against Imperial Hotels Ltd. for denying him lodgings on the basis of his race.⁶⁴⁶ While Constantine's legal victory did little to end discrimination in the metropole, it exposed the persistence of the colour bar through the personage of one of Britain's most recognizable and admired black residents in a manner not seen since Paul Robeson was denied service at London's Savoy Grill in 1929. The episode again confirmed the conviction of many black intellectuals that the abiding dilemma of the British Commonwealth and the search for a lasting international peace centered on race. As the LCP observed in its annual report, "The Learie Constantine incident at the Imperial Hotel is a reminder to those who usually express views to the contrary that the colour bar in this country still exists among a good number of people."⁶⁴⁷ In the years that followed, Constantine continued to denounce various manifestations of racism around the world, and, in 1954, he published *Colour Bar*, which contributed to the political awakening of a generation of Caribbean artists and intellectuals who witnessed the transition to independence. The text linked the author's personal experiences of discrimination to the United Nations' failure to enforce the "Universal Declaration of Rights" with regard to "coloured people" around the world in an ambitious global history of racism. As Constantine explained in describing why he "had to write this book," "I have been refused food in a London restaurant and submitted to ignominy when I asked for rooms in a London hotel." "A human being," he wrote, "requires some degree of dignity, certain standards of decency; above all, some reassurance that, whatever colour he happens to be born, he will not be shut out from a sense of brotherhood with all other men."⁶⁴⁸ Although

⁶⁴⁶ See "Law Reports," *The Times* (August 4, 1944).

⁶⁴⁷ League of Coloured Peoples, "Introduction," *Thirteenth Annual Report* (1943-1944), p. 3.

⁶⁴⁸ Learie Constantine, *Colour Bar* (London: Stanley Paul, 1954) p. 26-28.

Constantine acknowledged the relative freedom from the threat of racially-motivated violence that blacks enjoyed in the metropolitan Britain, he viewed instances of discrimination in London as much as Trinidad and South Africa, for example, as fundamentally connected by the colour bar structuring social, economic, and political relations on both the intra-imperial and inter-imperial levels. If the colour bar prevented greater cooperation between black and white within the British Empire, it also imperiled the “sense of brotherhood with all other men” and acted as a fetter on the realization of human potential around the world.

When the Greek proprietor of the Bristol Hotel in Lagos denied Ivor Cummings lodgings in 1947, and Governor Arthur Richards failed to take action, many black intellectuals in London deployed similar arguments. The British-born son of a reputable black physician and a white woman from Yorkshire and a senior member of the Colonial Office’s Welfare Department, Cummings had traveled to Lagos with J. L. Keith in an official capacity, adding to the ignominious character of the incident. As in the case of Learie Constantine, the scorn meted out at the Bristol Hotel to an individual of Cummings’ public standing revealed the discrepancy between the British rhetoric of equality and the prevailing climate of racism throughout the Empire in an undeniable fashion. A headline from the conservative *Daily Express* in London declared “British Official Barred” due to “Colour Ban at Hotel.” “The issue of racial prejudice,” Flint states, “could not have been distilled in more vivid form; a senior imperial representative had been excluded from the best hotel of a British colonial capital for no other reason than that his skin happened to be approximately the same colour as that of the colony’s own population!”⁶⁴⁹ Writing in *Pan-Africa*, T. R.

⁶⁴⁹ John Flint, “Scandal at the Bristol Hotel: Some Thoughts on Racial Discrimination in Britain and West Africa and its Relationship to the Planning of Decolonisation, 1939-47,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* v. 12, n. 1 (October 1983), p. 87.

Makonnen linked the Greek proprietor's treatment of Cummings at the Bristol Hotel to openly racist statements made recently by General Smuts in South Africa, the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, Godfrey Huggins, and the "liberal" commentator" Vernon Bartlett. "These four men," Makonnen asserted, "have dared to deny that black humanity, in common with other men, has rights equal with the manifold duties imposed on it." "It is time," he maintained, "all Africans realised that only by demonstrating their solidarity and their refusal to tolerate ... such inhumanity and disregard of their rights will they be able to command respect and authority in their homeland."⁶⁵⁰ Despite the WASU's past disagreements with Cummings and their distrust of his loyalties, the Union, which had strong ties to the Lagosian intelligentsia, presented the Colonial Office with letters of protest in London. The West African press also decried the incident and, in Lagos, prominent members of the intellectual and commercial elite denounced the apparent "disregard of, and opposition to, the principles of British Colonial Policy" inherent in this "intolerable insult to the Negro race" and organized mass protests, which *The Times* subsequently reported.⁶⁵¹ Moreover, the locale contributed to the incident's impact. Colonial experts and reformist groups like the FCB tended to focus their criticisms on South and East Africa, where white settlers, not the colonial state, were said to be the source of the worst abuses, and view conditions in British West Africa more favorably by comparison, thus, diminishing the problems there.⁶⁵² The episode at the Bristol Hotel provided powerful evidence to the contrary. As Flint suggests, "the element of racial discrimination, generally regarded as of minor significance in British West Africa because of the habit of contrasting the area with

⁶⁵⁰ T. R. Makonnen, "The Greek for 'Colour Bar,'" *Pan-Africa* v. 1, n. 6 (June 1947), p. 22-26.

⁶⁵¹ Quoted in Olusanya, *The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria, 1939-1953* (Lagos and London, Evans Bros. for University of Lagos, 1973), p. 105; see also Flint, "Scandal at the Bristol Hotel," p. 87-88.

⁶⁵² When the government came under attack, it was primarily for failing to adequately defend the African population against the designs of racist settlers and capitalist interests.

South, Central and East Africa, was ... a phenomenon which presented the colonial reform movement, whose dynamism lay essentially in London, with serious difficulties, for it was upheld not by settlers but by the colonial administration itself.”⁶⁵³

Although “the efforts of the League of Coloured Peoples to end racial discrimination in the commissioning of military officers and the employment of colonial officials of color set in motion reforms that led eventually to precisely the statements banning racial discrimination in hiring in the British government that the League demanded,” as Tignor observes, “the early steps taken during World War II were halting and deeply distressing to Lewis and his colleagues at the League.”⁶⁵⁴ Even in the short term, however, black intellectuals’ attack on the colour bar had a pronounced impact on the language of colonial governance. Indeed, as Flint notes, “Whereas in 1939 it had been quite respectable to argue theories of racial inferiority, by 1940 it was not, and by 1945 racial equality was the establishment orthodoxy,” in theory, if not in practice.⁶⁵⁵

Despite the limits of wartime progress towards their ultimate goals and the latent divisions between British socialists and themselves that would surface by the end of the 1940s, black intellectuals entered the postwar period with high expectations. Their demands had escalated dramatically during the Second World War due in large part to the essential contributions of the colonies to the defeat of the Fascist powers. From 1940, black pressure groups like the WASU and LCP called for the immediate adoption of democratic reforms, the withdrawal of the British from the business of internal government, and the granting of full Dominion status within the British Commonwealth.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ Flint, “Scandal at the Bristol Hotel,” p. 89.

⁶⁵⁴ Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 75.

⁶⁵⁵ Flint, “Scandal at the Bristol Hotel,” p. 78-79.

⁶⁵⁶ See Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, p. 134-136.

Chapter Seven

The Labour Party on Trial: Black Intellectuals and Leftist Internationalism, 1945-1950

Writing in *Wasu* at the end of the World War II, Dr. Rita Hinden of the Fabian Colonial Bureau proposed a “partnership ... between progressives forces of Britain and their counterparts in the colonies” in which the former would “support from the British end what the colonial peoples are striving for from their own end.” “Trusteeship,” she argued, “has clearly become outmoded” because the “trustee ... is not bound to take active steps for his ward’s advancement, or to spend a penny to secure his well-being.” Hinden raised “the possibility of a complete dissolution of the association between Britain and the colonial empire” only to dismiss it as impractical. “No responsible person, either in the Colonies or in Britain,” she claimed, “is calling for that at this particular moment.” In keeping with the internationalist spirit of the times, Hinden maintained that the more attractive alternative was “to remain inside some form of commonwealth or empire, but bearing a new status—and the phrase coined to describe the possible new status is ‘partnership.’” After the cataclysmic destruction of World War II, she wrote, “Progressive thought throughout the world looks for a greater unity and integration between nations and peoples—whether they unite within the framework of commonwealths, united states, federal unions, empires or unions of socialistic soviet republics.” Thus, Hinden suggested, “The great question now is: Can such a relationship of comradeship be created between the people’s movements in the Colonies and

the people's movements in Britain? That is the only form of 'partnership in empire' which appeals to me, as a socialist."⁶⁵⁷

This was, indeed, the question on the minds of many black intellectuals at the end of the war. Should complete independence or an association of self-governing territories be the goal of anticolonial movements? Was true partnership attainable within the framework of the Commonwealth or some other international body? As Cooper suggests, "A turning point had clearly arrived, but whether change would mean the reform of empire, the destruction of empire, or the forging of new kinds of political units was impossible to discern."⁶⁵⁸ As the Empire emerged from World War II, those who unfailingly declared their loyalty to Britain like Harold Moody and the most outspoken critics of imperialism such as George Padmore and the Ghanaian Communist Desmond Buckle alike argued for federation in the West Indies and West Africa and internal self-government within the context the Commonwealth, not the complete severing of ties with metropolitan Britain.⁶⁵⁹ In his booklet published in 1944, *Colour Bar*, Moody deployed the notion of "partnership" within the British Commonwealth in much the same way as Hinden. "The spirit of trusteeship, which emerged with the last war," Moody argued, "must give way to the idea of partnership. These [colonial] peoples are equal and partners with Britain in a great adventure. They must receive recognition and be trained to play their full part in the great enterprise of the British Commonwealth of Nations."⁶⁶⁰

By the end of the Second World War, the activities of black intellectuals helped to render the arguments employed in the past to justify imperial untenable. "Anticolonial

⁶⁵⁷ Rita Hinden, "Partnership and What It Means," *Wasafiri* v. 12, n. 1 (March 1945), p. 9-10.

⁶⁵⁸ Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, p. 26.

⁶⁵⁹ Padmore suggested that the British government should follow the lead of the Netherlands and transform the empire into a federation, "a partnership of peoples, each autonomous in internal affairs, linked to each other by harmonious and voluntary co-operation." Padmore and Cunard, "The White Man's Duty," p. 135.

⁶⁶⁰ Harold A. Moody, *Colour Bar* (London: New Mildmay Press, 1944), p. 22.

movements from the 1930s onwards,” Frederick Cooper explains, “were able to make the once-ordinary category of ‘colony’ into something unacceptable in international discourse largely because they linked activists in African towns and cities with principled groups in the metropolises, who in turn tied those issues to the self-conception of democracies.”⁶⁶¹ West Indians and Africans in London appropriated the language of colonial development to make material demands upon the imperial state and pressed for true citizenship and self-government in the British Commonwealth of Nations. In mid-1948, the WASU organized a three-day conference on “Post War Development in West Africa.” The Union invited a “large number of British Students’ organisations and other associations,” and obtained “the services of a number of British M.P.s,” including the socialist Tom Driberg and the conservative L. D. Gammans, and “other men of international repute” like the High Commissioner of India, Krishna Menon, “to address the conference on various aspects of the West African problem.” However, the papers presented by the West African intellectuals participating in the conference were given pride of place. “A panel of young West Africans,” Okoi Arikpo, the president of the Union, wrote in his invitation to Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole, “has been commissioned to prepare on behalf of W.A.S.U., papers covering the whole field of development. These papers entailed many months of objective, critical research, and will be presented at the various sessions as the basic material for the discussions of the economic and social implications of the various development schemes now being initiated.”⁶⁶²

⁶⁶¹ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 110.

⁶⁶² The conference was held at Caxton Hall in Westminster on July 29-31, 1948. Letter from Okoi Arikpo to Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole, July 5, 1948, Wellesley Cole Papers, SOAS Archives (PP MS 35), File 157 (WASU). For excerpts from the conference proceedings, see *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 6 (Spring 1949).

As the British government wavered on its commitment to self-sufficiency in the colonies, however, economic development, which was linked to the capacity to survive the vagaries of global capitalism, emerged as necessary prerequisites for self-government. In this way, even British socialists and the few Members of Parliament concerned with conditions in the Empire, including those from the Labour Party, sought to connect aspirations for political independence in the colonies to unity within the British Commonwealth. Thus, as Webster explains, “A ‘people’s peace’ that emphasized welfare at home, especially through the post-war development of the welfare state, corresponded closely to the rhetoric of a ‘people’s empire’ that emphasized ideas of welfare and development” in the immediate postwar period.⁶⁶³ During the parliamentary debates on the 1945 Colonial Development and Welfare Act, Arthur Creech Jones, who was the Labour Party’s expert on colonial affairs and head of the Fabian Colonial Bureau argued that the legislation would “contribute to training the Colonial people for complete and responsible self-government and fitting them, socially and economically, to discharge their responsibility in the world. They will thus, in due time, make their own independent decisions, in regard to their future inside the British Commonwealth.” “I believe, of course,” he continued, “that we are helping to unify the Commonwealth by the Bill before us. Nevertheless, it is important that we should realise that there can be no real political liberty unless the economic and social conditions of the Dependencies are built up.”⁶⁶⁴

Following the Party’s electoral victory in 1945, Africans and West Indians looked to the new Labour government to push reticent colonial officials in London and the colonies to institute sweeping changes. Yet, the reforms instituted under the banner of development in

⁶⁶³ Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, p. 7.

⁶⁶⁴ *House of Commons Debates* 408 (February 16, 1945), cc. 541-542.

the 1940s ultimately amounted to little more than an extension of the “empire-strengthening” tactics of the 1930s insofar as they consistently privileged the interests of the metropolitan economy and large British corporations operating in the colonies. Currency shortages in Britain after the war rendered the metropole even more dependent upon its African colonies.⁶⁶⁵ In circular to the colonial governors in 1947, Creech Jones, now the Colonial Secretary, justified the creation of the new Colonial Development Corporation by arguing that government investment in colonial economies would serve not only to better utilize the resources of the latter, but also “help to strengthen the resources of the sterling group as a whole and thus prove of considerable benefit to all of the members of that group and not only the colonies themselves.”⁶⁶⁶ If, as Tignor observes, “Creech Jones saw no contradiction between promoting the economic development of the colonies and strengthening the pound sterling, contradictions were bound to arise.”⁶⁶⁷

With their expectations for the postwar Labour government dashed by the late 1940s, most of the former chose ultimately to heed Kwame Nkrumah’s call to “seek ye first the political kingdom” and independence from Britain by the late 1940s. Nevertheless, the period immediately preceding independence in Britain’s African and Caribbean colonies did not witness an inevitable movement towards strictly national aspirations. Anticolonial nationalisms and the particular form of postcolonial states which emerged in the late 1950s and 1960s triumphed at the expense of a number of extra-national conceptions of community that circulated in the years prior to decolonization and attempts at collective mobilization that did not presume the necessity of the nation, from black internationalism, communism, and the socialist internationalism espoused by the Labour Party and others on

⁶⁶⁵ See Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*.

⁶⁶⁶ Arthur Creech Jones, Colonial Office Circular to Governors of Colonies, December 17, 1947, PRO CO 852/1347/9.

⁶⁶⁷ Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, p. 72.

the British Left. Indeed, at the end of the Second World War, most black intellectuals in London believed that the empire would necessarily give way to new forms of international association and cooperation and political institutions which reflected the realities of an increasingly interdependent world. Contrary to the familiar nationalist teleology, in which anticolonial resistance appears to evolve inexorably towards the quest for national sovereignty, the political imaginary of African and Caribbean intellectuals extended beyond and challenged the model of the nation-state in the decades before the dissolution of the British Empire.

This chapter examines the political and intellectual ties that linked black intellectuals to politicians, parties, and other groups on the British Left in the late 1940s. In many respects, what follows represents a history of missed opportunities, false starts, and political dead ends. The content of postwar reform, which emphasized the creation of a stable, respectable labor force and limited concessions to the colonial intelligentsia as a “safety valve” on mounting discontent, led growing numbers of African and West Indian intellectuals to conclude in the years following the war that even their socialist allies in Britain were unwilling to accept, let alone fight for, democratization, self-determination, and a mutually beneficial partnership. Their disillusionment with precisely those forces in Britain whom they once hoped would help them transform the Empire played a decisive role in their rejection of the political and ideational structure of the Commonwealth and led ultimately to their calls for complete independence. The racial paternalism of the British Left and particularly Labour’s failure to prioritize self-government for the colonies following the party’s victory in 1945 engendered a decisive shift in the terms and aims of anticolonial resistance at the heart of the British Empire. By the end of the decade, mobilization around

and for the independence of discrete colonial territories, the transformation of individual colonies into sovereign nation-states, largely supplanted the appeal of internationalism.

Up to the late 1940s, however, many maneuvered and articulated their demands from *within* the institutional and conceptual framework of empire as often as they sought to think and act *outside* of its structures. At a WASU conference on August 25, 1943 attended by a number of representatives from the West African press, Kweku Bankole Awoonor-Renner, a member of the municipal council of Accra, addressed the issue of West Africa's future relationship to Britain. "The question has often been asked ... as to 'whether West Africa would like to break away from the Empire.'" "Whether we would like to break away from the Empire or not," he argued, "depends upon the Policy of the British Government and indeed, ... the attitude of the British people in the United Kingdom towards our national aspiration." Awoonor-Renner expressed skepticism regarding the new rhetoric of partnership, especially the recent debates in Parliament on colonial development, which he viewed as little more than a futile attempt to delay the inevitable. "We see things are happening in the East and other parts of the world. We too, yearn for something progressive, and when I say progressive I do not mean simply something in the shape of the recent debate on the so-called Colonial policy," which "was to us in West Africa an attempt to divert our attention from our political responsibility." Rather, he continued, "We demand fundamental change not mere patchwork reforms. And we do hope that with the aid of you, who appointed yourselves our Trustees, but now as partners, this most needed change will be realised. And without you, it will be notwithstanding, for no nation or people can forestall the supreme march of history."⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁸ Reprinted from *Chicago Defender* (October 30, 1943) in Bankole Awoonor-Renner, *West African Soviet Union* (London: Wans Press, 1946), p. 25.

While the turn from “trusteeship” to “partnership,” from fiscal self-sufficiency to colonial development, during the Second World War engendered a cautious sense of optimism in some, black intellectuals in London called for more far-reaching reforms at its conclusion. In a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, Harold Moody asked, “Is there not a new spirit of emancipation coming over the world whereby she is determined to give two-thirds of its population the rights which have been denied to them heretofore?”⁶⁶⁹ In the mid-1940s, West Indians and Africans in London mobilized the concept of internationalism to not only buttress their vision of global black unity but also appeal to the imperial state and public opinion in Britain and abroad for substantive reforms. In early 1945, the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* published an open letter asserting the rights of “African peoples” around the world to enjoy the benefits of internationalism. The signatories, which included representatives of the League of Coloured Peoples CP (Moody, Dr. C. Belfield Clarke, and Samson Morris), West African Students Union (R. W. Beoku-Betts, K. A. Korsah, and T. A. Bankole), and George Padmore, maintained, “the African peoples by their contribution in man-power and material resources in the war against Fascism; by their service in Ethiopia, East Africa, the Western Desert, Italy and in the Battle of Germany; and by their service in Burma in the eastern war against Japan, have earned the right to expect that they shall benefit as a result of the new concept of international co-operation which has been acquired in the course of the grim ordeal of the war of liberation against Fascism.”⁶⁷⁰

The instability of this “new concept”—its plasticity and its capacity to integrate difference and multiple identifications within a totalizing vision of humanity—became the

⁶⁶⁹ Harold Moody, “Letter from the President to the *Manchester Guardian*, December 29th,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* no. 65 (February 1945), 96-97.

