Without Country:
Black Revolutionaries of the Caribbean Diaspora,
1932-1975

Dissertation Prospectus

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[Laughter.] Actually what I think about the Black Atlantic is that it really is a very close funky little room with all the men in it—and they’re all speaking English. [Laughter.] And that’s really what that is; it really is a way to, I think, escape the female again. In fact I am thinking that maybe the introduction of the global model, and the transculture, these are all ways, perhaps, to escape the messiness of gender.


I do not pretend to have the definitive answers to these questions. I would not be so presumptuous because I believe that what is involved at this stage in human development is a transformation of human activity at least as profound and radical as that which took place when men stopped being nomads and began to settle down to plant food and domesticate animals…Looking back at the Black movement over the past thirteen years, it is possible to discern a historical and logical development which characteristic of all revolutions: namely, a movement toward involving deep layers of the oppressed masses whose grievances are deeply rooted in the nature of the system and who are ready for increasingly desperate actions against it.

Grace Lee Boggs, “The Black Revolution in America” (1968)

Each woman in her own home is making a revolution.

Selma James, “A Woman’s Place.” (1953)

Prologue, 1973: NUFF Said

Hidden within the bush outside Caura, tucked into Trinidad’s Northern Range, a small band of fugitives—youth in their teens and early twenties—stood watch for the police that hunted them. A few days before, in nearby Valencia, Superintendent Randolph Burroughs and his “Flying Squad” raided their camp. Two men from Burroughs’ special unit were shot. As the guerillas fled, they taunted Burroughs to follow them at his own peril. For two years, the National United Freedom Fighters (NUFF) had crisscrossed the island—from the Fyzabad forest of the south, to the hills and mountains of the north—guns ablaze—and attacked police stations, oil companies, and Barclays bank. By some estimates, NUFF was over three hundred strong, but only a dozen or so members were armed and mobilized at any one time. NUFF’s numbers, and resolve, had eroded with each police ambush, arrest, and shoot-out.


“We coming in the bush now for all yuh,” Superintendent Burroughs hollered. An echo of gunfire trailed him. NUFF strategist Terrence Thornhill ran for cover as his relief, seventeen-year-old Beverly Jones, was shot in her face, her legs, and killed. The girl that came to be known as the “Heroine of the Revolution,” Beverly Jones, and her sister Jennifer, left a middle-class home for the mountains and armed revolt. The Jones sisters joined a posse at war with the neocolonial government of Prime Minister Eric Williams, with electoral politics, and with the failures of the aborted Revolution of 1970. Three years before, that spontaneous, united front of black and Indian workers, students, and a mutinous army regiment, promised to usher in the unrealized hopes of 1956: to overthrow the neocolonial regime, evict foreign imperialists, and deliver justice for the poor and unemployed of Trinidad and Tobago.⁵

The generation of freedom fighters under siege that day in Caura came from all castes and classes of Trinidadian society: men, women and youth; black, Chinese, and Indian. Many were the daughters and sons of the nationalist movement against which they fought. Terrence Thornhill’s father studied at Cambridge as Eric Williams, the future Prime Minister, took his doctorate at Oxford. After graduating from Tranquility Boys School and Queens Royal College—the alma mater of, among others, C.L.R. James and V.S. Naipaul—Terrence went abroad himself. Matriculating at Catholic University in Washington D.C., he immersed himself in the “Black consciousness” simmering in the Capitol, where he “started to see the sufferings of black people and identified with them.” Thornhill dropped out of school, saved money, and returned to Trinidad in the wake of the

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1970 uprising. His childhood friends, veterans of the National Joint Action Group (NJAC), a student movement at the forefront of the fight in 1970, had abandoned the organization and its “talking, theorizing” for more radical alternatives, for guns. A few months later, Thornhill left Trinidad again for a long-planned European tour. “We got the motorcycles in Germany, went through Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, going down to the border with Turkey, me and my roommate (he was white American). At the Turkish border we were told it was impossible to go through.” This was just after the coup. When he returned to Trinidad again, in December 1971, his friends had fled to the hills. Thornhill’s long absence from the political life of the island made him a perfect ally. “I was what you could call a ‘cool man,’” he recalled. “I wasn’t wanted, wasn’t known by the authorities, so I could do anything, get medication, foodstuff, whatever.” Thornhill stayed cool under fire too.

It’s difficult to speculate where and when these young people received their political education. Had Thornhill on U Street in Washington D.C.? At an NJAC meeting? On the Turkish border? Travel and translation exposed him to global revolutions in disparate contexts, and this travel enlisted him as an ambassador to struggles on his home island. Though I don’t know the itineraries of the Jones sisters travels, not yet at least, I do know that through personal connections with migrants like Terrence Thornhill they, and NUFF, had connections to broader struggles in Cuba, from which they borrowed tactics, to the United States and Europe. Like Thornhill, the Jones sisters abandoned the comfort and trappings of a middle-class life for wilderness and the weight of a gun. Seventeen, and ostensibly pregnant, Beverly Jones became a martyr. The slaughtered symbol of the revolution was the nation’s deviant daughter: an unwed (possibly pregnant) middle-class girl who slept under the stars with a pistol in her hand.⁶

⁶ The first-person accounts included here are taken from Brian Meeks, “NUFF at the Cusp of an Idea: Grassroots Guerillas and the Politics of the 1970s in Trinidad and Tobago,” Social Identities 5:4 (1999). Meeks elaborates on NUFF,
NUFF formulated and inherited radical politics of revolutionary anti-imperialism that were forged through travel, personal networks, and the long dialogue among diasporic intellectuals and grassroots insurgents throughout the twentieth century. Drawing from recent scholarship on “the long civil rights movement,” and the “transnational turn” in history and American Studies, *Without Country: Black Revolutionaries of the Caribbean Diaspora, 1932-1975* is an effort to expand the history of black power in the Atlantic world chronologically and geographically, through the contestation and maturation of radical politics across personal and professional networks, national borders, and two generations of Trinidadian migrants—border-crossing elites and grassroots insurgents—who were at the forefront of anti-colonial and anti-imperial battles that anticipated and buttressed the global women’s and black power movements of the 1960s and 1970s. *Without Country* will extend the history of black power into the interwar period, among the anti-imperialist struggles of a core group of West Indian migrants who studied, taught, and organized around the Atlantic world, and later became principal allies and opponents of a new generation of student activists.

Rethinking radicalism, revolution, and the boundaries of the Caribbean, *Without Country* will profile the networks of West Indian migrants, women and men, who theorized, practiced, and abandoned an intersectional Marxist feminist politics that generated diverse strategies for a truly transformative tomorrow. Generative as well as reactionary, founding organizers as well as reformers, migrant radicals agitated and organized for a range of movements across four decades, from anti-colonial nationalism to women’s liberation to black power. Often outcasts in their own homes, and enemies of the state, these radicals challenged the divisive campaigns that betrayed, opposed, and metastasized around them as the warships of new empires fortified the investments of

and ties the organization into a broader, regional history in *Narratives of Resistance: Jamaica, Trinidad, the Caribbean* (Mona: University Press of the West Indies, 2000).
old, neocolonial borders hardened, and the cult of black manhood strangled the possibilities for revolution in the fist of patriarchy.

A history of the travel of people, and ideas, across national borders, Without County will necessarily tread within and across specific nations and their archives, from Trinidad and Tobago to the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and back. Why Trinidad as a port of departure and (attempted) repatriation? Recalling the tributaries of his family’s migrations around the Caribbean, from “Monserrat, Grenada, Barbados, Antigua, Nevis, Tobago, and Panama,” to Trinidad, Stokely Carmichael noted that his heritage was unremarkable. “An economic magnet for people from the smaller territories,” with its sugar, cocoa, and petroleum industries, Trinidad was “a commercial and administrative hub,” whose population was constantly reconstituted by waves of migrants of seeking shelter, bread, and love. The growl of hungry bellies was especially loud during the global Great Depression, as thousands of workers, and fellow travelers, arrived in Trinidad, colliding and collaborating as the winds of change swept through Manchester, Manhattan, and the pages of the Negro World. In successive waves, Trinidadian migrants left for metropolitan shores. Yet the literature and soapbox cries of their sons made an indelible mark on the history of black liberation etched so deeply that the lives and labors of their daughters, sisters, and mothers, have been all but gouged out.

