

Reena N. Goldthree and Natanya Duncan: Feminist Histories of the Interwar Caribbean: Anti-colonialism, Popular Protest, and the Gendered Struggle for Rights



Feminist Histories of the Interwar Caribbean: Anti-colonialism, Popular Protest, and the Gendered Struggle for Rights

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Editorial

Writing in the pages of the *Negro World*, the official organ of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), in October 1925, Jamaican journalist Amy Jacques Garvey heralded a new era of women's civic activism. "The exigencies of this present age require that women take their places beside their men," she proclaimed. "[W]omen of the darker races are sallying forth to help their men establish a civilization according to their own standards, and to strive for world leadership." Positioning women in the vanguard of the entwined struggles for racial and anti-colonial liberation, Jacques Garvey announced that women's activism could ultimately extend beyond protest politics to armed struggle. "The doll-baby type of woman is a thing of the past, and woman is forging ahead prepared for all emergencies and ready to answer any call, even if it be to face the cannons on the battlefield." In her gendered blueprint for liberation, militant women "of the darker races" would advance the fight "to victory and to glory."¹

Born in Jamaica in 1895, Jacques Garvey migrated to the United States in 1917 and played a central role in black nationalist and anti-colonial political movements in the decades between the First and Second World Wars (Adler 1992; Bair 1992; Taylor 2002; Duncan 2009; Goldthree 2010; Parascandola 2016; Blain 2018). While her work as an editor and columnist for the *Negro World* afforded her an unusually visible global platform, Jacques Garvey's unflinching efforts to challenge colonial rule were part of a far-reaching and sustained groundswell of popular activism by women and men in the Greater Caribbean.² In the islands and in the diaspora, new activist groups—sugarcane cutters and oilfield workers, military veterans and market women, physicians and middle-class suffragists, poets and trade union organizers—mobilised to challenge colonialism and its attendant inequalities. In this issue of the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, we examine the political ferment of the interwar period (1918–1939), tracking how gendered conceptions of rights, respectability, leadership, and belonging informed anti-colonial thought and praxis. Rather

than constructing a singular narrative of Caribbean anti-colonialism, we grapple with the varied political visions and modes of resistance that animated critiques of colonial rule, attending at once to place-specific strategies and to shared regional agendas.

Feminist scholars have exposed the imbrication of anti-colonial nationalism and gender ideology, revealing how understandings of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality structured nationalist projects from above and below. “Despite professed ideals, nationalisms do not address all individuals equally: significant distinctions and discriminations are made along gendered (and also class and racial) lines,” as literary theorist Elleke Boehmer has observed. “Gender informs nationalism and nationalism in its turn consolidates and legitimates itself through a variety of gendered structures...the idea of nationhood bears a masculine identity though national ideals may wear a feminine face” (1991, 6). Engaging with these insights, the twelve articles included in this issue present new research on gender and anti-colonialism in Jamaica, Haiti, Bermuda, Puerto Rico, Curaçao, Trinidad, British Guiana (Guyana), and Caribbean diasporic communities in Panama and the United States. The authors disrupt the longstanding focus on the “fathers” and “heroes” of Caribbean nationalism by excavating women’s contributions to the region’s nationalist struggles, casting fresh light on prominent activists such as Una Marson, Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain, Dominga de la Cruz Becerril, and Trina Padilla de Sanz, while also introducing readers to less well-known figures such as trailblazing newspaper columnist Amy Denniston, community organizer Elizabeth Hendrickson, suffragist Gladys Morrell, and radical educators Catherine Donnellen and Eleanor Frances Cahill. In addition, they foreground gender and sexuality as crucial sites of contestation within nationalist struggles, analysing them alongside race, class, religion, and other axes of difference,³ to show how Caribbean women and men alike employed gender ideologies to assess grassroots resistance movements, popular religious and healing practices, and forms of belonging. Bridging the fields of women’s history and gender and sexuality studies, then, this issue offers a feminist analysis of the social, material, and discursive dimensions of anti-colonialism in the interwar-era Greater Caribbean.

