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PAN-AFRICANISM,
CARIBBEAN EXILE, AND POST-COLONIAL AFRICA

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Introduction

Despite being shipped to the Caribbean as slaves and the many miles that separate Africa from the Caribbean, the African continent has been etched in the consciousness of its Caribbean descendants. Slaves retained a variety of African customs, mores, and religious beliefs and many of them imagined themselves returning to Africa in the afterlife. In the case of Toussaint L'Ouverture, leader of former slaves during the Haitian Revolution, he actually cherished the idea of sending troops to Africa "with arms, ammunition and a thousand of his best soldiers" in order to conquer "vast tracts of country, putting an end to the slave-trade," and he set aside millions of francs for this purpose.¹

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, African emancipation was the central pre-occupation of West Indians such as Edward Wylmot Blyden, Henry Sylvester Williams, and Marcus Garvey, although not without its share of controversy. As V.Y. Mudimbe has observed, West Indians often "invented" Africa, or at least created an imaginary Africa replete with romanticized notions of ancient African societies and kingdoms on the one hand, and an image of contemporary Africa as a dark continent in decline from this illustrious past, on the other. Implicit, and often explicit, in this reasoning was the idea that "scattered Ethiopians" of Americas would rescue Africa and restore it to its former glory.² Seen as a component part of the West Indian's recovery from the legacy of slavery and the colonial degradation, such an idealized perception of Africa is understandable. The road to Caribbean rehabilitation passed through Africa and if West Indians were to humanize their existence, the continent itself would have to be rehabilitated.

By the 1930s, however, a new and highly politicized Caribbean conception of Africa emerged as exiled West Indians and Africans came into close contact with one another in the metropole.³ It was while in exile that a second wave of West Indians re-discovered the continent as they sought to reclaim their humanity in the face of colonialism at home

¹ Cyril Lionel Robert (C.L.R.) James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Allison and Busby, 1980). At 265.

² See V.I. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), and particularly pages 98-134 on Blyden.

³ For an analysis of the role of exiled intellectuals and politicians in anti-colonial struggles, and on C.L.R. James in particular, see Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996). 47-64; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 336. See also David W. Hart, *Exile and Agency in Caribbean Literature and Culture* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Florida, 2004); Bill Schwartz (ed.) *West Indians in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). For references to Caribbean exiles in Canada see Alfie Roberts, *A View for Freedom: Alfie Roberts Speaks on the Caribbean, Cricket, Montreal, and C.L.R. James* (Montreal: Alfie Roberts Institute, 2005); Paul Buhle, *Tim Hector: A Caribbean Radical's Story* (Jackson: The Press of University of Mississippi, 2006); David Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal: Black Power, the Caribbean, and the Black Radical Tradition in Canada," in (2007) 92:4 *Journal of African American History*. 516-539.

and racism abroad. In the process, West Indian paternalism gave way to genuine collaboration and solidarity among West Indians and Africans. In London in the 1930s, West Indians George Padmore and C.L.R. James of Trinidad, Amy Ashwood Garvey of Jamaica, and Ras Makonnen (formerly George T.N. Griffith) of British Guyana agitated for African liberation alongside several future African leaders, including Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, I.T.A. Wallace Johnson of Sierra Leone, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and later Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast (later Ghana). Their work in exile culminated in the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945, laying the foundation for the independence of Ghana and other colonial territories on the continent. During this same period in Paris, Aimé Césaire of Martinique, Léon Damas of French Guyana, and Leopold Senghor of Senegal established the literary-philosophical Negritude movement which, along with the emergence of the journal *Présence Africaine* and a publishing house of the same name founded by Alioune Diop, helped inspire both a cultural renaissance in Africa and the independence movements that swept France's African colonies.

In the 1960s, the focus of the Caribbean exiles shifted from Africa to the Caribbean as a new generation of West Indians, in part inspired by independence and liberation movements in Africa, set about transforming the Caribbean. Building on the foundation of their predecessors, they embraced a combination of Caribbean nationalism and Third World internationalism and socialism. These exiles, of which many were based in Canada, played a crucial role in the emergence of the Caribbean New Left which began with the "Rodney Riots" in Jamaica following Walter Rodney's expulsion from that country after his participation in the Montreal Congress of Black Writers, and culminated with the rise and subsequent fall of the Grenada Revolution (1979-1983).⁴ But Africa remained central to the work of West Indians such as Frantz Fanon and later Walter Rodney, and many other political-intellectuals of the post-Second World War and post-colonial period and even continued to inform those who were now primarily concerned with the Caribbean.

This paper focuses on the ideas of several West Indians who were preoccupied with African liberation. The bulk of the paper will examine the anti- and post-colonial writing of several important West Indian Pan-Africanist thinkers from the second quarter of the 20th century leading up to and during the period immediately following the Second World War and through to the wave of anti-colonial struggles that swept Africa and the Caribbean.

Slavery was and remains the ultimate form of forced servitude and domination. It is therefore not coincidental that several books on slavery or its impact on Africa, including C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins*, Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery*, and Walter Rodney *A History of Upper Guinea Coast* – authored by what W.F. Santiago-Vallés has

⁴ Brian Meeks, *Radical Caribbean: From Black Power to Abu Bakr* (Kingston, Jamaica: The Press of the University of the West Indies, 1996) 1–2.

described as maroon intellectuals because they drew upon the history of maroons in the Americas and slave resistance and struggle in general⁵ – appeared during periods intense agitation or anti-colonial activity in Africa and the Caribbean, or when global warfare was imminent. With this in mind, one of the goals of the paper is to examine how Caribbean political-intellectuals have engaged the African continent and grappled with ideas of African and Caribbean liberation, including slavery and forced labour and their relationship to underdevelopment in both regions.

This essay will also draw on the praxis African and Caribbean theorists and statesmen such as Amilcar Cabral and Kwame Nkrumah, and the more recent work of Ifi Amadiume. Nkrumah was celebrated for his role in ushering in the African independence movement. However, he came under criticism in Ghana during his tenure in office and his longtime associate C.L.R. James raised pointed questions about Nkrumah's leadership and the meaning of development in Africa, ideas which, in many ways, were first raised by James thirty years before in his history of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*.

The writing of Ifi Amadiume on gender in Nigeria represents some of the most insightful historical and sociological work on gender relations in contemporary Africa and provides a window into the roles that women can and do play on the continent.

Pan-Africanism: A Historical Overview

The concept of Pan-Africanism has its roots in slavery and the first Pan-Africanists were slaves that were transported across the Atlantic to the Caribbean. Thrown together from various African ethnic groups, they were forced to find methods of communication and the development of a common language played a crucial role in acclimatizing the slaves to their new environment and in the process through which the slaves forged new identities. The term Pan-Africanism was first used by Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian barrister, perhaps as early as 1894. Williams first expressed the ideology of Pan-Africanism at the 1900 London Pan-African Conference that he organized. With the death of Williams in 1911, African-American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois, who had attended the 1900 meeting, took up the mantle and organized Pan-African Congresses in Paris and London in 1919; in Paris and Brussels in 1921; in London, Paris, and Lisbon in 1927; and in New York in 1927. These congresses brought people of African descent together to discuss their plight with particular emphasis on continental African affairs. One of basic premises of the organizers of these congresses was the underlying connection and sense of nationhood between Africans and members of the African

⁵ W.F. Santiago-Vallés, "The Caribbean Intellectual Tradition that produced James and Rodney," in (2000) 42:2 Race and Class. 52.

diaspora; that the liberation and redemption of Africa was prerequisite to and inseparable from the liberation of people of African descent altogether. The high point of the Pan-African movement's historic meetings occurred with the 1945 Pan-African Congress in that it marked the transition from a by-and-large African diaspora-led movement to one that was not only focused on African concerns, but had Africans from Africa at the helm. At this monumental meeting, the theoretical foundation for the African independence movement was set. Two years later, Kwame Nkrumah, one of the conference's chief organizers, left England for the Gold Coast to lead the independence movement in present-day Ghana, paving the way for the independence of the entire continent.

Since 1945 there have been at least two major Pan-African Congresses (1974 and 1994) that were consciously initiated in the tradition of their predecessors. The Sixth Pan-African Congress in 1974 was particularly noteworthy because it was the first to be convened in Africa and occurred at a time when most African countries had already attained their independence and were now in the hands of Africa's middle-class. Yet the organization of the Congress exposed some of the contradictions inherent in the continent's nationalist struggles. As Horace Campbell points out, despite the fact that it was C.L.R. James, among others, who initiated the call for the Sixth Congress, prior to the meeting it was declared that "progressives from the regional steering committee be barred from the Congress" in favor of government delegates.⁶ And before the Congress began, Walter Rodney, who was then living in Tanzania where the Congress took place, noted that, for the most part, those attending would primarily be representatives of African and Caribbean states who, according to Rodney, "in so many ways represent the very negation of Pan-Africanism."⁷ We will discuss the significance of this point later, but this collusion of African and Caribbean heads of states to ensure that those critical of the African and Caribbean governments would be sidelined from the meeting represented a clear manifestation of a phenomenon identified by Frantz Fanon who described how, in replacing the old colonial regime, local leadership adopts the trappings of an independent state while retaining the preexisting attitudes and social and economic relations that constituted the very essence of colonialism in the first place.⁸

Pan-Africanism has never been a monolithic movement. In fact, more often than not, diverse strains of the movement have run parallel to one another. Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) represented the biggest and arguably the most influential Pan-African movement. Garvey, the charismatic and eloquent orator

⁶ Horace Campbell, "Pan-Africanism, The Struggle Against Imperialism and Neo-Colonialism," in *Pan-Africanism, The Struggle Against Imperialism and Neo-Colonialism* (Toronto: Afro-Carib Publications, 1975). 176.

⁷ *Ibid.* at 28.

⁸ Frantz Fanon, "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961; New York: Grove Press, 1968).

from Jamaica who George Padmore described as “a full-blooded Negro of Koromantee stock,”⁹ founded the UNIA along with his first wife, Amy Ashwood Garvey, in Jamaica in 1914 ostensibly to uplift “the Black race” who – based on Garvey’s ten years of travel throughout the Caribbean, Latin America and in Europe prior to founding the organization – were “still the object of degradation and pity the world over” with “no status socially, nationally, or commercially.”¹⁰ Despite the organization’s focus on the plight of people of African descent, the work of Garvey and the UNIA influenced a wide cross-section of people and movements, from Vietnam’s Ho Chi Minh, the legendary jazz musicians Duke Ellington and Oscar Peterson to leaders within the Irish nationalist movement. Like Europe’s Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanism movements which rose to prominence during the same period in which the UNIA emerged, Garvey’s movement transcended the boundaries of nation-states and continents and invoked a common African history (at times a somewhat romanticized history), combining nationalist and racial fervor with religious undertones and the idea of racial divinity.

Whereas the Pan-Russian practitioners were resolute defenders of Holy Russia,¹¹ the Pan-African movement – and in this particular case, Garvey and the UNIA – saw itself as the defender and pre-ordained liberator of the African continent and the vanguard of Black struggles the world over. As a result, Garvey is often described as a “Black Moses” and his movement, “Black Zionism.” This is also one of many parallels between Zionism and Pan-Africanism. Not only did Garvey draw on biblical tenets for inspiration but, as Paul Gilroy has pointed out, the Pan-African notion of diaspora has its origins in the Bible (Deuteronomy 28:25). Edward Wilmot Blyden, the 19th century progenitor of Pan-Africanism, grew up alongside Jews in the Caribbean island of St. Thomas. Blyden’s particular kind of Pan-Africanism was influenced by Zionism, which he called “a marvelous movement.”¹² But despite the influence of the *Old Testament* on people of African descent, the occupation of Palestine has caused many within the Pan-African world to align themselves with the Palestinian cause.

According to Garvey historian Tony Martin:

By 1921 Garvey was unquestionably the leader of the largest organization of its type in the history of the race. He had succeeded as no one else had in gathering up the worldwide feelings of dismay at the loss of independence and defiance

⁹ George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, 65.

¹⁰ This quote is taken from a 1915[?] statement entitled “A Talk with Afro-West Indians-The Negro Race and its Problems,” cited in Tony Martin, *Race First The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976). At 6.

¹¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1969). At 233.

¹² Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993). At 209.

*against colonialism and oppression, which characterized the 'New Negro' spirit of the age*¹³.

The movement had some 859 branches to its credit by August 1921. By 1926 the UNIA could boast of chapters throughout the African continent; all over the English, French, Dutch and Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Latin America; England; Wales; and Australia. Though the estimated number of UNIA members vary, there is no question that Garvey's message of Black pride and African redemption was an inspiration to Black people around the world. In South Africa, early members of the African National Congress (ANC), decades before Nelson Mandela became known a leader in the struggle against Apartheid, would read religiously and draw inspiration from Garvey's *Negro World*. Kwame Nkrumah acknowledged his debt to the work of Garvey and the UNIA which inspired him long before he became known as a Pan-African figure. As C.L.R. James writes of Garvey, "When you bear in mind the slenderness of his resources, the vast material forces and the pervading social conceptions which automatically sought to destroy him, his achievement remains one of the propagandistic miracles of this century."¹⁴ Referring to Garvey's reach in the Pan-African world, James adds:

*Garvey's voice reverberated inside Africa itself. The King of Swaziland told Mrs. Garvey that she knew the name of only two black men in the Western world: Jack Johnson, the boxer who defeated the white man Jim Jeffries, and Marcus Garvey. Jomo Kenyatta has related to this writer how in 1921 Kenya nationalists, unable to read, would gather round a reader of Garvey's newspaper, the Negro World, and listen to an article two or three times. Then they would run various way through the forest, carefully to repeat the whole, which they had memorised, to Africans hungry for some doctrine which lifted them from the servile consciousness in which Africans lived. Dr. Nkrumah, a graduate student of history and philosophy at two American universities, has placed it on record that of all the writers who educated and influenced him, Marcus Garvey stands first. Garvey found the cause of Africans and of people of African descent not so much neglected as unworthy of consideration. In little more than half of ten years he had made it a part of the political consciousness of the world.*¹⁵

With much pomp and ceremony, Garvey sought to demonstrate the greatness of Africa's history and to instill the idea that Black people were destined to throw off the yoke of colonialism and the legacy of slavery and assume their rightful place at the table of humanity. The messianic fervor and devotion of Garvey's followers is evidence of his reach and appeal. At his peak, tens of thousands would turn out to hear him speak and as the movement expanded, it was increasingly seen as a major political threat by U.S. authorities. Pressure was brought to bear on the UNIA while internal infighting and

¹³ Tony Martin, *Race First* (Dover, M.A.: The Majority Press, 1976). At 13.