⁶⁷⁰ Harold A. Moody, K. A. Korsah, R. W. Beoku-Betts, Samson Morris, K. A. Chunchie, George Padmore, J. S. Annan, T. A. Bankole, H. N. Critchlow, C. B. Clarke, and J. A. Garba-Jahumpa, “African Peoples Earned Right To Benefit By New Concept,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 12, n. 67 (April 1945), p. 12.

privileged vehicle for the articulation and circulation of alternate understandings of social organization in the mid-1940s. Many black intellectuals opposed internationalism to belligerent nationalism, *Herrenvolk* racial theories, and narrow self-interest, which engendered imperialist rivalries and defined the history of modern warfare, as the only means to securing lasting peace and stability around the world. Employing the test of “*mental development, cultural level, and possibility of salvation*” developed by the Lomeshie Research Centre for Anthropology and Human Biology, R. E. G. Armattoe from the Gold Coast wrote, “The loyalty of any individual begins then (1) with his parents; (2) his immediate family; (3) distant relations; (4) his playmates and classmates; (5) his workmates or colleagues; (6) fellow-citizens either in town or province; (7) imperial citizens; (8) language groups; (9) foreigners of the same race; (10) foreigners of different races.” He lamented that “for the majority of your acquaintances the limit is set either for classmates—i.e. old school ties, or to one’s social class...” “In each age,” Armattoe argued, “... only ten or less individuals can permit their loyalties to cover all humanity. These men and women alone can hope for salvation because they know the obligations of true civilization.” Yet, he remained hopeful in the wake of the horrors propagated by “lunatics” like Hitler during World War II. “Sovereign States are slowly realizing that sovereignty is not enough and that human loyalty must transcend national boundaries and reach to heaven. Anyone who knows how lunatics persist in their odd views must welcome this change of attitude as a good augury for mankind.”⁶⁷¹

Neither an expression of racial prejudice or chauvinistic nationalism nor an attempt to overcome, assimilate, or nullify cultural and historical differences, many African and West Indian intellectuals believed that black internationalism represented a corollary to humanist cosmopolitanism. Their political and philosophical commitments were based in part on a

⁶⁷¹ Armattoe, “Science, the State and the Citizen,” *Africana* v. 1, n. 2 (April 1949), p. 14-15.

historical perspective that emphasized the role of black agents in the making of an increasingly interdependent world and in which the making of modern black subjects around the Atlantic was inseparable from the dynamics of global integration. Black writers and activists in London envisioned pan-African cooperation in the form of proposed federations or associations of semi-autonomous polities as both the best means to actualize the intellectual, cultural, and material resources of colonial peoples in Africa and the Caribbean and a catalyst for greater international cooperation more generally.

The Road to Manchester: Pan-Africanism and Communism

The Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in October 1945 represented the apotheosis of the black internationalism of the 1930s and early 1940s and occurred within the context of a range of internationalist student, youth, and labor activism in Europe, West Africa, and the Caribbean.⁶⁷² Although Manchester has come to be seen as a major turning point in pan-Africanist and anticolonial activity that initiated the drive towards decolonization, it had significant, if lesser known, predecessors in the conferences organized by black intellectuals in London during World War II, which articulated escalating demands and an expansive conception of racial unity. In addition to those discussed previously, the League of Coloured Peoples held a conference on the theme of a “Peace Charter for Colonial Peoples” in London during late July 1944 and invited representatives of the French, Dutch, and Belgian governments to attend. The conference adopted a “Charter for Coloured Peoples,” which Moody forwarded to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, asking them to publicly endorse it. The Charter insisted that the “same economic, educational, legal

⁶⁷² Although Manchester is commonly referred to as the fifth in the series of Pan-African Congress in the history edited by Padmore and most other accounts, it was in fact the sixth.

and political rights ... be enjoyed by all persons, male and female, whatever their colour”; “that comprehensive plans be made and put into effect, in accordance with a definite time schedule, for the ... development of dependent regions and their peoples,” including “special funds ... set aside for this purpose”; “that all such economic development ... be in the interest of the peoples of the regions concerned”; “that educational plans ... be so formed and carried out that the peoples of such territories shall be able, in the shortest possible time, to play their full part in all spheres and at all levels of activity in their own countries”; “that the indigenous peoples of all dependent territories ... have immediately a majority on all law-making bodies, and ... be granted full self-government”; and “that Imperial Powers ... be required to account for their administration of dependent territories to an International body with powers of investigation, and, in particular, to make regular reports on the steps taken towards self-government.”⁶⁷³ In a letter published subsequently in *The Times* entitled “The Colour Bar,” Moody explained the purpose of the conference. “So numerous are the cases of discrimination ... brought to our notice, and so grave are the evils which are likely to result therefrom, that the League of Coloured Peoples recently called a conference to deal with this specific issue, and thereat framed and adopted a charter which is both comprehensive, concise, and complete in its statement of our desires. Our purpose is to press for its adoption by the United Nations.” As he had done in the past, Moody also urged Parliament to pass legislation “against any discrimination based on race, colour, or creed.” “To engage upon a war against the *Herrenvolk* theory,” he argued, “and at the same time to leave unresolved this black-and-white relationship is undoubtedly a very shortsighted

⁶⁷³ Letters from Harold Moody to Secretary of State Oliver Stanley and Prime Minister Winston Churchill (July 27, 1944) and enclosed copies of the “Charter For Coloured Peoples,” PRO CO 968/159/9: Colonial Policy – League of Coloured Peoples Conference (1944).

policy. However much the English may be disinclined to bring this matter into the open, they will none the less be compelled so to do before long....”⁶⁷⁴

In April 1945, Desmond Buckle helped draft a “Manifesto on Africa in the Post-War World” to be presented to the United Nations Conference in San Francisco along with the LCP, West African Students Union, International African Service Bureau, Negro Association (Manchester), Negro Welfare Centre (Liverpool and Manchester), Coloured Men’s Institute (East London), and a number of trade unionists from the Caribbean and West Africa.⁶⁷⁵ It restated Moody’s claim that “African peoples” had earned the right to benefit from the “new concept of international cooperation” due to their contributions to the war and recommended, among other reforms, that the new “International Organisation ... immediately adopt policies and ... the necessary machinery to secure uniform development of the economic, social and cultural life of African peoples” and that, “guided by the principle of equal rights for all men recognizing that the success of any scheme will depend on the measure to which Africans themselves participate, steps ... be taken for the provision of maximum opportunity for such participation at all levels of administration.” The authors also called for “energetic measures” aimed “at ending illiteracy, poverty[,] ... disease,” and “mass illiteracy.” Indeed, they maintained that only these measures could ensure future global stability and prevent the recurrence of military conflict inspired by inter-imperial rivalries. “The present inferior political, economic and social status of the African people,” they argued, “mitigates against the achievement of harmonious co-operation among the peoples of the world. International co-operation demands the abolition of every kind of

⁶⁷⁴ Harold Moody, “The Colour Bar,” *The Times* (August 10, 1944).

⁶⁷⁵ The manifesto was signed by Padmore, K. A. Chunchie, J. S. Annan (Gold Coast), T. A. Bankole (Nigeria), H. N. Critchlow (British Guiana), J. A. Garba-Jahumpa (Gambia), R. W. Beoku-Betts of the WASU, and Samson Morris, C. Belfield Clark, and Moody of the LCP. On Buckle’s role in preparing it, see Adi and Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (London: New Beacon Books, 1995), p. 17.

discrimination....”⁶⁷⁶ The Charter for Coloured Peoples and the Manifesto on Africa in the Post-War World foreshadowed many of the demands expressed at Manchester, and the Colonial Office perceived all of these activities as a related progression of black protest in Britain.⁶⁷⁷ Indeed, in July, the LCP announced plans for a “proposed Pan-African Conference.” Samson Morris, the League’s Executive Secretary, reported that the “*Pan-African Federation*, comprising several of the coloured organisations in Great Britain, *The League of Coloured Peoples*, and *The West African Students Union*, are arranging to sponsor a conference of African peoples in England” at which it “is expected that representatives from U.S.A., B.W.I., B.W. Africa, East Africa, South Africa, Belgian Congo, Ethiopia, Somaliland and the Sudan will attend.”⁶⁷⁸

However, the immediate impetus for the 1945 Pan-African Congress came from the inaugural conferences of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in London and Paris in 1945.⁶⁷⁹ Some of the trade union representatives had been released recently from extended internments during the war years, and many of the delegates remained in Britain in the intervening months, creating an unprecedented occasion for cooperation between black trade unionists and intellectuals from both sides of the Atlantic as the aforementioned Manifesto on Africa in the Post-War World indicates. The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* reported the preliminary meeting held in February and hosted several trade union leaders from the West Indies and West Africa. “At least three of these delegates,” the *Newsletter* noted, “have been imprisoned in their own Colony for Trade Union or political

⁶⁷⁶ Letter from Harold Moody to Secretary of State Oliver Stanley (April 6, 1945) and enclosed “Manifesto on Africa in the Post-War World,” PRO CO 968/159/9: Colonial Policy – League of Coloured Peoples Conference (1944).

⁶⁷⁷ See internal Colonial Office correspondence, especially the reactions to the announcement of planning for the Manchester Congress, PRO CO 968/159/9.

⁶⁷⁸ “Proposed Pan-African Conference,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 12, n. 70 (July 1945), p. 107.

⁶⁷⁹ See documents from the WFTU in George Padmore, ed., *The Voice of Coloured Labour* (Manchester: PanAf Service Ltd., 1945), a pamphlet published by the International African Service Bureau.

activity”: “35-year-old Ken Hill, from Jamaica ... was interned in 1942. Mr. Wallace Johnson, of Sierra Leone, after serving a term of five years, was released a few weeks ago in order to attend the Conference at the request of Sir Walter Citrine. The British Guiana delegate, the Hon. H. W. Critchlow, now a member of the B. G. Legislative Council, has also been detained in the past—what an indictment of British Colonial policy.” In his address, Wallace-Johnson “attacked British Imperialism, asked for a ‘Black Man’s Charter,’ for freedom of assembly, speech and Press,” and demanded “the recognition of Colonial Trade Unions.” The LCP lauded the decision of the delegates from the colonies, which “included a number from India, West Africa, the West Indies, Cyprus, and Palestine,” to create a Colonial Committee within the WFTU in order to present “a united front on all matters affecting Colonial interests.” Yet, while “the Colonial delegates have made quite an impression on their colleagues for their forceful personality and clear-cut ideas,” “it seems that these delegates are not finding it easy to have themselves heard.”⁶⁸⁰ In addition, conferences held in London and Prague in 1945 led to the creation of the International Union of Students (IUS) and World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY). West Indian and African students and intellectuals attended both meetings, contributing to the anti-imperialist stance of the new organizations in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The WASU maintained ties to the IUS and WFDY, and Bankole Akpata represented the Union on the latter’s executive committee.⁶⁸¹

Although the Pan-African Federation, led by the efforts of George Padmore and Ras Makonnen, had begun planning for the Manchester Congress, the arrival of the energetic young firebrand Francis Nwia-Kofi Nkrumah from the United States the same year also

⁶⁸⁰ “Secretary’s Notes,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* n. 66 (March 1945), p. 127; see also “West African T.U. Leader in Britain,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 13, n. 73 (October 1945), p. 19.

⁶⁸¹ See Hakim Adi, “West Africans and the Communist Party in the 1950s,” *Opening the Books: Essay on the Social and Cultural History of British Communism*, ed. by Geoff Andrews et al. (London: Pluto Press, 1995), p. 178.

proved to be fortuitous. At C. L. R. James' request, Padmore assumed responsibility for the new arrival's political education. He and Joseph Appiah met Nkrumah at Euston station and took him directly to a railroad union meeting where Appiah was speaking that evening, and Peter Carter made arrangements for him to stay at the WASU hostel. Nkrumah immediately immersed himself in the world of black pressure groups in London. Peter Abrahams recalled that Nkrumah "had quickly become part of our African colony in London and had our little group, the Pan-African Federation in our protests against colonialism. He was much less relaxed than most of us ... He seemed consumed by a restlessness that led him to evolve some of the most fantastic schemes."⁶⁸² Soon after his arrival, Nkrumah moved into a flat on Burghley Road in Tufnell Park with a fellow Gold Coaster, Ako Adjei, whom he had known in the United States, roughly equal distance between the WASU's headquarters and a group of West African radicals living in Primrose Gardens. Along with Padmore's apartment, where he spent many nights engaged in political discussions, these places became the center of Nkrumah's activities during his first months in London. He served as the regional secretary of the Pan-African Federation for the southern England and the Vice President of the WASU for a year, remaining on the Union's Executive Committee until his departure for the Gold Coast in 1947. Through these contacts, Nkrumah also met members of the Independent Labour Party and Labour MPs like Fenner Brockway, Ben Riley, and Reginald Sorensen.⁶⁸³

⁶⁸² Peter Abrahams, "Nkrumah, Kenyatta and the Old Order," *African Heritage*, ed. by Jacob Draschler (New York: Crowell-Collier 1963), p. 138.

⁶⁸³ In his now infamous letter of introduction to Padmore, James described Nkrumah as talking "a lot about imperialism and Leninism and export capital, and talk[ing] a lot of nonsense." "This young man," he wrote, "is coming to you. He is not very bright, but nevertheless do what you can for him because he's determined to throw the Europeans out of Africa." Marika Sherwood, "Kwame Nkrumah: The London Years, 1945-1947," *Africans in Britain*, ed. by David Killingray (London: Frank Cass, 1994), p. 167-169, 179-181; Appiah, *Joe Appiah*, p. 163.

Nkrumah played a major role in the preparations for Manchester, and his prominent position at the Congress provided him with a unique opportunity to make contacts with African and West Indian political activists and trade unionists. In war-addled Britain where racial discrimination in lodgings and restaurants remained commonplace, Ras Makonnen, who was the proprietor of several restaurants and other businesses in Manchester, and other black residents of the city like the physician and President of the Pan-African Federation Dr. Peter Milliard were also crucial in creating the conditions that made the event possible. Roughly 200 Africans or people of African descent attended the Pan-African Congress which took place between October 13 and 21, including W. E. B. DuBois, who was named its International President and honored as the “father” of pan-Africanism, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Peter Abrahams, the future postcolonial leaders Jomo Kenyatta and Hastings Banda, a number of others who became ministers of state (Obafemi Awolowo, Garba-Jahumpa, and Jaja Nwachuku) or assumed important positions within Nkrumah’s administration in Ghana (J. S. Annan, Kamkam Boadu, Eddie DuPlan, and Ako Adjei), and his future political rivals Joseph Appiah and Dr. Karankyi Taylor. Representatives of political parties like L. A. Thoywell-Henry of the People’s National Party in Jamaica and black organizations in Britain such as the WASU and IASB also participated, although Moody of the LCP and Buckle did not attend. Unlike the previous Pan-Africanist Congresses, many black trade unionists from Britain and the colonies took part in the weeklong event, and John McNair of the Independent Labour Party, Ms. H. Burton from the Women’s International League, T. B. Subasingha of the Ceylon Lanka Sama Samaj, and others attended as “fraternal delegates” or outside “observers.” Although some of the papers presented at the Congress were translated into and subsequently published in French, those in attendance came overwhelmingly from English-speaking parts of Africa and the Caribbean.

DuBois and Nkrumah contributed the “Declaration to the Imperialist Powers of the World” and the “Declaration to Colonial Workers, Farmers and Intellectuals,” respectively, to the proceedings, and the Congress unanimously approved some twelve pages of resolutions dealing with the United Nations Organization, black workers and the colour bar in Britain, the West Indies, and nearly every region of Africa. Black unity and independence from imperial rule within a larger structure of international cooperation became the overriding themes of the Congress. Dubois declared, “We demand for Black Africa autonomy and independence, so far and no further than it is possible in this ‘ONE WORLD’ for groups and peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation,” and Nkrumah argued, “the struggle for political power by colonial and subject peoples is the first step towards, and the necessary prerequisite to, complete social, economic and political emancipation,” and called upon “Colonial and Subject Peoples of the World” to “Unite.” In his contribution to Padmore’s *Colonial and ... Coloured Unity: History of the Pan-African Congress*, which reprinted the proceedings from Manchester, Abrahams quoted DuBois’s vision for the pan-Africanist movement from the *Dusk of Dawn*:

‘My plans ... had in them nothing spectacular nor revolutionary. If in decades or a century they resulted in such world organisation of black men as would oppose a united front to European aggression, that certainly would not have been beyond my dream.... Out of this there might come, not race war and opposition, but broader cooperation with the white rulers of the world, and a chance for peaceful and accelerated development of black folk.’

In addition to Padmore’s edited *History*, which appeared in 1947, the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* published the “Declaration to the Imperialist Powers of the World” and the “Declaration to the Colonial Workers, Farmers and Intellectuals” in early 1946.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸⁴ George Padmore, ed., *Colonial and ... Coloured Unity: History of the Pan-African Congress* (London: Hammersmith Bookshop Ltd., 1947); “Fifth Pan-African Congress,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 13, n. 76 (January 1946), p. 77-78. See also Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (London: New Beacon Books, 1995).

The West African delegates at the Congress also drafted a separate set of resolutions on the political, economic, and social development of the region. “The claims ‘partnership,’ ‘trusteeship,’ ‘guardianship,’ and the ‘mandate system,’” they maintained, “do not serve the political wishes of the people of West Africa,” and “the artificial divisions and territorial boundaries created by the imperialist powers are deliberate steps to obstruct the political unity of the West African people.” Thus, they declared “THAT COMPLETE AND ABSOLUTE INDEPENDENCE FOR THE PEOPLES OF WEST AFRICA IS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE EXISTING PROBLEMS!!”⁶⁸⁵

It has become something of a truism that the 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress led almost directly to the return of many of its participants to the colonies to lead national liberation movements, with Nkrumah’s return to the Gold Coast at the end of 1947 serving as the paradigmatic example. Nkrumah later claimed that it “brought about the awakening of African political consciousness. It became in fact, a mass movement of Africa for the Africans.”⁶⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the history of the multiple entanglements of this small, but highly significant cohort of Africans and West Indians in the metropole was more complicated than this narrative suggests.

For many, the period after Manchester represented a moment of radical possibility and inspired visions of pan-colonial or pan-“coloured” cooperation abounded for a brief period. Many looked increasingly to Asia, especially India, as a source of hope, a model for action, and a potential ally in the struggle for a new world. The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* cited statements of support from W. E. B. DuBois and the Secretary of the Caribbean Labour Congress of Jamaica to the Inter-Asian Congress held in Delhi in 1947 as

⁶⁸⁵ Quoted in Awooner-Renner, *West African Soviet Union*, p. 14-16.

⁶⁸⁶ Quoted in J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945: A Study of Ideology and Social Classes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 355-356.

“proof positive of the growing solidarity between the Asiatic and African Peoples” to which the League itself sought to contribute and quoted from the latter. “The Negro, Indian and coloured peoples of the Caribbean are displaying a lively interest in the development of the struggle against Imperialism in Asia ... Every victory won by you towards your liberation is a cause of rejoicing to us ... May the brotherhood of all peoples, races and nations grow stronger with each succeeding hour.” Makonnen also discussed the conference in *Pan-Africa*, the journal of the Pan-African Federation, which was launched at the beginning of 1947. “It was quietly organised; it was not aggressive nor even predominately political in spirit; and yet, when the writers of world history search for a landmark of the transition-point from one epoch to the next they may very well find it there.” “So rapidly does the face of the world change,” he wrote. “One wonders how long, or how short a time it will be possible and even necessary to hold a similar conference on Inter-African Relations.” The idea of African unity, “the United States of Africa,” Makonnen noted, “seems to haunt” the minds of the journals’ contributors. “And though the European official may think of it as a wild dream, the sight of Asia suggests that it is not too soon to discuss it realistically.” Similarly, in a speech to the LCP during a visit to London in late 1946, Norman Manley explained, “I do not know by what miracle of effort Africa will effect amalgamation of the Continent, but I know it is essential for the development of the African people themselves.” What is more, he argued, “the status of the African the world over will never be regarded as a free man of the world until Africa is a united and amalgamated continent.”⁶⁸⁷ For many black activists, India provided an archetype for building mass resistance to imperial rule and achieving unity between groups divided by ethnic and religious lines. As early as 1938, Awooner-Renner called on the Gold Coast Youth Conference to organize an All-West African National

⁶⁸⁷ *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 16, n. 88 (January 1947), p. 62.

