

“The Bahamas for Bahamians”: Bahamianization as Black Power in the Bahamian Context

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.15362/ijbs.v32i1.625>

Abstract

In the post-World War II period, Black people throughout the African diaspora collectively challenged colonialism, imperialism, and racism, seeking to break away from White colonial rule. By the late 1960s, Black Power as a political expression emanated from the United States. While Black Power Studies has primarily focused on the political, economic, and cultural dynamics of African Americans, the study of Black Power in the Caribbean has been largely ignored. This article seeks to include The Bahamas into the historiography of Black Power in general and Black Power in the Caribbean in particular. Using Walter Rodney’s definition of Black Power in the Caribbean, this article details Black Power in the Bahamian context. Because Black Power must be viewed in local and national contexts, this article first explores the history of White supremacy, colonialism, slavery, and racism in The Bahamas to provide context for the rise of the Progressive Liberal Party and its transition to a Black party, Black majority rule in 1967, and Bahamian independence in 1973. I argue that the Bahamianization policy of 1967 represented one of the ways Black Bahamians demanded political and economic power and control of their destiny and the future Bahamian nation-state. Moreover, the notion of “The Bahamas for Bahamians” must be read through the history of White minority rule and the denial of Black Bahamian access to opportunities and power. In this way, Bahamianization represented one form of Bahamian Black Power.

Introduction

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of Bahamian independence on July 13, 2013, *The Nassau Guardian* released a special issue analyzing various aspects of the nation’s political, economic, and social progress since independence. In “The Independence Story,” Candia Dames interviewed six of the then living delegation members—Sir Arthur Foulkes, Arthur

Hanna, Sir Orville Turnquest, Philip Bethel, George Smith, and Loftus Roker—present at the December 1972 independence conference at the Marlborough House in London (Ferguson, 2013). As early as the 1950s, young Black Bahamians were considering whether The Bahamas was ready for independence. Decolonization and civil rights movements were beginning to erupt globally, and in 1957, following the significant loss of India and Pakistan in

1947, Ghana became the first African colony to receive independence in the British Empire. Recognizing the significance of this historical moment, former Governor General and one of the founding politicians, Arthur Hanna stated, “We felt we were part of that revolution at that time, that we had a duty to move The Bahamas to independence” (as cited in Dames, 2013, p. 12).

This article seeks to include The Bahamas in the historiography of Black Power movements in the Caribbean. In *Black Power in the Caribbean*, Kate Quinn argued that Black Power scholarship has primarily focused on the United States while less is known about Black Power in other places in the African diaspora. The edited volume sought to examine the various ways Black Power in the Caribbean operated in the 1960s and 1970s by “outlining the particular national and international contexts in which it emerged, its local manifestations, and its relations with the movement in the United States” (Quinn, 2014b, p. 2). Examining local manifestations of Black Power in Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Jamaica, United States Virgin Islands, Dutch Caribbean, and Bermuda, The Bahamas is not represented among these narratives and is referenced only six times in the entire book.

This article engages with the work of Guyanese historian and activist Walter Rodney to analyze Black Power in the Bahamian context. In his essay “Black Power in the West Indies,” Rodney identified three categories that represented Black Power in the Caribbean: “(i) the break with imperialism which is historically white racist; (ii) the assumption of power by the black masses in the islands; (iii) the cultural reconstruction of the society in the image of the blacks” (Rodney, 2004, p. 485). In the

era of independence, Bahamianization was a policy implemented by the Progressive Liberal Party to control immigration and foreigners’ access to Bahamian resources. I argue that this represented one of the ways Black Power was articulated among Black Bahamians who were demanding political and economic power. Whether or not Black Bahamians endorsed the political expression “Black Power,” using Rodney’s definition, the transition to majority rule in 1967 followed by independence in 1973, and the Bahamianization policy (among other institutional and cultural changes that represented the Black majority) constitutes Black Power in the Bahamian context.

For Black Bahamians, who had historically been denied access to first-class citizenship, Bahamianization represented a political and economic approach to Bahamian Black Power as it sought to preserve and protect The Bahamas for Bahamians. While the leaders of the PLP demanded “The Bahamas for Bahamians” in general, a closer reading of the historical moment shows that the demand for political and economic opportunities, stricter citizenship, work permits, naturalization policies, and the protection of resources from foreigners, specifically addressed the concerns of Black Bahamians. White Bahamians, on the other hand, were opposed to many of these measures because they historically benefited from the Bahamian political and socioeconomic structure, controlling The Bahamas because of their racial identity. Bahamianization, then, functioned as one of the local and national applications of Black Power in the Bahamian context because it represented Black Bahamian self-determination and the attempt to reconstruct society and institutions for the benefit of the Black majority.