Turbulent and transformative, the decades between the world wars have garnered resurgent interest as governments mark the centenary of World War I and scholars reassess the era's many sociopolitical upheavals. Caribbeanist scholars have identified the interwar period as a critical conjuncture in the protracted struggle against colonial rule, uncovering both the structural conditions and the individual activists that catalyzed popular movements during the 1920s and 30s (e.g., Reddock 1988; K. Singh 1994; W. James 1998; Sharpley-Whiting 2002; Edwards 2003; Putnam 2013a; Dalleo 2016; Jiménez de Wagenheim 2016). In the articles showcased here, the contributors tackle several interrelated questions about the interwar Caribbean. How did the political shifts of the interwar era impact prevailing gender norms in the Caribbean? What roles did women—of various racial, ethnic, religious and class backgrounds—play in the era's major political movements? What ideas did political activists espouse about masculinity and femininity? How did nationalist leaders respond to normative colonial discourses on reproduction, sexuality, and the family? And finally, how have the political upheavals of the interwar era been remembered and reimagined in this contemporary moment? Each article engages with these questions through a focus on a specific site within the Greater Caribbean, while also considering regional commonalities and convergences. More broadly, the articles build upon foundational work by Caribbean feminist thinkers, while also introducing fresh theoretical and methodological approaches inspired by contemporary scholarly debates.

The islands and continental rimlands of the Caribbean possessed varying degrees of sovereignty in the interwar era, from Crown Colony status to political independence. Yet, across the region, colonialism and foreign military intervention limited most Caribbean residents' ability to participate in local governance. Three European powers—Britain, France, and the Netherlands—maintained longstanding networks of colonial possessions. The United States exercised jurisdiction over Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands as unincorporated territories. And, beginning during World War I and continuing well into the interwar years, the U.S. military led multi-year occupations of the region's formally independent nation states—Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic.⁴

The interwar Caribbean, therefore, should be viewed as a place of “constrained sovereignty,” a region where various forms of foreign intrusion “challenge[d] the principles of bounded territorial authority associated with the Westphalian order” (Bonilla 2015, 10).

Local Struggles and Pan-Caribbean Political Histories

The political conflagrations of World War I reverberated deeply in the Caribbean. Colonial territories became sites of rapid military mobilisation, which, in turn, provided a pretext for intensified policing of labouring men and women by the state. During the war years, over 30,000 conscripted troops from Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana fought in the French Army (Edwards 2003, 3; Andrivon-Milton 2005; Guyot, Gardiennet, and Champesteing 2014). More than 15,600 volunteers enlisted in the British West Indies Regiment, while smaller numbers of soldiers from the British Caribbean served in the West India Regiment, in Canadian regiments, or in metropolitan army units (Howe 2002; R. Smith 2004; Goldthree 2016a; Goldthree 2016b). Approximately 18,000 servicemen from Puerto Rico served in the United States armed forces, deploying as guards in the U.S.-controlled Canal Zone in Panama (Franqui-Rivera 2018, 63–96). As an emerging body of literature has begun to document, women across the region aided the war effort in myriad ways—as nurses, recruitment rally speakers, fundraisers, sex workers, and literacy teachers (Del Moral 2013; Bean 2018). The mobilisation for war propelled other sociopolitical shifts of lasting importance, most notably the suspension of Indian indentureship, a system that had brought half a million Indian labourers to the Caribbean from 1838 to 1917. Indentureship’s end not only marked a watershed in the formation of Indo-Caribbean communities, but also facilitated novel possibilities for political engagement and claims-making (Shepherd 1994; Ramdin 2000; Mohammed 2002a; Mahase 2008; Bahadur 2014).

In the war's wake, anti-colonialists of various ideological stripes mobilised in pursuit of greater political rights and improved living conditions, presenting formidable challenges to the European and U.S. overseas empires. Issuing demands for self-determination and full citizenship, activists contested the legitimacy of foreign rule through new mass organisations—such as trade unions, political parties, and nationalist associations—as well as older collectives such as mutual aid societies, religious groups and cultural clubs. Activists also used printed texts to marshal support, publishing literary works, newspaper articles, and protest pamphlets. The duration, scale, and militancy of anti-colonial actions varied widely during the interwar years, with activists employing tactics ranging from formal negotiation with the state to armed insurgencies in occupied Haiti and the Dominican Republic; yet the surge in grassroots protest occurred throughout the Greater Caribbean, often linking the islands to the diaspora and to other sites in the colonised world (e.g., W. James 1998; Davis and Williams 2007; Luis-Brown 2008; Boittin 2010; Ewing 2013; Putnam 2013a; Guridy 2013; Makalani 2014; Dalleo 2016; Duke 2016; Umoren 2016; Duncan 2017; Stevens 2017).