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7 Just two examples: Elma Francois, of St. Vincent, left home, in part, to join the father of her son, Albert James, who settled in Trinidad after fighting in World War I. Mabel Florence Charles, Stokely Carmichael’s mother, was born in the Panama Canal Zone and grew up in Montserrat. In Port of Spain to obtain her visa to the United States, where her parents had moved, Mabel met Stokely’s father, Adolphus Carmichael; see Rhoda Reddock, Elma Francois: The NWCSA and the Worker’s Struggle for Change in the Caribbean (London and Port of Spain: New Beacon Books, p. 9; Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (New York: Scribner, 2003), pp. 16-17; Winston James details the ecological, economic, and meteorological forces shaping Caribbean migration in “Caribbean Migration: Scale, Determinants, and Destinations, 1880-1932,” the first chapter of Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America (London: Verso, 1998).

8 Outside the West Indies and the United Kingdom, principally within the United States, the impact of these men and their Trinidadian heritage is similarly hidden, silenced by legacies of anti-communism and the pedagogy of “African American history.” See historiography below.
In July 1967, one year after he called for black power from the Mississippi Delta, Trinidad native Stokely Carmichael visited London for a conference on “The Dialectics of Liberation.” Once outside the stuffy lecture hall full of “armchair theoreticians,” he lifted his spirits among the African and Caribbean communities of London, guided by Michael X, (né DeFrietas) the Trinidad-born founder of the Racial Adjustment Action Society. “He was a black-consciousness militant,” Carmichael remembered, “quick-witted with a real mastery of that sharp, in-your-face, verbal comeback that in Trinidad they call picong...There was nothing British—much less Oxford—in the brother’s accent. It was pure San Fernando, back o’ bridge.” Throughout his stay, Carmichael met with local West Indian leaders, students, and journalists. Using his London stage, and Commonwealth roots, to connect movements in Britain, the United States, and the Caribbean. Carmichael was astonished by the local organizing of African and Caribbean youth, and “to hear Black Power resonating and to see the raised fists in the Asian communities, especially among Pakistani youth.” Back at the conference, Carmichael lambasted colonialism and the British Empire, drawing from his boyhood experiences in Trinidad to connect the plights of West Indians, Africans, and the “very real colonies” of minorities in the United States. “I have something against England,” he told his British audience. “I really do, because when I was young I had to read all that rot about how good England was to Trinidad, while she was raping us left and right. And all I used to read about when I was small was London, the beauty of London, and how peacefully everybody lived, and how nice life was—at my expense.”

9 Carmichael (Kwame Ture) with Thelwell, Ready for Revolution, p. 574.
10 Ibid., p. 576.
The following day, “revolutionary elder statesman,” and fellow Trinidadian, C.L.R. James addressed the conference. James had first heard Carmichael speak earlier that year, in March, at Sir George Williams University in Montreal. James had been so impressed with Carmichael that he quickly penned a letter to the twenty-four-year-old. “One of my most important and pregnant experiences is my experience both personal and otherwise of West Indians and people of West Indian origin who have made their way on the broad stage of Western civilization,” James wrote. He then traced a long lineage of “West Indians who have played a role on the world political stage that is not even properly understood by their own people,” including Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. “I say that I am one of them because it means that I understand the type very well,” James continued. “And you are one. I suspected it when I was reading some of your writings and having heard you I am absolutely certain of it.”12

*Without County: Black Revolutionaries of the Caribbean Diaspora, 1932-1975* is an attempt to excavate this genealogy of “West Indians on the world political stage.” Rather than retrace the well-trodden ground James describes—specifically, the biographies of elite fathers of pan-Africanism and black Marxism—this dissertation will attempt to underline a broader concept of black migrant radicalism that borrows from Hazel Carby’s concept of “History’s Hybrids,” and Carole Boyce Davies metaphor for radical politics that were “Left of Karl Marx.” The stories of migrant subjects, Carby argues, “are messily miscegenated and ambiguously hybrid,” and defy the “parochialism” of national histories. Carole Boyce Davies’s work on black communist Claudia Jones herald the potential for writing histories of people who “lived and organized at the intersection of a variety of positionalities (anti-imperialism and decolonization struggles, activism for workers’ rights, the

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critique of appropriation of black women’s labor, the challenge to domestic and international racism and their links to colonialism.”

Though most historians have yet to acknowledge the lineage that James describes here—black power as a transnational, Caribbean diasporic slogan—this neglected pedigree nevertheless casts other silences, and overlooks the local stages from which these West Indian men catapulted to world renown. The concept of radicalism at work in this dissertation, then, will encompass the border-shattering work of these male elites, local economic and political yearnings, and the working-class women’s movements from which intersectional, radical possibilities emerged. At their soapboxes and in their bedrooms, women organizing at the grassroots fought simultaneously, and continuously, with their migrant comrades against colonialism, imperialism, and patriarchy. Without Country will explore the history of black power as a continuation of anti-colonial, anti-imperial, anti-sexist radicalism of the 1930s, through the travel, political thought, and networks of two generations of Trinidadian anti-imperialists—insurgents on the ground, and intellectuals abroad—from the renaissance of literary and radical activity in the middle of the 1930s to the violent suppression of black power movements in the mid-1970s.

This history spans many years, across many territories. In order to tell it, Without Country will eschew conventional, nation-bound narratives for a history of the processes of network building, politicization, and radicalism in global/local spaces of intellectual and cultural exchange. Education, exile, labor, and desire are but four central themes that emerge from this long history of radicalism.

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and the Caribbean diaspora. Each of these factors presented obstacles and opportunities for migration and network-building across borders, and each will serve as organizing devices for individual chapters in the dissertation.

Rather than simply amend the well-documented black power movements that sprung from the red clay of Mississippi and the cinders of Detroit and Watts, with stories from Fyzabad’s oilfields and Port of Spain’s Carnival, *Without Country* will uncover circum-Atlantic networks fostered among intellectuals and activists in spaces where education—formal and informal, academic and political— took place. These include the open classrooms of public parks and factory floors, accredited universities, and international conferences. From Woodford Square and Piccadilly Greens in Port of Spain, the factories of Detroit and New York City, freedom schools in Mississippi and Alabama, to the residential halls at Oxford, Howard, Lincoln, and Sir George Williams, migrant radicals strategized, quarreled, and negotiated their constantly evolving relationship to nation, citizenship, and empire, and the racial and gender scripts that these relationships imposed.

Exile, as an organizing structure, as a fact, and as a political persona, will also serve as an analytical lens and an organizing structure for this dissertation. Although state repression—through exclusionary immigration policies, deportation, and police violence—crushed political possibilities in specific local spaces, exile also generated potential for their translation elsewhere. Furthermore, the erotic economies of specific political movements—desire among individuals, across borders, and the families that blossomed and collapsed in the process—fired the political imaginations of anti-colonial nationalists and world revolutionaries. Yet all too often, heterosexism, and the "tense and

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15 As Carole Boyce Davies shows, deportation was often only start of the story, *Left of Karl Marx*, p. 4.
16 Examples include the case of Elma Francois above, as well as the migrations precipitated by C.L.R. James’s unions with Constance Webb and Selma James. Exile, desire, and revolutionary labor likewise intersect in Stokely Carmichael’s union with Miriam Makeba. An embodiment of Carmichael’s adolescent longing for Africa and black power, Miriam Makeba provided Carmichael with familial links to the continent, just as he was in the process of relocating there. Indeed, In Conkary, Carmichael engendered kinship ties on a number of fronts, accepting the name Kwame Ture from his “political fathers.” Rewriting his heritage—colonial, national, and biological—and abandoning the nations that sent
tender ties” among individuals tore at the seams of radical horizons, and presented stumbling blocks to a liberatory, egalitarian, intersectional politics.  