¹⁴ James, *supra* note 1. At 397.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* at 396-397.

intrigue split the organization from within. Garvey was eventually imprisoned and later deported to Jamaica on what many believe were trumped-up mail fraud charges. Yet his influence is still felt to this day, more than 60 years after his death. Having been persecuted by Jamaica's colonial authorities and members Jamaica's black and brown elite, today Garvey is a national hero in his native country. And despite his rejection of early adherents of Rastafari and his criticism of Haile Selassie, the Rastafari god incarnate, for taking refuge in England during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, he is both an icon and a prophet among and within the Rastafari faith. In fact, it is largely through the music of reggae artists such as Burning Spear that his memory and spirit have been kept alive in the popular consciousness of Jamaicans and people across the globe.

The Nation of Islam and political figures such as Malcolm X and his mother, Louise Little, have all been influenced by the Garveyism. Louise Little is an important, and much neglected, individual within the Pan-African constellation. She was born in Grenada as Louise Langdon. In 1917 she moved to Montreal, Canada where she joined her uncle Edgerton Langdon, a staunch Garveyite,¹⁶ and she became an active organizer within the Montreal chapter of the UNIA. It was at a Montreal UNIA conference that she met Earl Little, Malcolm X's father. They eventually married in 1919 and, according to Jan Carew, Louise Langdon Little, her uncle Edgerton Langdon, and her husband Earl Little, "as Garveyite devotees...laid the foundation on which all the succeeding Black Power movements in Canada and the United States were built."¹⁷ As a mother in the United States, she would have her children read aloud passages from *The West Indian*, a newspaper produced by the Grenadian labour leader, anti-colonialist agitator, and ardent West Indian federalist, T. Albert Marryshow.¹⁸ According to Wilfred Little, Malcom X's eldest brother, when Marcus Garvey was on the run from the F.B.I., Louise Little gave him refuge in the Little household where she wrote letters and dispatches on his behalf.¹⁹ In addition to her work within the Garvey movement, she is also said to have spent a lot of time among the indigenous people on a local Indian reserve near Wisconsin.²⁰

The specific form of what will be referred to in this paper as radical Pan-Africanism or the radical Pan-African tradition – an expression of the interrelationship of diverse struggles of people of African descent across geographic borders, coupled with a socialist or socialistic outlook – begins in earnest with the work of James Padmore, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Ras Makonnen, and Jomo and Kenyatta (Eric Williams and Arthur Lewis were also associated with this tradition) in England in the mid 1930s in both the International Friends of Ethiopia and the International African Service Bureau. This tradition extends

¹⁶ Jan Carew, *Ghosts in Our Blood: With Malcolm X in Africa, England, and the Caribbean* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1994). At 129-130.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* at 131.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* at 117.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* at 118.

²⁰ *Ibid.* at 119.

into the 1940s with the work of Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah, who was introduced to Padmore by James. As Ron Ramdin suggests, in addition to James and Padmore's writings, a number of other important works emerged out of the efforts of individuals associated with the IASB, including Eric Williams's *The Negro in the Caribbean* and Jomo Kenyatta's *Kenya: Land of Conflict*.²¹ As I have already stated, the movement's location outside the African continent culminated in 1945 with the convening of the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester. Many of the individuals who go on to lead or play pivotal roles in the independence movements throughout Africa participated in this conference at which, in many respects, the theoretical basis for the African independence movement was laid.

Across the Atlantic in the Caribbean, a corresponding development within the radical Pan-African tradition also emerged in Trinidad under the leadership of Vincentian native Elma Francois. Francois was a founder of, and leading figure in, the Marxist-oriented Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association (NWCSA), an organization based in Trinidad and grounded in the labour struggles of the 1930s that swept the Caribbean. According to Francois, the organization's objectives were:

*1) To struggle for the development and better welfare of the Negro people, 2) To develop solidarity with the oppressed Negro people of the West Indies and the entire world, 3) To make known the conditions of the oppressed Negro people and their struggle against oppression and, 4) To win the masses of oppressed people the world over in a struggle for the better welfare of the Negro people.*²²

Before migrating to Trinidad, Francois was an active advocate for workers' rights in St. Vincent. In Trinidad, while washing clothes to make ends meet, she continued to be an active advocate for workers' rights and those of the marginalized in general. Her political activities, and the NWCSA's anti-imperialist work and mobilization against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia mirrored that of the International African Friends of Ethiopia and the International African Service Bureau. The NWCSA was exemplary in its policy of equal and full participation of women within the organization while being grounded, not only Trinidadian and Caribbean struggles, but in those of the people of the Soviet Union, China, India, and, to an extent, Western Europe. In 1938 Francois became the first woman to be tried for sedition in Trinidad, charges for which she was later acquitted. Sadly, she died suddenly in 1940.

The radical Pan-African tradition took on various forms and later included the work of Claudia Jones, another under-recognized figure within the tradition, and individuals like Jan Carew, as well as poets and writers Andrew Salkey and John LaRose, and poet Linton

²¹ Ron Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain* (London: Gower, 1987). At 146.

²² Rhoda Reddock, *Elma Francois: The NWCSA: and the workers struggle for change in the Caribbean in the 1930s* (London: New Beacon Books, 1988). At 35-36.

Kwesi Johnson. LaRose has been a stalwart figure in Black British history and is one of the founders of the George Padmore Institute in England. In the mid 1960s and 1970s in Canada, the Montreal-based Caribbean Conference Committee (CCC) – which included, among others, Hugh O’Neile, Alvin Johnson, Bridget Joseph, Robert Hill, Franklyn Harvey, Gloria Simmons, Gene Depradine, Rosie Douglas, Ann Cools, Alfie Roberts and Tim Hector – and its successor, the Caribbean International Service Bureau (CISB), also worked in close association with C.L.R. James and in the spirit of the International African Service Bureau. Members of the CCC and CISB continued their political work in the Caribbean long after the two organizations dissolved, playing significant roles in developments in Grenada, Dominica, Trinidad, St. Vincent, Jamaica, Antigua, and other parts of the Caribbean.

Work within the radical Pan-African tradition continued into the 1970s and early 1980s in England with the work of the Race Today Collective. Its adherents helped shape the thoughts and actions of successive generations of Blacks in Europe, the Caribbean and Africa. But this tradition is not confined to the individuals from Anglophone Caribbean and Africa. Parallel to the post World War II Pan African developments England, a similar tradition also emerged in France, in part, centered around the journal *Présence Africaine* along with the early writings of Aimé Césaire, Leopold Sédar Senghor, René Depestre and Frantz Fanon. In the United States, in addition to the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, a number of intellectual/activists emerged with the radical Pan-African tradition, including poet Claude McKay, Richard B. Moore, co-founder of the African Black Brotherhood and an early member of the U.S. Communist Party, and writer Richard Wright. As Santiago-W.F. Vallés has pointed out, in addition to the United States, small Caribbean and Latin American groupings also emerged in Cuba, Haiti, Suriname and other parts in the Americas in the 1920s and 1930s. These “Maroon intellectuals,” as he describes them, drew upon Maroon struggles and slave resistance in the Caribbean and Latin America in much the same way that James turned to the Haitian Revolution.²³ Furthermore, “the methodology and style of thinking that emerged from these efforts was characterised by its capacity to analyse and verify and apply what had been learned within a perspective...based on that accumulated experience.”²⁴ These independent groups were not only able to break with conventional intellectual and political traditions that buttressed the colonial order, but in so doing, they developed and sustained communication across regions, making “the development of new styles of thought and conceptualization possible.”²⁵

²³ Santiago-Vallés, *supra* note 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.* at 52.

²⁵ *Ibid.* at 53.

Exile

Exile has been central to Pan-Africanism. Referring to the experience of C.L.R. James, among others, Edward Said describes exile as “being liberated from the usual career, in which ‘doing well’ and following time-honored footsteps are the main milestones.”²⁶ Exile for Said “means that you are always going to be marginal and that what you do as an intellectual has to be made up because you cannot follow a prescribed path. If you can experience that fate,” he continues, “not as a deprivation and as something to be bewailed, but as a sort of freedom, a process of discovery in which you do things according to your own pattern, as various interests seize your attention, and as the particular goal you set for yourself dictates: that is a unique pleasure.”²⁷ The latter comment contains definite echoes of Barbadian writer George Lamming’s 1963 classic *The Pleasures of Exile* in which he too invoked the work of C.L.R. James as an embodiment of the exiled intellectual. It is also a theme that Robert Hill, as part of the new generation of West Indians sojourning in Canada who embraced the tradition of Caribbean exile and radical politics argued that West Indians live in exile while at home, stifled and suffocated by colonialism and neo-colonialism’s glass ceiling, and that it is when they are voluntarily exiled abroad that they begin to discover their identity and destiny and embrace possibilities that home does not immediately afford them.²⁸ While I would argue that self-discovery does not necessarily mean physical exile abroad, it has certainly played an important role in the work of C.L.R. James and Aimé Césaire, two names that Hill, like Said, invokes in his analysis of the role West Indian abroad have played in the African liberation struggle.

C.L.R. James and Aimé Césaire were arguably the two most important figures within the Caribbean tradition of exile. They were both Pan-Africanists who wrote important historical, fictional, and poetic works that would inspire and help set the tenor and tone of African and Caribbean liberation struggles of the 1950 and 1960s and their work continues evoke discussion and debate and has assumed a prominent place in post-colonial and cultural studies as well as in the fields of history, political theory, literature, and theatre. In many ways, James and Césaire were the quintessential renaissance men, itinerant Caribbean writers and public intellectuals who, in many ways, found comfort in their unsettledness. Most of them did not easily fit into a single profession – at least not initially – but wandered and strayed in and out of various artistic and political circles. Only much later in life did some of them find a more settled place. In addition to James and Césaire, here I am thinking of Claude McKay, George Lamming, Jan Carew, and although

²⁶ *Infra* note 27.

²⁷ Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, *supra* note 3. At 62.

²⁸ Robert Hill, “The West Indian Intellectual Abroad,” (unpublished). For a detailed analysis of James and Césaire’s work, see Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, *supra* note 3. Especially Chapter three, “Resistance and Opposition,” 191-281.

she was not a writer, Amy Ashwood Garvey who was not only a founding member of UNIA, but played an important role in London's Pan-African circles.²⁹ James and Césaire also stand out because of their longevity. When James died in 1989 he was 88 years old and had lived a rich and fulfilling life and the seeds that his work helped to plant had not only blossomed, but had taken unanticipated twist and turns. And yet James remained an unrepentant radical thinker in his twilight years and, as a result, has remained an inspiration to people of African descent and multiple generations of public intellectuals and political activists.

When Aimé Césaire passed away in April 2008, he had exceeded in age his Trinidadian counterpart by four years. Like James, Césaire was born into a plantation society in which the line between rural and urban was thin and in which slavery's ghost served as a constant reminder of its not so distant past (slavery was abolished in the Britain's Caribbean territories in 1838 and in the French Caribbean in 1848). Césaire too had lived long enough to hear the echoes of the First World War and experience the trauma and dislocation of the second. He lived through colonialism and bore witness to its demise in the Caribbean, Africa, and most of the world, only to be replaced by neo-colonial relations that in many ways represented the old order in new clothes, a reality that was only exacerbated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc which, for all its ailments, served as a counterbalance to the current era of hyper-globalization. James and Césaire's rich and complex lives embodied the spirit of the Pan-African and particularly the radical Pan-African or Black radical tradition, with all of its positive attributes and many of its tensions, contradictions and foibles, paving the way for key actors within this tradition such as Walter Rodney and Frantz Fanon. The mission here is not to exhaust their work but to explore, through their individual biographies, the colonial environment out of which they emerged in order to gain a sense of the currents and context that inspired their work.

James

Cyril Lionel Robert James was born on January 4, 1901 in Tunapuna, a small town outside of Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad. At an early age James found delight in listening to the local calypsonians and the "ribald ditties they sang in their tents during carnival time."³⁰ James's interest in this popular art form was much to the chagrin on his mother, Ida Elizabeth (Bessie) James, a product of a convent education with strong Victorian values. But, as James puts it, there was another side to his mother. She was a voracious reader of novels. From his mother, James developed a deep appreciation of fiction,

²⁹ For a detailed account of the life of Amy Ashwood Garvey see Tony Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan-Africanist, Feminist, and Wife No. 1* (Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 2007).