Roots of Bahamianization: Slavery, Colonialism, and Racism in The Bahamas

To understand the way Bahamianization came to operate as a form of Bahamian Black Power, a brief discussion of slavery, colonialism, and racism in the archipelago is necessary. The arrival of enslaved Africans coincided with the development of plantations and the creation of legal codes to enforce a system of social and racial order in the colony (Craton & Saunders, 1992, p. 119). For example, in 1723, African and Indigenous people were prohibited from traveling or leaving their homes without the documented permission of their master or mistress, gathering in groups of more than six people unless given consent, and were required to step aside to allow Whites to pass (Craton & Saunders, 1992). As the Black population grew, more laws were created to regulate and control Black people such as the 1768 Manumission Act which heavily monitored Black people, even requiring free people to wear a badge labeled “Free” that included their name, the date, and their militia number (Wilkie & Farnsworth, 2005, pp. 25–26). These laws established a pattern of White social, political, and economic power and Black oppression. Colonialism, slavery, and racism were systems predicated on power, and laws were central to establishing the social order to enforce that power.

While the creation of slave codes laid the foundation for racial and social order in The Bahamas, the arrival of White Loyalists in 1784 altered the developing Bahamian racial order (Johnson, 2000). Many Loyalists who settled in The Bahamas received land grants from the British colonial government which afforded them the privilege to establish businesses or plantations as those within the planter-merchant class sought to re-establish the economic and political power they

previously held in the mainland British colonies. Many White Loyalists also received public government positions and served as judges and lawyers, which often led to generational political power. For example, James, John, and Henry Armbrister (all brothers) moved to The Bahamas by way of Charleston, South Carolina and East Florida and secured positions in politics, establishing a legacy of generational power and leadership positions in The Bahamas (Peters, 1962, p. 235). Descendants of the Loyalists viewed themselves as a “local aristocracy” (Craton, 2007, p. 235) who, over time, became known as the Bay Street Boys—a White mercantile oligarchy whose political and economic power reigned for two centuries.

On August 1, 1838, enslaved Africans in British colonies were freed. The abolition of slavery represented freedom, education, control over their bodies, labor, and mobility. It meant full recognition as humans with a destiny and will. Yet, Black Bahamians were still denied full citizenship and continued to experience discrimination and structural and institutional racism. Residential segregation, introduced by White Loyalists, was common in The Bahamas. Education was also racially segregated and often inaccessible because of associated costs, reserving education for the wealthy. While the Board of Education introduced primary schools in 1835, many children, Black and White, did not attend school. Black children who were able to attend school mostly attended inferior schools. In addition to segregated neighborhoods and schools, Black Bahamians were also largely locked out of the political economy. Black people were rarely employed in office or civil service positions. Further, because subsistence farming and wrecking were the main economic activities, especially in the Family

Islands, the share and truck and credit systems kept Black Bahamians in debt and poverty (Saunders, 2003, pp. 27–30). Infrastructure, public health, and social services were weak or absent (especially in the Family Islands) and when improvements were made, they primarily benefited White Bahamians.

Influenced by the failing pineapple and sisal industries, lack of opportunities, and the truck and credit system, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, like elsewhere in the Caribbean and Latin America, Black Bahamians began to migrate in search of economic opportunities. Some traveled as far as Mexico for work while others worked on sugar cane plantations in the Dominican Republic from 1900–1912 (Saunders, 2003, pp. 69–71). Many migrated to Florida, particularly to Key West and Miami—the latter known as the “Miami Craze” from 1905 to 1924 (Mohl, 1987). In the United States, Black Bahamian migrants encountered American racism, experiencing constant police harassment and being verbally assaulted as “Nassau niggers” (Mohl, 1987, p. 287). While racism and discrimination were not foreign, Black Bahamians were not used to the American brand of racism and White vigilantism that African Americans experienced. However, these experiences in Florida helped to alter their political and racial consciousness, which led to many Black Bahamians becoming involved with the Marcus Garvey and Amy Ashwood Garvey-founded Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)—a movement centering Black nationalism, pan-African identity, and race-first consciousness. Bahamian Garveyites who returned to The Bahamas continued to uphold the Garveyite agenda and created two chapters in Nassau alone. While Garveyism would fade in popularity by the 1930s—in part due to the British colonial

government and the Bay Street Boys’ efforts to suppress Garveyism such as the passing of the Seditious Publications Act (1919–1924) which prohibited the publication and distribution of the *Negro World*, the UNIA’s weekly newspaper—its legacy made an indelible impact on the Black working class, foreshadowing the awakening to come.