The transnational family presented additional avenues and barriers to radical political action. Kinship networks stretched across generations, and oceans, distancing youth from the political assumptions, habits, and loyalties of their parents. Travel and alienation fostered introspection and relentless self-reflection of the migrant child’s place in the world, fueling the fires of rebellion. Yet rebellion had many strains, and targets. Just as Stokely Carmichael, eight years estranged from his mother, rebelled against her “conventional immigrant optimism” for the United States, Elma Francois’s son Conrad, who was raised by his grandmother in St. Vincent, embraced empire instead of his mother’s revolutionary vistas. Overall, Without Country embraces Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James’s demand for the recognition of children and women as “integral to history,” specifically a history “of young people's participation (and of women's) in revolutionary struggles.” Pairing the political rebellion of youth and the women’s movement as “intimately connected,” Dalla Costa and James wrote in 1973, “We are dealing with the revolt of those who have been excluded, who have been separated by the system of production, and who express in action their need to destroy the forces that stand in the way of their social existence, but who this time are coming

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17 Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” Journal of American History 88 (2001); M. Jacqui Alexander offers a way of telling a history of ideological and political formations across the imperial and colonial, and the neocolonial and neo-imperial, through the “palimpsestic character of time,” and the reproduction of “modernist claims about statehood and nationbuilding,” specifically citizenship—defined by heterosexual marriage practices—that is applicable to the family choices of diasporic intellectuals and the limits of their political visions for national or diasporic citizenship; Alexander, Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Radical feminists articulated and practiced alternatives to conventional heterosexual marriage in tune with their radical political practices on the public stage; see Boyce Davies, “Deportable Subjects: U.S. Immigration Laws and the Criminalizing of Communism,” The South Atlantic Quarterly 100:4 (Fall 2001), and Left of Karl Marx, pp. 50, 259 n.59; Reddock, Elma Francois, p. 18.

18 Carmichael (Kwame Ture) with Thelwell, Ready for Revolution, pp. 50, 96; “Mainspring of Black Power,” The Observer, 23 July 1967; Reddock, Elma Francois, p. 54.
together as individuals.” These personal connections and networks, and the political work that they generated, are at the core of this dissertation project.

The narrative threads of the project will be drawn generationally, as well as geographically, from the renaissance of literary activity and labor activism in the 1930s to the collapse of black power politics in Trinidad in the mid-1970s. In between, the dissertation will criss-cross the Atlantic with the Trinidadian radicals it follows. But what is Trinidadian in the context? And what is radical? Several of the principal characters within this story were born to families who had settled in Trinidad and Tobago for only one or two generations—if they were born there at all—and spent part, if not most—of their lives as exiles overseas. Others arrived to the islands as migrants, toilers, spouses and lovers from other shores, and planted roots as defenders of the exploited and the unemployed. As highlighted above, the settlement of this two-island colony, then nation, was constantly in flux, suckled and sapped by the “overlapping diasporas” of African, Indian, and Chinese workers to its shores, and out again to the metropoles that competed for its labor, its resources, its political and economic spoils. Radicalism, in this fluctuating, ever-changing social landscape, marinated in the constant interaction and dialogue among migrant travelers, and travel helped engender radicalism among middle-class, formally educated men, expatriate students, teachers, and journalists—as well as women who crossed racial, national, and oceanic divides to link local, grassroots battles against imperialism, patriarchy, and the exploitation of workers. While the literary and political work of these male, formally educated, intellectuals has been told before, the grassroots anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles, and feminist practice, of working-class women is less clear. And historians have rarely traced the concrete connections among these deceptively disparate movements.

20 Carole Boyce Davies, Ula Taylor, and Cathy Cohen, among others, have cataloged the erasures of women from studies of the black radical tradition; see Ula Y. Taylor, “Read[ing] Men and Nations: Women in the Black Radical Tradition,” *Souls* 1:4 (Fall 1999); Cathy J. Cohen, “Deviance as Resistance: A New Research Agenda for the Study of

Recent work seeks to revise these accounts, most notably the essays in Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard’s superb anthology, *Want to Start a Revolution: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). But erasures remain, and women are marginal to the concept of “black internationalism” in Michael O. West, William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkins, eds., *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), whose contributors, with the exception of Vijay Prashad, hardly mention women at all, let alone gender. Brian Meeks’s essay on “The Rise and Fall of Caribbean Black Power,” while attentive to Trinidad, ignores women. Furthermore, the editors’ choice of contemporary evidence of “the black international”—hip hop as embodied by Tupac Shakur—evokes sexism, homophobia, and rape as much as it does hip hop as “a productive technology in the current global mapping and moving of black political subjects via the social workings of diaspora,” Marc D. Perry, “Hip Hop’s Diasporic Landscapes of Blackness,” p. 233.

Following in the footsteps of recent books like Glenda Gilmore’s *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights 1919-1950*, *Without Country* is part of a broader historical turn to extend the chronology of “the long civil rights movement.” Like Gilmore, I am dissatisfied with simply extending timelines, but “in expanding the temporal and geographical boundaries of the war against Jim Crow.” Jim Crow, however, was only one front in a world war against colonialism, racism, and patriarchy. Because this topic covers broad chronological as well as geographic territory, the dissertation will intersect several subfields in twentieth-century U.S., Caribbean, British, and Atlantic history, and incorporate methods and theories from postcolonial studies, ethnic studies, and black and Caribbean feminist writers.

*Without Country* intervenes most directly in the burgeoning subfield of Black Power Studies. Currently, as scholars have paid increased attention to black power movements in the Caribbean, principally in Jamaica, Guyana, and Grenada, much work done remains to be done on “Black Power Revolution of 1970” in Trinidad and Tobago, and the subsequent NUFF guerilla movement.  

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23 My engagement with, and interventions in, feminist historiography and transnational feminist theory is conspicuously limited. As a new student to these fields, I will continue to study, and depend more heavily, on these particular genealogies as the dissertation develops.
Participant accounts dominate the few studies of black power movements in Trinidad and Tobago, and only a handful of scholars have uncovered feminist movements from the 1930s to the 1970s.25

The burgeoning field of Black Power Studies in the U.S., however, overshadows this transnational, intersectional history of black power and migrant radicalism across these four decades. Indeed, the explicit aim of Black Power Studies, as explained by Peniel Joseph in a recent “State of the Field” article in the Journal of American History, “is to demystify, complicate, and intellectually engage demonized, dismissed, and overlooked actors and struggles by providing nuanced, well-researched, and weighty narratives that document the profound implications of black power politics for the study of African American history and U.S. history more broadly.”26 Thus Black Power Studies revitalizes the period of the black power movements in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, principally the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, as a paradigmatic movement worldwide. Expanding the chronology of these movements into “the heroic period” of civil rights history from 1954 to 1965, Black Power Studies situates black activists “at the center of Cold War intrigues,” by chronicling the lives and revive the reputations of “both the iconic and unglamorous” figures that have been hidden by popular images of militancy and violence, as well as “contribute to, and expand the scope of, a larger contemporary discussion about the legacy of civil rights.” Additionally, Joseph


has called for attention to “the international historical context” of the Black Power movement, principally through the travels of U.S.-born black activists abroad.  