³⁰ C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (1963; Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). At 16.

particularly British fiction, and especially Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* about which James, the renowned Marxist would later write, he "laughed without satiety at Thackeray's constant jokes and sneers and gibes at the aristocracy and at people in high places."³¹ The novel had such a lasting effect on James that he could unrepentantly claim, "Thackeray, not Marx, bears the heaviest responsibility for me."³²

James's father, Robert James, was a respected schoolmaster who, though not an avid reader himself, would also provide James with books to read and did his best to instill in him the importance of education. When C.L.R. James was eight, his father began preparing him for the secondary school exhibition (i.e. scholarship) which earned him a place as the youngest student to win entrance to the elite Queen's Royal College, modeled on the British school system. Yet, despite his efforts, and to the consternation of his family and other James's supporters who had earmarked him to become either a lawyer or a doctor, the two most touted and respectable occupations for colonials of the time, James was at best a modest student who demonstrated little interest in conventional education. He obtained a classic British education, reading Latin and Greek as well as mathematics and English literature, including the plays of Shakespeare in which he found much solace. He also mastered French well enough to later translate Boris Souvarine's *Stalin* from French to English while in England in the 1930s. James also mastered "the code," as he describes it, those Victorian sentiments and social mores which he believed the British in Britain also lived by:

*Before very long I acquired a discipline for which the only name is Puritan. I never cheated, I never appealed for a decision unless I thought the batsman was out, I never argued with the umpire, I never jeered at a defeated opponent, I never gave to a friend a vote or a place which by any stretch of the imagination could be seen as belonging to an enemy or to a stranger. My defeats and disappointments I took as stoically as I could... From eight years of school life this code became the moral framework of my existence. It has never left me.*³³

The refrain "it has never left me" is telling as it speaks to one of the contradictions inherent in the experience of 20th century anti-colonial agitators who, in fighting against the colonial system, not only were compelled to employ many of the "master tools," but in many cases, acquired a fond appreciation of some of the very tools that were used in the colonial context to encourage uniformity and compliance while systematically alienating the majority of the population from reigns of economic and political power. According to James, two people lived within him, "one, the rebel against all family and school discipline and order; the other a Puritan who would have cut off a finger sooner

³¹ *Ibid.* at 39.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.* at 26.

than do anything contrary to the ethics of the game.”³⁴ This code permeated James life and it was only later when he arrived in England that he realized that the code was anachronism that few adhered to in British public life, and even fewer in private. Even after being unceremoniously rejected in his effort to enlist in the British army during World War I (“He took one look at me, saw my dark skin and, shaking his head vigorously, motioned me violently away.”³⁵) James still held fast to the code.

At least some of James’s colonial upbringing was offset by his childhood days in Arima, a small town about fifteen miles outside of Port of Spain where his father worked as a teacher. Arima was home to a thriving cocoa industry that was administered, by-and-large, by the Black population of the area. During Queen Victoria’s 1897 Jubilee, several Black representatives, many of whom were wealthy, asked her if she would make Arima a municipality. According to James, the queen, “knowing as much about Arima as she knew about Canada’s Alberta, said, ‘Certainly,’ and Arima became a municipality.”³⁶ This resulted in a Black mayor and a town virtually controlled by the Black population. Seeing Blacks in positions of prominence and running their own affairs at a time when the British Caribbean was under Crown Colony rule certainly had an impact on James. James also read Marcus Garvey’s *Negro World* and, as a young journalist also met Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association when he passed through Trinidad. According to James, the interview was one of the most astonishing in his life. Garvey told him nothing he hadn’t read before in the *Negro World*, but as James says, “Garvey had this quality. He put me to sit down in front of him and he started to talk. And it sounded as if Garvey had discovered all of these things the night before and he was telling me about it so that we both could go out and win victories for Black people.”³⁷ That James then recognized Garvey for the important figure he was is not insignificant. He would later repudiate Garvey’s organizational methods and approach while in England.³⁸ But the

³⁴ *Ibid.* at 28.

³⁵ *Ibid.* at 3.

³⁶ C.L.R. James, *At the Rendezvous of Victory* (London: Allison and Busby, 1984). At 253.

³⁷ Taken from a quote from a James interview with Tony Martin published in C.L.R. James, *A History of Negro Revolt* (1938; Chicago: Research and Associates School Times Publications, 1994). Introduction.

³⁸ James and his associate George Padmore would heckle Garvey, himself living in England in the 1930s, as he spoke in London’s infamous Hyde Park. In a *History of Negro Revolt* James wrote quite scathingly of Garvey’s “back-to-Africa” scheme, describing it as “pitiable rubbish” and strongly criticized some of Garvey’s other policies. He would later retract the spirit, though not the essence, of some of his criticisms in *A History of Pan African Revolt*, a 1969 edition of the earlier book. Yet remarkably, in 1973, in his justifiably little-known but influential (at least in communist circles) book, *Strategy for a Black Agenda*, (New York: International Publishers, 1973) African American Henry Winston, then National Chairman of the Communist Party, USA, manages to link James with Garvey in the most crude and simplistic manner. Contrasting the work of James and other Pan-Africanists with the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, Winston writes, “Blyden, Garvey, Padmore and C.L.R. James can indeed be ‘taken together.’ They were forerunners to neo-Pan-Africanism that U.S. imperialists have assigned a special role in diverting the Black liberation struggle movement in the U.S...to assist in their strategy of massively expanding neo-colonial beach-heads on the African continent.” (At 95). Winston also credits Padmore’s “overriding compulsion to link anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism

fact that Garvey had built a mass organization with millions of Black followers throughout the world, instilling a sense of pride in them and a love of Africa, could not be diminished or ignored.

Despite a lackluster academic performance at QRC, James later went on to teach at his alma mater. Among his pupils was Eric Williams, first prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago and author of the celebrated *Capitalism and Slavery*. Williams and James would cross paths again both in England in the 1930s while Williams completed his Ph.D. in history at Oxford and Williams thesis that slavery was abolished by the British, not for economic reasons, but because it was no longer economically viable, is partially drawn from James's *The Black Jacobins*.

As a young adult in Trinidad, James read widely and he became highly regarded in Trinidad as a man of letters and an expert on Western civilization and culture. He was training himself to be the quintessential British colonial intellectual who, in the absence of a substitute Caribbean tradition to draw upon, and groomed in the canon of European history, culture, and history, was preparing himself to assume an allotted place among society's elite. And yet something within him rebelled against this pursuit and encouraged him to take an alternative path.

The Beacon was a Trinidadian literary and cultural journal that addressed a wide range of social and political themes. It was first published in 1931 and James regularly contributed essays, reviews and fiction. He was among the magazine's inner circle of local writers, critics and intellectuals. In one issue of *The Beacon*, a British scientist, Doctor Sydney C. Harland, a resident of Trinidad's Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, contributed an essay. Doctor Harland argued that Blacks were intellectually inferior to Whites and, therefore, unfit for self-rule, a commonly held view which served as the justification for segregation in the southern U.S. and the system of Apartheid in South Africa. In fact it was views like Harland's that prompted James to write a biography of Trinidadian labour leader Captain Aurther Cipriani,³⁹ later abridged and published in England as *The Case for West Indian Self-Government* – in which, referring to Crown Colony rule he wrote:

The system is wicked, because to an extent far more than is immediately obvious it permits a privileged few to work their will on hundreds of thousands of defenceless people. But most of all is the system criminal because it uses England's overflow as

with Pan-Africanism" with contributing to "the ideological atmosphere" within which, according to Henry, the "bourgeois forces in the CPP" were able to "orient economic policies on capitalist and rich peasants as against public sectors of the economy. As a result," adds Henry, "the country was increasingly at the mercy of the credit, 'aid' and trade policies of neo-colonialism." (At 60.)

³⁹ Originally published as *The Life of Captain Cipriani* in 1932, and was abridged a year later. Captain Arthur Cipriani was a Trinidadian trade union leader, mayor of Port of Spain, and a staunch opponent of British Crown Colony rule. James had been associated with Cipriani in Trinidad.

*a cork to choke down the natural expansion of the people. Always the West Indian of any ambition or sensibility has to see positions of honour and power in his own country filled by itinerant demi-gods who sit at their desks, ears cocked for the happy news of a retirement in Nigeria or a death in Hong Kong.*⁴⁰

James responded to Harland's remarks in a lengthy polemic that was also published in *The Beacon*:

*Here is a man admittedly eminent in his profession, yet who, the moment he steps outside it, betrays the typical vices of the unscientific: disregard of essential facts, large conclusions drawn from small premises, random statements of a patent absurdity; in fact, taking it for all in all, the very negation of the scientific temper, the very antithesis of the scientific attitude. If the high priests of the temple cannot apply the doctrine, what hope is there for the multitude without!*⁴¹

James makes another point in his article that turned out to have a tremendous bearing on the course of his life. He invoked the memory of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the general of the Haitian army that defeated the Spanish, English and French armies at the time of the French Revolution. He recounts Toussaint's exploits as general, his military genius and his remarkable diplomatic skills before adding: "I think I have written enough. I would have preferred to write on Toussaint L'Ouverture for instance. But I have thought it necessary to reply to Dr. Harland's view of the negro..."⁴² We will examine *The Black Jacobins* in a subsequent section but, clearly, this is where the seed was sown for his classic study of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins* which was published in 1938 during James's exile in England as a vindication of people of African descent and one of the most important pre-Second World War Pan-African and African liberation texts.

Césaire

Like C.L.R. James, Aimé Césaire was the product of colonialism in a plantation society. He was born on June 26, 1913 Basse-Point to a dressmaker mother and a tax inspector father. Bass-Pointe is in the northern part of Martinique and is predominantly rural. Like most members of the Caribbean Black middle class, middle class status often meant living on the fringes of poverty and Césaire was only marginally sheltered from the squalor and festering poverty of rural Martinique where elephantiasis was endemic and the

⁴⁰ C.L.R. James, *The Case for West Indian Self-Government* (1933; New York/Detroit: University Place Book Shop/Facing Reality Publishing Co., 1967). At 31.

⁴¹ C.L.R. James, "The Intelligence of the Negro," in *From Trinidad: An Anthology of Early West Indian Writing*. At 237.

⁴² *Ibid.* at 236.

debilitating diseases such as leprosy and tuberculosis and malaria were still common.⁴³ Césaire was bright and at age 11 he attended the Lycée Schoelcher, named after Victor Schoelcher who administered the integration of Algeria into France under the aegis of assimilation. Schoelcher also oversaw the abolition of slavery in France in 1848 and wrote a book about the Toussaint L'Ouverture. Césaire excelled at the Lycée and upon completing his studies he left for France to study at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and then the École Normale Supérieure.⁴⁴ It was while in France that Césaire encountered Leon Damas of French Guiana and Léopold Senghor of Senegal where they initiated the Negritude movement. Negritude was an international philosophical and literary movement that was in part influenced by the Harlem Renaissance. It celebrated African identity and culture and rejected the ideological and aesthetic primacy of Europe and North America. But while Senghor celebrated African history, Césaire wrote his seminal poem *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*. The book was written during his visit to the former Yugoslavia in 1939 after seeing the island Martiniska which, like Martinique, means St. Martin's island. The coincidence inspired the poem which more than any other has been associated with the Negritude movement. Unlike Leopold Senghor who has been accused of idealizing Africa's present and past and collapsing cultures and identities into a single African whole, for Césaire Negritude was less a return to African roots and more an attempt to destroy the myths and stereotypes that instilled a sense of inferiority in people of African descent, and particularly the descendants of slaves in the Caribbean. Hence the citation:

...in passing it to the Negro, the instructor gives him in addition a hundred habits of language which consecrate the priority of white over black. The Negro will learn to say 'white as snow' to express innocence, to speak of blackness of a look, a soul, or a crime. Let him open his mouth and he condemns himself, except inasmuch as he sets himself to destroy the hierarchy. And if he destroys French, he already poeticizes; let us imagine the strange savour which words such as 'blackness and innocence' or the 'shadows of virtue' would have for us.⁴⁵

Displacing the primacy of Europe and Whiteness and affirming the virtues of Blackness was seen as a precursor to attaining genuine freedom. Whiteness was associated with colonialism and some of the most horrific acts of barbarism the world has witnessed. Whiteness/snow represents incarceration, sterility, and death.⁴⁶ Implicit in Césaire's epic poem is the idea that, in order for Black people to arrive at a state of decolonization, a comparable state of psychological redemption had to be reached. The choice of words

⁴³ David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* (New York: Picador, 2000).

⁴⁴ Robin Kelley, "A Poetics of Anti-Colonialism," in Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000). At 11.

⁴⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, trans. S. W. Allen (Paris: Gallimard, 1969). At 27.

⁴⁶ Mireille Rosello, "Introduction," in Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* (Highgreen, Tarsset, U.K.: Bloodaxe Press, 1995 [1956]). At 61.

here are deliberate as, as history demonstrates, Césaire was less concerned with absolute decolonization than with a form a freedom that retained the island's links with France. In many ways, Césaire's *Notebook* was the precursor to *Discourse on Colonialism*. However, when he wrote *Discourse on Colonialism*, he was at a different stage in his life. He was a member of France's Communist Party and its deputy in the French Parliament.

Discourse on Colonialism was one of the most compelling anti-colonial statements of the twentieth century. Published in 1950, the word barbarism runs like a thread throughout the book. The book anticipates Frantz Fanon's critique of Europe and Western civilization, but whereas Fanon directed his critique at both Europe's bourgeoisie and working class, Césaire's indictment of Europe and Western Civilization is restricted to the bourgeoisie.⁴⁷ Césaire declares Europe to be morally and spiritually indefensible and decries the falsity and hypocrisy of its *mission civilatrice*.⁴⁸ For Césaire, Europe's barbarism is surpassed only by that of the United States.⁴⁹ Baseness, corruption, and the systematic practice of torture and murder sink "deep into the soul of the European bourgeoisie," an accomplice to the barbarism inflicted on Europe by Hitler, a barbarism that was first tried and tested on the non-European people of the world.⁵⁰ It is this "dialectic of defeat,"⁵¹ Europe's external barbarism turned inward, or what Césaire describes as the "law of *progressive dehumanization*," that ultimately leads to "violence, corruption, and barbarism" both within and without Europe.⁵²

But while *Discourse* asserts that the notion of a European civilization and the idea that people of the Third World must look to themselves, not only for their own redemption, but to save the world from imminent catastrophe, Césaire concludes by placing the fate of the world in the hands of the proletariat which, if the meaning of the word is to be interpreted literally, means Europe's working class. The conclusion was no doubt influenced by the fact that he was then a member of the French Communist Party and yet, although Césaire's work anticipates the writing of Frantz Fanon whom he taught at the Lycée in Martinique, Fanon does not exclude the working-class from his indictment of Europe. Fanon provides a searing critique of Europe's failure to live up to the ideals that the best of its thought has represented. In his disavowal of European civilization for what he describes as its "succession of negations of man" and its "avalanche of murders," Fanon calls upon the people of the Third World to combine their brains and muscles in a new direction in order to create the "the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable

⁴⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963). At 313.