The emerging tourism industry also influenced the growth of Jim Crow racism in The Bahamas. The flow of White Americans, the average tourist, to The Bahamas meant an increase in discrimination and racism by employers and tourists. Anthropologist Catherine A. Palmer (1994) argued that racism and prejudice played a significant role in shaping how White tourists viewed Black Bahamians. Images marketed in brochures and other advertisements, some of which were developed and promoted by the Bahamian government, reinforced notions of slavery and Black servitude, creating a system in which tourism reinforced and maintained racism, discrimination, and inequality. The social and economic influence of White American tourists meant many hotels refused to employ Black Bahamians and other Afro-Caribbeans in managerial positions, often recruiting White foreigners from the United Kingdom and the United States instead. When businesses did employ Black Bahamians, they were employed in low-wage service positions. Hotels also discriminated against patrons of color, and it was not until the anti-discrimination resolution in 1956 that these luxury hotels were integrated (Craton, 2007). Moreover, while the tourist industry became increasingly profitable, outside of service positions, Black Bahamians were largely locked out of economic opportunities afforded to White Bahamians and foreign investors.

Black Bahamians and the Progressive Liberal Party Chip Away at Bay Street

The archipelagic nature of The Bahamas interrupted the widespread development of class and race consciousness across the scattered islands. While an “awakening of black consciousness” predates the 20th century (Trainor, 1983, p. 47), the absence of large-scale protests meant that the Colonial Office interfered very little in The Bahamas, which was different from other British territories such as Jamaica (Hughes, 1981; Saunders, 2003). However, the increased migration of Bahamians from the Family Islands to New Providence; migration to the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean; and participation in World War II, resulted in the spread of political and social organizing among Black Bahamians. Frustrated with the colonial government and tired of systemic racism, a new movement was coming which would shift the future of The Bahamas.

Historians Nona Martin and Virgil Henry Storr argued that “Bahamian Blacks had begun chipping away at Bay Street’s facade since the 1942 riot” (Martin & Storr, 2009, p. 38). When the United States entered World War II, the proximity of New Providence made it a strategic location for the Operational Training Unit, a military base. On May 20, 1942, work began on the two sites that were to be built in Grant’s Town and Pine Barren (called Main Field and Satellite Field). Twenty-five hundred local laborers were recruited and to be paid 12 shillings a day. The Bahamian government, however, agreed to the 1936 rate of four shillings. Black workers, however, were paid less than White workers (Saunders, 2003, pp. 151–165). While trade unions were nonexistent in The Bahamas, the Labour Union and the Federation of

Labour were created in 1936 and 1942, respectively, under the leadership of Charles Rhodriguez to combat labor exploitation and reach a new minimum wage rate of eight shillings per day. While trying to resolve the wage inequality, Black Bahamian workers grew increasingly angry. Known as the Burma Road Uprising, from May 31st through June 2nd, 1942, more than 2,000 Black Bahamians protested and destroyed Bay Street—Nassau’s business district and the symbol of White rule and power—and other White-owned establishments in the city. The police and the military intervened and a curfew was established until June 8th (Saunders, 2003, pp. 153–155). The events that occurred over those late spring days were indicative of the change that was coming to The Bahamas. The protesters were poor, young, and mostly from the Family Islands who were growing increasingly frustrated with racism, poverty, and inequality.