What would result from the political upheavals of the interwar decades? Looking broadly across the region we see an expansion of electoral democracy by the end of the 1940s, including the enfranchisement of women in several Caribbean territories. In Cuba, for example, disaffected soldiers and student activists sparked the Revolution of 1933, deposing President Carlos Manuel de Céspedes y Quesada and rallying under the slogan “Cuba for Cubans” (Pérez 2011, 204). Seven years later, in October 1940, the region's most populous nation would enact a new progressive constitution, which expanded civil liberties, social welfare provisions, and workers' rights as well as codified universal adult suffrage (Stoner 1991; Whitney 2001; Pérez 2011). In the British West Indies, universal adult suffrage was introduced in response to the landmark labour rebellions of the 1930s, becoming law in Jamaica in 1944 and in Trinidad and Tobago two years later (Post 1978, 1981; Ryan 1972; Reddock 1988, 1994; K. Singh 1994; Palmer 2014; Teelucksingh 2015). In 1946, the citizens of Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French Guiana voted to become part of metropolitan France, transforming the

vieilles colonies into overseas departments (Nesbitt 2007; Childers 2016). That same year, mass protests by militant students, urban workers, and peasants toppled the government of Haitian president Élie Lescot, inaugurating a new era of radical political activism (M. Smith 2009, 71–101; Joseph-Gabriel 2016, 6–10). In the colonies under Dutch rule, universal adult suffrage was enacted through a new constitution in 1948 (Oostindie and Klinkers 2003, 64–88). To be sure, these gains were not uniform or uncontested. The dictatorship of Raphael Leónidas Trujillo Molina in the Dominican Republic, which stretched from 1930 to 1961, offered a striking departure from the democratic opening in the Caribbean during 1930s and 40s, and presented a sobering example of how populist development projects could become a linchpin of authoritarian governance (Turits 2003; Derby 2009; Paulino 2016; Manley 2017).

Rethinking Gender and Anti-colonialism in the Greater Caribbean

This special issue originated through a series of conversations between the co-editors about how gender remains understudied and undertheorized, relative to race and class, in the scholarship on interwar Caribbean politics. Seeking to place studies of anti-colonialism more squarely into conversation with Caribbean feminist studies, the articles featured here approach the interwar period through a variety of academic disciplines: gender and sexuality studies, history, sociology, literary and cultural studies, and African Diaspora studies. The contributors draw upon an impressively diverse array of written materials—including advertisements, ethnographic field notes, novels, archival documents, memoirs, newspaper editorials, and short stories—as well as interviews and photographs. Geographically, they map the gendered terrain of interwar political activism across the islands and continental rimlands of the Caribbean as well as in the diaspora. When read together, the articles in this issue enable new comparative analyses of the interwar Caribbean across both geopolitical and temporal boundaries.

In the first two articles, W. Chris Johnson and Tyesha Maddox examine British Caribbean activism in interwar New York City. By the early 1920s, some 40,000 British Caribbean immigrants resided in Harlem, with smaller numbers in Brooklyn and other parts of the city (Putnam 2013b, 472; Watkins-Owens 1996). Johnson, focusing on the movement for equitable healthcare in Harlem, recovers the forgotten activism of black male physicians from the British Caribbean and the U.S. South. Like their African-American counterparts, Afro-Caribbean doctors spearheaded efforts to address the medical needs of black migrants, while simultaneously confronting the racist practices of white medical professionals. Yet, in their fight to improve healthcare for black Harlemites, “Caribbean Race Men of Medicine” drew upon eugenic theories to target young, single, working-class black women as dangerous sources of biological and moral contagion.

Maddox directs our attention to the activities and impact of Caribbean-American mutual aid societies and benevolent associations, reconstructing the social networks of immigrants during the interwar years. Through a vibrant web of local immigrant organisations, West Indians in New York City provided employment assistance to new arrivals, offered financial support to members, sponsored cultural events, and shared important news from the islands. Maddox highlights women’s untold contributions, noting their pivotal labour as organisers, fundraisers and officers. She reveals how Caribbean women used immigrant associations to redefine and extend constructions of home, forging new understandings of a shared “West Indian ethnic identity among islanders in the United States,” while also maintaining transnational connections with those “back home in the Caribbean.” By placing West Indian women at the center of histories of Caribbean immigration to the United States, Maddox illuminates women’s roles in the making and mobilisation of diasporic communities.