⁴⁸ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000 [1950]). At 32.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* at 47.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* at 48, 36.

⁵¹ The term dialectic of defeat is borrowed from David Scott's introduction to his interview with Rupert Lewis in 5:2 (2001) *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*. At 85.

⁵² Césaire, *supra* note 48 at 68. [Emphasis in original].

of bringing to triumphant birth.”⁵³ Not only does he believe that the European model is dead, however, but he breaks with Marxist orthodoxy by implying that even the notion of international working class solidarity has proven to be flawed if not altogether faulty. While some, like Jean-Paul Sartre, attempted with varying degrees of success to break with the political chauvinism that has characterized the European and North American left, Fanon argued, unfortunately “the workers of Europe have not replied to these calls; for the workers believe, too, that they are part of the prodigious adventure of the European spirit.”⁵⁴ Consequently, Fanon arrived at the conclusion that the Third World has only itself to turn to for guidance: “Humanity is waiting for something from us other than...imitation, which would be almost an obscene caricature.”⁵⁵

The Black Jacobins

In the mid 1930s, C.L.R. James founded the International African Friends of Ethiopia (IAFE) in order to mobilize against the fascist Italian invasion of Ethiopia.⁵⁶ Other members of this group included Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, T. Ras Makonnen (formerly

⁵³ Fanon, *supra* note 47.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* at 315.

⁵⁶ As Horace Campbell points out in *Rasta and Resistance* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1987) in much the same way they would later do during the struggle against South African Apartheid, people of African descent, in diverse ways, demonstrated their solidarity with Ethiopia during the Italian invasion. In addition to those from across the Pan-African world who offered to go and fight alongside Ethiopians (some of whom actually did) Blacks in New York rioted and fought in the streets against Italians over the invasion (at 73). A massive demonstration in support of the Abyssinians was held in Jamaica on October 15, 1935, and Amy Jacques Garvey spoke to a packed house in Ward Theatre on October 13, 1935, after which the Kingston division of the UNIA called upon the British to permit ex-servicemen to fight alongside the Ethiopian army (at 74). And, Campbell informs us, “in South Africa, black workers who were organised under the ideas of Garveyism began a march up the continent to assist their African brothers in Abyssinia. They were turned back [after] a few hundred miles by the British, who disarmed them,” (at 74). From Barbados, Arnold Ford, an old Garveyite who had established a sect of Black Jews in the United States and “determined that the real Jew were the *Falashas* of Ethiopia,” moved to Ethiopia with his wife and are credited with establishing the first co-educational secondary school in Ethiopia. And Herbert Jullian of Trinidad joined and served in the Ethiopian armed forces and rose to the rank of Colonel (at 157). On the other hand, Marcus Garvey criticized Emperor Haile Selassie for not being as well prepared for battle as he could have been. Cited from *The Blackman* (London: July/August, 1936) in Campbell, Garvey stated that “If Haile Selassie had educated thousands of his countrymen and women, and raised them to the status of culture and general knowledge necessary to civilisation, the Italians never could have dared an offensive against Abyssinia, because Abyssinia could have found leaders on the spot competent and ready to throw back the invader. But that is not all. If Haile Selassie had negotiated the proper relationship with the hundreds of millions of Africans outside Abyssinia, in South and Central America, in the United States, in Canada, in the West Indies, in Australia, he could have had an organisation of men and women ready for service, not only in the development of Abyssinia as a great Negro nation, but on the spur of the moment to protect it from any foreign foe” (at 75). Perhaps heeding Garvey’s advice, in 1937 Emperor Selassie sent his cousin, Dr Malaku Bayen, to New York to help consolidate support for the Ethiopian cause, particularly among people of African descent. The result was the formation of the Ethiopian World Federation which ultimately set up branches throughout the United States and the Caribbean. (Campbell, this note.)

George T.N. Griffith) of Guyana, Arthur Lewis of St. Lucia, and Jamaican Amy Ashwood Garvey of Jamaica.⁵⁷ Despite its small size, the IAFE played a pivotal role in disseminating information on the fascist invasion of Ethiopia. Their work resulted in public outcry against the invasion and the boycotting of Italian products.⁵⁸ Like people of African descent all over the world – in Ghana, South Africa, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Dominica, Barbados, Trinidad, Antigua, and other parts of the Caribbean, as well as in Britain and the United States⁵⁹ – James offered to enlist in the Ethiopian army. His plan was “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 putting across the International Socialist case.” At the time, James thought, “given the fact that I am a Negro and am especially interested in the African revolution, [it] was well worth the attempt.”⁶⁰ Unfortunately for James, by the time he had made his decision, the Ethiopian armed forces had been routed on the battlefield.⁶¹ James also wrote extensively on Ethiopia and the struggle against imperialism in general. He also wrote the play, *Toussaint L’Ouverture*, which was first performed with Paul Robeson, the extraordinary African-American actor, singer, and political figure who, in his own way was an important Pan-Africanist.

By 1937 the IAFE had evolved into International African Service Bureau with James’s boyhood friend George Padmore (born Malcolm Ivan Meridith Nurse), the distinguished Trinidadian about whom too little has been written, at the helm. James served as editor of the organization’s paper, the *International African Opinion*, but Padmore was not only the group’s leader and the pivotal figure in the London-based Pan-African circle in the 1930s and 1940s. As a more broad-based Pan-African group than the IAFE, the IASB included Jomo Kenyatta, I.T.A. Wallace Johnson of Sierre Leone, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and Ras Mokonnen, later to be joined by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. From 1937 through to 1945 when the Fifth Pan-African Congress was convened, the IASB was one of the most important groups concerned with African liberation outside of Africa. Prior to the Second World War, the group engaged in an internal debate about the method of African liberation struggle. According to Robert Hill, James successfully argued in favor of armed struggle against imperialism, a position that, after considerable debate, was adopted by

⁵⁷ Kenyatta and Lewis would go on to play significant roles in their respective parts of the world, In Kenya, Kenyatta became the country’s first independent head of state, and Lewis did brief stints in both Africa and Asia, before becoming a prominent Caribbean economist. In *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1963; Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993). At 258. James would later describe Amy Ashwood Garvey – along with cricketer Frank Worrel, Leon Trotsky, and, to a certain extent, Arthur Lewis – as having “a unique capacity to concentrate all the forces available and needed for the matter at hand, usually conversation, but, I suspect, applicable in other fields.” Makonnen, along with George Padmore, worked with Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana when the country became independent in 1957.

⁵⁸ Tim Hector, Interview by David Austin, May 23, 1999.

⁵⁹ Campbell, *supra* note 56, at 73.

⁶⁰ Cited from C.L.R. James, “Fighting for the Abyssinian Empire,” *New Leader*, June 5, 1936 in Kent Worcester, *C.L.R. James, A Political Biography* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), At 32.

⁶¹ Worcester, *ibid.* at 32.

the group up until the end of the Second World War.⁶² This debate animated James's classic study of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*, which argued that the self-activity of the ex-slaves of Haiti, employing armed struggle in the cause of liberation, was a model and a source of inspiration for the anticipated African liberation struggle.

In his 1980 foreword to the book, James suggests that he wanted "to write a book in which Africans or people of African descent instead of constantly being the object of other peoples' exploitation and ferocity would themselves be taking action on a grand scale and shaping other people to their own needs."⁶³ He then adds that, when he wrote the book, he was working closely with George Padmore and the IASB and that: "As will be seen all over and particularly in the last three pages, the book was written not with the Caribbean but with Africa in mind."⁶⁴ James also tells remarkable story of the impact of the book in South Africa. It's a fascinating quote which vividly illustrates what Nelson Mandela has described as the "unbreakable umbilical cord"⁶⁵ that has tied the fates of South Africans with African-Americans:

During the celebrations of the independence of Ghana in 1957, I met some Pan-African young men from South Africa who told me that my book had been of great service to them. I wondered how and they explained to me. A copy of it was in the library of the Black university in South Africa, though they didn't know anything about it until a white professor there told them: "I suggest you read The Black Jacobins in the library; you may find it useful." Eagerly they got the book, read it and found it a revelation, particularly in the relation between the blacks and the mulattos. That relation they found very important for understanding the relation between the Black South Africans and the Coloureds who were people of mixed race, black and white. They typed out copies, mimeographed them and circulated the passages from The Black Jacobins dealing with the relations between blacks and the mixed in Haiti. I could not help thinking that revolution moves in a mysterious way its wonders to perform.⁶⁶

That *The Black Jacobins* should influence South Africans in much the same way that Marcus Garvey's *Negro World* newspaper influenced early members of South Africa's African National Congress two decades before gives us some indication of how important

⁶² Robert A. Hill, "Rejoinder," (unpublished [1969]). At 5.

⁶³ C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Allison and Busby, 1980 [1938 & 1963]). At v.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* at vi.

⁶⁵ In his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1995), Nelson Mandela writes of what he describes as "an unbreakable umbilical cord" that "connected black South Africans and black Americans, for we were together children of Africa. There was a kinship between the two...that had been inspired by such great Americans as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, And Martin Luther King Jr" (at 583). Mandela, once a boxer, also mentions the legendary Joe Louis whose career he followed with great interest.

⁶⁶ James, *The Black Jacobins*, *supra* note 63 at vii.

the book must have been for those Africans who read it. And as we learn, once again from James, “Nkrumah and other revolutionaries absorbed the book.”⁶⁷ According to Tim Hector, as late as 1989 James slept with a map of Africa in front of his bed with the state of South Africa emphasized. In James’s view, a post-Apartheid South Africa augured the prospect of an African state with advanced development in modern technology in the hands of an African population. For James, such a prospect presented tremendous possibilities for the African continent on the whole.⁶⁸

In his influential work, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, Cedric Robinson notes that Marxism and James’s involvement in the international Trotskyist movement at the time also shaped *The Black Jacobins*: “It was as a Trotskyist that James would author *The Black Jacobins*, the work for which he is best known. First published in 1938, this still formidable study of the Haitian and French revolutions and their signification for British abolitionism, was at one and the same time an analysis of the relationship between revolutionary masses and leadership, and an attempt to establish the historical legacy of African revolutionary struggles.”⁶⁹ Robinson also mentions the protests and strikes in the Caribbean in the 1930s, alongside Blacks who joined the international brigades to fight against fascism in Ethiopia and Spain and argues that, as James observed these developments from afar, he bore witness to “the capacities for resistance of ordinary Black people” and the transformation of peasants and workers into liberation forces,” all of which convinced him that “successful armed rebellion among black people was possible.”⁷⁰

But it was Africa that was uppermost in James’s mind as he wrote *The Black Jacobins*, and he makes frequent references to contemporary Africa throughout the book. For example, in the opening chapter, James refers to the intelligence of the slaves of Haiti “which refused to be crushed, these latent possibilities, that frightened the colonists, as it frightens the whites in Africa to-day.” Referring to a chant in which Haiti’s slaves swore to fight to the death to destroy their White colonizers, James wrote: “For over two hundred years the slaves sang it at the slave sang it at their meetings, as the Jews in Babylon sang of Zion, and the Bantu to-day sing in secret the national anthem of Africa.”⁷¹ Elsewhere, referring to Toussaint’s sense of destiny, James writes: “he and his brother slaves only watched their masters destroy one another, as Africans watched them in 1914-1918, and will watch them again before long.”⁷² Later he refers to South Africa’s social and political

⁶⁷ C.L.R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1977), At 66.

⁶⁸ Tim Hector, Interview by David Austin, 23 May 1999

⁶⁹ Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000 [1983]). At 265.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* at 273.

⁷¹ James, *supra* note 63, at 18.

⁷² *Ibid.* at 82.

inequality,⁷³ and then, in what is perhaps the most vivid reference to Africa in the book, he mentions Toussaint's long-term plan to sail to Africa and put an end to the slave trade before lamenting:

*But for the revolution, this extraordinary man and his band of gifted associates would have lived their lives as slaves, serving the commonplace creatures who owned them, standing barefoot and in rags to watch inflated little governors and mediocre officials from Europe pass by, as many a talented African stands in Africa to-day.*⁷⁴

And on the last page of the book, James writes:

*Imperialism vaunts its exploitation of the wealth of Africa for the benefit of civilisation. In reality, from the very nature of its system of production for profit it strangles the real wealth of the continent – the creative capacity of the African people. The African faces a long and difficult road and he will need guidance. But he will tread it fast because he will walk upright.*⁷⁵

We can only imagine how passages such as these resonated with those African women and men who read them at the time. But his use of the word guidance in the second to last sentence perhaps contains a hint of paternalism and we are left to wonder who will provide the guidance. Moreover, the sentence seems to contradict his notion of African self-organization, a characteristic of James's work that we will encounter again.

Slavery and Post-colonial Struggle

Writing through the Haitian Revolution, James raises some key questions about the leadership, power, and the management of post-colonial society that presaged many of the problems that would beset post-colonial Africa, the Caribbean, and the Third World in general. Although James is very sympathetic to Toussaint's dilemma, he nonetheless argues that even within the parameters that were set by Haiti's position on the periphery of the global economic order and its troubled relationship to France, had Toussaint paid closer attention to the population, been less autocratic and more creative in exploring possibilities for restructuring Haiti's plantation economy, perhaps along cooperative lines, his fate and that of Haiti might have been different. Cooperative agriculture was not a far-fetched idea in Toussaint's time. France's commissioner in Haiti, Étienne Polverel, declared those slaves who were living on the sequestered land of émigrés or owners who had been deported for treason along with those who were fighting on behalf of he

⁷³ *Ibid.* at 141.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* at 265.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* at 377.

republic, would “co-own” the land, with a greater share of the revenue going to the soldiers given the risks associated with their work.⁷⁶ It is hard to imagine how some former slaves would have been permitted to co-own land while others toiled on the non-sequestered land of their masters. As Carolyn Fick suggests, “Presumably these estates would become something like government-run cooperatives or collective farms. But how would they be administered? And if the former slaves should have collective rights to the profits, would they also have a say in the management of the estates? Would they be able to decide *what* to produce or have a measure of control over the rhythm of production? All this remained vague.”⁷⁷ In any event, the slaves balked at the idea, insisting that the land be parceled off to them.