The British West Indies Temporary Alien Labor Program also contributed to Black Bahamian working-class racial consciousness. Between 1943 and 1965, approximately 30,000 Bahamians migrated to the United States for short term contracts in agriculture and manufacturing. As Black Bahamians experienced American racism, they also organized with African Americans who were demanding their own claims to equality and first-class citizenship during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Some Black Bahamians even participated in civil rights demonstrations in the southern United States, such as Bahamian physician and civic leader Judson Frazier Eneas. On April 29, 1964, Eneas, a pre-med student at Fisk University, a historically Black university in Nashville, Tennessee, was arrested and jailed with 300 members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), including

future United States Congressman John Lewis, for demonstrating at segregated restaurants (The Bahamianologist, 2023). These experiences of Jim Crow racism and Pan-African solidarity in the United States influenced Black Bahamian working-class politicization and helped shape organizing in The Bahamas in the late 1950s to early 1960s (Thompson, 2012). Moreover, the Contract also provided Black Bahamians with another invaluable source of power: cash. The Bahamian truck and kind system had indebted Black Bahamians to White employers as they were paid in kind/credit and forced to shop at their employers' stores. However, cash allowed one to have a choice, and choice allowed people to shop wherever they wanted.

In October 1953, the PLP was created by Cyril Stevenson, Sir Henry Milton, and William Cartwright for all Bahamians regardless of race, class, color, or gender. Yet, soon after its formation, the PLP was viewed as a Black party due to its predominance of Black working-class members (Saunders, 2007, p. 54). During this period, more Black Bahamians were able to attend high school and college, and their education abroad presented opportunities to build relationships with other members of the African diaspora who were discussing similar issues of colonialism, imperialism, racism, and independence in their respective countries (Saunders, 2007). Further, migrants from other Caribbean societies who settled in The Bahamas, Bahamians who returned from serving in the British West Indian Regiment during World War I and II, and Bahamians who were returning from contract work in the United States with their experiences of southern racism converged in a Bahamas that was ripe for Black socioeconomic and political change. Over the next decade, the PLP would increasingly grow in popularity

among the Black working class and continue to "chip away" at "Bay Street's facade," who had formed the United Bahamian Party (UBP) as the PLP continued to grow in popularity and challenge White minority rule. In the years leading to majority rule, the PLP focused their political platform on racism and increasingly "demanded for blacks a share in the prosperity" in The Bahamas (Trainor, 1983, p. 50).

Then, on Tuesday April 27, 1965, the House of Assembly rejected the PLP's petition to redraw the constituency boundaries which would reflect the population as Black majority. In response, Lynden O. Pindling, leader of the PLP, picked up the 165-year-old ceremonial mace, which represented the Speaker of the House of Assembly's power, and threw it out of the window to the large Black crowd below. As he threw the mace, Pindling, who often used Black nationalist rhetoric in his speeches which greatly appealed to working class Black Bahamians (Lee, 2012, pp. 70–73), shouted, "This is the symbol of authority, and authority on this island belongs to the people, and the people are outside!" (Johnson, 1972, p. 52). Following Pindling, Butler threw the quarter-hourglass out of the window into the crowd. Pindling, Butler, and other leaders of the PLP then joined the crowd of Black Bahamians who carried signs which read "Boycott Bay Street," "Bay Street Drunk with Power," and "Blood, Sweat, and Tears" while also singing the popular African American civil rights protest song, "We Shall Overcome" (Johnson, 1972, pp. 53–54). Known as "Black Tuesday," and the largest demonstration since the 1942 Burma Road Uprising, Martin and Storr (2009) argued these actions demonstrated that Bay Street could be defeated and that the PLP was the "'Negro's Party'" (p. 38). Two years later, the elections of January 10, 1967, led to majority rule, and, six years

later, independence from Britain was achieved on July 10, 1973.

“The Bahamas for Bahamians”: Independence and Bahamianization as Black Power

While Black Power had existed for generations in Africana social and political thought, in June 1966, Willie Ricks, a member of SNCC, began to use the term Black Power. However, it was fellow SNCC activist Kwame Ture’s (Stokely Carmichael) battle cry during a rally on June 16th, after being arrested in Greenwood, Mississippi which led to the popularization of the political expression Black Power (Marable, 2007, p. 92). While Black people collectively experienced slavery, racism, and colonialism throughout the African diaspora, and liberation and independence movements escalated from the 1950s through the 1970s, their historical experiences and means to liberation were diverse and specific to their colonial, demographic, and sociopolitical histories. In the United States, Black Power continued the political transition of the Black Freedom Movement from integration to Black nationalism. Similarly, “Caribbean Black Power was not a singular ideology but a heterogeneous movement that encompassed a range of convergent and divergent political positions and concerns” (Quinn, 2014a, p. 26). The histories of the Caribbean are incredibly diverse in colonial legacies (Spanish, British, French, Dutch), culture, economies, population size, and racial demographics. For example, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago had to contend with ethnic and racial diversity as both countries had significant Indian populations which were distinct from the Bahamian context.