This emphasis of Black Power Studies on U.S.-born subjects diminishes the long history of black activists traveling to and from the United States, the social and political movements in locales like Port-of-Spain, Montreal, and Brixton that precipitated the slogan, and the heterogeneity of movement participants that made black power a transnational banner before Stokely Carmichael ever stepped foot on U.S. soil. In their efforts to cross racial boundaries within the U.S., these authors also fail to address the traffic of ideologies and political strategy beyond tracking the one-way commerce of black power slogans to the Chicano, Asian American, and American Indian movements.” Consider a woman like Elizabeth Martinez, SNCC field secretary, co-author of Black Power: The Politics of Liberation, and Stokely Speaks, and attendee with Carmichael at the First Conference of the Organization of Latin American Solidarity in Cuba in July of 1967. Martinez’s trajectory from SNCC leader and political theorist of black power to becoming a principal founder of the Chicano movement suggests that the conversation on black power influences should be redirected away from influences and toward intersections and interactivity among radical movements.  

Scholars must not only bridge histories across ethnic divides, but must also attend to

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28 On provincialism and black studies, see Carby, “History’s Hybrids,” The Women’ s Review of Books 17:5 (February 2000); Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, a historian of the Black Panther Party, has traced such effects. “The Black Panther Party served as a paradigm of radical ethnic nationalism and a vanguard party for the revolutionary nationalist movement,” Ogbar argues, suggesting that Black Power inspired Yellow Power movements like the Asian American Hardcore and Yellow Brotherhood. Ogbar is right to show the interactivity of these movements, but he overstates the importance and uniqueness of the Black Panther Party, whose appeal, he claims, “was unprecedented in the annals of radical struggle.” This is a hard argument to accept in light of the Chinese and Cuban revolutions alone. While schooled in the political thought and theory of Huey Newton and Angela Davis, Thornhill’s fellow fighters, like the student insurgents in the Turkey from which he was barred, took their principal cues, and inspiration not from the radicals in the United States, but in Cuba; Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, “Yellow Power: The Formation of Asian-American Nationalism in the Age of Black Power, 1966-1975,” Souls 3:3 (Summer 2001), pp. 29-38; and Ogbar, “Rainbow Radicalism: The Rise of the Radical Ethnic Nationalism,” pp. 193-228. For a revealing look at the links between Black Power and the Chicano movement,
and reckon with their interactivity, and the history of race-making in the United States that has obscured differences within the category of black, and erased the lives of migrant actors whom scholars like Winston James have shown have had a role in U.S. politics disproportionate to their populations.29

Simply put, for far too long African Americanist historians, and black studies scholars more generally, have been anchored to a homogenous idea of blackness, an uncritical acceptance of racial codes that have cracked the foundations of even the most innovative scholarship in diaspora studies and black transnationalism. Ten years ago, Robin D.G. Kelley reflected on the turn toward international and transnational perspectives in United States history in an often-cited essay that reminded readers that black intellectuals had always already resisted “a bounded national history set in isolation from the world.”30 At the time, scholars in African American Studies, American Studies, Asian American Studies, and U.S. history were adopting strategies from cultural and postcolonial theorists to uncover the movement of people, ideas, and culture across borders, “the global within the local,” imperial circuits of knowledge production, and the “tense and tender ties” between colonizer and colonial subject. Subsequent studies shifted focus from elite subjects in the metropole, to colonial encounter, cultural hybridity, “global imaginaries,” and the constant construction and reconstruction of racial hierarchies in local, regional, and transnational contexts.31

But the field of black internationalist history is still reticent to budge from the safety and hegemony of U.S. black identity. Clear in Kelley’s essay, historians of “black internationalism” still cling to assumptions about an uncontested U.S.-born orientation, “Black History’s Global Vision” outward, and an undefined “we” differentiated from outsiders: “the Jamaicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Barbadians, Haitians.” It is no coincidence that Kelley positioned himself, in the first sentence of his essay, “as a scholar who owes his formative intellectual training to ethnic studies programs and Third World solidarity movements.” The “internationalist” thesis draws from this sense of “solidarity,” of the gaze black subjects born in the U.S., and the practice of comparison between themselves and black and Asian others across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and the Caribbean Sea.32 Entangled in import-export arguments about the influences of U.S. radicalism on movements abroad, these scholars depict the United States as a lodestone for the filaments of global radicalism. In contrast, Without Country will refocus this framework of African American history towards its literal subjects—and the global within—through the stories of Africans living in the United States and, borrowing from Carmichael, “African-Americans of the Americas.”33

The student movement, as it came to be known, was composed and lead by not only black and white activists from the urban centers of the U.S., but “outside agitators” of another kind, African and West Indian migrants who felt more than solidarity with the Third World. They were a part of it. The civil rights movement in the United States was always already a long-standing part of a protracted global struggle. Local movements for Black Power in the 1960s and 1970s inherited a system of international resistance that spanned the Atlantic during the depression, embodied by a network of West African and West Indian migrants who traversed the world. As C.L.R. James

reminded Stokely Carmichael in 1967, migrant activists “have played a role on the world political stage that is not even properly understood by their own people,” or, I should add, historians.

Histories of the student movement in the United States, though sensitive to the role tensions of northern students as “outsiders” in the southern communities they helped organize, miss the opportunity to highlight the role of immigrants, and depict these conflicts as regional, between Northern and Southern, educated and uneducated black Americans. Noting that “by 1967, most [SNCC] members thought of themselves as anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist members of the Third World,” Payne doesn’t address those organizers, like Carmichael, who didn’t just think of themselves in alliance with struggles in third world countries, but were actually born there.34 Some of the best histories of black power have noted that the movement was as much a “revival as a reversal.” Black power animated values, strategies, and political movements that were sown in the 1920s and 1930s in the Deep South, articulated in the philosophies of Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey, and practiced through the armed organizing work of sharecroppers unions. Historians of the New South have also challenged the idea of the South as a “closed society,” arguing against the exceptional racism in places like Mississippi by showing their connections to postwar racial politics in the North and West. Through their work of tracing the intersections of regional and ethnic movements, especially in freedom struggle during the 1960s and 1970s, these scholars have challenged the very idea of balkanized histories of the South and the Southwest, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Chicano Americans, which mute the forces of travel, mobility and shared struggle.35 While tracing connections to movements within U.S. borders, work remains to tell the story of activists who crossed them.

The field of African American history, already at the margins of U.S. history, has avoided the power such a periphery has to destabilize nation-bound, and thus incomplete, narratives of pan-Caribbean, pan-American, and transatlantic migrations. Likewise, African American history has relinquished the opportunity to place outcast black subjects at the core of nation-building projects, citizenship, and as a link to broader histories of migration, colonialism, and empire. Unfortunately, the bulk of “African American” historiography continues to perpetuate the “race-nationality concept” Ira de Augustine Reid critiqued in 1939, “a polyglot collection of racial mixtures and cultural adaptations,” reduced to the paradoxical category African American. The very framing of African-American history, as such, erases black subjects born outside of the United States, and naturalized citizens, like Carmichael, who spent only seventeen years living there. In positioning Carmichael as a principal actor in twentieth-century “African-American history,” scholars have merely footnoted his experience as an immigrant, and a child of two empires, using it as an anecdote, an insignificant detail about a militant narcissus that shattered King’s dream.

*Without Country* seeks to illuminate the relationship of its migrant subjects to citizenship and exclusion. Immigration scholars have divided migrations to the United States and Great Britain into four distinct periods. The first of these periods, covering the first three decades of the twentieth

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36 Two fields that have deep intellectual debts to Black Studies—Asian American Studies, and studies of whiteness—have done just that.