Of course, this discussion has direct bearing on contemporary Africa which was precisely James’s argument when he wrote *The Black Jacobins*. In the 1960s, another Frenchman, René Dumont, toured the West Africa with the object of conducting extensive surveys of the region’s economic and agricultural development. The results of his study were published in *False Start in Africa*, originally published in French in 1962 under the title *L’Afrique Noire est Mal Partie*, and like his studies of Cuba and China, Dumont’s work raised pointed questions about the economic policies of several African states. Dumont warned against bloated bureaucracies and frivolous spending and, like Fanon, was clear that independence and decolonization were not one and the same thing. *False Start in Africa* is an important and for too neglected book which, despite its at times patronizing tone, takes a sober, and rarely somber, look at Africa’s social and economic future. Space does not permit us to delve into the book in great detail but his analysis of potential of cooperatives concerns us here. Dumont believed that cooperatives had an important role to play in African economic future. But unlike several European countries which developed cooperative farms over an extended period of time, and independent from big business interests or the control of the state, Dumont argued that the luxury of time was not on Africa’s side and that state supported cooperatives were inevitable. However, Dumont warned against state aid being used as a tool to control cooperative initiatives and that a period of state “tutelage” be succeeded by direct management by the farmers themselves and their representatives once they have been trained or, to paraphrase Dumont, once they have learned to swim by having water thrown at them.⁷⁸ Based on his observations, he warned that if this transition happens too quickly, before the farmers have acquired the necessary experience, catastrophe lies in the horizon.⁷⁹ Dumont also raised questions about the training of cooperative managers.

⁷⁶ Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990). At 18.

⁷⁷ Carolyn Fick, unpublished paper. At 13.

⁷⁸ René Dumont, *False Start in Africa* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 1988). At 216.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon raised the issue of the concentration of human and financial resources in the national capital:

*In an underdeveloped country, the leading members of the party ought to avoid the capital as if it had the plague. They ought, with some few exceptions, to live in the country districts. The centralization of all activity in the city ought to be avoided. No excuse of administrative discipline should be taken as legitimizing that excrescence of a capital which is already overpopulated and overdeveloped with regard to nine-tenths of the country. The party should be decentralized in the extreme. It is the only way to bring life to regions which are dead...*⁸⁰

For Fanon, “the interior, the back-country, ought to be the most privileged part of the country. Moreover, the last resort, there is nothing inconvenient in the government choosing its seat elsewhere than in the capital.”⁸¹ By whatever means, the “capital must be deconsecrated; the outcast masses must be shown that we have decided to work for them.”⁸² Like Fanon, Dumont signaled the unwillingness of foreign trainees (African’s trained abroad) to work outside the capital cities. As a remedy, Dumont argued in favor of training farmers locally as “familiarity with our [French] civilization has already given rise to enough illusions and false ideas among the higher echelons.”⁸³

Dumont has much more to say on cooperatives and African development as a whole and the book is certainly worth visiting. But this is as much as space permits us here.

Walter Rodney

C.L.R. James was not the only West Indian within the radical Pan-African tradition to raise critical questions about emancipation, forced labour, and development by studying slavery and pre-twentieth century African history. In *A History of Upper the Guinea Coast: 1545 to 1800*, Walter Rodney examines trade and social relations between primarily Portuguese merchants and West Africans. And as we learn from him in *Walter Rodney Speaks: The Making of an African Intellectual*, the book represents an effort to bring to bear a Marxian analysis on the history of slavery and colonization in Africa.⁸⁴ Unlike James, however, *A History of Upper Guinea Coast* is centred on the sociology and economic history of the West African coast prior to and during the slave trade, and the impact of the trade on African societies. And in this painstakingly research study, Rodney

⁸⁰ This analysis figured heavily in the work of the Caribbean Conference Committee, a Montreal-based group that was mentored by C.L.R. James in the 1960s. See Frantz Fanon, in Roberts letter to *Monthly Review* (April 24, 1967). At 13-14.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* at 14.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Dumont, *supra* note 78, at 217.

⁸⁴ Rodney, *Walter Rodney Speaks*, 27.

provides the reader with insight into the inner-workings and dynamics West African societies of the period in question as well as issues that were raised by Amilcar Cabral about 20th century Guinea-Bissau under Portuguese rule. In many ways, Cabral's analysis of Guinea-Bissau makes explicit in a the twentieth century context what Rodney projects in his analysis of sixteenth to eighteenth century West African history.

Walter Rodney was a close associate of James. Having read C.L.R. James's classic work on the Haitian Revolution as a university student in Jamaica, he participated in a study group with C.L.R. and Selma James as he pursued a Ph.D. in history in London. These study sessions at the Jameses' home included a number of Caribbean nationals, several of whom would go on to play active political roles in the post-independent Caribbean. Among those involved were Richard Small, Norman Girvan, Orlando Patterson, Robert Hill, Joan French, Adolph Edwards, and John Maxell, all of Jamaica; Adolph Edwards, Margaret Carter Hope, from Barbados; Stanley French, St. Lucia; and Walton Look Lai, Trinidad. According to Rodney, the study group had a tremendous impact on him. Grappling with his own ideas and approach to history, and finding nothing "in the English political scene that was helpful,"⁸⁵ Rodney found the study group indispensable to his political development: "Getting together in London and meeting over a period of two to three years on a fairly regular basis," says Rodney, "afforded me the opportunity...to acquire a knowledge of Marxism, a more precise understanding of the Russian Revolution, and of historical formulation."⁸⁶ "One thing is certain about C.L.R. James," adds Rodney: "he has mastered a whole range of theory and historical data and analysis. This explains why he was very good at focusing in [on the subject matter]"⁸⁷ and "as many people know, C.L.R. had that habit of really incisively dismissing bourgeois foolishness. And I think that his wife, Selma James, in her own right had a complimentary if different style that tended in that same direction."⁸⁸ For Rodney, both C.L.R. and Selma James "exemplify the power of Marxist thought. That's what one got – a sense that a bourgeois argument could never really stand a chance against a Marxist argument, provided one was clear about it."⁸⁹

In 1970, a revised version of his Ph.D. thesis was published under the title, *A History of Upper Guinea Coast: 1545-1800*. The book is the least known of his major publications and it would be fair to say that it has been generally ignored by scholars, particularly American scholars,⁹⁰ although for different reasons, Pan-Africanists could also be added to this list. *A History of Upper Guinea Coast* is unique for its nuanced description of the relationship between Africans and Europeans, a relationship that began on an equal footing but then deteriorated into one of exploitation and servitude. It also illustrates the role of Africans in the slave trade, without diminishing the role played

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* at 28-29.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* at 29.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* at 27.

by Europeans. Rodney applies a Marxian analysis to distinguish between the aims and aspirations of the African ruling class, on the one hand, and those of the common people on the other. Somewhat empirical in its approach, the book details the way in which the African elite were both used and manipulated by Europeans during the slave trade, and the way in which African elites also consciously manipulated their European counterparts in order to profit from the enslavement of other Africans. Rodney never loses sight of the fact that it was Europeans who orchestrated and were the primary beneficiaries of the slave trade. Yet, referring to the existence of social classes in the Upper Guinea Coast and the phenomenon of slavery, Rodney informs us: “the kings were just as likely to rob their own people as to attack their neighbours.”⁹¹ He also suggests “it could scarcely have been simple coincidence that the Djolas and the Balantas, who produced the least slaves either by raiding or by preying upon each other, were the very tribes with an amorphous state structure from which a well-defined ruling class was absent.”⁹² Rodney also suggests that “Tribal divisions were not, then, the most important,” and that “When the line of demarcation is clearly drawn between the agents and the victims of slaving as it was carried on among the littoral peoples, that line coincides with the distinction between the privileged and the unprivileged in the society as a whole.”⁹³ “The Atlantic slave trade was deliberately selective in its impact on the society of the Upper Guinea Coast,” according to Rodney, “with the ruling class protecting itself, while helping the Europeans to exploit the common people. This is of course the widespread pattern of modern neo-colonialism.”⁹⁴

Two major points stand out in Rodney’s arguments, points that illustrate his unique traits as an historian and Pan-African figure. First, Rodney had no compunction implicating African rulers in the Atlantic slave trade, a critique that he would later extend to contemporary African and Caribbean rulers. Yet he did so without absolving Europe of its pivotal role in the trade of Africans and without overlooking the fact that those who most benefited from the trade were Europeans and North Americans. Hence the mention of neo-colonialism which suggests that the book was animated by political and economic developments in post-colonial Africa. Secondly, in identifying the class differences in Africa, Rodney was able to separate the common people from the elite who, often without hesitation, act in accordance with their own interests as opposed to those of the entire population. This too is an analysis that he would draw upon in his assessments of contemporary African and Caribbean developments.

Rodney’s description of the Djola and Balanta tribes is reminiscent of the writing of Amilcar Cabral, once leader of the liberation struggle in Guinea-Bissau. Cabral was an agronomist by training who surveyed the rural areas of Guinea-Bissau and drew some interesting conclusions about the social structures of diverse African ethnic groups within

⁹¹ Walter Rodney, *A History of Upper the Guinea Coast: 1545 to 1800* (1970; New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 117.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

the region. "In societies with a horizontal structure, like the Balanta society...the distribution of cultural levels is more or less uniform, variations being linked solely to individual characteristics and to age groups. In the societies with a vertical structure," Cabral informs, "like that of the Fula...there are important variations from the top to the bottom of the social pyramid. This shows...the close connections between the cultural factor and the economic factor, and also explains the differences in the overall or sectoral behaviour of these two ethnic groups towards the liberation movement."⁹⁵ Moreover, the "class character is still more noticeable in the behaviour of privileged groups in the rural environment, notably where ethnic groups with a vertical structure are concerned, where nevertheless the influences of assimilation or cultural alienation are nil or virtually nil. This is the case of the Fula ruling class, for example. Under colonial domination," adds Cabral, "the political authority of this class (traditional chiefs, noble families, religious leaders) is purely nominal, and the mass of the people are aware of the fact that the real authority lies with and is wielded by the colonial administrators. However, the ruling class retains in essence its cultural authority over the mass of the people in the group, with very important political implications."⁹⁶ The colonial authorities, knowing this reality, "installs chiefs whom it trusts and who are more or less accepted by the population, gives them various material privileges including education for their eldest children, creates chiefdoms where they did not exist, establishes and develops cordial relations with religious leaders..."⁹⁷ This system, we are told, "by means of the repressive organs of colonial administration...ensures the economic and social privileges of the ruling class in relation to the mass of the people," though "this does not remove the possibility that, among these ruling classes, there may be individuals or groups of individuals who join the liberation movement..."⁹⁸

Cabral's ideas resonate with the work of Mahmood Mamdani. In *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Colonialism*, Mamdani argues that⁹⁹ until the problems of the urban-rural dilemma – the dichotomy between urban civil rule and rural or customary law – is resolved factionalism will continue to prevail and political governance will remain, at the very least, a major challenge and, at its worse, continue to manifest itself in bloodletting and inter-ethnic conflicts. The similarities between Cabral and Mamdani rest less in their overall analyses and more in the fact they both point to the dilemma that the hierarchical and centralized rule of traditional and customary law has posed for colonial and post-colonial Africa. For Mamdani, in order to get beyond the present state of political despair in Africa, the nature of rule in both the rural and urban regions needs to be simultaneously transformed and democratized, creating the

⁹⁵ Amílcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," in *Unity and Struggle* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1980), 144

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* at 145.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* at 145-6.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* at 146.

⁹⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 294.

conditions for active participation of both citizens in the city and what he describes as subjects under customary rule in the country while reconciling the differences in these different forms of social organization.¹⁰⁰

It is remarkable that Cabral's work is not more widely acknowledged and studied in greater detail. He was certainly one of the last century's brilliant political minds and someone who, perhaps more than any single individual, lent clarity to the complex interplay of forces that defines the African continent. Cabral was one of the major influences on Walter Rodney's political life and it is not surprising that, through different means, they would come to similar conclusions about the nature of class struggle in Africa. In writing about the Atlantic slave trade at this early stage in his political life, Rodney was conscious of the prevailing socio-economic climate in Africa and the Caribbean and used history as a means of contextualizing and assessing contemporary events.

Tanzania

Walter Rodney embodied the best of the Pan-African tradition. He never shied away from controversial or difficult questions and much like Malcolm X, who was also assassinated before his prime, he was honest and principled consistently sought to expand his understanding of the world around him. Unlike many West Indian Pan-Africanist, Rodney spent a substantial amount of time in Africa. He taught at the University of Dar es Salaam in two stints, between 1966 and 1967 and again between 1969 and 1974. He lived in Tanzania during the early days of Julius Nyerere's Ujaama or "African socialism" and was able to witness it unfold first hand. As a result, he was better equipped than his Caribbean predecessors to raise critical questions about the economic and political development of Tanzania and the rest of the African continent.

In 1967, six years after Tanzania became independent, the government of Tanzania under the leadership of Julius Nyerere delivered his Arusha Declaration which ushered in a series of social and economic reforms designed to encourage economic and social self-sufficiency and thwart corruption and profiteering by government officials. Among the reforms included the nationalization of certain key industries and the implementation of a policy to prevent government officials from earning a salary beyond their government pay, controlling shares in a company, or owning houses for the purpose of collecting rent.¹⁰¹ By then, several liberation movements were well underway throughout Africa and Tanzania served as the base for a number of them. Visits to Tanzania by such notable political figures as Eduardo Mondlane and Marcelino dos Santos of FRELIMO (Mozambique) and Agostinho Neto of the MPLA (Angola) were frequent.¹⁰² A young Yoweri Museveni, later to become president of Uganda, studied at the University College of Dar es Salaam during this period and was allegedly Rodney's student.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* at 301.