In “Black Power in the Caribbean Context,” Lowenthal stated that “the long duration of formal colonial rule, the survival of a strong

class system, a general absence of industrial development, and above all, the presence of majority black populations mark the West Indies by contrast with the United States” (1972, p. 116). Like other Black communities throughout the Americas and Africa, Black Bahamian political mobilization began to formulate on a massive scale during the late 1960s as they challenged racism, imperialism, and colonialism. When the PLP won the 1967 elections, Black Bahamians were hopeful for a future under Black representation. Upon independence, Black Bahamians represented an estimated 85% of the population (Mueller, 1973). Black Bahamians—historically denied access to political representation, social equality, and economic mobility—were demanding full recognition as citizens who were entitled to the resources and opportunities within The Bahamas. “‘Now it will be our time,’ said a woman cab driver to *The New York Times*. ‘Now we will have a government for most of the people, not just the white ones.’” When the reporter, Wallace Turner, asked her if it will be a better government, she replied, “‘Yes, it will be better.’” (Turner, 1967). Importantly, while Caribbean Black Power did not necessarily mean a Black government, labor organizations, or Pan-Africanism, “for its proponents, Black Power was linked to all these historical moments as the latest stage in the region’s long struggle for meaningful independence and black liberation” (Quinn, 2014b, pp. 3-4).

Upon majority rule in 1967, one of the ways the PLP sought to restructure the historical legacy of White minority rule and Black subjugation was the Bahamianization policy. Known as the policy of “The Bahamas for Bahamians,” “essentially, Bahamianization was attempted by the government to control the recruitment of non-Bahamian labor into

the country. Specifically targeted under this program were white foreigners recruited by the Grand Bahama Port Authority, Haitians, and Jamaicans” (Tinker, 2011, p. 8). Bahamianization sought to eliminate the recruitment of foreign labor and increase job and business opportunities for Bahamians by limiting foreigners’ access to permanent residency, work permits, and citizenship. To help protect employment, the Bahamianization policy required employers to only hire Bahamians unless a qualified Bahamian could not be found (McCollin, 2002).

For example, after a landslide victory in the 1968 general elections, the PLP government worked to phase out the hiring of expatriates in Freeport, Grand Bahama by giving employment priority to qualified Bahamians. The PLP contested the Hawksbill Creek Act (signed August 5, 1955) not only because of the excessive allowances given to the Grand Bahama Port Authority Ltd. such as 50,000 acres of land for the construction of an industrial area and harbor and exemption from taxes and custom duties but also the recruitment of foreign labor. Black Bahamians and Afro-Caribbeans were generally hired for low-wage positions. The PLP accused the UBP of supporting the immigration of Whites while simultaneously denying the settlement of Black people (Craton & Saunders, 1998, p. 42). In fact, “non-Bahamians with useful skills were sought and allowed to settle permanently, as long as they were white and could be expected to vote for their Bay Street benefactors” (Craton, 2007, p. 37). White foreign labor was viewed by Black Bahamians as a tactic to strengthen White oligarchical control of the Black majority. The Bahamianization of Freeport was not only a response to foreign labor and immigration but was also tied to the advent of independence.

Moreover, like Bahamianization, there were various demands for “West Indianization” throughout the Caribbean. West Indianization often meant the rejection of foreign Whites and expatriates, given that the number of Afro-Caribbeans “at managerial levels” was relatively small. In the vision of a decolonized Caribbean, “nationalism [called] for replacing foreigners with natives, whatever their qualifications” (Lowenthal, 1972, p. 120). Bahamianization, a nationalist project, was inherently tied to questions of immigration, citizenship, and the protection of opportunities for the future Bahamian nation-state. As argued by historians Michael Craton and Gail Saunders (1998):

In respect to changes that can be made and aims realized by policy decision and enactments, Bahamian governments since 1967 (and even more since independence) have done their best to ensure that the Bahamas and its resources belong to Bahamians, that Bahamian property is not easily alienable to non-Bahamians, that the status of being Bahamian is not granted easily to outsiders, and that residence and work permits do not jeopardize the chances of employment or commercial profit for Bahamians. (p. 435)