The next two articles, written by Kaysha Corinealdi and Grace Sanders Johnson, shed light on Afro-Caribbean women’s intellectual production as a crucial site of interwar activism. Corinealdi examines Amy Denniston’s tenure as the editor of the “Of Interest to Women” section in the *Panama Tribune*, an English-

language newsweekly for Afro-Caribbean Panamanians living on the isthmus. Analysing Denniston's editorials, Corinealdi explores how ideas about gender roles, modernity, and citizenship shaped Denniston's vision for black communal progress in Panama. As the article reveals, Denniston espoused contradictory positions about women's role in the Afro-Caribbean Panamanian community, at times calling on women "to steadfastly pursue self-progress" while at other moments articulating "fixed notions of women's roles in society" based on biological difference.

Sanders Johnson considers the intellectual legacies of the U.S. occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) through the work of anthropologist Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain. Carefully parsing Comhaire-Sylvain's publications in the feminist journal *La Voix des Femmes* and her field notes from the rural town of Kenscoff, Sanders Johnson reveals that Comhaire-Sylvain drew upon her personal experiences of grief and familial loss during the occupation to produce accounts of Haitian society that highlighted peasant women's roles in kinship networks, religious practices, and mourning rituals. She shows how Comhaire-Sylvain's scholarship informed elite feminist discourse in Haiti, while also vindicating the country's linguistic and cultural ties to West Africa. The article richly documents women's contributions to intellectual debates in interwar Haiti, shifting our focus beyond Jean Price-Mars, Jacques Roumain and other well-known male thinkers.

Capturing the dynamics of local political struggles, Nicole Bourbonnais and Gladys M. Jiménez-Muñoz reveal how fissures of race and class shaped political mobilisations in the decades following World War I. Bourbonnais traces the connections between two political movements in interwar Bermuda: the campaign for women's suffrage and the campaign against racial discrimination. Focusing on the period from 1934 to 1944, she explores the turbulent alliance between the leaders of the Bermuda Woman's Suffrage Society (BWSS), which was founded by a cadre of elite white women, and the editor of the *Recorder*, an Afro-Bermudian newspaper published in Hamilton. The leaders of the BWSS and the *Recorder* initially found common cause in the

fight for suffrage and in their opposition to a 1935 report that recommended compulsory sterilisation for unwed parents and “mental defectives.” Yet, as Bourbonnais points out, the alliance ultimately fractured because activists in both groups pursued narrow agendas that privileged the concerns of “women” (understood as white and propertied) or “the race” (understood as black and male). As a result, Afro-Bermudian women had limited opportunities to speak for themselves or to advance their own political agendas in either organisation.

Jiménez-Muñoz traces the fault lines within the *Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico* [Puerto Rican Nationalist Party] through the lives of Dominga de la Cruz Becerril and Trina Padilla de Sanz. Deconstructing the hegemonic discourse of “*la gran familia puertorriqueña*” [the Great Puerto Rican Family], she charts how *Nacionalistas* articulated conflicting understandings of *la patria* [the fatherland/motherland] and Puerto Rican identity in their writings and political protests. She argues that the divisions of the interwar era revealed a national family comprised of the island's “white/near-white, property-owner” class and an alternative national family comprised of the “subaltern, mixed-race” majority. In a related point, Jiménez-Muñoz calls on scholars to devote greater attention to the contributions of black and *mulata* women in studies of Puerto Rican nationalism.

In their articles, Janelle Rodriques, Faith Smith, and Amrita Bandopadhyay each revisit debates about political belonging in interwar Jamaica through literature and the popular press. Rodriques interrogates gendered discourses concerning respectability, Obeah, and “the folk,” bringing together several central themes of this special issue. Like Corinealdi, she shows that anxieties about black womanhood permeated middle-class intellectuals' visions of racial and national progress. Analyzing two short stories published in the Jamaican weekly *Public Opinion*, Rodriques tracks how literary representations of Obeah simultaneously presented women and African-derived spiritual practices as threats to creole nationalism. This article also suggests that gendered and sexualised tropes about

“feminised bodies” animated nationalist writers’ engagement with folk culture and aesthetics in the 1930s.

Smith analyses the entanglement of leisure, intimacy, desire, and consumption in fictions by Jamaican writer Una Marson and West African journalist Mabel Dove. Scrutinising references to textiles in both authors’ writings, Smith considers how the metaphor of clothing attunes us to “the material and symbolic resonances of a respectable black feminine imaginary.” The article disrupts teleological readings of politics in the interwar British Caribbean, which render the social and intellectual ferment of the 1930s as a dress rehearsal for post-World War II nationalist struggles. Instead, Smith calls attention to middle-class black women’s acts of self-fashioning—through adornment and intimate relationships—to pose new questions about gendered conceptions of freedom.