¹⁰¹ Rupert Lewis, *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 126.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* at 128-129.

The political environment in Tanzania attracted a number of African thinkers, many of whom were Marxists and socialists as there was a sense that Tanzania was on the verge of something of profound significance for Africa. Tanzania also raised the ire of the United States and a number of Western countries for its socialistic orientation and raised eyebrows in the Soviet Union when it received economic and military assistance from China. Rodney's initial teaching stint in Tanzania occurred in the midst of these developments and the university became a hub of activity for both students and professors. Rodney saw his role as a professor in Tanzania as one of relating "to the indigenous Tanzanians, indigenous intellectuals and students, within the university,"¹⁰³ as further involvement was difficult due to "limits of culture, limits of one's legal and citizenship status" as well as linguistic barriers.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, as Rodney put it, "Tanzanian people, like other people, had constantly been subjected to harangues from outside as part of cultural imperialism. It was necessary...that we as progressive individuals (the majority of whom, indeed, initially were non-Tanzanians in the university), play our role mainly within the university." And displaying the kind of sensitivity that characterized his work, Rodney stated that "Tanzanians themselves whether they had contact with the university or not, would play a major determining role outside of the university."¹⁰⁵

How Europe Underdeveloped Africa

In Tanzania, Rodney completed his best-known work, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), in which he outlines how slavery and colonialism contributed to Europe's capitalist development. In many respects, the book is an elaboration of themes touched upon in his earlier writings. His main thesis seems obvious today: that Africa's underdevelopment is the result of a process which involved several centuries of depopulation through the slave trade, the destruction of African institutions and civilization, and the systematic exploitation of its resources and labour. This is a thesis that is borne out by history, and yet the book has been met with hostility and silence within the walls of European and North American academic institutions. And while a generation of Pan-Africanists and radicals swear by this book, today, as "credible" voices call the re-colonization of Africa, Rodney's analysis of the continents underdevelopment remains largely neglected.

Having outlined the diverse forms of African government and social and cultural institutions that preceded and existed alongside European imperialism in Africa, the impact that slavery and colonialism in Africa, and Africa's contribution to Europe's economic development, Rodney concludes the book on an upbeat note. He writes, "The process by which Africa produced thirty-odd sovereign states was an extremely complex one, characterized by an interplay of forces and calculations on the part of the various groups of Africans, on the part of the colonial powers, and on the part of interest groups

¹⁰³ Rodney, *Walter Rodney Speaks: The Making of an African Intellectual* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1990). At 39.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* at 39-40.

inside the metropolises.”¹⁰⁶ Yet despite the confluence of forces that contributed to the African independence movement – World War II, the emergence of the Soviet Union as a world power, India and China’s independence, the Bandung Conference, and the liberation struggle in Indo-China, etc. – Rodney stresses “that the move for the regaining of independence was *initiated* by the African people; and, to whatever extent that objective was realized, the motor force of the people must be taken into account.”¹⁰⁷ And in the face of those who would describe African independence as an utter sham, Rodney takes a more reasoned view of African independence. He writes: “the lowering and raising of flags cannot be said to have been devoid of meaning. Withdrawal of the directly controlled military and juridical apparatus of the colonizers was essential before any new alternatives could be posed with regard to political organization, social structure, economic development.”¹⁰⁸

Rodney did not conflate political independence with economic independence but saw it as a necessary stage in a process towards more meaningful and deep-seated autonomy. As far as the mass of the population was concerned, “the removal of overt foreign rule actually cleared the way towards a more fundamental appreciation of exploitation and imperialism. Even in territories such as Cameroon, where the imperialists brutally crushed peasants and workers and installed their own tried and tested puppet, advances had been made insofar as the masses had already participated in trying to determine their own destiny.”¹⁰⁹ Lastly, Rodney adds “That is the element of conscious activity that signifies the ability to make history, by grappling with the heritage of objective material conditions and social relations.”¹¹⁰

Rodney consistently emphasized that, despite whatever forces may be at play, it is conscious activity of “ordinary people” that is ultimately the decisive factor, the motor force, behind any meaningful change. His analysis of the independence movement is neither dismissive nor defeatist. He saw national independence as a necessary step towards genuine liberation, as part of a process, and not an end in-and-of-itself.

Ujamaa and the Sixth Pan-African Congress

Julius Nyerere’s wrote numerous essays on Ujamaa but the core principles of Ujamaa are perhaps best summarized in his essay “Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism” in which Nyerere writes: “The basic difference between a socialist society and a capitalist society

¹⁰⁶ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972; London: Bogle and L’Ouverture Publications Ltd., 1988). At 277.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* at 278.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* at 280.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

does not lie in their methods of producing wealth, but in the way that wealth is distributed.”¹¹¹ This simple statement lies at the root of some of African socialism’s detractors as the idea that it is not the production process – the method of producing wealth – that separates socialism from capitalism appears to justify the exploitation of labour under the banner of socialism in the belief that the end always justifies means. And yet Nyerere supports his assertion by arguing that in traditional African societies – which he describes as socialistic – no one was starved of food or suffered injury to their dignity.¹¹² Of course, this remark overlooks the fact that many traditional African communities practiced various forms of slavery. In essence, Nyerere argues that class struggle did not exist in traditional African society and that, under modern African socialism, class struggle would be a thing of the past.

By the 1970s however, Nyerere’s claims came under scrutiny. As the Tanzanian lawyer and political activist Issa Shivji argued in 1976, Nyerere’s government came under harsh criticism very earlier in its tenure when it failed to “Africanize” the economy. Opposition to the government by the Tanganyika Federation of Labour, for example, led to the union being forced underground by the government, only to reappear to challenge the ruling Tanzanian African National Union’s (TANU) attempt to control the Tanzania’s economy through the levers of the state.¹¹³ “Statification” also raised the ire of the local commercial bourgeoisie which began to disintegrate as the government took control of mills, farms, light industry, and import/export trade.¹¹⁴ As positions within the state apparatus became the main vehicle to upward mobility, seats on boards, chairmanships, and other government positions became highly coveted.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the work of the administration’s technocrats was characterized by bureaucratic attitudes and an absence of creativity and flexibility while workers and peasants found themselves watching Ujamaa from the outside. African socialism became less a popular process of social transformation and more a bureaucratically driven process being administered above the heads of Tanzania’s underclass.¹¹⁶

Of course, like the rest of Africa and the Third World, Tanzania was locked in a global economic system that favored European and North American economies. In the face of this, Ujamaa sought to “re-imbed” Tanzania’s economy without grappling with the fundamental inequalities that were implicit in the global economic order. It attempted to *improve* the productivity of peasant farmers by introducing more advanced methods of crop and animal husbandry, but without radically altering the social and legal systems

¹¹¹ Julius K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on African Socialism* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1974 [1968]) At 2.

¹¹² *Ibid.* at 3-4.

¹¹³ Issa G. Shivji, *Class Struggles in Tanzania* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1976). At 79.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* at 80-82.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* at 89.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* at 97.

that kept the same peasants in an exploitative relationship both locally and abroad. In fact, as Shivji argues, the move to increase productivity was largely carried out for the purpose of raising production for the world market, part of an attempt to play catch up with the industrialized Global North.¹¹⁷ In addition to its attempts to improve productivity, Ujamaa also experimented with modern intensive production methods. This was intended to be more *transformative* undertaking, but once again, Shivji argues that the Ujamaa villages that were established for this purpose remained locked in production of primary products such as coffee, cotton, and cloves for export and made little headway in the realm of industrialization.¹¹⁸ The local inequalities and attendant class antagonisms inherent in this economic relationship remained unchanged for the most part.¹¹⁹ These antagonisms surfaced in Tanzania in various forms. Workers opposed state imposed worker's councils that had been set up behind their backs and which effectively excluded them from actively participating in decisions that directly affected them. Workers simply ignored the councils or carried out pressure tactics such as strikes, the downing of tools, or locking out management which at times led to the workers being dismissed.¹²⁰ Tanzania's economy began to show the tell-tale signs of classic neo-colonialism. In the six years immediately following the Arusha Declaration, dependence on foreign aid in Tanzania increased threefold and the national debt significantly expanded.¹²¹ Moreover, capital inflow exceeded outflow by 373.2 million shillings.¹²² Even more disconcerting was that fact that state control of the economy ultimately meant that MNCs received state financing, shielding them from many of risks generally associated with investment.¹²³

As a colleague of Walter Rodney at the University Dar es Salaam, Shivji and Rodney no doubt had numerous conversations on the strengths and weaknesses of Ujamaa. These reflections would almost certainly have shaped his critical essay on Africa's political leadership, "Towards the Sixth Pan-African Congress: Aspects of the International Class Struggle in Africa, the Caribbean and America." The essay was written in preparation for the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Tanzania in 1974. And although Rodney was not able to attend the gathering, the paper was widely circulated.¹²⁴ Rodney poignantly articulates his views on Pan-Africanism, nationalism, and the African and Caribbean petty-bourgeoisie. Never one to focus solely on the external causes of African underdevelopment, Rodney spoke of the African struggle expressing itself "not merely as a contradiction between African producers and European capitalists but also as a conflict between the majority of the black working masses and a small African possessing

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* at 103 - 104.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* at 104 and 149-157.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* at 109-110.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* at 133-134.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* at 160.

¹²² *Ibid.* at 161.

¹²³ *Ibid.* at 168-169.

¹²⁴ Lewis, *supra* note 101, at 170.

class.”¹²⁵ He criticized those African leaders who, in negotiating independence with the former colonial powers, “reneged on a cardinal principle of Pan-Africanism: namely, the unity and indivisibility of the African continent.”¹²⁶ According to Rodney, “this African ruling class does not want to allow the masses...the consciousness or the reality of unity.”¹²⁷ Rodney also asserted: “the transformation of the African environment, the transformation of social and productive relations, the break with imperialism, and the forging of African political and economic unity are all dialectically interrelated. The complex of historical tasks can be carried out only under the banner of Socialism and through the leadership of the working class.”¹²⁸ And yet contrary to these ideals, “The African petty bourgeoisie as a ruling class use their state power against Socialist ideology, against the material interests of the working class, and against the political unity of the African masses.”¹²⁹ Rodney’s insistence on the primacy of socialism may sound dogmatic to our post-Soviet era ears but it is important to note that in the heat of the Cold War human liberation was often framed within imperialist/anti-imperialist and capitalist/socialist terms. In this particular sense, as capitalism’s binary opposite, socialism was synonymous with a political process in which the mass of the population were actively involved in building a new society. This, for Rodney, did not mean nationalization of industries as existed in Tanzania or his native Guyana – although it did not rule it out – but a form of socialism from below.

Acknowledging that political independence was an achievement in-and-of-itself and that under neo-colonial conditions some “elementary progressive steps” are attainable,¹³⁰ Rodney again reminds us that “such steps derive from the restlessness of the workers and peasants and not merely from the perceived class interests of the petty bourgeoisie.”¹³¹ “For this reason,” he adds, “it is crucial that within a Pan-African forum a principled and analytical position should be advanced for the adoption of increasingly revolutionary strategies for African economic and political liberation” and that the “petty bourgeoisie must either be pushed forward or further exposed.”¹³² Considering that Rodney was himself still living in Tanzania at the time, Rodney’s bold and explicit criticism of African leadership, including that of Tanzania, which he criticized for its restrictive employment and immigration practices,¹³³ is telling. His remarks, however, were

¹²⁵ Walter Rodney, “Towards the Sixth Pan-African Congress: Aspects of the International Class Struggle in Africa, the Caribbean and America,” in Horace Campbell, ed., *Pan-Africanism: Struggle against Neo-Colonialism and Imperialism* (Toronto: Union Labour/Better Read Graphics, 1975). At 19.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* at 21.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* at 24.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* at 25.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* at 31.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.* at 24.

characteristic of his commitment to the underclass and honest and democratic leadership.

Upon reading Rodney's paper, C.L.R. James, who was among those who initiated the call for the Six Pan-African Congress, but did not attend when it became evident that the event would exclude representatives of the Caribbean and Pan-African left, gave Rodney some strategic advice: "We of the Caribbean cannot go to the Pan-African Congress and be the leading ones in putting forward these ideas. That would be a political blunder of the most primitive type."¹³⁴ In essence, James was suggesting that Rodney adhere to his own advice. Rodney himself had reached the conclusion that, as a West Indian, there were limits to which he could directly intervene in African affairs.¹³⁵ It is also possible that James, who at this stage had visited Africa several times but had never lived there, perceived Rodney's explicit and implicit criticism of the Tanzania's government to be unduly harsh. James himself had praised Nyerere's Ujamaa for leading the way forward in Africa in a chapter of his *A History of Pan-African Revolt* (1969) and the same essay appeared in his *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (1977).¹³⁶ Tanzania's attempts to integrate the country's educational system into the economy and society at large and to proscribe TANU and government officials from renting property, holding shares in companies, receiving more than one salary, and generally not being associated with the practices of feudalism or capitalism – James found all of this laudable.¹³⁷ And although his essay on Ujamaa was originally published in 1969, his opinion remained unchanged in the 1977 publication of the essay which appeared two years after Rodney's "Towards the Sixth Pan-African Congress" and a year after Issa G. Shivji's book.