37 Published in 1939, Ira de Augustine Reid’s *The Negro Immigrant: His Background, Characteristics, and Social Adjustment, 1899-1937* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939) remains the foundational text for historical and sociological studies of black migration to the United States, particularly during the first wave that has garnered the most scholarly attention. Reid criticized of the field of immigration studies in the first three decades of the twentieth century: “Negro immigration as a modern aspect of the phenomenon has received only passing attention in the myriad works on the immigration policies and problems of the United States,” Reid wrote. “A sentence here and a paragraph three—frequently to the effect that this immigration is not extensive.” Ira de Augustine Reid, *The Negro Immigrant*, pp. 13, 23-24, 39, 227.

38 Carmichael’s colonial origins have become so insignificant to historians of the United States that Trinidad and Tobago is sometimes synonymous with other territories in the West Indies. See Carmichael, the “Jamaican-born New Yorker,” in Thomas Sugrue’s latest book, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Random House, 2008), p. 337.
century, has attracted the most scholarly attention due to the vast numbers of migrants, more than 100,000 by some estimates, who joined migrants from the U.S. South in the new “Black Metropolis” of Harlem. These studies focus on the personalities and political organizations built by individuals like Hubert Harrison, Marcus Garvey, and Cyril Briggs, and other prominent political figures from the British West Indies who unified vast numbers of African descended peoples in the Americas through race-based ideologies of unity. This period usually concludes with the Immigration Act of 1924, the Great Depression, and the Second World War. Provisions for national quotas in the Immigration Act of 1924 slowed migration, though West Indians continued to enter the U.S. through Great Britain’s quota. The second period, which U.S. immigration historians have largely overlooked, falls between the years that ushered in the “Windrush Generation” to Britain after 1948, and the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952, when the U.S. closed its doors. Nearly a decade later, these migrations reversed. The Commonwealth Act of 1962 banned the entrance of Britain’s black subjects, and the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 facilitated the second great migration of Caribbean to the U.S., along with educated professionals and skilled laborers from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

Within the past few decades, U.S. immigration studies have challenged euro-centric narratives of “melting pot” assimilation with more complex portraits of the interplay of colonialism, migration and racial formation. These studies have revised generations of scholarship that celebrated the pioneering spirit of European immigrants, and illuminated histories of alienage, imperialism, and

exclusion. Yet for all the great work that these scholars have done, they continue to ignore black immigrants from Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Sighted by scholars, the period of Caribbean Exclusion from the U.S. between 1952 and 1965 deserves closer attention, as do the effects of overlapping cold war immigration policies on movement and radical political organizing across borders. A particular political culture developed among migrants during the cold war, as civil rights and decolonization movements raged within the Caribbean and the United States. As an earlier generation of West Indian radicals were evicted from the United States under a tide of McCarthyism, and changed course to the U.K., smaller numbers of Caribbean travelers and their families traveled well-trodden roads to the United States through provisions of the McCarran-Walter Act that permitted family unification and student visas. The worldview of this civil rights generation, and their concrete connections to the archipelago, revise pervasive academic theories about transnational imaginaries, “solidarity,” and “Third world consciousness.”

Historians and sociologists have been unable to account for black heterogeneity and differences among people born in the U.S. and Caribbean without racializing them in the process.


43 This thesis extends from Harold Cruse’s The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership, introduction by Stanley Crouch (New York: New York Review Books, 1967, 2005). Writing in the late 1960s, Cruse compared Caribbean participants in the civil rights movement to Marcus Garvey, and attributed their “militant stand on racial discrimination,” to “a psychology of non-identification with American Negro status and accommodation to American white bourgeois values.” Black people born in the U.S., on the other hand, were “not being militant
For seventy years, since Ira de Augustine Reid published *The Negro Immigrant* in 1939, scholars have rehashed racist portraits of industrious immigrant sojourners, and native-born blacks with a deficient “attitude toward employment, work, and American society.”44 Shrouding “race” under the terms “ethnicity” and “ethnic difference,” and racial-ethnic traits of “radicalism” and “militant consciousness,” this scholarship echoes the historical xenophobia of its sources—from the anti-communist U.S. government officials to nativists in the U.S. black press.45 “Radicalism” and “militant consciousness” have come to signify inherent characteristics of Caribbean peoples, and the “lack” of such radicalism among the U.S.-born have come to indicate cultural and racial deficiencies. While praising the Caribbean immigrant as a virtuous, hardworking organism, these scholars chastise her shiftless, paranoid, cowardly U.S. cousin.46 Despite the best intentions of some of these scholars enough.” p. 255, and pp. 119, 427, 430, 432-433.

Thirty years later, in the award-winning *Black Identities*, Mary Waters repeated some the central claims in Cruse’s book, particularly the essential militancy of West Indians, and their use of national, “ethnic” affiliation as a strategy to escape white supremacy in the U.S. “Because they come from a society with a majority of blacks and with many blacks in high positions, the immigrants have high ambitions and expectations. Yet their experience with blocked economic mobility due to race and their strong racial identities lead them to challenge blocked mobility in a very militant fashion when they encounter it,” pp. 6-7; see also Dennis Forsythe, “West Indian Radicalism in America: An Assessment of Ideologies,” in Frances Henry, ed. *Ethnicity in the Americas* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1976).


44 Describing the character of these West Indian immigrants, Reid cited the history of slave rebellion as evidence that “the Caribbean Negro has developed into a spirited, aggressive culture type.” This aggressiveness found voice in projects like the Universal Negro Improvement Association, which reflected a Caribbean inclination to rebel against racist barriers to social and economic mobility. “The Negro immigrant is beyond a doubt more radical than the native,” Reid argued. “Protests against social and economic conditions are more pronounced among groups not so adjusted to their peculiar functioning within society,” Reid, *The Negro Immigrant*, pp. 54, 68, 71, 27, 35-38, 40-41, 49, 217-221.


46 This argument has been popularized by public intellectuals as well. During an interview with the *New York Times*, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. famously said, “we need to learn what the immigrants’ kids have so we can bottle it and sell it, because many members of the African-American community, particularly among the chronically poor, have lost that sense of purpose and values which produced our generation.” This comment, of course, contains a familiar
to avoid treating identity as “a zero-sum process,” their comparative work—grounded in the assumption that there are such things as essential, static Caribbean and U.S. cultures, and that these cultures have unchanging national characteristics—does nothing more than perpetuate the division of West Indian and “black American” societies into separate racial spheres. In method as well as argument, these scholars deny the dynamism of identity formation, and the lived experience of generations of migrants who balanced multiple national and regional identities, and in the process transformed local cultures that were always already global. These scholars would have you believe that a young Trinidadian shouting black power from the Mississippi Black Belt was so thoroughly assimilated into the culture of “black America” as to have forgotten the first eleven years of his life in an island of black and Asian majority, and that he meant that call for the United States alone.

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Chapter Summaries

Introduction

Outlining the themes of education, exile and desire, youth and rebellion, this introduction will propose alternative definitions of radicalism and revolution, as well as an unbounded history of a transnational Caribbean, through the stories of black and Asian workers, students, and intellectuals who combated structures of racism, patriarchy, and colonialism from the Great Depression to the oil boom of 1970s Trinidad. This chapter will profile the disparate sites of education and transnational exchange where West Indian migrants courted, networked, and strategized for a better future, often under the threat of state violence. Foregrounding black feminist struggles as foundational and generative of the radical traditions of the Caribbean diaspora, the introduction will question the stakes of revolution as accounted in conventional narratives of black radicalism and black power. In turn, it will offer alternative visions, articulated by migrant revolutionaries themselves, of a more complete transformation of structures of power—from bedrooms to the Black Belt.

Chapter One
“From Woodford Square to Where?”: A Radical Caribbean Renaissance (1932-1935)

Detailing the parallel renaissance in literature and radical politics during the early 1930s Trinidad and England, chapter one asks how gender, class and education—formal and self-taught—shaped the radical politics, sense of West Indian identity, and division among the colony’s divided castes: elite intellectuals who left Trinidad for the metropole, and grassroots activists who cast their buckets in local politics and anti-colonial struggle.