Bandopadhyay interprets depictions of Chinese Jamaican women in the work of three writers: interwar editor and novelist Herbert de Lisser and contemporary authors Victor Chang and Kerry Young. Historians have documented the fissures between the black and Chinese communities in Jamaica, noting how economic and ethnic tension fueled anti-Chinese riots in 1918. Building on this work, Bandopadhyay argues that sexual anxieties and competition over Chinese women profoundly shaped inter-ethnic clashes. Examining the literary magazine *Planter’s Punch*, she notes that de Lisser’s portrayal of Chinese Jamaicans invoked middle-class notions of respectability, characterizing Chinese women as dutiful “helpmates” and as symbols of the Chinese community’s integration into the island’s merchant elite. In contrast to de Lisser, Chang and Young underscore Chinese women’s battles against sexual and xenophobic violence and expose the marked cultural and generational divides among Chinese Jamaicans. Their contemporary writings, as Bandopadhyay suggests, respond to the elision of Chinese women from both the colonial archive and Jamaica’s creole nationalist project.

Shifting our focus to British Guiana, Aliyah Khan explores Indo-Caribbean women's participation in labour protests from the era of indentureship to the rebellions of the 1930s. Attentive to gendered erasures in the archival record, she reads Guyanese author Ryhaan Shah's acclaimed novel *The Silent Life* (2010) alongside historical accounts of labour activism by women in colonial British Guiana. The article illuminates how *jahaji bahin* ("ship sister") stories contest hegemonic Indo-Caribbean histories that center the migration experiences of the *jahaji bhai* ("ship brother"). By foregrounding the history of Indian women's interwar activism—through archival traces and literary representations—Khan reveals new accounts that subvert patriarchal, heterosexist understandings of the labour movement, anti-colonial struggle, and the process of Indo-Caribbean community formation.

In the final two articles, Rose Mary Allen and Bridget Brereton highlight women's activism during the late 1930s and early 1940s, tracing the impact of World War II on political movements in the southern Caribbean. Allen chronicles the campaign for universal adult suffrage in the Dutch Caribbean colony of Curaçao, exploring how women intervened in local debates about citizenship, gender, and race. Situating the suffrage campaign in the context of Afro-Curaçaoans' long struggle for socioeconomic mobility and racial and gender equality in the decades following emancipation, she finds that both elite and working-class women challenged conservative gender ideologies that limited women to the domestic sphere and excluded them from the public world of electoral politics. Their demands, as revealed in interviews and newspaper accounts, were framed not through the language of anti-colonial nationalism, but rather, through a call for voting rights on par with those granted to metropolitan women in the Netherlands. Yet, the long-term political changes engendered by the March 1948 bill instituting universal suffrage in Curaçao laid the foundation for anti-colonial uprisings during the 1960s and 70s.

Brereton recovers the activism of two Irish women schoolteachers in Trinidad during World War II. Hired to teach at a prestigious Catholic girls' secondary

school in Port of Spain, Catherine Donnellan and Eleanor Frances Cahill joined the local trade union movement and collaborated with anti-colonial intellectuals on the socialist newspaper *New Dawn*. Analysing their political activities and published writings, Brereton reveals how Donnellan and Cahill breached the norms of colonial society by labouring in solidarity with black activists in the male-dominated labour movement. She documents the brutal repression that both women faced, which included being fired from their teaching positions and imprisoned without trial by the colonial government. Contributing to the historiography on anti-colonialism in Trinidad by highlighting an example of intra-imperial collaboration, the article underscores the dire consequences faced by those who dared to challenge the entrenched hierarchies of race, class, and gender that underpinned British colonial rule.

To conclude, this issue features an interview with Dalea Bean, Lecturer and Graduate Coordinator at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Regional Coordinating Office, at The University of the West Indies, about her groundbreaking book, *Jamaican Women and the World Wars: On the Front Lines of Change* (2018). Bean calls attention to the world wars as vibrant, yet overlooked, moments of activism for women in Jamaica. The outbreak of war in 1914 provided unprecedented opportunities for Jamaican women—particularly white and near-white women from the upper classes—to participate in the public sphere through fundraising campaigns, recruitment rallies, and other patriotic activities. During World War II, Jamaican women served as soldiers in the Auxiliary Territorial Service as well as spearheaded initiatives on the home front to support the Allied war effort. In the interview, Bean discusses how gender and racial ideologies shaped the response to the world wars in Jamaica and reveals how wartime mobilisation transformed women's roles in Jamaican society. Linking past and present, she also considers how the activism of Jamaican women during the world wars might inform contemporary feminist movement building in Jamaica.