Congress, citing the recent All-India Conference to justify such a move. In October 1947, the *Gold Coast Observer* in Accra reported that Nkrumah was engrossed in preparations “for the All West African National Congress,” and the campaign of “positive action” that he initiated in the Gold Coast after his return drew heavily upon Gandhian principals of non-violent civil disobedience.⁶⁸⁸

The 1945 Congress also demonstrated the growing impatience of many black intellectuals in London with piecemeal, constitutional reforms, led by Nkrumah who declared, “We condemn internal self-government within the Empire. We stand for full and unconditional independence.”⁶⁸⁹ While this remained the goal of only a small majority in the mid-1940s, many more would take up this position by the end of the decade. Moreover, as Adi suggests, it signaled a growing shift towards the “analyses and language of the [pan-Africanist] movement’s Marxist wing.”⁶⁹⁰ Yet, substantial differences of opinion emerged between black activists and intellectuals over issues such as the goals of pan-African organization and decolonization and the place of Marxism and communism in achieving both.

Soon after the Manchester Congress, Nkrumah, who began calling himself “Kwame” around the same time, became heavily involved in a new organization, the West African National Secretariat (WANS), which also included I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson of West African Youth League, G. Ashie Nikoi of the Gold Coast Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society, Bankole Akpata, Nii Odoi Annan, Koi Larbi, Kojo Botsio, and Bankole Awooner-Renner and his wife Olabisi Awooner-Renner. The creation of the WANS, as Adi notes, came as a

⁶⁸⁸ Awooner-Renner, *West African Soviet Union*, p. 9-11; “The Inter-Asian Congress,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 16, n. 96 (October 1947), p. 192-193; “Editorial,” *Pan-Africa* v. 1, n. 6 (June 1947), p. 1; *Gold Coast Observer* (October 24, 1947).

⁶⁸⁹ Quoted in Adi and Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited*, p. 4.

⁶⁹⁰ Adi, *West Africans in Britain*, p. 128.

direct result of the Pan-African Congress.⁶⁹¹ If, as he argues, the “idea of West African nationhood ... reached its apogee with the formation of the West African National Secretariat,” the latter articulated a vision which shared by many West Africans intellectuals before them in the preceding decades.⁶⁹²

Indeed, many of the WANS's objects mirrored those of the WASU, and a number of individuals were active in both groups. The first president of the WANS, Awooner-Renner, was a member of the WASU as well; Bankole Akpata, who was a student at the London School of Economics, led the WASU's Study Group; Kojo Botsio served as the acting warden of the WASU hostel in 1946; and Nii Odoi, a law student in Edinburgh, joined both the WASU and WANS. At a meeting in December 1945, it was agreed that the WANS's purpose would be “to maintain contact with, co-ordinate, educate and supply general information to ... progressive organizations in West Africa with a view to realising a West African Front for a United West African National Independence; to serve as a clearing house for information”; “to foster the spirit of unity and solidarity among the West African territories”; “to publish a monthly paper and other literature”; “to make West Africans the true interpreters of their various desires, wishes, sufferings, hopes and aspirations.” “WEST AFRICA,” the WANS asserted, “IS ONE COUNTRY: PEOPLES OF WEST AFRICA UNITE!”⁶⁹³ In 1946, the WASU and WANS held their first joint meeting, which was attended by more than two hundred West African students. Although the meeting was not without disagreement, *Wàsù* celebrated it as “the beginning of a new epoch in West Africa's

⁶⁹¹ As Sherwood explains, “Most writers give membership of WANS as around 100, which is the number suggested in the Watson Commission Papers. I would suggest 42, on the basis that the unassigned WANS membership card found on Nkrumah at the time of his arrest [upon his return to the Gold Coast] was no. 43. There could not have been many students or non-professional workers who could afford the seven guineas membership fee, a large sum in 1946.” Sherwood, “Kwame Nkrumah: The London Years, 1945-1947,” p. 192, fn. 33; Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*, p. 128-129.

⁶⁹² Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*, p. 121.

⁶⁹³ “Aims and Objectives,” National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Papers, Group 2, Box 44, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., p. 8-9.

struggle for freedom and self-determination.”⁶⁹⁴ In April 1947, Nkrumah delivered a lecture to the WASU Study Group on “Philosophies of Our Time.” In spite of nagging financial problems, the members of the WANS produced a short-lived journal, *The New African*, and managed to privately publish several pamphlets in the late 1940s, most notably Bankole Awooner-Renner’s *West African Soviet Union* (1946) and Nkrumah’s *Towards Colonial Freedom* (1947). The WANS also circulated an appeal for funds for the proposed All West African National Congress to be held in Lagos in October 1948 with a view towards securing “Self-Determination and National Independence of all West African peoples, leading eventually to the Democratic Federation of all West African Territories.”⁶⁹⁵

Although he remained formally a member of the group’s central committee, Abrahams later remembered, “Nkrumah drifted away from us (the PAF)” from this point and increasingly devoted his energies to “his own West African group.”⁶⁹⁶ Aside from what others in the group perceived as Nkrumah’s rather cavalier attitude to his responsibilities in the PAF, Padmore and Abrahams’ chief objections to his involvement with the WANS lay in the latter’s exclusive focus on West Africa and its obvious ties to the Communist Party. Nevertheless, Nkrumah insisted, “West African nationalism does not preclude African nationalism ... a united free and independent West Africa is the political condition for Africa’s redemption and emancipation ... [and] for the emancipation of the Africans and peoples of African Descent throughout the world.”⁶⁹⁷ While Padmore himself had undertaken to educate Nkrumah in Marxism, the members of the PAF were sworn to forego

⁶⁹⁴ Indeed, as Adi suggests, the meeting was significant for including two representatives of French West Africa (one from Senegal and Sourous Apithy from Dahomey) and arguing “for an anti-imperialist movement with a socialist basis.” The WANS’s journal also listed Leopold Senghor as the group’s “Paris Correspondent.” *Wàssì* v. 12, n. 3 (Summer 1947), p. 13; Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*, p. 131. See also Leopold Senghor, “Pour une Renaissance Africaine,” *The New African* v. 1, n. 1 (March 1946).

⁶⁹⁵ Sherwood, “Kwame Nkrumah: The London Years, 1945-1947,” p. 176-177.

⁶⁹⁶ Abrahams, “Nkrumah, Kenyatta and the Old Order,” p. 138.

⁶⁹⁷ Letter from Nkrumah to J. B. Danquah (April 21, 1947), PRO, CO 964/24.

links to the CPGB for both political and strategic reasons. “Right from the time of the Pan-African Congress up to the late forties,” Makonnen recalled, “Kwame was double-dealing between pan-Africanism and communism. Here we had just finished out historical 1945 conference, in which the keynote had been that we blacks would be the generals of any African movement; and then we discovered that Kwame was playing with the communist boys in King Street [the CPGB’s headquarters], London, and developing the very alliances we had outlawed.” After visiting the headquarters of the WANS, where they found copies of the Moscow magazine on colonial questions, but not even a single copy of *Pan-Africa* or the other things we had been producing,” Makonnen and other members of the central committee of the Pan-African Federation confronted Nkrumah. “Our movement,” Makonnen insisted, “must be unfettered. To carry the burdens of Russia on our shoulders would be a terrible thing ... even if the King Street boys ... were clever, the boys in the Colonial Office were cleverer; they would find out that you had affiliations to the communist movement, and would use that evidence to damn the movement towards freedom from colonialism.”⁶⁹⁸ While Nkrumah appears to have never joined the British Communist Party and later claimed as much before the Watson Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances in the Gold Coast, he had clear ties to communists in Britain and admitted being influenced by communist ideas and discussing the proposed West African Congress with Palme Dutt, and others in the WANS like Awoonor-Renner, and the group’s secretary, Margot Parrish, were CPGB members.

⁶⁹⁸ As Sherwood notes, “When Drake asked Padmore if the Colonial Office knew that ‘communists are mixed up with WANS,’ Padmore replied that of course the Colonial Office knew: there was a ‘dossier’ on Awoonor-Renner and ‘there was Stalinist literature all over the place (in the WANS office). And that magazine (*The New African*) anybody who knows communist language could tell it.” Padmore was correct in suggesting that there were a files on Awoonor-Renner and other West African communists in Britain, who under near constant surveillance. Quoted in Sherwood, “Kwame Nkrumah: The London Years, 1945-1947; Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, p. 262-263. See also PRO, KV 2/1840 on Awoonor-Renner and other KV Files (PF 46942) on other black communists such as Amanke Okafor and Peter Blackman or suspected communists like Nkrumah, James, and Azikiwe.

It remains difficult to fully ascertain the extent of black intellectuals connections to the international communist movement, which varied widely.⁶⁹⁹ In Britain, as Adi suggests, “The Party’s internationalism was particularly significant because of its location at the heart of the British Empire.”⁷⁰⁰ In the 1930s, West Indians like George Padmore, Chris Jones of the Colonial Seamen’s Union, and Arnold Ward were active the Communist Party or affiliated organizations but had severed ties due to political differences, particularly around Abyssinia, by the end of the decade. The communist League Against Imperialism (LAI) played an important role in the creation of the Negro Welfare Association (NWA) in 1931. The Barbadians Ward and Peter Blackman, the two main figures in the NWA throughout the 1930s, maintained ties to the LAI and enjoyed the support of communists like Reginald Bridgeman and Hugo Rathbone. Although he worked to strengthen ties between the NWA and LCP in the late 1930s and served for a period as the editor of *The Keys* before being asked to leave the League for expressing “anti-British” views, Blackman remained a committed communist throughout his life.⁷⁰¹ Many West Africans also had, at least, a passing interest in communism, but only a small few maintained a lasting affiliation with the Party itself. From the late 1920s, communists like Shapurji Saklatvala, Bridgeman, and Rathbone became consistent allies of the WASU and used their relationship with the Union to establish contacts with anticolonial and trade unionist movements in West Africa. Other West Africans like Awooner-Renner and Wallace-Johnson attended the University of the

⁶⁹⁹ Hakim Adi has made significant contributions to our understanding of West Africans’ ties to the Communist Party, and recently released KV files at the PRO shed some light on the subject, although, of course, the latter are hardly unproblematic sources. See esp. Adi, “Forgotten Comrade? Desmond Buckle: An African Communist,” *Science & Society* v. 70, n. 1 (January 2006), p. 22-45; “West Africans in the Communist Party in the 1950s,” *Opening the Books: Essays in the Social and Cultural History of British Communism*, ed. by Geoff Andrews, Nina Fishman, and Kevin Morgan (London: Pluto Press, 1995), p. 176-194; and *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*, p. 141-143. Also, Marika Sherwood, *Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999).

⁷⁰⁰ Adi, “Forgotten Comrade?,” p. 22.

⁷⁰¹ See materials on Peter McFarren Blackman in PRO KV 2/1838.

Toilers of the East in Moscow during the 1920s and 1930s. Desmond Buckle from the Gold Coast became the first African member of the CPGB in 1937 and was a member of the Party's Colonial Committee by 1943.⁷⁰²

The Soviet Union enjoyed considerable international prestige after the Second World War, and even the writings of anti-communist black intellectuals like Harold Moody expressed admiration for its achievements and commitment to mass education and building a colorblind society.⁷⁰³ Thus, many more West Africans became interested in communism after the war, and a growing number of new arrivals in the late 1940s had developed communist sympathies or ties to the Party in the colonies before their departure for Britain. For example, Amanke Okafor formed the Marxist Talakawa Party in Lagos, Nigeria in 1945 with the goal of creating an independent, socialist Nigeria before moving to London, and, in 1949, he published a pamphlet, *Nigeria: Why We Fight for Freedom*, in which he argued that the attainment of "full democratic self-government based on a Parliament elected by universal adult suffrage" was "the paramount issue."⁷⁰⁴ During the war, H. O. Davies attended classes on Marxism in Lagos with a Party member stationed in Nigeria and contacted the CPGB following his return to London in 1945, and Azikiwe regularly visited the Party's headquarters on his repeated trips to London.⁷⁰⁵ Dr. Wellesley-Cole ordered books on not only the Fabian and cooperative movements in Britain but also Marxist-Leninist theory, which he forwarded to Sierra Leone.⁷⁰⁶ Often, these actions illustrated an interest in leftist political and economic thought more generally and an attempt to gain support for their own

⁷⁰² Adi, "Forgotten Comrade?" p. 32.

⁷⁰³ See, for example, "Letter from the President to the *Manchester Guardian*, December 29th, *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, p. 96-97.

⁷⁰⁴ Amanke Okafor, *Nigeria: Why We Fight for Freedom*, p. 36 in PRO KV 2/1853.

⁷⁰⁵ See PRO, KV 2/1817: Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe, Vols. 1-3 (1934-1949).

⁷⁰⁶ See letter from Dr. Robert Wellesley-Cole to Marjorie Nicholson of the Fabian Colonial Bureau (February 28, 1948), Wellesley-Cole Papers, SOAS Archives, File 149 (Fabian Colonial Bureau).

political activities and glean useful insights for the future development of the colonies. This was certainly the case with Davies, Azikiwe, and Wellesley-Cole, as all three men ultimately rejected communism. According to Adi, the Nigerian Ayo Rosiji joined the Labour Party, Fabian Colonial Bureau, and CPGB while studying law in Britain, suggesting that these were not mutually exclusive positions for many.⁷⁰⁷

After the war, the Communist Party also increased its attempts to recruit West Africans, particularly Nigerians, in London. In March 1945, the Communist Party held a conference “on the subject of the Colonies” at which Joseph Appiah, N. O. A. Morgan, Kamkam Boadu, F. O. B. Blaize, and S. T. Forster represented the WASU.⁷⁰⁸ By 1948, Emile Burns, a central figure in the CPGB and a close friend of Nkrumah, organized classes for the members of the Union and participated in its annual conference the same year. Burns outlined the main aspects of the resolution based recently by the Party’s executive committee to the Union, which were largely commensurate with the demands of the latter. These included “‘full democratic self-government’ for West African colonies, the abolition of all discriminatory legislation, withdrawal of the British armed forces and police, the replacement of European civil servants by Africans and financial assistance for industrialization and welfare in the colonies from the British government.” The CPGB also convened meetings of the Communist Parties of the British Empire in London in 1947 and 1949 at which Buckle presented papers on Africa and the West Indies, and the Party held a conference “On the Crisis of British Imperialism,” which was attended by many West African students. Around the same time, Buckle became a member of the Party’s International Affairs Committee and served as secretary of its Africa Committee, a subcommittee of the former. He also edited

⁷⁰⁷ Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*, p. 142-143.

⁷⁰⁸ *Wāsh* v. 12, n. 2 (March 1946), p. 6.

the Party's *African Bulletin* during the early 1950s. Amanke Okafor and Edward Unwochei, both members of the WASU, remained in contact with members of the Africa Committee like Maud Rogerson and Barbara Ruhemann, and the *Communist Review* reprinted Okafor's address to the WASU conference in September 1948 on "Africa's historical contribution to civilisation."⁷⁰⁹

Yet, the Colonial Office viewed the WANS as the main conduit for communist influence on West African students and intellectuals in London. Indeed, Bankole Akpata joined the CPGB in 1948, and Nkrumah, Botsio, Annan, and Awooner-Renner maintained ties with the Party in the late 1940s. Both Nkrumah's *Toward Colonial Freedom* and Awooner-Renner's *West African Soviet Union* evidenced the influence of a Leninist perspective on the WANS. The former included an economic analysis of imperialism and concluded with the call, "PEOPLES OF THE COLONIES, UNITE," reminiscent of both CPGB literature and his earlier "Declaration" to the 1945 Pan-African Congress.⁷¹⁰ Similarly, in the preface to *West African Soviet Union*, Awooner-Renner wrote, "It is only a united and independent West Africa, free from every vestige of foreign control, that could ensure security, happiness and prosperity for our unfortunate country and for the children yet unborn," and appealed to "all sincere friends of Africa" to "help us ... to create a free, united, strong and independent West African Federated Nation...." "The freedom of the continent of Africa," he asserted, "lies in the bosom of West Africa."⁷¹¹ The remainder of *West African Soviet Union* consisted of a menagerie of "sublime thoughts" by figures as diverse as Ladipo Solanke, Joseph Stalin, Danton, Patrick Henry, Plato, and Marx, letters to a "West African friend" and Julian Huxley, and an interview with the author from the *New Statesman and Nation*. British

⁷⁰⁹ Adi, "West African and the Communist Party in the 1950s," p. 180; Adi, "Forgotten Comrade?" p. 32-33; Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*, p. 143.

⁷¹⁰ Kwame Nkrumah, *Towards Colonial Freedom* (London: Wans Press, 1947), p. 43

⁷¹¹ Awooner-Renner, *West African Soviet Union*, p. 3-4.

communists viewed the pamphlet as a valuable counterweight to the influence of George Padmore and other pan-Africanists in the metropole.⁷¹²

Despite the fears of Padmore and Makonnen that Nkrumah had been co-opted by the communists, as Sherwood suggests, he “was probably too much of a pragmatist and an opportunist in the best sense ... to be committed to any theory or political party.” Rather, Nkrumah’s abiding concern and “consuming passion was for freedom—for all Africa, West Africa, or just the Gold Coast—whichever could be attained the soonest....” In *Towards Colonial Freedom*, Nkrumah argued, “unless there is complete national unity of all the West African colonies it will be practically impossible for any one colony to throw off her foreign yoke.”⁷¹³ Similarly, while Awooner-Renner proposed a program of industrialization and cooperative agricultural production for West Africa along the model of the Soviet five-year plans in *West African Soviet Union*, he also turned repeatedly to the examples of the United States and India to support his arguments, even reproducing Thomas Jefferson’s “Declaration of Independence” in its entirety. He maintained that there was “no separate future” for the various British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese colonies of West Africa. While he was prepared to accept “the unification of the British colonies and their self-government” as a “first step,” Awooner-Renner rejected Dominion status as a goal in itself. Citing the views of Gandhi, he argued that Africa, like India, “can never belong to the British or French family”; rather, it belongs “to a world family of nations.”⁷¹⁴ Thus, despite their fierce disagreements, the goals of Nkrumah, Awooner-Renner, and the WANS remained largely similar to those of anti-communist pan-Africanists like Padmore and Makonnen. They differed primarily over how to realize their shared aspirations.

⁷¹² See PRO KV 2/1840: Kweku Bankole Awooner-Renner.

⁷¹³ Nkrumah, *Towards Colonial Freedom*, p. 33.

⁷¹⁴ Awooner-Renner, *West African Soviet Union*, p. 12-21.

Most Africans and West Indians had little more than an intellectual curiosity in Marxist theory, particularly its emphasis on internationalism, mass mobilization and the economic underpinnings of imperialism, and its potential application to their own concerns. Even committed black communists participated in variety of international organizations in addition to the CPGB, and they remained marginalized within the Party. Although the CPGB intensified its “drive to develop cadres among African students in Britain,” principally through organizations like the WASU and WANS, “the Communist Party had little interest in the colonies, except for India,” and the activities black Party members “resulted in more rhetoric than action.”⁷¹⁵ Even Buckle, who retained his Party membership until the end of his life, remained on the margins within the CPBG. Thus, Adi observes, “in many ways his day-to-day activities were typical of those of a communist and internationalist, who apart from his writings had little responsibility in the CPGB for work connected with Africa.”⁷¹⁶ Although Buckle and Jonathan Tetteh, who was also from the Gold Coast, served on the Party’s Africa Committee, Nigerians became the primary targets of communist recruitment amongst West Africans. Yet, as Adi suggests, “Almost as soon as Nigerians came into contact with the Party, major ideological struggles broke out.”⁷¹⁷ West African communists, including many Nigerians, perceived attempts to form a Nigerian Communist Party as a move to segregate them from one another as well as the CPGB. One letter of resignation from a Nigerian Party member cited the “consistently un-Communist actions and behaviors [*sic*] of certain responsible leaders of the British Communist Party,” and “Comrades Palme Dutt, Idris Cox and Barbara [Ruermann],” another suggested, “have not been presenting the

⁷¹⁵ Sherwood, “Kwame Nkrumah: The London Years, 1945-1947,” p. 189, 191-192, fn 28.

⁷¹⁶ Adi, “Forgotten Comrade?” p. 36.

⁷¹⁷ Adi, “West Africans in the Communist Party in the 1950s,” p. 181.

rank and file with the true account of [the] political situation in Nigeria.”⁷¹⁸ The tendency of West Africans like Amanke Okafor to drift away from the Party and focus their energies on developing independence movements after returning to the colonies proved to be a constant source of disappointment to British communists.⁷¹⁹ Like their socialist contemporaries in postwar Britain, the CPGB often displayed a pronounced paternalism in its approach to West Indians and Africans, and many white communists resorted to openly racist statements regarding the latter when they disapproved of their actions.