Bahamian independence on July 10, 1973, came with the tightening of citizenship in the independence constitution; stricter work permits, permanent residency, and immigration policies; and the elimination of the Belonger Status category (Craton, 2007). In terms of citizenship, the Nationality Act of 1973 based citizenship on *jus sanguinis*. Those born in The Bahamas or born to a Bahamian father outside The Bahamas before July 10, 1973, were granted citizenship, yet those born to non-nationals after July 9, 1973, were not citizens of The

Bahamas but were entitled to apply for citizenship upon their 18th birthday (Craton & Saunders, 1998). Reflecting on the 1972 independence conference in London, Sir Arthur Foulkes stated that:

The glorious moment was when opposition and government got together on the question of citizenship, and it was the Bahamian delegation against the British government, not the PLP and FNM [Free National Movement], because the British had their ideas about Bahamian citizenship ... On that issue, we were, as we say, solid as a rock. We thought that Bahamians should decide who would become Bahamians in the future. (Dames, 2013, p. 15)

The Bahamian delegation's decision to base citizenship for the new nation-state on the principle of *jus sanguinis* (right of blood) and not *jus soli* (birthright citizenship) must be viewed as a deliberate decision by the independence delegation committee. Historically, the British colonial government and the Bay Street Boys created statutes in immigration policies which benefitted the White minority population. In particular, the Bahamian Belonger or Belonger status category, created by the UBP (who by this point was associated with White supremacy), gave individuals who were not born in The Bahamas, but "dedicated their lives and fortunes to the Bahamas" similar rights as Bahamians regarding business, employment, permanent residency, and voting (Craton & Saunders, 1998, p. 339). Belongers were typically Whites and were viewed by many Black Bahamians as a strategy imposed by the UBP to maintain White supremacy and rule. The elimination of the Belonger category by the PLP in 1973 was tied to ideas of full recognition and the need to protect the future political sovereignty of The Bahamas. Because most

Bahamians were Black, questions of citizenship, immigration, and the Bahamianization policy were strategies to protect The Bahamas for Black Bahamians who, for centuries, had been denied political and economic power.

Additionally, it must be emphasized that the push for stricter immigration and citizenship policies by the PLP illustrates the ways Bahamianization operated as a Black nationalist project, eclipsing the tenets of Pan Africanism which were present in some Black Power activists' philosophies such as that of Guyanese Pan Africanists Walter Rodney and Eusi Kwayana (Westmaas, 2014). The Bahamas for Bahamians not only attempted to address and correct White power and White access to economic opportunities, but also impacted Afro Caribbean migrants, Jamaicans and Haitians in particular. The PLP sought to create a nation-state which benefited Black Bahamians specifically not Black people in general. Jamaicans and Haitians represented the largest demographic of Caribbean laborers who sought economic opportunities in The Bahamas. They, too, were viewed as economic competitors and a threat to Black Bahamians' vision of a Black Bahamian nation-state. While both groups continued to seek work in The Bahamas despite these measures, in the post-independence period Haitians represented the largest threat to Bahamian nationalism and have been directly targeted by the state (immigration, politicians, etc.) and Bahamian citizens in the subsequent decades, often accused of being a danger to the Bahamian nation-state (Perry, 2026). Black Power in The Bahamas, then, was not inclusive of all people of African descent but rather those who had legitimate claims to the state through Bahamian heritage and Bahamian citizenship policies.

While Bahamianization represented political and economic power for Black Bahamians, there was also a cultural push. For example, young members of the National Committee for Positive Action (NCPA)—which had formed within the PLP in 1960 to serve as the activist, more radical element of the party—felt the 1962 elections failed to gain the PLP more seats because the party leaders were too conservative in their approaches for the change (Martin & Storr, 2009, p. 43). The NCPA believed that PLP members and supporters needed to be radically educated; they needed to believe that a Black majority *could* govern The Bahamas. NCPA sought to change the miseducation of Black Bahamians by encouraging them to read books about African history, politics, and economics; teaching Black Bahamians about their African history; and instilling African pride among Black Bahamians (Saunders, 2007). Bahamian cultural nationalism, as facilitated by the NCPA, was like Black Power in other areas of the anglophone Caribbean. For example, Jamaican Black Power of the late 1960s did not only attempt to challenge the White elite and the Brown middle class—who represented a buffer between the White colonial structure and the Black working class. Jamaican Black Power also rested on the need to empower and mentally transform Black Jamaicans, many of whom believed themselves to be inferior to the White and Brown classes who held power in Jamaica (Lewis, 2014, p. 55).