Charting Future Research Agendas: Enduring Questions and Possible Directions

By carefully tracing the intellectual and political genealogies of popular movements in the decades between the First and Second World Wars, the articles presented here expose the multiple variants of anti-colonial critique that emerged in the interwar Greater Caribbean. Rather than viewing anti-colonialism as a unitary set of principles or as a fixed ideology, the authors demonstrate that challenges to colonial rule emerged from activists who identified as revolutionary nationalists, Garveyites, socialists, and communists as well as from local reformers who advocated for self-government *within* empires. This move away from the traditional focus on nationalist party politics helps underscore how civic associations, labour unions, migrants' groups, women's organisations, and the periodical press engendered new anti-colonial counterpublics. While middle-class intellectuals and activists often sat at the helm of these initiatives, women and men from the labouring classes intervened—at times decisively—to broaden the scope of popular politics. Further, this issue unearths the webs of connection that linked local anti-colonial struggles to inter-island, regional, hemispheric, and global political currents, allowing us to study anti-colonialism as a process that unfolded at various geographic scales concurrently, instead of situating it solely within national histories. Finally, the articles recover the surprising alliances and coalitions that nourished anti-colonial movements. The protracted struggle against colonialism necessitated myriad forms of collaboration—sometimes across boundaries of race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, and political orientation—in pursuit of a shared objective. Thus, the contributors prompt us to wrestle with the messy world of interwar protest politics as it unfolded in the streets and in literary and cultural production. In conjunction with the newly published articles included herein, we have also provided an extended bibliography of relevant scholarship in an effort to draw attention to the growing literature on the interwar Caribbean.⁵ While we are pleased that the interwar period is now subject to heightened scholarly interest, many crucial questions remain unanswered about the intersection of gender, anti-colonialism and political change in the decades between the First and

Second World Wars. We conclude, therefore, by calling attention to several lacunae in the existing literature in the hope of stimulating new research.

Historical studies of interwar anti-colonialism have focused disproportionately on the political imaginaries and networks of urban residents, with much less attention given to the political worlds of rural working peoples. The voluminous writings of intellectuals and activists—from personal diaries to literary works to public speeches—offer a fascinating window into urban political culture, particularly in the region’s capital cities. Yet, in order to craft a more complete picture of Caribbean anti-colonialisms, we urge scholars to shift their view from Kingston, Havana, and Port-au-Prince to the region’s vast rural expanses. To date, insightful research has been done on the political culture of sugar and banana workers in the 1920s and 1930s, but many looming questions remain about the political consciousness of rural women and men. How did rural smallholders and wage labourers view the educated, urban, middle-class activists who led nationalist organisations? To what extent did women and men from the countryside participate in new political parties, labour unions, and civic clubs? How did rural people conceptualise political belonging and their relationship to the state? And to what extent did anti-colonial nationalism resonate beyond capital cities and port towns in the interwar decades? The nuanced scholarship on rural subjectivities in the interwar Dominican Republic—which combines deep archival research with innovative use of oral testimonies, historical photographs, literature, and popular songs—offers a promising example for scholars working on other Caribbean locales (Derby 1994; Turits 2002; García-Peña 2016; Ramírez 2018), as does Erna Brodber’s groundbreaking research on life in the Jamaican countryside (2004a, 2004b).

We should also consider how popular spiritual and religious practices informed anti-colonial movements in the interwar Greater Caribbean. Building on pioneering ethnographic studies conducted by Zora Neale Hurston and Melville J. Herskovits in the 1930s, scholars have highlighted how Afro-Caribbean spiritual practices have provided “alternative political and symbolic orders” for the

region's subaltern (Bogues 2002, 27).⁶ In a similar vein, studies of Indo-Caribbean communities have revealed that religious epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* influenced the worldview of not only Hindus, but Muslims and Christians as well (Mohammed 1998; S. Singh 2012). In order to develop these suggestive insights, scholars must now parse how ideas about gender, power, and authority derived from Caribbean spiritual practices shaped anti-colonial activism.