However, James shared Rodney's overall criticism of Africa's leadership. In fact, his own reflections on Kwame Nkrumah's rule in Ghana demonstrate that James could be just as critical of African leaders. For James, Nkrumah's tenure as Ghana's head of state initially served as a beacon for the rest of the continent. But as he argues, the six years between self-rule and independence (1951-1957) contributed to the deterioration of his government as, in James words, "A revolution cannot mark time for six years."¹³⁸ Rodney shared James's view, describing this liminal period in Ghana's history as one of "cooption and diffusing." According to Rodney, "in that period the colonialists ensured the perpetuation of the colonial state and of the international imperialist economy."¹³⁹ Paraphrasing James, Rodney suggests that Nkrumah's tenure as Ghana's president was

¹³⁴ C.L.R. James in Horace Campbell, ed., *Pan-Africanism: Struggle against Neo-Colonialism and Imperialism* (Toronto: Union Labour/Better Read Graphics, 1975).

¹³⁵ Rodney, *supra* note 103, at 39.

¹³⁶ James, *supra* note 67, at 214.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* at 215-216.

¹³⁸ C.L.R. James cited in Walter Rodney, "The African Revolution," in Paul Buhle, *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work* (London: Allison and Busby, 1986). At 43.

¹³⁹ Rodney, *Ibid.* at 43.

characterized by “the growth of a bureaucracy; the total alienation of the middle classes; the encouragement of a coterie of sycophants; failure to involve the masses politically.” And although James and Rodney acknowledged that Nkrumah inherited an infrastructure designed to meet the needs of the former colonial power – or, in James’s words, African heads of state found themselves “in charge of a British imperialist colonial government which was constructed for British imperialist purposes and not for purposes of governing an African population”¹⁴⁰ – they acknowledged “the personal degeneration of Nkrumah as he became overwhelmed by forces hostile to his original intentions.”¹⁴¹

Nkrumah’s reign did not begin this way. He emerged in Ghana in 1947, two years after playing a major role in the Fifth Pan-African Conference in Manchester, an event that helped to spark the continent-movement for independence. But as James argued, Africa’s petty bourgeois leadership subverted the popular movement after 1957 and as Nkrumah’s schemes failed under the weight of opposition at home and abroad, he resorted to repressive means such as jailing opposition figures and clamping down on the labour movement. And it is here that James found Frantz Fanon particularly useful. Paraphrasing him, James remarked: “The intellectuals [ruling class] must learn that they must dig deep among the mass of the population to find the elements of a truly national culture.”¹⁴² Drawing on James’s statement that Tanzania represents the highest stage reached to date by Blacks in revolt, Rodney argued Tanzania had earned this praise because it nationalized foreign investments, restructured the educational system, and planned a future based on rural development and socialist principles by drawing on local heritage – all of which James believed to be highly significant.¹⁴³ For Rodney Ghana was a different case: “Economic development under his [Nkrumah] rule was urban-directed and oriented towards industry, which was viewed as a panacea” which “ignored the majority of the population and was encouraging further ties of dependence with the outside world rather than self-reliance, as is Tanzania’s goal.”¹⁴⁴ Rodney remarks about Tanzania raises questions about the extent to which his comments in “Towards the Sixth Pan-African Congress” were directed at Tanzania. But his remarks on Ghana were actually part of a speech delivered at a conference on James in 1972, two years before he wrote the 1974 essay for the Congress and ample time for him to develop a more critical appraisal of developments in Tanzania. Which brings us back to James letter to Rodney after reading his statement to the Sixth Pan-African Congress.

As has been stated, it was not that James did not agree with the sentiments outlined in Rodney’s essay. This is evident in his critique of Nkrumah for what he deemed his political weaknesses. It is also evident in his statement that “Africa...will go crashing from

¹⁴⁰ James, cited in *ibid.* at 42.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴² *ibid.* at 44.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.* at 45.

precipice to precipice unless the plans for economic development are part of a deep philosophical concept of what the mass of the African people need” and that is where Nkrumah failed.”¹⁴⁵ And it worth noting that the above statement was originally published in 1964 which is to suggest that James considered Nkrumah’s government a failure two years before he was overthrown in a military coup. James’s caution to Rodney was much less to do with what he said and more to do with tactics; he did not think that someone from the Caribbean should be the one to lay such a devastating critique of the African petty bourgeoisie publicly. It is also possible that James was considering the fact that Rodney was still living and working in Tanzania and might be subjected to undue pressures as a result of his criticisms.

But Rodney’s remarks reflect one of his defining features, namely his uncompromising and no-nonsense political stance and his willingness and ability to pointedly articulate his political ideas, irrespective of whose feathers his convictions might ruffle. Committed to the idea that so-called ordinary women and men were the driving force behind meaningful social change, he refused to accept that political leaders – regardless of the ideology they professed to uphold – should arrogate unto themselves the reigns of political and economic power.

West African Wager to the Present

James, Rodney, and Shivji’s study of Ghana and Tanzania demonstrate the challenges involved in building post-colonial African states under global economic and political conditions that strongly favour former colonial powers. But in the euphoric days of anti- and early post-colonial struggle in Africa Ghana was often compared to Ivory Coast. During his first official state visit as the independent leader Ghana, Nkrumah’s host Félix Houphouët-Boigny proposed a wager. He suggested that the two leaders assess their respective territories ten years later to determine which state had made the most progress.¹⁴⁶ Houphouët-Boigny was widely recognized as the spokesperson for mutual dependence with France and Africa, a relationship linked to aid from France and strong ties to the metropole. On the other hand, Nkrumah was seen as a staunch advocate for independence now although, contrary to the advice of George Padmore, among others, Nkrumah opted for self-government between 1951 and 1957, a transition period to independence that lasted longer than French West Africa’s apprenticeship within the French Community. For Houphouët-Boigny, independence was seen as a somewhat risky “experiment” for which France’s colonies lacked the personnel resources to successfully carry out in the immediate present. As part of the Franco-African community, however,

¹⁴⁵ James, *supra* note 67 at 188.

¹⁴⁶ Jon Woronoff, *West African Wager: Houphouët versus Nkrumah* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1972) At 13.

Houphouet-Boigny argued Ivory Coast benefited from France's "keen sense of humanity."¹⁴⁷

Houphouet-Boigny emerged a prominent labour leader in the 1940s. His opposition forced labour and colonialism made him a popular leader and he eventually drew tens of thousands into his Parti Democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI).¹⁴⁸ As a minister in the French parliament he gave voice to the deplorable social, economic, and health conditions of African labourers whose existence was tantamount to being a slave. The irony, as he pointed out to his French colleagues, was that France had recently experienced forced labour during the Nazi occupation. To allow these conditions to continue in its colonial territories would be hypocrisy in the extreme.¹⁴⁹ His success against forced labour and his disassociation from local and French communists who advocated a radical break with France consolidated his relationship with the metropole and despite opposition from labour and student groups to his policies on independence, he advocated emancipation within the framework of the French union, and later the French community.¹⁵⁰ But President Charles DeGaulle's French Community did not last. He unilaterally modified the French constitution to permit independent states within the French Community, effectively foisting independence upon France's former African colonies, and on August 7, 1960 Ivory Coast became independent. Houphouet-Boigny's wager with Nkrumah was based on two different systems of government in West Africa. On the one had, a strong association with France as a non-independent territory, and on the other, an independent and socialist path. But with the collapse of the French Community, the initial basis of the wager came to an end. Moreover, Nkrumah's government was overthrown before the wager ended. Nonetheless, a brief comparison between the two countries up until 1966 sheds light on the challenges that confronted newly-independent African countries, and particularly those that attempted to build socialism in the post-colonial period.

Generally speaking, despite its smaller size and fewer natural resources, Ivory Coast's free market economy grew wealthier during the period in question. Emphasis was placed on agriculture and the country became one of the world's leading producers of coffee, cocoa, bananas, pineapple, and wood.¹⁵¹ Ghana's socialistic state was hampered by the popular view of the state as the population's patron and by a bloated bureaucracy. The state intervened in virtually every sphere Ghanaian life and, having assessed the advantages of working within the state structure, government was increasingly looked upon as a treasure chest.¹⁵² Although government was involved economically in both

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* at 10-13.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* at 136.

¹⁴⁹ Paul-Henri Siriex, *Félix Houphouet-Boigny: homme de la paix* (Paris: Éditions Segher, 1975). At 68-69.

¹⁵⁰ Woronoff, *supra* note 146 at 36, 43, 46, 47.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* at 224.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* at 225-226.

countries, state intervention in Ghana was pushed to the limit, in effect stifling local industry. This problem was exacerbated by the shortage of skilled personnel and under these conditions, Nkrumah's attempt to rapidly industrialize the economy achieved limited success.¹⁵³ If we add to this the fact that the military budget rose from 2.7% to 8.4% between 1955 and 1966, amounting to \$48 million in 1965, the picture becomes even clearer.¹⁵⁴ The absence of a burdensome state presence in Ivory Coast, Houphouet-Boigny's willingness to compromise with the country's elites, and the country's focus on agriculture as the motor force behind the economy meant more economic and social stability in Ivory Coast in the short term. However, it would require a close look at the way in which wealth was distributed in Ivory Coast to assess how this relative prosperity trickled down to workers and peasants in the country. Moreover, such a balance sheet demonstrates the pitfalls of measuring success in such narrow terms. While Ghana experienced successive military governments well into the 1990s, today it is identified as one of the poster countries of the IMF and World Bank and as an example of stability in Africa. But by the mid 1970s the periodic rise and fall of coffee, cocoa, other primary goods on the world market demonstrated the pitfalls of Ivory Coast's dependence on agricultural produce. And with the death of Houphouet-Boigny in 1993, Ivory Coast descended into civil war and anarchy, laying the foundation for the military intervention of France, the country's former colonial power. Although the situation is no doubt complicated, on the surface it would appear as though the tables have turned dramatically since the 1957 wager. Of course, positive IMF and World Bank indicators do not mean positive development. As Kwamina Panford has argued, Structural Adjustments Programs (SAPs) have helped to ravage Ghana's educational system, negatively impacted the country's local industry, increased unemployment and labour unrest, and set back the gains made by women from the 1950s through to the 1970s.¹⁵⁵ On the contrary, such indicators have often served to shield crass inequalities and callous policies that adversely affect the health and well-being of society's most vulnerable and negatively impacting the sustainability of local economies. And yet the shock that greeted the news of the chaos in Ivory Coast serve as a reminder that development is a protracted process that can at best be measured in stages. Economic growth indices only paint a partial picture.

African Development

This issue of gender and the role of women within African political struggles has not been given the attention it deserves. Simply put, from Pan-African and Black solidarity meetings to liberation and post-colonial struggles in Africa, the silent assumption has

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* at 226.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* at 227.

¹⁵⁵ See Kwamina Panford, *IMF-World Bank and Labor's Burdens in Africa: Ghana's Experience* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001).

generally been that the men will lead and the women follow. Only recently has the work of women such as Amy Ashwood Garvey, Elma Francois, and Claudia Jones been the given the attention it deserves. And in the case of the anonymous women who have played active roles in African and Caribbean social and political movements – women who are often the backbone of these movements – their work has generally been ignored because, as Patricia Hill Collins has written, “Social science research typically focuses on public, official, visible political activity even though unofficial, private, and seemingly invisible spheres of social life and organization may be equally important.”¹⁵⁶ But there are signs that a shift is taking place in this area. As Ifi Amadiume demonstrated in her path-breaking work, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex Relations in African Society*, what we have come to understand as traditional gender roles are not necessarily traditional. Many of our current assumptions on gender relations in Africa emanate from studies by Western anthropologists. Unlike the studies conducted on European and North American women, in the case of Africa, the research of Western anthropologists has generally collapsed all African women, irrespective of their positions of authority and class status, into one homogeneous block. As a result, they often conclude that African women are and have always been subordinate to men and that their social roles are restricted to domestic functions such as raising children, cooking, and other household duties. Many of these studies also emphasize such practices as arranged marriages, polygyny¹⁵⁷ and, we might add, female circumcision.

According to Amadiume, in Britain, such studies, with their lopsided approach to the study of African women and their misinformed assessments of African customs have had serious implications for Blacks. They affect their relations with the police and fuel racist antagonisms while providing the state with support for legislation and policies that discriminate against African in areas of immigration, child fostering, and adoption.¹⁵⁸ Such studies have also influenced the imposition of skewed development programs, originated in the West, supposedly designed to empower women in Africa.

Many Western feminist anthropological studies have not only served to diminish the significance of the domestic sphere while creating a false public/private dichotomy, but, as Amadiume’s research shows, they often fail to take into account the important roles that African women play in their societies and the extent to which their historic roles have been altered by colonial intrusion. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, of which the Nnobi are a part, gender constructions are not rigidly linked to biological sex. According to Amadiume, “Daughters could become sons and consequently male. Daughters and women in general could become husbands to wives and consequently males in relation to

¹⁵⁶ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991). At 140-141.

¹⁵⁷ Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987) At 6.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

their wives, etc.,”¹⁵⁹ opening political and social choices to women without having to behave like men. And despite “the supposed patrilineal system of inheritance and succession [that] prescribed that males allocate and own land, women controlled the subsistence economy”¹⁶⁰ while men sought authority through ritual specialization and ritual control.”¹⁶¹ Land inheritances were often manipulated in a practice known as *nhayikwa* or *nhanye* in which daughters became sons in order to inherit from their fathers.¹⁶² Amadiume’s study illustrates the flexible, almost porous nature of gender relations in that society, and the way in which women were able to negotiate and maneuver their way into positions of authority when it was not directly conferred on them. With colonialism, *Ekwe*, an important title bestowed upon women for their economic success and industriousness, was outlawed and, with the imposition of male-dominated chiefdoms and Christianity – which supplanted the female deity with patriarchal Christian concepts – the role of women was diminished in favour of a more exclusive patriarchal system of governance and social structure. This marked the beginning of a process by which women were largely excluded from the structures of power.¹⁶³

As philosopher Barry Hallen has points out, more recent studies on gender relations in Africa have added to Amadiume’s analysis. Nigerian sociologist Oyeronke Oyewumi suggests that, despite the anatomical differences between women and men, traditionally, the social categories of “women” and “men” were non-existence in the historic city Oyo in Yorubaland, Nigeria. There, lineage was more of a determining factor of roles and status than gender.¹⁶⁴ And according to Nigerian philosopher and artist Nkiru Nzegwu, the *obi*, which is the term used to delineate descent, included both women and men. Hence, contrary to Amadiume’s assertion, women did not necessarily have to become gendered as males in order to be included in the *obi* and be conferred status and inheritance.¹⁶⁵

As Amadiume illustrates, rethinking gender relations in Africa from a historical perspective has repercussions for the present. Referring to a 1986 government-sponsored debate on the political stability of Nigeria, Amadiume reflects on the feedback

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* at 15.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* at 21.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* at 27.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* at 32.