Following World War I, burgeoning migrant populations and an outpouring of political and intellectual activity in Trinidad and Tobago gave rise to an unprecedented level of literary production, union organizing, and radical activism. While some teachers and intellectuals cast their political hopes with gradual reform and the Trade Workers Association of Captain Arthur Cipriani, and their personal futures to the winds of emigration, working-class women were freedom fighters for the growing numbers of unemployed people. Growing numbers of Cipriani’s so-called “barefoot masses”—the unemployed workers in the streets of Port of Spain, and the oil and sugar fields of the south—were left out of Cipriani’s middle-class reform movement. Black and Indian women forged coalitions to challenge Cipriani and the colonial government. Defending the poor and disaffected was a vibrant, discordant number of grassroots women’s, labor, and ethnic nationalist movements—fractured along race, gender, and class—that staged hunger marches, and organized unions and political parties.

Chapter Two
“Struggle or Starve”:

The title for this chapter comes from a song by Brother Valentino, who, with other calypsonians, was one of the best chroniclers of black power period. One of the few books that considers the history of this period through the lens of music, and culture, is Louis Regis, The Political Calypso: True Opposition in Trinidad and Tobago 1962-1987 (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1999). On the revolution and the literary renaissance, see Hazel Carby, “Proletarian or Revolutionary Literature: C.L.R. James and the Politics of the Trinidadian Renaissance,” in South Atlantic Quarterly 87: 1 (Winter 1988).
From the Abyssinian Crisis to a Transnational Women’s Movement (1935-1939)\(^49\)

The mobilization of women during the Great Depression and in the wake of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia generated the widespread labor strikes in the late 1930s, and laid foundations for broad transnational coalitions that endured for more than thirty years. Chapter two bridges the divide between migrant intellectuals who emigrated to the metropole, and working-class activists who remained in the colonies, through the correspondence and intersecting politics between the International African Service Bureau in London and the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association in Trinidad. As Africans and West Indians in the U.K. mobilized in support of Ethiopia and the emancipation of Africa from European imperial powers, feminist intellectuals in England and Trinidad fostered transatlantic dialogues, and demanded relief for the staggering numbers of unemployed and hungry in the Caribbean. While men like C.L.R. James rested his hopes for world revolutions on African revolution, women like Amy Ashwood Garvey and Sylvia Pankhurst were attuned to the revolutionary potential of movements for self-government unfolding in the West Indies among self-educated migrant workers like Elma Francois, Christina King, and their Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association (NWCSA).

From her pulpits in Woodford Square, and the sugar and oilfields of Trinidad, Elma Francois lectured on imperialism and the history of African cultures. Circulating publications from Amy Ashwood Garvey and Pankhurst, Francois, an advocate of racial pride, nevertheless fought for interracial solidarity among black, Indian, and Chinese workers. On a more intimate level, Francois and her compatriots, including her domestic partner Jim Barrette, practiced alternatives to patriarchal marriage, and the gendered division of labor in the home. Francois’s public talks about workers and women’s rights, as well as African history and politics, connected her with fellow travelers from the U.S., and individuals like Uriah Butler, who has dominated historical accounts of the period.\(^50\) Newly unemployed from an injury in the oilfields, Butler signed on to Francois’s movement, and eventual split with Francois to found the British Workers’ and Citizens Home Rule Party in 1936. In 1937, during the violent repression of widespread strikes in Trinidad, Butler, Francois, and NWCSA members were arrested and tried for sedition. At her trial, Elma Francois delivered her speech, “World Imperialism and Colonial Toilers,” and was subsequently acquitted. Butler was imprisoned until 1939, and then again until the conclusion of the war, despite his enduring loyalty to Britain and the war effort.

Chapter Three
“A Clean Break With Past”: Teaching Revolution on the Assembly Line (1938-1948)\(^51\)

The politics of decolonization and civil rights merged—in concrete ways—through the interaction of actual people. U.S. universities were incubators for strategies of independence movements, as well as platforms for anti-colonial nationalist politics. Traveling into the classrooms of Howard, Lincoln, and Penn, the factories of New York and Detroit, the chapter will profile spaces where African and

\(^{49}\) From “Struggle or Starve: No War But the Class War,” Fight: Workers of the World Unite, London, August 1938, in Fight: facsimile edition of the British Trotskyist journals of the 1930’s, preface by Al Richardson.

\(^{50}\) Notably Gerald Horne’s recent, Cold War in a Hot Zone: The United States Confronts Labor and Independence Struggles in the British West Indies (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007).

West Indian migrants had direct contact with black liberation struggles outside the British Empire. A trip to the U.S. broadened the possibilities of revolution, as the mobilization of young feminists, workers and students expanded the horizons of anti-imperial struggle into an intersectional movement.

The Johnson-Forest Tendency, as Adrienne Rich notes, “predated not only the Women’s Liberation Movement but the student movements and the escalation of the Black Struggle in the 1960s.”52 Chapter three focuses on this understudied interracial, multi-generational, international movement, and the open classrooms of the Third Layer School, as antecedents to the radical liberation movements of the 1960s. Deployed by Trotsky to the United States in 1938 for a six-month trip, James spent fourteen years pondering “the Negro Question,” and the “Woman Question,” while organizing and educating workers and students, including Kwame Nkrumah. With Raya Dunayevskaya and Grace Lee Boggs, James split from the Socialist Workers Party to organize the independent Johnson-Forest Tendency, a Marxist workers and youth movement. Opening with the Fourth International Congress in 1938, when C.L.R. James left London for a short trip to the United States, the chapter will conclude seven years later, with the Pan-African Conference in Manchester in 1945 made possible by transatlantic networks built in the U.S.

**Chapter Four**


Nationalist politics in the Caribbean, and exclusionary immigration policies in Washington, imposed new obstacles and opportunities for the political work of migrant radicals. Chapter four extends the history of the Johnson-Forest Tendency into the cold war, when two of its members, C.L.R. James and Selma Weinstein, shifted their political focus from the women’s and black liberation movements in the U.S. to the movement for the independence of Trinidad and West Indian federation.

After a period of study, teaching, and politicization at Howard University and the Caribbean Commission, Eric Williams returned to Trinidad in 1948. During the early 1950s, Williams Woodford Square as his own pulpit for his own assent to power, lecturing Trinidadians on cultural nationalism, independence, and the future of higher education in the colony. “The University of Woodford Square” became the seat of a divisive nationalist movement in Trinidad, built on the political foundations of the workers struggles in the 1930s. Though Williams tried to co-opt the women’s movement, the dissent of trade unions, radical organizations, and Calypsonians grew stronger as the Peoples National Movmement (PNM) cemented power within a minority brown middle class, and marginalized the voices of Trinidad’s sizable Indian population.

Overlapping immigration policies in the U.K. and the U.S. shifted the course of Caribbean migrations as the Commonwealth Citizenship Act of 1948 ushered in the “Windrush Generation” to Britain, and anticommunists in the United States instituted an era of Caribbean exclusion through the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. During this era of McCarthyism, anti-communists in the U.S. racialized West Indians as inherently subversive, militant, and radical. After a fourteen-year stay in the United States, C.L.R. James, like other black “deportable subjects,” was imprisoned in Ellis Island and expelled from the country.53 Following him to England, and beyond, was the young Marxist feminist theorist Selma Weinstein.