The work of producing more nuanced and comprehensive accounts of interwar political mobilisations will likewise require further research on Caribbean women's contributions to the era's major civic organisations. Over the past four decades, scholars have produced biographies of notable women leaders and have also documented women's participation in political parties, labour unions, feminist groups, and international organisations like the UNIA (e.g., Brodber 1986b; Reddock 1990; Matos-Rodríguez and Delgado 1998; Boyce Davies 2007; Hoefte 2007; Macpherson 2007; Martin 2007; Mayes 2008; Manley 2017; Brunson 2018). Building on this valuable corpus of work, we must now direct more sustained attention to the rank-and-file, studying the perspectives and motivations of the working-class women whose labour was essential for movement building. Recently published collections of primary sources—such as *Cien años de feminismos dominicanos* and the *Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*—should yield significant new insights about the content and scope of women's popular activism.⁷ We also eagerly await further research on the political activities of Amerindian, Syrian/Lebanese and Chinese women during the interwar period, given the paucity of Caribbeanist scholarship on these groups.⁸

Important questions remain, too, about interwar-era conceptions of sexuality and respectability, particularly in regards to the experiences of queer Caribbeans. “One of the greatest silences in Caribbean historiography,” as sociologist Mimi Sheller has noted, “is the invisibility of queer subjectivities” (2012, 3). Even as scholars have produced a sophisticated body of research on

postcolonial queer literature, performance, and practices of “erotic self-making,” focusing on the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Allen 2011), the queer presence in the colonial Caribbean remains a neglected topic.⁹ In order to disrupt heterosexist nationalist narratives, we need to explore how queer and transgender identities were constructed in the region historically, while also attending to shifting understandings of the body, sexual desire, and eroticism more broadly. In this effort, M. Jacqui Alexander’s foundational claim that erotic autonomy is a constitutive and deeply contested aspect of citizenship provides a framework for thinking about the relationship between anti-colonialism and queer embodiment in the interwar decades (2005, 21–65).

Finally, we call on scholars to investigate the domestic sphere as a pivotal terrain of political struggle. “The public and private lives of individuals are inextricably linked,” as feminist theorist Patricia Mohammed has noted. “[A] neat separation of gender in the past into a privileged public masculinity and a subordinate domestic femininity has assuredly never been an adequate description of the lives of men and women in the Caribbean” (2002, xv). Marriage, reproduction, and child welfare were matters of intense concern for nationalist leaders during the interwar period, as promising recent studies demonstrate (Gregg 2007; Altink 2011; Leeds 2013; De Barros 2014; Putnam 2014a; Amador 2016; Bourbonnais 2016; Merritt 2017). How did concerns about domestic life shape anti-colonial projects, and how did anti-colonial activism remake the domestic sphere? To answer these questions, future studies will need to conceptualise the household as a deeply politicised space that both contributes to, and is transformed by, activism in the public sphere. Furthermore, scholars of interwar-era anti-colonialisms will need to take seriously the feminist insight that domestic, reproductive, and care work are essential to the making and unmaking of empire (McClintock 1995; Stoler 2002; Briggs 2002; Olcott 2011).

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¹ Amy Jacques Garvey, "Women as Leaders Nationally and Racially," *Negro World*, October 24, 1925, 7.

² According to Lara Putnam, the circulation for the UNIA's *Negro World* newspaper "reached between seventeen thousand and sixty thousand in the early 1920s." The *Negro World* was "distributed through newsagents and local chapters where governments permitted its entry and surreptitiously in the hands of black seamen where they did not." See Lara Putnam, "Circum-Atlantic Print Circuits and Internationalism from the Peripheries in the Interwar Era," in *Print Culture Histories Beyond the Metropolis*, ed. James J. Connolly, Patrick Collier, Frank Felsenstein, Kenneth R. Hall, and Robert G. Hall (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 218.

³ Significantly, Caribbean feminist scholarship has been characterized from its inception by a commitment to intersectional analysis. As Patricia Mohammed explains, "gender scholarship in the Caribbean has never limited itself to an examination of gender identity. There has been a consistent scrutiny and cross-examination of gender with the categories of race, ethnicity, class, age and regional difference by scholars of the region." See Patricia Mohammed, "Introduction: The Material of Gender," in *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought*, ed. Patricia Mohammed (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), xx. For an analysis of the ways in which Caribbean feminists have addressed racial, ethnic, and class differences, see Rhoda Reddock, "Diversity, Difference and Caribbean Feminism: The Challenge of Anti-Racism," *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* 1 (2007): 1–24.