¹⁶³ Other studies of gender relations in Africa by Diop and his protégé, Theophile Obenga, have also produced some interesting and provocative work on female/male relations in antiquity. See Cheikh Anta Diop, *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa: The Domains of Matriarchy and of Patriarchy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Karnak House, 1989) and Théophile Obenga, *Ancient Egypt and Black Africa: A Student’s Handbook for the Study of Ancient Egypt in Philosophy, Linguistics, and Gender Relations*. (London: Karnak House, 1992).

¹⁶⁴ Barry Hallen, *A Short History of African Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). At 97.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* at 106.

that came from local grassroots women. These women were frustrated and had more than enough to say about the “poor state of the nation’s economy, the political chaos in terms of corruption, the exploitation of women, especially the incessant demands for huge levies from women, etc.”¹⁶⁶ They also called for unity among Nigerian women, despite their awareness of social and class distinctions between themselves and women of the middle and upper classes, in order to elect a women president by 1990. “The general opinion of women was that men have failed in ruling the country; it is now time to try women! In order to sharpen women’s awareness of such concepts as class interests, class contradictions and class conflicts, a great deal needs to be done.”¹⁶⁷ For Amadiume, “any organization truly committed to the achievement of economic and social justice for women must be guided by a socialist ideology.”¹⁶⁸ It cannot, therefore, “be an umbrella or a miscellaneous organization representing women with conflicting and varied ideologies and orientations” or one that works for or is always “in harmony with whatever government is in power.”¹⁶⁹

Making a distinction between grassroots women and their elite counterparts Amadiume writes that, “like male politicians, on the platform of umbrella organizations, many women have used the services and support of the majority of women, especially at the grassroots, to enhance their own political careers. They have ripped off existing women’s organizations or have organized women to serve their own self-interest rather than that of the women they claim to represent.”¹⁷⁰ As a result, “women’s organizations which previously directed themselves began to wait for directives.”¹⁷¹ After suggesting ways in which Nigerian women can be better represented within the official political apparatus and proposing methods for legislative and judiciary improvement in the country, Amadiume suggests that “Other areas where change and improvement are needed would best be tackled through campaign work and massive adult education programmes in health care, childcare, workshops on such economic activities” which include running cooperatives, businesses and crafts, political education and religious debates “which reveal to women the positive and powerful roles that women have played in Islam, Christianity etc., in order to arm them against conservatism, etc.”¹⁷²

In conclusion she writes that she remains “convinced that in the drive for change and improvement, the momentum and specifications must be left to individual local areas. Women outside such areas should give information and support only when invited to do

¹⁶⁶ Amadiume, *supra* note 157 at 197.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.* at 199.

so.¹⁷³ For Amadiume, in the final analysis, the impetus for change among African women rests in local communities and in the hands of those who have the most to gain from transforming the societies in which they live. Amadiume's contribution to our understanding of social change sits well within the Pan-African tradition we have explored throughout this paper, and represents a major contribution to our understanding of the exigencies of social transformation in Africa.

In a little-known book, *Black Africa: the Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State*, Cheik Anta Diop, the renowned Senegalese physicist and African culture-historian, outlines his vision for African development. Diop's analysis is predicated upon a profound understanding of the cultural, agricultural, material and environmental resources of the African continent. Diop's ideas extend beyond conventional thinking on macro development that stresses leaner governments, the erosion of civil society, and reductions in social spending while consigning the Global South to the role of exporters of cheap primary products and suppliers of cheap labour to foreign corporations.

Diop provides historical, linguistic, and cultural evidence as well as compelling economic and geo-political arguments in favour of African unity in the form of a federated continent. Like many who have reflected on the prevailing socio-political conditions in Africa, Diop genuinely believed that "only a continentwide or subcontinentwide federated state can offer a safe political and economic area, stable enough for a rational formula covering the development of our countries with their infinitely varied potentials to be put in effect."¹⁷⁴ Diop describes potential sources of renewable and non-renewable energy. He proposes effective use of hydraulic energy (according to Diop, Africa possesses about half the world's hydraulic energy resources), solar energy and the use of windmills, taking advantage of trade winds on the West African Coast and the Cape region.¹⁷⁵ He also identifies tidal energy, global heat, volcanic thermal energy and geothermal energy, and hydrocarbons (petroleum) as potential sources of energy to be further explored and exploited.¹⁷⁶ Considering Africa's large deposits of uranium, Diop also includes nuclear technology as a potential source of energy. These diverse energy forms have the potential to play a significant role in the development and expansion of a number of local industries, putting Africa's natural resources and scientific know-how to work for the African continent.

But in addition to more effectively using available energy resources for economic development in Africa, Diop describes the ideological shift that will have to take place in order for genuine development to take place. According to Diop, African ideologists

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Cheikh Anta Diop, *Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated States* (Westport: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1978). At IV-V.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* at 45.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* at V.

“have not succeeded in moving revolutionary theory forward by one step in Black Africa. Indeed, though one be armed with such fecund a scientific method of analysis as Marxist dialectics (assuming it has been sufficiently assimilated) it would be hopeless to try to apply it to a reality of which one is totally ignorant. For a long time,” he continues, “many of our compatriots have thought that they could get by without any deep knowledge of African society and Africa in all aspects: history, languages, ethnicities, energy potential, raw materials and the like. The conclusions reached have been abysmally banal, when not plain and simply wrong. They have thought,” he adds, “they could make up for the lack of ideas, breadth, and revolutionary perspectives by the use of offensive, excessive, and murky vocabulary; they forgot that the truly revolutionary quality of language is its demonstrative clarity based on the objective use of facts and their dialectical relationships, which results in irresistibly convincing the intelligent reader.”¹⁷⁷

For Diop, a new vision, creatively exploring alternatives to the conventional economic approaches, is imperative. The raising of capital through joint ventures between the state and foreign capital while adopting policies similar to those adopted under NEP (New Economic Policies) during early stages of the Russian Revolution; the exchange of precious African metals (gold, silver, platinum) for hard currencies and heavy machinery; selling excess raw materials that local industries cannot absorb – Diop sees all of these approaches as necessary to economic reform in Africa. Yet, he adds that,

*In the last analysis, the most important investment is of a human character; it is the collective will of the peoples to serve their countries. The establishment of a collective public manpower pool is possible only if none feels frustrated. Before that can be achieved, it would be necessary that, through judicious paring, salaries paid for political positions be brought down to the range of workers' wages.*¹⁷⁸

Fundamentally, despite his emphasis on alternative methods of economic development by effectively using Africa's natural and scientific resources, Diop's prognosis for African development is essentially a social one in which the collective will of the population is tapped into and put at the centre of the development process. But, Diop warns, “Before everything else, we must help ourselves. What is termed ‘aid to the underdeveloped countries might for a long time be used all too easily as blackmail.”¹⁷⁹ “At all times,” he adds, “we would have to be ready to refuse any aid that carried strings with it, however unbinding these might appear to be.”¹⁸⁰ Lastly, “Africa must win and hold in a large part its own domestic market, one of the greatest in the world. A whole book should be

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* at i.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* at 83.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

devoted to the study of this market with a view to organising the economics of the African states.”¹⁸¹

Closing Words

Like so many of the theorists we have examined in this paper, Diop raises question as to whether Africa’s leadership is up to the challenges that confront the continent. Frantz Fanon, a descendant of African slaves who were transported to the Caribbean was among the first to raise serious questions about the viability of post-colonial African governments within the framework of the prevailing global economic and political order. Drawing on his experience as a member of Algeria’s *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) who served as the FLN’s ambassador to Ghana, *The Wretched of the Earth* presaged the dilemma that would confront African and Third World states.¹⁸² Fanon believed that a new world needed to be reconstructed upon the ashes of the old order which, despite its persistence, he believed had come to an end. Fanon also believed in human solidarity, but in the spirit of Bandung and the idea of a Third World – an alternative to the capitalism and communism – and firm in the idea that the people of the Global South would have to lead the way towards bringing a new world into being. He rejected the Europe “where they were never done talking of Man, and where they never stopped proclaiming that they were anxious for the welfare of Man: today we know with what suffering humanity has paid for every one of their triumphs of the mind.” For Fanon this Europe was coming to an end and he called upon the people of the Third World to create something different: “We today can do everything, so long as we do not imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe.” “Humanity,” he adds, “is waiting for something from us other than such imitation, which would be almost an obscene caricature.”¹⁸³ In many ways, Africa and its descendents have answered Fanon’s plea. It was the African liberation struggle that inspired the Civil Rights and Black Power movements in the U.S., which in turn, breathed life into the range of social movements that gripped the world in the 1960s, from militant students protests to the women’s movement. Through literature and the arts, Africans and people of African descent have posited new possibilities that continue to challenge the world to positively recreate itself.

As we recall the humble beginnings of Pan-Africanism and how a few focused African and Caribbean women and men plotted and schemed in exile as they dared to imagine that imperialism could end in Africa; and if we read this history with the understanding that change is a continual process and that independence and the present post-colonial

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* at 84.

¹⁸² An obvious omission in this paper is the relationship between “Black Africa” and the northern part of the continent, a relationship that Fanon’s work embodied in many respects.

¹⁸³ Fanon, *supra* note 47. At 313.

period represent important stages, but not an end result in Africa's development – then it is not difficult to imagine the possibilities that exist on the continent. There is much that can be gleaned from past struggles and the impact that such struggles have had, not only in Africa, but on the world stage. In Guinea-Bissau, the African Party of Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) under the leadership of Amilcar Cabral carried out an exemplary struggle against Portugal's brutal armed forces. In its almost twenty years of struggle for independence, the PAIGC remained focused on the goal of improving the lives of the people and, to this end, they set up schools, hospitals, and a more equitable system of justice in the zones that they had already liberated from the Portuguese. Through ideological and moral persuasion, they also won over many of their military and political opponents to their side during the struggle causing desertion and widespread disaffection among Portuguese soldiers¹⁸⁴ and the influence of Cabral's ideological work on Portuguese soldiers and members of the Portuguese left in no small way contributed to the military overthrow of fascism in Portugal with the fall of the Caetano regime in 1974.¹⁸⁵

But this history contains other sobering lessons. Despite the solid foundation that was laid by the PAIGC under Cabral's leadership, the political situation in Guinea-Bissau began to deteriorate shortly after independence (Amilcar Cabral was assassinated before the country became independent in 1974), eventually resulting in a coup in which Luis Cabral, brother of Amilcar, was overthrown. Post-independence Guinea-Bissau has been characterized by political instability and military rule and Guinea-Bissau has proved unable to avoid the fate of so many African and other countries of the Global South. The political malaise in Guinea-Bissau suggests that strong leadership is very important in the early stages of the fledgling independent state and although we can only speculate, it is not unlikely that events in Guinea-Bissau would have evolved differently had Amilcar Cabral lived to see Guinea-Bissau's independence through. One of Amilcar Cabral's rare gifts was his ability to balance contending political forces and encourage and inspire people to work together towards a common objective, fostering a sense of cooperation while instilling a sense of discipline and self-sacrifice.

Among other things, this paper has attempted to show how the idea of Pan-Africanism has been an animating force, inspiring people of African descent in Africa and around the world. Criticisms of Kwame Nkrumah often fail to mention his vision of a united Africa and his awareness of the role that the African continent played in the psyche of people of African descent. As he wrote in exile, "The total liberation and unification of Africa under an All-African socialist government must be the primary objective of all Black revolutionaries throughout the world. It is an objective which, when achieved, will bring

¹⁸⁴ Patrick Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). At 146-148.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* at 149-150.

about the fulfillment of the aspirations of Africans and people of African descent everywhere. It will at the same time advance triumph of the international socialist revolution..."¹⁸⁶ Nkrumah expended time and resources to promote Pan-Africanism and criticism of his tenure as Ghana's head of state should acknowledge his place among the pantheon of Pan-African figures whose vision of Africa and Africans transcended national boundaries.

This essay has many shortcomings. Literature should have found a place within it as African and the Caribbean writers have made a tremendous contribution to our understanding of human condition. Within the Pan-African tradition, the poetry and plays of Aimé Césaire, the poetry of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, and the writing of Buchi Emecheta, Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Maryse Condé, among many others, show an appreciation for the political, historical, and cultural challenges that have confronted and continue to confront the African continent and people of African descent.

This paper has been read primarily through the lens of Caribbean intellectual-Pan-African figures. Although it has not ignored the work of their African equivalents, this approach represents an attempt to show how West Indians have engaged the African continent while at the same time examining some of the principle threads in African post-colonial theory. This approach runs the risk of giving too much weight to Caribbean thinkers at the expense of their African counterparts, thus giving the false impression that this representation reflects reality in its entirety. No doubt, West Indians have played a significant role in African affairs, particularly within the Pan-African movement. But this reality reflects an interest in the African continent that is tantamount to a lost child desperately trying to find its way home, a simplistic analogy that reflects the reality of "scattered Ethiopia," Africa's descendents who were torn from their homeland and forced to recreate themselves in order to adapt to a new environment. West Indians are still struggling to become masters in their own home, afflicted by many of the internal and external challenges that confront the Africa. To its descendents abroad, Africa has often been a beacon of hope and Caribbean Pan-Africanism still rests on the premise that the future of Africa's descendents is integrally tied to the fate of the African continent.

¹⁸⁶ Kwame Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa*, (1970; London: Panaf Books Ltd., 1980). At 88.