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53 Boyce Davies, “Deportable Subjects.”
From her columns in *Correspondence*, and her acclaimed pamphlet, “A Woman’s Place,” Selma Weinstein fought for class solidarity among housewives and encouraged women to start revolutions in their own homes. After the United States deported C.L.R. James, Selma Weinstein abandoned her country to marry him. In 1957, just before Selma and C.L.R. James left England to join the independence movement in Trinidad, George Padmore, James, Grace Lee Boggs, Eric Williams and Kwame Nkrumah—whose Gold Coast had fast become a lodestone of Black Power—met at the Dorchester Hotel during the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers. Though the content of their conversation is unknown, they met at the cusp of radical change around the black Atlantic. Or so they must have hoped. A year after the conference, Selma and C.L.R. James joined the Peoples National Movement in Trinidad, where C.L.R James edited PNM paper *The Nation*, and Selma James organized local women and workers. Supporters of West Indian federation, Selma and C.L.R. James ultimately split from Williams over his abandonment of this project, and his concessions to Britain, Canada, and the U.S., principally over allowing the U.S. military base to remain at Chaguaramas. The two revolutionaries returned to Britain, and exile, just before the formal independence of Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, and the passage of the exclusionary Commonwealth Immigrants Act in the U.K.

Chapter Five

Focusing on the interactivity of hybrid subjects, and the generative sites of radicalism in local contexts, chapter five will revise pervasive theories about black internationalism, third world solidarity, the politics of black power through the stories of immigrant subjects in the U.S. student movement. West Indian leaders of CORE and SNCC, who drew from their formative experiences in the Caribbean as they called for self-determination from the Black Belts of Mississippi and Alabama, where they received their political educations among grassroots movements led by women.

The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 marked a generational shift in West Indian radical activity in the U.S. Though the immigration of Caribbean subjects to the United States ostensibly ebbed after 1952, exemptions for family reunification and education facilitated the entry of the next generation of West Indian youth. These youths were exposed to radical traditions and union organizing early, more often than not by the “mother who really fathered”—unionized women in the Caribbean and in the U.S.\(^{55}\)

During the 1960s, African and West Indian migrants in U.S. universities were attuned as much to the domestic civil rights movement as the decolonization struggles abroad. In the United States, students drew comparisons among conditions in the Caribbean, Africa, and the U.S., and rebelled against oppressive social hierarchies around the world. Young black migrants negotiated multi-

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\(^{54}\) Richard Wright’s *Black Power* (New York: Harpers, 1954), heralded the emerging independent nations of Africa, principally the Gold Coast, later the Republic of Ghana.

positional identities, and drew from colonial gender scripts as they formulated strategies of resistance, or practiced sexism. This chapter traces the politicization of this generation in the U.S. Deep South, focusing specifically on the Nonviolent Action Group at Howard and SNCC, culminating with the Lowndes County movement and the black power electoral politics of 1966.

Chapter Six

The global rebellions in the name of black power threatened the stability of world superpowers and newly emergent postcolonial nations alike. As black power traveled around the Atlantic, and around the world, those who carried its banner were met with state and vigilante violence, deportation, and exile. From closed gates emerged new possibilities. Though the limitations of electoral politics became evident in Alabama and Trinidad, black power invigorated broader campaigns against racism and sexism in the U.K., among a rabble of black and Asian movements.

In March 1965, as SNCC organized the Lowndes County Freedom Party to run and independent slate of candidates in the 1966 election, C.L.R. James returned to Trinidad as a cricket reporter for the *London Times* and Sunday *Observer*. Prime Minister Eric Williams had James arrested immediately and placed under house arrest for six weeks. At the time, Indian sugar workers staged a series of strikes, leading Williams to declare a state of emergency. That summer, James, Oilfield Workers Trade Union president George Weekes and Democratic Labour Party member Stephen Maharaj founded the short-lived Workers and Farmers Party to challenge, unsuccessfully, Williams and the PNM in the 1966 election. Losing the vote, James once again left his birthplace for England.

A few months later, James saw Stokely Carmichael speak at Sir George Williams University, and again that summer, in London. From 1967 to 1969, West Indian, African, and Indian organizations—principally, for this chapter, Selma James’s Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD), and Black Regional Action Movement—employed black power as a banner for action against racism and xenophobic violence. Other veterans of Trinidad's labor movement like John La Rose, founder of New Beacon Books, merged migration, worker radicalism and the cultural renaissance of black power—the union of literature and labor, poetry and picket-line politics—through the Caribbean Artists Collective. Following Enoch Powell's anti-immigrant “Rivers of Blood Speech” in April 1968, a Black People’s Alliance convened in a national conference of more than twenty organizations of Indians, West Indians, Pakistanis and Africans.

Chapter Seven

For a few months during in the spring of 1970, divided classes of Trinidadian society came together to stage the first black power revolution in the Caribbean. The spontaneity that was their spark, and their strength, was not enough to sustain this movement that lacked cohesion and a clear political strategy. Moreover, the oil boom of the 1970s subdued rebellious youth and discontent masses with prosperity and material comforts. Sexism was especially destructive to this coalition, as the chauvinist strains of black power diluted radical programs, and alienated local women who were the dynamos and veterans of political struggle throughout the twentieth century. The black power

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movements in Trinidad, heirs to the legacies of labor and working-class politics lead by women, turned its back on the them, and their networks. Because only a handful of few contemporary scholars have documented the political action of women in Trinidad during this period, this chapter joins their effort to shed light on this moment, and the continued dialogue among women’s movements in Trinidad and anti-racist and anti-sexist organizations in the U.K.  

The dissertation concludes with this short-lived alliance of organizations, some borne directly out of the campaigns of the late 1930s, that erupted out of student movements at Sir George Williams University and the University of West Indies, St. Augustine in 1969. In January of 1969, during an action against racist policies at Sir George Williams University, several Trinidadian students were arrested and charged for the destruction of computer equipment. As the students stood trial in February 1970, Port of Spain watched. Out of Carnival, revelers demanded the immediate expulsion of Canadian banks and companies. During the following weeks, cries against economic imperialism and foreign investments only grew louder and more assertive. The National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), a student group from UWI St. Augustine, attempted to lead the movement of a rapidly growing anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist alliances of students, union members, black oil workers and Indian sugar workers, and an army regiment that mutinied rather than subdue the protestors. This “revolution” in the making fragmented under the weight of its many interests, and the PNM split over Prime Minister Eric Williams’s response. Williams again declared a state of emergency, and U.S. and Venezuelan warships sailed offshore, prepared to evacuate their citizens and defend their oil leases.

The February Revolution politicized a new generation of Trinidadian freedom fighters, and its implosion gave purpose to a youth guerilla movement that abandoned the program of rebellion and electoral reform entirely. Taking their cues from Cuba, Watts, Malcolm X and Walter Rodney, the National United Freedom Fighters demanded the evacuation of foreign capitalists, and the absolute transfer of power to the excluded and exploited. This subsequent, understudied period of violence among guerrilla fighters and police left fourteen young fighters dead, including seventeen-year-old, and possibly pregnant, Beverly Jones, “Heroine of the Revolution.”

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57 As noted before, I am indebted here to the work of Rhoda Reddock, Patricia Mohammad, and Victoria Pasley.
Research Plan

Without Country: Black Revolutionaries of the Caribbean Diaspora, 1932-1975 will intersect the histories of several territories over four decades, but will be unburdened by the depth of detail required of a national history, or a history of local political movements in any one of these places. Rather, as an analysis of the intersections among local movements, and the transmission of knowledge and ideology across a bevy of personal and professional networks over vast distances in time and space, this dissertation will bridge intellectual history, literary studies, and biography through the close readings of texts—fiction, biography, editorial, political pamphlet, and broadside—that were parts of a global front against empire, patriarchy, racism, and cold war.

My primary source, then, is the literary corpus—published and unpublished—of these prolific writers. Supplementing materials unavailable in the collections at Yale University and the Schomburg Center for the Research in Black Culture (or through interlibrary loan) will require research trips to Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Montreal, and to a few archives in the United States. As the themes of exile and exclusion are major organizing devices for the project as a whole, I will also have to take a trip to the National Archives in College Park, Maryland to consult immigration and Justice Department documents relating to the process of racializing Caribbean migrants as inherently militant, subversive, and unfit for citizenship, as well as the legal wrangling that allowed for their deportation.