⁴ During the interwar period, the United States occupied Haiti from 1915–1934, the Dominican Republic from 1916–1924 and Cuba from 1917–1922. The interdisciplinary scholarship on the origins, implementation and impact of these occupations is substantial. See, for example, Alan McPherson, *The Invaded: How Latin Americans and Their Allies Fought and Ended U.S. Occupations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Peter James Hudson, *Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Intervention, Revolution, and Politics in Cuba, 1913–1921* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978); Hans R. Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915–1934* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of US Imperialism, 1915–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Bruce J. Calder, *The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation of 1916–1924* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984); Ellen D. Tillman, *Dollar Diplomacy by Force: Nation-Building and Resistance in the Dominican Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Lorgia García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), chapter 2; Raphael Dalleo, *American Imperialism's Undead: The Occupation of Haiti and the Rise of Caribbean Anticolonialism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016). In addition to these monographs, the *Journal of Haitian Studies* published a special issue in fall 2015, edited by Ermitte St. Jacques and Jeffrey W. Sommers, to mark the centenary of the U.S. occupation of Haiti.

⁵ There is a vast interdisciplinary literature on anti-colonialism in the interwar Caribbean. The bibliography provided here focuses on scholarship published in English.

⁶ Melville J. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1937); Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1938).

⁷ Ginetta E. B. Candelario, April J. Mayes, and Elizabeth S. Manley, eds., *Cien años de feminismo dominicano: una colección de documentos y escrituras clave en la formación y evolución del pensamiento y el movimiento feminista en la República Dominicana, 1865–1965* (Santo Domingo: Archivo General de la Nación, Departamento de Investigación y Divulgación, Área de Publicaciones, 2016); Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Volume XI: The Caribbean Diaspora, 1910–1920 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Volume XII: The Caribbean Diaspora, 1920–1921 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Volume XIII: The Caribbean Diaspora, 1921–1922 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

⁸ As historian Bridget Brereton observed over a decade ago, "We know very little about the historical experiences of women in the smaller immigrant communities, the Chinese, Portuguese, Syrian/Lebanese and Jewish groups." Unfortunately, this lacuna still exists. Bridget Brereton, "Gender and the Historiography of the English-speaking Caribbean," in *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought*, ed. Patricia Mohammed (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), 139.

⁹ For an interdisciplinary perspective on the contemporary queer Caribbean, see the November 2009 issue of the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, "Sexual Desires, Rights and Regulation," edited by Andil Gosine. See also M. Jacqui Alexander, "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas," *Feminist Review* 48 (1994): 5–23; Rosamund Elwin, ed., *Tongues on Fire: Caribbean Lesbian Lives and Stories* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1997); Jasbir Kaur Puar, "Global Circuits: Transnational Sexualities and Trinidad," *Signs* 26, no. 4 (2001): 1039–65; Kamala Kempadoo, "Sexuality in the Caribbean: Theory and Research (with an Emphasis on the Anglophone Caribbean)," *Social and Economic Studies* 52, no.3 (2003): 59–88; Linden Lewis, ed., *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Gloria Wekker, *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Thomas Glave, ed., *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism between Women in Caribbean Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Faith Smith, ed., *Sex and the Citizen: Interrogating the Caribbean* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011); Jafari S. Allen, *Venceremos?: The Erotics of Black Self-making in Cuba* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Carlos Ulises Decena, *Tacit Subjects: Belonging and Same-Sex Desire among Dominican Immigrant Men* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); David A. B. Murray, *Flaming Souls: Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Social Change in Barbados* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Noelle M. Stout, *After Love: Queer Intimacy and Erotic Economies in Post-Soviet Cuba* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Kofi Omoniyi Sylvanus Campbell, ed., *The Queer Caribbean Speaks: Interviews with Writers, Artists, and Activists* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Rosamond S. King, *Island Bodies: Transgressive Sexualities in the Caribbean Imagination* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016); Krystal Nandini Ghisyawan, "(Un)Settling the Politics of Identity and Sexuality among Indo-Trinidadian Same-Sex Loving Women," in *Indo-Caribbean Feminist Thought: Genealogies, Theories, Enactments*, ed. Gabrielle Jamela Hosein and Lisa Outar (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 153–70; Lyndon K. Gill, *Erotic Islands: Art and Activism in the Queer Caribbean* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors: Imagining Black Queer Genders* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).