“Bigger Plan—Worse Plight”: The Rise and Fall of Labour Internationalism

The Labour Party’s victory in the first general election in Britain in a decade and the creation of the United Nations Organization (UNO) at the end of the war appeared to many Africans and West Indians in London to herald the beginning of a new era internationalism and freedom for colonial peoples. Africans and West Indians in the metropole universally supported Labour Party candidates in the first general elections following the war, especially their strongest advocates like Arthur Creech Jones, Reginald Sorensen, and Fenner Brockway. As Joseph Appiah recalled, “between Tories and the Labour Party, the choice was clear; we needed no telling where to cast our votes.” “From W.A.S.U. our general headquarters,” he wrote, “went the war cry to every member: ‘The Tories must be destroyed wherever they are!’” Appiah and WASU members delivered “speeches, whenever possible in support of Labour,” and “joined Fenner and Reggie (Rev. Sorenson) on their platforms and in their door-to-door canvassing campaigns.” He also employed his soapbox at Speakers Corner in Hyde Park “to great advantage for Labour’s cause.”⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁸ Quoted in Adi, “Forgotten Comrade?” p. 34-35.

⁷¹⁹ See Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*, p. 163.

⁷²⁰ Appiah, *Joe Appiah: The Autobiography of an African Patriot*, p. 161-163.

Black intellectuals in London hoped that a Labour victory would result in greater investment in colonial development and a more rapid transition to self-government. After the election, G. Kio J. Amachree outlined the reasons for the Union's support of Labour in *Wàsù*. Not only were the Conservatives disproportionately "responsible for the 'exploitation' of the colonies and the very deplorable social and economic conditions existing there," but the comparative "lack of interest shown by Conservative M.P.s in colonial matters was also a glaring instance of Conservative selfishness." Moreover, "the complete 'blackout' of news concerning the exploits of the Colonial forces ... in the major theatres of war" and "pronouncements" like Churchill's declaration "that he had not become His Majesty's first Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire" Amachree explained, "were received with much resentment by all colonials." "If the Empire is, as we are made to understand, a partnership of peoples and nations," he suggested, "then surely it is subject to the hazards of any partnership and therefore liable to dissolution under certain conditions. There was no 'liquidation' in Mr. Churchill's time, but what is objected to is his narrow-mindedness on the matter." By contrast, "Colonial development is an important item on the Labour Party programme," and Labour MPs have asked the "majority of questions on colonial affairs" and "have always been the champions of the cause of colonials in the House of Commons." The Labour Party, Amachree added, "is largely composed of men and women from the working class; men and women who have a first-hand knowledge of ... the bitter experience of oppression, exploitation and suffering," and "people who have themselves suffered ... appreciate and try to understand the position of other unfortunate people." "Their sympathy for the problems of West Africa, their approachability and their

willingness to help in all circumstances have no doubt created a good impression among the African community.”⁷²¹

The announcement of Labour’s victory on July 26, 1945 sparked an outpouring of support and heightened expectations for dramatic change amongst black intellectuals in Britain and the colonies. As Appiah wrote, “That night of Labour’s victory was our night of joy and revelry too.” “It confirmed our belief that some of the ordinary people in Britain were sympathetic to our cause.”⁷²² The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* congratulated their “good friends for many years—Mr. A. Creech Jones and Mr. Reginald Sorensen—on their re-election to Parliament.” The LCP expressed its “very deep appreciation ... for the strong interest they have always taken in Colonial affairs,” and noted, “Mr. Creech Jones’ position as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies now gives him an opportunity for doing good which we have no doubt he will use to the utmost.”⁷²³ H. O. Davies drafted a letter of congratulations on behalf of the WASU to his former advisor and one of the primary architects of the Labour victory, Harold Laski. “It is our belief,” he wrote, “that the overwhelming majority secured by the Party is an unmistakable evidence that the people of the United Kingdom have accepted its programme for securing for the people of the Empire, as well as of the United Kingdom, full employment, progressively higher standard of living and real democratic freedom—consistent with the tremendous sacrifice made by them in their successful effort to destroy fascism.” Davies hoped “that the selfless interest shewn [*sic*] in the affairs of the West African Colonies by the Labour M.P.’s and the West African Parliamentary Committee when Labour was in the minority, will now ripen into

⁷²¹ G. Kio J. Amachree, “Why Colonial Students Supported Labour at the Last Election: A Summary of West African Students’ Opinions,” *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 2 (March 1946), p. 19-21.

⁷²² Appiah, *Joe Appiah: The Autobiography of an African Patriot*, p. 161-163.

⁷²³ “Secretary’s Notes – Parliamentary Elections,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 12, n. 72 (September 1945), p. 127.

concrete plans, steadily pursued, for the summary liquidation of poverty and ignorance,” the consequence of “decades of Tory misrule and a policy of imperial mercantilism.” The Union, he added, expected “that genuine efforts will now be made to advance West Africa to self-government as quickly as possible in accordance with the colonial policy of the Labour Party.”⁷²⁴ In a personal letter to Creech Jones, Azikiwe wrote, “We are looking forward to necessary dash and vigour in the formulation of colonial policy so that worthwhile risks may be taken in order to bring happiness and contentment to the masses. This is a great opportunity for service and we are anxiously hoping that you who are entrusted with this sacred task will carry it out unmindful of the difficulties that lie ahead.” He called for “occasional meeting[s] in Downing Street between Colonial Office experts and representative colonial peoples ... to establish mutual confidence, goodwill and fellowship.”⁷²⁵

As Pearce suggests, there is, “in retrospect, little justification for the belief that the Socialists after 1945 would produce radical and swift changes in the colonies.” Indeed, the Labour Party’s policy statement of 1943 described Britain’s colonies in West Africa and elsewhere as “inhabited by backward peoples or peoples of primitive culture ... whose economic and political systems are so backward that they are ‘not yet able to stand by themselves.’” “For a considerable time to come,” the statement concluded, “these peoples will not be ready for self-government.”⁷²⁶ Yet, if the expectations of West Indians and Africans in London were, perhaps, overly optimistic, they also appreciated the unlikelihood that imperial relations would change overnight and were hardly uncritical of the Labour

⁷²⁴ Letter from H. O. Davies to Harold Laski (July 7, 1945). Reprinted in *Wasu* v. 12, n. 2 (March 1946), p. 32.

⁷²⁵ Letter from Nnamdi Azikiwe to Creech Jones (November 5, 1945), Arthur Creech Jones Papers (MSS Brit. Emp. s. 332), Rhodes House, Oxford University, Box 7, File 1.

⁷²⁶ *The Colonies: The Labour Party’s Post-war Policy for African and Pacific Colonies* (London: Transport House, 1943), p. 2.

Party, even at the moment of its triumph.⁷²⁷ In outlining the reasons for West African's support for Labour in the election, Amachree noted, "In stating the case for the Labour Party it must not be assumed that that Party has no weaknesses. Even among West African pro-labourites in this country there are some who adopt the attitude that the Labour Party is the less harmful of two evils." In particular, he cited the daunting task of creating an "adequate machinery to supervise the men in the colonies" responsible for "the execution of any progressive colonial policy," which lay before the new ruling party. Nevertheless, Amachree called for quick and decisive action on the part of the new Labour Government. "The first big task of the Labour Party," Amachree averred, "... will be to overhaul the present machinery of colonial administration and see to it that whatever tasks it wants performed is promptly and efficiently executed. The Labour Party has a moral obligation to itself not to stop at making bare promises."⁷²⁸

During the Second World War, the West Indies and, above all, Jamaica received the bulk of the funds spent on colonial development. Indeed, as evidence of the disparity between rhetoric and practice in wartime development initiatives, Amachree cited a recent article from the *Times*, "which revealed that of the sum of 25 millions voted over a ten year period under the second Colonial Development and Welfare Act only 2 1/2 millions had been spent up to the end of the last financial year, and of this total the West Indies alone utilised 1,800,000."⁷²⁹ Yet, even in Jamaica, many black intellectuals found the government's proposals to be lacking from the start. In a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, which was reprinted in the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, W. Arthur Lewis criticized the views expressed by Dr. F. C. Benham, the economic advisor to Comptroller for Development and

⁷²⁷ Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, p. 104.

⁷²⁸ G. Kio J. Amachree, "Why Colonial Students Supported Labour at the Last Election: A Summary of West African Students' Opinions," *Wasù* v. 12, n. 2 (March 1946), p. 19-21.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*

Welfare in Jamaica, in the report of Economic Policy Committee, which was released in the summer of 1945. “No document,” he noted, “has been more eagerly awaited. The development organisation has done much planning of social services, but has given little attention to economic development, which is basic. This committee was expected to redress the balance, and its short report will be read eagerly not only in the West Indies but throughout the colonies, where preoccupation with welfare schemes seems generally to have submerged the economic problem.” However, for Lewis, the committee failed “miserably” due to a number of technical errors and a lack of imagination. “The cure for an adverse balance of payments and unemployment,” he wrote, “apparently, is a flood of imports.” While Lewis did not deem the report “entirely useless,” citing the program of public works as a notable inclusion, he believed that the “ridicule” with which Jamaicans received was “well merited.” “The development organisation,” he concluded, “will have to devote considerable thought to economic problems if its prestige is to recover.”⁷³⁰

The Labour Party rode into power in 1945 on the promise of a more egalitarian Britain, full employment, and an expansive welfare state, epitomized by the publicly funded National Health Service. This vision of metropolitan Britain was to be mirrored in the new colonial development corporations. “In the late 1940s and early 1950s,” Webster observes, “Africa was the focus for representations of a ‘people’s empire’ of welfare and development.” Yet, the Labour government’s colonial development initiatives consistently privileged the wants of British consumers and the needs of the metropolitan economy. A Fabian Colonial Bureau paper from 1947 expressed concern over the “stress on British consumption needs” in the formation of the colonial development corporations. “In putting

⁷³⁰ “Jamaica’s Economic Rehabilitation – Dr. Arthur Lewis’s Letter to *The Manchester Guardian*, August 25th,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 13, n. 73 (October 1945), p. 10.

over their plans for the new corporations, Ministers have stressed the need of the British housewife which the new colonial production is designed to satisfy. This is understandable from the point of view of getting British support for such large expenditure. But from the point of view of securing colonial co-operation, it is unfortunate.” “The inevitable colonial response,” the memorandum noted, “has been that this is nothing more than a new form of exploitation in the British interest; and that the colonial peoples will benefit little.”⁷³¹

Ultimately, as Douglas points out, “far from being, as British socialists sought in the late 1940s to portray it, an equal and freely chosen partnership between the metropole and the ‘less-advanced’ peoples, Labour’s version of ‘trusteeship’ in practice resembled the politics of the protection-racket, in which colonial peoples in the most literal of senses were to be made ‘an offer they couldn’t refuse.’”⁷³²

In contrast to Labour rhetoric, black intellectuals in London underscored the contradiction between Labour socialism in Britain and Labour imperialism in the colonies. As early as 1946, the West African National Secretariat suggested that the Labour government’s colonial policy demonstrated that “whether Socialist or Conservative, so long as the principle of administration is based on the foundation of Imperialism, the trend must be towards the safeguard of the interest of the twin sister of imperialism, which is capitalism.”⁷³³ In an article comparing “London and Paris styles” of imperialism in *Pan-Africa*, George Padmore cited a recent pamphlet produced by Labour MPs entitled *Keep Left*, which proposed a form of inter-imperialism in Africa, as evidence that “the admonition ‘Keep Left’ is not inconsistent with ‘Keep the Empire.’” The pamphlet announced, “once

⁷³¹ “Colonial Development Corporations,” FCB Paper (47) 14, Wellesley Cole Papers, SOAS Archives, File 149.

⁷³² R. M. Douglas, *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism, 1939-1951* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 205.

⁷³³ *The New African* (March 1946), p. 7.

we give up the attempt to hold the Middle East by force, we can concentrate our manpower and resources on the African development which should be our main colonial responsibility in the next twenty years.” “Obviously,” Padmore argued, “the authors, who claim to be left-wing socialists, can only think of Africa in terms of exploitation ... and reckon that Africans will let them have twenty more years before imperialists are asked to quit.” These “so-called ‘rebels’ against the official Foreign Office policy of Mr. Bevin,” he suggested wrote, “... advocate a sort of ... joint operation in squeezing as much wealth out of Africa as possible, and using it to help the Western Powers obtain the necessary economic strength to build a Western Bloc that will free them from their present dependence on America ... and enable them under British leadership to pursue an independent foreign policy against Soviet Russia.”

The Labour government’s groundnut scheme in East Africa, in particular, attracted criticism from black intellectuals and activists. “As an example of the way European Powers in Africa can provide an abundant supply of foods and raw materials,” he added, “the authors point to the Colonial Office scheme to develop groundnuts in East Africa under the United Africa Company, the biggest capitalist monopoly in Africa. This, they boast, ‘should ensure that we shall never again be short of fats.’” “This ‘Socialist Manifesto,’” Padmore maintained, “simply lets the imperialist cat out of the Labour Party’s bag. The authors confess that their conception of international socialism is purely for white folks in Western Europe. Their policy is: ‘Socialism at home, imperialism in the colonies.’” Thus, he concluded, “Lord save us from our socialist friends: our conservative enemies we know!”⁷³⁴

Both the LCP and WASU also denounced Labor’s plan for the expansion of groundnut cultivation in East Africa, particularly the central role given to the United African

⁷³⁴ George Padmore, “Imperialism: London and Paris Styles,” *Pan-Africa* v. 1, n. 7 (July 1947), p. 12-17.

Company, a subsidiary of Unilever, in the scheme. “When Mr. Creech Jones first announced the groundnuts scheme for East Africa,” an editorial in the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* claimed that “progressive people in Britain were as shocked as Africans to learn that the plan had evolved out of a proposal by the Unilever concern, a subsidiary of which is responsible for carrying out the technical side. Why they asked, could it be not done by a co-operative basis, Because, said Mr. Creech Jones, ‘Unilever have the experience.’” The author observed wryly, “There is no doubt that Unilever have experience, and so have Africans experience of Unilever, whose United Africa Company has a stranglehold on the economy of West Africa and is rapidly insinuating its tentacles into East Africa. To the Africans, Unilever spells capitalist monopoly, and any scheme run under their direction certainly has little to recommend it.” What is more, “nowhere in the scheme are there provisions safeguarding the interests of the local populations, or clauses which give them direct representation on the councils which will operate the scheme on the spot.” The editorial termed the scheme “state capitalism” and noted that even Ivor Thomas, who had served as Creech Jones’ Assistant Secretary, referred “to the Colonial Secretary as Labour Imperialist in the debate on the Colonial Development scheme in the House on November 6th, 1947.” Creech Jones, the League suggested, had betrayed his Fabian ideals. “It seems a curious departure for a Labour Colonial Secretary to ignore the firmly established Co-operative movement in Great Britain in favour of one of the biggest monopoly concerns in existence.”⁷³⁵ Writing in *Wáshù*, G. C. Onyiuke noted that “the acute world shortage of fats and oils, and the urgency of the need for producing more for Great Britain, forced the British Government to go ahead with the scheme, without either fully considering its implications in East Africa or its effects on the

⁷³⁵ “State Capitalism in Colonies under Labour,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 17, n. 99 (Jan.-March 1948), p. 10.

economy of those colonies now producing groundnuts [in West Africa].” “It may well be,” he added, “that the various colonial governments will ask the [United Africa Company] to play the same role in West Africa that it plays under the East African scheme. The difficulty is that ... it is far easier to let the U.A.C. in than to get it out,” and “what the U.A.C. would regard as worth its while may well border on the strangulation of the West African economy.”⁷³⁶ Writing in the same issue of the journal, Obiahwu suggested that the groundnut scheme was part of a larger attempt “to convert the ‘colonies’ into a huge granary of empire.” “Why,” he asked, “has this plan been promulgated on the wings of private finance-capital, instead of being a socialistic venture conforming to the political-economic programme of the present Government,” and “in what order are the interests of the ‘natives’ considered?” On the “interests of the colonials themselves,” he quoted Creech Jones’ “vague” remarks on the subject in the House of Commons: “An instrument is also required whereby we can undertake individual productive projects likely to increase the wealth of the colonies themselves, and to stimulate the supply of products of which this country and the world at large stand in need.” “Now that [Britain] is a debtor-nation, casting about for means of economic recovery,” Obiahwu charged, “she suddenly ‘discovers’ Africa as the long-lost Aladdin’s lamp, and rubs her eyes in wonder for all the world to see.”⁷³⁷

In his remarks at the conference of the Communist Parties of the British Empire in 1947, Desmond Buckle also assailed the central role given to “monopoly capital” in Labour’s program for colonial development. He explained how, “in the wartime mobilization of manpower and material resources of the colonies of East and West Africa and the Caribbean, monopoly capital had been given scope to consolidate its strangle-hold....” “The

⁷³⁶ G. C. Onyiuke, “East African Groundnut Scheme and West African Economy,” *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 3 (Summer 1947), p. 19-20.

⁷³⁷ Obiahwu, “Bigger Plan—Worse Plight,” *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 3 (Summer 1947), p. 21-22.

cooperation of the people concerned,” he noted, “was never sought, and, even under a Labour Government, monopoly capital has been given a definite role in the plans of development.” At the 1949 conference, he reported, “no attempt has been made to enlist the cooperation on a democratic basis of the people most concerned, or to check the activities of monopoly capitalism. On the contrary, monopoly capitalism has actually been assigned a role in these plans of development and rehabilitation.” Like many of his contemporaries, Buckle placed the colonies’ material claims upon the British government before the goal of formal independence. “Inasmuch as these monopolies were so powerful,” he argued in his report to the 1947 conference, “the struggle for independence would be hard. It would be of no benefit for a colony to acquire nominal independence which left monopolies intact...” Similarly, in 1949, Buckle asserted that Africans and West Indian recognized “that nominal ‘independence,’ which yet leaves them at the mercy of great monopolies ... would bring no real benefit.”⁷³⁸

The Labour government’s apparent disregard for public opinion in the colonies deepened black intellectuals’ frustration with the nature and pace of reform in the late 1940s. The government’s response to the on-going strike in Nigeria at the end of the war, the Secretary of State’s refusal to meet with the delegation of West African cocoa farmers’ delegation and the pan-Nigerian delegation during their visits to London, and proposed constitutional changes in the Gold Coast and Nigeria dismayed many.⁷³⁹ If the promise of the Commonwealth was going to be realized, Moody wrote in early 1946, “then our people must play their full part and pull their full weight in this great new enterprise.” He quoted

⁷³⁸ Quoted in Adi, “Forgotten Comrade?,” p. 32-33.

⁷³⁹ For example, the WASU study group, led by Ako Adjei, drafted “comprehensive memoranda” on cocoa control, the conscription of school boys in Nigeria, and Command Paper No. 6554 which outlined the proposed new constitutions for Nigeria and the Gold Coast and submitted it to the Colonial Office and Secretary of State. See *Wāsu* v. 12, n. 2 (March 1946), p. 5, 9.

approvingly from the remarks of the Secretary of State in the recently published report of the Moyne Commission: “It is of the first importance that the interests of the inhabitants of the Dependency should be aroused and their opinion consulted and their co-operation secured wherever possible.” For Moody and other black activists and intellectuals, a top-down, centrally orchestrated approach to colonial development that ignored or even suppressed the political and economic desires of the population ran counter to these sentiments. They insisted that the imperial government deal with the political parties, trade unions, and youth movements emerging in the colonies as legitimate manifestations of dissent and the developing political will of the people. As Moody put it, “We trust that when such interest is manifested, due notice will be taken thereof and that everything will be done to demonstrate to genuine co-operators the Government’s appreciation of their efforts.” “It is, in our opinion,” he asserted, “only along the line of such spontaneous expressions, arising from the real concern of the masses in their own future welfare and development, and the resultant clarification of the issues at stake deduced by the fact that the Government takes the pains wisely to deal with these expressions, that the desired end will ultimately be attained.”⁷⁴⁰

The Nigerian General Strike in 1945 presented the new Labour government with the first among many challenges in the late 1940s. Although the strike remained strongest in the predominately Yoruba southwest, it spread rapidly to the north and east along the railroad lines and was supported by seventeen unions representing 150,000 workers, many of whom were government employees and the market women of Lagos.⁷⁴¹ As a victorious Labour Party formed its government in the summer of 1945, the work stoppage took on the

⁷⁴⁰ *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 13, n. 76 (January 1946), p. 67-68.