Moreover, by 1967, Black Bahamians protested and challenged the education system; racist depictions of Black people in school textbooks; and advocated for a Black Studies curriculum (Trainor, 1983). During the era of independence, the PLP also sought to Bahamianize the education system by restructuring the British colonial education system, making it less British and more reflective of Bahamian people through the

creation of indigenous materials and the centering of Black Bahamian history and culture (Davis, 1995). Relevant education was an important theme of Black nationalism and Black Power movements in the African diaspora. In the United States, the Black student demands of the late 1960s, which began at San Francisco State University by the Black Student Union, led to the institutionalization of Black Studies into many university curricula (Rojas, 2007; Biondi, 2012). Similar demands occurred in the Caribbean such as the Black Beret Cadre in Bermuda who created Liberation School and were invited by student groups to encourage teachers to incorporate Black Studies into the curriculum (Swan, 2014, pp. 206–207). This cultural thrust sought to instill self-confidence, self-knowledge, and self-respect among Black Bahamians which, in turn, supported the economic and political thrusts inherent in Bahamianization. Thus, education, too, was a nationalist project within the movement of Bahamian Black Power.

The Black Power movement that erupted in Black communities across the United States and spread throughout the Caribbean underscored the need for Black people to control and defend their communities by developing racial and cultural pride, creating strong community institutions, and wielding economic and political power. Bahamianization, a nationalist project, contained similar goals to Black Power in the African diaspora as Black Bahamians sought to instill African pride and control of their communities, the future nation-state, and, thus, their destiny. As noted by the Black woman cab driver after the 1967 election, Black Bahamians time had come, and Bahamian independence and The Bahamas for Bahamians motto represented their approach to self-determination, their attempt to break from imperialism and

placing institutional power in the hands of the Black majority, the teaching of Black pride, and the cultural reorientation of Bahamian society in the image of the Black majority.

Conclusion

The goal of this article was to include The Bahamas in the historiography of Caribbean Black Power by framing Bahamianization as a form of Bahamian Black Power. Caribbean Black Power often differed from the Black Power movement in the United States but was heterogeneous within the Caribbean. The Bahamas had a unique colonial history due to its proximity to and historical ties with the United States, the archipelagic geography, their large White minority population, and a weak Black and Colored middle class. The historical denial of economic, political, and social equality laid the foundation for Bahamianization in 1967. While Pindling denied allegations that the PLP and the Bahamianization policy were for Blacks only, it would be imprecise to ignore the historical context; the demand for Bahamian sovereignty; and the protection of resources and opportunities that historically were reserved and given to Whites.

The late 1950s to the early 1970s was a critical period for Black Bahamians as the PLP fought to gain more electoral ground, to enact more racially inclusive reforms, and gain independence from Britain. The PLP and Black Bahamians were grabbing hold of their destiny and correcting the damages that institutions of slavery, colonialism, and racism had enacted upon Black Bahamians.

In the early 1970s, “one former UBP parliamentarian stated [that] ‘the U.B.P. way of life is finished forever in this country. Face the facts, we are living in a black man’s country and they are going to run it their way, not ours’” (Trainor, 1983, p. 54). While the PLP did not necessarily identify with Black Power rhetoric from the United States and the wider Caribbean, the goal of political, economic, institutional, and cultural power for Black Bahamians is key to the broader ideology and practice of Black Power.

The broader historiographical implication of this article illustrates that Black Power as a means of redressing historical wrongs and creating institutional, political, economic, and cultural power in the image of Black people did not occur in isolation or only within the United States. While the meanings and practices of Black Power differed based on local, regional, and national histories and politics, Black people from the Caribbean, the United States, and Africa worked together (whether directly or indirectly) during these decades as they shared similar goals of dismantling White power structures and building Black communities and nation-states. This article contributes to the contemporary gaps by inserting The Bahamas into the historical narrative of Black Power, nationally and transnationally. In particular, it speaks to what Black Power looked like in The Bahamas which adds to a larger, more complex and holistic understanding of Black Power in a global context.

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