I plan to set aside at least the next year, with any luck two, for full-time research. Currently, a combined award from Yale University and the Ford Foundation will fund my studies until the end of my sixth year. Next year, my fourth, I will defer funding from Yale and register in absentia in order to travel to Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom. During my fifth year, provided I do not win an outside award—like the Fox International Fellowship—I will return to Yale, teach,
and visit nearby archives in New York City, Washington D.C., and Montreal as necessary. In my sixth year, I will take the University Dissertation Fellowship and apply again for outside funding, specifically the Erskine A. Peters Dissertation Year Fellowship at the University of Notre Dame.

Next fall, I plan to spend two to three months in Trinidad and Tobago consulting collections at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine (UWI), and the National Archives in Port-of-Spain. In addition its exhaustive collection of secondary sources related to Caribbean history and culture unavailable in the U.S., including literature on the labor and black power movements in Trinidad and Tobago, UWI St. Augustine library contains the records and publications of Trinidadian writers, trade unions, and student groups active in the political rebellions and revolutions of the twentieth century. The Eric Williams Memorial Collection and the C.L.R. James Collection at UWI St. Augustine contain the largest treasury of primary documents, correspondence, manuscripts—as well as the personal libraries—of these two intellectuals, colleagues, and rivals. These collections span their political lives, and the collections shed particular light on their trans-Atlantic crossings, the independence movement in Trinidad, and their public conflicts over the newly emergent nation’s future. The Eric Williams Memorial Collection includes documents relating to his time at Howard and the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission, as well as his long tenure as Prime Minister, which encompass his government’s suppression of the black power movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The National Archives in Port-of-Spain house additional governmental and colonial documents related to the labor movements of the 1930s, and have dossiers on Elma Francois and Uriah Butler. Other collections include a series on Carnival and Calypso, which offer documents on the explosive Carnival in 1970, several series of historical photographs, and a comprehensive historical newspaper collection that stores, to name a few, The Independence Chinese Weekly, Port-of-Spain Gazette, Trinidad Guardian, Trinidad Express, Daily Mirror, the Independent, Newsday, Trinidad and Tobago...
Mirror, and Vanguard, the organ of the Oilfield Workers Trade Union, one of several unions which emerged from the labor movements of the 1930s, and went on to be integral to the February Revolution of 1970.

Following a trip to Trinidad and Tobago, I will spend at least three months at archives in Britain. Collections in Manchester, Birmingham, Oxford, and London are rich with materials on the black history in Britain, and Afro-Asian liberation struggles in the 1960s and 1970s. In Manchester, The Working Class Movement Library and the Labour History Archive of the People's History Museum—which will reopen after major renovations in February 2010—have a considerable collection of journals, newspapers, pamphlets and ephemera related to black and Asian anti-racist organizations in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the 1945 Pan-African Conference in Manchester. Rather than narrate a comprehensive history of black power in Britain, with complete profiles of these many organizations, the dissertation will account for the writings and networks of Selma and C.L.R. James, John La Rose, the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination, the Black Regional Action Movement, and the Universal Coloured People’s Association, which was formed following Stokely Carmichael’s visit to London in 1967. Copies of the journal of the Black Regional Action Movement, Black RAM, which was edited by Selma James, are available at the British Library reading room in West Yorkshire.

The Birmingham City Archives and the Birmingham Central Library also have considerable collections chronicling anti-racism, black and Asian coalitions, and black power politics in the 1960s and 1970s. The archive of the Indian Workers Association (IWA) contains news clippings, pamphlets, and journals relating to a number of organizations with which the IWA corresponded and formed alliances.

Rhodes House Library at The University of Oxford houses collections on colonial administrations and international labor organizations in the 1930s—specifically the Arthur-Creech
Jones Papers of the Colonial Manuscripts Collection, and the papers of the Fabian Colonial Bureau—which were in direct correspondence with Elma Francois, Uriah Butler, and the NWCSA.

The Labour Party Archive at Manchester University houses documents relating to the West Indian Federal Labour Party, which enlisted C.L.R. James as its secretary for a time. Additional materials relating to the party are available tucked into the C.L.R. James Papers at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London. Also in London, I will visit the George Padmore Institute, which houses the periodicals Race Today, The Leveller, Race and Class, Spare Rib, as well as the papers of John La Rose, Trinidadian labor organizer and founder of New Beacon Books, the Caribbean Artists Collective, and the Black Parents Movement.

While in Britain, I will make an excursion to Amsterdam to view the E. Sylvia Pankhurst Collection at the International Institute of Social History. Pankhurst’s personal archive, which includes papers and correspondence relating to her support for Ethiopia, and publication of the The New Times and Ethiopia News, will hopefully reveal fruitful connections to the women’s, labor and anti-fascist movements in Trinidad.

Additional correspondence and documents relating to Pankhurst, Ethiopia, and suffrage, are part of the Mary E. Gawthrope Papers at The Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives in New York City. The New York Public Library holds the National American Woman Suffrage Association Records, and its branch the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture holds The New Times and Ethiopia News and the J.R. Casimir Papers.

The Schomburg Center houses additional materials related to Kwame Nkrumah, C.L.R. James, Claudia Jones, and Amy Ashwood Garvey: the Council on African Affairs Papers, Marika Sherwood’s Kwame Nkrumah Research Materials and Claudia Jones Research Materials, The Claudia Jones Memorial Collection, the Ralph Bunche Collection, Benjamin J. Davis Papers, Clarence L. Holte Papers, the Phelps-Stokes Fund Papers, William Alpheaus Hunton Papers, St. Clair Drake Papers, John Henrik Clarke
Papers, Julian Mayfield Papers, C.L.R. James Letters to Constance Webb, the Larry Neal Papers, and other collections.

Adding further flesh to the material on C.L.R. James and the Johnson-Forest Tendency from collections in Trinidad, Britain, and New York, I will spend a summer in Detroit consulting the Martin and Jesse Glaberman Collection, the Raya Dunayevskaya Papers, the James and Grace Lee Boggs Papers, and the Frances D. and G. Lyman Paine Papers at the Walter P. Reuther Library of Wayne State University. These collections comprise the definitive archive on the Johnson-Forest Tendency, the Correspondence Publishing Committee, Facing Reality, and their many publications.

A colleague of the Johnsonites, student of C.L.R. James and George Padmore, and mentor of Stokely Carmichael, Kwame Nkrumah studied at Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania in the 1930s and early 1940s, and traveled frequently to New York and Washington D.C. Documents related to Nkrumah, and the generations of future West African nationalist leaders in the U.S. are held at the Lincoln University Archives, the University of Pennsylvania Archives and the University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, Temple University Archives, the Horace Mann Bond Papers and the Rayford Logan Papers at the Library of Congress, the W.E.B. Du Bois Papers at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst the Anson Phelps Stokes Fund Papers and James Weldon Johnson Papers at Yale University, and the Dabu Gizenga Collection Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University.

Should the time and resources materialize, I would eventually like to consult the Nkrumah collection at the Ghana National Archives, and the Ackah Watson Papers at the University of Ghana, Legon, which house records and correspondence related to Nkrumah’s early years in Britain and the United States, and his involvement in the 1945 Pan-African Conference in Manchester.

In addition to the SNCC Papers and CORE Papers on microform, I will consult the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center for records relating to Eric Williams, West Indian students
and the Nonviolent Action Group at Howard. If I have the time and resources, I will consult the *Stokely Carmichael-Lorna D. Smith Collection* at Stanford University Library as well. Student publications and university records related to the West Indian student politics at Canadian universities during the late 1960s, the 1969 “Computer Riot” at Sir George Williams University, and the subsequent trial, are held at the archives of McGill University, Concordia University, and McMaster University.
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