⁷⁴¹ See esp. Lisa A. Lindsay, “Domesticity and Difference: Male Breadwinners, Working Women, and Colonial Citizenship in the 1945 Nigerian General Strike.” *American Historical Review* v. 104, n. 3 (June 1999), 783-812.

proportions of a general strike. In response, the Governor of Nigeria imposed hated price restrictions and greeted public protest with government repression, targeting nationalist leaders like Herbert Macauley and Nnamdi Azikiwe. For many, these moves exposed the discrepancy between the rhetoric of partnership within the British Commonwealth and the practice of colonial rule. As one commentator asserted, “Until men are treated as men and paid as men on the basis of the services they render irrespective of their race and colour, no Nigerian would be stupid enough to regard himself sincerely as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations.”⁷⁴²

The WASU and Pan-African Federation organized a public meeting in Conway Hall on July 8 “to arouse public sympathy for ... the strikers” and organized a large demonstration at Trafalgar Square. *Wàsù* also reported that the Union cooperated with other black student organizations in Britain like the West African Students Club at Cambridge and the Association of Students of African in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle, and Exeter “over the issues of the unpopular Nigerian Constitutional Reform proposals and the recent General Strike in Nigeria.”⁷⁴³ The LCP’s *Newsletter* reported developments in Nigeria throughout the summer and fall of 1945 and expressed regret at the government’s attitude to what they perceived as a legitimate labor action undertaken to alleviate grievous conditions. In his opening letter in the September issue, Moody claimed that the new Labour Parliament was “the first in history which carried the unmistakable authority of people.” Yet, he noted, “The strike of 30,000 Nigerians, which lasted nearly six weeks, is also an happening of no mean significance among the largest population in our Colonial Empire. The sufferings of these people and their dependents must have been intense, and there can be no doubt

⁷⁴² “Justice Ends Where Colour Begins,” *Daily Service* (June 27, 1945), quoted in Nnamdi Azikiwe, “Inside Stuff: History of the General Strike,” *West African Pilot* (November 17, 1945), p. 50.

⁷⁴³ *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 2 (March 1946), p. 5-6; see also Sherwood, “Kwame Nkrumah: The London Years, 1945-1947.”

whatsoever that their claims can be fully justified.” The same issue of the *Newsletter* also contained a telegram from a distressed Azikiwe who intimated that he had been forced into hiding to avoid “assassination.”⁷⁴⁴

During Labour’s first year in power, the WASU’s representatives on the West African Parliamentary Committee raised questions regarding the continuation of wartime government controls on cocoa production in West Africa, the new Gold Coast Constitution, the resettlement of West African troops, and the colour bar in Cardiff, among other issues, but the committee met only intermittently thereafter. When a delegation representing cocoa farmers in the Gold Coast and Nigeria traveled to London to appeal for the removal of wartime economic controls, Secretary of State Hall refused to meet with them, and the Under-Secretary, Creech Jones, challenged their claim to speak on behalf of the farmers. The WASU and WANS decried Hall’s treatment of the delegation. The published organ of the WANS, *The New African*, reprinted a letter from Ashie Nikoi, a member of the delegation, to Creech Jones condemning the government’s attitude. “The Labour Government of Great Britain,” Ashie Nikoi asserted, “must redeem their pledges to the Colonial peoples or for ever cease to pose as advocates of the cause of the oppressed peoples.”⁷⁴⁵ *Wāṣū* published the twelve demands that they submitted to the Colonial Office, and, in the opening editorial of the same issue, declared, “It is a matter for regret to all West African students everywhere, who had cherished the loftiest ideas of a Labour Government, that the Labour Colonial Secretary has found it possible ... neither to receive the delegation nor to offer them any excuse for inability to do so. This attitude of Mr. Hall, coming so soon after the return of a Labour Government to power, is at once a set-back and an eye-opener.” Hall’s actions, the

⁷⁴⁴ *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 12, n. 72 (September 1945), p. 110, 114. See also extensive coverage of the Nigerian General Strike in same between August and November 1945.

⁷⁴⁵ See *The New African* (April 1946), p. 16 and (May 1946), p. 24.

WASU suggested, implied “that the issue of Labour and Capital in Great Britain is a domestic affair and does not extend to the outposts of the British Empire”; it was, in other words, “a case of ‘Governments may fall and Governments may rise, Colonial policy changeth never.’” The Union maintained that Labour’s approach to the colonies, not simply domestic affairs, represented the true test of the party’s commitment to its ideals. “Colonial policy,” they asserted, “is yet to prove the crucial test of the courage and sincerity of the British Labour Movement of Great Britain. The future of the Labour Government depends on whether they will break with the Tory policy of domination or continue to worship British interests and British capital to the detriment of real world peace.” Their statements on the General Strike, the protests by cocoa farmers in West Africa, and “the increasing restrictions being place by the West African Governments on Students wishing to travel” to Britain, they claimed, “were dealt with in an off-hand manner.” “In spite of the change of Government,” the WASU concluded, “there has not developed a change of hearts in its attitude to us. Letters intended for the Colonial Secretary do not appear to go beyond the desks of the junior officials who make it a habit of ‘regretting’ on behalf of the Colonial Secretary.”⁷⁴⁶

Although the Labour Colonial Secretary, George Hall, reaffirmed that “responsible self-government” represented the ultimate goal of colonial policy at the annual Estimates Debate in mid-1946, this was largely a reformulation of the wartime pronouncements of Oliver Stanley under the Coalition government, as his Tory opponents and much of the British press noted. By this point, such platitudes no longer satisfied African and West Indians in London, who argued that the Labour government’s actions or, in some cases, inaction was more indicative of their priorities. As early as May 1946, the journal of the

⁷⁴⁶ “West African Cocoa Delegation,” *Wāsi* v. 12, n. 2 (March 1946), p. 3, 6, 8.

Fabian Colonial Bureau, *Empire*, noted “already the Jeremiahs are lamenting its performance in the colonial field; already we are being told that Labour is a disappointment. These elements come mainly from the colonial peoples, though also from some of the ranks of the Party at home.” While the FCB attributed much of this discontent to unrealistic expectations, it conceded, “There has been a crying need for some warm, courageous statement of purpose from the Secretary of State.”⁷⁴⁷ In an article for the *New Statesman*, Rita Hinden stressed the need for Labour to distinguish its colonial policy from that of their Conservative predecessors. “Although we may push ahead with our reforms more zealously than the Tories, and be more consistent in putting native interests paramount ... yet we feel in our bones—and the colonials tell us—this is not enough ... Labour will not be successful in its colonial work, or convince anyone that it differs from its predecessors, until it has enunciated its long-run policy towards the Empire in terms which are clear and beyond doubt.”⁷⁴⁸ Writing in the *Manchester Guardian* during the summer of 1946, Fenner Brockway, who knew many of the black intellectuals in London personally, cautioned that time was running out for the Labour government to prove itself in the colonies.

Since the general election the tendency among them [colonial peoples] has been to give the Labour Government a chance to inaugurate a new relationship. Now the hope of this has gone ... it was the policy announced by the Government which has brought about the shock. Mr. Hall ... emphasized the continuity of his policy with that of his Tory predecessor, and even Mr. Creech Jones ... stressed the altruism of Britain towards the colonies rather than the right of the colonies to govern themselves.

An outspoken champion of Indian independence, Brockway added, “I draw attention to this urgency because we do not want to repeat in the colonies the long, tragic story of India.”

⁷⁴⁷ *Empire* v. 9, n. 1 (May-June 1946).

⁷⁴⁸ Rita Hinden, “Labour in Difficulties,” in Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers (MSS Brit. Emp. s. 365), Rhodes House, Oxford University, Box 43, File 1.

“The colonial peoples,” he insisted, “do not desire Britain to be good to them. They desire freedom to decide their own good.”⁷⁴⁹

While the immediate impact of the new Labour government on colonial policy was negligible, the elevation of Creech Jones to the office of Secretary of State for the Colonies in October 1946 reignited hopes for sweeping reforms. For one, Creech Jones was much more familiar with major colonial problems and the personnel in the Colonial Office than his predecessor George Hall, who “admitted privately that he was ‘right out of his depth.’” What is more, he had personal relationships with a number of black intellectuals and activists in Britain and the colonies. In the final years of the war, he visited West Africa in an official capacity, where he met with nationalist leaders like Macauley and Azikiwe in Nigeria.

Creech Jones’ early days as Secretary of State were not entirely inauspicious. He recommended the appointment of Dr. Harold Moody and Dr. Hastings Banda to the Colonial Office’s Social Welfare Advisory Committee, came out strongly against the political amalgamation of East Africa in any form, and moved to end the use of compulsory labor in Africa. At the 1947 Estimates Debate, Creech Jones argued for far-reaching political reform in the colonies. “We have to experiment boldly,” he maintained, “... and to recognise that while the transfer of power to people not fully trained or with adequate experiences or traditions to exercise it will lead to mistakes being made, it is only through actual experience in the exercise of responsibility that people can acquire a sense of duty and of service.” His vision for “constitutional development” in the empire entailed closer cooperation with and the integration of the colonial intelligentsia. As Pearce states, the years after 1947 “saw the emphasis of British policy shifting clearly to the educated Africans.”⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁹ Fenner Brockway, *Manchester Guardian* (July 20, 1946).

⁷⁵⁰ Quoted in Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, p. 121, 126, 133.

Yet, the initial optimism surrounding Creech Jones faded quickly. Soon after ascending to the office of Secretary of State for the Colonies, Creech Jones began to acquiesce to white settlers' resistance to even limited political reforms in East Africa and retreat from his wartime pronouncements on self-government and "international accountability" in the colonies. Writing in the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* in 1947, Dinah Stock asked why the Labour government had abandoned its earlier position as elaborated in 1946 in the Colonial White Paper 191, which established the principle of equal representation for Africans, Indians, and Europeans in a new Central Assembly for Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika. Although, she observed, statistically "a proportion of 300-3-1 would have been a fairer representation," "... compared to everything that previous governments had done in East Africa, where European control has always been an established principle, the proposal to give an equal vote to each of the three communities was a step toward justice." However, as a result of the apparent reversal of this position in the Colonial White Paper 210, which guaranteed a European majority in the new assembly, Stock claimed, "Africans and Indians [in East Africa] have had their faith in the Labour Government shaken rudely, perhaps irremediably." Thus, she concluded presciently, "It is very likely that we shall soon hear of disturbances in Kenya—labour unrest and anti-government movements of one kind or another among the non-white inhabitants. If so, the British public will take it as another proof that these 'backward' people are unfit for self-rule and that the progressive Colonial policy of a Labour Government is wasted on them." "By changing its mind under the pressure of a powerful and pig-headed minority," Stock argued, "the Government is telling them plainly that constitutional methods get nowhere. In words [the Labour Government] stands for African interests; in deeds it gives way to the

‘immigrant minority’ which makes no secret of using political power for its own political and economic ends.”⁷⁵¹

During the war, as Douglas points out, Labour’s policy on the purview of a new international authority in colonial administration “was unambiguous”. In *The Colonies and International Conscience* from 1945, Creech Jones and Rita Hinden noted censoriously that, despite his references to the need for greater international cooperation in addressing “common problems,” the Colonial Secretary, Colonel Stanley, had been “concerned mainly with the immediate practical advantages of regional collaboration,” not the “supervisory functions for the new Councils, nor ... their relationship to a future world authority.” It was “sheer hypocrisy,” they maintained, “that one Colony should be reported on at Geneva and the Colonies next door should not,” and, in his introduction to the volume, Creech Jones criticized Churchill for ignoring the “problem of international accountability” and refusing to include “matters affecting British Colonial territory” in the discussions at the San Francisco Conference.⁷⁵² Yet, as it took shape in the late 1940s, the Labour Party’s position was nearly indistinguishable from that articulated by Churchill and Stanley during the war. As early as December 1945, with the full backing of Bevin, the new Labour Prime Minister, Secretary of State Hall indicated that the new government would not deviate from the position of its predecessor, stating, “there should be no question of agreeing to place under any form of international trusteeship any of our Colonial territories, other than those now administered under Mandate.”

Black intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic followed closely the negotiations between the major powers on the form and purview of the United Nations after the Second

⁷⁵¹ Dinah Stock, “Words and Deeds in Colonial Policy,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 16, n. 93 (July 1947), p. 139-141.

⁷⁵² Arthur Creech Jones and Rita Hinden, *Colonies and International Conscience: Report by A. Creech Jones and Rita Hinden to the Fabian Colonial Bureau* (August 1945), p. 44-45.

World War. The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* endorsed the resolutions passed at a New York conference on the future of colonial peoples organized by W. E. B. DuBois.

[1] Colonialism must go, for the reason that it has caused poverty, illiteracy and disease, which affects not only the colonies, but also the world, and therefore world peace.

[2] There should be an international body established to oversee the transition of peoples from colonial status to such autonomy as colonial peoples themselves may desire.

[3] That on such an international body the colonial peoples ... shall have effective representation.

[4] That the prime object of this international body shall be to improve the economic and social condition of the colonial peoples.⁷⁵³

Although the results of the negotiations in San Francisco dashed black intellectuals' hopes that these ideals would assume a central position in its mission, some still harbored a measured optimism with regard to the UNO. In a lecture reprinted by the LCP in late 1945, A. H. Poynton praised Chapter 13 of the United Nations Charter, which created the Trusteeship Council, a new "machinery of supervision" composed of a mix of administering and non-administering states. Most importantly, Poynton explained, the new Trusteeship Council would have "two functions which the Permanent Mandates Commission had not, namely the power of receiving petitions and the power to visit territories."⁷⁵⁴ Many like Poynton hoped that this limited oversight would help insure a speedy transition to self-government.

Most African and Caribbean intellectuals would accept neither international control of the colonies under the trusteeship system or the continuation of British rule, but nothing less than self-government. The former, they maintained, represented, at best, a lateral move and, at worst, a continuation of foreign exploitation in an outwardly benign guise when the

⁷⁵³ "Colonial Representatives Stand for Freedom **Now**," *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 12, n. 69 (June 1945), p. 55.

⁷⁵⁴ "The San Francisco Charter: Lecture by A. H. Poynton," *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 13, n. 75 (December 1945), p. 47-50.

moment called for nothing less than democratic self-government. In 1947, the journal of the WASU declared:

Too much has been said about our tendency to pseudo-Europeanism; too often have we been referred to as detribalized Africans; and too persistently have historians harmonised in declaring the African inherently docile, asinine and possessed of no apparent qualification for self-government ... It is incumbent upon those of us here in Europe to work hard and acquire all the knowledge there is ... We in West Africa to-day owe a great duty to Africa: a duty to represent her in the family of nations; a duty to exonerate her from all allegations of inferiority and unfitness for self-government; and a duty to check the diabolical machinations of other nations to keep her dismembered....⁷⁵⁵

The West Indian and African participants in a conference organized by the Fabian Colonial Bureau in 1946 were asked, “Would you prefer to see colonial countries during the necessary years of preparation for self-government put under international control, or do you think that responsibility exercised by one European country only is preferable?” In response, Ms. A. Adeniyi-Jones asserted, “Judging from the state of international affairs just now when the United Nations Organisation fails to agree on simple matters, it would be a tragedy for the Colonies to come under their control.”⁷⁵⁶

After the formal inauguration of the United Nations’ trusteeship system in January 1947, it became impossible to conceal the discrepancy between the rhetoric of Labour internationalism and government policy. When the Indian delegate Maharaj Singh introduced a resolution in the General Assembly the following October calling for all non-self-governing territories to be subsumed within the new system, Creech Jones was compelled to justify this about-face in Labour policy. As he did repeatedly in the late 1940s, he suggested that ignorance and misinformation was the root of most criticism directed Britain’s treatment of its colonies. Creech Jones conceded that international opinion

⁷⁵⁵ “Is Our Journey Really Necessary?,” *Wāṣū* v. 12, n. 3 (Summer 1947), p. 3-4.

⁷⁵⁶ “Conference on the Relationship between the British and Colonial Peoples,” Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers (MSS Brit. Emp. s. 365), Rhodes House, Oxford University, Box 69, File 3.

provided an essential safeguard for colonies, but added, “provided of course that that opinion itself is informed, objective and unprejudiced.” He defended conditions in British Empire, claiming that they compared favorably with those in many independent states, and insisted that “‘*responsible* public opinion’ in the colonies was ‘against international intervention in their affairs,’ which would be regarded as both a ‘retrograde and humiliating step’ and a likely impediment to its progress towards self-government.” In response, “Singh quoted back to Creech Jones appropriate sections of *The Colonies and International Conscience*, pointing out that the views contained in that publication ‘were not identical with those which Mr. Creech Jones had expressed in the Committee.’” Thus, as Douglas observes, “Barely three years after the General Assembly’s first session, ... the Labour government had virtually ruled out any place for the UN in Britain’s colonial policy, although it was still prepared to consider the body as a dumping-ground for burdensome colonial liabilities, like Palestine or Eritrea, in which it had no vital economic or strategic interest.”⁷⁵⁷

Like Singh, such statements by their supposed allies in the Labour Party dismayed black intellectuals in London. “Public pronouncements by some of our leading ‘comrades’ in the new Labour Government such as Creech-Jones, Bevin, and Morrison,” Appiah recalled, “left us in no doubt what the difference between Labour-in-office and Labour-in-opposition was.” “In early January 1946,” he continued, “Morrison happily announced, ‘We are great friends of the jolly old Empire and are going to stick to it’ ... Bevan, not to be outdone, bellowed in Parliament on the 21st of February 1946, ‘I am not prepared to sacrifice the British Empire because I know that if the British Empire fell it would mean the standard of life of our own constituents would fall considerably.’” However, for Appiah, the “coup-de-grace” came on July 29, 1949, when Creech Jones declared in the House of Commons, “I

⁷⁵⁷ Douglas, *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism, 1939-1951*, p. 197-198, 201.

cannot foresee a point for a long time ahead when the work of the colonial service will come to an end because of the achievement of self-government....” “All,” Appiah noted, “were ominous words for Africa!”⁷⁵⁸

Creech Jones’ failure to do more than investigate of the extent of the colour bar in the colonies, when most black intellectuals called for the repeal of all discriminatory policies, and his treatment of the pan-Nigerian delegation to London also disappointed many. The Nigerian delegation consisting of Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Dr. Ibiyinka Olorun-Nimbe, Adeleke Adedoyin, Mallam Bukar Dipcharima, Paul Monyonge Kale, Chief Nyong Essien, and Azikiwe traveled to Britain to submit an alternative to the so-called Richards constitution and raise public awareness of the growing discontent in Nigeria.⁷⁵⁹ Nationalists like Azikiwe, the Lagosian elite, and black activists in the metropole denounced the Richards constitution, which partitioned Nigeria into three regional and largely ethnically defined units under a loose federated structure, and the Secretary of State’s suggestion that opponents wait and see how it functioned in practice satisfied few. At the Fabian Colonial Bureau conference on the relationship between Britain and colonies in April 1946, the Jamaican historian Elsa Goveia, who was then a student at the University of London, insisted, “British rule in Africa has arrested the evolutionary growth of African territory.” Rather than departing from this tradition, the partition of Nigeria under the new constitution, she argued,

⁷⁵⁸ Appiah, *Joe Appiah: The Autobiography of an African Patriot*, p. 162-163.

⁷⁵⁹ The Pan-Nigerian delegation included representatives from the major regions and ethnic groups in the colony. Ransome-Kuti was a Christian Yoruba from Abeokuta; Adedoyin, a prominent lawyer, and Dr. Olorun-Nimbe, a physician, were both from Lagos; Bukar Dipcharima was a muslim from Bornu; Monyonge Kale was president of the Cameroons Youth League; Essien was a leading member of the Ibibio Union from Uyo in Calabar; and, though born in northern Nigeria, Azikiwe was an Igbo whose family derived from Onitsha in the south. See PRO, KV 2/1817, v. 1 (1934-1947) and v. 2 (1947-1949).

“has been unscientific and unreal. It was done by people who were scrambling for territory and had no thought about the good of the country.”⁷⁶⁰

Several members of the WASU greeted the six delegates at the port of Southampton, and the Union fêted the visiting dignitaries at Africa House. The delegates held public meetings in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Edinburgh in cooperation with the Pan-African Federation, but Creech Jones refused to sanction their visit with a meeting. In response to the concerns of several members of the FCB Advisory Committee over his handling of the Nigerian delegation, the Colonial Secretary insisted, “The important thing is that the more educated elements should play a part in this system rather than repudiate it and try to realise now a system that is at present impracticable.” Nevertheless, the minutes from the Advisory Committee’s following meeting noted that certain members “were perturbed at the paternal approach to the problem revealed in the reply.”⁷⁶¹

Creech Jones’ obstinacy in the face of popular resistance to the Nigerian constitution angered Africans and West Indians in London. The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* noted that, whereas “there was keen controversy in Nigeria anent the relative merits of a delegation coming ... in person” due to the expense of such a journey, “all these arguments have been resolved by the Colonial Secretary’s admonition to the delegation to go back home and give the Richard’s Constitution a trial.” “It is not merely this peremptory direction,” the author continued, “but the fact that it came from Mr. Arthur Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies, one whom the Nigerian people in particular regarded as their friend, and has at once produced the effect of drawing all groups in Nigeria together against the intransigence

⁷⁶⁰ FCB Papers Box 69, File 3 – Conference on the Relationship between the British and Colonial Peoples, Clacton-on-Sea (April 12-14, 1946).

⁷⁶¹ “Reply from the Secretary of State on Nigerian Constitution,” FCB Paper 47(14) (December 1, 1947) and FCB (48) 1st Meeting Minutes (January 26, 1948), Wellesley Cole Papers, SOAS Archives, File 149. For more on the WASU’s view of the Labour government’s approach to both delegations and calls from constitutional reforms in the Gold Coast and Nigeria, see also “Produce and Politics,” *Wasu* v. 12, n. 3 (Summer 1947), p. 4-5.

of Downing Street.” The *Newsletter* also solicited a response from George Padmore. While the delegation’s visit had been a publicity success, he argued that the protest to the Secretary of State against the new constitution “was like an appeal from Caesar to Caesar,” because it was prepared by Baron Richards along with two former governors of Nigeria, Bernard Bourdillon and Donald Cameron, “vetted by Lord Hailey, Tory official adviser to the Labour Colonial Office, and blessed by Mr. Creech Jones himself.”⁷⁶²

Black intellectuals’ frustration with Creech Jones and the Labour government extended increasingly to other colonial reformers on the British left. The most important socialist group devoted to colonial issues, the Fabian Colonial Bureau, remained constrained by limited resources and its ties to the Labour Party in the late 1940s. Though not entirely uncritical of Labour politicians, Hinden and the Bureau often defended the government’s policies to black critics in London. Douglas suggests that one reason the Labour Colonial Secretaries “were able to pursue such policies with so little fear of contradiction by their colleagues in Cabinet Parliament or the Party” was “the umbilical connection that existed between the FCB and the administration in relation to which it was, in theory, intended to function as a ‘critic and spur.’” “After the ascension of its chairman [Creech Jones] to the Cabinet, the relationship between the two became so close that the FCB became little more than a quasi-autonomous adjunct of the official machinery of government.” If the scale of the FCB’s activities, which included publishing a monthly magazine and numerous pamphlets on colonial issues and prompting sympathetic MPs to ask questions drafted by experts in the House of Commons, was indeed remarkable, “it could hardly be considered an

⁷⁶² Indeed, when compared to the treatment of Kenyatta by Shiels, the Labour Colonial Secretary in 1929, Creech Jones’ attitude appears to be a step backwards. ““The Pan-Nigerian Delegation—Its Mission to London,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* v. 16, n. 96 (October 1947), p. 190-192. On Kenyatta and Shiels, see Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 121, 124.

alternative source of inspiration or influence.’’⁷⁶³ As a consequence, WASU members dubbed the Bureau the “unofficial mouthpiece” of the Labour government in late 1940s.⁷⁶⁴

At the same time, many liberal and socialist colonial experts increasingly displayed a degree of cynicism regarding the prospects for cooperation with intellectuals and activists from the colonies, whom they viewed as single-mindedly focused on self-government and political independence. These tensions surfaced during both the planning process and the proceedings for the FCB conference at Clacton-on-Sea in early 1946. Hinden, who organized the event, hoped to foster greater understanding and cooperation between black intellectuals from the colonies and British socialists and colonial experts. However, in response to her initial thoughts on the conference’s format and suggestions for participants, W. Arthur Lewis wrote that neither was likely to do more than reproduce existing fault lines. “The order of approach,” he noted, “seems likely to wreck the discussion,” since the “colonials will want to first of all discuss self-government, and will be prepared to approach other questions only when that is thoroughly off their chests.” What is more, “If the object is primarily to improve Bureau & Govt. public relations,” he explained, “none of the persons on your colonial list,” which included Max Iyalla, a WASU study group leader and former president of the Fabian Society in Nigeria, and the secretary of the LCP Sam Morris as well as a number of notable colonial experts seems particularly helpful except Abrahams, since we are all Bureau buddies and Labour propagandists. It is your enemies you must invite, rather than your friends.” Lewis suggested that the FCB needed to include, “at least one representative of WASU, or more, especially H. O. Davies,” “Belfield Clarke who is the centre of opposition among West Indians,” and “Padmore, whose widely publicised writings

⁷⁶³ Douglas, *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism*, p. 190-191, 202-203.

⁷⁶⁴ See “Produce and Politics,” *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 3 (Summer 1947), p. 5.

are a possible source of trouble.” He also recommended two students at the London School of Economics, the Trinidadian Lloyd Braithwaite of the West Indian Students Union and Ms. A. Adeniyi-Jones from Nigeria. With the exception of Clarke, all of these individuals participated in the conference, as did Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Elsa Goveia, and several other African and West Indian students.⁷⁶⁵

Hinden also encountered serious misgivings about the structure of the conference from British experts like the anthropologist Audrey Richards. In reply to Hinden’s invitation, Richards wrote, “I have brooded over your paper with interest—and gradually deepening depression!” She added that Margery Perham and Margery Fry had “the same feelings of depression.” Richards explained, “my pessimism leads me to think that if we are to get anywhere we want to get down to more fundamental things, and I am not sure that a conference of people who are mainly politicians, journalists and so forth are the people to do it.” The discussions likely to ensue from “such a wide subject,” she feared, would “fall into the emotional and political ruts which one has already dug” and “lead to fierce talk on whether we ought to be anti-imperialist or imperialist, and ... to discussions or rather lamentations by colonial students....” Instead, Richards proposed the inclusion of sociologists, economists, and psychologists like Dr. Barber and Bowlby and more circumscribed discussions designed to consolidate existing knowledge and areas for future research. As she wrote in a subsequent letter to Hinden, “I think the difference between us is that I do not think the time is ripe for a big conference, but merely for further discussion.” Although Hinden and the other organizers ultimately deemed Richards’ suggestions impractical under the given time constraints, they expressed considerably sympathy for her perspective and shared her “depression” over the current state of discourse with students

⁷⁶⁵ Letter from W. Arthur Lewis to Rita Hinden (January 17, 1946), FCB Papers, Box 69, File 3.

and intellectuals from the colonies. Indeed, Hinden admitted, “I think your approach is more fundamental and likely to be more valuable than mine....”⁷⁶⁶

Socialists in Britain advanced a technocratic approach to social and economic problems in the colonies as a prerequisite to political reforms. Hinden and other Fabians maintained that the British Empire should evolve gradually into the Commonwealth under British guidance. In 1943, Leonard Woolf dismissed calls from some on the “extreme left” for immediate independence for the colonies, claiming that to do so “would be disastrous—disastrous for the Africans.” “Most of them,” he maintained, “are ignorant and uneducated, terribly poor, ravaged by tropical diseases. To think that that are capable of suddenly taking over the government of their countries under the political and economic conditions of the modern world is just nonsense. They would fall victim to the first private profiteers and exploiters and the first imperialist government who crossed their path.” “No,” Woolf concluded, “the right way to deal with our African colonies ... is to begin at once to educate the Africans to govern themselves.”⁷⁶⁷ This view remained ascendant in Labour Party circles and extra-parliamentary organizations like the Fabian Society during the late 1940s. “Like the post-war welfare state,” Webster suggests, “the post-war welfare empire made clear the need to follow expert advice in order to achieve modernity, highlighting the importance of British technical and scientific expertise in defeating the ravages of the tsetse fly, modernizing African agriculture, providing healthcare.”⁷⁶⁸ Due to the prevailing paternalism on the British Left, in practice, cooperation between groups like the FCB and Africans and West Indians consisted largely of attempts by the former to cull support

⁷⁶⁶ Letter from Audrey Richards to Rita Hinden (January 12, 1946), letter from Hinden to Richards (January 28, 1946), and letter from Richards to Hinden (January 29, 1946), in *ibid.*

⁷⁶⁷ Leonard Woolf, “A Challenge to All of Us: Two Views on the Responsibilities of Colonial Empire,” *The Listener* (August 12, 1943), p. 179-180.

⁷⁶⁸ Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, p. 68.

amongst the colonial intelligentsia and check the influence of communists and nationalists. When this failed, socialists and other colonial reformers in Britain often came away frustrated from the interactions with black intellectuals and activists in the late 1940s.

Much of the discussion at the Clacton conference focused on the performance of the new Labour government. A committed Fabian, Lewis suggested that “colonials expect too much of the new Government.” “They cannot change the whole Colonial Empire,” he argued, “and we are unjust to expect more than they can do. We must give the new Government time, and see what it does.” Previous Tory governments, Lewis added, “have pursued futile and bad policy in the Colonies, and there is every reason for the distrust which exists. This Government now has a chance to change. If it does change we must co-operate. If not, then ... we must push the British out and do the best we can for ourselves.”⁷⁶⁹

Others, however, were less charitable. Like Lewis, Padmore noted that “distrust” remained pervasive prevalent because of a long tradition of “domination,” but he insisted that the new government had done little to assuage these concerns during its short tenure in office.

Although when Labour “won the election, the majority of the politically active colonial people welcomed this victory,” Padmore cited several incidents like the Secretary of State’s refusal to receive the delegation of cocoa farmers from West Africa and defense of the use of flogging in Trinidad, “which have shaken considerably that confidence.” He later noted, “When the Labour Government came into power, the Pan African Federation sent a letter to the Prime Minister putting forward some suggestions of measures by which the Labour Government could show its good will,” such as equal employment practices and the repeal of all discriminatory legislation and the sedition laws in the colonies. “We do not want big changes immediately,” Padmore explained, “but some gestures to show the good will. How

⁷⁶⁹ *Domination or Cooperation?*, p. 9.

can the colonial intelligentsia play its proper role and lead the people towards progressive moves when they are constantly subject to such prohibitive legislation.”⁷⁷⁰

The Clacton Conference highlighted, rather than assuaged, the growing ideological rift between black intellectuals in Britain and Labour Party and Fabian socialists. Labour’s colonial policy in the late 1940s, Douglas notes, “bore the stamp of its Fabian architects, the Webbs, who regarded the British proletarian and his colonial peasant counterpart—although the latter to a far greater degree—to be fundamentally incapable of self-government and in need of the expert administrator’s services.” Thus, “Self-government, in the original Fabian schema, was no substitute for good government; and although this formula was modified at home it never ceased to apply to the colonies: as Listowel remarked in 1948, it was ‘no part of a truly progressive policy to hand over the responsibilities of government to the educated African oligarchy of the towns.’” The rejection of “national self-determination as a desideratum of Labour foreign policy” became an integral component of the socialist internationalism that linked the Labour Party and extra-parliamentary groups like the FCB in the 1940s. Creech Jones, Douglas observes, “revealed how much he too had been influenced by this intellectual current when, in his first speech of the 1945 general election campaign, he drew an explicit parallel between ‘small states’ and ‘small colonies’ as entities that could never aspire to become ‘absolutely independent units.’” “They must be associated with stronger Powers,” he argued, “... if they are to survive either politically or economically.” Others like H. N. Brailsford also “opposed the obsolete ‘Liberal’ concentration upon self-government to British socialists’ ‘modern’ economic approach to the to the problems of empire.”⁷⁷¹ Similarly, the goal of the FCB was not colonial freedom, but rather to transform

⁷⁷⁰ Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers Box 69, File 3.

⁷⁷¹ Douglas, *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism*, p. 203-204.

the “discontented, slum-ridden old Empire ... into a *voluntary* association of free nations.”⁷⁷² *Empire* published an editorial on the “devolution of power” in serial form during late 1946 and 1947. While conceding the right of colonial peoples to choose the form of their government, the author maintained “that as long as the power still rests with Britain, Britain has the responsibility to do what is right in her own eyes, even against the will of the local populations.” The piece succinctly articulated the dominant view within the FCB regarding its role vis-à-vis the colonial intelligentsia. While the author noted that this did not “exonerate the colonial power from trying to get local co-operation,” the latter was seen to entail little more than a greater attempt “to explain what she is doing as carefully as possible....” The failings of past government initiatives were attributed, above all, to a lack of information and misunderstanding. “It is very possible,” the editorial continued, “that if some of the beneficent schemes which have been opposed by local opinion, had been preceded by adequate consultation and enlightenment, the opposition would have been found to be far less strong.”⁷⁷³ Fabians working in the field approached West Indians and Africans in the metropole as conduits of information regarding and potential advocates for the development initiatives of the Labour government, with little concern for establishing an earnest debate over what these schemes would include.

The majority of the Africans and West Indians at the conference viewed the situation differently than their interlocutors in Britain. They insisted, as Peter Abrahams put it, “If we are human beings, we have the right to self-determination.” Many believed that the failure of their would-be allies to recognize this fundamental precept stemmed from a flawed understanding of the workings of empire. While “White socialists talk about their good

⁷⁷² Quoted in Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, p. 125.

⁷⁷³ “The Transfer of Power,” *Empire* (May 1947), in Wellesley Cole Papers, SOAS Archives (PP MS 35), File 149 (FCB).

intentions for the colonies, what they can do to help,” Abrahams suggested that the situation be viewed “from a different point of view.” Britain, he asserted, “became a great power only after she ... had become a power with territorial possessions all over the world. Britain’s greatness is based on her territorial and political power, it is based on Empire. If Britain were to be without Empire tomorrow, she would not be a great power any more.” “It irritates me very much,” Abrahams continued, “when socialists put the question what are we, the colonials, going to do when Britain leaves the colonies. The question should be what is Britain going to do when she leaves.”⁷⁷⁴ This recognition—and, indeed, annoyance—led some like Braithwaite to question claims by British socialists, liberals, and conservatives “that England has a special mission to perform because of her long experience in colonial rule.” Rather, he argued, “*It is precisely this experience of the past which unfits Britain for the task of trusteeship.* Any country possessing an empire must to some extent hold the theory of a master race. Colonial subjects first want to see a change in this attitude before they are prepared to put their trust in the Labour Government.”⁷⁷⁵ Similarly, T. E. Sealy confessed, “I feel that the British people do not really want to have full equality between themselves and the colonial peoples....” He recalled, “When I asked [one Englishmen] why they did not teach anything about colonial matters in the schools,” the reply was “that his Education Committee ... did not want their children to become ‘little imperialists.’ Colonial knowledge to these people, apparently, could be nothing else.” In a comment clearly directed at Creech Jones and other members of the Labour government, Kenyatta noted, “While certain British people are willing to learn from colonials privately – over a cup of tea – they are unwilling to admit publicly that these people are ready for self-government.” “Racial discrimination,” he

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁵ *Domination or Cooperation?*, p. 3.

concluded, “is the worst factor – the Labour Government should make a declaration abolishing racial discrimination in all British colonies.”⁷⁷⁶

Hinden acknowledged the gulf between the goals of black intellectuals from the colonies and her own, which she attributed to a “difference of approach.” Several of the West Indians and Africans at the conference, including Nkrumah who restated the resolutions passed at the 1945 Pan-African Congress in his address, demanded complete independence from Britain in the immediate future. Hinden proposed a partnership in the struggle for “social justice” that would lead to self-government as the culmination of a socialist program of social, economic, and political development. “We laughed,” she remarked, “when Lewis said that most vocal colonials are trusting the Fabians least of all. When Mr. Nkrumah said ‘We want absolute independence’ it left me absolutely cool. Why? There is a difference of approach. It seems to me that colonial peoples today want self-government and independence. British socialists are not so concerned with ideals like independence and self-government, but with the idea of social justice.” Hinden opposed Nkrumah’s call for independence to the internationalism of British socialists. Referencing the current situation in Eastern Europe and the limited fruits of the recent political reforms in Jamaica, she explained, “British socialists ... ask themselves whether independence in itself is a worthwhile aim. We think of the colonies from two points of view – independence and social justice.” “But,” Hinden added, “you should not draw the conclusion that because we are concerned with social justice, we are unsympathetic to your desire for independence. There is a difference of focus and historical approach. The British socialist movement has not had to fight for independence but for social justice.”

⁷⁷⁶ FCB Papers Box 69, File 3.

Kenyatta rejected Hinden's reasoning and charged that, once again, the reputed champions of colonial reform had introduced an insidious distinction in the application of their ideals. "Why is there a difference of approach on the part of us colonial people?" he asked. "We claim complete independence because so long as someone sits on your back you can never find time to think about the things that really matter. The freedom which we claim can never be given by the Fabian Colonial Bureau, and whether or not you are sympathetic to our claim, we shall get that freedom." For Kenyatta and many of his peers, partnership entailed a degree of autonomy of purpose and action, and independence represented a prerequisite for greater international cooperation, whether in the context of the British Commonwealth or some other international organization. "We are looking forward to the time when we Nigerians can be a nation amongst nations," one Nigerian student asserted. "It is not that we want to sever all connections with you; the world is so closely knit together. But there must be a basis of co-operation, not domination. And co-operation is impossible so long as the one side is doing all the sweating, and the other the harvesting." On "the question of partnership," Kenyatta declared, "I am tired of talking about this. We are not asking the Labour Government to be revolutionary but to do certain things which it has promised to do. It is better food, housing, living conditions that we want. If we are to cooperate at all, it must be on an equal basis. We are tired [of] patronising organisations. We object to being treated as children." He claimed that their self-appointed "friends," as much as their Tory rivals, attempted regularly to discredit the work of black intellectuals from the colonies. "We must have the opportunity to put our own point of view," Kenyatta argued. "English socialists say that the Pan African Federation does not represent anything. Yet we are able to call a conference of our people from all the territories. Unless you change your attitude we cannot cooperate." Nevertheless, he added, "there are many points in common

and I think that even if we retain our demand for complete independence, and we cannot immediately agree upon this, there are many other points upon which we agree and for which we could work together.”⁷⁷⁷

In 1947, Hinden and the Fabian executive entreated Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole to join the advisory committee of the FCB, and he became one of three men to represent the colonies at a FCB conference at Pasture Wood in Surrey the following year. The conference on the “New Approach to Empire Problems” set out to consider the effects of political reform and the new development corporations in the colonies. Participants included Audrey Richards from the LSE, the Labour MP Aidan Crawley as a representative of the Colonial Secretary’s office, and Herbert Frankel, the professor of colonial economics at Oxford. The Bureau asked Cole, P. L. U. Cross, and Daw Saw Yin to address the “Colonial Reaction to These Developments” in West Africa, the West Indies, and Burma, respectively.

Although Cole gladly accepted the invitation, his ambivalence towards having his perspective framed in this fashion was perceptible in his remarks at the conference. Eschewing a narrow identification with West Africa or Britain, he began by resituating himself as an interlocutor with unique insight into both.

For the last 25 years since matriculating I have had more opportunities of studying the African side on the one hand, and the English side on the other than many a contemporary ... I have been a member, I think, of almost every West African organisation, student and post student. On the other hand I have been a member of almost all student, and other organisations that come my way in this country ... I have been invited to serve on three Colonial Office Committees and both in Africa and in this country I have been in constant and close touch with all shades of African opinion.

Cole addressed West Africans’ changing view of the Labour government since the war.

“Right up to this summer, ... I felt that things were moving in the right direction, and that

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

reasonably soon, West Africa would be – I think ‘self-determining’ is the word.” He added, “The greatest single factor making for optimism in West Africa was the arrival of the Labour Party in power, and especially Mr. Creech Jones as Secretary of States [*viz*],” whose “popularity among West Africans is unique.” Against this backdrop, Cole maintained that “a great opportunity was missed” when the government “snubbed” both the cocoa delegation in 1946 and the Nigerian delegation in 1947. He cited recent controversies in Sierra Leone over mineral and land rights, political reform and the so-called native administration, and higher education, especially the Governor’s plan to close historic Fourah Bay College, as further evidence of the new Labour government’s failure to embark on a more progressive colonial policy. “What is happening in Sierra Leone is not an isolated phenomenon,” he added, but rather a harbinger of “what is happening in the other [West African] Colonies.” A “basic factor” limiting reform in West Africa, Cole averred, “is the fear in some quarters that if Africans develop and progress it will Britain having to come out, loss of jobs, a contracting service.” However, he maintained, “There is no truth in this,” pointing to the example of the Gold Coast—“the most nationalist [and] the most friendly to Britain.”

For Cole, the British Empire had reached a crossroads, and the Labour government at the helm could not forestall change much longer. “In the present stage of West Africa you cannot keep the people down. They are determined to see clearly where lies their destiny in the modern world, enough to make the necessary sacrifices to attain it. Already the old Empire is divided into Commonwealth and Empire. It is not our intention to remain long on the Empire side of the dividing line.” Thus, he continued, “The Labour Government is on trial.” “Has it, he asked, “got the realism and the statesmanship to face facts, and so do better than its predecessors? ... Are its representatives prepared to avoid under-estimating these so-called subject peoples and instead to consult them fully and freely, at all levels, in an

atmosphere of complete equality and frankness; or will they continue sending out edicts from Olympus, thereby immediately putting the mere mortals of Colonial Archea in the position of Jupiter's thunderbolt?"⁷⁷⁸

Although some black intellectuals remained committed Fabians into the 1950s, relations between the FCB and West Indians and Africans in the metropole deteriorated in the late 1940s. West Indians like W. Arthur Lewis and West Africans such as Lampitey and de Graft Johnson of the Gold Coast Students Union, Max Iyalla, and F. A. Ogunshye, a student at the London School of Economics, trade union official, and secretary of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, continued their involvement with the FCB.⁷⁷⁹ Yet, a growing number believed that British socialists both within and outside of the government only solicited their opinions to legitimate ready-made directives. The perspectives of some black intellectuals were acknowledged, but only up to a point; that point was often where the latter's demands diverged from those of their white interlocutors or threatened the perceived interests of metropolitan Britain. By the late 1940s, even political moderates like Dr. Wellesley Cole had grown impatient with their socialist friends.

A disagreement between Hinden and Dr. Wellesley Cole in 1948 led to the denouement of his participation in the FCB. Wellesley Cole was outraged when Hinden circulated an edited version of one his letters to the Advisory Committee. The letter was a personal one to Hinden, expressing his regret at having to leave during the discussion in the previous day's committee meeting. The letter centered on the question of "whether in facing the issues in East Africa, the Labour Party is being forced to depart from the principles of dealing with Colonial Peoples which it has hitherto held." Wellesley Cole suggested that the

⁷⁷⁸ Paper given by Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole at Fabian Colonial Bureau Conference, "The New Approach to Empire Problems," Pasture Wood, Surrey (January 18, 1948), in Wellesley Cole Papers, File 149.

⁷⁷⁹ Adi, *West African in Britain*, p. 149, fn 54.

committee return to the subject at a later meeting because “it holds the key to much in the attitude of African peoples that seems to puzzle sincere Socialists like yourself.” He then addressed the sources of West and East Africans’ growing distrust of the Labour government at length. “The key to the problem,” he explained, “is simple ... because they still have not gained their emancipation. However much they appreciate the good intentions of the Labour Party, and I for one certainly do, it is by actions rather than sentiments and intentions that they can judge.”

Wellesley Cole criticized the technocratic zeal of many British socialists, which, he suggested, led them excuse horrific abuses against the African population.

The significant point which we must face squarely is, that the more the undeveloped East African territories become jolted by science and mass economics into modern ‘progress’ the more certain it is that they will develop into another Southern Rhodesia or South Africa ... land policy, segregation, ... regulations open or implied which limit the Africans to certain grades of labour ... are all limbs of a frightful Moloch to which I can only see the undeveloped East African natives being sacrificed, to the strains of the hymn of economic urgency and world needs.

Even some “staunch socialists,” he added, now proclaimed “the need to push those territories ahead at all costs to the indigenous inhabitants ... if the native peoples suffer in consequence, this, they say, is the price which must be paid for progress.” With the consolidation of settler control proceeding in East Africa with the endorsement of the Labour government and socialists in Britain, Wellesley Cole asked, “Do you see now why West Africans are very nervous, and are not inclined to accept at face value what is promised for them?” It is a widely held belief in West Africa that the only thing that has saved them from the fate of the East and South Africa is the combination of climate and the mosquito. After close observation for some 25 years I am sorry to say that I fully endorse this feeling.” Although, he explained, “I consider myself to be one of the moderates,” “my whole aim

from now on is to promote as far as possible unity and solidarity of our people so that we can develop as rapidly as possible to a point from which we can never be pulled down under any pretext.”

Wellesley Cole argued that many of the “improvements on paper” instituted by the Labour government in West Africa had been negated “in practice.” “Although millions are being spent under Colonial Welfare and Development Fund in West Africa,” he contended, “analysis shows that a large proportion is really spent on salaries to Britishers sent out, and in no single instance is there a budget showing how many Africans will be needed for training to play their part in the development of their own country, or later, to take over when the British experts will have retired.” While, Wellesley Cole concluded, the “intentions of Mr. Creech-Jones are beyond doubt” and “in the Labour Party many [are] sincere and honest advocates of equality among peoples, and physical improvements among Colonial peoples,” “I can assure you that among the operative officials and authorities the mere far off dim prospect of Africans being allowed to manage their own affairs is frightening and startling.” Wellesley Cole maintained that the overreaction on the part of the colonial government in the Gold Coast and the Under Secretary of State’s knee-jerk response in Britain demonstrated this. “At the first sign of such a threat the Government of the Gold Coast did not hesitate to shoot, and the under Secretary of State for the Colonies promptly brought up the spectre of Communism.” Both, he argued, proved “that there is still a wide gap between aspirations of the peoples of Africa and the practical policies of British authorities.”⁷⁸⁰

In reply, Hinden confessed that some of his accusations had “a definitely irritating effect” and that she felt bound by “duty” to respond to several. However, she sought and

⁷⁸⁰ Letter from Dr. Wellesley Cole to Hinden (May 26, 1948), Wellesley Cole Papers, File 149.

received Wellesley Cole's permission to circulate the letter along with a piece by Marjorie Nicholson in advance of the committee's next meeting, stating, "I think I am really on your side as regards the gist of your letter."⁷⁸¹ However, the resulting paper, entitled "The Socialist Attitude Towards African Development," included a shortened version of Wellesley Cole's letter, minus the last two paragraphs which included some of his most biting criticisms of Creech Jones and the Labour government. Incensed by what he viewed as a blatant attempt to censor his input, the latter wrote to the chairman of the FCB Advisory Committee, J. Frank Horrabin, to announce his intention "to be absent" from the forthcoming meeting. "The letter purported to come from me and included as a basis for discussion at that meeting," he explained, "is only that portion of my original letter to the Secretary which she apparently has decided should be the only portion brought to the notice of the Committee." "This autocratic editing," he continued, "coupled with certain experiences which some of us have had with the ex-Chairman of the Bureau [Creech Jones] in connexion with Fourah Bay College, has compelled me to pause – and review in light of experience certain premises which one had hitherto taken for granted."⁷⁸² Both Horrabin and a shocked Hinden beseeched Wellesley Cole to reconsider, reminding him, as the former put it, that "the letter was a personal one to Dr. Hinden & that it was she herself who thought that part of it dealing with the general question of Africans' reaction to Developmental Schemes to be so interesting that it [would] be useful to circularise it." Hinden lamented, "Why should it be so impossible for us to work together constant misunderstandings? Why should my actions be interpreted always in the worst possible light? ... how can people co-operate if they are constantly suspicious of each other?" "And," she added, "what on earth has Creech Jones'

⁷⁸¹ See letter from Hinden to Wellesley Cole (June 8, 1948) and Wellesley Cole's reply (June 9, 1948), *ibid.*

⁷⁸² Letter from Wellesley Cole to Horrabin (June 27, 1948), *ibid.*

actions to do with our Committee? None of us are responsible for them, & don't even know what they are.”⁷⁸³ Despite Hinden's protestations, Wellesley Cole's involvement with the Bureau declined precipitously thereafter, ending altogether by 1950.

Hinden's response, if sincere, belied the close association between the FCB and the ruling Labour government, which had become a major source of the frustration for Africans and West Indians in their dealings with the Bureau. In the months prior to his rift with the FCB, Hinden and Nicholson had rebuffed several of Wellesley Cole's requests and suggestions, and, in each instance, the justification that they provided centered on the Fabian Society's affiliation with the Labour government and their desire to avoid unsettling the Bureau's amicable relations with the Colonial Office. In early 1948, Wellesley Cole inquired about the possibility of the FCB joining into an alliance with other likeminded, but autonomous, organizations, particularly those established by Africans and West Indians themselves like his own West African Society. After “discussing the position of the Fabian Society in regard to associating itself with outside movements or campaigns, of whatever nature, with Andrew Filson, the General Secretary of the Society,” Hinden replied, “I understand from him that it is not possible for the Bureau as a section of the Society to link itself with any such outside movement or campaign. That would limit our possibility of action to make representations to the Colonial Secretary on the lines of those we have already put forward.” She added, “I am sure you will be disappointed about this, but the Fabian Society has a very unusual constitutional position. It cannot ever pass resolutions or announce policy, and has always to work within a framework of general loyalty to the Labour Party with which it is affiliated. Sometimes I feel as if I were walking on a tightrope.

⁷⁸³ Letter from Hinden to Wellesley Cole (June 28, 1948) and letter from Horrabin to Wellesley Cole (June 30, 1948), *ibid.*

[B]ut this unique position has many advantages as well as obvious disadvantages.”⁷⁸⁴

Similarly, unsatisfied with the “reassurance about Government intentions” offered in response to the Bureau’s queries regarding proposals for a new Police Bill in Sierra Leone, Wellesley Cole pressed the issue further and forwarded a set of follow-up questions to Nicholson, urging her to ask Bureau members to raise them in House of Commons. In response, however, Nicholson wrote, “there is no point in putting further questions as we shall get the straight reply that the matter is under consideration.” “You will understand,” she explained, “that when we put questions, we don’t like to give members questions to which they will get simply a stone wall answer – that is unprofitable to us, and the members don’t like it. Considering how much we use them, we are always anxious not to lose their support.”⁷⁸⁵

For British socialists like Hinden and Nicholson as much as colonial officials, “the development project,” as Cooper explains, implied a unilateral flow of resources and know-how from metropolitan Britain and represented essentially a benevolent enterprise.⁷⁸⁶ In a short pamphlet entitled *Colonial Problems*, Hinden argued that, “before ... the framework [of British rule] can be withdrawn in any colony, we must be sure that there has grown inside the colony a sufficient number of educated citizens, with the power to replace our support by their own. If that does not exist, we should be abandoning these countries to gangster rule.” In his review in *Wàsù* in 1947, M. Sunjuye-Manuel described *Colonial Problems* as a “fine apologia.” Hinden, he wrote, “asserts that the colonies are for the most part ‘poor and backward countries’ which bring to ... Great Britain nothing much in trade or profits from

⁷⁸⁴ Letter from Hinden to Wellesley Cole (February 14, 1948), Wellesley Cole Papers, File 149.

⁷⁸⁵ Letter from Nicholson to Wellesley Cole (February 26, 1948), Wellesley Cole Papers, File 149.

⁷⁸⁶ Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 66.

investments.” In response to Hinden’s arguments, Sunjuye-Manual posed a series of “pertinent questions”:

(a) Has Britain at any time withdrawn her imperial influence from any part of the world ... as a result of only a little agitation by the governed? If she has not, then, has no country ever been ‘ripe’ in the sense of Dr. Hinden? (b) How is Britain fostering the development of the so-called ‘poor and backward’ peoples ... to make the eventual withdrawal of British rule possible? (c) Does Britain not contribute to the poverty and backwardness of ... [them] by economic exploitation? (d) Can the buyer who is also the sole dictator of the prices of the economic products of a country think much of that country in terms of progress, as it relates to wealth? (e) Do not the meagre salaries of the colonial civil servants who happen to be indigenous elements of the colonies enhance poverty and backwardness? (f) How does Great Britain make use of the wealth of the mines of West Africa, which should have so greatly enhanced every department of progress?⁷⁸⁷

As in the case of Wellesley Cole, those like Hinden who espoused a vision of a progressive empire generously bestowing its capital and knowledge on the “poor and background countries” of Africa often perceived such expressions of impatience on the part of colonial subjects as the result of ignorance or misunderstanding, if not bad faith.

The shooting in the Gold Coast in early 1948 and the Labour government’s handling of the ensuing unrest in Britain’s “model colony” in West Africa shocked and angered Africans and West Indians in London, and exacerbated the growing tensions between them and British socialists both within and outside of the government. As news of events in Accra reached London from the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), black intellectuals in the city once again came together in protest. The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* decried the “uncalled-for ... attack” on “these unarmed West African servicemen, once acclaimed gallant heroes of the campaign to recapture Burma.” The League also criticized the inaccurate and “unkind” remark of the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies in the House of Commons that “Communists[s] were responsible for the riots,” which followed

⁷⁸⁷ M. Sunjuye-Manuel, “Pertinent Questions on Colonial Problems,” *Wàsù* v. 12, n. 3 (Summer 1947), p. 17-18.

the shootings. Instead, they insisted that the “underlying causes” of the trouble had “their roots in uncontrolled inflation of prices of goods in the Gold Coast, coupled with the administration’s refusal to establish a system of rationing, price pegging and fair distribution.” The LCP, WASU, and other black intellectuals like George Padmore organized marches on Downing Street and held a demonstration in Trafalgar Square on March 7 “against the unwarranted police action” and “dastardly imperialist action” in firing upon peaceful protesters and subsequently detaining the “Big Six” leaders of the UGCC—Kwame Nkrumah, J. B. Danquah, Ofori Atta, Akuffo Addo, Ako Adjei, and Obetsebi Lampitey—without charges. Governor Creasy maintained that the arrest of the latter, several of the latter had been officers in the WASU while in London, were “like the quarantine which is imposed on people who have caught a dangerous infectious disease.” In his speech to the demonstrators at Trafalgar Square, Joseph-Mitchell, the Secretary of the LCP, “pointed out that the British Labour Government cannot afford to take fright when Colonial people take seriously the promises which have been extended to them.”⁷⁸⁸ Joseph Appiah led a delegation from the WASU and WANS to Creech Jones “to persuade him to appoint a commission of inquiry into the affair in the name of ‘socialist morality and justice,’” and Bankole Renner, Kankam Boadu, and Appiah subsequently became the first citizens of the Gold Coast to address the Watson Commission in London before the commissioners left for the colony.⁷⁸⁹

Black intellectuals in the metropole interpreted the actions taken by Governor Creasy in the Gold Coast and the reaction of the Under Secretary and Secretary of State for the Colonies through an imperial lens, linking them to concomitant developments elsewhere in

⁷⁸⁸ See *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, v. 17, n. 100 (April 1948), p. 29-34. Creasy quoted in Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, p. 51.

⁷⁸⁹ Appiah, *Joe Appiah*, 171-172.

Britain's "tropical empire." The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* noted that, "at the moment, ... the struggle [for human rights and freedom] is breaking into violence on several fronts." "In the Gold Coast," the author continued, "over two hundred people have been injured and some twenty killed in cold blood, simply for demonstrating against poverty and inflation," "gas has been used against workers on the sugar plantati[on]s of Trinidad," and the "Trade Union Leaders, Ken Hill and F. Glasspole, members of the League, have been arrested in Jamaica for leading a strike of the bus workers."⁷⁹⁰

In the wake of the disturbances in the Gold Coast and amid on-going agitation by Africans and West Indians in London for the release of the "Big Six," the Labour government moved to improve the international image of British colonial policy. In late 1947, Hector McNeil proposed a strategy to the Secretary of State to assuage mounting criticize from the colonial intelligentsia and, within the UNO, "non-administering" powers like the Soviet Union and especially India. "[A] very attractive idea," McNeil suggested, "... would be to include as one of our alternate delegates next year a reliable, experienced subject from one of our colonial territories." "A negro," he added, "would be in a much better position ... at the Assembly to advance our case if he actually believed in it than any of us ever are. It would be extremely difficult from the propaganda point of view for the Soviet [*sic*] or India to attack him."⁷⁹¹ With Bevan's full backing, Creech Jones forwarded the proposal to the Prime Minister, who approved it. In the end, they settled on a suitably "reliable" choice, Grantley Adams, the leader of the Barbados Labour Party and head of the Executive Council in the island's House of Assembly. As Douglas suggests, "Adams was ideally suited for the purpose. An Oxford-educated lawyer who professed the belief that 'the

⁷⁹⁰ "Editorial," *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, v. 17, n. 100 (April 1948), p. 27-28.

⁷⁹¹ Quoted in Douglas, *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism*, p. 199-200.

Labour Government is prepared to grant complete responsibility as soon as the Colonies are in a position to take it,' the strongly anti-Communist Adams, while ostensibly speaking for the people of the colonies, would 'in fact be representing the United Kingdom and act[ing] as a spokesman for H.M.G.'s policy.'" Most importantly, "as the leading political figure of a territory on the brink of full independence, he was 'implacably opposed to all attempts to place the Colonies under the supervision of the United Nations.'" ⁷⁹²

Nevertheless, the selection of Adams encouraged many black intellectuals in London. He had served on the LCP's Executive Committee in the mid-1940s, and most expected him to speak out against conditions in the colonies and demand immediate self-government in the British West Indies. ⁷⁹³ As the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* observed, "When it was announced that Mr. Grantley Adams had been appointed as an alternate member of the United Kingdom delegation to the session of the United Nations held in Paris, colonial peoples throughout the Empire welcomed his appointment as a recognition of their coming of age ... No longer could it be argued that West Indians, at least, are not yet ready for responsible self-government, when a delegate was chosen from among them to represent the 'Mother Country' at the great international tribunal." "Apart from this satisfaction," the *Newsletter* explained, "Colonial peoples throughout Africa and Asia, as well as West Indians, looked to Mr. Adams to put their grievances, their hopes and aspirations before the representatives of 52 nations." ⁷⁹⁴ However, when Adams addressed the Trusteeship Council in October 1948, the Labour government's already tarnished image received another significant blow in the eyes African and West Indian critics. Claiming to speak "for the peoples of the British Colonial Empire," Adams spurned the notion that

⁷⁹² *Ibid.*, 199-200.

⁷⁹³ See League of Coloured Peoples, "Ninth Annual Report for the Year 1939-1940."

⁷⁹⁴ "NO MANDATE FROM EMPIRE PEOPLES," *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, v. 17, n. 104 (October-December 1948), p. 117-123.

theirs was a “grim relentless struggle for freedom against reactionary colonial oppressors.” “We do *not* look upon the British Government as a ruthless exploiter,” he insisted. “We do *not* regard the ties that link us the British Crown as an intolerable yoke. Far from it.”⁷⁹⁵

Adams’ speech provoked an immediate outcry from black organizations in Britain and the Caribbean. The Pan-African Federation passed a resolution condemning his remarks, arguing that there was no legitimacy to his claim to speak for any of Britain’s colonial territories, let alone all of the diverse populations of the British Empire. The LCP also denounced the speech. The *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* noted the critical reaction of “people in different parts of the Empire to his claim to speak on their behalf” and that “Africans in England” had organized a number of protest meetings and “passed resolutions of denunciation which were sent to the Prime Minister, Colonial Secretary, and members of the Trusteeship Council.”

The journal also published excerpts from letters of protest by Richard Hart, the Secretary of the Caribbean Labour Congress, and the Kenya African Union (KAU) as evidence of the colonial response to Adams’ speech. The *Newsletter* claimed that the KAU’s detailed memorandum to the United Nations made “complete absurdity of Mr Adams’ reference[s] to ‘*mere lack of knowledge on the part of some critics of British Colonial administration*’” and “‘ill-founded, unconstructive criticism uttered from ulterior motives.’” Indeed, the KAU argued, “If this is the description he would apply to the following facts, too, then we must seek a fresh definition of truth....” Hart contrasted the high hopes that the choice of Adams had encouraged with the sense of betrayal that many felt after his appearance before the Trusteeship Council. “His comrades who hailed his appointment as a member of the British delegation with jubilation,” he explained, “expected him to oppose the transfer of the

⁷⁹⁵ Quoted in Douglas, *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism*, p. 200.

Caribbean Colonies from the present control ... and to demand the alternative of the transfer of power to the people of the Caribbean themselves,” or even “go further to champion the cause of all Colonial peoples to freedom and democracy.” Thus, Hart concluded, Adams’ “speech in the form he actually delivered it must have brought shame and disappointment to countless numbers of Colonial workers in all parts of the world.” “The opportunity for the voice of Colonial labour to ring out in unmistakable condemnation of imperialism from the world’s most publicised platform,” he asserted, “has been used for the delivery of a speech which earned the fulsome praise of the pro-imperialist press.” Most appalling of all, Hart added, “around his legitimate rejection of the transfer proposal, he wove a defence of British Colonial Policy (not in the Caribbean but generally) and a rejection of the proposal that U.N.O. should be supplied with regular information concerning our progress towards self-government.”⁷⁹⁶

To black intellectuals in London, the Labour government’s use of Adams as an apologist for its position was analogous to, if more subtle than, its more blatantly coercive attempts to quell the growth of political and labor mobilization in West Africa and the Caribbean. Indeed, such misinformation provided the conditions of possibility for state-directed violence. “Unfortunately,” the *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter* observed, “an iron curtain” had been erected against news of developments in the colonies. As a consequence, before the recent events in the colony, there was sense in Britain that the people of the Gold Coast were “not violently stirred by discontent but apparently eager to make the new Constitution work as a step on the lawful, peaceful road to self-government. Then, suddenly, quite without warning, as far as the outside world was concerned anyway, the British Press

⁷⁹⁶ “NO MANDATE FROM EMPIRE PEOPLES,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, v. 17, n. 104 (October-December 1948), p. 117-123.

front-paged stories of rioting and looting, of people killed and wounded while on peaceful unarmed demonstration.”⁷⁹⁷

By the end of the 1940s, many African and West Indian intellectuals and activists shared a sense of frustration and even betrayal with regard to British socialists and Labour politicians. In 1948, African students jeered at Creech Jones as he tried to outline Labour’s colonial policy at a public meeting in London.⁷⁹⁸ In a review of Hinden’s *Empire and After: A Story of British Imperial Attitudes* for the West African Society’s journal, *Africana*, in 1949, A. A. Y. Kyerematen noted that “Vigorous efforts are being made these days by the British Government and people to develop and befriend their colonies: what with welfare and development schemes, constitutional reforms – for what they are worth – imperial conferences, colonial months and pleas for the elimination of all shades of colour prejudice and discriminations!” “What,” he asked, “has led to this ‘development crusade’ and the apparent abandonment of the erstwhile ‘sneaking art of imperialist Britain?’” While conceding that “no one reading through the book can doubt the writer’s honest desire for some enduring solution of the colonial dilemma,” Kyerematen questioned just how far Hinden’s views deviated for the “old imperialist jargon.” “When she cited antagonistic tribal feelings ... and cleavage between ‘the bright young men with their English university degrees’ and ‘the villagers and the less educated strata’ as real disqualifications for self government, is she not echoing familiar imperialist jargon which is now outmoded by recent happenings in West Africa, particularly in the Gold Coast” and “in these days when even the ‘masses’ in West Africa are not taking their association with the British Empire for granted?”⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁷ “Editorial,” *League of Coloured Peoples Newsletter*, v. 17, n. 100 (April 1948), p. 27-28.

⁷⁹⁸ Adi, *West Africans in Britain*, p. 133.

⁷⁹⁹ A. A. Y. Kyerematen in Robert Wellesley Cole Papers, PP MS 35, File 156 (West African Society).

Appiah recalled the personal nature of he and his peers disappointment with their Labour “comrades.” Since “I could not myself believe that any British political party, however well-intentioned, would, on coming to power at that critical period in Britain’s history, proceed to liquidate the British Empire pronto,” he wrote, “... I, for my part, was prepared to give the new government up to the end of their five-year period within which to dismantle the outmoded, disgraceful and inhuman colonial apparatus.” Yet, Appiah explained, “in spite of all our promptings, independence for my country and many others in Africa came under Tory rule and not under the rule of our ‘best friends’—the so-called ‘socialist believers’ in human dignity—Labour! I count this as one of the greatest betrayals of friends by friends in all history.”⁸⁰⁰ After the Second World War, Makonnen remembered, “We had put so much trust in some of them, but once they were in office one felt: ‘These traitors, that’s what they are. The old Ramsey Macdonald is still lurking in Labour’s cupboards. Scratch a Macdonald or some of these other socialist fellows, and what do you find? A Tory.’” Although, he explained, “you couldn’t indict the whole lot, for there some genuine people, ... these various volte-faces left you rather confused. You began to evolve a theory about these contradictory British; that one will split your head open, while the next will sew you up. Alternately, if the confusion became too great, you felt trapped and asserted that the only good Englishman was a dead one.” “It was with these sorts of attitudes towards the English political scene,” he added, “that we began to draw the various African groups in Britain into our [Pan-African] Federation....”⁸⁰¹ Similarly, Nkrumah wrote in his autobiography:

Not long after my arrival in 1945 the Labour Party won its victory over the Conservatives in the first post-war general election. The West African

⁸⁰⁰ Appiah, *Joe Appiah: The Autobiography of an African Patriot*, p. 161-163.

⁸⁰¹ Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, p. 181-182.

Students' Union did what they could to bring about a Labour victory because they felt that this party was the most understanding and the most sympathetic towards the colonial problem [and] ... arranged for various Labour members to give talks to the students and through that I met several prominent Socialists, among them Mr A. Creech Jones ... and Dr Rita Hinden, Secretary of the Fabian Colonial Bureau. But I regret that our hopes in the Labour Party were completely dashed to pieces; in fact we saw little difference between Labour colonial policy and that of the Tories. Consequently, at a Labour Party meeting Mr Creech Jones was exposed to much heckling by colonial students who made a point of being present.⁸⁰²

By 1950, the Labour Government's approach to colonial affairs and dismissive attitude towards dissent frustrated even longtime interlocutors like W. Arthur Lewis, who was a member of the Labour Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. In 1949, Lewis expressed his doubts regarding the value of the committee's efforts to its secretary, Charles Greenidge, "since a Labour Colonial Secretary seems to do just as his officials please, without reference to the documents we write."⁸⁰³

Conclusion

West Indian and African intellectuals in London entered the post-World War II period with great anticipation. The passage of the first Colonial Development and Welfare Act in 1940, its renewal and the Labour Party's triumph in 1945, and the creation of the Colonial Development Fund under the Labour Colonial Secretary Creech Jones in 1947 all seemed to herald the dawning of a new age of more egalitarian relations within the British Empire. Almost as soon as these hopes were given expression, however, the Labour government's apparent reversal of the Party's stance during the war confounded them, exacerbating black intellectuals' impatience with the pace of change. Although many in Britain continued to champion a conception of the British Commonwealth as a "world-wide

⁸⁰² Nkrumah, *Ghana*, p. 57-58.

⁸⁰³ Quoted in *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism, 1939-1951*, p. 202.

free partnership” in the late 1940s, it was invoked increasingly as a preferable alternative to international oversight and as a check on the vagaries of the world economy and the self-serving ambitions of foreign powers and rabble-rousers within the colonies. Like the notion of “trusteeship” before it, “partnership” within the Commonwealth became, in practice, an obstacle to more sweeping changes and a prosthesis for the continued existence of British rule. If the Labour government had placed the colonies on the road to independence by the time the Party ceded power to the Conservatives in 1951, as Pearce and other historians have argued, it did so primarily through its failure to transform the nature of Britain’s relationship to them and what Labour’s former supporters from Africa and the Caribbean viewed as the betrayal of its socialist ideals.

Conclusion

Black organizations in London like the West African Students Union, League of Coloured Peoples, and International African Service Bureau developed within an atmosphere characterized by a variety of internationalisms, including pan-ethnic movements, feminism, communism, and the socialist internationalism ascendant within the British Labour Party and the Left in general after World War I. This intellectual and political context and the types of sociability that these groups fostered gave rise to a range of black internationalist activity and new regional imaginaries in the form of the West Indian Federation and a United West Africa. The history of West Indian and African intellectuals in late imperial Britain demonstrates that, as Edwards argues, “black internationalism is not a supplement to revolutionary nationalism, the ‘next level’ of anti-colonial agitation. On the contrary, black radicalism necessarily emerges through boundary crossing—black radicalism *is* an internationalization.”⁸⁰⁴ At the same time, their activities in the metropole drew greater attention to colonial problems and contributed to a major shift in the rationale and espoused goals of colonial policy from the 1930s.

The first two chapters moved forward through time. Chapter One followed the development of black organizations in London during and especially after the First World War, while Chapter Two traced the international political context and intellectual sources of black internationalism in the 1930s. While briefly discussing more ephemeral groups like the Union of Students of African Descent, African Progress Union, and Nigerian Progress Union, the bulk of the chapter focused on the two most important black pressure groups of the interwar period, the West African Students Union (WASU) and League of Coloured

⁸⁰⁴ Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, p. 243.

Peoples (LCP). It examined the purpose and aims of these organizations through their reactions to the Imperial Exposition at Wembley, their protests against the color bar in London and the implementation of anti-sedition legislation in the colonies, and their struggles to establish a hostel in London for black students and visitors. The WASU and LCP developed relationships with officials in the Colonial Office, colonial experts, British politicians, and metropolitan political groups (liberal, socialist, and communist). Because these connections remained essential, in varying degrees, to the financial survival and credibility of both organizations, they became a source of antipathy and the cause of moments of open hostility between them. Yet, black intellectuals continued to pursue an allusive racial unity and press the imperial state for reforms, forcing colonial officials and British politicians to acknowledge and respond to their criticisms. Through pressure groups like the WASU and LCP, black intellectuals in London assumed growing importance in a contest over the meaning and application of the shifting terms of imperial governance between 1919 and 1950. From their position in the imperial metropole, they offered a countervailing arguments and representations of blackness that could not be ignored as easily as the criticisms of the colonial intelligentsia in Africa and the West Indies, and periodical culture became their primary instrument.

Chapter Two considered the relation between sojourners' intellectual engagement with the shifting terms of imperialist discourse in the interwar period and their conception of black internationalism, including attempts to think beyond or modify the nation-state form, such as the WASU's vision of a "United States of West Africa" and calls for a West Indian Federation. Events in the mid-1930s like the labor disturbances in the Caribbean and West Africa and especially Italy's invasion of Ethiopia galvanized black intellectuals in London, leading to the emergence of new and often more outspokenly anticolonial organizations,

such as the International African Service Bureau, as well as the radicalization the more established WASU and LCP. Their thinking reflected the mounting tensions on the international scene and political atmosphere in which the relationship between imperialism and internationalism was debated regularly. Within this context, African and West Indian intellectuals in London argued that black internationalism was a natural expression of the spirit of the age and a necessary counter to the looming threat of inter-imperialism. For many, cooperation between people of African descent was essential not only to their own welfare and the future of the Caribbean and Africa, but also to global peace and stability.

Chapter Three turned to the lives of black women intellectuals in the metropole.⁸⁰⁵

The Jamaicans Una Marson and Amy Ashwood Garvey and West African women like Stella Thomas, Constance Cummings-John, and Irene Cole spent years in London and made novel attempts to link feminism and black internationalism in their political activities and art. Although Caribbean and African men dominated most black pressure groups in London, women made significant contributions to their development. Limited in number and often circumscribed to what were perceived as positions appropriate to their gender, female sojourners, nonetheless, performed vital, if hitherto ignored, roles in organizations like the WASU, LCP, and IASB from the start. Through them, West African and West Indian women engaged in public debates on gender difference and the role of women as well as racism and the future of Britain's West Indian and African colonies. By the 1940s, however, the marginalization of women and their concerns within these groups led others like Irene Cole and Folayegbe Akintunde-Ighodalo to create the first black women's organizations in the metropole—the West African Women's Association and Nigerian Women's League.

⁸⁰⁵ On internationalism and feminism, see esp. special issue on Feminisms and Internationalism, Mrinalini Sinha, Donna J. Guy, and Angela Woollacott, eds., *Gender & History* v. 10, n. 3 (November 1998), pp. 345-568.

Chapter Four considered how sexuality inflected what Homi Bhabha terms “the on-going practices and performances of ‘crossing over’” for African and West Indian men in London.⁸⁰⁶ The assistance of British women was often essential in helping male sojourners navigate the difficulties that confronted them during their first days in the metropole, not the least of which being widespread discrimination in housing and employment. Women as different as Nancy Cunard, Sylvia Pankhurst, and Dinah Stock contributed not only their labor but also essential financial and organizational assistance, and many understood these ties as an extension of their commitment to feminism and/or socialism. Moreover, most African and West Indian men developed close personal and sexual relationships—in some cases, marriages—with British women who helped them in both their personal lives and political struggles. Relations between African and Caribbean men and white women in Britain varied drastically, but they were shaped always by discourses of racial and gender difference and characterized by both real and imagined danger. In the metropole, sexuality became intertwined with the political wrangling between black intellectuals and the imperial state in colonial officials’ attempts to police male sojourners’ sexual behavior in London, as in the Colonial Office’s request for police surveillance on the WASU hostel and the closure of Aggrey House. Within this context, African and Caribbean men engaged in a complex, if varying, calculus as to the proper conditions for and limits to their personal and sexual relationships with white Britons, which formed a constituent, rather than ancillary, component of self-fashioning and black radical politics.

Offering an intellectual history of the work of West Indians and Africans working in the humanities and social sciences, Chapter Five examined black intellectuals’ engagement

⁸⁰⁶ Homi Bhabha, “The Vernacular Cosmopolitan,” *Voices of the Crossing: The Impact of Britain on Writers from Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa*, ed. by Ferdinand Dennis and Naseem Khan (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2000), p. 140.

with and contributions to the development of colonial studies in Britain's top universities, especially the disciplines of anthropology and imperial history. Many of these individuals returned home to lead the drive towards independence and went on to become important postcolonial leaders, but the scholarly pursuits of these individuals has received far less attention than their more auspicious political achievements. By contrast, this chapter focused the interventions of West Indian and African intellectuals within the fields of history and anthropology, while suggesting how their self-conception as “intellectuals” informed their subsequent political goals. It traced their connections to an emerging cadre of specialized colonial “experts” both within and outside of British universities in the 1930s and 1940s and the institutional sites in which they thought and produced scholarship in the metropole. Black scholars, students, and political activists drew increasingly upon the work of such colonial experts to support their claims. Yet, they also challenged these same individuals’ claims to objectivity, often casting them as interested participants in the imperial project and claimed that they represented the true experts, while denouncing the institutionalized racism that stunted their own professional advancement.

Chapter Six covered the World War II period, years that witnessed a major reconceptualization of the British Empire in the form of a new “developing mission.” By the late 1930s, an influential segment of colonial experts, reform-minded officials in the Colonial Office, and politicians on the left concurred that the British Empire had to be reformed if it were to survive and that the traditional “pay your way” approach to colonial administration had to give way to a program of development funded by direct government expenditure. The onset of the Second World War compelled the British parliament to move in this direction with the passage of the first of a series of Colonial Welfare and Development Acts. “Partnership” became the buzzword for this new imagining of empire, and the “tropical

empire,” particularly Africa, emerged as the focal point of the new commitment to colonial development by the end of the war. Africans and West Indians in London contributed to this invention of development, employing the new language of development to make material claims on the British government, and, in rare cases, some were employed as welfare officers. Black intellectuals highlighted the contradiction between the universalizing discourse of development and the continued existence of the color bar in various guises. At the same time, colonial welfare and development initiatives extended to the imperial metropole: as greater numbers of African and West Indians students arrived in Britain during the final years of the war, the Colonial Office established a number of new, government-run hostels to house them and expanded its staff of welfare officers dramatically. While these measures met a pressing need and were, in part, a response to calls for action from black intellectuals in London, they also increased the imperial state’s capacity to monitor and police the activities of sojourners.

The final chapter examined the immediate postwar years, especially the Labour Party’s electoral victory in 1945 and the subsequent failure of the new Labour government to institute its vision of “socialist internationalism” in the years that followed, which marked a significant juncture in black internationalist activity. Both the ties and tensions between black intellectuals and the British left, more generally, after the Second World War were considered in detail here, highlighting some of the main obstacles to a black/Left alliance in metropole. Black intellectuals’ mounting frustration with the unwillingness or inability of British colonial officials and politicians, including those in the Labour Party, to countenance truly equitable relations within the British Commonwealth or even the new United Nations Organization led a growing number to reject the postwar rhetoric of “partnership” and, ultimately, demand complete independence for the colonies. West Indians and Africans’

personal ties to members of the Labour Party and affiliated groups like the Fabian Colonial Bureau only deepened their disillusionment and sense of being betrayed by the postwar Labour government. By the end of the 1940s, mobilization around and for the independence of discrete territories (colonies which would become independent nation-states) increasingly supplanted the appeal of various conceptions of internationalisms. This reorientation of the terms and goals of anticolonialism in the late 1940s also brought about the decline of black internationalism and the attendant conception of the black intellectual of the interwar and World War II years. As C. L. R. James noted, “The black intellectuals as a distinctive body came to an end at the end of the Second World War” or soon thereafter.⁸⁰⁷ Chapter Seven explored the changing political imaginary of black intellectuals, British socialists, and colonial experts in the years preceding decolonization by considering the relationship between black internationalist work and the dissolution of the Commonwealth dream.

In the 1950s, the struggle against imperialism became sutured to the goal of national liberation, and a vision of pan-Africanism as cooperation between independent nation-states supplanted the black internationalism of the 1930s and 1940s. Of course, there continued to be calls for African and even “Third World” unity, but as the Bandung Asian-African Conference in 1955 demonstrated, such efforts often presupposed, rather than transcended, the nation-state form. Nevertheless, by resisting the temptation to assume that the dissolution of the British Empire led inevitably to the emergence of territorially-discrete postcolonial nation-states, a history of fleeting possibilities and missed opportunities for dialogue and cooperation comes into view, “the paths not taken, the dead ends of historical processes, [and] the alternatives that appeared to people in their time” to which Cooper

⁸⁰⁷ James, “Black Intellectuals in Britain,” p. 161.

directs our attention.⁸⁰⁸ Indeed, these forlorn visions of extra-national community appear prescient from our present vantage point. At the turn of the twentieth-first century, when the globe once again seems to many commentators to be increasingly integrated, if in profoundly uneven ways, some West African intellectuals have begun to call closer union in the region in strikingly similar terms. Manthia Diawara has argued that “the nation-state for which many Africans still fight, kill, and die, is no longer viable as a cultural and economic unit.” “To survive in the postmodern world dominated by new regional economic powers and information systems,” Diawara suggests, “West African states, too, must adopt a regional imaginary and promote the circulation of goods and cultures that are sequestered or fragmented by the limits that the nation-state imposes on them.” Like many black intellectuals in London during the 1930s and 1940s, for Diawara, “What is urgent in West Africa today is less a contrived unity based on an innate cultural identity and heritage, but a regional identity in motion that is based on linguistic affinities, economic reality, and geographic proximity, as defined by the similarities in political and cultural dispositions grounded in history and patterns of consumption.”⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁸ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 18.

⁸⁰⁹ Manthia Diawara, “Toward a Regional Imaginary in Africa,” *The Cultures of Globalization*, Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 124.

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